

TRANSCENDENTAL SUBJECTIVITY AS THE FOUNDATION OF KNOWLEDGE:
A CRITIQUE OF EDMUND HUSSERL'S EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONALISM

BY

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to almighty God for His love and kindness.

To my parents, CHIEF and MRS. OLU OWOLABI, who insisted that I should follow this path of honour. And also to the memory of my sister OLUWATOYIN OWOLABI (April 1977 - June 1986) who understood by her personal experience the pain and the struggle in my life.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis represents the original work of Kolawole Owolabi in the Department of Philosophy, University of Lagos.



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CERTIFICATION

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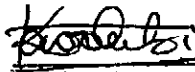
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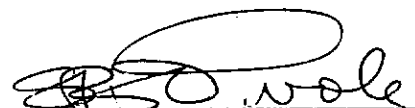
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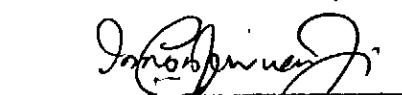
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A B S T R A C T

This study intends to show that Edmund Husserl's theory of transcendental subjectivity is inadequate as the ultimate ground and the absolute standard of justification for all epistemic claims. Epistemology - the branch of philosophy that investigates the nature of human knowledge - has been dominated throughout its history by the belief that there can be one ultimate source of all knowledge claims and that this source should also play the role of the standard of justification for our knowledge claims. Recently this position has been tagged "epistemological foundationalism".

Edmund Husserl (1859 - 1938), popularly known as the father of the phenomenological movement, has within his philosophy an epistemological foundationalist theory. Husserl was an admirer of Rene Descartes who without any doubt is the ideal foundationalist. In fact, Husserl's foundationalism is a revised version of Descartes' foundationalism.

Husserl's foundationalism which rests on the theory of transcendental subjectivity shall be shown to be untenable. We shall also argue that any form of foundationalism cannot be adequate since foundationalism emanated from the erroneous assumption that there can be an ultimate ground for the numerous knowledge claims that we may make.

A theory of knowledge which sees knowledge as a dynamic enterprise is adopted in this thesis. This will do away with the dogmatism of foundationalism and accept multiple sources of knowledge instead of one ultimate source. It will see the justification of knowledge as being contextually determined and will deny any absolute a priori standard of justification.

The consequence of this epistemic position on society at large is open-mindedness and tolerance. The new epistemic theory will serve as the panacea for the manifold problems that foundationalism has created and it will call to order the dogmatism, fanaticism and intolerance which are inseparable from entrenched foundationalism and which we cannot afford in the contemporary world.

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

There is a fundamental agreement among philosophers throughout all ages that philosophy is an enterprise that seeks answers to the baffling problems and questions that confront human beings in their unavoidable interactions with the world around them. All philosophers seem to agree with Plato that wonder is the origin of philosophy. Bertrand Russell in his book The Problems of Philosophy defines philosophy as the attempt to answer the fundamental questions of life. He said:

... philosophy is merely the attempt to answer such ultimate questions, not carelessly and dogmatically, as we do in ordinary life and even in the sciences but critically, after exploring all that makes such questions puzzling and after realizing all the vagueness and confusion that underlie our ordinary ideas¹.

One of such important questions is: How do I know anything that I claim to know? Some philosophers fervently believe that if any answer could be got to the question of the nature, origin and source of knowledge, the entire problem of man is half solved. The entire history of philosophy has therefore been dominated by such related questions.

Most philosophers hold that if the ultimate source of knowledge is known then certain knowledge would be apprehended. Such an ultimate source of all certain knowledge would then serve as a standard for the justification or invalidation of all knowledge claims. This means that an epistemic position of absolute certainty would automatically become the foundation,

1. Bertrand Russell: The Problems of Philosophy. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p.1

the basis of all epistemic claims, it would function as the pillars on which to build a viable epistemological super-structure.

The urge to attain this foundation of knowledge was greatly felt by Rene Descartes who without any doubt is the foundationalist of all times. The father of modern philosophy played a paternal role not only to philosophy but also to foundationalism. It was he who first felt the need to have certain knowledge that would serve as the foundation of all knowledge. He saw the epistemic certainty in the "cogito" or the subjective mind and therefore contended that only the mind could give genuine knowledge. On the foundation of the "cogito" Descartes established all knowledge claims. He argued further that any knowledge outside this was baseless and therefore unacceptable.

Other modern philosophers took a leaf from Descartes and came out in search of the foundation of knowledge. At the end of the day two camps emerged. Members of the opposing camp were those who saw sense experience as the foundation of knowledge instead of the cartesian rationalist foundation, and they were led by John Locke. Locke disagreed with Descartes' position that the thinking aspect of man is the foundation of knowledge. His own position is that in experience, "All our knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives"².

The empiricists as those opponents came to be known, felt that science rather than mathematics should be the model which the castle of knowledge should emulate. They argued that since

2. John Locke: Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Bk. II, Chap. 1, Sec. 1, A.C. Fraser's edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 10.

science gives us most of our knowledge and since "what science cannot discover mankind cannot know"³, it sounds reasonable if knowledge should follow science and make sense experience its foundation. The popularity of science in the modern age led to the acceptance of empirical foundationalism at the expense of the rationalistic foundationalism championed by Descartes. In this century empirical foundationalism dominated the scene keeping its opponent at the background.

Despite the popularity of empirical foundationalism in this century and especially in the first half of this century when it reached its peak in the hands of the logical positivists there was the attempt of a philosopher to resuscitate the dead cartesian form of foundationalism. That person is no other than Edmund Husserl. Husserl (1859 - 1938) is well known as the founder and originator of the phenomenological movement and method. Inherent in his phenomenological philosophy, especially in the latter part of his career, is a foundationalistic position.

Husserl's foundationalism is a neo-cartesian foundationalism. Husserl agreed with Descartes in making the subjective ego the foundation of knowledge, he only disagreed with the method of going about it. He also wanted to improve on Descartes' mistake and avoid the popular criticism of solipsism and subjectivism levelled against Descartes.

To achieve those set objectives, Husserl replaced the cartesian method with the phenomenological method of bracketing

3. Bertrand Russell: Religion and Science, (New York: Galaxy Press, 1961), p. 243.

or reduction. The method which he termed "epoche" to him shall purify the mind of all prejudices and shall remove all our previous epistemic claims. Husserl, like Descartes, said the "epoche" cannot bracket the ego or the subject since it is the entity performing the bracketing. In the light of this he concluded that the absolute entity is the ego and the absolute knowledge is the knowledge of the ego. But Husserl went on to improve on Descartes' theory of "ego" by asserting that the ego is transcendental and purified. He calls his own foundation, "the transcendental subject" or "pure subject".

Husserl's development of epistemological foundationalism is not entirely the same as that of Descartes. Rather, he attempted an improvement on the latter's theory. This improvement relies on the theory of intentionality of consciousness which he got from Franz Brentano. Brentano the descriptive psychologist, had earlier on reformulated the ancient theory of intentionality of consciousness asserting that consciousness by its very nature must be related to the external world and that the existence of a subjective being implies the existence of the objective world since consciousness is consciousness of something.

Husserl took up this theory and used it for an epistemological purpose. He argued that since the transcendental consciousness or ego is the apodictic fact, the external world which is its intentional correlate must also be apodictic. The transcendental subject necessarily implies the external world. The foundation of knowledge is therefore the subject and the external world. Husserl expanded the famous

proposition of Descartes "cogito ergo sum" (I think therefore I exist) to "ego cogito cogitatum" meaning (I think the object of thought). What this new slogan means is that the epistemic certainty is not the "cogito" but rather the combination of both the "cogito" and the "cogitatum", that is, the subject and object of thought put together.

Husserl therefore argued that the transcendental subject by its intentional nature is a correlate of the world, it is the primary substance, the knowledge of it being the primal cognition. He also went further to say that nothing can exist if it is not an object of thought of a thinking mind. It is the subjective ego therefore that creates the external world through its intentional nature. Consciousness, therefore, as he said constitutes the world. It is the metaphysical foundation of the world and he concluded that it should also be the epistemological foundation too.

In the light of all those arguments Husserl contended that anything known is known by the transcendental ego. It is to him the source of all knowledge. It should therefore serve as the standard of justification for all epistemic claims. Any knowledge should be justified or invalidated by this primary criterion of knowledge. This is the epistemological foundationalism of Edmund Husserl that we shall explicate and criticise in this thesis.

Before we go further, let us try to look at the background of the said Edmund Husserl. Husserl was born on 8th April 1859 in Austria to Jewish parents; but he later became converted to christianity and was baptised in a Lutheran

Church in 1887. Husserl had his pre-university education in the towns of Olmutz and Vienna in Austria. He began his university education at Leipzig where he studied the sciences. He later moved to the University of Berlin where he studied mathematics graduating in 1881. Husserl did his doctorate degree at the University of Vienna and wrote his dissertation on the calculus of variations.

When Husserl was a student at Vienna he came in contact with Franz Brentano a descriptive psychologist who later had a tremendous influence on his career. Husserl attended the lectures of Brentano, and became fascinated with philosophy. With encouragement from Brentano he abandoned mathematics for a teaching career in philosophy. Husserl first began his career as a teacher of philosophy at the University of Halle. At Halle where he was a privadozent he came in contact with Carl Stumpf who also had a tremendous influence on his thought.

Husserl published his first book Philosophy of Arithmetic in 1887. He followed it up with the two volumes of Logical Investigations (1900 - 1901). The publication of the latter book established Husserl as a philosopher and popularised him among the academics. The fame that this brought him won him a position as a lecturer at the University of Gotingen where he later became a professor. Husserl's ideas became very influential among the students he taught at this university. It was here that the first set of his disciples first organised themselves for the purpose of discussing and propagating his ideas.

In the spring of 1910 Husserl delivered some series of lectures which were later published under the title The Idea of Phenomenology. In the same year Husserl also published another book titled Philosophy as a Rigorous Science.

Husserl's major philosophical work was published in the year 1913 under the title Ideas: General Introduction to Phenomenology. In 1916 Husserl moved to the University of Freiburg to occupy the professorial chair in the Department of Philosophy of the university. It was here that he met Martin Heidegger who later became one of his most popular disciples and admirers of his phenomenological philosophy.

In 1929 Husserl again published another book, Formal and Transcendental Logic. That same year he went to deliver a series of lectures at Sorbonne University in Paris. The lectures were published in a volume titled The Paris Lectures, and they were later expanded and enlarged under the title Cartesian Meditations.

Around this time the Nazi regime in Germany became hostile and started their negative policies against the people of Jewish background and Husserl was not left out. He was removed as a Professor in 1929 and was banned from attending public lectures and seminars. Husserl went into quiet retirement rejecting the appointment offered him as a Professor at the University of South Carolina. Husserl lived the rest of his life in solitude in a Benedictine monastery where he wrote two other books; Philosophy and the Crisis of European Men and the Transcendental Phenomenology both in 1929.

At his death in 1938 Husserl left 40,000 pages of unpublished manuscripts which were written in shorthand. He also left behind a lot of books in his private library. All those were smuggled out of Berlin during the Nazi era in Germany and they now constitute the famous Husserl archives in Louvain today.

II. Methodology

To achieve our objective which is basically to show the inadequacy of Husserl's foundationalism we shall adopt the expository and critical methods. We shall first make an exposition of the views we want to examine before we start to criticise them. We shall try as much as possible to follow the logical sequence of all the arguments behind the theory of transcendental subject before we come out to show the inadequacy of the theory.

This thesis will rely for its source of materials on the original texts of Edmund Husserl especially the relevant books which are:

- (1) Ideas: General Introduction to Phenomenology
- (2) Philosophy as a Rigorous Science
- (3) The Idea of Phenomenology
- (4) The Paris Lectures
- (5) Cartesian Meditations.

We shall also make use of some secondary sources like writings on Edmund Husserl in particular and phenomenology in general. Books on epistemology shall also be consulted.

The thesis will be divided into five chapters. The first chapter will be a look at epistemological foundationalism

generally from an historical perspective. The second chapter will examine Husserl's phenomenological philosophy, the basic features and the historical development of this method of philosophy. The third chapter will examine the basic premises behind Husserl's theory of transcendental subjectivity, we shall attempt to show the errors behind those premises. In the fourth chapter which will be the nerve centre of the thesis, the theory of transcendental subjectivity will be examined in detail. We shall see the rationale behind Husserl's belief in the capability of the theory to serve as the foundation of knowledge. The chapter will also criticise and reveal with the aid of consistent arguments why Husserl's foundationalism and in fact any form of foundationalism cannot be sustained. The last chapter will be devoted to an examination of the alternative to be followed if foundationalism is to be avoided.

We shall conclude the thesis by showing the negative implications of a foundationalist position not only for the other branches of philosophy, but also for socio-political, religious and educational systems. The new theory of knowledge - contextualism - which we shall present as the alternative to foundationalism, we shall argue, will alleviate all the problems created by foundationalism.

III. Literature Review and Rationale for the Study

A survey of the relevant literature on Edmund Husserl's phenomenology in general and the theory of transcendental subjectivity in particular will justify the need for the present study.

The available literature on Husserl's philosophy is very scanty in comparison to the huge work that has been carried out on his contemporaries like Martin Heidegger and Jean Paul Sartre. The literature on Edmund Husserl can be categorised into two. There are those in book form that examine Husserl's philosophy in the light of the phenomenological movement. These works fail to see in detail the theories embedded in Husserl's philosophical system. They are more of historical accounts of the development of the phenomenological movement.

The second category of the literature on Husserl is mostly in the form of articles in learned journals. They examine, though not in detail the various theories in Husserl's philosophy without drawing their full implications. In actual fact the theory of transcendental subjectivity which Husserl regarded as the cardinal theory of his philosophy has not been given the attention it deserves. This fact will become clear when we look at the two categories of literature on Husserl's philosophy.

Among the first category of works on Husserl's philosophy is Herbert Spiegelberg's The Phenomenological Movement (1976). The book, written in two volumes, is aimed at presenting the historical development of the phenomenological movement. Making use of unpublished correspondences, original

texts, diary account and written replies to inquiries, the author presents a systematic account of the genesis and growth of phenomenology from the precursors of Husserl down to his disciples.

In the greater part of the first volume of the book the author discusses how phenomenology grew out of the descriptive psychology of Brentano. He then goes further to identify the three stages in the development of Husserl's phenomenology. It is in discussing the last stage of Husserl's philosophy that the author makes mention of the theory of transcendental subjectivity but this was done in a brief manner.

Parl Welch's doctoral thesis which was later published with the title The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl: The Origin and Development of his Phenomenology (1943) needs to be examined. The primary objective of this work is to trace the course of Husserl's development from 1891 when he wrote his first book Philosophie der Arithmetik to 1931 when he published his last major work Meditations Cartesiennes. Welch takes a radical stand in this book, arguing that Husserl's genius lies not in presenting a new method for philosophy but rather in making phenomenology a better alternative to both empiricism and rationalism. Like Spiegelberg, he does not discuss the theory of transcendental subjectivity. This is due to the fact that the book tends to see Husserl in the light of his early stage of realism.

Marvin Faber's book The Foundation of Phenomenology: Edmund Husserl and the Quest for A Rigorous Science (1943) unlike the other two books examines Husserl's theory of

transcendental subjectivity. The book begins with an historical account of Husserl's phenomenology from the root. Faber examines some of the unpublished works of Husserl and discusses at length the manifold theories in Husserl's philosophy. Faber, unlike Spiegelberg and Welch, criticises the theory of transcendental subjectivity. His basic criticism is that the theory turns phenomenology, a hitherto scientific system, into a mystical and grotesque system.

In his other book Naturalism and Subjectivism (1959) Faber continues his assault on transcendental phenomenology. Here Faber attacks Husserl's transcendental phenomenology as a product of "illicit ignorance". He advocated naturalism as a better and more realistic position than the subjectivism of Husserl.

Among the second category of literature on Edmund Husserl is Albert Chandler's article "Professor Husserl's Program of Philosophic Reform" The Philosophical Review (Vol. XVI, 1917, pp. 634 - 648). The article is intended to show the failure of Husserl to make philosophy a scientific enterprise. Husserl, according to Chandler, "has not lifted philosophy from the plane of conflicting standpoints to the plane of objective science; he has merely added one more standpoint to the number" (p. 648) Chandler's article, like many others, is an attempt at showing the impossibility of Husserl's objective of making philosophy a rigorous science. The article does not discuss the theory of transcendental subjectivity either in detail or in passing.

T.W. Adorno in an article titled "Husserl and the Problem of Idealism" The Journal of Philosophy (Vol. 37, No.1 January 1940, pp. 5 - 8) discussed the theory of transcendental

subjectivity though in passing, in his bid to show that Husserl's transcendental idealism cannot be a realistic theory. According to Adorno, Husserl cannot deny that his metaphysical position is idealism of the traditional type because he never fully freed himself from the assumptions of traditional idealism. "The doctrine of essence which was regarded as the main anti-idealist stroke of Husserl's finally reveals itself as the ~~sum~~mit of idealism".

In another article by S. Hook titled "Husserl's Phenomenological Idealism" in The Journal of Philosophy (Vol. 27, No. 14, July 1930, pp. 365 - 380) the theory of transcendental subjectivity is discussed but not in detail. Hook, like Adorno, discusses the theory in his bid to criticise Husserl's idealism. Hook argued that Husserl's idealism belongs to the German idealistic tradition and that it is in fact Hegelian.

Roman Ingarden's article "About the Motives Which Led Husserl to Transcendental Idealism" published in a book titled Phenomenology and Natural Existence: Essays on Memory of Marvin Faber also discusses the Husserlian treatment of the theory of transcendental subjectivity. The primary objective of Ingarden was to make conjectures on the motives that led Husserl to formulate the theory of transcendental subjectivity. In his bid to realise this objective he touched though briefly on the basic themes of the theory. N. Roterstreich also has an article in the same book that focuses on the theory. The article titled "Ambiguities of Husserl's Notion of Constitution" examines

the notion of constitution which is a basic feature of the transcendental subjectivity.

P. J. Chandhury's article "Vedanta as Transcendental Phenomenology" in Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol. 20, 1959, pp. 229 - 245) also examines the theory of transcendental subjectivity but again in a rather sketchy manner. The goal of the article is to point out the similarities in Vedanta, an aspect of Indian Philosophy and transcendental phenomenology of Husserl. In the bid to realise this objective Chandhury went on to analyse though briefly the theory of transcendental subjectivity.

By far the most detailed, rigorous and critical analysis of the theory of transcendental subjectivity was presented by Jean Paul Sartre in his book The Transcendence of the Ego (1957). The book sets out to show the impossibility of attaining the transcendental subjectivity by the Husserlian phenomenological method. The transcendental ego, he argues, cannot be realised philosophically but mystically. The Ego, Sartre argues cannot be detached from the world. It is a being in the world, it cannot move out of the world. Any attempt to make the Ego transcendental will result in the death of the Ego. Sartre therefore went further to deny the various attributes of the transcendental ego claiming that the Ego is not the primary entity in the world. But even this Sartrean critique of the theory of transcendental subjectivity failed to put this theory within the proper perspective, that is, the epistemological perspective.

Our review of the literature on Husserl shows that the theory of transcendental subjectivity is yet to be situated within the epistemological context as a foundationalist theory. In no known work is there any attempt to look at the theory in the light of Husserl's primary objective of making it the ultimate source and ultimate point of justification of all epistemic claims.

This present study therefore seeks to fill this gap. It views Husserl's theory of transcendental subjectivity in the light of the foundationalist tradition in the history of epistemology. We are aware of the various criticisms being levelled against all forms of foundationalism. Our aim is to see whether Husserl is immuned from them.

CHAPTER ONE

EPISTEMOLOGY AND THE QUEST FOR AN ULTIMATE FOUNDATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Philosophers who concern themselves with the theory of knowledge are apt to be haunted by an ideal of certainty. Seeking a refuge from Descartes' malicious demon, they look for a proposition, or class of propositions of whose truth they can be absolutely sure. They think that once they have found this basis they can go on to justify at least some of their beliefs, but that without it there can be no defence against skepticism. Unless something is certain, we are told nothing can be even probable*

A.J. Ayer

1.0 Introduction

This chapter seeks to investigate the nature of epistemology the branch of philosophy that deals with human knowledge. We intend to show that epistemology throughout its history has been dominated by the search for an ultimate foundation or an ultimate position that will justify all knowledge claims. We seek to examine what we call epistemological foundationalism, that is, the belief in an ultimate foundation of all epistemic claims and see how this theory originated out of the assertion of the skeptics that knowledge is impossible.

* A.J. Ayer, "Basic propositions" in Philosophical Analysis: A Collection of Essays (ed.) Max Black, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc, 1963), p. 57.

Skepticism is an important epistemological methodology. It is the position to the effect that knowledge is unattainable. The stand that knowledge is unattainable generated the philosophers quest for a position that will show that epistemic claims are possible and justifiable. In the light of this relationship between foundationalism and skepticism, the present chapter will examine in detail skepticism, its arguments and the many varieties of it in the history of philosophy. We shall at the end assert that wholesale skepticism which generated foundationalism is an untenable stand which philosophers should not have taken seriously.

Aware of the fact that Descartes' foundationalism is an epitome of the quest for an ultimate foundation of knowledge, we shall in this chapter see the argument for an ultimate foundation of knowledge and the objections that have been raised against it. We shall conclude the chapter by dropping a hint that Husserl's transcendental subjective foundation which this thesis seeks to criticise was greatly influenced by the Cartesian foundationalism.

1.1 Epistemology and Epistemological Foundationalism

Epistemology according to the Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology is "the theory of the origin, nature and limits of knowledge. The systematic analysis of the concepts employed by ordinary and scientific thought in interpreting the world including an investigation of the act

of knowledge or the nature of knowledge with a view to determine its ontological significance."¹ The dictionary of Philosophy by A.R. Lacey also defines epistemology in this manner:

Enquiry into the nature and ground of experience belief and knowledge. What can we know and how do we know it? are questions central to philosophy, and knowledge form the main topic of epistemology along with other cognitive notions like belief, understanding, reason, judgement, sensation, imagination, supposing, guessing, hearing and forgetting.²

Epistemology, which is also sometimes called Gnosiology, is the examination of the nature and validity of knowledge. The concern of epistemology is primarily with the nature of human knowledge. It deals with the nature of knowledge of all kinds and with man's awareness of its environment.³ Epistemology according to D. W. Hamlyn;

"... is that branch of philosophy which is concerned with the nature and scope of knowledge, its presupposition and basis and the general reliability of claims to knowledge."⁴

It is possible for us to keep on supplying definitions to cover this branch of philosophy without getting a comprehensive and acceptable definition. The reason is not far-fetched. It is difficult to get an accurate definition of philosophy that will cover all the ramifications of this branch

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1. J.B. Baldwin (ed) Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology (Gloucester: Macmillan, 1960), p. 603.
 2. A.R. Lacey, The Dictionary of Philosophy, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), p. 5.
 3. J. B. Baldwin, Op Cit, p. 333
 4. D.W. Hamlyn "Epistemology" in The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 2 (New York: The Macmillan Company and the Free Press, 1967), pp. 12 - 13.

discipline and the multiple themes that epistemologists discuss.

Whatever pertains to "knowledge" always receives the interest and attention of epistemologists. Epistemology, therefore, can be briefly defined as the theory, doctrine or study of knowledge. Knowledge is the defining characteristic of epistemology. What then is knowledge? What do we mean when we say we know something?

The Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology defines knowledge as:

- (1) The cognitive aspect of consciousness in general. To know means to perceive or apprehend or to understand or comprehend.
- (2) Knowledge is also used in contrast to mere opinion, sometimes called belief. In this application, it signifies certitude based on adequate objective grounds. There may be belief or subjective certitude without adequate objective foundation.
- (3) Knowledge is further used for "what is known" as such. Thus we speak of chemistry as a body of knowledge. Knowledge is used as a synonym for cognition and also to specify a perfect cognition. That is the cognition that satisfies three conditions which are:
 - (1) Truth
 - (2) Self satisfying and indubitability
 - (3) Logically impossible to falsify.⁵

5. J. B. Baldwin (ed), Op. Cit, p. 604.

Philosophers have not agreed on the definition of knowledge. In fact, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to provide a definition of knowledge that would be acceptable to all philosophers. The question, "what is knowledge?" will definitely receive the same attention as the question "what is philosophy?" Philosophers never agree on the meaning of definition of many concepts. The question "what is knowledge?" is therefore capable of turning a seminar room into a rowdy market place. The task of getting an acceptable definition of knowledge is a tedious one:.

Whichever way we may turn, we are going to be involved in complications. Yet the question what is knowledge? seems so simple. This beguiling simplicity which is characteristic of philosophical questions often produces an unfortunate effect.⁶

The problem of the definition of knowledge is one of the many problems of philosophy that can be traced to the genesis of philosophy. The concept of knowledge has its own peculiar problem which makes any attempt to define it more complicated. Philip Chapin Jones, in his

6. David Pears, What is Knowledge? (London, : George Allen and Unwin Ltd), 1971, p. 1.

book - The Nature of Knowledge declares:

knowledge is a task far more difficult than that encountered in finding an explanation of physical phenomenon. An explanation of knowledge must be in terms of something more fundamental than knowledge and that obviously is something unknown ⁷

David Pears also expressed the same fear about the difficulty of getting the "knowledge of knowledge": in this manner

The problem of knowledge has another important characteristic which it shares with a certain number of philosophical problems. That is that it is so general that it includes itself in its own scope ⁸

The first attempt in the history of philosophy at defining knowledge was in Plato's Theatetus. In this dialogue, Socrates in his usual manner, engaged his interlocutors on the meaning of knowledge. Many meanings were given to knowledge; such as belief, opinion, true belief, true opinion and true belief plus logos.⁹ By far the most popular, but not necessarily the most acceptable definition in the Theatetus, was the definition of knowledge as true belief plus logos which Plato later rejected as being inadequate.

7. P. C. Jones, Nature of Knowledge, New York & London: (The Free Press, 1964), p. 21.

8. David Pears, Op. Cit., p. 2

9. Plato, Theatetus, Transl., F.M. Cornford (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul), 1971 201-D

But despite this rejection, the definition was ironically, until recently, the most popular and relatively acceptable definition of knowledge among philosophers.

This definition simply says that a person X knows P if and if:

- (i) X believes that P
- (ii) P is true
- (iii) X is justified in believing that
P is true

The reason for the abandonment of this traditional definition of knowledge, lies in the argument of E. L. Gettier in his short but influential article "Is Justified true belief knowledge?"¹⁰ In this article Gettier provided us with instances of justified true belief that are not knowledge.¹¹ Ever since this article became popular the traditional analysis of knowledge has been rejected by philosophers. Some people have even made futile attempts of amending it. Ayer defines knowledge as justified true belief when the believer has the right to be sure.¹² Chisholm says knowledge is justified true belief when the believer has adequate evidence.¹³ Unfortunately after many attempts by many persons, no one has yet uncovered what can be added to "justified true

10. E.L. Gettier "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge" Analysis 23, 1965, p. 121 - 123

11. In this article Gettier gave concrete examples of people with justified true belief and yet they do not have knowledge.

12. A. J. Ayer, The Problem of Knowledge (hormonsworth: Penguin, 1963) p. 35.

13. R. M. Chisholm, Perceiving a Philosophical Study (Ithaca: Cornman, University Press, 1957) p. 6.

belief to reach knowledge.¹⁴

Throughout the history of epistemology, an acceptable definition of knowledge has been elusive. The unfortunate aspect of the story is that contemporary linguistic philosophers who took up the task of providing an acceptable definition of knowledge, rather than solve the problem have complicated it by their so called linguistic analysis and atomistic division of the word "knowledge" into many parts. The analytic philosophers are presently talking of "knowledge" connoting many things such as "knowledge by acquaintance", "knowledge by description", "knowing how" and "knowing that". But all these are mere pointers to the fact that it is difficult to provide a single definition to cover all the uses of the word "know", "knowing" and "knowledge".¹⁵

As a writer has pointed out,

There is of course no simple answer to the question what knowledge is. The problem divides like the roots of a tree. You take what appears to be a simple issue and connected questions come up at surprisingly distant places.¹⁶

The truth is that the problem of the definition of knowledge really involves more on the field of epistemology. The problem is in fact one of the many problems that dominate the field of epistemology. As Philip Jones rightly observed "In the over two thousand years of recorded philosophy, no subject has proved more baffling than the relationship between the

14. James W. Cornman, "Epistemology", in Encyclopedia Americana, Vol. 10 (Danbury Connecticut: Americana Corporation International, 1979), p. 517.

15. Ibid. p. 518

16. David Pears, Op. Cit., p. 1

physical universe and our knowledge of it".¹⁷ Epistemology, in reality, is nothing but tissues of problems and bundles of complications. As a branch of philosophy and like other branches of philosophy it does nothing other than seek to supply solutions to the multi-farious problems that dominate the study. This observation brings us to the problem of the foundation of knowledge which is the main issue to be examined in this chapter.

One of the many problems that dominate epistemology as a field of study is the problem of the foundation of knowledge. What then is this problem of foundation of knowledge? It is simply this. If we say that we know "X" for example, how can we justify that we really know X? What is the standard or the criterion of our epistemic claim? How can we really know, or how can we distinguish a claim to knowledge from other claims? We can say that we know X through observation. And that if any other person really observes he will know "X". Therefore our standard or criterion of knowledge in this case is observation. But the question is why we accept observation as a standard of knowledge. This particular argument will definitely continue ad-infinitum. But in order to avoid this, epistemologists have decided to stop at a particular criterion; this criterion they called the foundation of knowledge. It may be observation, or reasoning, or intuition for example. Any knowledge claim that can be traced to this criterion becomes a tenable knowledge claim.

17. Philip C. Jones, Op. Cit., p. 22

18. David Pears, Op. Cit., p. 3

The problem of foundation of knowledge can also be explained better by detailed analysis of the word "foundation".

Let us look more closely at the idea behind the word "foundation". Part of the idea is that the less certain pieces of contingent knowledge should be based on the more certain pieces and part of it is that it should be possible to establish the more certain pieces independently without using the less certain pieces. For foundations are stronger than superstructure and they are without its help.¹⁸

The genesis of the problem of foundation lies in the negative beginning of epistemology. Epistemology, as a field of study, started on a skeptical note in the hands of the Sophists.¹⁹ Epistemology began with the claim that knowledge is impossible. In order to show that knowledge is possible, epistemologists wanted to establish a good criterion or foundation for the acceptance of all knowledge claims. The study of epistemology is therefore "among other things a set of defence works against skepticism of the very possibility of knowledge."²⁰ In the bid to answer the skeptics therefore epistemologists have turned themselves into the biblical wiseman who seeks to build his house on the foundation of rock.

D.W. Hamlyn also agreed that the need to provide a true and acceptable standard of knowledge that will meet the demands

18. David Pears, Op. Cit., p. 3

19. Protagoras and Georgias were responsible for this negative condemnation of objective knowledge. Their critique woke epistemologists up to face the task of justifying the claims to knowledge.

20. D. W. Hamlyn, Op. Cit., pp. 10 - 11.

of the skeptics is the genesis of the problem of foundation, when he said:

Traditionally epistemology has involved what is sometimes referred to as the search for certainty impressed by the possibility of doubt and by the supposal that if doubt be allowed it's head this will undermine the foundation of knowledge philosophers have sought to make these foundations unshakable. The architectural models involved here are not without significance. There is a tendency to think of the corpus of knowledge as a building that is rising upward and that those who increase the stock of knowledge are building additional stories into the existing fabric. If the foundations are not secure the whole building will come crashing to the ground.²¹

The above statement, apart from explaining the origin of the problem of foundation, also sheds more light on this problem particularly with the allusion to the building. Confronted with the critical eye of the skeptics therefore, any epistemologist who believes that knowledge can be attained will have to justify this claim. Any epistemic claim needs justification with a criterion. This criterion itself needs to be justified with another criterion. This process of justification could continue ad infinitum. The reason for this is that, with the skeptics around, philosophers will have to be very careful about what they will present as knowledge. This painstaking attitude on the part of epistemologists could lead to an infinite epistemic regress problem of justification which is another offshoot of the

21. Ibid., p. 11

problem of justification? It is simply this:

If any beliefs are to be justified at all ... there must be some terminal beliefs that do not owe their credibility to others; for a belief to be justified it is not enough for it to be accepted let alone merely entertained, there must be good reason for accepting it. Furthermore for an inferential belief to be justified the beliefs that support it must be justified themselves.²²

This particular problem of justification of knowledge or foundation of knowledge gave birth to a stand popularly called "epistemological foundationalism". This is the stand that says that the justification of knowledge should not continue in an infinite regression but should stop at a point analogous to the "unmoved mover" of Theodicy. This stopping point, according to them, shall be the foundation of all knowledge. They felt that:

There must be some kind of belief that does not owe its justification to the support provided by others. Unless this were so, no belief would be justified at all; for to justify any belief would require the antecedent justification of an infinite series of beliefs.²³

The epistemological foundationalists therefore are those philosophers who believe that all justification of epistemic claims should stop somewhere and should not continue in an infinite regress. They are those who believe that there can be one ultimate foundation or criterion that will be apodictic and immutable enough to

22. Antony Quinton, Nature of Things (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1973), p. 119.

23. Ibid., p. 119.

serve as the basis of justification for other claims. Virtually all the great names in epistemology subscribe to this view and virtually all of them feel that they can supply an acceptable foundation that will be strong and convincing enough to justify all epistemic claims. This basic justification or foundation of knowledge is referred to as the "protocol truth, "the "basic statement"; "the self evident" or the "unmoved movers" of the epistemic realm.

The reason for this popularity of foundationalism in epistemology is not far-fetched.

The main reason for the impressive durability of foundationalism is not any overwhelming plausibility attending to the main foundationalist thesis in itself but rather the existence of one apparent decisive argument which seems to rule out all non-skeptical alternatives to foundationalism, thereby showing that some version of foundationalism must be true on the assumption that skepticism is false.²⁴

Foundationalism in retrospect is the view that certain "beliefs possess a degree of epistemic justification or warrant which does not depend inferentially or otherwise on the justification of other beliefs".²⁵ Foundationalism, according to David Annis, may be expressed as the conjunction of two theses, namely the thesis of self justification and the thesis of self dependence.²⁶ By the thesis of self justification Annis meant "that some statements have at least

24. L. Bonjour, "Can Empirical Knowledge have a foundation?" In the American Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 15, No. 1 (1978), p. 1.

25. Ibid., p. 1

26. David B. Annis, "Epistemic Foundationalism" in Philosophical Studies No. 31 (1977) p. 345.

some degree of initial epistemic justification which is independent by the justification they may derive from other statements".²⁷ By the thesis of dependency Annis claims that "empirical statements must ultimately derive at least some of their epistemic justifications from statements that are self-justified."²⁸ Annis went further:

Foundationalism has tended to conceive of the dependency relation as essentially linear. There are various justified or basic statements and all non basic statements receive their justification through linear derivation from these statements. From the basic statement "p" we derive or infer the non-basic statement "q" and from "q" we infer the further non-basic statement "r". In this way "r" derives its justification from "p" through the essentially linear relation of sequential derivation.²⁹

Foundationalism in epistemology is based upon the belief that knowledge forms an ordered hierarchical system and at the base of it lies the self evident justification or foundation of knowledge. But in fact this belief does not receive a unanimous acclaim among philosophers. Owing to the problem of Proving the "basic foundation," as absolutely strong enough to justify all other claims, foundationalists have disagreed among themselves on the feature of this basic foundation.

Traditionally, foundationalism was basically the strong form. But because of the problem that philosophers faced in the justification of the "basic belief" or "protocol truth"

27. Ibid., p. 345

28. Ibid., p. 345

29. Ibid., p. 345

as self evident they have tended to be changing gear and adjusting their stand to favour a less difficult foundationalist stand which is known as weak foundationalism. Strong foundationalism is described by Bonjour as follows:

Foundational beliefs which terminate the regress of justification possess sufficient epistemic warrant independently of any appeal to inference from (or coherence with) other empirical beliefs to satisfy the justification condition of knowledge and qualify as acceptable justifying premises for further beliefs. Since the justification of these basic beliefs as they have come to be called is thus allegedly not dependent on that of any other empirical belief; they are uniquely able to provide secure starting point for the justification of empirical knowledge and stopping points for the regress of justification.³⁰

The point of departure between strong foundationalism and weak foundationalism lies in the problem of proving that the foundation is self justifying. The weak foundationalists believe that the claims of self dependency, indubitability, incorrigibility and truth on its own value accorded to the basic foundation may be difficult to prove. Weak foundationalism is a reaction to the arguments and objections of the opponents of strong foundationalism. In the face of the conviction of the arguments of the opponents of foundationalism, some foundationalists have readjusted their stand in recent times from the claim that the basic foundation is always certain, to a less dogmatic claim that the certainty of the basic foundation is tentative.

30. L. Bonjour, "Can Empirical Knowledge have a Foundation?" Op. Cit., p. 4.

The weak foundationalists who were mostly contemporary philosophers like Keith Lehrer, Bertrand Russell, Roderick Chisholm and Nelson Goodman, are those who agree that the basic foundation of all knowledge ~~possesses~~ some degree of independent epistemic justification. But they also believe that this degree of independent epistemic justification is much lower than those attributed to them by the traditional strong foundationalists.

Despite the attempt of the weak foundationalists to side-track the various objections against strong foundationalism, the fact still remains that epistemological foundationalism has not reached and cannot reach the primary objective of compressing all knowledge under the same umbrella. The fact that the attempt to provide a basic foundation of justification for knowledge has failed throughout the history of philosophy is an obvious fact. No amount of amendment can save foundationalism from its precarious predicament since it is a product of a misconception. This position will be adequately defended in chapter four.

1.2 Foundationalism In Traditional Epistemology

Virtually all traditional epistemologists whether rationalists or empiricists, agree that knowledge is possible and that, there is a criterion or foundation that is basic and ultimate enough to serve as the reason for the justification of other epistemic claims. What we are saying in essence is that rationalists and empiricists are both foundationalists in the sense that they both agree that there is one source or criterion that gives justification to all

epistemic claims. A rationalist may say that reasoning is the criterion of knowledge. Any epistemic claim that is consistent or that is derived from reasoning is therefore a justified epistemic claim, whereas to the empiricists, the standard of knowledge is sense experience. Any claim to knowledge that is justified on the basis of sense experience is therefore accepted by the empiricists as justified epistemic claim.

With the above explanation we can conclude that the rationalists and the empiricists are all foundationalists in the sense that they feel that a certain, immutable and apodictic foundation should be sought to serve as the basis of other epistemic claims. In a bid to establish this certainty, both rationalists and empiricists have decided to bury their hatchet, in order to fight their common enemy which is skepticism. In fact their similarities are much more than their differences.³¹

The quest for an epistemic foundation can historically be traced to the primitive society. This urge among the Greeks dates back to the pre-philosophic time. The pre-socratic poets, Homer and Hesiod, were responsible for first asserting that the gods are the ultimate source of all ideas. According to the two poets their poetic knowledge came from the muses.³² This particular super-natural foundation of knowledge was taken up by Heraclitus and Parmenides who both regarded the gods Zeus and Dike respectively as the originators of their source of knowledge.³³

31. Karl Popper, Conjectures and Refutation, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 9.

32. Ibid., p. 9

33. Ibid., p. 9

The bid to put knowledge on an ultimate foundation' received a further development in the philosophy of Plato. Having been influenced by his teacher Socrates on the theory of the pre-existence of the soul before its contact with the body, Plato formulated an epistemological foundationalist theory out of this. He made the "forms" or the "world of forms" and the perfection of this world the foundation or standard of knowledge. Any knowledge that conforms to the truth, perfection and certainty of the world of forms becomes accepted as true knowledge. Knowledge to him becomes innate and mere recollection of the perfect ideas in the world of forms. Aristotle, his disciple, also believes that such immutable and certain concepts like the reliability of geometry and deductive logic are infallible truth, good enough to serve as the pillars of the castle of knowledge. This in essence is Aristotle's contribution to the development of foundationalism.

In the medieval period, epistemology returned to the super-natural explanation. To the medieval philosophers who were firstly theologians the standard, the basic truth, the ultimate foundation of knowledge is God. This concept of God according to them is self-evident. With the presence of God and the direction of the divine illumination knowledge becomes infallible.

The excesses of the medieval dogmatists produced the skepticism and caution of the Renaissance and the modern period. Because of the need for the basic foundation of knowledge to be strengthened, to be able to face the challenges of the inquisitive age, philosophers of the

modern age gave serious attention to the need to establish knowledge on a rational foundation. Both Rene Descartes and Francis Bacon championed this new urge.³⁴ Descartes particularly felt that knowledge should be modelled after mathematical axioms since they are immutable and self-evidently true:

Descartes was impressed by the results achieved in his days by mathematics in general and geometry in particular. If the axiomatic method employed, in geometry - the method of deriving theorems by strict deductive means from intuitively obvious axioms in the light of carefully laid down definitions of terms could be successful in geometry, why not elsewhere?³⁵

During the modern period, epistemologists were divided into two camps with reason and sense experience as the two foundations of knowledge. All knowledge, according to John Locke, comes from the senses; since the mind at birth was a tabula-rasa.³⁶ Both Berkley and Hume followed Locke's empirical foundationalism. According to David Hume, any claim to knowledge must be traced to an impression which is the ultimate source of knowledge. He expressed his foundationalist position thus:

If I ask you why you believe any particular matter of fact ... you

34. Ibid., p. 7

35. D.E. Hamlyn, Op. Cit., p. 25

36. John Locke, Essay Concerning Human Understanding BK. II. Chap. 1, Sec., 1A C. Frasers editions (London: Oxford Press, 1970), p. 15.

must tell some reason, ... But as you cannot proceed after this manner in infinitum, you must at least terminate in some fact; fact which is present to your memory or senses... 37

Spinoza and Leibniz were followers of Descartes' foundationalism. Knowledge to them must follow the order of mathematical truth. Spinoza felt that knowledge should follow logical reasoning. He said:

For genuine or certain knowledge is by definition a set of sequence of ideas each one follows logically from its predecessors. 38

According to Leibniz, knowledge should be innate. The ultimate and basic knowledge is the innate ideas. The reason, according to him is because of the clear and distinct nature of such knowledge. Leibniz and Spinoza, like Descartes, believe that:

What is true for mathematical knowledge holds for all our ultimate knowledge which may likewise be derived deductively from first principles of purely rational origin. Therefore unlike proper conditions our ultimate knowledge can attain the degree of certainty found in the propositions of Euclid. 39

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37. David Hume, An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding BK. II. Chap. 1, Sec., 1A C. Frasers editions (London: Oxford Press, 1970), p. 15.
38. Quoted by G. Parkinson in Spinoza's Theory of Knowledge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954) . p. 35.
39. H. Meads, Types and Problems of Philosophy, (New York: Rhinehart and Wilson Inc., 1971) p. 184.

Foundationalism also appeared in virtually all epistemological texts even up till the recent times.⁴⁰

People like Wittgenstein, Bertrand Russell, the Logical Positivists and the members of the analytic movement believe in the principle of foundationalism in epistemology.⁴¹

According to Wittgenstein and Russell ideas and beliefs can be justified on the basis of their derivation from ultimate empirical evidence. The logical positivists and the analytic philosophers also subscribe to this view which is simply a neo-empirical foundationalism.

But despite the popularity of foundationalism in the history of philosophy, the fact still remains that none of these philosophers that subscribed to the view has been able to provide a fool-proof argument for the infallibility of the basic knowledge or the foundation of knowledge. "Thus, foundationalism has become a philosophical hydra, difficult to grasp with and seemingly impossible to kill".⁴² The problem of providing the certainty of the basic knowledge has always been a problem for foundationalism. Philosophers have been unable to show how a particular basic knowledge can be so certain as to give justification for other claims.

40. Cf., Nicholas Rescher, The Coherence Theory of Truth, (London: Oxford University Press, 1973)

41. Ibid., p. 51.

42. Laurence Bonjour, Op. Cit., p. 1

To claim to put all epistemic claims on the same foundation is not possible. There is no way we can do it without falling into dogmatism. As Nicholas Rescher put it, the bid to find the basic foundation of knowledge will either result in an infinite regress or we move in a circle.⁴³ He continued:

The only way to terminate the regress is by a dogmatic acceptance somewhere along the line of an ultimate unjustified (and presumably unjustifiable) truth that is used to justify others but is not itself justified. But any such unjustified acceptance is by its very nature arbitrary and irrational. Thus how can there be a secure standard of rational acceptance? How can we secure such a standard of rational acceptance? How can we secure such a standard and then again onwards until ultimately some unjustified standard is irrationally accepted.⁴⁴

The above quotation really summarises the predicament and the problem that permeates foundationalism throughout its history. The theory of foundationalism as an attempt to put all knowledge in a nutshell - is one of the many panicky measures that philosophers resorted to in order to nullify the arguments of skepticism against the possibility of knowledge. The question that comes to mind is this: how did skepticism become so powerful, to the extent of having so great an influence on the history of epistemology? This question shall be answered in the next section where we shall critically examine skepticism as an epistemological methodology.

43. Nicholas Rescher, Op. Cit., p. 58

44. Ibid., p. 58

1.3 Skepticism and the Genesis of Foundationalism

Skepticism etymologically, means inquiry. The word skepticism came out of the word 'skeptikos' which means **an inquirer**. ~~But the word "skepticism" in the present~~ and popular usage connotes a denial or a doubt cast on the existence of something. Skepticism in its original usage meant the act of being critical, not being satisfied with something and thereby inquiring to get the real meaning of the thing in question. A skeptic, therefore, with this usage, is a man with a critical mind who is not easily satisfied with simple explanations and will therefore go further to be critical of it in order to get better explanations. In philosophy skeptics are those people who cast doubt on the possibility of knowing anything.

In epistemology, to come down to the narrower sense of the word, the skeptics are therefore those philosophers who deny the possibility of knowledge. Skepticism in epistemology has been very influential and popular.

Skepticism is a negative trend in epistemology. It challenges the various claims to knowledge and rejects them as being unjustified. There are so many reasons or arguments which the skeptics have brought to challenge epistemic claims. The arguments vary from the unchanging feature of the world, to the unreliability of our sense, and the inability of mortals to comment categorically on the claim to knowledge.

Ralph Mason Blake gave some reasons why a philosopher may become an epistemological skeptic.⁴⁵ According to him

45. R. M. Blake, "A Criticism of Skepticism and Relativism" in The Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 21, No. 10, (May 1924), p. 253.

skepticism may be "a result of an ardent devotion to the truth and of a belief in the great importance of correct view of things".⁴⁶ This particular group of philosophers, Blake said, may feel that truth should be pursued with utmost vigour and error should strictly be avoided. Skepticism, he continued, may on the other hand be the product of indifference.⁴⁷

In the above statement, Ralph Blake identified two types of skepticism. The first may be called "positive-mild-skepticism" and the second "negative and extreme skepticism". By the former, Blake meant the tendency to keep calm and be meticulous towards any knowledge claim. Whereas, by the latter, he meant a sort of pessimistic and negative way of approaching knowledge. We quite agree with the former view that positive skepticism becomes very necessary to epistemology in particular and to any intellectual pursuit in general.

Skepticism, in the positive sense of the word, saves us from naive realism, which is the common sense acceptance of epistemic claims without asking questions. This type of skepticism is therefore a virtue rather than a vice. It is this type of skepticism that has been acting as the dynamic force in epistemology.⁴⁸ The extreme

46. Ibid., p. 253

47. Ibid., p. 253

48. R.H. Popkin, "Skepticism" in The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 7 (New York, The Macmillan Company and the Free Press, 1967), p. 499.

and the negative skeptics are those philosophers who tenaciously and dogmatically believe that knowledge cannot be attained at all. They argue that since our senses are deceitful and unreliable, objective knowledge can never be got. This type of skepticism runs through the history of epistemology.

Skepticism we noted began with the Sophists. The revolution they embarked upon in philosophy, that is, bringing the attention of philosophers from nature to man produced this skepticism. Protagoras and his fellow skeptics asserted that knowledge is not objective and immutable but rather subjective and relative. Protagoras' homó-mensura theory and Geogias' assertion to the effect that knowledge is impossible or at best if it is possible it is relative, marks the beginning of skepticism as an epistemological methodology. But even Permanides and Heraclitus are said to have earlier reflected some skeptical ideas in their philosophies. Heraclitus' metaphysical theory of change "was taken as indicating human inability to discover any fixed immutable truth about reality."⁴⁹ Also Permanides outrightly denied the reliability of sense knowledge. Xenophanes also denied the existence of any criterion of true knowledge and maintained that man could not distinguish truth from error.

Ironically, it was the "academy", a school founded by Plato, the most committed apostle of objective and immutable knowledge, that really formalised skepticism as a philosophical method in the ancient period. The members of the school revolted against the proprietor,

49. Ibid., p. 449

Plato, after his death. They went further to reinterpret the Socratic dictum. "All that I know is that I know nothing" and gave it a skeptical meaning.

Phyrrho of Elis was another great name in the history of skepticism. In fact the name, Phyrrho, is at present being used interchangeably with the word skepticism. Phyrrho's skepticism was a denial of what he calls the dogmatic skepticism of the "academy". A good skeptic should, according to him, not even be dogmatically attached to the thesis that knowledge is impossible but rather he should reserve judgement over all issues. Phyrrho's philosophy came to us through his famous disciple Sextus Empiricus; the latter was to the former what Plato was to Socrates. According to Phyrrho, academic skepticism misses the point for asserting that:

1. Knowledge is impossible
2. Some beliefs are more probable than others
3. A strong inclination can accompany some of our more probable beliefs.
4. Probability should be a guide to living.

To Phyrrho, a good skeptic should be more of an open-minded inquirer than a dogmatic doubter. Skepticism, he felt, should be a mean between Platonism and the Skepticism of his disciples.⁵⁰ The goal of any skepticism is to attain what he calls the stage of ataraxia, that is unperturbedness. The goal of this skepticism is not only theoretical knowledge

50. R.H. Popkin, "Skepticism" in Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 7, p. 450.

or denial of it but rather happiness and peace of mind.

... unlike academic skepticism, which came to a negative dogmatic conclusion from its doubts. Pyrrhonian skepticism made no such assertion. It is merely saying that skepticism is a purge that dominates everything including itself. The Pyrrhonist then lives dogmatically following his natural inclinations, the appearances he is aware of and the laws and customs of his society, without ever committing himself to any judgement about them.⁵¹

Sextus Empiricus is without doubt the megaphone of the Pyrrhonian skepticism:

Sextus appears to have been the direct or indirect source of many ... arguments, concepts and theories. It is only in the work of Sextus that a full presentation of the position of the Pyrrhonian skeptic appears with all of their dialectical weapons employed against so many philosophical theories.⁵²

The famous ten tropes of Sextus shall continue to be a store-house from which skeptics will borrow arguments to be used in the condemnation of any claim to knowledge.⁵³

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51. R.H. Popkin, History of Skepticism from Erasmus to Descartes (Assen, Van Gorcum, 1969), p. XI.
 52. Craig B. Bush, Montaigne and Bayle; Variations on the Theme of Skepticism (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), p. 18.
 53. From the time that Sextus Empiricus condified the skeptical arguments to form what he called the "ten tropes" philosophers have been going to Sextus to borrow his timeless arguments for their objective of refuting the various claims to knowledge. Up till the present moment Skeptics still rely on Sextus Empiricus.

During the medieval period, skepticism became an instrument with which Christian philosophers attacked reason. The christians "repudiated rationalism and philosophy in order to exhibit the virtue of faith in God and his revelation."⁵⁴ They saw their inspiration in Paul's statement in the first Corinthians 1: 19 - 29 which says:

For it is written, I will destroy
the wisdom of the wise, and will
bring to nothing the understanding
of the prudent. Where is the wise?
where is the scribe? where is the
disputer of this world? Hath not God
made foolish the wisdom of this world?⁵⁵

Christian skeptics of the medieval period also accepted the Augustinian interpretation of the fall of man as an explanation for the uselessness of reason without faith. Some of the extreme Christian skeptics came to the point of condemning the search for knowledge. Agrippa for example, describes intellectual pursuit as useless and immoral. Knowledge, he maintained "was the source of Adam's trouble and will only cause us grief if we pursue it" ⁵⁶

Skepticism took a new turn in the Renaissance and became a weapon of attack against Christian dogmatism of the medieval period. The various discoveries and inventions of this age gave birth to a new negative way of looking at the idea of God. The Renaissance is without doubt a period of skepticism, in reaction to Christian dogmatism. Nevertheless some renaissance thinkers were able to reconcile their skeptical stand with Christian doctrines. An example is

54. C. B. Bush, Op. Cit., p. 18

55. I Corinthians 1: 19 - 20.

56. Quoted by R.H. Popkin, History of Skepticism, Op. Cit., p. 23.

Montaigne who argued that only faith and revelation rather than reason and logic can give us knowledge. Charron was also another renaissance skeptic who argued for "the help of God" as the best bet in our search for knowledge. With his embryonic form of the cartesian systematic doubt,⁵⁷ Charron argued against the reliability of sense knowledge and our reasoning as the foundation of knowledge.

By far the most consistent and famous skeptic of all ages is David Hume (1711 - 1776) the last of the British empirical trios. His philosophy is a hybrid of the philosophies of his two predecessors Locke and Berkley and the philosophy of the French rationalist Descartes. His skepticism is rather a conclusion of the British empiricism that began with Bacon. Hume drew skeptical conclusions from the empiricism of his predecessors. Hume, in his skeptical journey, doubted the existence of all ideas not derived from sense impressions, from the existence of God to metaphysical assertions. To him, skepticism is not Phyrhonian suspension of judgement on all things - since this will lead to madness - but rather an outright rejection of all meaningless and senseless things. His skepticism is therefore a typical example of what we call extreme skepticism.

In recent times skepticism is also present in the philosophy of the existentialists, particularly the works of

57. R.H. Popkin, Charron and Descartes: "The Fruits of Systematic Doubt" Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 21, No. 10 (May 1924), p. 832.

58. R.H. Popkin, "Scepticism" in Encyclopedia of Philosophy, p. 450.

of Soren Kierkegaard: who "brilliantly combined themes from Sextus, Hume ... to attack the rationalism of the Hegelians".⁵⁸ The ideas of Nietzsche, particularly his assertion that: "truth is nothing but errors that human-beings cannot do without" is a clear manifestation of skepticism. The work of George Santayana Skepticism and the Animal Faith is one of the most popular skeptical treatises in this century.

From the brief history of skepticism above it can be seen that skepticism "has been a major dynamic force in intellectual history".⁵⁹ Skepticism has been the propelling force in epistemology throughout its history. It has turned itself into an enforcer of law and order in epistemology. Skepticism in every age prevents epistemology from going astray. It is the gateway to epistemology or the "customs officer" in epistemology. It prevents "illegal goods" or even "legal goods" without "duties" from entering the territory of knowledge. Skepticism "has functioned as gladly to dogmatic philosophy and has served as a challenge to keep it honest".⁶⁰

According to Ralph M. Blake: "Skepticism is a protean doctrine capable of appearing in a surprising multitude of different forms." In the light of the multifarious forms of skepticism, Professor Ruch also identified four epistemological views that can be called skepticism in the history of philosophy.⁶² The four views are what he called (1) Indifferentism (2) Probabilism (3) Phenomenalism

59. Ibid., p. 449

60. Ibid., p. 449

61. R. M. Blake., Op. Cit., p. 254

62. E.A. Ruch, Ways of Knowing and Thinking (Lesotho: National University of Lesotho, 1977), p. 64.

(4) Empiricism. But he contended "that only the first two above mentioned trends are strictly skeptical."⁶³ he nevertheless went further to say that the last two, "If logically pursued will lead to some skeptical positions ..."⁶⁴

By Indifferentism, Ruch meant the heroic form of skepticism as most clearly expressed in Phyrrho's position.⁶⁵ It simply demands us to be indifferent and not commit ourselves to any judgement. By "Probabilism" he meant the philosophy of the new academy which enjoins us to live our individual life with the view that knowledge may probably exist. This view seeks to be a mean between the two extremes of indifferentism and the absolute denial of the old academy.⁶⁶ The two extremes, "probabilism" felt will make life unbearable.

The third trend identified by Professor Ruch which is Phenomenalism is a sort of solipsistic and subjective way of looking at knowledge.⁶⁷ This particular view was held by Bishop Berkeley. The last trend is "empiricism". This according to Ruch is the logical consequence Sextus drew from phenomenalism and which Hume and Auguste Comte also derived from Cartesian phenomenalism.⁶⁸ But without doubt the four identified trends are still mild and moderate skepticism.

63. Ibid., p. 65

64. Ibid., p. 65

65. Ibid., p. 65

66. Ibid., p. 64

67. Ibid., p. 64

68. Ibid., p. 64

There is still in epistemology an extreme and absolute skepticism which is best represented by the old academy. This stand outrightly rejects the possibility of knowledge whether subjective or objective whether for practical or philosophical reason. This extreme skepticism is responsible for the epistemological quest for the foundation of knowledge. But the truth is that there is no way by which the foundationalists can convince the extreme skeptics since they are fanatics who already have their minds made up. What we seek to do now is to show that extreme skepticism can never challenge epistemology since it is an untenable stand. We believe that epistemologists should stop their search for the foundation of knowledge in order to please the skeptics. Our stand, in other words, is that:

... One can neither theologise nor philosophise without some scepticism and on the other hand too much scepticism undermines all the authority and destroys all the work of reason whether it be within the field of philosophy or even of the positive sciences.⁶⁹

It is on the basis of this stand that we shall go now to show the fallacies of extreme skepticism.

Extreme skepticism, wholesale and universal, is not only untenable but a bundle of contradictions. Skeptical arguments of the extreme stand are full of fallacies and inconsistencies. Moderate skepticism is a virtue, a state of mind, that should be cultivated. But to say that any kind of knowledge is impossible is to deny the foundation of

69. George T. Ladd, "Rationalism and Empiricism" in Mind Vol. 1 22 (1913) p. 1.

the world, shake the basis of rationality and erode the root of all things. It is a stand that cannot be defined. To seek to do so is to seek to defend the indefensible.

Skepticism, in its long history has received a lot of criticisms. By far the most popular argument against skepticism is the self-contradictory argument. This objection simply asserts that the skeptical stand to the effect that "there is no knowledge" is self-contradictory since the awareness of the universal ignorance which that stand exposes is itself knowledge.

But this dialectical refutation of the sceptics view may perhaps after-all be too short and an easy way. It has about it an air of hocus pocus and logical hair splitting which does not wholly inspire confidence. This argument is trivial, naive and too simple. It is just too weak to confront the sporadic arguments supplied by the sceptics throughout the ages.⁷⁰

Apart from the above another popular argument against extreme skepticism is the polar argument or the argument from the parasitic nature of the extreme skeptical stand. According to the argument, some words like "knowledge" and "ignorance", "truth" and "opinion", "negative" and "positive", "possible and impossible" are polar words or twin words.

70. R.M. Blake, Op. Cit., p. 255.

Words like "knowledge" for example needs its opposite "ignorance" to exist.

To seek to use one and deny the other is an obvious contradiction. What we are saying was well explained by D.W. Hamlyn in his book The Theory of Knowledge. He said:

"The ... argument turns on the fact that certain terms or concepts come in pairs such that a given pair is somehow essentially contrasted with the other; indeed, by way of this contrast. These pairs are polar in this way ... It is sufficient to say here that inclaiming that a pair of concepts is polar, it is maintained not only that there is an exclusion between instances of the concepts but also that one of the concepts can be understood only if the other is understood also.⁷¹

This particular argument has been consistently used by Gilbert Ryle.⁷² His argument in ~~effect~~^{effect}, takes the form of analogies to drive home the same point.⁷³ The most famous of the analogies of Ryle is that of the counterfeit coin. Ryle argues that the fact that we know that a counterfeit coin exists implies our knowledge of the original coin, since the knowledge of the former implies the knowledge of the latter.

The polar argument also gave birth to the parasitic argument. By the parasitic argument, critics of extreme skepticism say that since ignorance is a parasitic word, since "impossibility of knowledge" is a parasitic expression, then the original words such as "knowledge" or "possibility of

71. D.W. Hamlyn, Op. Cit., pp. 16 - 17.

72. Cf. Gilbert Ryle Dillemmas, Cambridge University Press, 1954.

73. D.W. Hamlyn, Op. Cit., p. 17

knowledge" must exist. This argument is saying - to use the analogy of Gilbert Ryle - that the knowledge of an original coin precedes the knowledge of the counterfeit coin and that the knowledge of the counterfeit coin is parasitic on the knowledge of the original coin.⁷⁴

Against skepticism, this argument simply says that the skeptical thesis to the effect that "there is no knowledge" is untenable and contradictory. The thesis is a parasitic one that relies on an original thesis; that is, "there is knowledge". To say that there is no knowledge, you must first of all know what knowledge is because this will be a standard for your rejection of knowledge. And having seen this knowledge it becomes contradictory to turn round to say that there is no knowledge. Knowledge exists if there are errors. Doubt implies the existence of something. It is only a person who knows "what knowledge is" that can deny something as not being knowledge. For knowledge to have existed once at all makes nonsense of the stand of extreme skepticism.

Extreme skepticism can also be objected to on the ground that it has caught itself in its own trap. To say that none of our beliefs is infallible is to set a standard which the skeptics too can never reach. This stand therefore negates their very thesis. The skeptic says that there is no belief of ours that cannot be challenged. If the skeptics are saying this, we shall agree with them. But the skeptics must also agree that the view of his - to the effect that our

74. G. Ryle, Op. Cit., pp. 83ff.

belief can be challenged - can also be challenged too.⁷⁵

If he says otherwise, then his view-point is a baseless prejudice:

And he certainly will not be likely to hold that, there are any grounds for his theory which render it infallible. For in the first place this would surely be a very curious brand of skepticism, and in the second place, even though it be a theoretically possible view, no one has ever actually had the temerity to set forth any actual argument for which it was claimed that they rendered such a belief infallibly correct.⁷⁶

Blake continued:

And if there are no grounds which serve to render the belief in his own theory infallibly correct, there is no reason why any higher standard should be required of other beliefs. It seems hardly fair to hold that the belief in the impossibility of knowledge is adequately grounded even if the evidence for it does not make the belief infallibly certain and at the same time to hold that no other belief is adequately grounded unless it meets this higher standard.⁷⁷

The skeptical claim that all knowledge is infallible is an extreme and sweeping stand that has disastrous effect for everything including skepticism itself. When the Skeptic says that there is no knowledge that is infallible, he has set a standard far too high for anything to attain. Skepticism must also necessarily attain this standard or else its own stand becomes untenable. The failure of the skeptic to attain the higher standard makes him guilty of the offence he is accusing others of.

75. R.M. Blake, Op. Cit., p. 257.

76. Ibid., p. 257

77. Ibid., p. 257

There are other series of arguments that attract our attention, not only for their truth, but also because they are consistent with the stand of this thesis. The thesis is a departure from the extreme stand of foundationalism and extreme skepticism. Our position is that skepticism that is the wholesale type is untenable. It is therefore an absurd reaction on the part of epistemology to seek to answer it by providing an ultimate justification of all epistemic claims. Knowledge we belief is not absolute. It is the belief of the foundationalists that knowledge should always be justified by an ultimate foundation. We seek to support a new theory of knowledge which shall terminate both foundationalism and wholesale skepticism. This new theory was well expressed by John Russell.⁷⁸

John Russell argued for a new and radical theory of knowledge and truth since according to him the source of doubt is the traditional conception of truth and knowledge.⁷⁹ To him, traditional epistemology has always been searching for "truth" and "knowledge" that is absolute final, immutable and objective truth. To search for this is to search for the blood of the stone. It will get us nothing but frustrations and disappointments. John Russell therefore attempted to solve the problem. He proposes:

Now the only salvation from this condition lies in a fundamental, a radical change in your meaning of truth and knowledge. You must be truly converted from this error in your conception of truth, you must be born

78. Cf. John Russell, "Pragmatism as the Salvation from Philosophic Doubt" Journal of Philosophy, Vol. IV, No.3 (January 1907) pp.

79. Ibid., p. 57.

again; if you would enter the
kingdom of secure truth and of
a peace which doubt cannot destroy.⁸⁰

Russell therefore went on to argue for a new pragmatic conception of truth and contended that truth has only meaning within experience and can never transcend it. Truth, he felt, is not wholesale and complete in a glass container to be apprehended but rather it is a concept that has meaning only within a specific experience. The same applies to knowledge. The two are fundamentally an affair of experience.⁸¹ Knowledge, he felt is not a pre-planned arrangement that can be fully comprehended by man but rather "an awareness or consciousness of the experience, of its want, its discord, its intention, its pointing beyond itself."⁸² Knowledge is a piece-meal and tentative affair and not an immutable and apodictic concept that philosophers thought it to be. With this radical and realistic definition of truth and knowledge, skepticism automatically becomes dead:

Accepting this new meaning of truth
your doubt can no longer exist, it
belongs to the old standpoint, to the
old things that pass away when you
become a new man in respect of your
fundamental thought. Let truth,
once mean for you what I have declared
it to mean. And are you not saved
from doubt with a complete and
permanent salvation?⁸³

Extreme skepticism becomes extinguished with the water of this radical epistemology. Universal skepticism is an

80. Ibid., p. 58

81. Ibid., p. 59

82. Ibid., p. 59

83. Ibid., p. 59

extreme step, it is the product of the over ambitious philosophers who seek to attain absolute, immutable and indubitable knowledge. Traditional conception of truth and knowledge is fully responsible for wholesale skepticism and foundationalism. Skepticism's bid to show the dogmatic philosophers that the latter have not attained their set objective gave birth to universal skepticism. The skeptics in a strong reaction against the dogmatists asserted that to have attained objective knowledge is impossible. Both the dogmatic philosophers who say we can know all, and the skeptics who say we cannot know at all are taking extreme stands. And as Aristotle rightly said virtue lies between extremes.

The dogmatists and the destructive sceptic were both wrong, the former for insisting that we can and must have knowledge of reality, the latter for insisting that everything is in doubt. Between the two views lies a new outlook, constructive skepticism.⁸⁴

Our stand here is that skepticism in the mild sense of it is necessary for the pursuit of knowledge even though absolute and immutable knowledge, the type that the traditional philosophers are searching for, is unattainable. This stand will be expounded further in chapter five. But despite the futility of this foundationalist attempt, the history of epistemology has been dominated by this search and this as we have said was influenced by the arguments of the extreme skeptics. By far, the most committed philosopher

84. R.H. Popkin, in History of Skepticism, p. 143

to the quest for the foundation of knowledge was Descartes and he was also rigorously committed to answering the charges of the skeptics. In the next section of this chapter, we shall seek to examine his foundationalism.

1.4 Cartesian Cogito As the Foundation of Knowledge

For three reasons we shall seek to examine the epistemological foundationalism of Rene Descartes the father of modern philosophy in this section. The first reason is that Descartes is the greatest foundationalist of all times. He is the philosopher that shows the utmost commitment and consistency to the problem of foundation of knowledge. Ayer agreed with our observation and said; "the attempt to put knowledge on a foundation which would be impregnable to doubt is historically associated with the philosophy of Descartes".⁸⁵ D.W. Hamlyn also shares our opinion on this when he said:

It has been thought necessary to discover the truths that are indubitable and to show that the rest of what we suppose to be knowledge is based on or derived from these indubitable truths. Perhaps the most explicit instance of a belief in this procedure is the philosophy of Descartes.⁸⁶

'The second reason why we seek to examine Descartes' foundationalism is because of his commitment to answer the charges levelled against knowledge by skepticism:

Descartes was the first of all men save Augustine to try to meet the sceptical challenge by realising the full force of the attack ... He saw that only by taking them seriously enough could one see the extent of their onslaught and the means of combating them. Only by seeing that the

85. A. J. Ayer, Op. Cit., p. 2

86. D. W. Hamlyn, Theory of Knowledge, p. 35.

consistent application of their method led not to their desired end of equipollence but to certainty could the challenge be answered.⁸⁷

The third reason for the examination of Cartesian foundationalism can be seen in the great influence and inspiration that Cartesianism has on Edmund Husserl, whose epistemological foundationalism this thesis is out to examine.

The reason why Rene Descartes plunged headlong into the search for the foundation of knowledge lies in the fact that he came to philosophy at a time when philosophy, and in fact human knowledge was in crisis. Descartes was the major philosopher that came after the Renaissance and the Reformation. The period gave birth to series of doubts and denial of knowledge. The skepticism of the period was borne out of the emergence and development of science into a more precise enterprise.

The reformation, the scientific revolution and the onslaught of skepticism had crumbled the old foundations that used to support the entire framework of man's intellectual achievement. A new age required a new basis to justify and guarantee what it had discovered. Descartes, in the tradition of the greatest medieval minds, sought to provide this basis by securing the superstructure, man's natural knowledge to the strongest possible foundation. The all powerful eternal God. The skeptical crisis was to be overcome by a new methodology serving an old purpose. Theological mechanism what has turned out to be clay, or even quick sand.⁸⁸

Having come to philosophy at a time of crisis and

87. R.H. Popkin, "Charron and Descartes" The Fruits of Systematic Doubt, p. 2.

88. R. H. Popkin, History of Scepticism, p. 180.

conflict between the dogmatism of the previous age and the extreme skepticism of the new age - Descartes had first of all the duty to reconcile the two combatants before he could settle down to any meaningful work in philosophy. Descartes, though he had his sympathy for the medieval period, appeared to be supporting the renaissance skeptics, whereas his goal was to establish a better foundation of knowledge. Thus Popkin comments:

Although the traditional interpretation of Descartes saw him as the scientific enemy of scholasticism and orthodoxy fighting to find a new era of intellectual freedom and adventure; this is gradually giving way to a more conservative interpretation of Descartes as a man who tried to reinstate the medieval outlook in the face of Renaissance novelty and a thinker who sought to discover a philosophy adequate for the Christian world view in the light of scientific revolution of the 17th century.⁸⁹

But despite the loyalty of Descartes to scholasticism, he never forgot that the foundation of indubitable knowledge is the purest gold that should be sought with the care and the meticulousness of the gold miner. Descartes never forgot the Platonic spirit of searching for immutable knowledge. He sought to establish a secure and solid foundation of knowledge. He felt that this is a road to all other successes in philosophy. To attain this foundation is very important since it leads to happiness and satisfaction. To have it is like having a minting machine when all sufferings become a thing of the past.

89. Ibid., p. 175.

Descartes' commitment to the search for the foundation of certainty was the result of his personal experiences. Being a child of the Renaissance, a successful scientist and a geometrician of distinction; and having seen exactitude in mathematics, precision in geometry and certainty in science, he wanted the same for philosophy. he came to philosophy and found it wanting, he met it in disarray and disorder.⁹⁰ Because of the disorderliness and uncertainty that permeated philosophy, Descartes argued that the skeptics had a point in claiming that knowledge is impossible. To him knowledge cannot exist in an atmosphere of controversy, disorder and uncertainty. Descartes felt that in reality the skeptics had uprooted the weak foundation of knowledge because of the controversial nature of philosophy. He held philosophers responsible for the predicament that befell philosophy.

Descartes, in the light of this, saw himself as a messiah. He saw himself as a reconstructor of the destroyed building. He felt that the building would have to be fully destroyed from the top to the foundation level, to give way to a new and solid foundation. The materials for the new edifice, he felt should be obtained from the sceptics - since it was they who were complaining about

90. This particular experience later reflected in the philosophy of Edmund Husserl of the 20th century. He like Descartes, was a mathematician and like Descartes, he wanted to put philosophy on a mathematical foundation. We shall examine this clearly later on in this thesis.

the weakness and inferiority of the earlier edifice. What we are saying by the above metaphor is that Descartes wanted to accept the weapon of the skeptics and fight them with it. Descartes in other words used the doubting method of the sceptics to get to the solid foundation he was really searching for.

The method of doubt is not original to Descartes, it had been used by Augustine and Charron.⁹¹ But the genius of Descartes lies in the clear presentation of the skeptical arguments for its intended objective. His doubt was not a negative denial but rather a positive denial for the sake of affirmation. As he himself said:

Not that indeed I imitated the skeptics who only doubt for the sake of doubting and pretend to be always uncertain for on the contrary, my design was only to provide myself with good ground for assurance and to reject the quicksand and mud in order to find the rock or clay.⁹²

His intention was the opposite of that of the skeptics. He wished to throw away all the apples - to use his own metaphor - in a basket of many rotten ones in order to pick the good ones. The principle of this methodic doubt would be based on mathematics. As in mathematics only clear and distinct ideas would be accepted. He would analyse all problems and

91. Charron used it for a theological reason rather than for a philosophical reason which Descartes used it for.

92. Rene Descartes, Discourse on Method in Philosophical Writings, ed and translated by Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Thomas Geach (London, Thomas Nelson and Sons Limited, 1970), p. 28.

start from the simple and certain ones to the more complex ones, and at the end of the day cross-check and see whether he had not missed anything.⁹³ Descartes sought to continue his methodic doubt borrowing a leaf from the methods of mathematics. He said it clearly in his Discourse on Method:

I especially delighted in mathematics because of the certainty and self evidence of its reasoning. But I did not yet discern its real use; thinking that it only subserved the mechanical arts. I was surprised that on such firm and solid foundations nothing more exalted had been built.⁹⁴

He also talked of the reliance of the methodic doubt on the mathematics paradigm when he said:

Those long claims of perfectly simple and easy reasonings by means of which geometers are accustomed to carry out their most difficult demonstrations had led me to a fancy that every thing that falls under knowledge forms a similar sequence.⁹⁵

Descartes commenced his methodic doubt by dismissing anything that did not have the attribute of clearness and distinctness. He went on doubting more than the skeptics. He "seeks to show that the levels of dubiety far surpasses the simple and mild ones hitherto introduced by the sceptics."⁹⁶

93. Descartes, Op. Cit., pp. 20 - 21.

94. Ibid., p. 11.

95. Ibid., p. 21.

96. R.H. Popkin, History of Skepticism, Op. Cit., p. 181

By making his test so severe changing ordinary sceptical doubt into complete negation, Descartes thereby set the stage for the unique and overwhelming force of the cogito. So that by no act of will is one able to resist recognizing its certitude. Only by forcing oneself to doubt and negate to the greatest degree possible can one appreciate the indubitable character of the cogito.⁹⁷

Descartes wanted skepticism to use its last card. He wanted it to bring out its most deadly arguments against the possibility of knowledge, so that those arguments could be quickly neutralized. Descartes took up the arguments of the skeptics of old, particularly the ten tropes of Sextus in debunking the criterion of knowledge. He rejected the senses as a source of knowledge on the basis of the fact that "a wise man never entirely trusts those who once cheated him"⁹⁸. He brought up the "dreaming argument" to debunk further claims to knowledge. Finally he introduced the "evil genius" argument to nail the coffin of knowledge.⁹⁹ The "evil genius" argument or the

... demon hypothesis is much more effective in revealing the uncertainty of all that we think we know. This possibility discloses the full force of

scepticism in the most striking fashion and unveils a basis for doubting, apparently never dreamed of before. If perchance there is a "malin-genie" who

97. Ibid., p. 181

98. Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, p. 29 .

99. The Demon Hypothesis has never been used before this time by any skeptic, the view is original to Descartes.

is capable of distorting either the information that we possess or the faculties that we have for evaluating it, what then can we be sure of? Any criterion, any test of the reliability of what we know is open to question because either the standard or the appreciation of it may be demonically infected.¹⁰⁰

Descartes' methodic doubt is a voyage into the depth of complete skepticism. But his hope lies in the fact that the journey shall terminate in a promised land of happiness. His own skepticism was not like that of the Pyrrhonists. It was not a wind blowing toward nothing but rather a road to the foundation of indubitable knowledge. His goal was to clear the way for the hidden treasure, the clear and distinct truth which will be strong enough to be the foundation of all knowledge. He felt he found it finally in the course of his doubting:

But I have convinced myself that nothing in the world exists - no sky, no earth, no minds, no bodies. So am not I likewise non-existent. But if I did convince myself of anything, I must have existed. But there is some deceiver, supremely powerful, supremely intelligent, who purposely always deceives me? If he deceives me, then again I undoubtedly exist; let him deceive me as much as he may, he will never bring it about that at the time of thinking that I am something, I am nothing. Thus I have now weighed all considerations enough and more than enough and must at length conclude that this proposition "I am" I exist whenever I utter it or conceive it in my mind is necessarily true.¹⁰¹

100. R.H. Popkin, History of Scepticism, p. 67

101. Rene Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, Op. Cit., p. 67.

This is the certainty which Descartes had so much laboured for. He has turned a negative method for a positive attainment of the indubitable:

The negative method as well as the method of doubt occurs to some extent, though not with the same driving force, in the mental elimination process proposed by some of the "nouveau Pyrrhonians". But as Descartes saw, perhaps the most crucial difference between the procedure of the skeptics and that of Descartes lies in the purpose for which the method is employed and the results that are to be achieved by its use. The sceptics according to Descartes, doubt out of perversity ... and gain so little from this method of philosophizing, that they have been in error all their lives and have not been able to get free of doubts ... 102

Descartes got the doubt from the skeptics and used it for the betterment of philosophy. He used it as a method of negating opinions and prejudices so that truth would shine forth.¹⁰³ The unique truth is the indubitability of the "I" or the cogito. Descartes felt he had seen the truth in the cogito and the truth would set him free from the bondage of skepticism. But whether he has really seen the "gold" or not we do not know at this stage. Perhaps Descartes has seen a piece of glass and has mistaken it for diamond.

Descartes felt that skepticism had been caught in its own trap. He felt that it had committed suicide, a victim of its own weapon. The extreme skepticism which he resorted to, would open the road to the cogito which is a

102. R.H. Popkin, History of Skepticism, p. 186.

103. Ibid., p. 186.

denial of the stand of the skeptics. The cogito according to him, is the foundation of the new castle of knowledge which would replace the demolished one.

Descartes had in fact said it all; the foundation, standard, or criterion of all knowledge is the cogito. Other epistemic claims can be justified in the light of their derivation from or consistency with the cogito. But was Descartes successful in his objective of making the cogito the foundation of knowledge? His failures and limitations have been well exposed by his contemporaries and his successors. Let us examine some of them now.

The history of philosophy has not witnessed any concept that has received so many criticisms and objections as the cogito " of Descartes. From the time Descartes dropped his pen and put his ambition of attaining the foundation of knowledge into rest to the present moment, many books and articles have been written and many will be written to show the limitations of Descartes' epistemological foundationalism. May be because of the confidence and hope with which Descartes launched his programme or because of its arrogant claim to have attained the hitherto sought - for foundation of knowledge, his contemporaries and even his successors are never tired of pointing out how many fallacies exist in Descartes' argument.

Philosophers, therefore have decided to turn the cartesian triumph into Pyrrhonism.¹⁰⁴ To his critics there is an implicit contradiction in his Meditations. The first Meditation contradicts the second Meditation

104. Ibid., p. 213

according to them. They felt that:

At every turn, the sceptical dragon, that he was supposed to have slain, would rise up and attack him ... Descartes' opponents tried to reduce the father of modern philosophy to a man who at best had only the knowledge and the experience of the cogito. But what this meant or why it was true or what else was true he would never find out. Every road he took to or from the cogito heads directly to complete Pyrrhonism.¹⁰⁵

The predicament of Descartes was that he was an enemy of both the skeptics and the dogmatists. He was not able to answer the charges of the skeptics against the claims to knowledge and the limited certainty that knowledge has been relying on has been eroded by his skeptical arguments. As a contemporary of Descartes in the person of Boudin put it, Descartes' new method disfigures the old formula while it grows pale at a new danger.¹⁰⁶ Boudin felt that Descartes' method might be good in keeping us from error, but it was also bad in keeping us from knowledge. Cartesianism therefore amounts to embracing uncertainty at the expense of certainty. It amounts to cutting the child's nose in order to prevent him from having cattarh.¹⁰⁷

It has been said that:

The evidence presented by Descartes is highly suspicious; it consists of pointing out what happens occasionally or how sick and mad people behave, if we are not really sure of these very doubts, why give up the tried and true path to run headlong into a total pyrrhonism from which nothing certain can follow.¹⁰⁸

105. Ibid., p. 213

106. Quoted by R. Popkin, Ibid., p. 200

107. Quoted by R. Popkin, Ibid., p. 318

108. Ibid., pp. 318 - 319.

According to critics Descartes has taken more than his mouth could chew. His criterion of clearness and distinctness for the justification of truth and epistemic claims is far too high. His cogito can never reach this objective if he is to be sincere with himself. At the end of the day, Cartesianism will be caught in the trap it sets for skepticism. Cartesianism, as some people pointed out, if we examine it deeply, is semi-skepticism. This observation is even an understatement. It could be said that cartesianism is naked skepticism and Pyrrhonism at its peak. Descartes carried skepticism rather too far and at the end destroyed the little hope for the attainment of objective knowledge.

Another objection that has been consistently raised against Cartesian cogito is the argument to the effect that the search for the immutable, objective and apodictic knowledge set forth by Descartes was abandoned by him hence subjectivistic and solipsistic knowledge was embraced. This particular criticism was first brought forward by a contemporary of Descartes in the person of Pierre Gassendi.¹⁰⁹ Descartes himself realised the effectiveness of this argument and described it as the "objection of objections". Gassendi argued with the skeptics that the cogito is nothing but subjectivism and solipsism. The clearness and distinctness of cogito, it is said is a figment of the imagination of Descartes.

Without doubt, Descartes had taken his doubt rather too far. His doubt has really undermined the search for knowledge

109. Ibid., p. 191.

and has put paid to the ambition of any quest for an indubitable foundation of knowledge. Descartes had taken the skeptical knife far too close into the neck of knowledge. The purpose of doubt which should clear the impediments to the quest for knowledge was not realised; since the doubting method went out of its way to destroy a lot of things. Descartes never made use of the doubting method in a correct way.

The doubt should not be raised just once and employed as a universal purge to eliminate all opinions and beliefs but should be raised correctively as a daily dosage to be taken in small quantities for the health of the mind as a quest and benign remedy which protects one from poorly biased opinions. But doubts should not be employed a la Descartes as a poison that destroys even the first principle of reasoning.¹¹⁰

C.S. Pierce also enjoins us to avoid this type of doubt, for it destroys virtually everything. He said:

... A person may, it is true in the course of studies, find reason to doubt what he began by believing; but in that case he doubts because he has a positive reason for it; and not on account of Cartesian maxim.¹¹¹

What we are saying in essence is that Cartesian doubt can never reach any positive affirmation at all. As David Hume rightly pointed out if the doubt of Descartes is ever possible to be attained by any human creature, it would be incurable.

110. Ibid., p. 191

111. Quoted by W. Gallie, in Pierce and Pragmatism (New York, Dover Publications, 1966), p. 75.

And "no reasoning could ever bring us to a state of assurance and conviction upon any subject".¹¹² Descartes' cogito, as some have said, should not be taken seriously since it is nothing but the product of hypothetical statements that can never become practicable.¹¹³ It is just like Anselm's ontological argument, a product of the human thought which can never become an issue in practical life.¹¹⁴

Descartes foundationalism has also been criticised as being involved in a vicious circle. The famous cogito of his relies for its justification on the existence of God. As Antoine Arnauld pointed out Descartes was caught in the vicious circle of moving from the cogito to the idea of God. Apart from the objection of circularity, the fact that Descartes resorted to theology in defence of his epistemological foundationalism makes him to be opposed by many philosophers. To abandon logic and consistent argument in philosophy and embrace theology and dogmatism is to complicate issues since God's existence is itself a controversial issue in philosophy.

C.S. Pierce, the American pragmatist, advanced another criticism basically meant to debunk the premise of Descartes to the effect that epistemology can be put in a nutshell following the paradigm of geometry.¹¹⁵ Pierce realized

112. David Hume, Op. Cit., p. 214

113. Cf. Richard H. Popkin, History of Scepticism, pp. 208-209

114. Gaunilon had earlier on attacked the ontological argument of Anselm's as nothing but an idea that only exist in the mind but cannot exist outside the mind.

115. W.H. Gallie, Op. Cit., p. 112

how Descartes' experience as a geometrician influenced his assertion that epistemology should borrow a leaf from geometry. But this geometrical feature traceable to Euclid had, according to Pierce, been abandoned by modern mathematician. He said:

Modern mathematicians, however would reject this claim. They would maintain that whenever a subject matter admits of demonstrative and deductive presentation, there are a variety of ways in which this can be done. In other words, the theorems found deduced in any one system can, as a rule, be deduced from anyone of a different sets of axioms and the only reasons for preferring one of these axioms to another are those of convenience and pedagogic efficiency. The general importance of this however is perhaps most clearly seen in the case of the physical science whose truths are quite obviously gained in piece-meal fashion and therefore always subject to subsequent corrections but are nevertheless in the end presented for instance (in most text-books) in deductive or semi deductive form.¹¹⁶

Pierce is saying, in essence, that events have proved the deductive method of geometry that Descartes so much held in high esteem wrong as a paradigm for epistemology. To Pierce, this deductive paradigm can never work or be applicable to the realm of epistemology. He went further to criticize Descartes:

Descartes wrongly assumes that to achieve knowledge of any given subject-matter, we must commence from some piece of direct, indubitable knowledge

¹¹⁶ ibid., p. 77

largely because of this he has greatly exaggerated the part which deduction from first premises plays in any branch of knowledge; and finally he has misconceived the characteristic function or service of deduction itself. These errors are particularly insidious in the case of philosophy which is concerned with wide and in the main vaguely expressed issues - the very last issues to admit of knockdown demonstrative solution.¹¹⁷

Without doubt, Rene Descartes, like his predecessors and like other epistemological foundationalist, failed to show that the cogito is self evidently true to serve as the basis or the pivot of all other epistemic claims. Descartes has even been accused of eroding the foundation of knowledge. The failure of Descartes in making the cogito a formidable foundation of knowledge should have put an end to the ambition of philosophers to seek the basic epistemic claim. But far from this, the successors of Descartes also attempted to salvage foundationalism. One very important name in this respect is Edmund Husserl. Husserl's belief, for instance, that the transcendental ego is the foundation of knowledge is an amended version of Cartesian foundationalism. Just as Descartes was one of the most consistent foundationalists of his age, so can Husserl's foundationalism be regarded as one of the most consistent attempts at foundationalism in our age.

1.5 Summary

This chapter went on to show the problem of foundation and explicate the theory of foundationalism as an offshoot of the problem. We argued that foundationalism is a perennial theory and that the theory originated out of the challenges of the skeptics against the possibility of knowledge.

117. Ibid., p. 79

We have shown that wholesale skepticism which generated foundationalism is an untenable stand. The untenability of wholesale skepticism implies the natural search for an ultimate foundation of knowledge.

We argued on the importance of Descartes' foundationalism. We contended that despite his rigorous arguments Descartes still failed to provide an adequate ultimate foundation. The reason we said is because such a foundation is not possible of attainment in reality.

The failure of Descartes in particular and the failure of all epistemologists throughout all ages to attain the ultimate position of justification for all epistemic claims is a salient warning that Husserl's foundationalism is moribund. This fact shall be explicitly presented in later chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL MOVEMENT

Pure phenomenology which we are here seeking the way, whose unique position in regard to all other sciences, we wish to make clear and to set forth as the most fundamental region of philosophy, is essentially new science, which in virtue of its own governing peculiarity lies far removed from our ordinary thinking, and has not until our own day therefore shown an impulse to develop. It calls itself a science of 'phenomena'*

Edmund Husserl

2.0 Introduction

The name Edmund Husserl, is presently associated with the phenomenological movement, the movement that he founded and developed in the first half of this century. The totality of Husserl's philosophy can only be understood within the background of the phenomenological programme. Husserl's academic life reflected his commitment to the development of phenomenology. It is in the light of this that any meaningful critique of his philosophy must firstly examine the phenomenological movement¹. It is necessary for any just critique of Husserl's phenomenology to commence with an examination of the history of the phenomenological

*E. Husserl, Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology, Translated by W.R. Boyce Gibson (London: Allan and Unwin Ltd., (1969), p. 41.

1. It is also necessary to devote a chapter of this thesis to the phenomenological movement because of the unpopularity of the movement in the English Speaking World.

movement. For as Quentin Lauer rightly said "no work of Husserl can be understood unless the whole of his work is understood, at least on its broad outlines...."² Phenomenology is to Husserl an epistemological exercise.³

Accordingly, the first order of business for the Husserlian phenomenologist is to locate those cognitions that are first in themselves and can support the whole storied edifice of universal knowledge, with a view to constructing on their basis science governed by the idea of a definitive system of knowledge.⁴

Husserl's position to the effect that the transcendental subject is the ultimate foundation of all knowledge, (which we have called epistemological foundationalism), is the primary goal of his phenomenological programme.

This chapter therefore will be devoted to an examination of phenomenology as a method, as well as a philosophical movement. The aim of this is to see the orientation and the background behind the Husserlian foundation. We shall again see whether there is anything peculiar in this phenomenological background that makes Husserl's epistemology immune from the various objections to foundationalism in general.

2.1 What is Phenomenology?

Jared S. Moore in an article titled "Is this Phenomenology?"⁵ published in 1945, barely some few years after the

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2. Quentin Lauer, in Introduction to Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy (New York: Harper and Row, 1965) p. 56.
 3. Richard Schacht "Husserlian and Heideggerian" Phenomenology Studies, Vol. 23, 1972, p. 295.
 4. Ibid., p. 295
 5. Jared S. Moore "Is this Phenomenology?" in Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol. vi, 1945 - 1946, p. 78.

final development of phenomenology by Husserl, made the following comments:

Phenomenology is undoubtedly one of the most important philosophical movements of our day, but it is also one of the most elusive. It is elusive not only as to many of its details but even as to its general purport. What is phenomenology? What is it trying to do, and what does it make no pretense of doing? These questions as well as such more common place cry for answer, and in no place that I have discovered is a clear answer to be found.⁶

These comments of Moore are as relevant today as they were when he made them. This section of the chapter therefore will seek to supply answers to those pressing questions raised by Moore. It will study the ~~tends~~ of phenomenology, the ideas of the members of the phenomenological movement and also seek to understand phenomenology both as a method of philosophy and as a philosophical tendency.

But first it should be pointed out that phenomenology should not be considered as a school of thought in philosophy. Far from being a school, phenomenology is rather a movement or a tendency.⁷ Some people have even gone to the extent of saying that phenomenology "does not represent any special technique or intricate methodology"⁸. The above is not true, although the phenomenological movement in its history has presented itself as a combination of many divergent

6. Ibid., p. 78

7. M. Faber "The Phenomenological Tendency" in Journal of Philosophy, Vol. LIX No. 15 August, 1962.

8. John Wild "On the Nature and Aims of Phenomenology" in Philosophy and Phenomenological Research Vol. VI 1945 - 1946, p. 85.

views although it can be said that there are as many phenomenologies as there are phenomenologists, however there are some common features that unite them. It is these common features of phenomenology that we seek to examine here.

The phenomenological movement is a twentieth century development in philosophy. It is a movement that was developed in Germany in the first half of this century by Edmund Husserl who up till now still remains the dominant figure of the movement. The movement, despite the conflicts of interests and disparity of purpose that exist among its members, aims at making philosophy a descriptive exercise. Phenomenology as a movement asserts that the descriptive approach is the best approach to any act of philosophizing. The unifying slogan of the phenomenological movement is the dictum "to the things themselves". What this means is that the things themselves, that is the phenomena of thought, are the most qualified entities within which to seek their characteristics. In philosophy, therefore, the phenomenologists feel that we should approach the phenomena in their pure state and allow them to reveal themselves. The objects of philosophy, that is the 'Zachen', should be given full hearing.

Phenomenology therefore is the scientific study of the phenomena, the scientific understanding of the objects of experience, the descriptive interpretation of objects of consciousness in their pure states. As a philosophical method of enquiry, it

... demands that as much as possible our inquiry in the search of knowledge and the

true nature of reality be carried out without prejudice or the influence of preconceptions. All these must be set aside. Everything previously known or normally presumed about the object of inquiry must be placed between phenomenological brackets, so that the object may be analysed as pure phenomenon.⁹

The phenomenological movement as we said earlier, is not an association of philosophers with the same belief or purpose, but rather phenomenology "has served as a tool for extremely divergent enterprises."¹⁰ The members of the movement are in open confrontation on the nature and goal of the phenomenological enterprise. It has been said that each successive phenomenologist produces a divergent meaning for the term phenomenology. Perhaps it is in the light of this that Merleau-Ponty, a phenomenologist, once remarked that phenomenology "for so long remained at an initial stage as a problem to be solved and as a hope to be realized."¹¹ But this notwithstanding, there is still a pressing need for answers to the questions raised earlier, on the nature and goal of phenomenology for, as Spiegelberg says, "there is a

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9. Joseph Omoregbe, Jean Paul Sartre's Conception of Human Freedom, Ph.D Thesis, 1975 p. 2.
 10. H. Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement, Vol. II (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff 1976).
 11. Maurice Merleau Ponty, The Phenomenology of Perception Translated by Coline Smith, (New York: The Humanities Press, 1962), p. viii.

need for a concise statement of the main ingredients of a concrete phenomenology"¹².

2.1.1 Scope and Focus of Phenomenology

The term "phenomenology" to Edmund Husserl and the members of the phenomenological movement connotes a study (or methodology for the study) of the objects of consciousness in a descriptive manner. Etymologically, phenomenology means the logos of phenomenon, that is, the study of phenomenon in its pure state. But in the hands of Husserl and his disciples, phenomenology means the descriptive study of the objects of pure consciousness as they really are without our own preconceptions interfering in our interpretation of them.

The term "phenomenology" was not introduced in the vocabulary of philosophy by Edmund Husserl, rather the term has been used by many modern philosophers, even before the advent of the phenomenological movement. "Phenomenology" as a philosophical notion has been used in as many widely varying senses as the term phenomena itself.¹³ J.H. Lambert, the British Philosopher of the eighteenth century first used the term 'phenomenology' to denote his aspect of Epistemology which demarcates the region of truth from the region of illusion or error.¹⁴

12. H. Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement, Vol. II Op. Cit., P.

13. Richard Schemitt, "Phenomenology" in Encyclopedia of Philosophy Vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan and the Free Press, 1967), p. 135.

14. H. Spiegelberg "Phenomenology" in Encyclopedia Britanica, Vol. 17, (Chicago: Benton Publisher, 1968), p. 810.

To Lambert, phenomenology is the theory of illusion. After Lambert, Sir William Hamilton also made use of the word 'phenomenology' in his book Lectures on Metaphysics (1858) when he referred to it as a purely descriptive study of all that is before the mind¹⁵. Apart from these two British philosophers, the term phenomenology was also used by philosophers like Herder, Kant and Fichte. But the man who really popularised the term in the modern period is Friedrich Hegel when he titled his famous book, Phenomenology of the Spirit.¹⁶ But the truth is that Hegel did not give any serious attention to a clarification of the term "phenomenology" as used in the title of that work, Hegel only conceived phenomenology as "the science in which we come to know mind as it is in itself through the study of the ways in which it appears."¹⁷ Although Hegel, like Edmund Husserl, saw phenomenology as a rigorous science, nevertheless what the two called "phenomenology" are not the same.¹⁸

... Husserl's whole enterprise seemed to be so antithetical to Hegel's that philosophers were initially interested

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15. R. Schmitt "Phenomenology" in Encyclopedia of Philosophy Vol. 7, p. 135
 16. Cf. F. Hegel, Phenomenology of the Spirit, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).
 17. R. Schmitt, "Phenomenology" in Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 7 p. 135.
 18. Some French Phenomenologists like Sartre, Paul Ricoeur and others have been trying to show that Hegel is a great predecessor of the phenomenological movement. Although we agree that Husserl was influenced by Hegel in his conception of phenomenology yet the influence is not as much as these French Phenomenologists will want us to see it.

in either one or the other, if either
but not in both.¹⁹

Even in recent times the term "phenomenology" is still in use by philosophers who are outside the circle of the phenomenological movement, especially the members of the analytic movement and the pragmatists. C.S. Pierce the famous American philosopher conceived "phenomenology" as the descriptive study of all that is observed to be real and also of whatever is before the mind. William James another pragmatist like Pierce also made use of the term in his philosophical treatise. Teilhard de Chardin a contemporary French philosopher adopted the term phenomenology for his own use to indicate his programme of studying man scientifically.²⁰

A prominent user of the word "phenomenology" in recent times is J.L. Austin, a member of the analytic movement. Austin calls his philosophical programme "Linguistic Phenomenology". The way he carried out this programme reflects a lot of similarities with the methodology of the members of the phenomenological movement.

But "there is no evidence that Austin even seriously read a page of Husserl. Whatever he may have meant by linguistic phenomenology, there is no reason to see it as a reference to any influence of Husserl".²¹

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19. Walter Kaufmann "Hegels Conception of Phenomenology" in Phenomenology and Philosophical Understanding, ed by Edo Pivcevic, (Bristol: Cambridge University Press, 1975). P. 212.
 20. H. Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement, Vol. 1, p. 137.
 21. Anthony Marser "Austin's Linguistic Phenomenology" in Phenomenology and Philosophical Understanding,

Coincidentally, or due to some indirect influence, Austin's phenomenological programme shows some similarities of purpose with that of Husserl.

Both wanted to get rid of the prejudices which philosophers have inherited, to start philosophy afresh as is shown by Husserl's slogan 'Back to the things themselves' which I think Austin would have been willing to reach. Both thought of philosophy as an enterprise which should become cooperative.²²

In the light of this, phenomenology is a word that is comparable to a prostitute, it is available to all men at all times. This without doubt is creating a lot of problems for an understanding of the tenets of the phenomenological movement. Added to this is the fact that phenomenology has been used ambiguously by members of the phenomenological movement.

It has become the name of a way of doing philosophy by using the phenomenological method. For the phenomenologist who regards their method as the only correct way of proceeding in philosophy, phenomenology therefore is the best and perhaps the only legitimate way of philosophizing today. For other philosophers phenomenology is one school of movement in philosophy today.²³

Apart from these two common uses of the word, phenomenology has also been used in other ways to connote other things. This vague and ambiguous nature of the term phenomenology has led to a loose employment of the term, to the embarrassment of

22. Ibid. p. 139

23. R. Schmitt, Op. Cit., p. 135

the members of the phenomenological movement. It has led to a distortion of the objective and purpose of the phenomenological movement. The phenomenology of the members of this movement has been misconceived. Erroneously,

Phenomenology is taken as a kind of introspectional psychology, as a subjectivism, as a kind of phenomenism, as a mysticism whose central concern is a dark realm of essences, as an intuitionism of a Bergsonian Order, as an antiscientific doctrine or as a philosophy that denies the reality of the world by bracketing out existence.²⁴

The ambiguous nature of the word "phenomenology" is not *the only* reason for the misunderstanding of the purpose of the phenomenological movement. The members of the movement are also responsible for the confusion that permeates their philosophical stand point. The members are in open disagreement over what phenomenology is, and over what should be the scope and focus of phenomenology. It is in the light of this that writers always talk of the phenomenology of Husserl or the phenomenology of Scheler, instead of referring to a universal phenomenology. What Husserl conceived "phenomenology" to be is different from what either Scheler or Heidegger conceived it to be.

Whereas Husserl conceived phenomenology to be the descriptive study of the phenomena after purging ourselves of predilections in an act of judgement, Scheler conceived it

24. Maurice Natanson, Literature Philosophy and the Social Sciences, Essays in Existentialism and Phenomenology, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962), p. 5.

to be an act of "intuiting values objectively in a more or less instinctive fashion".²⁵

In the light of all these disagreements over what phenomenology is, how then can we know the scope and focus of the phenomenological movement? In an attempt to answer this question Peter Heath opines

Considering the variety of phenomenologies which have thus issued directly or indirectly from Husserl's inspiration. It is not easy to find a common denomination for such a movement beyond its common source.²⁶

What Spiegelberg seems to be saying here is that for us to have an appropriate definition and focus of phenomenology, we should turn to Edmund Husserl who is the ultimate source of phenomenology. Although this may not give a comprehensive focus of the phenomenological movement, nevertheless it is adequate for our present purpose.

Apart from Edmund Husserl, one phenomenologist that seems to be the synthesis of all phenomenological ideals is Merleau-Ponty. In his book The Phenomenology of Perception, he gave a definition of phenomenology that is comprehensive enough for our understanding of the scope and focus of phenomenology. The definition goes thus:

Phenomenology is the study of essences. It is a transcendental philosophy which places in abeyance the assertions arising out of the natural attitude, it is also a philosophy for which the world is always "already there" before reflection begins - as an inalienable presence and all its efforts are concentrated upon reaching a direct and primitive contact with the world and ending that contact with a philosophical

26. H. Spiegelberg, 'Phenomenology' in Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 17, p. 211.

status. It is the search for a philosophy which shall be a rigorous science. It tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is without taking account of its psychological origin.²⁷

In the half a century history of the phenomenological movement, no definition has ever attempted to capture the goal and aspirations of phenomenology as this definition of Merleau-Ponty. It is the only definition of phenomenology that has succeeded in synthesising the disparing goals of the many phenomenologists. This definition has confirmed that phenomenology is a philosophical standpoint that seeks to describe the data of experience and extract the essential qualities of things from the given data without bringing into focus any priori predilections. The goal of this exercise is to achieve a presuppositionless philosophizing. This, without doubt, is the only common feature of the phenomenological movement. Perhaps, it is in the light of this that Edo Pivčević said:

The disconcerting fact is that philosophers who regard themselves as phenomenologists often radically differ in their handling of key philosophical issues, what unites them is their acceptance of the general principle that in philosophy priority should be given to an analysis of experiences from the point of view of those who have the experiences or are able to have them.²⁸

27. Maurice-Merleau-Ponty op. cit., p. viii.

28. Edo Pivčević, Introduction to Phenomenology and Philosophical Understanding

Phenomenology as seen from the above description is the philosophical standpoint that gives respect and priority to the data of experience. As a movement phenomenology grew out of the descriptive psychology of Frantz Brentano.²⁹ From Brentano, phenomenology inherited the act of describing phenomena as they come to us. It is also from Brentano that the phenomenologists got the idea of intentionality of consciousness.³⁰ The idea of intentionality is the umbilical cord that ties all phenomenologists together. No phenomenologist can claim to be oblivious of this theory, for it is the foundation of any reasonable phenomenological exercise.

According to Brentano, the central operating principle of consciousness is intentionality. This theory says that all consciousness has some intentions in the world outside. Consciousness, Brentano says, is purposeful, every consciousness is always consciousness of something. This theory of consciousness was adopted by Edmund Husserl after a thorough amendment - as the starting point of phenomenology.

29. Frantz Brentano (1838-1917) is the Austrian descriptive psychologist who introduced Edmund Husserl to philosophy. He was a philosopher - psychologist and had a tremendous influence on the philosophy of Edmund Husserl. Some writers even regarded him as the father of phenomenology. The influence of Brentano on Phenomenology shall be discussed in great detail in the next section of this chapter.

30. The idea of intentionality of consciousness was not introduced to philosophy by Frantz Brentano, it was rather introduced by the ancient philosophers but the theory was made popular by the scholastics and it was from them that Brentano got the theory having rigorously, studied the philosophy of the Scholastics when he was a candidate for the priesthood in a seminary.

The theory of intentionality of consciousness in phenomenology is the mode of linking man with the objective world. With the certainty of the mind, got from Cartesianism, the certainty of the world outside becomes imperative.

With intentionality phenomenology accepts that the world outside is really there on its own without the mind creating it.³¹ Intentionality is the key to phenomenology.³² Having got the external world through intentionality, phenomenology then seeks to study the world by a return to the originality of immediate experience without our previous preconceptions.

In retrospect, phenomenology is a revolt against the attempt to approach philosophy from the standpoint of "Crystallized beliefs and theories handed down by a tradition which only too often perpetuates preconceptions and prejudices".³³ It is the attempt to eliminate those theories and embrace unadulterated phenomena.³⁴ But this demands a lot of efforts in order for us to remove the effect of the habitual patterns of thought and thereby gain entry into a new dimension "of the pristine innocence of first seeing".³⁵ Phenomenology therefore enjoins us to turn toward phenomena which had been blocked from sight by the theoretical patterns in front of us.³⁶

31. Colm Wilson Introduction to New Existentialism, (London: Hutchinson and Co. Publishers, 1966), p. 40.

32. Ibid., pp. 39 - 40.

33. H. Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement, Vol.1

34. Ibid., p. 656

35. Ibid., p. 656

36. Ibid., p. 658

Apart from all these, phenomenology like other contemporary philosophical movements that is, Existentialism and the Analytic Movement seeks to make man the centre of philosophy. Phenomenology like these other movements is a revolt against the Hegelian subjugation of man to the wishes and caprices of the whole. Phenomenology is humanism just as existentialism is humanism. Perhaps it is in the light of this that Walter Biemel defines phenomenology as:

... the instrument through which humanity attains absolute self reflection the actualizing of the authentic ideal of humanity's self reflection, phenomenology recognizes itself in the service of the striving which becomes free through the unveiling which is directed to the idea - which lies in infinity of a human which truly and thoroughly would exist and live in truth and genuineness.³⁷

Phenomenology according to Sartre has plunged man back into the world, it has "given full measure to man's agonies and sufferings and also to his rebellions."³⁸

It is appropriate at this juncture to say that the scope of phenomenology is wide and that it has its focus on many things. It cannot be said that phenomenology has been

37. Walter Biemel "Husserl's Encyclopedia Britannica Article and Heidegger's remarks thereon" in Husserl: Exposition and Appraisals, edited by Frederick A. Elliston and Peter Macormik (Notredame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), p. 229.

38. Jean Paul Sartre, Transcendence of the Ego (New York: Noon Day Press, 1957). p. 105

able to achieve most of its objectives. But the truth is that phenomenology, in ~~the~~ half a century history of its existence, has been able to entrench itself as an attitude and a philosophical method of studying phenomena. As a methodology and as an attitude its objective is to allow the phenomenon to reveal itself. What then do the phenomenologists mean by this term phenomenon? This is what will be examined now.

2.1.2 The Notion of Phenomenon

The word "phenomenon" "is a technical philosophical term which different philosophers have used in different senses".³⁹ The word has a Greek origin. It means that which reveals itself in the act of seeing. Phenomenon in the Greek usage refers to any object or occurrence perceived or observed.

In the history of philosophy, the term "phenomenon" has been used vaguely and ambiguously. Philosophers mostly refer to it as the object of study, whereas scientists see it as the observed entity that they seek to explain. In the modern usage of the word according to H. H. Price Phenomenon connotes that which is immediately apprehended by the senses before any judgement takes place⁴⁰. Generally speaking and in the ordinary man's view, phenomenon is that which is outside there. It is the object in nature. Coming down to

39. R. Schmitt "Phenomenology" in Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 7, p. 139.

40. H. Price "Phenomenalism" in Encyclopedia Britanica, Vol. 7 p. 812.

philosophy, the term becomes vaguely defined and its meaning becomes elusive. Phenomenon means different things to different philosophers.

The term 'phenomenon' apart from being constantly changing from one philosopher to another, also changes from one epoch to another. In ancient Greece, it connotes the apparent nature of an entity in contradistinction to the real nature of that entity. Phenomenon then is the appearance which is a mere reflection of reality. This conception of phenomenon was abandoned later on for a different view brought into philosophy by the British Empiricists - phenomenologists.

The Phenomenologists of the modern period conceived phenomenon as the immediately apprehended data of experience, which connotes the raw and the crude facts that we derive from objects in the process of perception. Whereas the earlier Greek philosophers treated it as a metaphysical term, modern philosophers take it to be an epistemological notion. It was Immanuel Kant who brought the concept from the realm of epistemology back to the realm of metaphysics where it was in the time of the Greeks. The phenomena to Immanuel Kant are the appearances, as objects produced by the unity of the categories.⁴¹

Kant viewed phenomenon as the articulated system of

41. Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, Translated by T.A. Abbot, 6th ed (London: Longmans, 1909), p. 249

appearances unified by the categories in the form of an object. This conception of phenomenon is the basis of the Kantian dichotomy of the phenomena and the noumena. To Kant, the phenomena are the objects or events as they appear in our experiences whereas the noumena are the objects or events as they are in themselves independent of the forms imposed on them by our cognitive faculties.⁴²

The above Kantian conception of phenomenon is a synthesis of the Greek and modern philosophers' conception. It is without doubt by far the most popular view of the concept in the twentieth century. But ironically it is this that the phenomenologists, particularly Edmund Husserl, seek to oppose.

Edmund Husserl's conception of phenomenon is nearer to that of the British phenomenologists than to the Kantian view.

For Husserl, the phenomenon is not the Kantian appearance which points back necessarily to a noumenal reality.⁴³

Walter Biemel stressed the need to avoid this confusion of the Kantian notion of phenomenon with that of Husserl, when he said:

The Husserlian notion of phenomenon should not be in any way confused with that of Kant. For Husserl there is no opposition. In the phenomenon that which is and that which an entity appears comes to light.⁴⁴

42. H. Spiegelberg "Phenomenology" in Encyclopedia of Philosophy, p. 135.

43. Maurice Natanson op. cit., p. 10

44. Walter Biemel, op. cit., p. 229

In light of the controversial and ambiguous nature of the term "Phenomenon" in the history of philosophy, Martin Heidegger distinguishes between what he calls the vulgar use of the term "phenomenon" and the phenomenological use of the term.⁴⁵ By the vulgar use he meant the Kantian notion of phenomenal entities as object of empirical intuition.

But phenomena in the phenomenological sense are not entities or existents of any sort. They are not object like, they cannot be perceived, inspected or studied in the manner of objects. They have to do with the "how" rather than with the "what" of objects. They are not "neutral" and detached description. They have to do with modes of existing; they relate not to entities qua entities but to being. They reveal the manner in which we are; the mode of our own being; they make themselves through moods.⁴⁶

But we should also point out at this juncture that this heideggerian view of phenomenon is not unanimously accepted by all phenomenologists. To Heidegger as we saw earlier, "being" is the only phenomenon. But phenomenon is more than this to other phenomenologists. To most phenomenologists, the phenomenon is the totality of all things that present themselves to consciousness. The phenomena comprise all the objects of experience, i.e. all the objects of consciousness. They comprise of the "Zachen",

45. Quoted by A. Quinton "The Concept of Phenomenon" in Edo Pivčević, Phenomenology and Philosophical Understanding, p. x

46. Ibid., p. x

the "things" in its totality, that made the world. Phenomena, to most phenomenologists are the unity of Kantian phenomena and his noumena. They connote the appearances with the reality embedded in them.

The phenomenologists do not take phenomena as just the objects of sense perception, but rather they view them as the totality of all that exist. They include things such as other men, animals, plants to inanimate entities like love, sorrow, hunger, values, life and so forth. In fact to the phenomenologists, the mental phenomena are more acceptable as phenomena than even the physical ones.

Phenomenology therefore as the descriptive study of phenomena has as its objects of study the totality of objects and events that exist. But because phenomenology has very often been confused with phenomenism, another view that has phenomenon as its point of focus⁴⁷.

An attempt will be made below to examine the differences.

2.1.3 Phenomenology Not Phenomenism

One common misinterpretation of the phenomenological movement that is a threat to the future of its development is the belief that phenomenology is synonymous with phenomenism. This particular misinterpretation or confusion is prevalent in the English speaking world.

The first reason for the confusion of phenomenology is the communication gap that exists due to the disparity in language and orientation between the phenomenologists

47. According to Spiegelberg, some libraries in America are still confusing the two terms. Books on the two are according to him being shelved together. See H Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement, Vol. 1 op. cit., p. 443.

and the philosophers of the English speaking world.

The second reason for the confusion lies in the fact that phenomenalism as a philosophical theory has always been popular with the English speaking philosophers. British philosophers such as Berkely, Hume, Mills etc. were phenomenologists. Besides, the similarity of the two words also adds to this confusion. But the truth is that phenomenology is not phenomenalism. Phenomenology is, in fact, opposed to phenomenalism. Whereas the latter is a philosophical method the former is an epistemological theory. Whereas phenomenology as a method is applicable to all the branches of philosophy, phenomenalism is only an epistemological enterprise.

Phenomenalism is a theory of perception. It believes that material things are nothing but sense data that are produced by our senses. To them, all things outside are appearances created by our senses.⁴⁸ This view is a conclusion arrived at from the extreme empiricism of David Hume, Berkley and in recent time A. J. Ayer. To phenomenalism, material objects are nothing but sense data. This theory leads logically to skepticism. It is precisely this skepticism which phenomenology seeks to dismantle.

Phenomenology is therefore completely antiphenomenalism. Although phenomenologists, particularly Husserl, claim to be empiricists just like the phenomenologists, yet, as Husserl rightly pointed out, his own empiricism differs from

48. H. H. Price "Phenomenalism" in Encyclopdia Britannica Vol. 17 p. 812.

that of the phenomenologists. His, is a "radical empiricism". It is what the phenomenologists assert, that the phenomenologists reject. Whereas the former believe that material objects are created by the senses, the latter believe that the material objects are out there on their own, independent of our senses. Phenomenalism again can be said to be a sort of solipsism while phenomenology through its theory of intentionality seeks to refute solipsism. To the phenomenologists the subjective mind implies the external world, the consciousness of the subjective mind implies the independent existence of objective entities.

Although phenomenalism and phenomenology may appear to be working on the same notion - phenomenon - the truth however is that phenomenology is more serious and rigorous than phenomenalism. As John Wild rightly says of Phenomenology:

Its aim is to achieve an accurate description of the pre-analytic given phenomena. Whatever they may turn out to be, and to avoid all systematic and a priori distortion since however these phenomena are originally given as a changing material continuum in which the intelligible elements are mixed with one another in many accidental ways, Phenomenology must not be confused with mere phenomenalism which sets for itself the really hopeless task of transcribing the infinitely variable succession of appearances.⁴⁹

49. John Wild "On the Nature and Aims of Phenomenology"
Op. Cit., p. 285

Whereas phenomena to the phenomenologists are devoid of essences, to the phenomenologists, phenomena reveal their essences. Phenomenology is therefore a product of the mental sciences, particularly psychology. Whereas phenomenism is the product of the physical sciences.

It is clear from all we have said above that phenomenology is quite different from phenomenism.

2.1.4 Phenomenology as a Philosophical Method

Phenomenology as conceived by Edmund Husserl in the beginning is a philosophical method, that is, a method with which any serious philosophy can be pursued.⁵⁰ The fact that what is meant to be a method eventually developed into a philosophical movement is a testimony to the great admiration that philosophers had for this method. This is why phenomenologists sought to apply the phenomenological method to their various fields of inquiry.⁵¹ The fact that this methodology established by Husserl was eventually reworked by his disciples did nothing to change its initial status.

Phenomenology is a method, in fact it is a little more than another name for science, an attempt at the most rigorous form of science. Different scientists have different claims, different fields to which they apply the scientific method, so it is with phenomenology.⁵²

Phenomenology is a method specifically meant to rid

50. Kenneth Hamilton "Husserl's Contribution to Philosophy" in Journal of Philosophy Vol. 36, No. 9, April 1939, p. 226.

51. Colin Wilson, Op. Cit., p. 62

52. Ibid, p. 62.

philosophy of all its previous problems.⁵³ According to Husserl Philosophy should and ought to make use of the methodology of phenomenology to be able to regain its position as the basis of all other disciplines. Husserl's work was dominated by the ambition to formulate the methodology.

Over and over again he reworks the same problems, and for most part they are problems of method. Only with the method established could the pursuit of any problem result in the kind of absolute knowledge which he regarded as essential to philosophy. Again, he pleads for restoration of philosophy to its proper dignity as we shall find him doing in his latest writings - always with the assumption that only the phenomenological method can achieve this restoration. No matter what changes and developments one may seem to find in Husserl's thought in the course of his long career, the idea remains always the same and the method for attaining this ideal though more and more refined, is still basically the same phenomenological method.⁵⁴

The metamorphosis that the phenomenological method underwent in the hands of Husserl and his disciples was intentional. From the onset, Husserl wanted this method to be applied to all areas of philosophy. Husserl himself was convinced that this method was capable of performing this herculian task. Little wonder then that phenomenology

53. Ibid., p. 62

54. A.D. Osborn, "A Philosopher's Philosopher" in Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 36, No. 9, April 1939.

became a method for the study of divergent issues ranging from human beings to psychological phenomena. Husserl believed that the problem of philosophy was the problem of method. The methodologies that had been in existence before the formulation of the phenomenological method were to him ineffective and incapable of getting philosophy to its intended destination.

What then is the new thing in the phenomenological method that is lacking in the other methods of philosophy? The answer is in the finger tip of Husserl. The problem that dominates philosophy, he felt, arises because other method interpret the facts of experience with their pre-conceptions and prejudices. This, Husserl felt has been the Achilles' heel in philosophy. What makes phenomenology the best philosophical method is the fact that it is a method of describing the facts of experience from a presuppositionless-position.

Phenomenology as a method, Husserl contended, is better than all other methods, because it is conscious of the fact that for any serious work to be done in philosophy, we must transcend our everyday experience or natural attitude⁵⁵ which is full of preconceptions. These preconceptions may hamper our bid to carry out a serious philosophical discourse. Previous philosophical method had not

55. The Notion of the Natural Attitude is an important theory in Husserl's philosophy. This notion shall be explained further in the next chapter.

taken cognisance of these impediments and had been working oblivious of these obstacles. For the avoidance of such problems and those failures, philosophy in general should embrace the phenomenological method for it is the only way to serious and result-oriented philosophising.

The center-piece of the phenomenological method is the "epoche" or reduction⁵⁶ process. It is the process of getting rid of our previous prejudices which hinder our ability to see clearly the phenomena of thought. This process will undo the effect of habitual pattern of thought and will make us "to return to the pristine innocence of first seeing".⁵⁷

The phenomenological method according to Wolfe May, is a call on us to detach ourselves from the categories imposed on us by our everyday natural attitude and explain things on the data and values supplied to us by our immediate experience of things.⁵⁸ This can only be done through the "epoche". The "epoche" "is the necessary condition for all other phenomenological procedures, for it guarantees the freedom of a starting point which refuses to remain within the metaphysical orientation of common sense."⁵⁹ The epoche, as Spiegelberg once commented serves not as a bulldozer for removing everything including the useful things, but rather as

56. The notion of "epoche" is without doubt the most important concept in Husserl's philosophy. Thus concept shall also receive serious attention in the late chapters.

57. H. Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement, Vol. II, p. 659.

58. Wolfe Mays "On Phenomenology as a Methodology of Philosophy" in Linguistic Analysis and Phenomenology (ed) by Wolfe Mays and S.C. Brown, (Lewisburg, Buckwell University Press, 1969), p. 8.

59. Maurice Natanson, Op. Cit., p. 13.

a brush "to remove foreign bodies and to refurbish phenomena without pulling them from their roots".⁶⁰

It is pertinent at this juncture to point out that the phenomenological method described above is not acceptable to all the members of the phenomenological movement. A very good example of this dissention over the phenomenological method is clearly noticeable in the work of Heidegger. Heidegger disagreed with his predecessor, Husserl, on the method for the phenomenological programme. He came out in opposition to the much talked about epochal process. To Heidegger the basic method of phenomenology is the hermeneutic method and not the epochal method. Whereas Husserl talked in terms of "reduction" as the best method of phenomenology, Heidegger talked in terms of "destruction" or "hermeneutic" method.

What does Heidegger mean by this "hermeneutic" method in phenomenology? Simply put it:

... is the method of bringing out the normally hidden purposes of such-goal-determined things in being as human beings.⁶¹

The basic difference between Husserl's epochal method and Heidegger's hermeneutic, lies in the fact that the former is seeking a removal of the original phenomenon by eliminating the irrelevant things, whereas the latter is seeking a removal of the hidden phenomenon out of the

60. H. Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement Vol. II, p. 657.

61. Ibid, p. 324.

garbage of irrelevances. There may appear to be little difference in the two methods, but this difference is made clear by the fact that Heidegger's method is more restricted than the Husserlian method. To Heidegger, the hermeneutic method is only applicable to the study of being alone, whereas Husserl conceived his own method as being adequate for the study of all phenomena. The reason is not far-fetched Heidegger believes tenaciously that the only true phenomenon is "being".⁶²

This disagreement over the phenomenological method notwithstanding, it is still possible to identify some basic characteristics of this method which are prevalent in all phenomenological literature. As Spiegelberg observed in his book "The Phenomenological Movement"⁶³, the methodology consists of seven steps, which are firstly the act of investigating the phenomena. By this first step the phenomenologist will carry out a careful study of the phenomenon in question with the aim of seeing it for what it is. The second stage of the phenomenological method involves the act of investigating the general essences of the phenomenon. The third stage which is basically a continuation of the second stage, involves the apprehension of the essential relationship among essences.⁶⁴

62. Heidegger made use of this hermeneutic method in the study of being in great detail in his most popular book Being and Time. (M. Heidegger, Being and Time, Trans by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell 1962).

63. H. Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement, Vol. II, p. 659.

64. Ibid, p. 659.

The fourth stage of the phenomenological method as Spiegelberg said is the stage of passivity where the phenomenologist will stay and watch the modes of the appearing entity. While the fifth stage deals with the watching of the constitution of phenomena in consciousness.

The sixth stage of the phenomenological method is by far the most important; it is the stage of the "epoche". It is the stage when the observer will suspend his previous beliefs in the existence of the phenomena. The last stage is the stage of interpretation. Having fully observed the phenomena without the distorting influence of preconceptions, the observer can now interpret the meaning of the phenomena.

In retrospect, it can be said that the phenomenological method is basically a method of description in contradistinction to the method of prescription and analysis, the method of observing in opposition to the method of ascribing. The phenomenological method involves the act of observation and recording of facts as they are given by experience. It impores the practitioner to see and listen, not to talk and act. It is a method of letting the objects of experience speak while you wait around, recording the speeches and actions. It involves adequate observation and correct description of the objects of experience. The role of the phenomenologist is adequately summarised by Peter Heath as follows:

His role is merely that of an observer, reporter, analyst, taxonomist and so on, his sole business is to provide information. Even if as is at least conceivable, his investigation should reveal norms and values among the essences,

they would strictly be "value facts" in this context and his account of them could likewise be purely descriptive, and not normative in character.⁶⁵

Phenomenology, as we have discussed above, is an attempt at providing an adequate method of philosophising.

2.2 The Genesis of Phenomenology

It is sometimes said that phenomenology was not founded but grew. The seed of phenomenology was sown in the past, and most likely at the beginning of Western philosophy. Perhaps it was the most favourable climate of the early twentieth century and the rigorous work carried out by Husserl and his disciples that popularised the ideals of this movement. There is no single aspect of phenomenology that does not reflect the influence of one philosopher of the past or the other. But it can also be rightly said that phenomenologists only take the aspect of a philosophy that suits them and go on to criticise the aspects that they object to. No philosopher was too great for the phenomenologists to criticise and no idea was too perfect to escape from the critical hammer of the phenomenologists. What we have as phenomenology therefore is a combination, or rather the synthesis of what the phenomenologists regard as good in the philosophy of the past.

The above observation was endorsed by Edmund Husserl, the pioneer of the phenomenological movement, when he said:

Probably no other urge in my constitution is more developed

65. Peter Heath "The Idea of Phenomenological Ethics" in Phenomenology and Philosophical Understanding, p. 161.

than to revere, to follow those whom I love reverently and to take their side with eagerness. But as my nature unfortunately has two sides, there is also in me an indomitable critical sense, unconcerned about my emotional inclinations analyzes coolly and rejects ruthlessly what appears to it untenable. Thus bound by sentiment, free by intellect, I pursue my course with scant happiness. Always inclined to acknowledge the superiority of others and to let them lead me upward, again and again I find myself compelled to part company with them and to seek my own way instead of continuing to build on the foundations laid by others as I would so gladly do, I have built in despair of the strength of their work new foundations of my own.⁶⁶

It is on the basis of this observation that this section will be devoted to a review of the influence of previous philosophers on phenomenological ideas.

2.2.1 The Remote Precursors of Phenomenology

John Wisdom in an article that appeared in the Journal of Philosophy in 1961 titled "On the Nature and Aims of Phenomenology" said this of the phenomenological movement:

We need only to reflect for a moment on the nature of philosophy, as it first came into existence in Greece to realize that there is nothing which ought to seem suprisingly new or original about this conception of the task of philosophy.⁶⁷

66. This is part of a letter written by Edmund Husserl to his teacher and mentor Franz Brentano on the 15th of October, 1904, Quoted by H. Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement, Vol. I, p. 90.

67. J. Wisdom "On the Nature and Aims of Phenomenology" p. 285.

This statement is an attack on the phenomenological movement. This comment under-states the work done by these twentieth century philosophers in turning an ordinary ambition into a reality. Although it is without doubt true that the ancient Greek philosophers had a very great influence on the phenomenological movement, it is an exaggeration to declare that there is nothing new in phenomenology.

William Dilthey, one of the contemporaries of Edmund Husserl, once referred to Husserl as a true Plato.⁶⁸ This observation to a great extent is an affirmation of the great inspiration that Husserl in particular and phenomenology in general drew from platonism.

Even Edmund Husserl himself confirmed this when he referred to Plato as the ideal philosopher.⁶⁹ According to him the golden age of philosophy was when philosophy was in the hands of Plato. Husserl saw himself as an heir to this platonic spirit. He conceived of philosophers after Plato as traitors to the cause of making philosophy a rigorous science. His objective therefore is to bring sanity

68. Cf. Quetin Lauer "Questioning the Phenomenologists" in Journal of Philosophy Vol. 15, No. 21, October 1961, p. 635.

69. Cf. E. Husserl, "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science" in Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy, p. 178.

back to philosophy by bringing it back to its original status, that is, the platonic conception of it.

The meeting point for platonism and phenomenology which Husserl so much stood for lies in the essential goal of the two philosophical systems. Husserl admired Plato's interest for the essences of things in opposition to their existential aspects. He fell in love with the platonic search for the ultimate essence of all things. The platonic attempt of getting universal essences from particular appearances fascinated Husserl, and it is the spirit behind his eidetic science which is the other name for phenomenology. Just as Plato seeks to challenge skepticism and relativism by deriving original nature of things from various particulars and thereby establish objectivity and universal truth, so is Husserl willing to overthrow sophism and subjectivism by his study of essences.

Despite this similarity of purpose between platonism and phenomenology, the two had to part ways. The reason is not far fetched. Whereas Plato regarded the universal essence of things as having separate existence in another world, phenomenology regarded essences as having been revealed by the particulars. The platonic dichotomy of appearance and reality has no place in phenomenology; for with phenomenology, in appearance the reality becomes revealed, in phenomena the noumena become given. It is at this point that the influence of Aristotle on phenomenology becomes manifest.

Another area where Plato influenced Husserl's philosophy is on the rationalistic nature of Husserl's epistemology. Though Husserl claims to be a radical empiricist, he is in reality a rationalist, and his rationalism tends toward Plato's rationalism more than to the seventeenth century. To him, continental rationalism is a mistaken rationalism.⁷⁰

The idealism of Plato also has a lot to do with phenomenological idealism. This particular influence is basically on Husserl's phenomenology and not at all reflected in the ideas of his disciples. Husserl's transcendental idealism is in a way a revival of the platonic idealism. His assertion that the transcendental ego can be objective and perfect shows a lot of influence of the platonic metaphysics on his philosophy. The transcendental ego is in a way a reformulation of Plato's conception of the philosopher king.

According to John Wisdom, phenomenology is a revival of the spirit of classical philosophy - that is, the ancient and medieval philosophy.⁷¹ Phenomenology, he felt, is an attempt at undoing what the modern age did to philosophy. It is an attempt at removing philosophy from mere empty speculation to the act of philosophising basically on the data supplied by our mode of experience. The conception of philosophy held by the classical philosophers was a descriptive one, and it is

70. E. Husserl, "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science" in Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man, p. 179.

71. John Wisdom "On the Nature and Aims of Phenomenology" Op. Cit. p. 85.

to this that phenomenology feels we should return. The spirit of phenomenology therefore should be seen in the light of Ancient and Medieval Philosophy.

The descriptive tendency of classical philosophy was given to phenomenology via Husserl's teacher Franz Brentano. Brentano was a great admirer of Aristotle, particularly his descriptive approach to philosophical issues. Brentano refined and developed this approach into a more grandiose method which was taken up by Husserl and the succeeding phenomenologists. The great influence that medieval philosophy had on phenomenology also came via Brentano who was a great admirer of scholastic philosophy. This is why Brentano is generally regarded as the channel through which the influence of classical philosophy filtered into phenomenology.⁷²

The greatest inspiration that phenomenology derived from the philosophers of the past was from Rene Descartes, despite Husserl's claim to the effect that it seeks "to reject really all the well known doctrinal content of the Cartesian philosophy"⁷³. The truth of the matter is that Descartes' influence on Husserl is not coincidental, rather it is expected, for both had the same background. Husserl shared with Descartes the mathematical-scientific background.

72. The Influence that Brentano's philosophy had on Phenomenology shall be discussed in detail in the next sub-section.

73. E. Husserl Cartesian Meditations, Trans by Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers), p. 1.

He shared with Descartes, the ambition to salvage philosophy from its decadent position and then restore it to its former position. He regarded Descartes' earlier attempt as the perfect road towards the final upliftment of philosophy. Husserl therefore followed these steps taken by Descartes in the seventeenth century; and this became, the starting point of its phenomenology.⁷⁴

Husserl, was a true cartesian in the sense that he felt that a new foundation should be got for philosophy. He emulated Descartes' ambition of making the foundation solid and reliable. On the question of how to get this philosophical foundation, Husserl again went cartesian, for its "phenomenological method" is a refinement of the "methodic doubt" of Descartes. As Peter Kostenbaum said "there is a fundamental kinship between Descartes' method of universal or systematic doubt and Husserl's phenomenological technique"⁷⁵ Husserl fashioned his phenomenological method after the cartesian method though he refined it and made it a more positive method. The two methods have as their goal, the purging or removal of our prejudices from our modes of knowing.

Apart from the great inspiration that cartesianism supplied to phenomenological method, the influence of the former on phenomenology is also felt on the conception of the "ego". Just as the end result of Descartes' methodic doubt was the "ego" or the subject, so was the end result of the

74. Husserl started his philosophy on this cartesian note in his two famous books (1) Paris Lecture, (2) Cartesian Meditation, op. cit.

75. Peter Kostenbaum, Introductory Essay to Edmund Husserl's The Paris Lecture, p. xvi.

phenomenological method, the "ego", that is the transcendental ego. In fact, "to Husserl, the point at which cartesianism anticipated phenomenology most is that at which the subjective being is the first certainty and the final source of all certainties."⁷⁶

Despite the obvious reliance of phenomenology on cartesianism which even Husserl also accepted, some writers believe that Descartes' influence on phenomenology has been grossly exaggerated. Prominent among these writers were James Fulton⁷⁷ and Marvin Faber⁷⁸. According to Fulton, the influence of Descartes on Husserl is not much, because much as Husserl admires Descartes, he was very critical of virtually all his ideas. Fulton opined that the problem of Descartes is different from the problem of Husserl, this implies that they cannot influence each other.⁷⁹ Fulton claims that historical circumstances have made the special object of wonder to change from what it was at the time of Descartes to what it became at the time of Husserl⁸⁰. In the light of this therefore, Fulton felt that phenomenology should not be seen as 20th century cartesianism.⁸¹

76. James S. Fulton, "The Cartesianism of Phenomenology" in Philosophical Review, Vol. 49, No. 3, May 1940, p. 286.

77. James Fulton Ibid.

78. Cf. Marvin Faber, "The Phenomenological Tendency" in Journal of Philosophy Vol. LIX, No. 16, August 1962, p. 136.

79. James Fulton, Op. Cit. p. 286

80. Ibid., p. 286.

81. Ibid., p. 286

Marvin Faber also subscribed to this view and was even more opposed to any attempt to trace Husserl's phenomenology to cartesianism. He said:

Husserl's alleged "focal interest" in Descartes is an over statement. Descartes provided a methodical device as Husserl expressed it, for its own purposes. Descartes turns out to be a rather innocent bystander, who proves to be useful for the purposes in hand. In Husserl's view he resembled Columbus, who had indeed discovered a new world in this case the realm of subjectivity without realizing it.⁸²

What he seems to be saying in the above statement is that Husserl's phenomenology is more useful and more innovative than Descartes' method. Descartes according to him may be credited for trying to find certainty on subjectivity, he however failed to transcend the subjective stage into an intersubjective stage, which Husserl later saw and embraced with his phenomenology.

We quite agree that the influence of Descartes on phenomenology will be exaggerated if one relies solely on his two books "The Paris Lecture and Cartesian Meditations".⁸³ But if one goes further to study the two philosophical systems

82. Marvin Faber "The Phenomenological Tendency", p. 136.

83. I see this two books as an attempt on the part of Husserl to sell phenomenology to the French people. In order to secure their best attention, he wanted to make phenomenology look like an offshoot of cartesianism, which is the most popular philosophical system that have emanated from the French soil. He took this attempt too far when he asserted that phenomenology is neocartesianism.

one will see clearly the many points of disagreement in them, but that does mean to say that Husserl was not seriously influenced by Descartes.

The differences between cartesianism and phenomenology as Peter Kostenbaum⁸⁴ has shown, are as follows:

- (1) Whereas Descartes formulated his methodology after the model of mathematics in a deductive manner; Husserl's experience in philosophy of mathematics made him know that worldly phenomena are not rationally organised like in mathematics.
- (2) Husserl disagreed with the cartesian distinction of the mind and body which has been a perennial problem of cartesianism.
- (3) Whereas Husserl's epoche made a distinction between the natural attitude and the disengaged attitude, Descartes never made such a distinction.
- (4) While Descartes' slogan at the end of methodic doubt was "ergo cogito" Husserl transformed his own slogan into the triadic "ego cogito cogitatum". This, on the part of Husserl, reflects the influence of Frantz Brentano's theory of intentionality. By this

84. Peter Kostenbaum "Introductory Essay to Husserl's The Paris Lecture, p. xix.

Husserl seeks to show that his subjectivity is intersubjectivity and not sophistic subjectivity of Descartes.

Another source of influence on phenomenology in the modern period is David Hume. "The influence of Hume is peculiar, it is at once positive and negative".⁸⁵ We can say at this point that there was no serious work done in epistemology after Hume's skepticism that failed to take Hume into serious consideration. Hume also woke up Husserl from his dogmatic slumber just as he did to Kant. Husserl agreed that the skepticism of Hume has made us aware that our customs and habits dominate us and feed us with preconceptions and prejudices which prevent us from seeing reality. What Hume conceived as the misconceptions of customs and habits is very similar to what the phenomenologists conceived as the prejudices of the stage of the natural attitude or "Lebenswelt". Hume's discussion of the influence of habits in our mode of knowing is particularly an eye-opener for the phenomenologists, who converted what appeared to be a negative tool in the hand of Hume to something positive and useful.

The "radical empiricism" which Husserl calls the "phenomenological epistemology" reflects this Humean influence. Husserl, in the same spirit as Hume, saw the given

85. Quetin Lauer, Introduction to Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy p. 20.

facts of experience as very important for any true epistemology. Hume's influence is best seen in the earlier Husserl where he regarded the "phenomenon" or "Dachen" as the best source of knowledge.

Retrospectively, the influence of Hume on phenomenology commenced with Husserl's belief that the Humean skepticism must be debunked in order to safeguard the foundation of knowledge that had been threatened by Hume. Nevertheless, Husserl admired the Humean critique of causal metaphysics and his theory of knowledge. He agreed with Hume that our habits are hindrances to our absolute cognition of things, those habits, he felt should be avoided. Husserl admired Hume's phenomenalism but went further to improve on it and made it phenomenology instead of phenomenism. Whereas Hume sees phenomena as yielding no necessary knowledge, Husserl sees them as yielding absolute knowledge. It is said that Husserl despite these differences still regards Hume as the first descriptive phenomenologist.⁸⁶

The influence of Kant is great on phenomenology. As Quetin Lauer puts it, it was even Kant, out of the great philosophers, who first had any serious influence on Husserl's phenomenology via the neokantians.⁸⁷ Husserl's ambition was basically to continue the revolution that Kant started in philosophy. Husserl was impressed by the Critique of Pure Reason⁸⁸ and the various attempts of Kant to find out the

86. Quetin Lauer, Introduction to Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology and the Crisis of European Man, p. 20

87. Ibid, p. 20

88. Cf. Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason trans. by T. A. Abbot (London: The Free Press, 1964).

cognitive powers of the intellect. Husserl, in fact attempted to carry out a work similar to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason.⁸⁹ Husserl agreed with Kant that the epistemological truth is a mean between the two extremes of rationalism and empiricism. He was greatly influenced by Kant's attempts at a synthesis of the two.

Husserl fell out with Kant because of the latter's dichotomy of phenomena and noumena and his assertion that the noumena are in-comprehensible. Husserl felt that this was an unnecessary problem being created for philosophy.

The truth, he felt, is that the noumenon is the same as the phenomenon; Husserl never saw any reason why Kant should have separated the two. Kant's greatest influence on Husserl nevertheless came in the later stage of Husserl's thought; that is the transcendental stage. The word "transcendental" was borrowed from Kant by Husserl. Kant had also earlier asserted that the transcendental self is a real entity which can in no small measure, serve as a source of knowledge. The transcendence according to Kant is the source of meaning. All these were accepted by Husserl and they formed the bulk of his transcendental phenomenological state.

According to R.B., Perry "The militant and profoundly influential idealism of contemporary thought traces its descent from Kant ..."⁹⁰ This particular statement is also

89. Quentin Lauer, Introduction to Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy, p. 20

90. Ibid., p. 20.

true of Husserl's idealism which reflects lots of Kantian influence. The Husserlian idealism, to a great extent, shows Edmund Husserl's philosophy as being of German origin. The Husserlian "transcendental ego" reflects not only the influence of Kant's idealism but also the influence of other German idealists like Hegel, Shelling and Fichte. But Husserl's idealism is different from German idealism because the latter emphasized metaphysics while the former emphasises method. It is in this respect that Heidegger becomes the greatest mainfestation of the Kantian influence on phenomenology. Whereas, Husserl was so much interested in epistemology as the core of phenomenology, Heidegger felt that metaphysics should rather be the core. In the light of this therefore, Heidegger devoted a lot of his writings to an attempt at doing what Kant did in metaphysics in a phenomenological manner.

2.2.2 Immediate Predecessors of Phenomenology

Apart from the philosophers of old who inspired the thought of the phenomenologists, some of their contemporaries also influenced the direction that phenomenology took.

Of all the contemporaries of the phenomenologists, Frantz Brentano is generally regarded as the greatest influence on phenomenology. He is even regarded by some writers as the first major figure of the phenomenological school.⁹¹ Without doubt Frantz Brentano was to phenomenology what Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were to existentialism. His influence on the two great phenomenologists, Husserl and Heidegger, is tremendous. He, in fact, started phenomenology

91. Maurice Roche, Phenomenology, Language and the Social Sciences, (London and Boston, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973) p. 1.

as a "descriptive psychology"

Frantz Brentano's influence on phenomenology came via Edmund Husserl in particular. Husserl came under the tutorship of Brentano in 1884 and it was his lectures that made him opt for a career in philosophy instead of mathematics which he wanted to pursue before he met Brentano. As Husserl himself said:

It was from (Brentano's) lectures that I took the conviction that philosophy was a field of serious work, that it too could be treated in the spirit of strictest science and hence that it had to be treated so.⁹²

Husserl after listening to the lectures of Brentano became interested in philosophy and wanted very seriously to take after his teacher Brentano. He admired the moral integrity and the personality of Brentano whom he always followed everywhere even during his vacations.⁹³ Husserl admired Brentano's sense of mission and his commitment to philosophy and he showed this by dedicating his first book "Philosophy of Arithmetic" to him.

Husserl's devotion and commitment to Brentano was at the early stage so fanatical that it bordered on hero-worship. Not only the philosophy of Brentano but his mode of dressing and his way of speaking influenced Husserl.⁹⁴

92. Quoted by H. Spiegelber, The Phenomenological Movement, Vol. 1. p. 37.

93. Marvin Faber "Edmund Husserl and the Background of his Philosophy" in The Philosophy and Phenomenological Research Vol.1, No. 1, September 1940, p. 6

94. Ibid., p. 8

It has been said that the idea of the "transcendental ego" in phenomenology was inspired by the life which Brentano lived at his old age and which Husserl saw.⁹⁵ The withdrawn life which Brentano lived at his old age, his appearance which reflected his indifference to the world and his personality which appeared transfigured gave Husserl the idea that a transcendental being is a symbol of truth, objectivity and perfection.⁹⁶ This therefore resulted in the formulation of his theory of the transcendental "ego".

But it should be noted that this devotion and admiration ceased at a latter stage in Husserl's life. Brentano was very critical of most of Husserl's writings. Due to this factor Husserl changed and became very critical of Brentano's philosophy. He was not pleased with Brentano's discussion of the theory of intentionality and came out to classify Brentano's work as "distilled scholasticism".⁹⁷ Looking back at his previous admiration for Husserl, he regretted ever attaching himself to him. But this notwithstanding, the influence of Brentano on Husserl in particular and phenomenology in general remain great.

As aforementioned, Brentano's philosophy is classified as part of the phenomenological movement by some writers. The reason is not far fetched, since Brentano's descriptive psychology is the embryonic form of phenomenology. His book

95. Ibid., p. 8

96. Ibid., p. 8

97. Ibid., p. 10

Psychology From an Empirical Standpoint (1874) served as a source of most phenomenological concepts. The book reflected the "radical empiricism" of Brentano and he greatly made use of the descriptive method in this work. He called on philosophy in the book to make use of the descriptive study of empirical facts instead of the rational self justification that had hitherto been the official concern of philosophy. This is the beginning of the descriptive method that later developed into phenomenology.

Brentano's phenomenological psychology or descriptive psychology,

... was primarily concerned with classifying and categorising modes of experiencing and types of consciousness. One major source of data would be each individual's description of their private domains of experience.⁹⁸

By this, Frantz Brentano widened the "traditional empiricism" by admitting experiences hitherto overlooked or neglected.⁹⁹ This particular innovation stimulated the thought of the phenomenologists and it was on this epistemological innovation that phenomenology started as a philosophical enterprise.

98. Maurice Roche, Phenomenology, Language and the Social Sciences, p. 2.

99. H. Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement, Vol. 1 Op. Cit. p. 49.

Brentano's influence on phenomenology reached its peak in his discussion of the notion of "intentionality". The concept of intentionality which became one of the foremost-concepts of phenomenology was brought back to the attention of philosophy by Brentano. Brentano borrowed the concept from the scholastics and revitalised it to meet the challenges of his time. He modified and amended the theory to suit his epistemological purpose. In fact as Spiegelberg¹⁰⁰ rightly said, Brentano's notion of intentionality is very different from that of the scholastics.¹⁰⁰ In order to avoid the confusion of what Brentano calls intentionality with what the scholastics referred to as intentionality, Brentano made use of another word "reference" instead of "intentional". As Spiegelberg¹⁰¹ said:

It was certainly none of Brentano's doing that this wholly unscholastic conception came to sail under the old flag of intentionality.¹⁰¹

Brentano's conception of consciousness - as an activity that is characterised by its relation between the active subject and the object outside it - is the basis of phenomenology. In fact this Brentanian concept became the centre-piece of all phenomenological discussions.

100. Ibid., p. 41

101. Ibid., p. 41

It can be rightly said that this concept is the meeting point of all phenomenologists. Since they all realised that intentionality is the basis of objectivity.

Another area where Brentano's influence on phenomenology is note-worthy is his theory of "Inner perception" as the foundation of knowledge. This stand, without doubt, influenced Husserl's conception of the "transcendental ego" and the latter's assertion that the concept is the foundation of knowledge. Although Frantz Brentano never gave very serious attention to the discussion of this "epistemological foundationalism" it later became a major theme of the philosophy of his disciple, Husserl.

2.3 HUSSERL'S DEVELOPMENT OF PHENOMENOLOGY

In this section we shall show how the seed of phenomenology sown at the commencement of philosophy germinated into a formidable tree in the hands of Edmund Husserl. Though phenomenology may be seen as a hybrid of Platonism, Cartesianism, Humean, Kantian, and Brentanian philosophies, nevertheless, Husserl deserves our commendation for synthesising these diverse philosophies into one philosophical system.

This section therefore aims at exposing the gradual development of phenomenology by Husserl. We shall show how Husserl came about these concepts that formed the core of phenomenology, the various transformations that those concepts went through in the hands of Husserl and the position of Husserl among the divergent stands that make up the phenomenological school.

2.3.1 Husserl's Mission in Philosophy

Although Edmund Husserl came into philosophy at a relatively later time in his life he developed so much interest for philosophy that he believed he had to make a significant contribution to the discipline. It was in the process of carrying out this ambition that Husserl formulated his philosophical system which came to be known as "phenomenology".

Like most other philosophers he saw himself as would be redeemer of philosophy from philosophical problems. Having studied mathematics where precision was the stock in trade, and science where exactitude was the order of the day, it is only to be expected that Husserl was disturbed by the state of philosophy at the time he came to the stage.

Husserl had grown disturbed at the state in which he found philosophy. A multiplicity of "systems" were advocated by a multitude of men, little agreement could be found among them either, as to the proper field of philosophy or as to its distinctive methods. In consequence, results also were altogether divergent and often contradictory. Husserl was troubled by this.¹⁰²

Husserl felt that philosophy which is supposed to be the queen of the sciences is very defective. The problems that confronted him in philosophy were more than the problems of mathematics. He had come to philosophy expecting it to serve as the foundation of mathematics and the sciences, but he found philosophy more wanting. The chaotic atmosphere that reigned

102. Kenneth Hamilton, Op. Cit., p. 226.

supreme in philosophy angered and saddened him. He poured out this melancholic mind into his diary in this language.

"I have been through enough torments from lack of clarity and from doubt that waivers back and forth ... Only one needs absorb me. I must win clarity, else I cannot live. I cannot bear life unless I can believe that I can achieve.¹⁰³

Philosophy was meant to be the least controversial of all the sciences and thereby act as the judge of other disciplines. Husserl saw this tradition as having been betrayed by the philosophers of his time. Thus he commented: "During no period of its development has philosophy been capable of living up to this claim of being a rigorous science".¹⁰⁴

Thus philosophy, according to its historical purpose the loftiest and most rigorous of the sciences, representing as it does humanity's imperishable demand for pure and absolute knowledge ... is incapable of assuming the form of rigorous science. Philosophy whose vocation is to teach us how to carry on the eternal work of humanity, is utterly incapable of teaching in an objectively valid manner.¹⁰⁵

Husserl however felt that all hope was not lost, philosophy he felt could still regain its original status.

103. Quoted by Kenneth Hamilton, Ibid., p. 225.

104. Quentin Larer, Introduction to Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy, p. 71.

105. Ibid., p. 71

Husserl felt that philosophy only needs a rebirth, a serious purging in order to become what it was originally meant to be. He felt philosophy in his hands would thus become free from the shackles of subjectivity and disorder.

How is this promised redemption possible? How did Husserl seek to salvage philosophy and restore its lost glory? The answer can be briefly summarised thus:

When men start from the common ground
and follow common paths, they must
reach a common goal. Could not such
a program be mapped out for philosophy?¹⁰⁶

This is exactly the salvation which Husserl seeks to bring to philosophy. He feels that traditional foundations of philosophy should be abandoned for a new one which will be acceptable to all. This he felt could only be achieved if philosophy becomes a universal and strict science by purging itself of its pre-dilections and preconceptions. Philosophy according to him should start from a presuppositionless and bias-free foundation. Philosophy should attempt to uproot all its previous foundation and start on a new bias-free foundation. Philosophy, he felt, should be called archaeology.¹⁰⁷ For it will need to dig for a new foundation.

Husserl felt that philosophy would be rid of all its problems if it gets to this point of presuppositionlessness. The "given facts of experience" rather than our prejudicial interpretation of them will determine the course of philosophy.

106. Kenneth Hamilton, Op. Cit., p. 225.

107. H. Spiegelberg, Op. Cit., p. 82.

This, Husserl felt, is the promised land. At this stage, it would become strong enough to carry the heavy load - that is the other disciplines which it is expected to serve as their foundation.

The mission of attaining a foundation for all disciplines is part of Husserl's ambition to bring philosophy to the status of a science. Science he felt deals with the given facts of experience, it works with the self-evident. This scientific attitude according to Husserl is going to be emulated by philosophy. This can only be done when philosophy accepts to start all enterprises from a presuppositionless position. The process of reaching this scientific goal by philosophy will be quickened if philosophy accepts the method of phenomenology. For as he said "only phenomenology can be truly philosophy".¹⁰⁸

He felt that phenomenology as a method is quite capable of redeeming philosophy from all its problems. The age long ambition of making philosophy a rigorous science can be attained by applying the phenomenological method.

In his mind this ambition can be realised by complete dedication to truth, and thus in the combined efforts of generations, all carrying on their researches according to the phenomenological method. Thus, he sees each individual philosophical problem as, so to speak, autonomous, demanding for its solution a new beginning, not a pre-fabricated system. Each problem is to be taken by itself and investigated in a rigid application of the phenomenological method, the only philosophical method worthy of the name because it is the only method which will guarantee scientific rigour in philosophic thinking.¹⁰⁹

108. Edmund Husserl, Philosophy as a Rigorous Science, Op. Cit. p.

109. Quentin Lauer, Introduction to Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man, p. 4

We should rather say at this juncture that Husserl's philosophical programme seeks two fundamental foundations, the first is the foundation of all disciplines, this relates to philosophy generally, the second foundation which Husserl seeks is what this thesis is out to examine, that is, the foundation of all knowledge. The two are related or we should rather say that Husserl seeks one solution to the two problems. The first foundation that is the foundation of all disciplines can be seen in a phenomenological philosophy which is presuppositionless. This type of philosophy is objective and rigorous enough to serve as the foundation of all the other disciplines. The second foundation which Husserl seeks is an epistemological foundation, an epistemological stand or position which can serve as the basis of all other epistemic claims. The answer to this lies in a phenomenological person, a transcendental self devoid of all the prejudices and biases that can act as an impediment to his attainment of total knowledge.

The phenomenological method and the two foundations which Husserl sought vigorously did not come suddenly. He attained ~~them~~ in a gradual manner and the whole idea that later culminated in Husserl's phenomenology spanned through many years. The theory which started at an embryonic stage in 1891 at the publication of Husserl's first book developed as Husserl grew philosophically. The development of Husserl's phenomenology is divided into three broad stages in the light of the genetical growth of Husserl's philosophy. The three stages according to him are consistent and uncontradictory despite

the significant changes.¹¹⁰ We shall now attempt to see the three stages of the development of his phenomenology.

2.3.2 The Three Stages in Husserl's Philosophical Career

The first stage in Husserl's phenomenology is the "pre-phenomenological stage" or the "stage of descriptive psychology". This stage marks the coming of Husserl into philosophy from mathematics via descriptive psychology. As would be expected the influence of his early discipline mathematics is tremendous at this stage. The stage commenced with the publication in 1891 of Philosophie der Arithmetik. In the book, Husserl was more of a logician and a mathematician than a philosopher. The objective of the book

... was to derive the fundamental concepts of mathematics from certain psychological acts which were traced with remarkable detail.¹¹¹

At this stage of the publication of the Philosophie der Arithmetik, Husserl's philosophy is still at its infancy, Husserl has not distinguished himself as a distinct and independent thinker, rather he was still hiding under the shadow of Brentano. The book was an attempt at defending psychologism - that is the view that Mathematics and logic have psychological roots. Psychologism was a popular philosophical stand at this time. Little wonder then why

110. Marvin Faber, "Edmund Husserl and the Background of his Philosophy in Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 12.

111. H. Spiegelberg; The Phenomenological Movement, Vol. 1, p. 92.

111

Husserl devoted a whole book for the defence of this stand.

Although Husserl later had to abandon his stand in this book, nevertheless, the book still marked an important epoch in his career as a philosopher. For it was in the book that Husserl first discussed the concept of "intentionality" which will become the centre-piece of his later philosophical ideas. Husserl taking a leave from Brentano argues in the book that mathematical entities are intentional. This contention was meant to confirm in a more logical manner, the earlier stand of psychologism that mathematics has its root in psychology. Husserl's discussion of psychologism therefore is an attempt at showing that mathematics is objective; since intentionality implies objectivity.

✓ Husserl's discussion of intentionality at this stage shows that this cardinal principle of phenomenology - intentionality - was conceived as early as the beginning of his philosophical career. As he himself put it in this manner "my course was already marked out by the Philosophie der Arithmetick.¹¹² In fact the descriptive method which will later be adopted as the official method of the study of phenomena was thoroughly applied in this early book. All these are pointers to the fact that this stage which may be referred to as the embryonic stage of phenomenology has a lot of influence on the latter stages of the development of phenomenology in the hands of Husserl.

Edmund Husserl later abandoned the defence of psychologism which he put forward in the book, due to the

112. Quoted by Marvin Faber in "Edmund Husserl and the Background of his Philosophy" in Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, p. 2.

review and critique of the book by Gottlob Frege. Frege impressed it on Husserl that logic and mathematics cannot be derived "from psychological operations, that, indeed, the central terms and structure of both logic and mathematics are ideal objects, meaning entities, whose status is precisely independent of the concrete activities of mind and of thinking in its neurological aspect".¹¹³ Husserl agreed with Frege and came to attack his earlier psychologistic stand in a new book he wrote titled Logische Untersuchungen (1900 and 1901). This book marked the commencement of the second stage of Husserl's phenomenology. Despite the repudiation of his earlier stand in the Philosophie der Arithmetik, the fact remains that Frege "by no means discredited it as a whole and the fact that Husserl's confidence in his work was not seriously shaken is shown by the frequent references to it in later writings".¹¹⁴

As we said earlier, the second stage of Husserl's phenomenology begins with the publication of his second book, Logische Untersuchungen. This stage is popularly referred to as the stage of Quasi-Phenomenology. Although phenomenology at this period may be said to have got its focus, nevertheless, Husserl had not yet purged himself of the Brentanian influence. Phenomenology at this time basically relied on the Brentanian descriptive method. The slogan then was "to the things themselves". Husserl here believes that the

113. Ibid., p. 2.

114. Ibid.; ,p. 2

knowledge of the phenomenon could only be got from the intuitive experiencing of the self givenness.

The Logische Untersuchungen is very important for establishing Edmund Husserl as an independent thinker with some fresh ideas to contribute towards the progress of philosophy. According to Quentin Lauer.

It was Logische Untersuchungen, that established Husserl as a figure to be reckoned with in the European philosophical world at the beginning of the twentieth century. Reactions to it were varied, but on all sides, were strong, opponents decried the Logical Investigations as the revival of the outmoded metaphysics, a relapse into "scholasticism". Adherents saw it as a Magna-Carta of objective philosophical thinking.¹¹⁵

The condemnation of Husserl's Logical Untersuchungen as a "revival of outmoded metaphysics" and "a relapse into scholasticism" confirmed what we earlier asserted that Husserl of the Logical Investigation is still a devoted disciple of Frantz Brentano who was a neo-Aristotelian and a Scholastic.¹¹⁶ Despite Brentano's later criticism of the

115. Quentin Lauer, Introduction to Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man. p. 50

116. The influence of the scholastics on Brentano was due to the fact that he studied philosophy in a seminary where he was a candidate for the priesthood. The Catholic seminary devoted a lot of time to the philosophy of the scholastics. This must have been the reason for Brentano's deep attachment to scholasticism.

Logical Investigation, one could still truly describe the book as an attempt by Husserl to practise on logical phenomena the descriptive method of Franz Brentano.

The book Logical Investigations was basically an attempt to undo what Husserl had earlier done in his first book Philosophie der Arithmetik. The second book seeks to attack psychologism in all its ramifications. Husserl of the Logical Investigation felt nothing but disdain for psychologism which was the popular philosophy of the time. Why did Husserl need to devote a whole book to an attack of a stand to which he earlier subscribed? The answer is obvious, Husserl saw the loophole in psychologism. Embracing psychologism at first made him see its weakness as an extreme stand which leads to no other conclusion but relativism. To trace the foundation of mathematical and logical concepts to the mind of an individual is nothing, Husserl argued, but relativism. To him relativism apart from being an untenable self-defeating stand, destroys the very meaning of truth and falsehood. It leads nowhere but to nihilism.

Edmund Husserl saw psychologism as an offshoot of the naturalistically oriented theory of consciousness.¹¹⁷ Thus psychologism is to him a product of scientism,¹¹⁸ an attempt at taking over every study by the natural sciences. Psychologism to him is nothing but naturalism.

For Husserl naturalism meant the general philosophical orientation which treated the total range of mental activity as essentially causally conditioned by, and in the

117. Maurice Natanson, Op. Cit., p. 7

118. Husserl later on continued his attack of naturalism in his book, Philosophy as a Rigorous Science, Op. Cit. There Husserl criticised all attempts at entrenching scientism which according to him includes contemporary philosophical ideas such as positivism and historicism.

final analysis a part of the events of nature. The paradigm for philosophical understanding is taken in the naturalistic persuasion as causal explanation. Finally, naturalism is defined by its insistence on locating the primary problems of philosophy within a continuum of inquiry whose ideal form is that of scientific method.¹¹⁹

This negative aspect of the Logical Investigations, that is the critique of psychologism and naturalism, led Husserl to the positive aspect of the book. In this, Husserl felt that psychologism and naturalism belong to the stage of the Lebenswelt, the stage of the natural attitude.¹²⁰ He saw an alternative to naturalism in a radical way of looking at psychical phenomena as something different from nature but which has an intention in the natural world. Husserl therefore called for a careful examination of consciousness directly "to appreciate its content and structures quite apart from prior scientific commitments from philosophical prejudgements and which strives, ~~above~~ all to regain the immediate experiential world we have forgotten, denied or battered away".¹²¹

This second stage of Husserl's phenomenology is appropriately named the stage of Quasi-phenomenology, for phenomenology had not taken its stand as a philosophical system at this point in time. It was still in a process of development. Husserl only made use of the word "phenomenology" in a footnote in the first volume of the Logical Investigations.

119. Maurice Natanson, Op. Cit., p. 8

120. Ibid., p. 8

121. Ibid., p. 9

Even in the second volume where phenomenology was mentioned in the body of the book, he only described it as "a descriptive psychology developed for the clarification of fundamental ideas of formal reasoning".¹²² Phenomenology in this book is still a means of purifying logic and epistemology by appealing to the evidences of the intuitive self-givenness.

The next book after Logical Investigations, is Philosophy as a Rigorous Science, (1911), which was described by Par! Welch as the transitional book¹²³ or the link between the stage of Quasi-phenomenology and the last stage of pure phenomenology. Philosophy as a Rigorous Science still belongs to the second stage of Husserl's philosophical career. The book continued Husserl's critique of psychologism and naturalism. But it marked a significant stage in Husserl's development of "phenomenology" of moving from mere descriptive psychological study to what he called a rigorous scientific discipline. Husserl presented phenomenology in this book as an ideal, a goal in view which should be reached. He conceived phenomenology as an autonomus discipline which will serve as the foundation of all other disciplines.

Phenomenology is now, in short; an autonomous region for investigation that is free from the assumptions of psychology in keeping with the requirements of a pre-suppositionless philosophy.¹²⁴

122. Marvin Faber, Edmund Husserl and the Background of his philosophy, p. 12.

123. E. Par! Welch, The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl; The Origin and Development of his Phenomenology, (Columbia, University Press 1941), p. 36.

124. Marvin Faber Edmund Husserl and the Background of his Philosophy p. 16.

But Husserl did not give any reason for taking this position until the last stage of his pure phenomenology.

The last stage ~~of~~ Husserl's philosophy commenced with the publication of Ideas in 1913 . Phenomenology has now matured into an independent and unique method of philosophising. The book came out to discuss the dichotomy between the natural attitude and the phenomenological attitude. The natural attitude, Husserl felt, is the attitude of presuppositions, prejudices, and self deception. This Husserl felt should give way for the ideal attitude, that is, the phenomenological attitude where presuppositionlessness and objectivity will reign supreme.

The Cartesian Meditations (1929) marked Husserl's entry into transcendental idealism. Here Husserl introduced the concept of "transcendental subject" which is the major point of focus of this thesis. Husserl conceived of the transcendental subject as the residue of the epochal processes. The suspension or bracketing of prejudices which the "epoche" seeks to achieve would culminate in what he calls "the pure consciousness" or "the transcendental subject". This "pure consciousness", Husserl felt, would be capable of the task of being the foundation of all knowledge since it had been purged of all prejudices. Husserl apart from discussing in detail the concept of transcendental subject, devoted a lot of chapters to show that the transcendental phenomenology would not turn into mysticism, idealism and solipsism. This defence of transcendental phenomenology from the objections of its detractors was what Edmund Husserl devoted his old age to.

We can say at this point in time that phenomenology in the hands of Husserl reflects a gradual but consistent development of a philosophical theory. Despite the apparent contradictory stages in Husserl's phenomenology, there is still something common to all the three stages. And this is the bid to apprehend the essences of phenomena. From the descriptive psychology stage to the transcendental stage, there is a constancy of the objective of showing the essences of things whether psychical or physical. From the logical and mathematical analysis of the earlier period to the metaphysics of the later period, there is a constant attempt to intuit the essences of all things.

It can also be observed that Husserl's phenomenology, if it is seen as consisting of two broad stages - the earlier and the later stages - reflects the influences of his immediate and his remote precursors respectively. The early Husserl was dominated by the influence of his predecessors like Brentano, Stumpf, Meinong and Frege, whereas the latter Husserl was inspired by the philosophers of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries such as Kant, Hume, Hegel, Fichte and particularly Rene Descartes.

The distinction between the early Husserl and the latter Husserl is still relevant if one considers the influence that Husserl had on his disciples. The fact that his admirers never agreed among themselves is a reflection of the conflict that exists between his earlier phenomenology and later phenomenology. Phenomenologists like Heidegger, Sartre, Hartman and Scheler embraced the earlier Husserl and criticised the later Husserl, while others like Merleau Ponty

held dearly to the later Husserl. It is in the light of this that Maurice Roche contended that:

There is hardly a follower of Husserl today who would accept all his pronouncements and there is hardly a major follower of Husserl who has not put forward serious criticisms of phenomenological philosophy.¹²⁵

✓ The reason for the apparent conflicts in the philosophical system of Husserl is understandable. As a philosopher he does not believe in a dogmatic attachment to a particular stand without modifying or reviewing it. In the course of his writings he always refers to himself as the perpetual beginner who is always ready to change his stand, amend his views and, if necessary, start afresh.

Retrospectively, we can say that Husserl was the man who turned the Brentanian dream of doing philosophy in a descriptive manner into reality. Husserl was responsible for turning phenomenology not only into a method but also into a philosophical system where the descriptive method rather than the analytical method becomes dominant. It was the enviable task that Edmund Husserl performed on phenomenology that later on constituted themselves into the phenomenological movement. From the student days of Husserl under Brentano to the last days of his life, he was a man who had opted for a life which later culminated in what became "phenomenology". It can therefore be said that one cannot talk of phenomenology or the phenomenological movement without mentioning Edmund husserl, the founder of Phenomenology.

125. Maurice Roche, Op. Cit., p. 23.

2.4 Phenomenology After Edmund Husserl

As far back as 1905, Husserl began to attract the attention of not only his students but also his colleagues. His phenomenology during this time became a subject of rigorous study, controversial discussion and bitter criticism. The first reaction to Husserl's philosophy came from two German Universities of Gotingen and Munich. In the two institutions, a sort of intellectual fashion arose that could be compared to the activities of the members of the Vienna Circle. The students and lecturers of philosophy in these two universities constituted themselves into an organisation described as the Munich and Gotingen circles. Their primary objective was the study of Husserl's philosophy with the goal of improving on it. The members of the circles have been described as the "older movement" of phenomenology by Spiegelberg.¹²⁶ Jean Herring also refers to this period in the history of phenomenology as the "phenomenological spring"¹²⁷.

In this respect two names are note-worthy, and they are Alexander Pfander (1870 - (1941) and Adolf Reinach, the leaders of the Munich and Gotingen circles respectively. Pfander has once been described as the "Soul of the

126. H. Spiegelberg *The Phenomenological Movement* p. 161

127. Ibid., p. 161

so called Munich circle of phenomenology"¹²⁸

Pfander's contribution to phenomenology should be examined briefly. Like the other disciples of Husserl that we shall see later, Pfander was critical of some of the ideas of Husserl. He saw the primary goal of phenomenology as the purification of psychology from the misinterpretation of it by the adherents of psychologism. He regarded phenomenology as the descriptive study of psychological phenomena. Pfander never agreed with the concept of reduction which is the core of Husserlian phenomenology. To him, the gem of phenomenology is not in the "epoche" but rather in the descriptive study of phenomena. Like the latter phenomenologists, Pfander also applied the phenomenological method to the study of ontological concepts.

Adolf Reinach, the leader of the Gotingen Circle was another early member of the phenomenological movement. A one time student and later junior colleague of Husserl at the University of Gontingen, he was in fact the closest to Husserl of all the phenomenologists. He has been described as the "phenomenologist per excellence".¹²⁹ His premature death (he died in 1917 during the first world war) did not allow him to contribute all he could to phenomenology. To him, phenomenology is the method that frees us from prejudices and allows us to explore the essences of phenomena rather than their existence.

128. Etienne Gilson et al, Recent Philosophy Since Hegel to the Present, New York, Random House 1962, p. 104).

129. H. Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement, Vol. II, p. 195.

Reinach like other disciples of Husserl never agreed with the Husserl's journey to the transcendental stage. If Reinach had lived longer, he would have applied the phenomenological method to the study of philosophy of religion, social philosophy and philosophy of law.

Max Scheler (1874 - 1928) is another important figure in the history of the phenomenological movement. In fact his presence in phenomenology threatened Husserl's leadership of the movement. Max Scheler was once described by Ortega Y. Gasset, the famous Spanish philosopher as the "first man of genius in the new land of phenomenology..."¹³⁰ Scheler was before the entry of Martin Heidegger into the stage of phenomenology regarded as "the number one phenomenologist, ... and in fact to many he was more of a star of the first magnitude whose dazzling light revealed more than the prominent member of a new school, but a philosopher of the age".¹³¹

It has been said that Scheler was responsible for the spread of phenomenology outside Germany in the early decades of this century. His phenomenology particularly, his application of the phenomenological programme to the solution of human problems appealed more to the French and the Spanish than the method-oriented phenomenology of Husserl. Max Scheler never devoted his time to improving on the phenomenological method but rather applied the ready-made method of Husserl to problems in Ethics, theology and sociology, to the annoyance of Husserl.

130. Ibid., p. 196

131. Ibid., p. 197

Edmund Husserl never liked what Scheler made of his phenomenological programme. He described Scheler's work as the fool's gold in opposition to its own genuine gold of solid phenomenology.¹³² The conflict between Husserl and Scheler can be traced to the philosophical aim of the two.

It takes little reading in Husserl and Scheler to realize that Scheler's fundamental quest in philosophy for a rigorous science which characterised Husserl's original enterprise. Scheler had no ambition to found a new science such as phenomenology. For him such a science was at best a means, a new approach that would help find new answers to questions as well as acute crisis.¹³³

The difference between Schelerian and Husserlian phenomenology is also traceable to the personality and temperament of the two philosophers. Scheler was more of a practising phenomenologist whereas Husserl was more of a theoretician. Scheler felt that phenomenology should serve as the means of solving problems in ontology, in particular, and in all human affairs in general. In this regard "Scheler anticipated the existentialists without being one, in his conviction that philosophy is above all concerned with man's historical situation and is a message for one's time".¹³⁴

Whereas phenomenology never transcended the stage of method in the hands of Husserl, it became a tool of solving problems in the hands of Scheler.

132. Ibid., p. 230

133. Ibid., p. 231

134. Etienne Gilson et al, Recent Philosophy Since Hegel, p. 115.

In his thought, Scheler gave very strong expression to the twentieth century desire for philosophical concreteness. He firmly rejected the idea that science was orientated towards the concrete reality and philosophy towards the abstract, and insisted that it was precisely towards the concrete reality of man and the world that philosophy had to direct its attention.¹³⁵

Phenomenology, to Scheler, should serve man, it should respond to man's urge to surmount his many problems. The fundamental point of focus of phenomenology should be man. For as he said, man is the fundamental theme of any philosophy. He said;

f Since the first awakening of my philosophical consciousness, the questions, what is man? and What is his place in the universe of being? have occupied me more deeply and more centrally than any other philosophical questions.¹³⁶

What then are the contributions of Max Scheler towards the development of the phenomenological movement? This lies in his man-oriented ethics, epistemology and sociology. For him epistemology, sociology, theology and anthropology are many ways of looking at the same thing, that is, man. In epistemology, he made man the standard of knowledge and asserted that knowledge is not absolute but rather purposive. In ethics, Scheler attempted a phenomenological study of ethics with

135. Bernard Delfegaw, Twentieth Century Philosophy, Translated by N. D. Smith, (New York, Magi Books Inc., 1969), p. 126.

136. Quoted by H. Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement, Vol. II, p. 234.

the goal of reconciling the conflict between the Kantian objective formal ethics and the realistic ethical philosophy of people like Nietzsche. The result of this equation was Schelerian ethics with man as the standard of all values. The "value of values", he contended "is the ineffable human person whose glorification is the very sense of all moral order and indeed the sense and the ultimate value of the whole universe".¹³⁷

Nicolai Hartman (1882 - 1950) is another great figure in the history of the development of the phenomenological movement, despite the fact that he never saw himself as a member of the movement.¹³⁸ His phenomenology is nearer to Scheler's than to Husserl's and in fact he never regarded Husserl as the founder of phenomenology. He never regarded him as a phenomenologist at all.

Nicolai Hartman represents the combination of Husserl's systematization and Scheler's concretization. In his philosophy, one can easily notice a synthesis of Husserl's rigour and method on the one hand and Scheler's aim of making phenomenology the method of solving practical problems on the other hand. Like Pfander and Scheler before him and like Sartre after him, Hartman saw phenomenology as the instrument for understanding ontological complications. Hartman calls his own ontology "critical ontology" after the critical work done by Kant.

137. Etienne Gilson, *Op. Cit.*, p. 127

138. Hartman throughout his academic life always keep a distance from the phenomenologists. He only regarded them as neighbours, rather than fellow phenomenologists. At a later time in his life, he became very critical of the phenomenologists.

The influence of Kant on Hartman is great, whether positively or negatively, just as it was on his two predecessors in phenomenology. The influence is even greater on Hartman who was a Marburg trained neo-Kantian. The Kantianism in Hartmann is a refined one, having defected from the neo-kantian school in 1921. His defection led to his entry into phenomenology. For he was in phenomenology an instrument for attacking the neo-kantians. Hartman made use of the phenomenological method to attack the stand of the neo-kantians in ethics, epistemology and metaphysics. Like Scheler he applied the method to human problems, particularly in epistemology, ontology and ethics. In this, Hartman was not as successful as Heidegger and Sartre, who were fully responsible for popularising phenomenology.¹³⁹

No matter the amount of objections that Edmund Husserl may raise¹⁴⁰ historians of philosophy will for long continue to consider Martin Heidegger as his successor. Martin Heidegger (1889 - 1976) was without doubt the person responsible for turning the abstract method of phenomenology into a thing of interest to incoming generations of philosophers.

139. The two philosophers, Heidegger and Sartre were responsible for the fusion of phenomenology and existentialism and their work marked the beginning of the problem that Warnock identified when he said:

"It has become increasingly difficult as more work is done in phenomenology and existentialism concurrently begins to take its place as part of philosophical history to distinguish the one from the other". C.F. May Warnock Existentialism; (London, O.U.P. 1970). p. 23.

140. Husserl never saw Heidegger as his successor, for him, What Heidegger was doing was anthropology and not phenomenology. He rather regarded Heidegger as his antipode rather than his successor.

The fact that Heidegger's phenomenology is opposed to Husserl is no more an object of debate. Most writers agree that "Husserlian phenomenology and Heideggerian phenomenology are related in little more than name and motto; and that there is even no remote family resemblance between them".¹⁴¹ Erroneously people have been interpreting Heidegger's defection from Husserlian phenomenology as a sort of student-teacher conflict, the type of which we can see in Aristotle against Plato or Marx against Hegel. But the truth is that Heidegger was never a student of Husserl in the real sense of the word.

.... Heidegger was never Husserl's pupil in a sense of the term which would justify the expectation of a special personal loyalty to Husserl. Heidegger was an established scholar in his own right with a record of several publications before he had ever met Husserl.¹⁴²

Heidegger's earlier interest in phenomenology convinced Husserl that he was a rightful successor to his phenomenological throne and made him recommend him as his successor to the professorial chair at Freiburg. But it was not long before Husserl realised that Heidegger was more of a rebel than a loyalist. From the onset Heidegger disagreed with Husserl's phenomenology. His conception of phenomenon is poles apart from Husserl's conception of the term. The only point of agreement in the two philosophers is the belief that phenomena

141. Richard Schacht "Husserlian and Heideggerian Phenomenology" in Philosophical Studies, Vol. 23, 1972.

142. H. Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement Vol. I., pp. 276 - 271.

should be allowed to reveal themselves and their meaning.

Heidegger allied himself with Husserl of the Logical Investigations and contended that we should go to the things themselves. He agreed with Husserl that the descriptive method is ideal. But Heidegger disagreed with his mentor on what should be the point of focus of phenomenology. Whereas Husserl saw the human consciousness and epistemology as the central point of focus of phenomenology, Heidegger saw "being" as the central point of focus.

Heidegger's phenomenology is basically an ontological phenomenology. To him ontology rather than Husserl's epistemology is the core of philosophy. Heidegger like Scheler applied the method of phenomenology to the problem of being. He shifted the focus of phenomenology from epistemology which it used to be in the hands of Husserl to ontology.

In understanding the differences between Husserl and Heidegger one needs to apprehend their backgrounds and orientation. Husserl was a mathematician turned philosopher whereas Heidegger was a student of theology and anthropology before coming to philosophy. The interest of Husserl, like a mathematician was in the formulation of methods and systems to attain precision, whereas Heidegger's interest was in the understanding of man. Husserl, like a mathematician, saw epistemology as the nearest to his earlier vocation and therefore embraced it, while Heidegger saw metaphysics as nearer to his earlier discipline.

Heidegger unlike Husserl saw phenomenology as a tool of metaphysics, a tool with which problems of metaphysics and ontology can be apprehended. The purpose of phenomenology he

contended is to unveil the hidden aspects of human being , that is, the "Dasein". Phenomenology to him is the best method of understanding ontology. Heidegger contended that only as phenomenology is ontology possible. Heidegger felt that the importance of phenomenology lies in showing the need to reflect upon our consciousness of being.

In his most popular book Being and Time, Heidegger attempted a phenomenological study of Dasein with the objective of understanding the nature of man and the world in which man lives. In the course of this phenomenological analysis of the Dasein, Heidegger exposed and analysed the problem of human existence; the existence of the others, human anxiety and other related concepts. After the book, Heidegger never gave any serious attention to phenomenology in his later works.

Even in this book Being and Time, where Heidegger devoted a lot of time to phenomenology, he never saw phenomenology as an end. To him phenomenology is more of a potentiality than an actuality. Phenomenology he felt is a method by which we can understand, "being qua being". But even in this book Heidegger did not conform to the dictates of the method as specified by Husserl.

The method thus sketched at the beginning of Being and Time is phenomenology only in a new and perhaps loose sense of the word; it is in fact Existentialist phenomenology designed to reveal how things really are if we think about them and to open our eyes to our true position in the world.

The missionary socratic tone has come back and the dispassionate scientific project of the phenomenological reduction is far away.¹⁴³

Phenomenology to Heidegger is rather a means to an end, and not the end itself. The end he contended is 'Being'. Heidegger disagreed openly with Husserl's belief that phenomenology is the end. He opposed the Husserlian conception of phenomenology as the ideal philosophy. He objected to most of Husserl's views. In fact the concept of bracketing which he accepted was with reservations, for he preferred the word "destruction" to the word "reduction". Heidegger vehemently opposed Husserl's contention that the goal of philosophy is to become a rigorous science. To him the goal of philosophy is rather the understanding of being, particularly the Dasein. Heidegger opposed Husserl's idealism and his theory of the transcendental subject. He rejects in its entirety Husserl's dichotomy of the natural attitude and the phenomenological attitude. The differences between the two phenomenologists were well summarised by Richard Schacht in these words:

Heideggerian phenomenology is not transcendental but rather existential. Husserl's 'transcendental ego' and "transcendental experience" and "pure essences" are for Heidegger abstractions; and he considers it to be an illusion to regard them as more real or more fundamental than the self, the experience and the things of concrete everyday existence. If the phenomenologist is to grasp the true nature of things for Heidegger, he must not perform

143. Mary Warnock Existentialism, p. 54.

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Husserl's phenomenological reduction, and he must not concern himself with anything like Husserl's transcendental "theory of knowledge" and "pure egology". Rather he must undertake a careful analysis... of the Dasein i.e. of the concretely existing human being. 144

The above is a true summary of Heidegger's revolt against Husserlian phenomenology. And as Richard Schacht again said, Heidegger's opposition to Husserl's phenomenology brought him to the door post of existentialism. Despite all his objections,¹⁴⁵ Heidegger's philosophy is in line with the philosophy of the existential phenomenologies and he is therefore an existentialist. It is to the other existential phenomenologist, Jean Paul Sartre that we shall now turn.

Jean Paul Sartre is best remembered today as the greatest of the existentialists. But Sartre is a phenomenologist as well as an existentialist. It is in the light of this that W. A. Leuijpen referred to him as an existential-phenomenologists.¹⁴⁶ His philosophy like that of Heidegger is an existentialized phenomenology, though he is trully one of the best phenomenologists. Although Sartre never regarded himself as a phenomenologist - for he viewed the phenomenological movement as consisting of only Husserl and Heidegger - nevertheless phenomenology is certainly a decisive part of his philosophical method. Husserl and Heidegger without any debate

144. Richard Schacht, Op. Cit., p. 307.

145. Heidegger refused to regard himself as a member of the existentialists movement.

146. W. A. Leuijpen, Existential Phenomenology, (Duquesne University Press, Pittsburg, Pa (1963) p. 104.

supplied Sartre with the main points of departure for his philosophy. The two phenomenologists are philosophically much nearer to him than any contemporary French philosopher.¹⁴⁷

Sartre was responsible for popularising phenomenology in the French soil. He was solely responsible for making France the second home of phenomenology. Sartre's philosophy like Heidegger's was an application of the phenomenological method to solve the problem of ontology. Sartre was first introduced to phenomenology in 1934 when he went to Berlin to study the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger. Sartre was impressed with Husserl's phenomenology and in fact ~~saw~~ saw him as the stimulus and liberator. He saw his book Ideas as the most important book that he had ever come across.

Sartre saw in phenomenology a weapon for the attack of traditional philosophy. He saw it as a means of fighting the traditional philosophers' abandonment of the problem of human existence. He sought to synthesise the method of Husserl with the ontology of Heidegger to produce what later became his existential phenomenology. He wanted through the phenomenological method to turn the attention of philosophy back to the problem of man. It is therefore in the light of this that it is true to say that "Sartre stole much of his existential fire from Husserl"¹⁴⁸

147. H. Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement, Vol. II pp. 454 - 455.

148. Maurice Natanson, Literature Philosophy and the Natural Sciences, p. 33.

The question that follows is this: To what extent is Sartre a loyal disciple of Husserl? An answer to this question will briefly expose the true position of Sartre in the phenomenological movement. The first point of agreement between Sartre and Husserl is on the descriptive feature of phenomenology. Sartre was greatly fascinated by the phenomenological call for phenomena to be studied descriptively, Sartre accepted the dictum "to the things themselves" and went on to carry out his philosophising with this motto at the back of his mind.

Sartre again was impressed by the subjectivism of phenomenology. He saw this as an avenue to wrest philosophy from the shackles of Hegelian absolutism. He saw this subjectivity as an avenue to return philosophy to the problem of man. He was in love with the phenomenological theory of subjectivity. His interest in phenomenology increased when he saw the implication of the famous theory of intentionality, which is inter-subjectivity.

Sartre like the other disciples of Husserl never accepted the whole of his phenomenology. In fact very early in his career Sartre objected to some aspects of the Husserlian phenomenology particularly its latter philosophy. He objected to his theory of the transcendental subject in a book devoted to this subject matter titled The Transcendence of the Ego. Sartre also attacked Husserl in his most popular book Being and Nothingness. In the two books Sartre criticised Husserl's leap to the transcendental stage as unnecessary and unwarranted. He said:

Husserl for the length of his philosophical career was haunted by the idea of transcendence But the philosophical techniques at his disposal removed from him any way of accounting for that transcendence; his intentionality is only the caricature of it. Consciousness, as Husserl conceived it cannot in reality transcend itself either toward the world or toward the future or toward the past.¹⁴⁹

Sartre like Heidegger and Scheler before him departed from Husserl and charged him with infidelity to his original conception of phenomenology. Sartre saw in latter Husserl an undoing of the good work of the earlier Husserl. He therefore accused Husserl of moving from being a phenomenologist to being a phenomenalist in the latter stage of his life.

Sartre therefore owing to the shortcomings of the latter Husserl allied himself more with Heidegger. He accepted Heidegger's assertion that the "problem of being" is the fundamental problem of Philosophy. He agrees with Heidegger's criticism of Husserl and saw the former as the proto-type of phenomenology. In his book Being and Nothingness, Sartre in the tradition of Heidegger went to examine the problem of being. But he still had it at the back of his mind that phenomenology was the best method of doing this. "Sartre sees in major principles of phenomenology implicit clues to existential philosophy; he believes that he is carrying out the vital impulse of Husserl's discoveries".¹⁵⁰

Another name that is worth mentioning in the history of the development of phenomenology after Husserl is Merleau Ponty.

149. J.P. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 109.

150. Maurice Natanson, Literature, Philosophy and the Social Sciences, p. 33.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908 - 1961) was the closest and the most loyal of all the disciples of Husserl. He is even more loyal to Husserl than Jean Paul Sartre who introduced him to husserl.¹⁵¹ Merleau-Ponty in his development of phenomenology saw himself as the rightful successor of Husserl. He was the only member of the movement who agreed with the transcendental stage of Husserl but he did this with reservations for he reformulated the subjectivistic tendency of this stage.

Merleau-Ponty like his fellow French phenomenologist, Sartre, was an existential phenomenologist, for he applied the method of phenomenology to the apprehension of the problem of human existence. But he is more rigorous and more systematic in his development of phenomenology than Sartre. The primary objective of his phenomenology is the understanding of the relationship between consciousness and the world. This objective was persistent in all the writings of Merleau-Ponty.

In his most popular book Phenomenology of Perception, Merleau-Ponty aimed at understanding the position of man in the world. He contended that we can only understand the position of man in the world if we understand perception. The understanding of perception he opined is possible when we abandon our absolute distinction between the perceiving subject and the object perceived. Merleau-Ponty sought in his own development of phenomenology to purge it of its cartesian influence. He wanted to remove from phenomenology the cartesian

151. Merleau-Ponty was introduced to Husserl by Sartre when the later gave him a copy of the Idea which he bought during his sojourn in Germany.

aspects, particularly the distinction between the object and subject of perception. He saw a bright future for phenomenology if it could be purged of the Cartesian and Augustinian subjectivistic influence.

It is this anti-cartesianism and the related attempt to find a new center for the phenomenological enterprise which characterizes the fundamental originality of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology.¹⁵²

Merleau-Ponty's critique of cartesian aspects of phenomenology confers on him the responsibility of providing a new orientation for phenomenology. He accepted this responsibility by supplying his "bipolar" phenomenology, by this he meant a rejection of the subjectivity. With his bi-polar phenomenology, the cogito reveals not only itself but the inseparability of it from the external object of perception. The cogito now is no more lonely but a committed and engaged consciousness. The subject is now entangled in the external object, with the two becoming one.

Merleau-Ponty, though relatively loyal to the Husserlian objective, he never stayed on the level of methodology alone. Like Heidegger and Sartre, he also applied the methodology of phenomenology to the problems of man. Like the two, he also existentialised phenomenology. In fact the most characteristic thing about Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is his attempt to bring it down from the level of pure consciousness to the world of concrete life; in fact to incarnate it in individual and social human existence.

¹⁵², H. Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement, Vol . II. p. 523.

Closing our examination of the development of phenomenology after Husserl, it is appropriate to say that phenomenology in recent time has become a global phenomenon. Its status has moved from being a Franco-German affair to a worldly phenomenon. In fact the headquarters of phenomenology moved from Germany or France to Louvain in Belgium. Even the English speaking world which formerly was apathetic to phenomenology has changed gear. Phenomenology has been introduced to this area of the world particularly in the United States of America where the influence of phenomenology is now tremendous.

Again, we should comment that the status of the phenomenological method has moved from being a philosophical method to a method of studying all disciplines. The method is presently being used in the study of disciplines like psychology, sociology, psychiatry, aesthetics, mathematics and many other disciplines. Phenomenology therefore has presently become what Husserl, the founder wanted it to be, that, is, the method by which all disciplines should be studied.

2.5 Critical Appraisal of the Phenomenological Movement

So far, in this chapter, we have examined Edmund Husserl's philosophy within the context of the phenomenological movement. We have attempted to see the background and orientation that produced his philosophy. We made an excursion into the past to see the origin and development of the phenomenological movement which he pioneered. This expose has opened our mind to the following points, namely that;

- (1) Phenomenology is defined as the descriptive study of phenomena in their pure and original state without the influence of a priori beliefs and prejudices.

- (2) Phenomenology enjoins us to be in state of presuppositionlessness in all our endeavours in order to apprehend the correct situation of things.
- (3) Phenomenology is an attempt at introducing a new methodology to philosophy with the ultimate aim of making it a precise, orderly and strict science.
- (4) Phenomenology is not a philosophical school but rather a philosophical tendency among philosophers of different orientation who hold diverse views. The only thing that unites them is the inspiration that all the members received from Edmund Husserl, the founder.
- (5) Phenomenology in recent time has become a method of studying virtually all disciplines.

At this point in our examination of the phenomenological movement, it becomes necessary to ask whether phenomenology has been able to achieve its set objectives. We should now ask whether phenomenology has been successful where previous philosophies have failed. These questions will form the basis of our critique of the phenomenological movement which will be done now.

In the short history of the phenomenological movement, the movement has received more criticism than even the philosophical ideas that have been around for long. The reason is not far-fetched. Phenomenology, at the beginning drew a large programme and made its work so grandiose that its views became easily accessible to criticisms. In fact some critics have said that phenomenology is not something new but rather a repetition and

combination of all that has been with philosophy for long. In this respect, John Wild,¹⁵³ Ortega Y. Gasset¹⁵⁴ and even Herbert Spiegelberg¹⁵⁵ will come to mind. Gasset the famous Spanish philosopher opined that Husserl's phenomenology is not something new. His philosophy he said "is one of the naive and unjustified philosophies".¹⁵⁶

We do not agree with this criticism of the phenomenological movement. As we said earlier in this chapter, phenomenology may reflect the influence of the philosophies of the past in its programme, but it is gross exaggeration to say that the movement is simply a repetition of previous philosophies. On the contrary, phenomenology in the hands of Husserl and his disciples has brought a new methodology into the study of philosophy. It has introduced to philosophy and impressed it on philosophers the fact that the attitude of reverence is most needed in order to do any fruitful work in philosophy. To criticise phenomenology as being totally unoriginal is unfair.

As Lauer rightly said, we need to exercise caution when criticising the phenomenological movement or we shall be engaging in a futile venture.¹⁵⁷ Lauer contended that if we intend to give a general criticism of the ideas of the movement, we may find ourselves accusing some phenomenologists

153. C.F. John Wild, Op. Cit.

154. Quoted by H. Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement, Vol. II, p. 612.

155. Ibid., p. 613

156. Ibid., p. 613

157. Quentin Lauer "Questioning the Phenomenologist", Op. Cit., p. 634.

of what they do not assert, since phenomenology has become a blanket word for describing philosophers with diverse and at times opposing views. What Lauer is saying in essence is that a criticism of one theory in phenomenology may be applicable to some members of the movement whereas it may not be applicable to others. This may therefore be unjust. In the light of the above Lauer advised that:

Only a phenomenology of phenomenology would provide us with a common denominator at which criticism could be ammended.¹⁵⁸

An important criticism is that against the phenomenologists' claim that philosophy should be done without presuppositions. The suggestion that we study the phenomena in a prejudice-free manner is a warning in the right direction. But the question is whether this is ever possible to realize.

We agree with the phenomenologists that most philosophical problems arise when our predilections are brought into our study of things. In fact, this thesis accepts that the ideal should be emulated but we have at the back of our mind that the state of presuppositionlessness can not be fully attained. It is a utopian objective which cannot be realized. There is, as we know, a difference between ideals and realities. In reality to reach a bias-free or a presuppositionless position is not possible. We can never be free from our presuppositions. In fact it is humanly impossible to do anything without presuppositions. Presuppositions are the means through which we carry out most of our studies. The presuppositions are

^{158.} Ibid., p. 634.

already entrenched in us. We are in fact oblivious of the fact that we have them. Although we may be deceiving ourselves thinking that we are acting without prejudices, but those prejudices like shadows are always hidden behind us.

To think of a philosopher who is totally free of predelictions is not possible. In fact, no step can be taken in life without some a priori assumptions. It is nothing but self-deceit to think of oneself as totally free of these assumptions. Only angels and non-mortals can ever be prejudice-free. What the phenomenologists should have said is that we should strive as much as possible to philosophise with limited assumptions or that our assumptions should not be subjective but rather objective. For it is contrary and inhuman to think, speak or act independently of presuppositions. No human being can ever work on a tabula rasa.

A careful examination of the work of the phenomenologists will confirm that they themselves are never presuppositionless. They never attempted to free themselves from their a priori assumptions, but rather formulated their ideas with the aid of the a priori beliefs. We can therefore ask borrowing the language of Lauer that:

.... how phenomenological is phenomenology or better still how phenomenological can it be? How viable is phenomenology without extra-phenoemological appeals? Not even Husserl imagined that phenomenology could be thoroughly presuppositionless in the sense that leaves behind all one's human equipment when one begins to philosophize.¹⁵⁹

159. Ibid., p. 634.

Can the phenomenologists claim that they are totally free from the presumptions they derived from their societies, teachers and colleagues? The answer is negative. The philosophies of the phenomenologists are packed full of the views of their predecessors and the influences of their societies. Looking through the work of Husserl for example, one will see clearly the great influence of philosophers like Descartes and Brentano. Heidegger also reflected in his writings the ideas of previous philosophers and his experience as a seminarian. Sartre is even not exempted from this. His work reflects the great influence of Nietzsche, Heidegger and Kierkegaard. As Spiegelberg said "Sartre's phenomenology ... is not free from preconceptions. And he shows little if any patience with those of his readers who are not willing to share them with him".¹⁶⁰

If anybody is guilty of bringing too many predilections into philosophy, it is the phenomenologists. Their writings reflect a lot of extra-philosophical ideas that one begins to wonder whether they are ever serious with their assertion that philosophy should be done without prejudices. Their works reflect a lot of views acquired in their pre-philosophical lives. Husserl's works for example are full of mathematical axioms and principles that one begins to wonder whether he is writing a philosophical treatise or a book on algebra. Heidegger also brings into his work terminologies that are non-philosophical, that are so complex and private that only the

160: H. Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement, Vol. II, p. 511.

initiates can decode. The phenomenologists are therefore the first to disobey the law they made, that is that philosophy should be done on a clean slate.

Again we want to pick holes in the phenomenologists' stand that philosophy should be done in a descriptive manner. This belief is in line with the tradition of 19th century, *that* philosophy should make use of the methodology of science and that it is only when philosophy is scientific that it can be perfect. This stand is definitely an erroneous one. It is nothing but a manifestation of the general craze for science in this century. W. Kaufmann, like many others, noted that it was the relative successes of science in this century that led to the assumption that anything scientific is good and profitable, "it has become fashionable for scholars to copy the ways in which minor scientists cough and spit".¹⁶¹ And Compleston put this fashion in this language:

The general positivist attitude, the conviction that the empirical sciences are the only reliable source of knowledge about the world, is obviously widespread in the 19th century ... Some of the German philosophers who represented this current of thought went well beyond the particular sciences by developing a general view of reality.¹⁶²

Phenomenology like other philosophical systems in the nineteenth century such as the Analytic Movement and the Logical Positivist school has as its basic assumption the

161. W. Kaufmann "Hegel's Conception of Phenomenology" in Phenomenology and Philosophical Understanding, Op. Cit. p. 230.

belief that a scientific philosophy is the ideal philosophy. Although this assumption may be implicit in the writings of the latter phenomenologists, it was nevertheless explicit in the writings of their mentor, Husserl. Husserl never hid it from his readers that his primary aim was to make a science out of philosophy. But the question is whether this is possible.

Any attempt to make philosophy scientific is destined to fail. For philosophy and science are two different fields of study with different objectives. The methodology of one cannot and should not be therefore forced on the other without adequate justification. The nature of philosophy is quite different from the nature of science. It is normal for philosophy to be controversial. The object it seeks to study makes it to be so. Added to this is the fact that the scope of philosophy is wide, this is why it is studied in a broad manner without a precise methodology. The attempt to force the method of science on philosophy will be futile if not suicidal. The attempt to turn philosophy into science is worthless. The phenomenologists were therefore not being realistic when they set for themselves the task of making philosophy a "strict science".

As we earlier said in this chapter the phenomenological movement is one of the various reactions to Hegelianism in this century, particularly to its extreme abstraction. Hegelianism is accused of taking philosophy away from the reach of the mortals far into the outer world with its mysticism. The phenomenological movement levies this charge against Hegelianism. But unfortunately the phenomenologists themselves entered into the mysticism and abstraction they accused Hegelianism of.

A close look at the development of phenomenology will reveal that this entry was not deliberate but rather the result of the careless use of language. This obscurity of language even to professional philosophers makes phenomenology of little interest to many.

Their readers complain of the difficulty and the abstract nature of the language of the phenomenologists. Their writings are a combination of abstract and private vocabulary and at times most of their words coined by them have no explicit meanings. Those who complain that Husserl's language is difficult and very ungerman will be short of words when confronted with the writings of Heidegger. As Mary Warnock said, Heidegger has defeated his primary purpose of explaining the concept of 'being' with his difficult language. She said:

While Husserl's language is obscure and difficult the difficulties we encounter with Heidegger are different and to my mind greater for his writing is not intended to be precise and his plan is not a scientific plan. In his later philosophy, he quite definitely aimed to demonstrate the power of poetical rather than logical thinking in Being and Time, his method is cumulative and actual vocabulary new and barbarous. Total comprehension would be impossible and probably not what was intended. 163

What Mary Warnock says of Heidegger in the above quotation is applicable to other phenomenologists. All phenomenologists are noted for squeezing and bending words to give them different and peculiar meanings. They, most of the time, speak in technical language that baffles their readers. The result of this non-challant use of language is not favourable to phenomenology.

163. Mary Warnock, Existentialism, p. 49

The squeezing and bending of existing words by literalizing their meanings whether etymologically justified or not without additional guidance to the reader by way of definitions or examples is apt to create a twilight of uncritical semi-understanding among the gullible and of hostile misunderstanding among the more critical.¹⁶⁴

Even if the phenomenological movement meant well for philosophy and believed that it is a sure salvation from the multifarious problems that confront man, the poor means of communication would never make this a reality. Although phenomenology may not become analytic in the sense of the British tradition, it is necessary for philosophical ideas to be presented in clear and lucid language. No amount of patience can make even a devotee comprehend a work that is presented in a difficult and complex language.

In rounding off this section in particular and this chapter in general, we should comment on the disorderliness and contradictions that characterised phenomenology as a philosophical movement. We have remarked in this chapter that phenomenology, unlike other movements, is made up of philosophers with diverse and often contradictory views. We disagree with Maurice Natanson's assertion that the conflicts and disagreements that permeate phenomenology are signs of vitality. But "A house divided against itself is destined to fall" is an old saying which has been empirically proved by the phenomenological movement. The conflicts that exist among members of the movement are partly responsible for the cold reception that is given to phenomenology when it is compared to other philosophical movements.

164. H. Spiegelber, The Phenomenological Movement, p. 350.

The disagreement between philosophers of the movement is even more pardonable when one sees the contradictions in the philosophies of individuals. In this respect Husserl readily comes to mind. Husserl's philosophy is characterised by the contradiction between his earlier stand of realism and his later stand of idealism. In Husserl, we see realism and idealism, two opposing views being presented together. It is this contradiction among many others that stimulated this present study in the first instance.

2.6 Summary

This chapter examined the phenomenological movement that emanated out of Husserl's philosophical career. The objectives of this is to reveal the orientation behind Husserl's epistemology. We examined Husserl's philosophy in detail and the ideas of his predecessors. We also examined the development of phenomenology after Husserl and showed the shortcomings of phenomenological philosophy and the effect of this on the movement.

Having therefore investigated the genesis, development and limitations of phenomenology in general, our next chapter will be devoted to an examination of the premises behind Husserl's contention that the transcendental subject is the ultimate position of justification for all knowledge claims.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PREMISES OF EDMUND HUSSERL'S FOUNDATIONALISM

To make Husserl's view intelligible one must grant a number of suppressed premises. Attacks, actual and possible ones, from non-phenomenological sources are usually directed at these suppressed premises, but pointing out their existence facilitates the elucidation of Husserl's doctrines.
*Peter Kostenbaum

3.0 Introduction

Behind all philosophical positions lie some basic premises. At the root of all philosophical views there are some assumptions. A careful exposition of those premises will aid the understanding of such philosophical views. It is with this at the back of our mind that we seek to examine the assumptions or premises behind Husserl's theory of "transcendental subjectivity" which is otherwise referred to as Husserl's epistemological foundationalism in this study.

The fundamental objective of Husserl's phenomenology is to provide an ultimate foundation for knowledge and for philosophy. This dual foundation is interwoven and interconnected, such that "there can be no radical separation between the Husserlian critique of cognition and the Husserlian universal philosophy"¹. This quest

*Peter Kostenbaum in Introductory Essay to Edmund Husserl's. The Paris Lecture (The Hague Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), p.xii .

1. Quentin Lauer in "Introduction to Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy (New York) Harper and Row Publisher(1965) p.44.

for a foundation of knowledge and of philosophy dominated the entire career of Husserl and all his writings were directly or indirectly geared towards the realization of the goal.

At a later stage in Husserl's career, he asserted that the foundations of knowledge and philosophy would be ~~apprehended~~ in the "transcendental subjectivity" and "transcendental philosophy" respectively. These two foundations are related, or we should say precisely that the two foundations are two ways of looking at the same entity. Husserl therefore argued that all his earlier philosophical positions "are stepping stones to the transcendental subjectivity in which knowledge is guaranteed in which it is rendered apodictic absolute."²

This chapter, therefore, in the light of the above, will examine the premises that led to the conclusion that "transcendental subjectivity" is the foundation of knowledge. We shall in this chapter carry out an investigation into how Husserl got to his destination in the "transcendental subjectivity". We shall reveal how this conclusion was drawn as an inference from all these premises. And finally at the end of the chapter the fundamental fallacies of the assumptions will be shown with the aim of revealing that Husserl's foundation-ism is a conclusion arrived at from invalid premises, which necessarily implies the invalidity of the conclusion.

2. Ibid., p. 44

3.1 Phenomenology As The Search for Foundations

One fundamental premise of Husserl's philosophy is the view that the truth or the perfect nature of any concept or any thing whatsoever can be attained if we go to the root or the foundation or the essence of such a concept or thing in question. This assumption was very important in the philosophical meditations of Edmund Husserl. In fact Husserl conceived of his phenomenology as the solution to all philosophical problems because he believed that phenomenology would always strive at apprehending the root or the foundation of all problems and issues. In the light of this, Husserl contended that phenomenology is a quest for the foundations of all problems and issues. Husserl's presumption could be well understood if we examine how he got into philosophy. Husserl initially stumbled into philosophy as a result of the crisis he witnessed in his earlier discipline - mathematics. He saw in mathematics problems that were insurmountable and felt the only solution to those problems lay in philosophy. These problems were essentially foundational problems. Husserl therefore searched for this foundation in philosophy but unfortunately, he found philosophy wanting.

Coming to philosophy Husserl saw a more perplexing situation. Despite this Husserl still believed that philosophy should be the foundation of not only mathematics but all disciplines, and he sought to make it equal to this task. For philosophy to regain its position, Husserl felt that it must be radicalised by going back

to its own root or foundation. Philosophy, he felt could only be radicalised if it becomes phenomenological, that is if it became a search for foundations. It could only be radicalised he felt if it sought to apprehend essences and roots of problems and issues. In that way philosophy would become what he thought it originally was, that is, a rigorous science.

Husserl therefore, true to this basic assumption appealed to all philosophers to always go to the root or essences of issues. His proposal in 1924 that "one should not consider himself too good for a foundation work" has become the motto of his phenomenological programme.³ It was this belief that made him devote his entire career to the search for the dual foundation of knowledge in general and of philosophy in particular.

The assumption that the roots or foundations of things have the best information about issues was not new, philosophers before him had held this belief. Particular mention should be made of Descartes and Kant in this respect. Husserl himself saw these two philosophers as his predecessors. He was fascinated by Kant's reconstruction of epistemology which he carried out in his Critique of Pure Reason. Descartes also greatly impressed him with his bid to apprehend the foundation of philosophy and cognition.

3. Quoted by: H. Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction, Vol. II (The Hague, Martins Nijhoff, 1976), p. 75.

The phenomenological programme of Edmund Husserl was therefore meant to return philosophy to the foundations or roots of all problems that confront it. Phenomenology, Husserl contended, must reformulate all philosophical problems and surmount them by tackling them from their roots. All philosophy, to be precise all genuine philosophy, must conform to this phenomenological programme. He said

A philosophy with problematic foundations with paradoxes which arises from the obscurity of the fundamental concepts is no philosophy. It contradicts its very meaning as philosophy.⁴

In the same page of the same book quoted above, Husserl again talked at length on the need to investigate the root of problems in order to solve them. He felt that phenomenology should become archaeology and its instrument should be the digger⁵, for it needs to search for the roots of issues in order to understand those issues.

Edmund Husserl therefore called himself a "perpetual beginner". His philosophy was guided by the ideal of presuppositionlessness which is an offshoot of his belief that phenomenology is a foundational study. On the basis of this assumption, Husserl enjoined all

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4. E. Husserl, Ideas General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology. Translated by W.R. Boyce Gibson (London, Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1969), p. 27.
 5. H. Spiegelberg, Op. Cit. Vol. I., p.82.

philosophical works to commence at the root, to begin afresh to do away with prejudices and to avoid predilections. All studies should always begin afresh and all things should be studied at their roots without unclarified assumptions which will distort the nature of the objects of study. Maurice Merleau-Ponty a follower of Husserl summarised all the above in these words:

The philosopher.... is a perpetual beginner, which means that he takes for granted, nothing that men learned or otherwise believe they know. It means also that philosophy must not take itself for granted, in so far as it may have managed to say something true: that is an ever renewed experiment in making its own beginning and finally that radical reflection amounts to a consciousness of its own dependence on an unreflective life which is its initial situation, unchanging given once and for all.⁶

The belief that all studies should be started afresh since truth lies at the root of things gave birth to another premise which is referred to as the "phenomenological ideal of presuppositionlessness". The premise of presuppositionlessness in Husserl's philosophy is that, since truth is at the root of things, all our philosophical works should be done without presuppositions, without biases, because these will prevent us from reaching the root. It is in the realization of

6: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, The Phenomenology of Perception translated by Colin Smith, (New York, The Humanities Press, 1962), p. xiv.

this fact that Husserl contended that the true foundation of philosophy and cognition is apprehended when we go directly to the root, to the essence of things in question. With this at the back of his mind, Husserl formulated his famous slogan "to the things themselves", that is, when we want to understand anything, we should go directly to that thing itself. This marks the early stage of Husserl's philosophy. At a later stage Husserl changed gear and asserted that the transcendental subjectivity or the purified ego is the best source of information about all things⁷. Spiegelberg summarised the Husserlian transition from realism to idealism thus:

But where were those roots or beginning of knowledge to be found? Husserl's first and most obvious answer was in the things, the sachen, the phenomena in the customary sense to which all our concepts ultimately referred. This was the period of the celebrated "turn to the object". Yet increasingly in the process of digging down to the root of those phenomena by means of his phenomenological analysis and of trying to give full and ruthless account of his beliefs Husserl came to the conviction that these roots lay deeper namely in the consciousness of the knowing subject. Thus to the "turn to the object" was supplemented by a "turn to the subject"⁸.

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7. For the reasons why Husserl abandoned realism for idealism Cf Roman Ingarden, "About The Motives which led to Husserl to Transcendental Phenomenology" in Phenomenology and Natural Existence: Essays in Honour of Marvin Faber (Ed) Daily Riepe. (New York State University of New York Press, 1973) pp. 95-117.
 8. H. Spiegelberg, Op. Cit., Vol. I, p. 82

From the above examination of Husserl's assumption that phenomenology, if it wants to solve the pressing problems of philosophy, must be a foundational study we can understand why the quest for a foundation became an important task in Husserl's philosophy. The belief that truth lies at the roots of things, the assumption that all study should be carried out without the hindrance of unclarified presumptions led Husserl to search vigorously for the foundations of philosophy and cognition. He felt that the apprehension of the two implies that philosophy would be fully purged of its problems. This led Husserl to formulate his theory of transcendental subjectivity and to assert that it is not only the foundation of cognition, but also the foundation of philosophy. Any philosophy, he contended, that starts with the purified ego or the transcendental ego is destined to succeed. And any knowledge that emanates from it is justified.

3.2 Phenomenological Reconciliations and Reconstruction in Epistemology

Husserl is to the twentieth century philosophy what Plato, Descartes and Kant were to their times. Husserl like these philosophers was determined to solve the problems of philosophy particularly the problems of epistemology which he regarded as the core of philosophy. This led Husserl to formulate his epistemological foundational theory. It was in his bid to reconcile the warring parties in philosophy, particularly epi-

stemology, that he went in search of a common ground for the opposing views. This common ground Husserl later referred to as the foundation of philosophy.

The assumption therefore that phenomenology represents the synthesis of the polar views in philosophy gave birth to Husserl's foundationalism. He saw his phenomenology as a renewal of the Kantian "Copernican revolution". He wanted, like Kant, to reconcile the warring parties in philosophy and to reconstruct the multifarious theories in philosophy so that they would all become unified as one. Husserl, like Kant, wanted to commence this reconciliatory exercise with epistemology, which he saw as the heart of philosophy.

The phenomenology of Husserl was therefore an attempt in the cartesian and kantian spirit to rebuild philosophy, to build a castle that will accommodate the conflicting theories that permeate it. It is an attempt at bringing under the same roof rationalism and empiricism. This was what led to his foundationalism. To attain this objective philosophy, as we said earlier he would have to go back to the beginning and start with the index zero. All existing philosophical theories will have to be suspended until further notice. Husserl aimed at this reconciliation in his book Ideas where he contended that

In the fundamental position we have set up we have presupposed nothing, not even the concept of philosophy and we intend to hold on to this policy henceforth. The philosophic epoche which we propose to adopt should consist when explicitly formulated, in this that in respect of the theoretical, we shall abstain from passing any judgement at all and that our whole discussion shall respect the limits imposed by this abstention.⁹

In this book, Husserl attempted this reconciliation and reconstruction in philosophy by taking epistemology as his paradigm. Here he tried to show that both empiricism and rationalism are two extremes and sought to show their limitations as well as their assets. He at the end of the day concluded that phenomenology or transcendental philosophy which relies on the transcendental subject is the ideal epistemological theory, for it is the synthesis of both empiricism and rationalism. It is the hybrid of the assets of the two theories. Husserl in the book showed that phenomenology can synthesise both empiricism and rationalism and he also argued that this is not a contradiction to the phenomenological mind. He said that the root of both empiricism and rationalism lies in the 'transcendental ego'. Husserl argued that phenomenology is empiricism in as much as empiricism seeks to go to the primary data of experience. According to him

9. E. Husserl, Ideas....., pp. 80-81.

Empiricistic Naturalism springs, as we must recognise from the most praise worthy motives. It is an intellectually practical radicalism which in opposition to all idols to the powers of tradition and superstition to crude and refined prejudices of every kind, seeks to establish the right of the self-governing reason to be the only authority in matters that concern truth.¹⁰

He agrees with the empiricists that the dator of experience or the object of knowledge should be apprehended. This explains his slogan: "to the things themselves" and it represents the empiricist aspect of his phenomenology.

He also agreed with the *empiricists* when he said that "natural knowledge begins with experience and remains within experience".¹¹ Husserl went further to say that

The world is the totality of objects that can be known through experience, known in terms of orderly theoretical thought on the basis of direct presence.¹²

All the above confirm the view that Husserl subscribed to empiricism, especially some of its cardinal principles which he regarded as epistemological assets. He was drawn most to Hume whose radical empiricism he admired. He saw Hume as the peak of empiricism although he disagreed with his skeptical conclusions. In this

10. Ibid., p.82

11. Ibid., p. 51

12. Ibid., p. 52

respect therefore

Husserl liked to present Hume as 'the first and greatest although descriptive phenomenologist. And he claimed that Hume was deceived into thinking that he was some kind of empirical psychologist "introspecting" particular sense data and building up generalizations to account for ordinary mental phenomena.... Husserl claims that on the contrary Hume's object is to exhibit the essential in the particular. Husserl was led to call Hume the first phenomenologist in so far as Hume described what appears.¹³

Husserl's earlier work shows that he was an empiricist whereas in the later stage he was a rationalist idealist. His phenomenology at the later stage departed from traditional empiricism because of its inadequacy and this departure was well summarised by Albert Chandler when he said:

Empiricism is a wholesale tendency in so far as it demands that all theory should rest upon direct seeing of realities rather than upon tradition and prejudice. But it is arbitrary and dogmatic in its assumption that all seeing must be of the empirical type, namely, the perception of individual facts, localised in space and time. Logic and mathematics rest in fact upon quite a different kind of seeing.¹⁴

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13. Maurice Roche, Phenomenology, Language and the Social Sciences, (London and Boston, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 11.
 14. Albert Chandler, "Professor Husserl's programme of philosophic Reform" in The Philosophical Review, Vol. 26, (19), p.637.

It is this inability of the empiricist to cognize the knowledge from mathematics and logic that made rationalism appeal to Husserl and made him to argue for rationalism, particularly in his later works. He wanted to show that rationalism if radicalised, could complement empiricism. In the light of this Husserl saw phenomenology as a form of rationalism because it is preoccupied with the general essences of all things. Husserl's phenomenology seeks to apprehend the eidetic or essential knowledge rather than individual knowledge. It seeks to comprehend the Eidos and cognize the eidetic rather than the empirical aspect of things. To him, for example, true knowledge is the knowledge of redness in all red objects and not the redness in an individual object. Husserl seeks to know the unchanging entities behind changing things, the essences or the eidos and in this he became a rationalist.¹⁵

Although Husserl believes that true knowledge begins with experience, he also contends that true knowledge should strive at universals, essences, rather than particulars. He believes that since experience is the best way of apprehending knowledge, it should aim at the Eidos rather than the individuals. The knowledge of particulars is not true knowledge because of the fact that they are not durable and can easily lose their certainty. The knowledge of individuals can only make meaning when the universal is cognised. According to

15. We should point out that Husserl's rationalism is more of the platonic type than that of the seventeenth century.

him "Individual Being of every kind is, to speak generally, 'accidental'. It is "so and so" but essentially it could be other than it is."¹⁶

Husserl believes that the true and pure knowledge is the knowledge of universals.¹⁷ Everything that is, all particulars have "essential" being and there with an Eidos to be apprehended in all its purity.¹⁸

An individual object is not simply and quite generally an individual, a 'this there' something unique, but being constituted thus and thus "in itself", it has its own proper mode of being, its own supply of essential predicables which must qualify it (qua "Being as it is in itself") if other secondary relative determinations are to qualify it.¹⁹

All the above are mere repetitions of the obvious fact in the eidetic studies, that is that particulars are mere reflections of universals that the individual possesses the attributes of their Eidos. That from the particulars we can apprehend the flow of qualities from their essences. "Every material being" Husserl said "has its own essential derivations and at the limit the universal derivative."²⁰

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- 16. E. Husserl, *Ideas*, ..., p.53
 - 17. Ibid., p. 53
 - 18. Ibid., p. 53
 - 19. Ibid., p. 53
 - 20. Ibid., p. 53

In the light of the foregoing, it becomes clear why Husserl felt that his reconciliation would lead to a situation whereby phenomenology would become a combination of both empiricism and rationalism. But phenomenology needed to reconstruct the two theories. There was the need therefore for a reconstruction of traditional empiricism, to enable it grasp the universal essences or Eidos, which are the objects of knowledge according to the new theory that Husserl sought to propound. Empiricism in the traditional form considered the universals as nothing but the summary of the attributes of the particulars.

Husserl also disagreed with rationalism in some aspects and decided to reconstruct it. For it assumes erroneously that we can know the essences without experience. Rationalism believes that facts could be separated from essences whereas Husserl believes otherwise. Hence Husserl sought to reconstruct rationalism in order to make it realise that both 'individuals' and 'essences' are related, but that essences are superior and priori to individuals. It was this attempt at reconstruction that led Husserl to the theory of the "transcendental subjectivity". For it is only in the theory of transcendental subjectivity that the reconciliations and reconstructions that Husserl was trying to bring about could be realised. Let us now see how Husserl carried out this reconstruction.

Husserl began his reconstruction of traditional epistemology with his contention that facts cannot be separated from essences that the individual is a derivative from the universal. In the light of this he contended that an individual intuitive knowledge - in as much as individual is derived from essence - must necessarily imply an essential intuitive knowledge.²¹ Individual intuition, he asserted, passes into essential insight which he calls ideation.²² Husserl continued by claiming that individual intuition is similar to eidetic or essential intuition; but calls the former "empirical intuition" and the latter "Eidetic Insight" or "Ideation".²³

By individual intuition Husserl meant the immediate knowledge of individual entities or particular objects. For example the fact that the particular tomato is red is an individual intuition. Whereas by Eidetic Insight he meant the universal apprehension of the fact that all ripe tomatoes are red. Husserl is therefore saying that in essence, both the knowledge of particulars and that of universals are attained intuitively. In fact, he said, "of whatever kind the individual intuition may be, whether adequate or not, it can pass off into essential intuition and the latter, whether correspondingly adequate or not, has the character of a dator act"²⁴

21. Ibid., p. 55

22. Ibid., p. 55

23. Ibid., p. 55

24. Ibid., p. 55

Summarising the similarities in individual intuition and essential insight. Husserl said

Essential insight is still intuition just as the eidetic object is still an object. The generalization of the correlative mutually attached concepts intuition and object is not a casual whim, but is compellingly demanded by the very nature of things. Empirical intuition more specifically sense-experience is consciousness of an individual object and as an intuiting agency "brings it to givenness": as perception to primordial givenness, to the consciousness of grasping the object in "a primordial way" in its bodily selfhood. On quite similar lines essential intuition is the consciousness of something of an 'object' a something, towards which it glance is directed, a something "self given" within it; but which can then be presented in other acts vaguely, or distinctly thought, made the subject of true and false predications....²⁵

Husserl, as we can see from the passage quoted above, seeks to show further how essential insight is a correlate of empirical insight since the latter is derived from the former. This position would however be rejected by both traditional empiricists and traditional rationalists. These two categories of philosophers would reject Husserl's reconciliation exercise. Traditional empiricists would not listen to any talk of eidetic intuition, for the independent existence of 'Eidos' is according to them not possible. On the other hand traditional rationalists would reject an eidos which is

25. Ibid., p. 55

known empirically and intuitively since "Essences" are apriori and independent of individuals.

In the above quoted passage the similarity between "empirical intuition" and "essential insight" lies in the fact that the two are "intentional" that is, that the empirical intuition is consciousness of an individual object such as eiditic insight, it is the consciousness of an Eidos. The two intuitions are both directed, this means that they are both related to the world.²⁶ With intentionality Husserl aims at showing that the two intuitions have the world as their correlate and in this, he seeks to show that the two are similar. Even essential insight, he feels has something to do with the world and he says:

It lies in the intrinsic nature of essential intuition that it should rest on what is a chief factor of individual intuition namely the striving for this, the visible presence of individual fact, though it does not, to be sure, presuppose any apprehension of the individual or any recognition of its reality. Consequently it is certain that no essential intuition is possible without the free possibility of directing one's glance to an individual counterpart and of shaping an illustration; just as contrariwise no individual intuition is possible without one free possibility of carrying out an act of ideation and therein directing one's glance upon the corresponding essence which exemplifies itself in something individual visible.²⁷

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26. The concept of intentionality as we said in chapter two is cardinal to Edmund Husserl's philosophy. We shall examine in detail Husserl's explication of this concept in the next chapter.
27. E. Husserl Ideas, p. 56

Despite this similarity, Husserl felt that essential insight is still different from empirical intuition in principle.²⁸ But Husserl argued that we cannot think of eiditic insight without individual intuition. He went on to look at the difference between the two as one type of difference that exists between "existence" that is individual concrete being and essence, between "facts" and Eidos".²⁹

In the next page after the page where Husserl discussed the similarity between eiditic insight and individual intuition, Husserl asserted that though most essential insights need individual intuitions and cannot act independently of them, nevertheless, there are some essential insights that could be done without individual intuition.³⁰ What he is saying here is that there are some pure essential insights which are not derived from individual objects such as fantasy and imagination. Husserl calls this type of essential insight 'pure thought' or "unmixed thought", for it "does not imply any positing of individual existence whatsoever; pure essential truths do not make the slightest assertion concerning facts."³¹

Husserl is by this trying to imply that some essential insights are pure and independent of experience, they

28 Ibid., p. 56

29 Ibid., p. 56

30. Ibid., p. 56

31. Ibid., p. 57

are "unmixed thought" and therefore independent of empirical facts. This stand is without doubt a mark of rationalism in the traditional sense which Husserl wanted to avoid. By this Husserl has pitched his camp with the rationalists and thereby defeated his reconciliatory objective.³²

In the light of this new development, Husserl makes a demarcation between what he calls "empirical eidetic insight" and "pure eidetic insight". By pure eidetic insight he meant those eidetic insights which are independent of experience, whereas by empirical eidetic insight, he meant those eidetic insights which have the empirical facts as their correlates.³³

As a derivative from this analysis of the dichotomy of "empirical intuition" and "essential insight" which we examined earlier Husserl talked of the dichotomy of the science of facts - which studies empirical intuition and science of essences - which studies essential insights. He said

The connection (itself eidetic) which holds between individual object and essence and which is such that to each individual object a state of essential being belongs as its essence, just as conversely to each essence there corresponds a series of possible individuals as its factual instantings Vereinzelungen is the ground for a corresponding reciprocal relationship between sciences of fact and sciences of essence.³⁴

32. We shall criticise this partiality on the part of Husserl in the latter part of this chapter.

33. Ibid., p. 57

34. Ibid., p. 61

By the sciences of facts Husserl meant such natural sciences like biology or psychology and by sciences of essence he meant the eidetic studies like pure logic or mathematics.

Husserl argued that sciences of essence are independent of sciences of facts whereas sciences of facts are not independent of sciences of essences. Sciences of essences, Husserl said:

... in all their thought constructions, are free through out from any positings of actual fact; or what comes to the same thing, in them no experience qua experience, i.e. qua consciousness that apprehends or sets up reality or concrete being can take over the function of supplying a logical ground.³⁵

Husserl went on to argue that a geometer who is a student of the sciences of essence does not need experience to comprehend his study. He does not have experience as the foundation of his study. He can decide to draw his figures in experience or in fantasy.³⁶ The choice is left to him. Whereas

The student of nature behaves quite differently. He observes and experiments, i.e. he fixes what is concretely there just as he experiences it; experience for him is an act that supplies grounds, and for which mere imagining could never be a substitute. For this very reason science of fact

35. Ibid, pp. 61-62

36. Ibid p. 62

and science of experience (Erfahrung) are equivalent concepts. But for the geometer, who studies not actualities but "ideal possibilities" not actual but essential relationships, essential insight and not experience is the act that supplies the ultimate ground.³⁷

Husserl further asserted that though sciences of facts rely on sciences of essence and cannot work without them, the reverse happens to sciences of essence because according to him "eidetic sciences exclude in principle every assimilation of the theoretical results of empirical sciences... From facts follow always nothing but facts".³⁸

The sciences of facts are not independent of the sciences of essence, in fact it cannot progress without its help. Husserl said

No fully developed science of fact could subsist unmixed with eidetic knowledge, and in consequent independence of eidetic sciences formal or material. For in the first place it is obvious that an empirical science wherever it finds grounds for its judgment through mediate meaning, must proceed according to the formal principles used by formal logic. And generally, since like every science it is directed towards objects it must be found by the laws which pertain to the essence of objectivity in general. Thereby it enters into relation with the group of formal ontological disciplines, which, besides formal logic in the narrower sense of the term includes the disciplines which figured formerly under the formal "mathesis universalis".³⁹

37. Ibid, p 62

38. Ibid, p. 63

39. Ibid, pp. 63-64

What Husserl is saying in other words is that natural science cannot do without eidetic science since it must in the process of analysis and judgement of its data, observe the law of formal logic. He says again that natural science if it seeks to study objects must conform to the universal rule of mathematics. In essence what he is saying is that if natural science seeks to understand the external objects it cannot at any level do it independently of eidetic sciences.

The analysis of the dichotomy of individual intuition and essential intuition, fact and essence, sciences of facts and sciences of essence is not a digression, rather Husserl wanted by this analysis to show, that individual intuition is complementary to essence etc. By this he seeks to show indirectly that empiricism and rationalism if they are reconstructed, are complementaries which is what his pure phenomenology is out to do. He confirmed this in this language:

The general discussion concerning essence and science of essences in contrast with fact and the science of facts which we have undertaken by way of prelude concerned essential foundations for our construction of the idea of pure phenomenology.⁴⁰

The fact that Husserl's pure phenomenology cannot reconcile traditional empiricism and traditional rationalism could be seen from the above analysis.

40. Ibid, p. 80

Husserl has without doubt been very partial towards rationalism. From what we have seen, he is not true to the spirit of his reconciliation. He brought into phenomenology, traditional rationalism, through the back door, or how else should one describe all his assertions of the superiority and priority of essences over facts which permeated the whole of Husserl's analysis?

Be that as it is, let us continue with our examination of Husserl's reconstruction of traditional epistemology. Husserl asserted that his quarrell with empiricism, is that, it denies concepts like "ideas", "Essence" and the "Knowledge of Essential Being". Husserl felt that empiricism cannot deny all those without challenging its own foundation. According to him the victorious advance of the natural sciences, however greatly indebted for their high scientific level as "mathematical" to eidetic grounding has favoured philosophical empiricism and has made it the dominating, and indeed in the circles of empirical science the almost exclusively dominating conviction".⁴¹

What Husserl is saying above is that traditional empiricism which denies essential insight or knowledge of essences relies on empirical science which also has its foundation in the very essential sciences that it denies.

41. Ibid, p. 81

Empiricism Husserl felt should be debunked for biting the finger that fed it. The denial of "essences" of "eidetic sciences" is detrimental to empiricism, Husserl said.

Husserl asserted that although empiricism has good intentions in seeking to make immediate experience, the only judge or the only source of knowledge, it however spoilt everything by thinking that experience is only the experience of matters of fact and thereby rejects essences as opposed to facts ⁴². To them, "what is not fact - world is imagination, and science based on imaginations is simply imaginary science."⁴³ Husserl asserts that empiricism as a philosophical theory will regard any talk of "ideas" or "essences" as "ideological extravagance" a "reversion to scholasticism" or a sort of "speculative construction a priori".⁴⁴

The rejection of 'essences' by the empiricists, Husserl argued is borne out of a misconception. He says:

... all that the empiricists here say rests on misunderstandings and prejudices - however good or well meant the motive which generally inspired him. The fundamental defect of the empiricist's argument lies in this, that the basic argument of a return to the "facts themselves" is identified or confused with the requirement that all knowledge shall be grounded in experience. Accepting the intelligible naturalistic

42. Ibid, p. 82

43. Ibid, p. 82

44. Ibid, p. 82

limitation of the field of knowable "facts", he takes for granted without further question that experience is the only act through which facts themselves are given. But facts sachen are not necessarily facts of nature, the fact world in the ordinary sense, not necessarily the fact world (Wirklichkeit) in general, and it is only with the fact world of nature, that the primordial dator act which we call experience is concerned.⁴⁵

Husserl continued his argument against empiricism by asserting that empiricism has defeated its original purpose, that is a prejudice - free return to the things themselves, by rejecting non-experiential facts or judgements. He continued that facts or judgement may be experiential or not; we should therefore not reject non-experiential facts. "Immediate seeing" (sachen) not merely the sensory seeing of experience but seeing in general as primordial dator, consciousness of any kind whatsoever is the ultimate source of justification for all rational statements".⁴⁶

By this Husserl wanted to correct the erroneous impression of the empiricists that sense experience is synonymous with the return to facts themselves. He, in the light of this misconception replaced the word "experience" with "intuition" which he felt, is more appropriate and will capture both sensory seeing and the eidetic seeing which "experience will deny". He said

45. Ibid, p. 82

46. Ibid, p. 84

Thus for "experience" (Erfahrung) we substitute the more general "intuition" and there decline to identify science in general and science of experience. Moreover, it is easy to see that he who supports this identification and contests the validity of pure eidetic thinking is led into skepticism which, as genuine cancels itself through its own absurdity.⁴⁷

Empiricism by its skepticism of eidetic knowledge involves itself in an absurdity, Husserl argued. It also involves itself in a suicidal mission, for it is challenging its own foundation. By rejecting essences the empiricists are destroying their own foundation which is the eidetic science. The denial of essences is borne out of a misconception, it is borne out of unclarified assumption, that is the assumption that sensory experience is the only form of experience. For these reasons, Husserl felt the need for a new empiricism that would avoid the limitations of traditional empiricism. He said this of the new empiricism:

Whereas these philosophers, holding characteristically to an adopted standpoint and in open contradiction with their principle of freedom from bias, start out from unclarified, ungrounded preconceptions, we start out from that which antedates all standpoints; from the totality of the intuitively self-given which is prior to any theorizing reflexion,

47. Ibid, p. 85

from all that one can immediately see and lay hold of, provided one does not allow oneself to be blinded by prejudice and so led to ignore whole classes of genuine data.⁴⁸

Husserl's new empiricism or phenomenological empiricism involved a true prejudice-free philosophizing. Husserl felt that this new theory would really become dejure and defacto independent of preconceptions and thereby apprehend the self-given intuitively. The intuitively self-given is not only the sensory experiencing but also the eidetic experiencing. At this level, phenomenology becomes empiricism, it replaces the ill-conceived empiricism of traditional epistemology. Phenomenology, Husserl argues, is positivism, but it is a radical positivism. He said:

If by positivism we are to mean the absolute unbiased grounding of all science on what is "positive", i.e. on what can be primordially apprehended, then it is we who are the genuine positivists. In fact we permit no authority to deprive us of the right of recognizing all kinds of intuitions as equally valuable sources for justification of knowledge, not even that of "modern natural science". When it is really natural science that speaks, we listen willingly and as disciples. But the language of the natural scientists is not always that of natural science itself and is assuredly not so when they speak of "natural philosophy" and the "theory of knowledge of natural science"....

48. Ibid, p. 86

But just on this account it is clear to us that the "positivists" confuse at one time the cardinal distinctions between the types of intuition, and at another, though they see them as opposed types are yet not willing, being bound by their prejudices to recognize more than one of these as valid or indeed even present at all.⁴⁹

After his criticism of traditional empiricism, he went on to deal with traditional rationalism. But his attack on rationalism is relatively mild. He said "obscurity prevails to be sure on the opposite side also",⁵⁰ Husserl criticizes rationalism for failing to show that pure intuition is possible. Rationalism, he said "does not bring to clear consciousness through reflection the fact that there is such a thing as pure intuition, a mode of being presented in which essences are primordially given as objects just as individual realities are given in empirical intuition".⁵¹ Husserl thus wishes to show that rationalism in its traditional form needs amendment and needs to be told that it should not be apathetic to the cause of "pure intuition" but should champion its existence loud and clear to convince the skeptics and the empiricists.

He asserted that traditional rationalism takes a lot for granted and it is too apathetic. He argued that "self-evidence" or the prior truth which is the

49. Ibid, pp. 86-87

50. Ibid, p. 87

51. Ibid, p. 87.

cardinal concept of rationalism is really misconceived. He said the rationalists had lost touch with its true meaning. He went further:

These so called feelings of self-evidence, of intellectual necessity and however they may otherwise be called are just theoretically invented feelings. Every one will recognize this who has brought some cases of self-evidence into view as a really given object of vision, and has compared it with a case in which evidence of the same content of judgement is lacking.⁵²

Husserl is here saying that rationalism misconstrues the essence and meaning of self-evidence. He asserts that "self-evidence" should provide an "insight into essential relations" instead of the belief that it is a feeling which is at the basis of all judgment. The rationalists had, therefore by their misinterpretation of what self-evidence is, contributed to the empiricists attack on essential insight. Self-evidence to Husserl is essential insight.

Phenomenological epistemology seeks to show that knowledge, both of individual facts and essences, is possible. Any denial of this, he felt, is based on an erroneous assumption. Empiricism as he had earlier argued cannot deny essences or ideas. He said,

52. Ibid, pp. 87-88.

Blindness to ideas is a kind of psychic blindness which through prejudices renders incapable of bringing to the field of judgement what we have already in our intuition. Our critics in truth and so to speak continuously see "ideas" "essences" - make use of them in thought formulate judgements concerning essences - only from their epistemological "standpoint they explain the same way self-evident data are patient, they let theories chatter about them, but remain what they are.⁵³

The empiricists Husserl said are so sure of the non-existence of ideation. They assert that the talk of it in our ordinary language is nothing but "grammatical hypostatization"⁵⁴. What we regard as essences are to them mental products of abstraction.⁵⁵ They regard them as mental constructions and products of abstraction. "Essence", "Idea" or "Eidos" are only grand "philosophical names for "sober psychological facts. Dangerous names on account of the metaphysical suggestion they convey!"⁵⁶

This stand of the critics of essence is taken by Husserl as nonsensical and escapist. To him "essence" exist in the true sense of the word. Taking examples to nullify the assertion that "essences" are mere mental constructions, Husserl tried to distinguish between mental abstraction and eidetic insight or ideation.

53. Ibid, p. 89

54. Ibid, p. 89

55. Ibid, p. 90

56. Ibid, p. 90

Giving examples from arithmetic, Husserl said that we can talk of numbers like two and four, for example we can add them with other numbers or subtract them from other numbers. This kind of number presentation according to him is mental construction.⁵⁷ This is quite different from essences which involve the numbers themselves. For example, the number 2 is an essence without its being added to or subtracted from other numbers.⁵⁸ Husserl explained further:

.... number presentation is not number itself, it is not the digit two, this unique member of the number series which, like all such members is a non-temporal being. To refer to it as a mental construct is thus an absurdity, an offence against the perfectly clear meaning of arithmetically speech which cannot any time be perceived as valid and preceeds all theories concerning it. If concepts are mental constructs, then such things as pure numbers are no concepts. But if they are concepts, then concepts are no mental constructs. Thus fresh terms are needed if only to resolve ambiguities so perilous as these.⁵⁹

Husserl therefore in the light of this argument contended that "Essences" "Ideas" or "Ideation" are not mental constructions but rather "a primordial dator act and as such analogous to sensory perception and not to imagination"⁶⁰ or an abstraction of the brain.

57. Ibid, p. 90

58. Ibid, p. 90

59. Ibid, p. 90

60. Ibid, p. 92

On the basis of all these limitations of traditional epistemology which we have been examining, Husserl concluded that the best mode of knowing is intuition. As we saw he earlier on replaced the word "experience" with the word "intuition" because of the misuse of the former word by the traditional empiricists. Knowledge is the intuitive cognition, whether through individual intuition or eidetic or essential intuition. Intuition Husserl referred to as the "principle of all principles", and the best and ideal method of cognition. He said:

But enough of such topsy-turvy theories! No theory we can conceive can mislead us in regard to the principle of all principles that every primordial dator intuition is a source of authority (Rechtsquelle) for knowledge, that whatever presents itself in 'intuition' in primordial form (as it wherein its bodily reality), is simply to be accepted as it gives itself out to be, though only within the limits in which it then presents itself. Let our insight grasp this fact that the theory itself in its turn could not derive its truth except from primordial data. Every statement which does nothing more than give expression to such data through merely unfolding their meaning and adjusting it accurately is thus really.... an absolute beginning called in a genuine sense to provide foundations.⁶¹

Husserl by the above position has shown that the mid-point between rationalism and empiricism is intuition. He holds that genuine knowledge comes when we get to the object of knowledge and apprehend its nature

61. Ibid p. 92

primordially. Whatever presents itself in intuition in its original form is to be accepted.

The question that we should ask now is, how did this epistemological reconciliation lead Husserl to the theory of the transcendental subject? The answer is obvious. If we say that we should apprehend the object of knowledge in its primordial and original form and that this is the best mode of acquiring knowledge, there is still a problem. The problem is this: can we as the subject of knowledge adhere to this injunction? Can we obey, to the letters, the command of the "principle of all principles" and apprehend objects as they are primordially given? The answer is definitely in the negative. Human beings as we know, always bring in, their prejudices, presumptions and unclarified views into whatever they do. If they bring this in, in this respect they will distort the object of knowledge and thereby defeat the purpose of the "principle of principles".

To avoid this problem, Husserl advocated that the subject will have to be totally purified, it will have to be fully purged of all his assumptions, prejudices and biases. The subject of knowledge after this purification will therefore become the pure subject or the transcendental ego. It will become objective and prejudice-free and it will be capable of apprehending the true nature of all things primordially in their original state.

As we know, Husserl's earlier belief is that we should get the object of knowledge and this is the best and most reliable source of information about itself. This constitutes the earlier foundationalism of Husserl, as well as his earlier realism. Like his mentor, Descartes, he wanted the unshakeable apodictic foundation of knowledge. This goal, he felt, could not be realized if the human being remained what he was, he would have to be changed to become capable of this new task. This accounted for Husserl's journey into idealism and his formulation of the notion of transcendental subjectivity. We would, he felt, be living in the world of illusions if we continue to think that the object in its primordial state could be apprehended by the psychological ego. The latter needed serious purging in order to be able to face the impending challenges. Hence the psychological ego had to give way for the transcendental ego.

Roman Ingarden, a close disciple of Husserl, tried again to adduce reasons for Husserl's formulation of the theory of transcendental subject, despite the fact that Husserl's reconstruction of traditional epistemology had earlier got him to the point of the "object of knowledge" as the foundation of knowledge. Ingarden said that Husserl probably went into idealism because of the criticism of a contemporary of his in the person of

Leonard Nelson.⁶² Nelson argued that the Husserlian attempts to justify knowledge by the particular object of knowledge itself is question begging. According to Roman Ingarden, Husserl agreed implicitly with Nelson and this may account for his transition to transcendental subject as the point of justification for knowledge.

From the above, it could be seen that it was Husserl's bid to reconcile the conflicting theories in philosophy by reconstructing them that led him to his formulation of the theory of transcendental subjectivity. Husserl believes that a common foundation of the conflicting theories in epistemology, that is, empiricism and rationalism should be sought in order to reconcile them. It was the search for this common foundation that finally led Husserl to the notion of transcendental subject. For the transcendental subject is both empiricistic and rationalistic, it is empiricistic as much as it is the ego that takes part in the process of experience and it is rationalistic in as much as intuitive reasoning and innate ideas are attributes of the ego which becomes perfect when it is purified and becomes transcendental. Husserl by his theory of transcendental ego had taken into consideration both the belief of the empiricist and the position of the rationalist.

62. Cf Roman Ingarden Op. Cit. p. 100

3.3 The Dichotomy Between The Natural Attitude and Phenomenological Attitude

The belief that there are two standpoints, one the natural standpoint and the other the phenomenological standpoint, which are diametrically opposed, is a belief that is basic to the philosophy of Edmund Husserl. The dichotomy of the natural attitude and the phenomenological attitude with the conviction that philosophers should go beyond the former and aim at the latter is primary to his phenomenology and is responsible for the formulation of the famous theory of transcendental subjectivity. How this premise generated the concept of transcendental subjectivity is what we are about to examine now.

Maurice Natanson once commented that the clue to phenomenology is the appreciation of the natural attitude.⁶³ What Natanson meant by this is that any attempt to understand Husserl's philosophy, that is, his phenomenology should first begin with a comprehension of Husserl's notion of natural attitude in contradistinction to the phenomenological attitude.

By the concept of natural attitude or Lebenswelt Husserl meant the standpoint or attitude of everyday life, the attitude of taking things for granted and assuming everything naively. By the natural attitude he meant the belief of the ordinary man, the man in the

63. Maurice Natanson Literature, Philosophy and the Social Sciences in Existentialism and Phenomenology (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962), p. 4.

street with his assumption, that the real world exists for him and it is what it is. Husserl believes that this attitude is borne out of misconceptions, it is an attitude of naive realism, an attitude of unclarified presuppositions which when verified will turn out to be disappointing. Husserl's argument is that this naive attitude should be transcended, it should be seriously scrutinised so that its limitations will be revealed. When this is done, Husserl felt, there will be a change in attitude, a change in standpoint for a new standpoint which he calls the "phenomenological standpoint".

The fact that the totality of Husserl's philosophy becomes intelligible only when this dichotomy is apprehended can never be over emphasized. The polarity of these two standpoints was persistent in Husserl's philosophical meditations. Throughout his career as a philosopher, Husserl always asserts whether explicitly or implicitly that genuine philosophy can only be done when we transcend the stage of "Lebenswelt". Husserl believes sincerely that the whole problem that philosophy has been facing is due to the fact that philosophy has been done from the standpoint of the natural attitude. All the problems of epistemology metaphysics and other branches of philosophy are products of the limitations of the natural attitude. For these

problems to be surmounted, philosophy will have to transcend the natural attitude and embrace the phenomenological attitude. It is because of this that Husserl felt that his "phenomenological philosophy" which is a philosophy borne out of the phenomenological standpoint is the best and the solution to all philosophical problems.

The detailed discussion of this concept of natural attitude is best presented in his two books "Ideas" and "The Idea of Phenomenology", after these two books, he never gave any serious attention to the discussion of the concept again, with the exception of his unpublished papers where he dealt at length with this concept for a different purpose. In the Ideas, Husserl introduced the concept of natural attitude in this manner:

I am aware of a world, spread out in space endlessly and in time becoming and become, without end. I am aware of it, that means first of all, I discover it immediately, intuitively, I experience it. Through sight, touch hearing etc., in the different ways of sensory perception, corporeal things somehow spatially distributed are for me simply there, in verbal figurative sense "Present" whether or not I pay them special attention by busying myself with them, considering, thinking, feeling, willing. Animal beings also, perhaps men are immediately there for me; I look up, I see them I hear them coming towards me; I grasp them by the hand, speaking with them, I understand immediately what they are sensing and thinking, the feeling that stir them, what they wish or will. They too are present as realities in my field of intuition.⁶³

63. E. Husserl Ideas Op. Cit. p. 100

In the above quoted passage, Husserl talks of the realm of natural attitude as the realm of naivety, where we are just thrown into the world with all the multifarious beings that inhabit the world. In the passage he presents the natural attitude as the crude primitive stage, where man is just there, observing, perceiving naively without cross checking or questioning his perception. The world at this stage is just forcing itself on us, without allowing us to think or ponder about it.

Husserl therefore talks of the opposing standpoint or attitude. He asserts that the natural world is not the only available world, there is another world which he calls, the "Arithmetical world"⁶⁴. This arithmetical world is the same as his phenomenological standpoint. He says that the two "worlds are present together but disconnected, apart, that is from their relation to the ego in virtue of which I can freely direct my glance or my acts to the one or the other."⁶⁵

As should be expected, Husserl on the basis of this dichotomy also makes a distinction between sciences of the natural standpoint and the sciences of phenomenological standpoint. He says:

On the one side, stand the sciences of the dogmatic standpoint, facing the facts and misconceived about all problems of an epistemological or skeptical kind. They take their start from the primordial givenness of the facts, they deal with (and in the testing of their ideas return always to these facts), and they ask what the nature of the immediately

64. Ibid, p. 104

65. Ibid, p. 105

given facts may be, and what can be immediately inferred from that natural ground concerning these same facts and those of the domain as a whole. On the other side we have the rigorous inquiries of the epistemological, the specifically philosophical standpoint.⁶⁶

By the sciences of the philosophic standpoint, Husserl means those sciences that are skeptical and critical of the sciences of the natural standpoint. "They are concerned with the skeptical problems relating to the possibility of knowledge".⁶⁷

In the light of all the limitations of the natural standpoint, Husserl enjoined us to do away with this attitude and try to embrace the phenomenological attitude. "Instead of remaining at this standpoint, we propose to alter it radically".⁶⁸ This alteration of the natural attitude to give way for the phenomenological attitude led to the introduction of the concept of "bracketing" which is a cardinal concept in Husserl's phenomenology. Bracketing is the instrument with which we can transcend the natural attitude for the phenomenological attitude. At this realm or standpoint man becomes transcendental and purged of the limitations of the natural standpoint. The alteration of standpoint was described by Husserl in this manner:

66. Ibid, p. 96

67. Ibid, p. 96

68. Ibid, p. 107

Thus all sciences which relate to this natural world, though they stand never so firm to me, though they fill me with wondering admiration, though I am far from my thought of objecting to them in the least degree, I disconnect them all I make absolutely no use of their stand point.⁶⁹

What then is the consequence of this for epistemology? And how will this premise lead to the concept of the transcendental subjectivity which Hurrel later referred to as the foundation of knowledge? Husserl, as we know, regards epistemology as the core of philosophy. The dichotomy of the natural and the phenomenological attitude as an important basic premise of Husserl's philosophy was reflected explicitly in his analysis of epistemology. In the Idea of Phenomenology, he related this dichotomy to the epistemological problem and therefore arrived at the need for a foundation of knowledge which later led to his notion of transcendental subjectivity.

In this book (Ideas of Phenomenology) Husserl argued that the problem of epistemology arises because epistemology had been operating with the data supplied by the natural attitude. In this respect, he felt that traditional epistemology had taken for granted the objects of knowledge supplied by the natural attitude. He said:

The natural attitude of mind is as yet unconcerned with the critique of cognition, Whether in the act of intuiting or in the act of thinking,

69. Ibid, p. 111

in the natural mode of reflection
 we are turned to the objects as they
 are given to us each time...⁷⁰

Husserl argued that we accept the knowledge of
 whatever appears to us in perception as the true knowledge.⁷¹
 We make judgement and generalize on the basis of universal
 assumptions. Natural cognition, according to him,
 creates problems and brings difficulties which are settled
 without critical questioning.

Contrasting the natural attitude with the phenomeno-
 logical attitude, Husserl argued that the many assumptions
 of the natural attitude, the possibility of cognition
 which is taken for granted in the natural standpoint
 becomes a problem which needs serious clarification in the
 new standpoint, that is, the phenomenological standpoint,

If we immerse ourselves in the sciences
 of the natural sort, we find everything
 clear and comprehensible, to the extent
 to which they have developed into exact
 sciences. We are certain that we are in
 possession of objective truth based
 upon reliable methods of reaching
 (objective) reality. But whenever we
 reflect, we fall into errors and con-
 fusions. We become entangled in patent
 difficulties and even self contradictions.
 We are in constant danger of becoming
 skeptics or still worse, we are in danger
 of falling into any one of a number of
 skepticisms all of which have, sad to say,
 one and the same characteristic: absurdity.⁷²

70. E. Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, (translated
 by William P. Alston & George Nakhmikian), (The
 Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970) p. 13.

71. *Ibid*, p. 13

72 *Ibid*, p. 17

Husserl in the above quoted passage showed the conflicting situations that exist in the two polar standpoints, particularly for epistemology. Epistemology in the traditional sense, according to Husserl is in the natural attitude, it domiciles in the realm of naivety and over assumptions. It takes knowledge for granted. At this realm everything is clear and unproblematic, truth is assumed. But a change in standpoint will show the many difficulties and problems which have hitherto remained unperceived. Skepticism therefore will be the method of epistemology at the level of the phenomenological attitude,

Husserl argued that the epistemology of the natural attitude had forgotten the primary task of epistemology which "is the critique of theoretical reason"⁷³ The theory of knowledge according to Husserl "must brand the well-high inevitable mistakes which ordinary reflection makes about the relation of cognition, its meaning and its object thereby refuting the concealed as well as the unconcealed sceptical theories concerning the essence of cognition by demonstrating their absurdity"⁷⁴

Husserl continued by saying that as a result of relying on the natural standpoint, traditional epistemology produced not only false theories and views about the

73. Ibid, p. 17

74. Ibid, p. 17

essence of cognition but also "self contradictory and therefore fundamentally misleading interpretations of the being that is cognisized in the sciences of the natural sort."⁷⁵ It is only when epistemology transcend this world that it can ever face its primary duty and therefore surmount the problems created by the natural attitude.

Husserl therefore says that the natural attitude, for producing erroneous views about cognition, should be altered. He said that "the entire world of nature, physical and psychological, as well as one's own human self together with all the sciences which have to do with these objective matters are epistemologically speaking put in question. Their being, their validity are left in the air"⁷⁶ Husserl argued that for any serious progress to be attained, the natural standpoint in epistemology will have to give way to a new one. This new standpoint, that is, epistemology of the phenomenological attitude will involve not a naive belief in cognition but rather a critique of cognition. Husserl said:

The critique of cognition is the attempt of cognition to find scientific understanding of itself and to establish objectively what cognition is in its essence, what is the meaning of the relation to an object which is implicit in the claim to cognition and what its objective validity or the reaching of its objects comes to if it is to be cognition in the true sense.⁷⁷

75. Ibid, p. 17

76. Ibid, p. 22

77. Ibid, p. 22

Husserl contended that if the cognition of the natural attitude is altered radically there must be an end product. This end product according to him is the transcendental ego. He said:

Although the epoche which the critique of cognition must employ, begins with the doubt of all cognitions, its own included, it cannot remain in such doubt nor can it refuse to take as valid everything given including that which it brings to light itself. If it must presuppose nothing as already given, then it must begin with some cognition which it does not take unexamined from elsewhere but rather gives to itself, which itself posits as primal.⁷⁸

With all the above Husserl has shown that the critique of cognition though very radical cannot continue ~~ad~~-infinitum. It needs to end somewhere, there must be a primal cognition, a foundation which is self-evident, adequate enough to justify all other epistemic claims. He said this of the primal cognition.

The primal cognition must contain nothing of the unclarity and the doubt which otherwise give to cognition the character of the enigmatic and problematic so that we are finally in the embarrassing position of having to say that cognition as such is a problem, something incomprehensible, in need of elucidation and dubious in its claims. Or to speak

78. Ibid p. 22

differently: If we are not allowed to take anything as already given because our lack of clarity about cognition implies that we cannot understand what it could mean for something to be known in itself yet in the context for cognition then it must after all be possible to make evident something which we have to acknowledge as absolutely given and undubitable in so far, that is as it is given with such complete clarity that every question about it will and must find an immediate answer.⁷⁹

The need for self evident apodictic foundation of knowledge is what Husserl stressed above. Having arrived at a new standpoint therefore, Husserl saw the need for the indubitable foundation which will justify all knowledge claims. Like Descartes, Husserl felt that despite any extreme skepticism the indubitable would still be apprehended. He said: "But it is at once evidence that not everything is doubtful, for while I am judging that everything is doubtful, it is indubitable that I am so judging; and it would be absurd to want to persist in a universal doubt."⁸⁰ We have seen with the above exposition how the polarity of the natural attitude and phenomenological attitude led to the formulation of the theory of transcendental ego. Husserl at this point, following his mentor Rene Descartes, has reached the foundation of knowledge in the "Ego Cogito". The knowledge of the subjective being

79. Ibid, pp. 22-23

80. Ibid, pp. 23.

is to him the primal cognition and this is attained when the natural attitude is abandoned for the phenomenological attitude

3.4 Fallacies of Husserl's premises

At this point in our examination of Husserl's premises it becomes expedient to comment and show very early the fallacies that permeate the assumptions behind the concept of transcendental subjectivity. We shall see the errors and misconceptions behind Husserl's assumptions and this will enable us to see the inadequacy of Husserl's foundationalism which is the primal objective of this research. As we know, it is an elementary rule of logic that the invalidity of a premise implies the invalidity of the conclusion.

It was the assumption that the truth dwelt in the root or the essence of things that made Husserl pursue these roots, with a view to showing the ultimate root or essence of all things which led him to postulate his famous theory of transcendental subjectivity.

We agree with Husserl that the true nature of things can best be attained when we go to the root or the context that gives birth to the things in question. We subscribe to this belief and it will be the basis of our own position on the justification of knowledge in the latter chapters. But our disagreement with Husserl lies in the fact that Husserl abandoned this earlier premise when he contended that there must be an ultimate essence, an ultimate founda-

tion of all things. The reason why Husserl talked of an ultimate foundation behind all other foundations or essences is because of his implicit belief which is that all things, all situations, are interconnected, interrelated and interwoven. He believes that behind all these roots of other things lies an ultimate foundation or ultimate essence.

This implicit assumption that all things or the whole happenings in the world are interconnected and interrelated is behind the philosophy of all traditional foundationalists. This assumption that the world is arranged in a linear order with one ultimate foundation at the root of everything gave birth to most of the problems of philosophy and it is responsible for the "problem of foundation" which Husserl attempted to solve by his postulation of the theory of transcendental subjectivity.

We should point out that Husserl at the beginning of his career was a realist. He was true to the realist belief that we should go to the things themselves. But at the latter stage of his career, he can be seen to be going against this realist principle of going to things themselves. Instead he began to see things as related to one ultimate foundation. It was at this stage that Husserl got converted into the spirit of traditional philosophy, the influence of Descartes, Plato and Kant at this stage on Husserl being tremendous. Husserl,

having been converted into the absolutism and dogmatism of traditional philosophy, failed to see things in their unique contexts and began instead to see them as connected and traceable to one ultimate root.

The reason why Husserl abandoned realism for absolutism lies in his ambition to make his philosophy the panacea to all philosophical problems. It was this that led him into the vigorous search for the ultimate solution and to argue that the transcendental subjectivity is the panacea to all problems. The second assumption behind Husserl's foundationalism, that is the belief in the need for reconciliation and reconstruction in philosophy, reflects again this ambition which permeates his entire philosophy.

The ambition to reconstruct philosophy is a futile one. Husserl as we know wanted to reconstruct traditional philosophy because of the conflicts and controversies that permeate this field of study. He said:

Instead of a unitary living philosophy, we have a philosophical literature growing beyond all bounds and almost without coherence. Instead of a serious discussion among conflicting theories that in their very conflict demonstrate the intimacy with which they belong together, the commonness of their underlying convictions and an unswerving belief in a true philosophy, we have a pseudo reporting and a pseudo criticizing, a mere semblance of philosophizing seriously with and for one another... But how could actual study and actual

collaboration be possible when there are so many philosophers and almost equally many philosophies? To be sure we still have philosophical congresses. The philosophers meet, but unfortunately not the philosophies. The philosophies lack the unity of a mental space in which they might exist for and act on one another.⁸¹

The above quoted passage summarises Husserl's disenchantment with traditional philosophy. It accounted for the ambition of Husserl to reconstruct and reconcile the conflicting views in philosophy. But the question that we want to raise is this: Can we ever attain a reconciliation in philosophy? The answer is emphatically in the negative.

Husserl's belief that philosophy should be unanimous rather than controversial is borne out of a misconception of the nature of philosophy. The problem of conflict that Husserl tries to solve is not a problem at all, conflicts are no problems in philosophy on the contrary they are what constitute philosophy. Husserl totally misconceived the nature of philosophy by seeking to resolve the conflicts that permeate it. The beauty of philosophy lies in controversy. Philosophers cannot but disagree, disagreements and conflicts are essential features of philosophy.

Husserl's anger about the controversial nature of philosophy reveals him as a mathematician rather than

81. E. Husserl, Cartesian Meditations: Introduction to phenomenology. translated by Dorion Cairns (The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1962), p. 5.

as a philosopher. In fact, it takes little introduction to philosophy for anybody to be able to appreciate that controversy is the spice of philosophy. All philosophers themselves are aware of the fact that there is no royal road to philosophy.

Husserl enjoined philosophers to throw away the standpoint of the natural attitude and philosophise on an index zero. This, Husserl argues, is the only means by which philosophical conflicts can be resolved. The truth is that philosophers cannot do away with their natural attitude. It will continue to guide and direct them in their philosophizing. The great philosophers of the past were unable to do this and no philosopher can philosophise on a clean state, on an index zero. The belief of Husserl that reconciliations of conflicting theories in philosophy can only be attained if we suspend all our previous beliefs is mistaken. No philosopher can philosophise without prejudices. Philosophies in the first instance are generated by these pre-philosophic beliefs, there would not be a philosophy without them. Philosophies are attempts to rationalize and justify pre-philosophic ideas.

Taking the example of Thales we can see that his philosophy, particularly, his belief in the primacy of water, was a way of rationalizing the beliefs of the Milesians who were surrounded by water and assumed that water was the cardinal and fundamental substance. Again,

Medieval philosophy to a large extent, was an attempt to rationalize the christian prejudices and beliefs of the time. There are other examples in the history of philosophy to show that pre-philosophic problems and issues propell and instigate philosophers to think. Husserl himself as we have seen formulated his phenomenological philosophy on the basis of inherited beliefs and prejudices. Philosophies reflect the belief and prejudices of philosophers. Nietzsche realised the above fact when he asserted that the true philosopher always writes with his blood. This may be a queer metaphor, but it is not a hyperbole.

The next point to note is that even the reconciliations which Husserl continuously announced in his works were never realised at all. In epistemology which he chose as his paradigm of reconciliation, he failed to achieve any reconciliation. Instead of reconciling the two conflicting theories, empiricism and rationalism, he took side with rationalism. Most of Husserl's attacks were directed at the empiricists. At the end of the day, no reconciliation was effected. Or how else do we see his assertion that the "essential insight is primary to "empirical intuition and his argument that pure sciences are independent of experience? All these are ways of re-introducing the notion of "innate ideas" which is the bed-rock of traditional rationalism.

Now let us take a look at the inference which Husserl drew from his purported reconciliation of empiricism and rationalism. The assertion that the transcendental subjectivity is the foundation of all epistemological positions defeats the purpose of the claimed reconciliation. The contention that the transcendental subjectivity is the common basis of all philosophies and the point of justification for all knowledge only compounds the conflicts and controversies that permeate philosophy. If the transcendental subject, that is the ego of every man, is the paradigm of philosophy and the foundation of all knowledge, then instead of conflicts that we see hitherto in philosophy, we will now witness chaos and anarchy. For Husserl's position will lead to relativism and make nonsense of the whole reconciliation that Husserl claimed to have affected.

Again the Husserlian dichotomy of the natural standpoint and the phenomenological standpoint is also a misconception. In as much as we agree that there is a difference between common sense realism and the critical nature of philosophy, we disagree with Husserl's treatment of the two as if they are diametrically opposed. In fact the polarity between the two standpoints exists only in the mind of Husserl. The way Hesserl talked of

the natural attitude as something to be avoided reminds us of the platonic dichotomy of the world of forms and the world of appearance. Indeed Husserl's dichotomy reflects as we said in chapter two, the influence of Plato, like Plato, his is an attempt at capturing the ideal which is impossible. Husserl's dichotomy like that of Plato is nothing but running away from concrete reality.

Husserl speaks of the natural attitude and stresses the fact that this standpoint is prone to error whereas the phenomenological standpoint is error-free and perfect. But human beings qua human beings are prone to error. Man as he is created is an imperfect and fallible being. How can he therefore attain this perfect standpoint that is the phenomenological standpoint?

The fallacies of Husserl's premises which we have examined here, are very important for it will be the basis of our comprehensive critique of Husserl's foundationalism in the next chapter. The criticisms carried out in this chapter have revealed that Husserl's foundationalism was borne out of a misconception, a fallacious and an erroneous belief about philosophy, man and the world generally. More will be said about this in the next chapter.

3.5 Summary

In this chapter we examined the premises behind Husserl's foundationalism, we saw how the belief in the fact that authentic nature of things could be got at the foundation of things led Husserl to search for the ultimate foundation of things. This was because he felt apprehending it implied the apprehension of the authentic nature of all things. This ultimate foundation, we argued, was finally identified with the transcendental subject.

We again in the chapter examined Husserl's attempt to reconcile and reconstruct traditional epistemologists and epistemology respectively. This, we saw, made him formulate the theory of transcendental ego. Husserl believes that all knowledge begins from and remains within experience. He also believes that true knowledge is essential knowledge. Those two theses are empiricistic and rationalistic respectively. The synthesis can only be reached by a transcendental ego, for it is the nerve centre of experience. And in fact only the transcendental ego - in opposition to psychological or empirical ego - can apprehend the essences of all things.

Again we also examined Husserl's presumption about the polarity of natural standpoint and the phenomenological standpoint. We argued that his contention that the former should be transcendental generated the need for a new ego -

transcendental ego - to replace empirical or psychological ego of the natural standpoint.

The chapter closes with our criticism, that is, that these fundamental assumptions are products of some initial misconceptions and that this fact invalidates his foundationalist thesis. This misconception in Husserl's philosophy will therefore be expounded further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

HUSSERL'S FOUNDATIONALISM: THE TRANSCENDENTAL
SUBJECTIVITY

What is the philosophic use of the transcendental ego? To be sure, for me the one who philosophizes, it obviously precedes in an epistemological sense, all objective reality. In a way, it is the basis of all objective knowledge* E.Husserl.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter was devoted to an examination of the assumptions underlying Husserl's formulation of the theory of transcendental subjectivity. In this chapter we shall examine in detail this theory with the objective of later showing the invalidity of this epistemological position.

Husserl's philosophy as we have seen was influenced by Descartes; his theory of transcendental subjectivity clearly shows this influence. Husserl, as we said earlier on, was fascinated by Descartes' attempt at apprehending the foundation of knowledge. Husserl saw himself in the same position which Descartes was at the beginning of modern philosophy when renaissance skepticism challenged the foundation of knowledge, and there was the need for another foundation. The foundation which Descartes gave then was no longer capable, Husserl felt, of sustaining the superstructure. Post-cartesian skepticism, particularly Humean skepticism, had made it absolutely necessary for there to be a new foundation. This new foundation,

*E. Husserl, The Paris Lectures, Trans. by P. Kostenbaum (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), p. 10.

Husserl felt, should still take into consideration the radicalism behind Descartes' early foundationalism, but should avoid the shortcomings of this cartesian foundationalism.

Husserl, therefore, in a bid to lay a foundation for twentieth century epistemology, followed, though with utmost caution, the road paved earlier on by Descartes. Our objective in this chapter is to see how Husserl arrived at this foundation, and to show the unique features in Husserlian foundationalism that makes it capable of doing what its predecessors could not do.

4.1 "EPOCHE" AS THE ROAD TO THE FOUNDATION

In order to attain the foundation of cognition, Husserl decided to emulate Descartes' earlier attempt. He felt that the apodictic foundation could only be arrived at if we decide to do away with all our previous knowledge and accept only that which is indubitable. Unlike Descartes who used the "methodic doubt" in the bid to attain the apodictic certainty Husserl made use of a method called "epoche" which we saw earlier on in this study. The concept of epoche which is the nerve centre of the phenomenological method is the act of going back to the root of phenomena. It means the act of suspending previous beliefs about things which are objects of investigation. It is the act of going back to the "origins of which our all too hasty everyday thought has lost sight"¹. Husserl described

1. Herbert Spiegelberg: The Phenomenological Movement: A historical Introduction Vol. 1 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), p. 133.

the concept of epoche thus:

The whole world as placed within the nature-setting and presented in experience as real, taken completely "free from all theory", just as it is in reality experienced, and made clearly manifest in and through the linkings of our experiences has now no validity for us, it must be set in brackets, untested, indeed but also uncontested. Similarly all theories and sciences positivistic or otherwise which relate to this world however good they may be succumb to the same fate.²

The concept of epoche is an epistemological method of apprehending the ultimate foundation. This is only to be expected because Husserl's goal is to lay the foundation of cognition. As an epistemological method Husserl felt that the epoche would help us in the apprehension of the primal cognition. In his book The Idea of Phenomenology Husserl discusses the theory of epoche as purely an epistemological method³. He describes epoche as "epistemological reduction", and sees it as the method through which the dubious and controversial cognition of the natural standpoint could be done away with. Cognition of the natural attitude, he says is dubious because of its prior assumption. Hence there is need for a primal cognition that shall be certain⁴. The epoche is "a new

2. E. Husserl: Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology Trans by W.R. Boyce Gibson (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1931), p. 11.

3. E. Husserl: The Idea of Phenomenology, Trans by W.P. Alston and G. Nakhnikian (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), p. 21

4. Ibid, p. 22

and radically new method which is set over against the natural method"⁵.

This new method enables us to start everything afresh on a clean slate without prejudices. The epoche as Peter Kostenbaum puts it, is the act of "focussing on any part or all of my experience and then observing, analysing, abstracting and describing that experience by removing myself from the immediate and lived engagement in it"⁶. Husserl also defines the epoche as the act of modifying the natural standpoint in order to understand it perfectly well. He says:

... the thesis undergoes a modification whilst remaining in itself what it is, we set it as it were "out of action". We "disconnect it" "bracket it". It still remains there like the bracketed in the bracket, like the disconnected outside the connexional system. The thesis is experience as lived (Erlebnis) but we make no use of it, and by that, of course we do not indicate privation as when we say of the ignorant that he makes no use of a certain thesis⁷.

At this point in our examination of epoche, we should point out a common misunderstanding of this theory. A lot of people, because of the relationship between Husserl and Descartes, tend to view the "epoche" as a new word for the old "methodic doubt". And on the basis of this, they criticise Husserl's method as too negative. The

5. Ibid, p. 22

6. Peter Kostenbaum: Introductory Essay to The Paris Lectures, Op. Cit., p. XX.

7. E. Husserl: Ideas, p. 108.

fact is that, though Husserl followed Descartes' spirit of abstaining from judgement, which was the purpose of the methodic doubt, he was aware of the limitations of the methodic doubt and was ready therefore "to reject all the well known doctrinal content of Cartesianism"⁸.

The most popular example of the misinterpretation of this Husserlian method was presented by Van Meter Ames who in an article criticised Husserl's "doubt" for being too negative⁹. Ames confused Husserl's epoche with the Cartesian "methodic doubt". He says: "it seems fantastic that a leading thinker who makes his reputation by analysis of scientific caution should carry doubt as far as he does..."¹⁰. Husserl's epoche he says is a universal doubt and Ames wonders how Husserl could attain certainty from this universal doubt¹¹.

In the most popular reply to this misunderstanding of Husserl's philosophy Professor Natanson attacked Ames for hitting a wrong target.¹² Ames work, he said, is "utterly unjust to Husserl since it misinterprets his position"¹³. Natanson argues that Husserl's "epoche" is

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8. E. Husserl: Cartesian Meditations. Trans by Dorion Cairns, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), p.2.
 9. Cf V.M. Ames "Mead and Husserl on the Self" in Philosophy and Phenomenological Research. Vol. XV 1955, pp.320-331.
 10. Ibid, p. 324
 11. Ibid, p. 324
 12. M. Natanson: "Phenomenology from the Natural Standpoint: A reply to Van-Meter Ames" Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol. XVII , 1956, p. 242.

not the act of doubting but a device by which "the individuals experience of the world is made the object of systematic inspection by a strictly methodological device"¹⁴. Natanson goes further to defend the method of epoche contending that the world is not banished by this method. Things, he continued will not change mysteriously by the method. The only change Natanson said that the epoche effect is the observer's mode of experiencing the world. "The object of doubt is not the totality of things but rather the observer's doxic belief in that totality or any of it"¹⁵.

Van Ames' misinterpretation of Husserl's "epoche" shows that he is not conversant with Husserl's literature. In all his books where Husserl discusses this method, he is always warning against any attempt to see his epoche as twentieth century "methodic doubt". In the Ideas he warns that his method is not a transformation of the earlier thesis to something else but precisely its anti-thesis. He says: "The thesis is "put out of action" bracketted; it passes off into the modified status of a "bracketted thesis" and the judgement simpliciter into bracketted judgement"¹⁶.

Although the misinterpretation of Husserl's method may be due to the obvious influence of Descartes on him in formulating his philosophy, the fact still remains that

14. Ibid, p. 242

15. Ibid, p. 242

16. E. Husserl: Ideas, p. 109.

Descartes is not the only philosopher that inspired the method of epoche, the ancient skeptics, to be precise, Pyrrho, also influenced him. In fact the word "epoche" originated with Pyrrho¹⁷.

Apart from those philosophical inspirations, Husserl must have been influenced to formulate the theory of bracketing by his earlier discipline, mathematics. Bracketing, as we know, is a method used by mathematicians in order to solve complex problems. In mathematics when the mathematician is confronted with two unrelated problems, parenthesis is introduced in order to solve the problems in different ways. Husserl adapted this mathematical method for a philosophical purpose, that is, for solving complex philosophical problems.

Under these various influences Husserl decided to make use of the method of epoche in his bid to lay a foundation (the ultimate foundation) for philosophy and cognition. Aware of the dubitable and unreliable state of all previous "foundations", he decided "a la Descartes" to abandon them and seek a new and ultimate foundation. The primary duty of any serious philosophy is to attain this apodictic truth for without it nothing positive can be done. To him "the philosopher's quest is for trully

17. According to Herbert Spiegelberg, Husserl was introduced to Pyrrho by a contemporary of his Raoul Richter who wrote a book on the ancient skeptics titled "Der Skeptizismus in der Philosophie". Spiegelberg said that Husserl digested this book and must have come in contact with the method of epoche as Pyrrho used it in this book Cf H. Spiegelberg, Vol. 1, Op.cit., p. 134.

scientific knowledge, knowledge for which he can assume ... complete responsibility for using his own absolutely self evident justifications"¹⁸. He continues:

I can become a genuine philosopher only by freely choosing to focus my life on this goal. Once I am thus committed and have accordingly chosen to begin with total poverty and destruction my first problem is to discover an absolutely secure starting point and rules of procedure, when in actual fact, I can lack¹⁹ any support from the existing disciplines¹⁹.

Husserl therefore embarks upon bracketing every belief with the objective of attaining an ultimate foundation of knowledge. In the spirit of science, he says, anything that cannot be justified shall be given the index of zero. Husserl goes on in this bracketing process, asking himself persistently the following questions:

"Can we find evidence that is primitive in the sense that it must by necessity precede all other evidences?"

"Can we find the evidence that is both immediate and apodictic?"²⁰. Husserl gave positive answers to these questions.

In the process of bracketing Husserl puts aside theories from the sciences; that is, he refused to give them any consideration. He refuses to take the world for granted, saying "the experience of the world as the true universal ground of knowledge becomes unacceptably

18. E. Husserl: The Paris Lectures, p. 4

19. Ibid, p. 4

20. Ibid, p. 6.

naive realism"²¹. The existence of other men and animals which we know through our senses are also questionable. "In short the entire concrete world ceases to have reality for me and becomes mere appearance"²².

On the whole Husserl's process of bracketing can be divided into five stages which are (1) philosophic bracketing (2) scientific bracketing (3) phenomenological bracketing (4) Eidetic bracketing and (5) transcendental bracketing. These stages will now be explained.

Philosophical bracketing, as the name implies, is the act of putting in bracket philosophical theories and views which we must have acquired in the course of our life in the natural attitude. In as much as these theories are formulated on the basis of the prejudices of the natural attitude they need to be bracketted. Scientific bracketing is the act of putting in parenthesis all scientific ideas. It is the act of giving the index of zero to all beliefs we have about the world and man especially beliefs derived from the sciences of the natural standpoint.

Phenomenological bracketing, the third stage in the process of epoche, involves the act of suspending only previous beliefs about the phenomenon in question with the aim of apprehending the phenomenon in its pure state.

21. Ibid, p. 6.

22. Ibid, p. 7

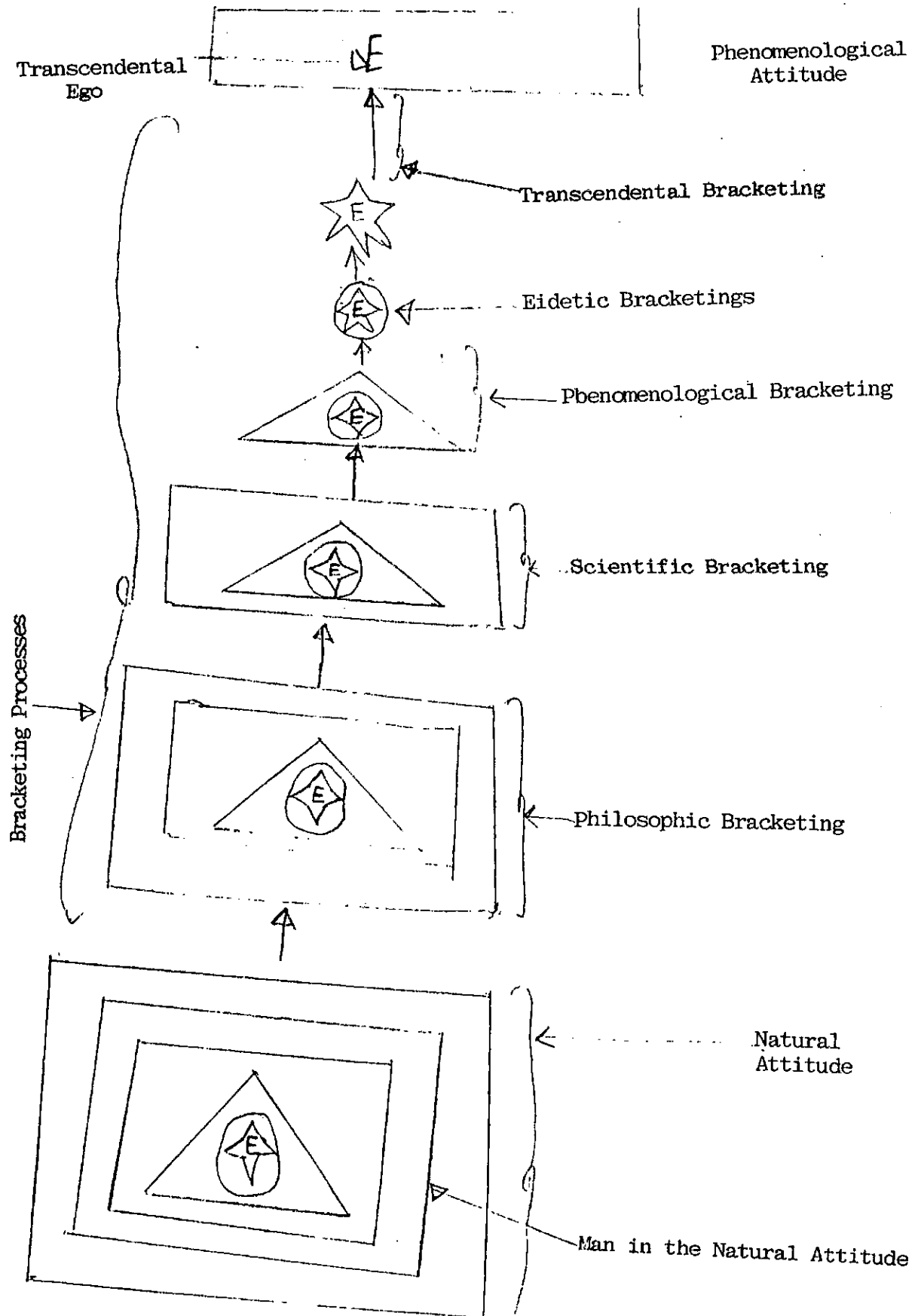
Eidetic bracketing, the fourth stage, involves the act of bracketing the particularising and existential aspects of an object in order to see clearly the essential attributes of the object. The final stage of the process of epoche is the transcendental reduction. This involves the act of putting in bracket our own individual self, our empirical or psychological ego in order to arrive at a pure or transcendental ego. The various stages in the bracketing process is well illustrated by the diagram on the next page.

It is obvious that this process of bracketing cannot continue ad-infinitum; there must be an end to the suspension of judgement. Husserl therefore ends his bracketing when he comes to something he cannot bracket. Like Descartes, Husserl says the ego cannot be bracketed. "We gain possession of something... what we acquire... is my pure living with all the pure subjective processes"²³. The epoche is therefore the methodology through which we apprehend the transcendental ego as the apodictic certainty.

4.2 TRANSCENDENTAL EGO AND TRANSCENDENTAL EXPERIENCE

As Descartes, in the modern period, ended his quest for an absolute apodictic certainty with the subjective ego, so did Husserl end his own "epoche" with the subjective ego. Just as Descartes contended that we

23. E. Husserl: Cartesian Meditations, p. 20



cannot doubt that we are thinking so did Husserl assert that we cannot bracket the transcendental ego for it is the entity responsible for the bracketing. Husserl like, Descartes, asserts that anything that belongs to the realm of transcendental ego is apodictic. The realm of consciousness is the realm of apodicticity for the whole world acquire meaning and reality from it²⁴.

Despite this similarity between Husserl's Ego and the Cartesian Ego, Husserl still claims that his own theory avoids the shortcomings of Cartesianism. He contends that his transcendental ego avoids in its entirety the relationship between the cartesian ego and scholasticism²⁵. Husserl also claims that his own transcendental ego does not derive the whole world from its apodicticity in a deductive manner²⁶. The reason why Husserl decided to avoid the deduction of the whole world from the apodictic ego "a la Descartes" is because of its early training in mathematics²⁷. His training in mathematics made him aware of the fact that the world cannot be derived deductively from an apodictic truth²⁸.

Husserl believes that instead of trying to get the other things deductively from the apodictic ego we should observe well and see that the apodicticity of the transcen-

24. E. Husserl: The Paris Lectures, p. 8.

25. Ibid, p. 9

26. E. Husserl: Cartesian Meditations, p. 24

27. Peter Kostenbaum, Op.cit., p. XVIII

28. Ibid, p. XVIII

dental ego logically implies the apodicticity of the world which he refers to as the transcendental experience. The world to him is nothing but what the transcendental ego experiences. This transcendental experience is therefore a logical correlate of the transcendental ego. The failure of Descartes to identify this obvious fact, Husserl says, made him the father of the rather absurd transcendental realism²⁹. The transcendental reduction, Husserl says, reveals not only the apodicticity of the transcendental ego but also the apodicticity of the transcendental experience, its correlate. He says:

The bare identity of the "I am" is not the only thing given as indubitable in transcendental self experience. Rather there extends through all the particular data of actual and possible self experience - even though they are not absolutely indubitable in respect of single details - a universal apodictically experienceable structure of the Ego.³⁰

What exactly does Husserl mean by the transcendental experience? By transcendental experience he means the whole activity of the transcendental ego, the consciousness processes of the transcendental ego. The totality of the whole world as a phenomenon of the transcendental ego is the transcendental experience. All that one witnesses when one's transcendental ego engages in the daily interaction with the world is transcendental experience. By virtue of the fact that it is my transcendental

29. E. Husserl: The Paris Lectures, p. 9

30. E. Husserl: Cartesian Meditations, p.28

ego that gives meaning to the world, it therefore becomes imperative that all that is in the world belongs to the realm of transcendental experience.

With this new development Husserl has widened the horizon of the transcendental ego. He has uplifted the transcendental ego from being a subjective affair to an objective one through the inclusion of transcendental experience as part of the apodictic certainty. "This is the sphere of a new kind of experience, transcendental experience"³¹. On the basis of this new development Husserl expanded the cartesian dictum "cogito ergo sum" saying; "The expression "ego cogito" must be expanded by one term. Every cogito contains its meaning, its cogitatum"³².

To Husserl the transcendental ego is not the foundation of things, rather the apodictic foundation is the transcendental experience. It is the activity of the Ego rather than the Ego itself that is unique. Husserl feels that the transcendental experience should be analysed to see this adequate foundation of both transcendental epistemology and transcendental science³³. What Husserl wants to do by this is to purify and consolidate its new foundation. He wants to make it perfect and pure so that all men will be convinced that it is really the ultimate foundation of all things.

31. E. Husserl: The Paris Lectures, p.11

32. Ibid., p. 12

33. E. Husserl: Ideas, p. 215

Husserl begins his purification and consolidation of the Ego by showing the extra-ordinary qualities of the transcendental experience. According to him the whole world is determined by the transcendental ego through its consciousness. The first quality of the transcendental ego is "reflexion". This, Husserl said, is the most important aspect of the ego³⁴. All the activities of consciousness, the experience of the ego are done through "reflection". Through the reflective act the ego can realise its past and apprehend its future³⁵. This act of knowing our future through reflexion Husserl calls "anticipation" or "previsional expectation"³⁶. Whereas the act of remembering our past through reflexion he calls "recall" or "immediate retention"³⁷.

The above insight into Husserl's analysis of the act of "reflexion" has revealed to us exactly how much he believes in the absolute authority of the transcendental ego as the ultimate foundation of knowledge. By the above, Husserl has widened the horizon of the Ego. Whereas the empirical ego is only in the present and it is capable of seeing only what is presently within its focus, the transcendental ego is able to see both past and future

34. Ibid., p. 216

35. Ibid., p. 216

36. Ibid., p. 216

37. Ibid., p. 216

experiences. The transcendental ego through the present development now becomes the point of justification for not only what we can see in the present but also those things that belong to the future and the past. The transcendental experience has been expanded through this new development.

In the light of this Husserl contends that the ego is capable of knowing a lot of things even those in the past. The transcendental ego through its experience, is a flow of becoming³⁸. It is in the Heraclitean state of flux, constantly moving from the past to the present, and constantly transforming its experiences to something else³⁹.

It is pertinent to point out here that the reason why the whole world which was bracketted through the epoche is eventually restored is because of the notion of intentionality. But for the fact that the ego is interlocked with the whole world through the notion of intentionality of consciousness, the transcendental ego would not have been able to talk of the transcendental experience or of the cogitatum. It is because consciousness is directed at the world outside through the notion of intentionality that we are able to talk of the correlation of the transcendental ego and transcendental experience. Robert Sokolowski once commented

38. Ibid., p. 220

39. Ibid., p. 220

on the formidable role of intentionality in making phenomenology objective when he said that the concept of intentionality "is the decisive factor in a major change in the current of modern philosophy and reintroduces an element of realism that had been absent since the Aristotlenian and Scholastic tradition was questioned by Descartes"⁴⁰.

4.3 INTENTIONALITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

As we mentioned earlier the major difference between Husserlian ego and the Cartesian ego lies in the fact that Husserl's own ego is a correlate of the external world. Whereas Descartes asserted the apodicticity of the "Ego", Husserl asserted that both the "Ego" and the "cogitatum" are apodictic. Husserl feels that the fundamental mistake of the Cartesian foundationalism is the fact that Descartes failed to see that both the ego and the world are given as apodictic. He says: "It so happens that he stands before the greatest of all discoveries - in a sense he has already made it - yet fails to see its true significance that of transcendental subjectivity. He does not pass through the gateway that leads into genuine transcendental philosophy"⁴¹.

40: Robert Sokolowski "Edmund Husserl and the Principles of Phenomenology" in Twentieth Century Thinkers ed. by John Ryan (New York: Alba House 1965), p. 138.

41. E. Husserl: The Paris Lectures, p. 9

Husserl feels that his foundationalism presents an alternative to that of Descartes because it avoids the subjectivity and solipsism of the latter. He feels that due to his apprehension of intentionality of consciousness the "Ego" alone is not the absolute certainty but that the cogitatum is also given as certain. What then does he mean by intentionality of consciousness?

The intentionality of consciousness for Husserl means the fundamental feature of consciousness, the basic attribute of the conscious ego. Husserl contended that consciousness is intentional, it points to something outside itself. The essence of consciousness he maintains is intentionality⁴². What he means by this is that consciousness is characterized by its intentional nature. Consciousness is always pointing to something outside. It must have a focus, a goal, a point of reference which is different from consciousness. Consciousness, he says, is consciousness of something. When you think you must think of something. When you imagine you must imagine something. Consciousness is always a projection towards something external to it.

Husserl as we mentioned earlier got the theory of intentionality from another of his mentor Franz Brentano⁴³.

42. Ibid., p. 13

43. Brentano is not the originator of the concept. The concept has been in use for long. Plato and Aristotle made use of this theory and the medieval philosophers particularly Aquinas also used the theory. It was from the Scholastics that Brentano got the theory in its bid to find a principle of defining the mental phenomena.

But whereas Brentano introduced the concept of intentionality into his philosophy to demarcate between physical phenomena and mental phenomena, the reverse is the case for Husserl. Husserl's purpose for introducing this notion of intentionality into his phenomenology is to link the realm of material with the mental realm, to show that the mental phenomena are related to the physical phenomena. Husserl so much believes in the potentiality of this theory to save him from the limitations of Cartesianism that he contends that the concept is quite indispensable to phenomenology⁴⁴.

With the introduction of the theory of intentionality of consciousness, Husserl was able to avoid the pitfall of Descartes. He was able to realize that the apprehension of consciousness implies the apprehension of the external world that it is related to. Husserl with the knowledge of intentionality was able to understand the correlation of the noesis and the noema. Husserl asserts therefore that the Ego will always give to us the external world as its point of focus. He says; "In every wakeful cogito a glancing ray from the pure ego is directed from the object of the correlate of consciousness"⁴⁵. On the basis of this essential attribute of the Ego Husserl came to the conclusion that the apodicticity of the Ego logically and necessarily implies

44. E. Husserl: Ideas, p. 245

45. Ibid., p. 243

the apodicticity of the cogitationes.

With intentionality consciousness is now a stream between two poles, that is, the subject and the object of experience. Intentionality has tied together the realm of the "noesis" and the realm of the "noema".

"To be is to be the object of subject and the subject of an object at the same time. An object has meaning only to the extent that it is given to a subject or an ego"⁴⁶. Speaking further on the link between the subject and the object, Husserl says:

Individual consciousness is interwoven with the natural world in a two-fold way; it is some man's consciousness or that of some beasts, and in a large number at least of its past of its particularizations it is a consciousness of this world⁴⁷.

Husserl's introduction of intentionality into phenomenology has expanded the scope of the Ego. There is now a relationship of interdependence between consciousness and intentional object. Consciousness has now become the pre-condition for meaningful being. Consciousness has within itself both the subject and object of consciousness. "Consciousness is not restricted to subjectivity - as Cartesianism would have it - but arises through subject-object interaction"⁴⁸.

There are two sides now in the transcendental realm, the noetic and noematic sides. Husserl contended that

46. Peter Kostenbaurn, Op. cit. p. XXVII.

47. E. Husserl: Ideas, p. 126

48. Peter Kostenbaurn: Op. cit., p. XXVII.

"the reference here is to the two sidedness which makes intentionality into consciousness as consciousness of such and such. This always yields two orientations for description"⁴⁹. These two orientations are united by the transcendental ego. The transcendental ego is the synthetic unity of the cogito and the cogitatum, the synthetic unity of the noesis and the noema. This synthetic unity according to Husserl is the unique and fundamental feature of consciousness. And he says that the elucidation of this very feature is very important for phenomenology⁵⁰.

The reasons why the synthetic unit of the cogito and the cogitatum is fundamental is very obvious. Husserl feels that with this synthetic unity of the ego and the world in the transcendental ego, its foundationalism is further consolidated. Whereas Descartes' foundationalism rests on the "cogito" alone. Husserl through his explication of the intentional relationship between the cogito and the cogitatum has shown that his own foundation does not rest on subjectivity per se but rather on objectivity.

Husserl continued to add more qualities to the transcendental ego in order to make it more indispensable to the whole world. He continued by saying that the Ego

49. E. Husserl: The Paris Lectures, p. 14

50. Ibid., p. 14

not only unifies synthetically the cogito and cogitatum but also unifies the manifold perceptions that come together to make one perception. Husserl explained this by the example of a hexahedron⁵¹. According to him when we perceive a hexahedron we perceive it at different times, different colours and different shapes are seen. The colour and shape are constantly changing. How then do we have an objective and permanent colour and shape of the object? Husserl answers that it is the transcendental ego that unifies and synthesises all these colours and shapes that we see.

What Husserl is saying by this is that only the transcendental ego can apprehend the true and correct nature of all external objects. It is the ego that unifies and makes one the manifold data we receive from objects in the course of perception. The Ego synthesises the manifold features of the object in the process of perception. "That we become aware of different events as one and the same is due to the activity of synthetic consciousness"⁵².

The many colours we perceive in an object are made one by the ego, they are one in consciousness; they are the same in intentionality. The original identity of objects can only be seen not by the process of perception

51 E. Husserl: The Paris Lectures, p.16

52. Ibid., p. 17

via the empirical ego but can only be seen by the transcendental ego through its synthetic activity. Consciousness therefore or transcendental ego deals with realities and not appearances. This fact, that is, the fact that the transcendental ego can apprehend the true phenomenon at all times, is an essential attribute of all transcendental consciousness. It is "an essential characteristic of every act of consciousness. It is the ability to pass over - through synthesis - from perennially new and greatly disparate forms of consciousness to an awareness of their unity"⁵³. And because of this extra-ordinary quality and ability of the transcendental ego Husserl concluded that the ego is the "thing in itself"⁵⁴.

Husserl went on in his process of consolidating and uplifting of the transcendental ego by asserting that the Ego is a potentiality as well as an actuality⁵⁵. It is capable of transcending its present state for a higher state. He says:

Every cogito - for instance, an external perception, a recollection etc. - carries in itself a potentiality immanent to it and capable of being disclosed. It is a potentiality for possible experiences referring to the same intentional object, experiences which the ego can actualize⁵⁶.

53. Ibid., p. 18

54. Ibid., p. 18

55. Ibid., p. 18

56. Ibid., p. 18

Husserl continues by saying that in each cogito there are manifold horizons to be exploited. In any perception he says there are many horizons, many potentialities to be exploited such as the fact that one can look in one direction rather than another.

Each recollection leads me to a long chain of possible recollections ending in the now and at each point of immanent time it refers me to other present events that might be discoloured and so on⁵⁷.

This contention - that the ego is both a potentiality as well as an actuality - is another attempt at boosting the image of the transcendental ego. With this assertion the transcendental ego has been developed to the point that it can engage potentially in any form of experience. Nothing is out of the reach or out of the focus and horizon of the transcendental ego. There is no experience that it cannot participate in. At worst it may participate in it potentially.

But at this point in time let us ask how we know that the transcendental ego combines both actuality and potentiality together. The answer Husserl gave is that we can know this when we analyse the intentional structure of consciousness. By intentional structure of consciousness Husserl meant the act by which consciousness interacts with the objects of consciousness or the

57. Ibid., p. 18

interaction between the Ego and the world. The analysis of this is therefore! "The disclosure of the actualities and potentialities in which objects constitute themselves in perceptual units"⁵⁸. In every intentional analysis, Husserl says, we go beyond the immediate or the actual, and this analysis discloses to us potentialities. These potentialities bring out manifold aspects of new experiences in which are made manifest what earlier was meant only implicitly⁵⁹. In the light of this Husserl says:

Each individual cogitatum - since it is stretched out in time in transcendental and immanent manner is a synthesised identity that is an awareness of the continuity of the same event. As a consequence, an individual object already functions in a sense as a transcendental clue to the subjective multiplicities that constitute the object⁶⁰.

Husserl contends that the ego is not a disorganised collection of manifold experiences. Rather, it is a unity through synthesis. "It is a many levelled synthesis in which always new classes and individuals are constituted. However every object expresses a rule structured within transcendental subjectivity"⁶¹

After this intentional analysis Husserl came out with another assertion which adds more quality to the

58. Ibid., p. 19

59. Ibid., p. 19

60. Ibid., pp. 20-21

61. Ibid., p. 21

transcendental subject. Husserl says that the world exists for the ego, "first in experience, as directly visible and tangible intentionality, and latter as any kind of intentionality directed towards the world"⁶². He went further to say that "reason" and "unreason" are nothing but the universal structure of transcendental subjectivity"⁶³. What he is saying here, is that the word "reason" and its opposite are used in relation to the almighty transcendental subjectivity.

Husserl also went further to say that even "evidence" that is to have an evidence of something is an awareness of intentional consciousness⁶⁴. What he is saying is that an awareness of an island in the Atlantic Ocean, is simply an intentional connection between the transcendental ego and the island. Husserl is saying in essence, that we have evidence of a thing when our transcendental ego has an intentional or a directional relationship with the thing. Anything is therefore real and we have evidence of its reality when it is intentionally connected with the ego.

Husserl also said that the "existence" and "essence" of all things belong to the transcendental subject. He says that any true being, whether it is real or ideal can only be important if it is a correlate of the trans-

62. Ibid., p. 21

63. Ibid., p. 22.

64. Ibid., p 22

cendental subject through intentionality⁶⁵. He continues further:

At the outset only one fact is evident and guides me, namely that I accept as being only that which presents itself to me as being and that all conceivable justification if it lies within my own self and is determined in my immediate and mediate intentionality in which any other meaning of being is also determined⁶⁶.

The above explication of Husserl's theory of transcendental subject and its intentional feature has shown to us Husserl's foundationalism. The last quotation in particular has shown us what Husserl wants to make out of the notion of transcendental subject. Husserl by the investigation into the intentional structure of consciousness is able to bring out explicitly the qualities and attributes of the transcendental ego. He is able to show that evidence, reason, unreason and in fact the existence of anything external depends on the Ego. It is implied therefore that the justification of any knowledge of the external object must rest on the transcendental subject.

But Husserl does not even stop with the intentional analysis of consciousness. He goes further to argue that the transcendental ego is not only the intentional correlate of the world, but also the creator, the

65. Ibid., p. 23

66. Ibid., p. 23.

organiser and the constitutor of the world. This position is the centre piece of the theory of constitution which is also an important aspect of Husserl's phenomenology.

4.4 CONSCIOUSNESS AS CONSTITUTING THE WORLD

The assertion that consciousness constitutes the world is the primary thesis of the notion of constitution in the philosophy of Edmund Husserl. The notion of constitution is an offshoot of the theory of intentionality. It was introduced by Husserl in order to further consolidate the position of the transcendental ego. Despite the prominence of this theory of constitution in Husserl's later works, there is still an inverse proportion between the centrality of the notion and the establishment of its meaning and function⁶⁷.

By constitution we mean the act of bringing about, the act of creating a state of being, the act of structuring or organising things. The word constitution, therefore in Husserlian philosophy denotes a lot of things. The first meaning, is the act of bringing together. The second meaning is the act of establishing an order of things. The third is the process of ordering of our images and representations about things and the establishing of meaning of the object in question⁶⁸. There is

67. N. Rostenstrench: "Ambiguities of Husserl's Notion of Constitution" in Phenomenology and Natural Existence: Essays in Memory of Marvin Faber (ed) by Dale Riepe (New York) State University of New York Press, 1973) p. 152.

68. Ibid., p. 152.

ample evidence to show that these three meanings blend in Husserl's philosophy⁶⁹.

By consciousness constituting the world Husserl means that the world is brought together, established, ordered by the transcendental ego. In the Paris Lectures he explains it as:

... the view of the ego's universality from the perspective of the identity of this object. That is to say, it is a reflection on the question of the systematic totality of real and possible conscious experiences, which - while they refer to an object - are nonetheless anticipated in my ego and represent to me a strict rule for possible syntheses⁶⁹.

As we earlier mentioned the notion of constitution is an inference drawn from the essential nature of consciousness, that is, intentionality. Husserl on the basis of the fact that the world can never exist independently of the Ego took a step further to argue that the Ego constitutes the world in its consciousness. Without the Ego, he felt, the world cannot exist. It is the Ego by its intentional activities, by its directedness at the world, that structures, organizes and formulates the totality of what we regard as the external world.

From this explication of the notion of constitution, it could be seen that whereas its counterpart, that is,

69. Ibid., p. 152

intentionality which was introduced to philosophy by the ancient thinkers is fool proof⁷⁰, the offshoot of it which Husserl introduced on its own is problematic. In fact the notion of constitution is the Achilles' heel of phenomenology. Opponents of Husserl have seen this notion as the most scandalous aspect of his philosophy⁷¹. How can the subjective mind create the objective world? How can the whole world be constituted by a subjective mind? These questions have been at the centre of the attacks on Husserl's notion of constitution. Husserl himself acknowledges the fact that the notion is problematic. He in fact categorised the manifold problems that are related to the notion of constitution as "constitutive problems"⁷².

The notion of constitution in Husserl's philosophy is a reflection of the influence of Kant on him⁷³. Herbert Spiegelberg contends that Kant's analysis of experience in which the intellect with the help of its categories synthesises the sense data supplied by the perception thus

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70. The notion of intentionality, despite its longevity is still very popular among philosophers today particularly the existentialist. In fact this concept is the pillar behind their philosophical position.
71. Robert Sokolowski: "Edmund Husserl and the Principles of Phenomenology" in Twentieth Century Thinkers, Op. cit., p. 139
72. E. Husserl: The Paris Lectures, p. 24
73. In this respect see Peter Kostenbaurn, Op.cit. p. XLI and H. Spiegelberg, Op. cit., p. 110.

constituting indential objects within the flux of our sensations"⁷⁴, is very much in line with Husserl's "constitution". A look at the two philosophers, that is Husserl and Kant, will show a close relationship between them on the "notion of constitution" and "analysis of experience". But in reality the two philosophers meant different things. Whereas Kant's analysis of experience through categories aims at showing the link between thinking and the data of thought alone, Husserl went further by showing that thinking is not only related to the data of thought but also creates it⁷⁵.

Husserl's notion of constitution is therefore closer to Berkley than to Kant. George Berkley (1685-1753) had earlier on propounded an immaterialistic theory, making all things in the world a creation of the subjective mind. Whatever exists he said is something that is perceived. Without the perceiver, he said, the external world cannot exist. The little difference between Berkley's immaterialism and Husserl's constitution is the Husserl's position to the effect that the external world is created by the ego, is not limited to perception alone as Berkley did. Husserl believes that the external world is created by the subjective mind not only because the ego is perceiving it, but also because it is an intentional correlate of the subjective mind, which logically cannot

74. Ibid., p. 110

75. N. Rostenstrench: Op. cit., pp. 153-154.

have any independent existence from the subjective mind.

This notion of constitution first appeared in the later works of Husserl especially Cartesian Meditations where Husserl brought this theory into the open as a logical implication of the theory of intentionality. Husserl in this book tried to show the process of how the ego constitutes the world. Constitutional Investigation is the name that Husserl gave to the act of understanding and analysing the constitutional process. According to Husserl the theory of intentionality is incomplete and illogical without the notion of constitution. He argued that in order for the theory of intentionality to be complete and genuine "it has to create its own correlate"⁷⁶

Husserl goes further in his notion of constitution by saying that the ego is not only the creator of the world but it is also its own creator. The process by which the transcendental ego creates and constitutes itself is referred to as "self-constitution" by Husserl. He says:

... the ego has being and its being is being for itself. Also its being, together with all that specifically belongs to it is constituted in the ego and continues to constitute itself for the ego. The ego's being-for-itself is being, that is, in a state of continual self constitution of so called transcendentials i.e. worldly objectivities⁷⁷.

76. Ibid., p. 157

77. E. Husserl: The Paris Lectures, p. 25.

The assertion, that is the ego constituting itself, though appears to be a paradox is a play on Husserl's earlier dichotomy between the transcendental ego and the empirical ego. What Husserl is saying by self-constitution is that the transcendental ego is the constituter, the creator of the empirical ego through the process of intentionality. This position is also another attempt by Husserl to uplift the transcendental ego and make it the ultimate source and standard of justification for all epistemic claims. As we said earlier on it is a cardinal position of foundationalism, that the ultimate foundation of knowledge must not only be self justifying but also self dependent. In the light of this belief Husserl therefore says that the ego is the ultimate concept which is responsible for its own existence. If he were to say something else constitutes the ego then he would demolish the whole of his foundationalist belief. The transcendental ego must therefore be the ultimate, the metaphysical as well as the epistemological "unmoved mover".

As we said the notion of constitution is problematic and the problems relating to this notion are called problems of constitution by Husserl. Husserl's attempt to solve those problems commenced when he contended that the ego can constitute the world because it is not a mere process of thought but also a concrete entity capable of

creating, structuring itself and the rest of the world⁷⁸. Husserl says that the transcendental ego is not a mere process of thought, because for it to be a mere process and not a concrete individual is to make nonsense of the claim that it is intentional. It is only a concrete entity that can possess the so called intentional features of the transcendental ego. The ego he says is not only a flowing life, a process of thinking with no concrete individual, but rather it is a concrete entity, an "I" who lives⁷⁹. The Ego, Husserl again says, is a concrete pole and it "lives in all processes of consciousness and is related through them to all object poles"⁸⁰.

Husserl explicates further the concrete nature of the Ego by saying that this ego - pole is constantly changing its features⁸¹. With every thinking act, he says, the ego acquires a new abiding property⁸². What Husserl is saying is that the Ego being a concrete entity changes its status with every new thinking act that it perform. With every new thought a feature is added to the concrete ego to reflect the new development. If the ego becomes convinced of stealing for example and comes out in support of it then it has changed its feature. It has become with this stand he took, an ego that supports stealing. If it later on reverses its support, then the ego has changed its status to become

78. E. Husserl: Cartesian Meditations, p. 65

79. Ibid., p. 66

80. Ibid., p. 66

81. Ibid., p. 67

82. Ibid., p. 67

the ego which is against stealing. Husserl maintains further that the Ego becomes concrete by this ability to change its feature. The possibility of changing position makes the Ego concrete, the capability to cancel and negate its earlier position by a new act, Husserl maintains, is an evidence of its concreteness. Husserl therefore says that the ego is not merely a subjective process but also "an identical substrate of ego - properties"⁸³.

Husserl explains further:

The Ego is thus not merely an empty pole, but the permanent and enduring subject of persisting convictions and habits through whose alterations the unity of the personal ego and its personal character is first constituted. From this we must disassociate the ego in its full concretion, because the ego is concrete only in the flowing multiplicity of its intentional existence and with the objects that are meant and constituted for it therein. The Ego may thus also be viewed as a concrete monad⁸⁴.

From the above quotation we can see that Husserl has given another name to the transcendental ego. Due to its concrete nature Husserl calls it a monad. And as we know the word monad was introduced and popularised in philosophy by Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716)⁸⁵. The Ego is now a monad because it is a concrete individual and an object that is also the primary entity in the universe.

83. Ibid., p. 67

84. Ibid., p.68

85. Leibniz calls monads the simple substances that have no extension. According to him all things in the world are combination of minads. They were created by a supreme monad, God.

This position without doubt will lead Husserl towards an idealistic metaphysics.

4.5 IDEALISTIC IMPLICATION OF THE TRANSCENDENTAL INVESTIGATIONS

Our investigation into the realm of transcendental ego and transcendental experience, our exposition of Husserl's notions of intentionality and constitution have landed us in a metaphysical position which is idealism.

Husserl first begins to show his inclination towards idealism when he said that the Ego is not a mere process of thought but rather a concrete individual, a monad. Husserl did not stop at this but went further to stress the primacy of the Ego over all things. The Ego, is the constituter and creator of the whole world. The Ego he says "possess(es) an enormous inborn a priori"⁸⁶. It is a priori and prior to all things. Husserl goes further to show the superiority of the Ego over other things.. He says:

...the ego is a pole in all specific perspectives or ego acts, the ego is also the pole of the affects which - proceeding from objects that are already constituted - unfailingly motivate it to look attentively and to take a perspective. The Ego thus possesses a double polarization, the polarization that is directed towards manifold objective unities, and the I polarization, a centralization by virtue of which all intentionalities are related to the identical "I" pole⁸⁷.

86. E. Husserl: Cartesian Meditations, p.81

87. E. Husserl: The Paris Lectures, p. 28

The above assertions show in unmistakable terms the idealistic consequence of Husserl's transcendental investigation. Husserl himself agreed that his transcendental phenomenology is transcendental idealism. We have seen now that Husserl's phenomenology has ended with his taking a metaphysical position of idealism. But Husserl seriously warns against any attempt to see his idealism in the light of traditional idealism. He believes that his own idealism is not the Kantian idealism which gives room for an uncomprehensible noumena⁹², neither is it diametrically opposed to realism or materialism⁹³. But it is an idealism which follows from the genuine analysis of the transcendental ego and its intentional and constitutional attribute⁹⁴.

As we know epistemological foundationalism has always been formulated with a metaphysical foundationalism at the background. The same is now true of Husserl. Having established a metaphysical foundationalist theory the next thing is to infer an epistemological foundationalist position. And he says; "We now proceed to relate this egological and transcendental theory of constitution of being ... to the usual theory of knowledge or theory of reason"⁹⁵. Having seen how Husserl developed the theory of transcendental subjectivity, it is pertinent at this juncture to show the

92. Ibid, p. 84

93. Ibid., p. 84

94. Ibid., p. 84

95. E. Husserl: The Paris Lectures, p. 30

transcendental subjectivity as the ultimate foundation of knowledge.

4.6 TRANSCENDENTAL SUBJECTIVITY AS THE ULTIMATE FOUNDATION OF KNOWLEDGE

As we earlier on stressed in chapter one epistemological foundationalism is the position to the effect that there is an ultimate, self-evident and apodictic truth that is capable of justifying all epistemic claims. The foundationalists believe that this position should be self-justifying and self-dependent. From our explication of Husserl's theory of transcendental ego we have seen that this theory, as Husserl meant it to be, is an epistemological foundation, a position that is self-justifying and self-dependent as to be able to justify all epistemic claims.

A cursory look at Husserl's development of the concept of transcendental ego and transcendental experience, most especially the intentional and constitutional nature of the theory, reveals that Husserl takes the transcendental ego, with its correlate, the transcendental experience, as the ultimate, self-justifying and self-dependent foundation of all knowledge.

Husserl, in his transcendental investigation, gave us enough evidence to show the capability of the transcendental subject to serve as the foundation of knowledge. As we saw in our earlier examination of the theory of transcendental ego, the whole world exists not independently of the ego, but rather as a necessary correlate of the purified

ego. The world he claims exists just as an intentional correlate of the ego. "Everything in the world ... exists for me because I experience it, because I perceive it, remember it, think it, judge it, value it, desire it, etc ... The whole meaning and reality of the world rests exclusively on such cogitationes⁹⁶. The above assertion summarises how Husserl made the whole world to be just a "thought of thinking being" or rather an experience of an experiential being". Whatever exists according to Husserl exists because of the ego that perceives it.

Husserl, never stopped with the notion of intentionality but went further to say that the ego is responsible for constituting the world and bringing it into being. This constitutional assertion as we know is a step further in Husserl's attempt to uplift the theory of transcendental ego. With constitution, the whole world is now a creation of the ego. This, as we saw, led Husserl to contend that the transcendental ego is the metaphysical foundation.

Husserl contends that reality, essence and existence are determined by the transcendental ego. To be real is to be real to the ego. The standard of judging whether anything is good or not, whether a thing is valuable or otherwise belongs to the transcendental ego.

From this analysis of the ego we can conclude that the ego without any doubt, is an epistemological foundation in the philosophy of Husserl. Husserl's position is that if

96. Ibid., p. 88

true knowledge comes from experience and if true knowledge is the essential knowledge; the knowledge of the essence, then only the transcendental ego can apprehend such a knowledge. Husserl's reason for saying this lies in his earlier analysis which we shall state briefly again.

Every experience is the experience of a transcendental ego. Every knowledge is acquired from experience. In the light of these two propositions, Husserl concludes that the source and position of justification for true knowledge is the transcendental ego. Husserl argues that since meaning and reality belong to the transcendental ego, since it is the transcendental ego that can determine whether something is meaningful or not, then the ego automatically is the position of justification for all knowledge. Husserl says therefore that counting and calculation are done by the ego. He argues again that proofs and arguments should have the transcendental ego as paradigm since the ego is the constituter of meaning and being.

Husserl's belief is that if we agree that whatever exists in the world is a correlate of the ego, that whatever exists is created by the ego then we would have to accept that all knowledge has the transcendental ego as their ultimate source. If this position is true then we would be compelled to accept the transcendental ego as the ultimate foundation of knowledge and the justification of all

epistemic claims. Husserl states clearly that all that which exists for him, exists by virtue of his cognitive consciousness⁹⁷. In the light of this Husserl concludes that the transcendental consciousness is the only entity capable of showing whether an epistemic claim is justifiable or not. He says:

Any distinctions that I draw between veridical and illusory experience, and between reality and appearance occur themselves within my own sphere of consciousness. The same is true even when at a higher level, I distinguish between intelligent and unintelligent thinking between what is necessary a priori and what is contradictory, what is empirically true and what is empirically false... Every proof or foundation for truth and being takes place entirely in my own self its product is characteristic in the cogitatum of my cogito⁹⁸.

Husserl's epistemological foundationalists position that is the transcendental ego being the foundation of knowledge simply put is this: Whatever we can know can only be known by the transcendental ego in the process of experience. So all our knowledge should be justified by this transcendental ego. What Husserl is saying is that, when we claim to know "P" the transcendental ego must be the source of our knowledge of "P". To prove therefore the epistemic certainty of P, we should always appeal to the transcendental ego. We should strive to show how "P" is known by the transcendental ego. Any failure to do this

97. E. Husserl: The Paris Lectures, p. 30

98. Ibid., p.31

negates the epistemic claim that we know "P".

Edmund Husserl, like other foundationalists, believes that knowledge is in a linear order and that at the base of this order lies the transcendental ego. He also believes that any knowledge whatsoever must necessarily be traced to the transcendental ego whether directly or indirectly. If we say, for example that we have epistemic claims of the fact that two plus two is equal to four, that "London is the capital of Great Britain that Mansa-Musa reigned in Old Ghana" that "Oxygen and hydrogen combine to form water all these epistemic claims, diverse as they may be Husserl believes should be derived from the transcendental ego. They can only be genuine epistemic claims if they are acquired by the ego. He believes that those claims can be determined as genuine or not by the transcendental ego.

From Husserl's analysis of the transcendental ego, it is implied that the transcendental ego may not be the direct source and standard of all epistemic claims. But like a typical foundationlist, Husserl believes that if any epistemic claim is to be genuine it must have as its ultimate foundation the transcendental subject. What we are say in essence is this; if you claim to know that the straight line is the shortest distance to a point; you can justify this claim by showing how your transcendental ego gave birth to this knowledge. If you can not do so, then you must be able to show that your knowledge was given to you by a teacher, who must have acquired his knowledge from a mathematics textbook. The writer of this textbook who is the source of the knowledge of the teacher must have derived his knowledge from a particular person who

incidentally may be Pythagoras. And Pythagoras in order to make his epistemic claim genuine must show how his said knowledge is derived from the transcendental ego. The final authority for justification, Husserl felt, is the transcendental ego.

A closer examination of Husserl's transcendental ego will shed more light on the rationale behind this subjective foundation. Husserl, as we know, believes that with the method of enoché the subjective ego must have become purified and transcendental; it must have been purified and purged of all its limitations, it has become free and fair to become impartial standard of knowledge. The ego, Husserl emphasised, is not the world or empirical ego that is psychologically partial but rather it is the pure ego, that has transcended all worldly prejudices. The standard of justification of epistemic claims should be impartial and the transcendental ego satisfies this condition, for it has become equidistant to all things and all ideas in the world. It is now the archiemedian point, the best position that can give us the true picture of the world. Husserl tenaciously believes that if the transcendental ego is detached and freed from the world then it will be able to serve as the impartial point of justification for all knowledge.

Having examined Husserl's theory of the transcendental subjectivity the appropriate questions are these: How can the objective world be an offshoot of a subjective mind? How can we make objective the activities going on in a subjective mind? Is Husserl's philosophy not a celebration of

subjectivism and solipsism like that of his predecessor Rene Descartes? Husserl's answers to these questions are what we shall examine now.

4.7 TRANSCENDENTAL SUBJECTIVITY AS INTERSUBJECTIVITY

The accusation that Husserl's transcendental subjectivity is a presentation of solipsism is one that Husserl cannot but take very seriously. Husserl's notion of transcendental subjectivity has been challenged as a subjectivistic theory that has nothing to do with the objective world. Critics of Husserl kept on asking the question. How can the subjective mind be the creator and the foundation of the objective world? Husserl, realizing the havoc that this objection can do to his entire philosophy devoted the last section of his book Cartesian Meditations to the answering of this objection. Husserl in the first instance saw this allegation as part of the misinterpretations of his philosophy, saying that "the whole problem is inconsistent. It involves an inconsistency into which Descartes necessarily fell because he missed the genuine sense of reduction to the indubitable"⁹⁹.

Husserl claims that his transcendental subjectivity is intersubjectivity. He recalled how he revealed the inevitable correlation of transcendental subject and the objective world through the intentional feature of the subject. This fact he says is enough to convince his critics that the transcendental subject is an objective phenomenon. Husserl therefore goes further to say that the other person is given by the apprehension of the transcendental ego through the

99. E. Husserl: Cartesian Meditations, p.83

process of intentionality. The alter ego is therefore a necessary correlate of the transcendental ego just as the external world is its correlate. He says: "I experience others as actually existing and on the one hand as world objects"¹⁰⁰. Husserl's argument is that the other ego which he calls the alter ego automatically comes into being the moment the apodicticity of the transcendental ego is attained after the process of epoche. Husserl argues further that the alter ego experiences me - the original ego - just as I experience it and whatever takes place in my consciousness can also take place in their own. The world, he says, is not a private synthetic formation but rather an "inter-subjective world actually there for everyone, accessible in respect of its objects to everyone"¹⁰¹.

Husserl envisaged a problem with this explanation; "How can we account for the inexplicable fact that everything which exists for me can acquire meaning and verification in my intentional existence"¹⁰²? This problem, Husserl feels, can only be solved by presenting a transcendental theory of empathy¹⁰³. The transcendental theory of empathy is the act of showing that the others exist and can be identified with our personal self. Husserl therefore argues that the fact that the others exist is proveable by every day occurrence. In everyday life he says the existence of the original ego is always pointing to the existence of the other. The other, he says, is a mirroring of the original ego or an analogue

100. Ibid., p.91

101 Ibid., p.91

102 E. Husserl: The Paris Lectures, p.34

103. E. Husserl: Cartesian Meditations, p.92

of it¹⁰⁴. Just as one cannot avoid one's image in the mirror so can the original ego not avoid the other.

Husserl argues further that in the experience of our own ego the other is always presented as an alter ego through the process he calls appresentation¹⁰⁵. Appresentation is the process of presenting a second entity apart from an original entity in the process of presentation. Husserl says that appresentation occurs also in external experience. He says: "the strictly seen front of a physical thing always and necessarily appresents a rear aspect and prescribes for it a more or less determinate content"¹⁰⁶. In every apperception, he says, there is an original ego from which the apperception takes its source. Apperception, he contends, is not an inference, not a thinking act, rather it is an analogy which always points back to a primal or original ego¹⁰⁷.

But even with this theory of appresentation there is still an inherent problem which is the problem of how the alter ego will be as genuine as the primal or original ego. To solve this problem Husserl introduced another concept which he calls "pairing"¹⁰⁸. He says that the alter ego can be as genuine as the primal ego because the two are always and necessarily given in an original "pairing"¹⁰⁹

104. Ibid., p.94

105. Ibid., p.109

106. Ibid., p.109

107. Ibid., p.111

108 Ibid., p.112

109 Ibid., p.112

Pairing, he says, is the process whereby the alter ego is not known just through identification but rather through association. Whereas in appresentation the duplicate, that is, the alter ego may not be as real as the original but in the process of pairing the two, the original ego and the alter ego are given as similar things, they "are always constituted precisely as a pair"¹¹⁰. Husserl says that if there are more than two entities to be given in this process of association then the process becomes "plurality" instead of pairing¹¹¹.

Husserl again argues for the necessary existence of the other ego by virtue of the fact that the other ego can change position with the original ego. The original ego, Husserl says, belongs to what he calls the "here" orientation whereas the alter ego belongs to the "there" orientation. What he is saying in essence is that the original ego belongs here whereas the alter ego belongs there. Husserl says that despite this, there can be an exchange of orientations. Any "there" can change its position to become "here"¹¹². He goes further to say that since the original ego is potentially capable of becoming the other ego and the other ego is capable of becoming the original ego, then the other ego can be seen as another original ego¹¹³. The other ego is

110. Ibid., p. 112

111. Ibid., p. 112

112. Ibid., p. 116

113. Ibid., p. 117

is therefore not my duplicate but rather "I apperceive him as having spatial modes of appearance like those I should have if I should go over there and be where he is"¹¹⁴.

The next question posed by Husserl is this; How do we know the feelings of the other? He answers by saying that this is possible through "empathy". We know the feelings of others when he behaves in a way that I will when I am having a similar feelings¹¹⁵. I know that the alter ego is angry for example if he behaves the way we do when we are angry. In the same vain, I know that he is happy if he reacts the way I will if I am happy.

In the light of this explanation of the existence of the other, Husserl goes on to talk of men as living in a community. The first feature of this community, he says is the commonness of nature¹¹⁶. He says:

The first thing constituted in the form of community, and the foundation for all other intersubjectively common things is the commonness of nature along with that of the other organism and his psycho-physical Ego, as paired with my own psycho-physical Ego¹¹⁷.

Men are always perceiving the same nature. One always perceives the same world with ones alter ego. In appresentation Husserl argues we see man as living in community with the others because the presentation of our Ego is fused to the appresentation of the other. The two are so fused that they stand within the functional community of perception¹¹⁸.

114. Ibid., p. 117

115. Ibid., p. 117

116. Ibid., p.120

117. Ibid., p.120

Husserl says that my nature is similar to the nature of the alter Ego. Although it may appear dissimilar, in reality it is the same.

Husserl goes further to show the similarity between the original Ego and the alter Ego by asserting that the two are the same in their perception. They both perceive the same world. The fact that the two are similar makes phenomenology to be objective and the alter ego is the primal phenomenon of objectivity¹¹⁹. The fact that we realise and we are convinced that the other, the alter ego exists like us makes the transcendental subjectivity to be objective. Husserl therefore says that having got the other, that is, the alter ego as a being constituted in myself, we do not know the other men through the same process of knowing the original ego, but we know them because they are members of the same community of monads. One knows oneself now as a man among other men with the same perception and feelings¹²⁰. The others perceive me just as I perceive them, "he experiences me forthwith as an other for him just as I experience him as my other"¹²¹. There is therefore now a "community of monads which we designate as intersubjectivity"¹²².

Having shown that the transcendental subjectivity is essentially intersubjectivity, Husserl tries to bring out

118. Ibid., p. 122

119. Ibid., p. 124

120. Ibid., p. 129

121. Ibid., p. 130

122. Ibid., p. 130.

the metaphysical implication of this new development.

He says:

Our monadological results are metaphysical,
if it be true that ultimate cognitions
of being should be called metaphysics¹²³.

Husserl goes on to show the metaphysical result of the intermonadological relationship. He says that though the transcendental ego is apodictic, a priori and the constituter of the world through its intentional experience, this will only be possible if the transcendental ego is in communion with the other egos¹²⁴. Husserl contends therefore that there is a single universal community of monads. In the light of this contention he concludes that there is only one objective world, one objective time, one objective space and one objective nature¹²⁵. This world is the objective world created and constituted by the ego in communion with others. Husserl says that it is impossible to think of another world apart from this world of the transcendental ego.

With this explication of transcendental ego as compulsorily an inter-subjectivity Husserl says the "illusion of a solipsism is dissolved"¹²⁶. Though the transcendental subjectivity still retains its status as the epistemological and metaphysical foundation, we are aware of the fact that it is not a solipsistic affair but rather an intersubjective

123. Ibid., p.

124. Ibid., p. 129

125. Ibid., p. 140

126. Ibid., p. 150

phenomenon. Whenever we argue therefore that the ultimate point of justification for all epistemic claims is the transcendental ego, we know implicitly that the transcendental subjectivity is an intersubjective phenomenon. Husserl explained this fact thus:

The path leading to a knowledge absolutely grounded in the highest sense, or (this being the same thing) a philosophical knowledge is necessarily the path of universal self knowledge first of all monadic and then inter monadic¹²⁷.

The questions that we should ask now are these: Has Husserl fully answered the charges of solipsism? Has he by all the above analysis, been able to make his own foundationalism immune from the various attacks against all foundationalist theories? The answers are in the negative. Husserl's reaction to the issue of solipsism is not convincing. Husserl by some assumptions inherent in his philosophy made his foundation prone to the charge of solipsism. There is nothing he can do to answer this charge, to do this he needs to demolish the whole superstructure that makes up his philosophy. Again, to the second question the answer is that Husserl's foundationalism is inadequate. His epistemic position is totally invalid. This will be shown in the following section.

4.8 INADEQUACY OF THE TRANSCENDENTAL SUBJECTIVE FOUNDATION

Having gone thus far in our explication of Husserl's theory of transcendental subjectivity, it is now appropriate

127. Ibid., p. 156

to show the reasons why we consider his position inadequate as the foundation of knowledge. Husserl's foundationalism is seen as inadequate for two reasons, firstly because of the inherent mistakes in his transcendental subjective foundation and secondly because of the fact that any form of foundationalism cannot be sustained since the theory is borne out of an erroneous and misconceived notion of knowledge. This section will therefore take care of the first part of our criticism whereas the second part of the criticism, will be the focus of the next section.

Our first point of disagreement with Husserl's transcendental subjective foundation concerns the route that he took in getting to this destination, that is, the concept of epoche. We believe that the notion of epoche is an erroneous route that will never lead Husserl to the expected destination. We want to assert now that Husserl's notion of epoche is a utopian exercise. Husserl as we said earlier, argues that for us to apprehend the foundation of knowledge, man needs to purify himself, he should purge himself of all his previous beliefs and knowledge. Husserl continues further by saying that there should be the transcendental reduction which will be the last stage in the process of reduction. This transcendental reduction will, according to him, lead to the final attainment of the transcendental subjective foundation. The question that we should ask is this: Can man ever become transcendental?

Just how transcendental is the transcendental self"? Can one really succeed in passing from the natural ego to a subject dissassociated from the former and yet using conceptual and intuitional powers similar to, if not identical with those employed in the "natural setting"? And further, is it possible to dissassociate the activity of the natural ego from that of the transcendental, while yet using the experience of the former to provide the latter with "raw-material" for concepts that apply in the realm of pure consciousness? In a word: does the bracket really hold? Can a "transcendental" ego thus attain objective truth?¹²⁸.

To those numerous questions our answers are negative. In as much as we go along with the spirit of reverence and objectivity behind the theory of bracketing, we disagree with Husserl's belief that this epoche will lead us to a transcendental subjective foundation. Our contention is that man can never transcend himself. Man is fundamentally an empirical ego and nothing can make it - not even the bracketing - transcendental. There is no way by which man can move out of the empirical world. Man cannot be separated from the world by any kind of bracketing. Man is fundamentally a being in the world. As Miguel de Unamuno rightly said man, even if he is a philosopher, cannot do without his preconceptions and pre-philosophic beliefs which Husserl wanted to bracket totally. Unamuno says:

... each philosopher is a man of flesh and bone who addresses himself to other men of flesh and bone like himself. And let him do what he will, he philosophizes not with the reason only, but with the will, with the feelings, with the flesh and with the bones, with the whole and the whole body. It is the man who philosophizes¹²⁹.

128. Kenneth, G. Hamilton: "Edmund Husserl's Contribution to Philosophy" in The Journal of Philosophy, Vol.36, No.9, April, 1939), p.231.

129. Miguel de Unamuno: The Tragic Sense of life trans by Crawford Fritch (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1954), p.28.

The relevance of the quotation is to show that the attempt of Husserl to remove the individual man from the world, to become a transcendental ego is futile. As Unamuno says "the philosopher is a man before he is a philosopher"¹³⁰. There is no way by which man can transcend the world. He cannot disassociate himself totally from his emotions and passions as we hinted in the last chapter. The transcendental man is therefore not realizable.

Husserl's assertion that we should become transcendental and purge ourselves of previous knowledge is not a new development in philosophy. There are precedents in the history of philosophy. There had been philosophers advocating a total break from the past, philosophers enjoining men to be indifferent to the empirical world. But history has shown that these men were the first to break their set rules, confirming again that man cannot break totally from the world in which he lives. In this respect the names of Bacon and his theory of Idols and that of Descartes and his methodic doubt come to mind.

It is therefore clear that the transcendental reduction and its by-product, the transcendental ego, are more of conceptualizations than realities. Husserl's transcendental reduction appears possible only in theory, only in the realm of abstraction. It is absolutely impossible in practice. Nobody can ever succeed in reality with the trans-

130. Ibid., p. 30

cendental bracketing. What Husserl should have done is to make an hypothetical assertion that, if the transcendental reduction is possible and the transcendental ego is attained then the ego will be the source of justification for all epistemic claims. If we look carefully at the process of reduction we shall find out that the process, like the methodic doubt of Descartes, is far from what happens in everyday life. Husserl enjoins us to suspend all beliefs, to put in bracket everything including our psychological ego. Our position is that it is a misnomer in ordinary life to talk of bracketing of beliefs except we begin to doubt those beliefs. Suspension of judgement, is only resorted to in ordinary life when things become questionable.

The fact that this route to the transcendental subjective foundation, that is the epoche, is utopian becomes clear when we find out that Husserl was influenced by mathematics in his formulation of the method. We know quite clearly that certain things which are apodictic in mathematics become questionable when applied to real life. The theory of bracketing is one of such things. It is a mathematical principle which works in the realm of abstraction but fails to work in the realm of reality.

Husserl with his theory of bracketing feels that we can attain the foundation, the ultimate source of knowledge, if we put all previous knowledge in bracket. He feels that we should isolate the individual ego and make it the founda-

131: Bright Wilson: An Introduction to Scientific Research, (New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc.), 1952, p.10.

tion of knowledge. But is this position not a contradiction? Can we know the foundation of knowledge without taking into consideration all our previous knowledge? Husserl's epoche puts the intended foundation in a precarious situation. It is rather absurd to talk of a foundation of knowledge that will neglect the previous cumulative knowledge of men. No body, not even the most intelligent philosopher, can attempt to do anything without the support of previous knowledge. As Bright Wilson said: "An individual completely ignorant of what was known before has little chance of making a worthwhile new contributions"¹³¹. It is therefore clear that Husserl has taken a wrong step by his belief that the epoche will lead to the foundation of knowledge. As a theory the epoche, as we saw, is utopian and unrealistic. It cannot lead anywhere in practice, rather it will even complicate the problem that Husserl seeks to solve.

Let us even assume that in theory the bracketing is possible, will it lead to a genuine foundation? Will the transcendental ego, the residue be the source of justification of all knowledge claims? The answer is negative. Even if the transcendental ego is possible, it will be completely isolated from the world. The contention of Husserl is that the ego will not be detached completely from the world because by its intentional features it is related to the world. Husserl believes that despite the fact that the ego will be transcendental it will still be connected to the world through the notion of intentionality. But the

131. Bright Wilson: An Introduction to Scientific Research, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc.), 1952, p.10.

above fact has been objected to by many writers on the philosophy of Husserl. There is the unanimous agreement that Husserl's phenomenological reduction contradicts the notion of intentionality and that if he attains the transcendental ego, the notion of intentionality will be lost. As Natanson said "Phenomenological reduction and the transcendental ego rob intentionality of its genius by relinquishing the immediate world seized through its intentional consciousness"¹³².

The assertion that the transcendental ego contradicts the notion of intentionality has been the dominating issue in the criticisms of Husserl by his opponents. To them it takes little reading and thinking to realise that an ego that is transcendental can no longer lay claim to being connected with the empirical world. The empirical ego can still talk of being connected with the world through the intentional nature of consciousness, but an ego that becomes transcendental has lost any claim to this. Husserl's discussion of the theory of ego especially in the latter stage has made him lose any claim to the assets of intentionality. As Jacques Maritain said "the very notion of intentionality in passing from the hands of the great scholastic realists to the hands of the great neo-Cartesians (as Edmund Husserl describes it in his last work) has lost its effectiveness and value"¹³³.

132. Maurice Natanson: Literature Philosophy and the Social Sciences (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962), p. 30

133. Jacques Maritain: Degress of Knowledge, trans by Gerald Phelan (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1959), p. 103.

If the notion of intentionality was a great asset in the hands of the scholastic it became a liability in Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. With the transcendental reduction Husserl finds himself in a precarious situation from which even the notion of intentionality cannot save him. With the transcendental reduction opponents feel that

Husserl has abandoned the real world, that his procedure of phenomenological reduction leaves the phenomenologist in epistemic isolation and that consequently there is no way of ever achieving objective confirmation of phenomenological reports¹³⁴.

Transcendental reduction without any doubt has spoilt the good works that Husserl did earlier on. The whole of Husserl's philosophy becomes contaminated and questionable in the face of the transcendental reduction. The worst part of it is that the transcendental reduction will not even arrive at the foundation or knowledge which made Husserl embark on this fruitless journey in the first instance. It is therefore obvious that the transcendental ego which Husserl so much developed in his later works "is not only unnecessary to a phenomenological theory of consciousness" but "inimical to the very essence of such a theory"¹³⁵.

If we can recall the role that the notion of intentionality played in the development of Husserl's subjective foundation, we will realize that the loss of this notion spells doom for Husserl's foundationalism. Husserl believes that his subjective foundation is apodictic because it is

134. M. Matanson: Literature Philosophy and the Social Sciences, p. 27

135. Ibid., p. 47

connected with the whole world via the notion of intentionality. He goes on to say that the ego constitutes the external world only because of the fact that the ego by its very nature is intentionally related to the world. In fact the only thing that separates his foundationalism from that of Descartes is the introduction of intentionality into his own theory. But as it has been pointed out Husserl's transcendental ego contradicts the notion of intentionality. Thus the essence of Husserl's foundationalism is challenged and the totality of his foundationalism becomes, to say the least, questionable.

Among those who criticized Husserl's transcendental ego as a contradiction of his theory of intentionality was Jean Paul Sartre. Sartre as we know was a disciple of Husserl who felt disgusted with the way Husserl presented phenomenology at the later stage of his career. In a book titled The Transcendence of the Ego¹³⁶ which he specifically devoted to an attack of Husserl's theory of the ego, Sartre spoke out the mind of the majority of the observer's of phenomenology. The disagreement between Sartre and Husserl, as the introduction of the book says,

centres... on a single question whether consciousness can be found after reduction presided over by a transcendental ego... Sartre goes to the heart of the matter in the following essay. His contention is precisely that there is no ego in or behind consciousness. There is only an ego for consciousness. The ego is out there in the world an object among objects¹³⁷.

136. J.P. Sartre: The Transcendence of the Ego trans by Forrest Williams and R. Kirkpatrick, (New York: Noonday Press, 1957)

137. F. Williams and R. Kirkpatrick: "Introduction" to the Transcendence of the Ego, pp. 17-18.

Sartre threw his weight in this essay behind the Husserl of the early stage where the ego is not a transcendental one. He was disappointed with the Husserl of the later stage for scandalising the good name of phenomenology by his transcendental turn which to him is unnecessary and unwarranted. Sartre still believes in the Husserl of the Logical Investigations where there is no ego behind consciousness. The Ego he said "is neither formally nor materially in consciousness it is outside; in the world. It is a being of the world like the ego of another"¹³⁸.

Sartre argued further that if ever the transcendental ego is attainable - which he is sure is impossible - it cannot be the essential concept of phenomenology. The transcendental ego if attained, will not be capable of reaching the position that Husserl preserved for it in his later works. It will not be the apodictic foundation of all knowledge. The reason is that the transcendental ego, if attained, would "tear consciousness from itself; it would divide consciousness, it would slide into every consciousness like an opaque blade. The transcendental "I" is the death of consciousness"¹³⁹. The transcendental ego, Sartre continued, is far from being the absolute realm, the standard of meaningfulness, that Husserl wanted it to be, rather to Sartre, it is a concept shrouded in mystery, it is anything but certain¹⁴⁰.

138. Sartre: The Transcendence of the Ego, p.31

139. Ibid., p. 40

140. Ibid., p. 40.

Sartre says that the transcendental ego makes consciousness ineffective, it is the reduction that reduces the prestige of consciousness as the apodictic realm. Husserl, he feels, has not improved the nature of consciousness by making it transcendental, rather he had made it vulnerable to attacks from all quarters. The transcendental reduction is therefore not an upliftment of consciousness, rather it down-grades it. With reduction consciousness becomes shrouded in mystery. Sartre says it becomes loaded down, heavy and ponderable.

All the results of phenomenology begin to crumble if the I is not by the same title as the world, a relative existent, that is, to say an object for consciousness¹⁴¹.

Sartre became an admirer of Husserl because of Husserl's earlier position, where the ego is not a builder and constituter of the world but rather arises with experience¹⁴². With the introduction of a new conception of Ego Sartre feels Husserl engaged in an exercise which "constituted a betrayal by Husserl of what was most fruitful in the phenomenologists emphasis upon the intentionality of consciousness"¹⁴³. Having made the ego transcendental all the assets of phenomenology became liabilities. The transcendental reduction to Sartre is therefore a "contraction of intentional consciousness into itself a kind of Brahmanic annihilation of consciousness"¹⁴⁴. The Ego is not apodictic

141. Ibid., p. 42

142. M. Natanson: Literature Philosophy and the Social Sciences, p. 27

143. F. Williams & R. Kirkpatrick: "Introduction" to Transcendence of the Ego, p. 18.

144. Ibid., p. 25

neither is it grasped with adequate evidence, Sartre says. Rather it appears veiled and covered like a pebble at the bottom of water¹⁴⁵.

Sartre says therefore that the absolute realm is not the transcendental ego shrouded in mystery and isolated from the world; the absolute realm should be the consciousness which is not transcendental but interwoven with the world, a consciousness which has not lost the ego via the transcendental reduction. The true foundation, Sartre contends, is not the isolated ego but rather it is the ego in consciousness. This is the only way by which Husserl can escape solipsism which permeates the transcendental subjective foundation. Sartre therefore says:

Instead of expressing itself in effect as "I" alone exist as "absolute" it must assert that absolute consciousness alone exists as absolute which is obviously a truism. My "I" in effect is no more certain for consciousness than the "I" of other men. It is only more intimate¹⁴⁶.

In the light of this Sartre felt that the transcendental ego cannot lay claim to any "constitution" of the world. We can no longer consistently assert that the ego constitutes the world. Sartre said: "The world has not created the me, the me has not created the world"¹⁴⁷. With this therefore Husserl's phenomenology took a different

145. Ibid., p. 44

146. Ibid., p. 104

147. Ibid., p. 105.

turn in the hands of Jean Paul Sartre¹⁴⁸.

The fundamental fact that came out of all these criticisms of Husserl is that the theory of transcendental subject is diametrically opposed to the notion of intentionality. Sartre adduced convincing arguments to show that an ego that is transcendental loses claim to the gem of phenomenology, that is, intentionality. The loss of intentionality therefore has a lot of consequences for Husserl's epistemological foundationalism. He would even say that the foundationalism automatically collapses if intentionality is removed from it. The transcendental subjective foundation cannot be viable if it loses the notion of intentionality. With the convincing arguments that the "phenomenological reduction and the transcendental ego draw us away from the reality which intentionality not only promised but gave"¹⁴⁹, there is need for Husserl to recaptulate and withdraw all his assertions about the transcendental subjective foundation. The loss of intentionality signals the end of the transcendental idealistic epistemology of Husserl.

As we earlier said the whole of Husserl's epistemology rests on this intentional feature of consciousness. As we saw, Husserl's transcendental subjective foundation rests

148. Sartre used this phenomenology, that is, the non-egological aspect of it, as the epistemological and metaphysical basis of his existential philosophy. In his later works he argued that man by virtue of intentionality of consciousness is a being with others, an intersubjective being.

149. M. Natanson: Literature Philosophy and the Social Sciences, p. 31.

solely on this fact. If this fact is removed everything becomes meaningless. It was because of intentionality that Husserl was able to say that the "ego" is a synthetic unity, the unity of the noematic and the noetic realm. Intentionality made Husserl refer to the "ego" as a potentiality as well as an actuality, It made him refer to the ego as having the knowledge of the past, the present and the future through reflexion. Without intentionality the ego becomes immobile, if not totally dead. As Sartre rightly said, with the loss of intentionality "consciousness as Husserl conceived it, cannot in reality transcend itself either toward the world or toward the future or toward the past"¹⁵⁰.

With this development, the constitution of the world by consciousness is no longer viable. Husserl's loss of the notion of intentionality implies the loss of the notion of constitution, since it is because of intentionality that Husserl concluded that the transcendental ego constitutes the world. It will be absurd to continue to talk of the notion of constitution when transcendental phenomenology has lost its cardinal concept - intentionality.

All these are pointers to the fact that Husserl's transcendental idealistic epistemology with his foundation resting on the transcendental ego disappears with the exist of intentionality. With the present situation of things all these assertions and claims about the extra-ordinary power of the transcendental ego become withdrawn. Phenome-

150. Jean Paul Sartre: Being and Nothingness, Trans. by H.E. Barnes (London: Methun, 1969), p. 109.

nology is no longer capable of defending those positions.

Having lost intentionality, transcendental idealism cannot lay claim to being realism. Consciousness is now withdrawn from the world, it is now lonely. As Maritain said: "it requires but a slip of the mind, a small mistake to think of transcendental idealism thus refurbished in terms of realism"¹⁵¹. With intentionality absent from Husserl's idealism, the idealism falls from grace. It becomes the same as Berkley's subjective idealism. Without intentionality Husserl's idealism cannot lay claim to uniqueness. Husserl is therefore guilty of all the allegations and objections raised against all idealistic theories, especially the charge of solipsism.

As we saw in our analysis of Husserl's theory of transcendental subject, Husserl gave serious attention to the charge of solipsism. He argued, on the basis of the intentional feature of the ego, that the ego is intersubjective. The summary of Husserl's argument is that the ego implies the alter ego by its intentional and constitutional feature. But we know that this claim is no longer tenable in the light of our earlier arguments against intentionality. With the transcendental subjective position which lacks any intentional characteristic, Husserl can no longer defend himself against the charge of solipsism. The moment the subject becomes transcendental all its activities become solipsistic. The refutation that Husserl presents

151. Jacques Maritain: Op. cit., p. 106

in the Cartesian Meditations "does not seem to us capable of unsettling a determined and intelligent sophist"¹⁵².

Our insight into the objection raised against the theory of transcendental subject, that it is fundamentally and essentially opposed to the notion of intentionality, has therefore made it clear to us that Husserl's transcendental subjective foundation rests on an erroneous ground which has been seriously shaken.

Another objection raised against Husserl's transcendental foundationalism is to the effect that Husserl's later philosophy which basically centres around transcendental phenomenology is a contradiction of the scientific and descriptive approach of phenomenology as Husserl meant it to be at the beginning. To the opponents, Husserl by embracing transcendental phenomenology abdicated his earlier position that philosophy should be descriptive and scientific. The transcendental reduction and its corollary the transcendental ego, in their views, defeat the scientific spirit behind Husserl's philosophy. The bracketing, according to them, dug a wide gulf between phenomenology and the sciences. The later Husserl which is mystico-religious is opposed to the early Husserl which is Logico-scientific and there is no way by which one can be an inference from the other.

The criticism that Husserl's transcendental ego is a celebration of mysticism is popular. It has been accepted

152. J. Sartre: The Transcendence of the Ego, p. 103.

by Husserl's close disciples. Roman Ingarden the Polish student of Husserl conjectured that Husserl's transcendental phenomenology might have been influenced by a religious conversion¹⁵³. Apart from this some experts on the mystical philosophies of the East have been trying to show that Husserl's transcendental phenomenology reflects a lot of similarities with Eastern philosophy. According to Pravas Juran Chadhury in an article titled "Vadanta as Transcendental Phenomenology"¹⁵⁴, he says, Husserl's transcendental ego in particular is the same as the Brahman in Indian philosophy¹⁵⁵.

In the said article, the writer argues that Husserl's later epistemology is the same as the metaphysical approach to epistemology which is the approach of "Vadanta". The method Husserl resorted to in apprehending the Ego according to Chadhury is the method of "Vadanta"¹⁵⁶. He says:

The method followed in his (Husserl's) transcendental phenomenology will not appear strange to a student of Vandata who finds in his discipline the layers of subjectivity and their corresponding objective world constituted by the formers projective activity¹⁵⁷.

Our stand is not to the effect that Eastern philosophy or Vandanta is unphilosophic. We are not against the mystical tendency of transcendental phenomenology. Our only objection is that Husserl by moving from a scientific approach to a mystical approach is inconsistent. Husserl

153. R. Ingarden: "About the Motives which led Husserl to transcendental Phenomenology" in Phenomenology and Natural Existence ed. by Dale Riepe (New York: State University of New York Press, Alberny, 1973), p. 97

154. P.B. Chandbury: "Vadanta as Transcendental Phenomenology", in Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol.10, No.1, 1959, pp. 255-257.

155. Ibid., p. 255

156. Ibid., p. 225

157. Ibid., p. 255

made us believe at the early stage of his philosophising that his approach will be scientific. Why then did he have to end up asserting the opposite of this? His foundationalism eventually became more of a religious phenomenon that one accepts on faith than a philosophical enterprise that one performs with reason.

Husserl's theory of transcendental subjectivity and his claim that it is the foundation of all epistemic claims narrows down the scope of knowledge. Like traditional theories of knowledge and in the spirit of traditional foundationalism, Husserl asserts that all knowledge must trace their source to the transcendental subject in order for those claims to be genuine knowledge claims. But as we know the transcendental subject as Husserl developed it can only be the source of rational knowledge or abstract knowledge. What we are saying in essence is that there are many types of knowledge. We have scientific knowledge, empirical knowledge, speculative knowledge. Our argument therefore is that it is not possible for Husserl's transcendental subject since it is out of the empirical world to serve as the source or the foundation of empirical knowledge or scientific knowledge. Husserl assumed erroneously and sweepingly that knowledge can have an ultimate foundation. He felt that all knowledge is abstract and can be justified by a transcendental subject. Perhaps Husserl would have been more correct if he had asserted that all speculative knowledge should be justified by a transcendental subject instead of sweepingly generalising that all forms of knowledge should be justified by the transcendental

subject.

Husserl's epistemological position which rests on the theory of transcendental subject has therefore reduced the scope of knowledge. It will narrow down what we have as knowledge. It will not accept scientific knowledge as part of our corpus of knowledge. The reason is clear scientific knowledge cannot be derived from a transcendental subjective source. Rather scientific knowledge is acquired when the subject interacts with the object of knowledge. Scientific knowledge involves interaction of subject and object of knowledge rather than the subject being transcendental and being removed from the object to be known.

What we are saying in essence is that scientific knowledge can never rest its foundation on a transcendental subject. In fact the transcendental subject cannot take any right step in the acquisition of scientific knowledge. As we know the scientist who seeks to acquire knowledge about the world cannot just be possibly transcendental; rather he should be actively involved. The scientist is not the religious guru who speculates in order to acquire knowledge. Rather a scientist needs to be actively involved with the object of knowledge. He is always busy in the laboratory interacting with the substances and chemicals to be known. We are not denying the speculative aspect of scientific discovery, what we are saying is that the practical aspect is very important, if not more important

than the speculative aspect. The scientist who distances himself for a long time from his object of knowledge can no longer lay claim to knowing much less the Husserlian imaginary scientist who turns himself into a transcendental subject. Husserl's assertion will therefore remove scientific knowledge, which represents half of what we have as knowledge from our assembly of knowledge.

Husserl's theory of transcendental subjectivity in epistemology seeks to show that knowledge is a passive phenomenon. And as we saw above scientific knowledge will disprove this. In fact, that knowledge is not a passive phenomenon, in which the subject of knowledge distances himself from the object to be known is clear not only in the sciences but also in history, psychology, sociology, anthropology and religion. In all those disciplines it is very clear that knowledge is interaction. It is a rational as well as an emotive phenomenon. As Dewey says: "there is no knowledge of anything except as our interests are alive to the matter and our will actively directed towards the end desired. We know only what we most want to know"¹⁵⁸.

The historian who wants to have a knowledge of the socio-political history of an area cannot do this by becoming transcendental. He cannot acquire any knowledge from the distance. In fact he acquires the raw data about the people when he interacts with them, when he interviews them and asks them relevant questions. The same is applicable to the anthropologist or the sociologist who is in

158. Quoted by E.H. Zadler: "Dewey's theory of knowledge" in John Dewey: His thought and influence (ed) by John Blewett (New York: Fordham University Press, 1960), p.60.

search of the knowledge of a particular culture or society. The sociologist or the anthropologist if he is not from the said society, if he is not a member of this cultural system will have to live with the people, interact with them share in their experiences and suffer their misfortunes. It is only by this that he can acquire the needed knowledge. What then does Husserl mean by his assertion that all knowledge comes from a transcendental subject? The above example has nullified the stand of Husserl. As K.C. Anyanwu also confirmed "knowledge is a complicated act of judgement in which our interest, personalities and commitments are greatly involved"¹⁵⁹.

The assertion by Husserl that the transcendental subject is the foundation of knowledge is a product of a rationalist preconception, the preconception that true knowledge is speculative, or that it is a mental and inner enterprise. This preconception is not peculiar to Husserl it is popular with all rationalists. They all assume that practical knowledge is not genuine knowledge, and that true knowledge can only be acquired by our internal self. The true situation is that knowledge is both practical and speculative. At the early stage in the acquisition of facts, we can come to the speculative aspect of knowledge where the subject will withdraw into his shell and contemplate on those facts. The two stages are complimentary.

159: K.C. Anyanwu: The African Experience in the American Market Place. (New York: Exposition Press, 1983, p. 117.

But the foundationalists deny one. The empiricists regard knowledge as basically practical while the rationalists consider it as speculative.

Our position is therefore midway between the two extremes. Knowledge by its very nature is a complicated enterprise. It cannot be seen from an absolute perspective. Husserl's position that the transcendental subject is the originator and justifier of all epistemic claims is an erroneous one. Knowledge by its very nature implies an active subject and not a dormant or a transcendental one. It needs an interested subject not a detached subject. To be withdrawn as a subject of knowledge is to lose all one's knowledge. As Sartre rightly pointed out, knowing is more of an explosion. The knowing mind he said, should be centrifugal, knowledge is a combat and not a peaceful possession¹⁶⁰. Sartre said further that "one does not have knowledge; one bursts out in the acts of knowing toward the object known"¹⁶¹.

The stand of this present study that the transcendental subject is not the foundation of knowledge is also supported by what Sedar Senghor christened the "African Mode of Knowing"¹⁶². Senghor, in a bid to present a unique socialism as the ideology for newly independent African countries argued that this socialism should be different from scientific

160. Quoted by Maurice Natanson: Literature Philosophy and the Social Sciences, p. 28

161. Ibid., p.28

162. Cf. L.S. Senghor: On African Socialism, trans by Mercer Cook (London: Pall Mall Press, 1964).

socialism because, whereas the latter is borne out of an epistemological theory of dialectics, the former has its foundation on a new epistemology. Our position is that there is no unique "way of knowing" specifically reserved for Africans. Rather what Senghor termed "African mode of knowing is a method through which some epistemic affairs - anywhere in the world - are conducted. What is more, Senghor himself contended that Western epistemology is at present embracing this method of knowing¹⁶³. This points to the fact that the method is not uniquely an African affair.

The African mode of knowing according to Senghor entails a sort of interaction between the subject and object of knowledge instead of the detachment and separation that exists between the subject and object of knowledge in the West. In order to know an object Senghor says an African man will touch and penetrate it¹⁶⁴.

To know a human fact, psychological or social, no longer means to investigate it with the aid of statistics and graphs, but to live it: Like the white man, who to understand the situation of Negro Americans blackened his skin with a chemical product and worked as a Negro-shoe shine boy¹⁶⁵.

Senghor goes on to say that the Negro African who seeks to know the other will not draw a line of demarcation between himself and the object but will rather unit himself with it¹⁶⁶

163. Ibid., p. 70

164. Ibid., p. 71

165. Ibid., p. 71

166. Ibid., p. 72

The above assertions are not peculiar to African epistemology, it is not an African man alone who acquires knowledge by interacting with the object to be known; the European man also does. The European scientists participate in all these creative exercises of epistemology which Senghor stated. The European scientist wastes many months and years in the laboratory, feeling, touching, understanding and caressing the object of knowledge before he goes to analyze. We agree with Senghor that Western epistemologists always dig a big gulf between the object and the subject of knowledge. But the truth is that the Western historians, the Western anthropologists, the Western scientists who go into the field, realize that they can not keep a distance from the objects to be known. They are aware through experience that for one to really know, one must not be transcendental, one must not stay in one's shell. On the contrary one must abandon one's personality to become identified with the external objects.

It is not the Western scientists but the western philosophers who feel that the knower should be transcendental. The Newtons, the Galileo's, the Keplers, and the Einsteins would not say this. It is the Lockes, the Descartes and the Huseerls that would talk of knowledge as if it were a speculative exercise in which the subject stays in a point and the object comes to him to be possessed. The belief that knowledge can only be acquired if the subject interacts with the object to be known is behind the whole of western science. It is even responsible for

the many successes and discoveries in science. The point we seek to make is that, it is only in theory that we can talk of a knowledge with a transcendental subject as its foundation; in practice it is impossible and in fact a misnomer to imagine it.

Contemporary science and psychology is presently showing us that the subject of knowledge not only interacts with the object of knowledge but disturbs and dislocates it¹⁶⁵. For a philosopher of Husserl's standing to talk of a detached and transcendental subject is therefore embarrassing, most especially if such a philosopher is a twentieth century thinker and not a man of the past. It is ironical that Husserl who has been championing the cause of psychology and science in philosophic discourse will come with such an outrageous and unscientific position. Husserl's belief in the efficacy of psychology and science is therefore totally defeated by his transcendental subjective epistemology.

That Husserl is an outdated philosopher is evident from his conservatism. The whole of his philosophy manifests this. He came to philosophy with the impression that the great philosophers like Plato, Descartes and others were idols to be worshipped, and he threw his weight behind their cause. He never seized the opportunity of the time he came and the advancement in related disciplines to

165. Cf. K.C. Anyanwu: Op.cit. pp. 68-75.

study these philosophers in the light of these disciplines. Husserl's foundationalism presents him well as a conservative philosopher. The theory of transcendental subjective foundation as we showed earlier on is a revised edition, a reviewed copy, an amended version of the rationalist foundation of Plato and Descartes. Husserl never took time to find out the opinions of contemporary philosophers on the problem of foundation which those philosophers sought to solve by presenting a foundationalist theory. Contemporary philosophy is presently saying that the problem of foundation is a pseudo-problem, a badly formulated problem and that is why it has remained unsolved. The second part of our criticisms of Husserl's foundationalism shall therefore centre around this stand.

4.9 FOUNDATIONALISM AS A PSEUDO THEORY

Our stand in this section is that Husserl's foundationalism is bound to fail, not because of the inherent mistakes in the theory of transcendental subject, but because any theory of foundationalism is moribund. It is so because foundationalism in whatever form is a solution to a badly formulated problem and a badly formulated problem will always receive a badly formulated solution. As Cornelius Benhamin said; "the solubility of any problem is dependent to a great extent upon the accuracy and precision with which the problem is formulated"¹⁶⁶.

¹⁶⁶. Cornelius Benjamin: "The Problem of Knowledge" in The Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 27, 1930. p.381

There is a general agreement among philosophers in recent times over the fact that the history of philosophy is the story of errors of men who ask questions that cannot be answered and formulate problems that can never be solved. Philosophers therefore felt that those questions can be solved either by two ways, if they are reformulated or they are ignored totally. As Moritz Schlick said:

... Certainly many will for centuries continue to wonder further along the traditional paths. Philosophical writers will long continue to discuss the old pseudo-questions. But in the end they will no longer be listened to; they will come to resemble actors who continue to play for some time before noticing that the audience has slowly departed. Then it will no longer be necessary to speak of "philosophical problems" for one will speak philosophically concerning all problems that is clearly and meaningfully¹⁶⁷.

All that we said above is true of the problem of foundationalism. Foundationalism as we saw earlier is the search for an ultimate source or foundation of knowledge the quest for a protocol truth or basic cognition that will disprove the Skeptical stand that knowledge is impossible. This quest as we saw dominated the history of philosophy for two millenia. But this endeavour has been a story of repeated failures. The Husserlian theory of transcendental subject, as we have seen, is the continuation of this search. Why has foundationalism been failing throughout history? It is the opinion of many lovers of

167. Moritz Schlick: "The Turning Point in Philosophy" in A.J. Ayer (ed) Logical Positivism (Glencoe: Free Press, 1959), p. 57.

wisdom in recent times that the resistance of the problem of foundation to a solution is an indication of the fact that the problem needs urgent reassessment.

Our position vis-a-vis foundationalism is that foundationalism no matter how it is improved cannot be an adequate theory of knowledge. No theory, no matter its sophistication can ever solve the problem that gave rise to foundationalism. Foundationalism is a pseudo theory for it seeks to solve a pseudo-problem. Foundationalism originated out of a misconception, it was borne out of an erroneous assumption of the true nature and growth of knowledge. From the start foundationalism was ill-conceived and therefore ill-fated. No argument or adjustment can ever change the fate of this theory.

Foundationalism has failed throughout history because it was conceived out of the erroneous assumption that there is an ultimate source of knowledge. By asking the question: what justifies our total system of beliefs foundationalism asked an erroneous and misleading question¹⁶⁸. The attempt of philosophers to find an answer to this question ended in two thousand years of failure. Foundationalism is fully responsible for its predicament, it created its own problem by asking a wrong question. We therefore agree with F.L. Will's assertion that "foundationalism is doomed by its own internal momentum"¹⁶⁹. We shall

168. Michael Williams: "Coherence, Justification and Truth" in Review of Metaphysics, Vol. XXXIV, No.2 (Dec. 1980), p. 255.

169. F.L. Will: Induction and Justification, (London: Cornell University Press, 1974), p.157.

now go on to show how foundationalism failed because of its erroneous assumption that knowledge can be justified by an absolute point.

The fundamental tenets of foundationalism are as follows: There is only one source of knowledge. This source of knowledge should always justify or invalidate all epistemic claims. It is therefore the basis or foundation of knowledge, with all knowledge-claims resting on it. The knowledge claims are arranged in a linear and hierchical order. The belief is that the basis or foundation of knowledge is the first cognition and it should be eternally true and justified. In the light of those assumptions knowledge is seen with the metaphor of a building. Knowledge is conceived as growing upward like a building with the materials being added unto it. The question that should be asked is this. Does this assertion trully describe the original nature of knowledge? The answer is definitely in the negative. Why then has foundationalism made this mistake?

An examination of the origin of foundationalism and the problem of foundation will reveal the misconception that generated this theory of knowledge. As Ernest Hutten rightly said, most of the perennial problems of philosophy cannot be solved by logical analysis rather they can only be solved if we put those problems unto their proper setting and see whether there is a genuine problem or a

pseudo problem¹⁷⁰. This can best be done if we examine the historical setting that gave birth to the problem.

Hutten says further:

Modern philosophers have often pointed out that there are pseudo-problems or puzzles which cannot be solved but can only be resolved. They may be resolved however if we recognize not only that such problems have usually been given a logically improper formulation, but also that they arise from an attitude which we no longer accept¹⁷¹.

Philosophers have been unable to solve most of their perennial problems because they "fail to see that problems may become obsolete because of the change in the attitude which once prompted philosophers to pose them; they think only of the logic of a problem and forget its history and, especially the psychological origin of the problem"¹⁷². This particular assertion is very true of Edmund Husserl who in this century is still battling with the problem of foundation.

From the above we can now see the relevance of seeing the origin of the problem of foundation. It was the early Greek philosophers who formulated this problem. At the time the Greek philosophers formulated the problem they had a mystico-religious attitude and this gave birth to the idea of a universal and absolute source of knowledge.

170. Earnest Hutten: The Origin of Science: An Enquiry Into The Foundations of Western Thought (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1962), pp. 21-22.

171. Ibid., p. 22

172. Ibid., p. 22

The belief that there should be an absolute source of knowledge was borne out of their religious philosophy which sees the world as basically one entity. They believed that there was permanence behind the changing world, that there should be an essence behind the existential features of men. In the same vein they concluded that there should be an ultimate approach to knowledge. "When the Greeks, invented philosophy it was for them one means of coping with their fantasies and subjecting the fantasies to traditional control, many of the traditional problems of philosophy arose in this manner"¹⁷³. The above is also true of the problem of foundation and the theory of foundationalism.

But it is pardonable for a primitive and religious society to bother itself with a meaningless question like that of the ultimate foundation of knowledge. The age of mysticism and religion may concern themselves with such a problem due to what Hutten called "epimophilia" - that is the urge to know everything at the same time¹⁷⁴. But in a modern age as ours the search for an ultimate foundation of knowledge is outdated. The problem of the ultimate foundation of knowledge is an error made in the past which should be rectified in the present. Failure to recognise this retarded the progress of modern philosophy.

173. Ibid., p. 30

174. Ibid., p. 45

It is disappointing that twentieth century philosophers should still see the problem of a foundation of knowledge as a genuine problem that should be given such an attention. The various experiences which we have had and which the Greeks never had should have enabled us to resolve the issue of the ultimate foundation of knowledge long ago. "To keep to an epistemology however streamlined it may be is to forget history, it is to imprison the problem of knowledge. Like a fly in a piece of amber"¹⁷⁵. The Greek's conception of knowledge as a static, linearly and hierarchically organised entity is an outdated and in fact a misleading concept of knowledge. To continue to conceive knowledge in the light of this archaic epistemology is like doing physics in the light of Aristotle's ideas or preferring alchemy to chemistry¹⁷⁶.

We must then not take philosophy as something static, a finished product which jumped ready made, from the head of a Plato or Aristotle. If we want to understand what philosophy is all about and what it can do, we must consider that like science it changes and must change otherwise we shall not understand either the Greek problems of philosophy or our own. Those philosophers who today uphold a "philosophia - perennis"... Cut themselves off from their own history. They make philosophy dead subject¹⁷⁷.

175. Ibid., p. 39

176. Ibid., p. 49

177. Ibid., p. 28

Apart from the fact that foundationalism originated out of an attempt to solve a badly formulated and archaic problem, foundationalism also misconceived knowledge and therefore thrived on this misconception. First foundationalism misconceived the nature of knowledge by the belief that knowledge is organised linearly in a one-dimensional order. Knowledge by its true nature is the way human beings get acquainted with the diverse objects and entities that constitute the universe. Is it therefore logical for us to try to know the divergent things of the world through a one dimensional approach? The answer is negative. It is wrong to talk of only one ultimate source of knowledge. This way of thinking is borne out of the belief that knowledge is organised and arranged in a closet, in a nutshell. But this is not the case, as Titus says knowledge is not in packages but rather it is the "result of growth in which a living organism with interests and drive is in a constant contact with a changing environment"¹⁷⁸.

The foundationalists feel that knowledge is organised because they see knowledge in a sort of order in the individual mind. The truth is that human knowledge outside the mind is in disarray and disorder. To talk of knowledge that has one source is to fail to recognise the fact that the arrangement of cognitive facts is only done in the mind.

178. Harold Titus: Living Issues in Philosophy: An Introductory Textbook (New York: Reinhold Company, 1970), p. 39

The two thousand years quarrell between the empiricists and the rationalists was motivated by the misconception that knowledge has one ultimate source. The rationalists and the empiricists are both mistaken in the quest for the ultimate source of knowledge. Both reason and sense - experience are among many sources of knowledge but neither of the two is the ultimate source. The mistake of traditional philosophers who quarrelled over the ultimate source of knowledge as Popper says arises because they ask authoritarian questions that require authoritarian answers¹⁷⁹. The questions, he said require yes or no answers. Modern philosophers found themselves in this problem because they fail to challenge the legitimacy of those questions¹⁸⁰. According to Popper there is no ideal source of knowledge rather we have many sources of knowledge. Those sources of knowledge are rather complimentary; the senses, reason, intuition, revelation all have value depending on the context and situation. It is in the realization of this fact that Leighton says:

The sound position may be called rational - empiricism or empirical rationalism. In contrast with a priori-rationalism. It stressess the dependence of all our knowledge on experience. In contrast with sensationalistic empiricism, it insists on the purposive activity of the mind and reality, such a point of view makes an organic synthesis of the valid claims of both rationalism and empiricism.

179. Karl Popper: Conjectures and Refutation, p. 24.

180. Ibid., p. 29

From this standpoint we explicitly hold that the materials of knowledge come to us in experience but the materials thus given are organised by the activity of reason into the texture of our sciences¹⁸¹.

As we said, the misconceptions that permeate foundationalism can be traced to the mystico-religious origin of philosophy. But the questions to be asked is this; why did the scientific age not dispose of this problem? The answer is that scientists assumed that where religion failed science may triumph, they assumed that science could provide the answer to the age-long question of the ultimate foundation of knowledge. Historically, the scientific successes of the renaissance marked the end of the religious rational source of knowledge. With the Copernican revolution men no longer relied on supernatural sources for knowledge, they rather felt that human experience was the ultimate source since all the discoveries of science came via sense experience.

But the scientific approach to the question of foundation, we want to argue will also fail. Contemporary science is presently revealing the inability of sense experience to know everything. As we know modern empiricism and empirical foundationalism rely on Newtonian physics which believes in absolute space and time. But Einstenian science is now telling us that almighty Newton is not totally right afterall and that sense experience cannot know many things.

181. Quoted by Harold Titus: Op.cit., p. 55

The Einstenian relativity theory has challenged Newtonian physics, which is the root of empirical foundationalism pointing out again that the question of an ultimate foundation of knowledge cannot receive a convincing answer. Science has even denied the absolutism of empirical foundationalism in recent times. According to Frank Egler there is nothing in contemporary science that denies mystical insight, divine revelations as good sources of knowledge¹⁸². He went further:

Science is just another road to knowledge that depends on certain rules and regulations which are considered, as rational and reasonable. These different roads to knowledge are not mutually exclusive¹⁸³.

Whether based on mystico-religious assumption or on scientific belief foundationalism cannot be sustained. Foundationalism cannot convincingly argue for an ultimate source or foundation of knowledge. Science has its own source just as religion has its own source of knowledge. To seek to make all epistemic claims to be derived from one source is an unrealistic epistemology. It is "a theory of knowledge which is not human but divine, of knowledge acquired by a unique and perfect being without initiation, training, tradition or need to learn"¹⁸⁴.

182. Frank Egler: The Way of Science, (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1970), p. 1

183. Ibid., p. 1

184. Perelman ch. The Idea of Justice and the Problem of Argument (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 131.

Another position of foundationalism that is erroneous is its notion of self evident truth, apodictic certainty or protocol truth, etc. To Husserl for example the transcendental subject is the self-evident truth. All foundationalists talk of this protocol truth as infallible. They see it as the solid foundation upon which the castle of knowledge can be established. But the question is whether it is possible for such an absolutely infallible truth to be attained. Do we have a precedent in history, whether in science or anywhere of an infallible and eternal truth? Our contention is that there is none. No position is absolutely certain.

The foundationalists' quest for a foundation of knowledge as we saw earlier on is borne out of the belief in the fact that the so called epistemic regress problem should be avoided. By epistemic regress problem as we saw earlier, they mean the problem of how to avoid the regress of justification claim. They argued that the evidence used in justifying a claim needs to be justified itself, this they contended lead to an infinite regression which they seriously wanted to avoid. To avoid this regression the foundationalists stopped at the basic truth which they felt would be the permanent position of justification of all knowledge.

Our stand is that no justification, whether it relies on basic truth or not can ever be permanent. Even the so called self-evident truth is not infallible, all things are

constantly changing no truth is absolute and internally certain. Justification of anything should therefore be tentative and should recognise the obvious fact that nothing is permanently free from error. The foundationalists' quest for an eternally true foundation of knowledge is not realistic.

When we look at actual knowledge or what at any particular time in history has been taken to be knowledge, from this point of view, whether that be in science, in commonsense or in other domains, one of its most striking features is its constant liability to change not simply by accretion, but in a variety of subtle yet fundamental ways¹⁸⁵.

The belief in an infallible truth or basic foundation of knowledge is borne out of the foundationalists' conception of truth. Foundationalism relies on the traditional notion of truth which assumes that truth is permanent. The reason for this conception of truth which is erroneous lies in the fact that they look at truth independently of contexts. In reality when we talk of truth we always have in mind, truth within a situation or a context. We can say that it is true that "Lagos is a populous town". The above statement is being made within the context of African towns. The statement may become erroneous if we compare Lagos with either Tokyo, New York, Los Angeles or other bigger towns. There is no situation whereby we talk of truth as if we are

185. F.L. Will: Op cit, p. 228

not having a particular context in mind. Truth can never be seen independently of situations and contexts. It is this error of conceiving truth independently of situations that led to the belief that there can be an infallible truth.

The traditional philosophers' quest for an apodictic truth is borne out of a misconception. The quest for an infallible truth is utopian and unrealistic. Truth by its very nature is not permanent. A fact can be true today and become untrue tomorrow. As Karl Popper said: "truth is often hard to come by and that once found it may easily be lost again"¹⁸⁶. The history of ideas has shown that no truth, no matter how certain, survives for ever. It is in the light of this that Nietzsche once said that truth are those errors human beings cannot do without¹⁸⁷. The implication of this paradox is that human beings should not strive to apprehend an infallible truth but that they should content themselves with tentative facts which they should abandon the moment they are no longer needed.

The foundationalist's belief in an infallible truth is a product of science and mathematics. The empiricists and rationalists as we saw earlier on felt that an infallible truth was possible because of what they saw in the sciences and mathematics respectively. But the truth is that a closer look at the sciences and mathematics will negate the belief

186. Karl Popper: Conjectures and Refutations, p. 24

187. Friedrich Nietzsche: The Gay Science, in The Portable Nietzsche trans by W. Kaufmann (London: Charto and Windus, 1971).

that a fact can be absolutely true. Frank Egler once said that; "scientific knowledge is often a phenomenon of a particular time"¹⁸⁸. The above statement has challenged the belief that there is an infallible truth in science which is the implicit assumption of the foundationalists. Science cannot support the quest for an apodictic truth because such truth cannot be sustained by science. Science and the history of ideas have been seen to be "a dynamic process, as a struggle between various opposing forces"¹⁸⁹. The whole of the history of science has confirmed the fact that the science of yesterday can become the myth of tomorrow¹⁹⁰.

Science has totally denied having any relationship with the belief in absolute truth in recent times, especially with the advent of Einsteinian physics. The present position has been expressed clearly in these words:

... if you want an ultimate truth, a final reality, it is fundamental religion and not science that can give it to you. It is faith, not doubt, that creates it. The wisdom of science lies in the admission of ignorance and certainty¹⁹¹.

The foundationalists in the light of this should stop looking at truth from the utopian perspective. They should stop seeing man as a "completely unemotional, a human, not light restricted, camera, capable of recording truth and reality"¹⁹².

188. Frank Egler, Op cit., p. 2

189. E. Hutten, Op. cit., p. 27

190. Ibid., p.27

191. Frank Egler, Op.cit, p. 57.

192. Ibid., p. 55

The rationalist foundationalists' belief in the possibility of apodictic truth as we know was also inspired by mathematics. The position is that the indubitable facts of geometry is a confirmation of the fact that absolute truth is possible. The most obvious examples of those foundationalists are Descartes and Husserl. Our stand again is that absolute truth is not possible even in mathematics; for mathematics is also constantly under review. There is constant change in the realm of mathematics to the extent that there can not be an absolutely true position. All theories, all ideas are constantly being reviewed in mathematics in the light of new challenges and new discoveries. A very good example is the theory of numbers which is the foundation of mathematics, as F.L. Will says:

... the theory of numbers is not what it was at the time of Phytagoras, not just because we have additional information about those entities that people at that time referred to as numbers, but also because as a consequence of many developments since that time we think of numbers differently. The word "number" has now a different reference. So great is the difference that many of the claims made at that early time are hard to construe, to assimilate in the language and thought in which we advanced claims about numbers today¹⁹³.

Although modern science at the peak of its successes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, based on Newton's conception of absolute space and time, confidently and proudly asserted that science could give absolute truth, history has proved it wrong. Contemporary science has

193. F.L. Will, Op cit., p. 237.

again revealed the fact that science is provincially limited by time. At the commencement of eighteenth century, says Whitehead, scientists asserted that nonsense had been gotten rid of, that mankind would henceforth have absolute infallible truth, but alas we are presently "at the opposite pole of thought"¹⁹⁴. The whole ambition of attaining absolute truth has been proved unattainable.

At this juncture we should point out that the belief in the linear arrangement of knowledge and the conception of an apodictic truth at the base of it led to the belief that the corpus of knowledge is organised like a super-structure.

The presumption, expressed in the metaphor of foundations and building is from the point of view of cognitive authority hierarchical. It is that there are certain starting points in knowledge, certain items upon which other items depend but which themselves depend neither upon these or any other items. The flow of cognitive authority, warrant, rationality is in one direction, always from those starting points, so that what we learn by means of them always depends for its cognitive status altogether upon them¹⁹⁵.

Throughout all ages, foundationalists always subscribe to the belief that human knowledge is a building that is under construction with new materials being added to the entire superstructure. Foundationalists like good architects always emphasise the need to have a solid foundation. Our position is that the true nature of knowledge is opposed to this metaphorical belief. Knowledge for what it is cannot

194. A.N. Whitehead: Science and the Modern World, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), p. 43

195. F.L. Will: Op.cit., p. 188.

be compared with a building because: "The growth of knowledge involves much modification and indeed abandonment at some places of what we earlier held to be true, it also involves the connection and linking of pieces of knowledge that have earlier seemed distinct and occasionally the reverse"¹⁹⁶.

From our earlier position; that is, our contention that knowledge is not organised in a linear order and our opposition to any form of infallible truth, the belief in the castle of knowledge collapses. For two millenia the attempt of philosophers to erect the building of knowledge has like the biblical attempt to construct the tower of Babel ended on a tragic note. The fact is that the epistemological edifice is constantly falling at the time when builders have reached a higher point, revealing the futility of any attempt to construct such an edifice. To look at knowledge from the metaphor of a building leads therefore to a misconception of the nature of knowledge.

F.L. Will in his book Induction and Justification which without doubt is one of the most rigorous attacks on foundationalism in this century argued that knowledge is not "developed in a constructive manner but rather in a revisionist manner"¹⁹⁷. He contends that knowledge is not constructed but only being revised, so that we have more of subtraction than addition. The theory of knowledge should

196. D.W. Hanlymn: The Theory of Knowledge, (London: The Macmillian Press, 1970), pp.10-11.

197. Ibid., p. 237

not see knowledge as a thing permanently determined and therefore being constructed but rather as a phenomenon under consistent review and revision with even certain facts becoming replaced at the time when they are no longer probable facts.

A theory of knowledge that by design neglects the manifold ways in which revision and correction of this kind take place in knowledge, that so narrowly defines the domain of the rational that all these ways are excluded from it, renders itself by this design incompetent to provide understanding, and by understanding, assistance in the conduct of one of the most important ways in which knowledge actually is achieved and developed¹⁹⁸.

From all these, we can see that knowledge in its natural setting is not arranged in a linear and hierarchical order with the protocol truth at the base like a strong building whose existence depends on a rock-solid foundation. If we see knowledge for what it is that is a human affair in a social set up then the various failures that dominate foundationalism will be avoided. Knowledge for what it is embraces in an essential way a vast and not very orderly system or practices, it can only be misconceived if we try to think of it as systems of practices or as systems of propositions encapsulated in individual minds, preferably in geometric order. Because knowledge is a social institution, like all such institutions, it has its existential feature.

198. Ibid, p. 238

The attempt to see knowledge as a building is absurd and does not take into consideration the tentative and unorganised nature of human knowledge. It has therefore been said that if knowledge is to be seen as a building then the building should not be the normal one with solid and absolute foundation. Rather the building should be seen as a building in the swamp, where there can never be a solid and everlasting foundation¹⁹⁹.

The lesson of this new metaphor is that there is no absolute truth at the base of the corpus of knowledge. The truth and the justification of all beliefs that seek to become knowledge are not absolute. The truth and the justification are rather adhoc and tentative. The above conception of truth and justification of knowledge as tentative was also confirmed by Neurath's comparison of knowledge with a ship in the high sea which though cannot be dismantled in case of a problem but can be repaired. Neurath says:

We are like sailors who must rebuild their ship on the open sea, without ever being able to begin a-new from the bottom. When a beam is removed a new one must at once be put in its place, with the remaining ship being employed as a support. Thus with the help of old beams and drifting timbers the ship can be completely refashioned - but only through gradual reconstruction²⁰⁰.

199. Karl Popper: The Logic of Scientific Discovery, (London: Hutchinson & Co. publishers, 1959), p. 111.

200. Quoted by F.L. Will: Op cit., p. 165.

The comparison of knowledge with a ship in the high sea is particularly a challenge to Descartes and Husserl who felt the need for the superstructure of knowledge to be demolished in order to erect it on a firm foundation. Neurath's comparison shows the futility of such an exercise. The attempt to reconstruct the cognitive castle is thus seen to be unrealistic and impossible.

We shall conclude by saying that the foundationalists' programme of apprehending an ultimate source of knowledge, a basic truth at the base of all cognitive claims and the belief in the linear arrangement of knowledge is erroneous. We still hold our earlier belief that extreme skepticism is erroneous but moderate skepticism is tenable. Our argument is that though knowledge and truth are attainable, absolutely certain knowledge is a mirage. Foundationalists fail to accept the fact that human beings are fallible and that errors and mistakes are inherent features of man. Throughout the history of philosophy this type of attempt to make human beings angels have been implicit and have been unsuccessful.

Some philosophers have however also been pointing out the fact that human beings are fallible and therefore prone to error. In this respect the names of people like Xenophane, Socrates, Erasmus, David Hume and Kant should be mentioned. Those philosophers have been showing how untenable it is to seek to apprehend absolute certainty. As Karl Popper an admirer of these philosophers rightly said all our epistemic claims are conjectures, mere guesses

that can easily be falsified because we are human beings²⁰¹.

Philosophers should come down from their ivory towers and philosophise as mortal and fallible men and not as immortals and angels. Our attempt to understand knowledge can only be successful if we avoid looking at knowledge independently of man and society. The feeling that absolute truth is possible reflects a failure to acknowledge the limitation of man as a fallible being.

Foundationalism has failed as a theory of knowledge because it has refused to see knowledge in its proper setting. Because it has a grandiose and bogus notion of knowledge and man, it assumes that man is perfect and infallible. For only a perfect being can have such an epistemic system that we see in foundationalism.

4.10 SUMMARY

We have in this chapter brought into focus Edmund Husserl's theory of transcendental subjectivity. We commenced the chapter by showing the theory as the residue from the process of bracketting. The transcendental reduction which ushers in the transcendental subject we showed to be the last in the process. It is the act which makes the ego to become pure and removed from the empirical world. We saw here how Husserl derived the theory as the only unbracketed entity in the universe.

201. K. Popper: Conjectures and Refutations, p.39

The theory of transcendental subjectivity was shown in the chapter to be an important and in fact the essential entity in the whole universe of Husserl. Husserl argued that its indubitability and genuineness is clearly made manifest by the fact that the concept was the only entity that survived the great purge effected by the process of bracketing. It is therefore seen to be a reliable source of knowledge.

Husserl, though we said, is attempting a reformulation of Descartes foundationalism, distinguished himself from the latter, by his argument that the transcendental subject is a necessary correlate of the objective world. We saw in the chapter that Husserl's foundation is not as subjective as Descartes' because both the cogito and the cogitatum are made the foundation of the world by him. This is made possible by intentionality. The fact that the transcendental subject cannot but be conscious of the world makes, the existence of the subject to be logically linked with the existence of the world.

The theory of intentionality was well exploited by Husserl to further boost the prestige of the transcendental subject. As we saw here Husserl even went further on the basis of the intentional nature of the transcendental subject to assert that the subject creates the world through a process he calls constitution. A detailed analysis of how Husserl developed the transcendental subject as an essential and formidable notion was clearly seen. In the light of this Husserl made the subject to be the metaphysical as well as the epistemological foundation.

Having revealed Husserl's transcendental subjective foundation, we went on also in this chapter to show why we regard this position as being untenable. The chapter showed the fallacies and the inconsistencies in Husserl's development of the theory. We found out that the theory of intentionality which is the nerve-centre of Husserl's transcendental subjective foundation is in opposition to the transcendental nature of the subjective foundation. The whole super-structure established by Husserl therefore crumbles in the face of this obvious contradiction.

In the last section of the chapter we went on to show that Husserl's failure is not fully due to his own making, but partially traceable to the fact that foundationalism in whatever form cannot be tenable since it is a pseudo theory that originates out of a misconception. We argued that foundationalism is an attempt to solve a badly formulated problem. A badly formulated problem we argued can never receive a genuine solution. Foundationalism, we said, is a product of an old misconception. The traditional misconception of knowledge as something that can have an ultimate source. In the light of this misconceived origin of foundationalism it becomes obvious that all foundationalist theories and in fact Husserl's version are destined to fail.

ALTERNATIVES TO FOUNDATIONALISM

Knowledge is not a series of self consistent theories that converges towards an ideal view, it is not a gradual approach to the truth. It is rather an ever increasing ocean of mutually incompatible and even incommensurable alternatives, each single theory, each fairy tale, each myth that is part of the collection forcing the others into great articulation and all of them contributing via this process of the development of consciousness* Paul Feyereband.

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The last chapter ended on the note that Husserl's foundationalism and in fact any form of foundationalism is destined to fail, the reason we said is because foundationalism originated out of a misconceived notion of knowledge. Having done away with foundationalism we feel it is necessary for us to examine the various options available to us in our bid to replace the moribund theory.

This chapter will now briefly examine coherentist theory of knowledge and find out why it cannot replace foundationalism as the ideal theory of knowledge. We shall also examine contextualism as the best theory of knowledge. In concluding the chapter we will try to suggest an improvement on contextualism by synthesising it with the earlier part of Husserl's phenomenology to make up a theory of knowledge which we shall call "phenomenological contextualism".

5.1 COHERENTISM: THE TRADITIONAL ALTERNATIVE TO FOUNDATIONALISM

Throughout the history of foundationalism as a theory of knowledge its traditional opponent has been the coherence theory of knowledge of coherentism. It has been said that a complete rejection of the doctrine that knowledge has foundation implies

* Paul Feyereband: Against Method (London: New Left books, 1977), p. 30.

the acceptance of a coherence theory of truth and knowledge"¹. The questions that we should ask are these: What is coherentism? To what extent is ~~it~~ an adequate explanation of the true nature of knowledge? Can coherentism succeed where foundationalism failed?

Coherentism or coherence theory of knowledge is the theory that asserts that knowledge is in a holistic or circular system. The contention of the adherents to this theory is that knowledge is not in a linear and hierarchical arrangement, but in a circle. Their argument is that the justification of epistemic claim need not come from a basic statement or a protocol truth. Rather a justification is made if such an epistemic claim coheres or is consistent with the entire system. In other words any epistemic claim, to the coherentist, is justified and validated if such a claim is logically connected with the accepted system and thereby forms a perfect sequence with the whole.

The belief is that all ideas are within systems, all ideas are tied together in a system and we can only know whether an idea is true or not if such an idea is logically consistent with the totality of the system. According to Bradley one of the most popular exponents of the coherence theory of truth, the fundamental attribute of truth is that

... it must not conflict with itself, and there must be no suggestion which fails to fall inside it. Perfect truth, in short must realize the idea of systematic whole².

¹ Antony Quinton: "The Foundations of Knowledge", in Education and the Development of Reason (ed) by R.F. Dearden et al, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 144.

² F.H. Bradley: Essays on Truth and Reality, (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), p. 223.

This theory of truth is also extended to explain knowledge, most especially the origin, growth and justification of knowledge. Coherentism stands in opposition to foundationalism. Coherentists seek to avoid the various limitations of foundationalism. They argue that there is no problem of epistemic regress in this theory of knowledge. They contend that there is no need for a stop at a basic truth since justification is carried out by the whole system rather than by one basic fact. In fact the argument is that within a circle there is no superior or "first", so the superiority of the basic truth does not arise with coherentism. The regress of justification, they argue, does not go on forever, neither does it need to stop at a particular truth. It rather circles back upon itself and thus forms a closed system³.

As we said earlier on, coherentism can best be explained in contrast with its traditional rival foundationalism. Nicholas Rescher in explaining this theory of knowledge contends that whereas foundationalism is an authoritarian theory of knowledge, coherentism is a democratic theory of knowledge. What he is trying to say in essence is that coherentism harbours no hierarchy of epistemic claims with the absolute truth at the base; rather all epistemic claims have the same status. On the whole coherentism can best be summarised with this imagery:

³Lawrence Bonjour: "The Coherence Theory of Empirical Knowledge" in Journal of Phil. Vol. LXI (Oct. 75), p. 283.

On the coherence theory, truth is not ... a tree like structure supported by a firm root but like a mass of objects (some tied to others) thrown into a liquid: some of them rise to the surface themselves or are dragged there by others; some of them sink to the bottom under their own weight or through the pull of others. For the coherentist knowledge is not a Baconian brick wall with block supporting block upon a solid foundation, rather an item of knowledge is like a node of spider's web which is linked to others by thin strand of connection each alone weak but all together adequate for its support⁴.

Having seen coherentism, our next line of action is to see within the available information we have on this theory whether it has successfully achieved what foundationalism for many centuries failed to do.

If we can recollect our earlier criticisms of the position of foundationalism we will realize that coherentism commits all the cardinal errors of foundationalism. Let us take, firstly, the question of the arrangement of knowledge. To conceive knowledge as organised is to fail to see knowledge for what it is. This same error committed by the foundationalists has also been committed by the coherentists for they see knowledge as organised and arranged, though in a systematic and circular order. Any attempt to understand the whole corpus of knowledge as interrelated, whether in a linear order or in a circular order, is misleading.

Let us look at the coherentists' position of epistemic justification and see whether it is an improvement on the foundationalist's. As for an epistemic claim to be justified, the coherentist says such a claim has to be consistent, coherent and in line with the system. Without any doubt this position on

4. Nicholas Rescher: The Coherence Theory of Truth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 319

justification is an open cheque, a permissive theory which will validate any claim whether or not it is justified. The standard of coherence is thus too weak and too permissive to serve as a reliable epistemic standard. It is therefore to be rejected. Any epistemic claim can pass the coherentist's test, and even the obviously invalid claims can become justified simply by being consistent with the system. The coherentist democracy is therefore an unreliable one. We therefore agree with Moritz Schillick's assertion that:

If one is to take coherence seriously as a general criterion of truth, then one must consider arbitrary fairy stories to be as true as a historical report, or as statements in a textbook of chemistry, provided the story is constructed in such a way that no contradiction ever arises. I can depict by help of fantasy a grotesque world full of bizarre adventures: the coherence philosopher must believe in the truth of my account provided only I take care of the mutual compatibility of my statements and also take the precaution of avoiding any collusion with the usual description of the world, by placing the scene of my story in a distant star where no observation is possible⁵.

Both foundationalism and coherentism are borne of the same old misconception of knowledge. Coherentism is also absolute and authoritarian in its conception of knowledge. It also thrives on the age-long mistake that an absolutely certain knowledge can be attained. The only difference between the theory and its rival, foundationalism, is that whereas the former believes that absolute certain knowledge is attainable in the organic whole, the latter believes that it is at the base of the hierarchy of knowledge.

5. Moritz Schillick: "The Foundation of Knowledge" in A.J. Ayer (ed) Logical Positivism, Op. cit., p. 215

We have seen the inadequacies of these two theories and why we therefore reject them. We shall now turn to contextualism, which in our view is a more realistic and more adequate theory of knowledge.

5.2 CONTEXTUALISM: TOWARDS AN ADEQUATE THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Traditional theories of knowledge failed because they never looked at knowledge for what it is, rather they looked at it for what they wanted it to be. We shall now see that "contextualism" a recently developed theory of knowledge which has its root in the past is a more adequate theory of knowledge⁶.

Contextualism as a theory of knowledge was developed in this century particular in the seventies by two writers, David B. Annis and Timo Airaksinen. But that does not mean that other writers do not subscribe to this viewpoint. We should even say that contextualism represents the combination of all genuine reactions to foundationalism and coherentism. It seeks to avoid all the fundamental mistakes of the earlier theories and therefore put knowledge on its natural setting by making it a human and social phenomenon.

As the name "contextualism" implies, this theory of knowledge contends that all knowledge claims are made within a social or individual context. According to David Annis:

Contextualism is an alternative to the traditional theories of foundationalism and coherentism. It denies the existence of basic statements in the foundationalist sense (although it allows contextually basic statements), and it denies that coherence as traditionally been explained is sufficient for justification. Both theories overlook contextual parameters essential

6. Contextualism as an epistemological theory is implicit in the works of Ludwig Wittgenstein, (the later philosophy) Karl Popper, William James, John Dewey and other American pragmatists.

to justification such as the issue context ..., social information and social practices and norms of justification. In particular the social practices and norms of justification. In particular the social nature of justification cannot be ignored⁷.

From the above the positions of contextualism can be clearly stated as follows: (1) There are no basic statements. There is no ultimate cognition. All cognitions are basic depending on their contexts. (2) Coherence is not enough to justify all epistemic claims. (3) Any form of justification, that is, any attempt to validate or invalidate an epistemic claim should take into consideration the context of such claims. Justification should also be social and existential. These are the explicit positions of contextualism. But we have the implicit stands of the theory which are as follows:

(1) There are many sources of knowledge depending on what it is to be known and the context within which the knowledge is to be acquired. (2) No knowledge is absolutely certain to the extent that it cannot be invalidated. All these assertions of contextualism will now be examined.

As we know the various theories of knowledge which we examined earlier on are mainly concerned with justification. The reason for this is not far-fetched. Any theory of knowledge cannot but take into serious consideration the justification criterion since the first definitional attribute of knowledge is justification. What we are saying in essence is that for anything to be called knowledge that claim will have to be justified.

7. David Annis: "Contextualist Theory of Epistemic Justification" in *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 3, (July 1978), pp. 218-219.

Contextualism also takes into consideration the nature of epistemic justification emphasising that all justification should depend on contexts and situations. Its position on justification can be stated in this manner:

When asking whether S is justified in believing h, this has to be considered relative to an issue-context. Suppose we are interested in whether Jones, an ordinary non-medically trained person, has the general information that polio is caused by a virus. If his response to our question is that he remembers the paper reporting that Salk said it was, then this is good enough. He has performed adequately, given the issue-context. But suppose the context is an examination for the M.D degree. Here we expect a lot more if the candidate simply said what Jones did, we would take him as being very deficient in knowledge. Thus relative to issue-context a person may be justified in believing h but not justified relative to another context⁸.

According to the above quotation the justification you give to an epistemic claim cannot be said to be the same in every situation. Rather it allows diverse justification depending on contexts and situations. From the example we see that Jones needs a weak justification for his knowledge of polio in the first situation whereas the same Jones needs a stronger justification for his knowledge of polio when he is being examined for the degree of "doctor of medicine". We see that the situation of Jones has changed from being an ordinary person to that of an expert who needs to justify more convincingly his knowledge claim.

From all this, it is clear that the position of contextualism is that the justification of knowledge varies depending on contexts and situations. Contextualists are totally opposed to the foundationalists who sought for an a priori and absolute

8. Ibid., p. 213.

justification of all epistemic claims even before the claims are made. The position of contextualism is that knowledge cannot be validated independently of situations. Such an attempt by the foundationalists to prejudge a knowledge claim before it is made is a mistake. The foundationalists for example, the empirical foundationists say that knowledge claims that fail to be justified empirically is invalid. This type of position is unfair. They have already given the standard for invalidating a claim ignoring the unique factors that may later on crop up. Such a theory of knowledge is static and unrealistic whereas contextualism is radical and dynamic.

Timo Airaksinen in an article titled "Five types of knowledge"⁹ also came out in support of a contextual theory of knowledge. The position of Airaksinen is that knowledge is not a unidimensional enterprise rather he says, knowledge is multidimensional. His implicit assumption is that since the world is diverse the knowledge of it will also be diverse. He argues therefore that there are many types of knowledge and he goes along to name five which are (1) perceptual, (2) acceptance, (3) coherence, (4) ecological, (5) learning. We are not concerned with his types of knowledge; what is of importance to us is his position that there are many approaches to knowledge, many sources of knowledge and therefore that there should be many criteria for justifying the diverse epistemic claims. To him no single criterion can ever be adequate for justifying the multifarious knowledge claims that people can make. He says:

9. Timo Aira Ksinen: "Five types of Knowledge" in American Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 15, No.4 (Oct. 1978).

... we have mutually independent criteria which we can prove really apply in their respective situations and the succeed in their common task equally well.¹⁰

The summary of this contextual -theory of knowledge is that both the source of knowledge as well as the method of justification of knowledge vary from one type of knowledge to another. For example Aira Ksinen will say that a knowledge A can be a perceptual knowledge whereas a knowledge claim A can only be justified with a perceptual parameter while the knowledge claim B can only be justified by a coherence parameter. Any attempt to justify either of the two epistemic claims by different parameters will fail. Knowledge should always be seen in the light of the context that gave birth to it. This is what he seems to be saying by his division of knowledge into types.

Again we can explain the above stand and contextualism in general by means of concrete example. A perceptual knowledge for example is a knowledge that is derived through a perceptual method and should be justified by a perceptual criterion. Coherence knowledge, to Airaksinen, is a knowledge that is arrived at through a coherence method and should be justified by a coherence criterion. Perceptual knowledge is knowledge by perception, for example the epistemic claim that says: "The tomatoe is red". By coherence knowledge we mean something more complex which needs further explanation.

An example of coherence knowledge is when there is a system, let us say in a society it is the acceptable moral norm that a junior person should always prostrate for his senior (that is in

10. Ibid., p. 263

age). If Mr. A is a man living in the society who is aware of this norm then if he refuses to oblige by prostrating we can say that: Mr. A is proud, rude and disobedient. The knowledge that Mr. A is disobedient is coherence knowledge. It is derived from the system and it can only be justified within the system. It is not proper for another person using an a priori standard to say that such a claim is unjustified. The claim cannot be justified by any standard alien to the system.

Contextualism is a departure from the traditional epistemology and the abysmal failures that permeate its entire history. It disassociates itself from the traditional belief in absolute eternal certainty, and accepts the realistic position that certainty is tentative and contextual. The claim that sense - experience is the ultimate source of knowledge is unrealistic. The same is applicable to the rationalistic foundation.

Our criticism of foundationalism and coherentism is that the two theories fail to take into consideration the natural ways of knowing. The two theories of knowledge have been too idealistic and utopian in their approaches. We argued that it is this mistake intrinsic in traditional epistemology that automatically nullifies Edmund Husserl's attempt to make a transcendental subject the foundation of knowledge. We believe that contextualism is a better theory of knowledge because it takes into consideration the true nature and psychological origin of knowledge. Contextualism asserts that knowledge is a human and social phenomenon and any theory of knowledge that fails to take this into consideration has failed before it

starts.

Contextualism maintains that absolutely certain knowledge is unattainable to man, that at best what we can have is tentatively certain knowledge. It is a refusal to continue the endless war with skepticism, and an acceptance of moderate skepticism, with the belief that extreme skepticism is self-refuting.

Contextualism differs from other theories of knowledge because of its realistic nature. It does not engage itself in self-deceit by claiming that knowledge is absolutely certain. Rather it takes the position that knowledge is relative, that human knowledge is situational and contextual. This position though unpopular in traditional philosophy has been stated explicitly at the commencement of the history of epistemology by Protagoras and the Sophists. It has also been supported by Hume, Kant and the contemporary pragmatists. In actual fact this stand is also implicit in all philosophical theories, if we strive to take them to their logical conclusions. It is the response to the yearning throughout the ages for a realistic theory of knowledge.

5.3 ON PHENOMENOLOGICAL CONTEXTUALISM

In concluding this chapter, we shall argue that Husserl's phenomenology can serve a contextual purpose. In actual fact the realistic stage of Husserl's philosophy which came earlier can be remoulded to produce a contextual theory. We should state that Husserl is not a contextualist but a foundationslist as we have shown earlier on in this thesis. What we therefore wish to do is to draw out the contextual implications in his philosophy and that of his successors.

Firstly, the dictum of Husserl's phenomenology "Zu den Sachen selbst" "To the things themselves" can be given a contextual interpretation. Although the meaning of this slogan in Husserl's philosophy is that the essence of things should be clearly understood, we can, however, give a contextual meaning to it. This rather platonic position of Husserl can be made contextual if we posit that "to the things themselves" means that things should be understood within their original contexts. We shall argue that the platonic interpretation of this slogan is outdated and should therefore be replaced by a more realistic one.

This phenomenological slogan means for us that whatever one wants to understand, one should trace it to its original context. We should avoid bringing in a priori and previous preconceptions in our appreciation of those things. Phenomenology, therefore, as a contextual theory is still a descriptive study of all issues within their contexts without the influences of predilections. When one therefore talks of studying and understanding the phenomenon in its pure state, what phenomenological contextualism says is that one should try to see the phenomenon within its original context, that is, within the particular situation that generates it.

Applying phenomenological contextualism to epistemology, what the theory means is that we should avoid dogmatism in our quest for knowledge. Phenomenological contextualism accepts that there are manifold sources of knowledge. It rejects Husserl's position that the transcendental subjectivity is the only source of knowledge. We also posit that for any epistemic claim to be justified we do not need a priori standard. Rather we should evaluate it within the particular context that generates it.

Phenomenological contextualism is therefore an hybrid of the good ideas in Husserl's phenomenology and the tenets of contextualism. We accept the Husserlian goal of presuppositionlessness but with serious amendment. We believe that this ideal as Husserl presented it is utopian and unrealistic. We have therefore decided to give it a different interpretation. By presuppositionlessness, our new theory of phenomenological contextualism enjoins us to try to see all issues within their contexts. The bracketting method will help the person seeking to justify knowledge contextually to really apprehend the true context that gives birth to the knowledge.

What the above position signifies is that the bracketting method can help solve the problem inherent in contextualism. The problem of contextualism is simply that, more often when we seek to justify an epistemic claim contextually we may find ourselves unconsciously bringing in ideas from other contexts to justify it. With the bracketting method, we now have an instrument for throwing away all those a priori beliefs that may infiltrate our thought and therefore prevent us from really seeing knowledge as a phenomenon within a context.

The theory of intentionality which is also another cardinal principle in Husserl's phenomenology can also serve a contextualistic purpose. The theory of intentionality is a description of the nature of consciousness. It simply says that consciousness is consciousness of something and that every thinking act implies an object of thought. This theory, if applied to the notion of knowledge, will support a contextual theory of knowledge. With intentionality, knowledge is always knowledge of something, to have any knowledge implies the existence of an object as well as a context of knowledge. This amounts to

saying that every knowledge implies a context and this context should be taken into account if we wish to justify the knowledge.

As we saw earlier on most of the phenomenologists after Husserl disagreed with him on his transcendental subjective foundationalist position. Virtually all of them quarrelled with his foundationalism and there are implicit contextualistic ideas in their philosophies. This is what we now want to make explicit with the theory of phenomenological contextualism.

Some disciples of Husserl were ontologists, and forerunners of the Existentialist movement. Prominent among them are people like Sartre, Heidegger, Gabriel Marcel and Merleau-Ponty. They have all been described as existential phenomenologists. Those writers have within their philosophies some hidden contextualistic assumption that needs to be brought out. Existentialism as we know is a realistic philosophy that seeks to challenge the dogmatism and authoritarianism prevalent in traditional philosophy. The existentialists believe that philosophy should abandon abstraction and concentrate on the problems of human existence. Although the existentialists did not give serious attention to epistemology, their positions in ethics, if thoroughly analysed, will result in contextualism.

In ethics, the existentialists argue that there should not be any moral standard independent of human actions. They contend that man is capable of creating his own values depending on the situation of things. The rightness or wrongness of an action, they posit, cannot be determined a priori but within the context of the action in question. This ethical stand has an epistemological counterpart and this is what we have called phenomenological contextualism.

Contextualism as we earlier on said has been with philosophy for long. It only became formalized and popularised in this century as the ideal approach to knowledge. We believe however that contextualism needs polishing and this polishing we have carried out using the tool of phenomenology. The product of this amendment exercise is what we have called phenomenological contextualism. Its position once again is that an epistemic claim should be seen for what it is. It should be seen as having been derived from one of the manifold sources of knowledge. We should strive to justify an epistemic claim within the context that generates it. We should accept or reject such a claim with reference to the context or situation that generates the knowledge. This approach to knowledge and to other aspects of philosophy will finally save us from the dilemma of foundationalism

5.4 SUMMARY

Having rejected foundationalism in whatever form in the previous chapter, the present chapter examined the alternatives to foundationalism. The chapter firstly exposed and analysed coherentist theory of knowledge which is the traditional alternative to foundationalism. We found out that coherentist epistemology is not better than foundationalism, for it also thrives on the mistakes and the misconceptions that led to the demise of foundationalism.

In the light of the failure of both foundationalism and its traditional rival coherentism, contextualism, a theory of knowledge which takes into consideration the true nature of knowledge as a social and existential phenomenon, we argued, should replace foundationalism and should be the official approach

to the study of epistemology.

Again in this chapter we argued that despite the domination of traditional epistemology by foundationalism, contextualism has been in philosophy for long, through in a silent manner. We contended that this theory is even embedeed in the philosophy of Edmund Husserl. An attempt was therefore made in the chapter to bring out the contextualist assumptions implicit in Husserl's philosophy. This is what we called "phenomenological contextualism".

CONCLUSION

We shall round up our critique of Edmund Husserl's foundationalism by showing the precarious consequences of this philosophical standpoint on the society. Having argued so far that foundationalism is a misconceived theory, because it has a misleading assumption of what knowledge is, we shall again argue that the theory should be rejected because its implications are negative and precarious for mankind in general.

It may be argued in some quarters that foundationalism is an epistemological theory which cannot have any practical consequence. It has however been established and proved beyond reasonable doubt that philosophical ideas, even the so called abstract areas of philosophy, like epistemology, have direct influence on the practical life of human beings. As Karl Popper rightly said, epistemology is no longer seen in the light of its Humean conception as abstract, remote and altogether irrelevant region of pure philosophy but in the Kantian sense¹. To Kant the epistemological question is one of the three cardinal questions that are fundamental to philosophy both as a theoretical as well as a practical discipline. In fact Bertrand Russell has confirmed the fact that epistemology can have practical and relevant implications on the sciences, ethics and even politics².

That foundationalism can spell doom for man's practical life can also been seen from the fact that this theory is not restricted to epistemology but has infiltrated the practical aspects of philosophy. Foundationalism as we saw, in

1. Karl Popper: Conjectures and Refutations. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 4.

2. Ibid., p. 4.

epistemology is the belief that there is an ultimate source for all knowledge and that there is one absolute standard for the justification of all knowledge claims. Generally speaking foundationalists believe that all things must have an ultimate source and that an absolute a priori standard must be got to evaluate all things. The spirit behind this is authoritarianism and it permeates the entire fabrics of traditional philosophy.

The authoritarian spirit of seeing things from a static, one dimensional and absolute perspective can be traced to the initial starting point of philosophy in the hands of the milesians. This authoritarian spirit or "spirit of foundationalism" has been the official principle and the foundation of traditional philosophy. Western philosophy throughout its history has been the attempt of philosophers to supply answers to this badly formulated authoritarian question.

In metaphysics the question "What is the ultimate reality?" has been a central question. This question like its counterpart in epistemology has led to the conflict between the materialists who saw matter as the ultimate reality and the idealists who saw spirit as the ultimate reality.. Metaphysicians, like epistemologists, until recently have not even questioned the rationale behind this question. They never for once gave it a serious thought that "spirit" and "matter" could be complimentary and that the two could be real.

The authoritarian spirit is also felt in the realm of ethics where ethicists have been divided into rival camps over the question of what should be the ultimate standard of judging moral actions. The same is also applicable to socio-political philosophy where the foundationalists have been engaged in controversy in their attempts to answer the questions: "what is

the ideal system of government?" "Who are the ideal rulers ?"; these questions have led to bitter conflicts not only among political philosophers but also among political scientists and politicians. The chaos brought about by these authoritarian questions have dominated the whole of human society.

Philosophy of science is an area of philosophy where the foundationalist spirit became very popular in this century. The question as to what should be the ideal method of carrying out scientific enquiry has been at the center of this foundationalist spirit. The logical positivists have been at the forefront of the absolute authoritarian claim that empirical observation and verification method alone should be adopted, as the method of science to the detriment of other methods. In the first half of this century they dominated not only philosophy of science but the entire fabrics of philosophy. With their principle of verification they went out condemning and rejecting anything that cannot conform to their absolute principle. As we saw earlier this principle of verification is nothing other than empirical foundationalism.

This logical positivists' authoritarian rejection of all things that do not conform to their absolute empirical principle has led again in recent times to the rejection of African philosophy. According to this group of philosophers African philosophy should be rejected because it lacks logic and scientific rigour. Genuine philosophy they argued should be logical, scientific, self-critical and analytical which obviously are the principles behind logical positivism³.

3. It is difficult to mention names at this point in time because many of the champions of this position are changing their views in the face of criticisms. We can, however, mention scholars like Peter Bodunrin and Kwesi Wiredu as members of this school of thought.

C.S. Momoh exposed the misconception behind this denial of African philosophy when he referred to those philosophers as "African Logical Neo-positivists"⁴.

At this juncture we want to point out that foundationalism in whatever form has never succeeded. Rather it has generated bitter conflicts and unhealthy rivalry. It has led to the unpopularity of philosophy when it is compared to other disciplines like the sciences. We are not saying that philosophy should not be controversial, for we acknowledge the fact that controversy is the spice of philosophy. But what we object to is the unhealthy and negative controversies over trivial issues which foundationalism has brought into philosophy. We sincerely believe that it is scandalous to hear philosophers engaging in bitter conflicts over what should be the ultimate source of knowledge when it is obvious that knowledge has many sources, and not one ultimate source. It is therefore not surprising that the story of foundationalism whether in epistemology, ethics or metaphysics has been a story of repeated failures. Foundationalism failed to understand the true nature of man and the world which are the objects of the study of philosophy. They sought to make man static and the world permanent which is impossible, and because of this philosophy has been stagnant.

Foundationalism with its spirit of authoritarianism behind it has been a scandal to philosophy and has given it a negative image. Philosophy in the light of this spirit has come to be seen as an exercise in abstraction that should not be taken seriously. In the light of this, William James said:

4. C.S. Momoh, "African Philosophy Does it Exist?" in Diogenes. 1985, pp 69 - 97.

Philosophy is out of touch with real life, for which it substitutes abstractions. The real world is various, tangled painful. Philosophers have almost without exception, treated it as noble simple and perfect; ignoring the complexity of fact and indulging in a sort of optimism that exposes their system to the contempt of common men...⁵

In recent times philosophy has not been seen as a serious exercise; rather it has been seen as mere mental gymnastics. The reason is obvious; philosophers have not been realistic they have always been looking at issues from their utopian and authoritarian perspectives. This has led to the belief in some quarters outside philosophy that the philosopher is a "blind man in a black room looking for a black hat that is not there"⁶.

But we should state clearly that if traditional philosophy has not been able to achieve its lofty goals, because of its authoritarian unrealistic approach to issues; it has affected tremendously the society, though negatively. Without any doubt philosophical ideas have been infiltrating persistently into the society. The authoritarianism that foundationalism breeds and accommodates has led to the various problems that we have in the society today. Although common men may not hold philosophy in high esteem, although the man in the street may regard philosophy as being unrealistic, yet the fact remains that those negative features of philosophy are reflected in the life of the individuals in the society. The individual may be unconscious of this, but the fact remains that philosophical ideas and issues influence unconsciously the behaviour of men.

5. William James: Some Problems of Philosophy (New York: Greenword Press, 1968), p. 26.

6. Ibid., p. 9

The fanaticism, intolerance and authoritarianism that permeate the entire world community today are reflections of the influence of traditional philosophy on human life.

At this point in our argument let us briefly see how foundationalism breeds fanaticism, intolerance and authoritarianism by briefly examining the foundationalism of Edmund Husserl again. Edmund Husserl as we saw earlier on contended that the metaphysical foundation of all things is the transcendental subject. He argued that the transcendental subject is the primary substance and the creator of all things in the world. He regarded all genuine experiences as that of the transcendental subject. The subject is to him the criterion of meaning. The existence and essence of everything depend on it. Whatever exists according to him exists for the transcendental subject, it exists as the intentional correlate of the transcendental subject. The transcendental realm is the absolute realm and anything outside it is meaningless.

The above digression has clearly brought into the open the authoritarianism and fanaticism of the foundationalist theory. Husserl's transcendental subjectivity as we know is the absolute and a priori standard of truth, reality and moral goodness. The phenomenological method is the ideal method for carrying out all enquiries whether in the sciences or in the humanities. Husserl, like a true foundationalist, refused to allow anything short of this. To him the transcendental subject is the royal road to knowledge and reality. It is the ideal method of enquiry; to do otherwise is to him, to engage in a pseudo-study. This, Husserlian foundationalism epitomizes the fanaticism, authoritarianism and intolerance that has dominated the entire history of philosophy and the contemporary society.

The fact that the contemporary world is a world of crisis is not in doubt. In this century alone mankind has witnessed two world wars and several inter-ethnic, inter-religious and ideological wars. At present the world is gripped with the fear that the cold war between the capitalists and the socialists could degenerate into a nuclear holocaust. Our contention is that this volatile situation has its root in philosophy, because as the preamble to the UNESCO's constitution rightly said "wars begin in the minds of men". It is our belief that the conflict between individuals and groups today is a far-reaching effect of the authoritarianism, fanaticism and intolerance which the foundationalist attitude in philosophy breeds.

The conflicts in politics today, whether at the micro-level or at the macro-level, centres around three issues , namely, ideology, dictatorship and discrimination. These three problems which are fundamental political problems are also part of the far-reaching implications of the foundationalist spirit in traditional philosophy.

Ideological conflict is a problem that is confronting the world today. The world as we know is presently divided into two conflicting camps with two opposing ideologies socialism and capitalism. Our contention is that this conflict has its root in philosophy since ideologies are borne out of philosophy. The antagonistic posture between the East and the West as we call these conflicting groups is a result of the authoritarianism and intolerance of traditional philosophy. Adherents of the two ideological view-points are in conflict because they see their positions as the ultimate and absolute truth which ought to be accepted by their opponents. We need not blame political leaders who

antagonise themselves and see their own ideology as the absolute ideal. We should rather blame the philosophers who formulated these ideologies and claimed that they were absolutely perfect and ideal. We should blame them for refusing to see that rival ideologies are complementary, and for failing to acknowledge the obvious fact that situations and contexts should determine the appropriate ideology to be used in a particular place and at a given time.

Political philosophers were the brains behind political ideologies. The two most popular ideologies, socialism and capitalism were formulated by political philosophers. In formulating those ideologies these philosophers were influenced by the foundationalist spirit of totalitarianism and absolutism. This foundationalist spirit which was at the back of their minds led them to believe that there could be an absolutely ideal system of government and an absolutely perfect economic system. In the light of this, those philosophers went on erroneously to present their positions as the only way out. In the true foundationalist spirit the philosophers saw themselves as the saviours of mankind and the custodians of truth. This attitude led their followers to fanaticism and intolerance which culminated in the political conflict that we are now witnessing in the world.

Our stand is that the narrow-mindedness and intolerance which foundationalism breeds in traditional philosophy has led to the precarious situation of today. The philosophers that formulated these ideologies and made them absolute should share the greatest blame for the cold war going on today in the world and the volatile situation the world has been plunged into. If those philosophers had not erroneously believed that

there is an ultimate and absolutely true ideological position the present situation would not have arisen.

The foundationalist spirit again has created another problem in the society but this time it is a problem for the third world countries. The problem is that of dictatorial and despotic leadership. Half of the countries of the third world today are being ruled by despotic leaders who govern their subjects without their consent and make laws arbitrarily. The leaders always see themselves as the ideal rulers who have been destined to rule by divine providence. Such leaders are intolerant to criticism and opposition. They regard critics as subversive elements and treat them as such. This dictatorship is a consequence of the foundationalist spirit of traditional philosophy.

The problem of racial and ethnic conflict and discrimination is a social problem both for the national and the international communities. Apartheid and tribalism, to use the appropriate terms, are problems for both the international and national communities respectively⁷. These problems have their foundation in the authoritarian and intolerant spirit of foundationalism. The same is applicable to the problem of religious intolerance which like the earlier problem is the bane of the world today whether at the micro or at the macro-level. All these problems arose because philosophy sold the outrageous position to mankind that there can be only one ultimate truth, only one ultimate reality and only one ultimate certainty. Consequently there arose the belief that there is only one ultimate tribe which

7. I have discussed something like this in a paper titled "Epoche as the solution to the Problem of Tribalism". It is presented during the Second Faculty of Arts Seminar of the University of Lagos, May 1985.

is superior to all others, only one ethnic group race or religion that is ultimate, and superior to all others. This belief as we know was one of the reasons behind the second world war and the many wars that we have witnessed in this century.

The negative implication of foundationalism can also be seen in our educational system. Epistemological foundationalist misconception of knowledge has affected the whole of our educational sector. The reason is obvious. Both education and epistemology deal with knowledge, hence epistemological theories affect education. The authoritarianism and intolerance of foundationalism and the belief in only one approach to knowledge has led to a perilous situation in education. It has generated two serious problems, and these are "narrow educational targets" and "indoctrination".

Traditional theories of education like traditional philosophy thrived on the assumption that there is a royal road to knowledge. Educational philosophers, like their counterparts in epistemology, believe that there is only one source of knowledge. It is believed that the formal school is the only place where the children can receive genuine knowledge. The child is made to believe that the school and the teachers possess the whole of knowledge. The children are therefore put together in a formal school with arrogant teachers who believe that the child should be made to see the absolute truth. This in essence is the implication of epistemological foundationalism. Although it is necessary to say that twentieth century education is coming out against this stereotype and straight jacket education, we should nevertheless mention that in present day Nigeria and in some parts of the

third world the foundationalist problem is still very rampant.

Foundationalism in education as we said has created the problem of "narrow educational targets". What do we mean by this? We mean a situation whereby the educational system is organised with the assumption that the formal school, especially the university is the ultimate and only source of knowledge. The informal school is therefore discouraged and looked upon with a skeptical eye, the policy makers therefore see informal education as inferior. Wilhelm Ebert one time president of the world confederation of teachers articulated this problem of narrow educational targets in this manner:

One of the principal shortcomings of educational system in most parts of the world is that from the time a child enters school the target is set on the University. Yet each year only about 1% to 3% of the school population enters universities. Nevertheless, all the effort, expenditure and preparation are for the benefit of this small minority⁸.

This problem of narrow educational targets he said has also led to another problem which he referred to as "diploma disease" or "credentialism". This problem is currently being experienced in this country because all opportunities in life depend presently on pre-career educational qualifications which we believe can only be acquired from the formal schools.

Another perilous situation that foundationalism has created in our educational system is indoctrination. As we are well aware foundationalism breeds authoritarianism, dictatorship and

8. William Ebert: "Today's Schools' for Tomorrow's needs" a paper presented at the Asian Regional Conference of Teachers at Banguio, Phillippines, May 1977.

fanaticism. The consequence of this in education is indoctrination. As E.A. Davey rightly observed indoctrination takes place when the teacher makes rules without explanation; when the teacher commands needlessly, when he expects unnecessary and irrational obedience, and when he tries to establish his authority by appeals to convention⁹. This type of situation will always arise when we believe that there is an absolute and final source of knowledge. This frame of mind will make dictators of teachers and robots of pupils. The teachers will disseminate dogmas and doctrines instead of dynamic and useful ideas.

Another far-reaching consequence of epistemological foundationalism, especially empirical foundationalism, in the world today is the belief that science education is more important than the study of the humanities. In all aspects of our educational system today, science education is seen as superior to the humanistic studies, this has led to a situation whereby all disciplines try to become scientific in their methodology. The policy of education in Nigeria as we know, favoured science education to the detriment of other forms of education. The popularity of science in this century, as we earlier said, led to the belief that science is the ultimate source of knowledge, and this is also responsible for this favouritism toward science.

According to Paul Feyereband it is absurd that science which fought against the authoritarianism and supersitition of the church is presently replacing religion by its own authoritarianism and supersitition. Science, he says has become

9. Quoted by: Paul Feyereband: "How to defend society against science" in Scientific Revolutions (ed.) by Ian Hacking, (London: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 156.

another ideology and myth which should be rejected. He clearly described the belief in the superiority of science over all other forms of knowledge in this manner:

"... consider the role science now plays in education. Scientific facts are taught at a very early age and in the very same manner in which religious facts were taught only a century ago. There is no attempt to waken the critical abilities of the pupil so that he may be able to see things in perspective ... In society at large the judgement of the bishops and cardinal was accepted not too long ago ... Heretics in science are still made to suffer from the most severe sanctions this relatively tolerant civilization has to offer"¹⁰

In the light of these perilous consequences of accepting foundationalism in whatever form it has become absolutely necessary for present day philosophers to renounce this spirit and look for a better method of approaching philosophical issues. Very many contemporary philosophers now challenge and reject foundationalism and the authoritarian spirit that it generates. Contemporary philosophers are conscientiously looking for a way of avoiding the liability of the foundationalist tradition. As William James put it: "At the present day it is getting more and more difficult for dogmatists claiming finality for their systems to get a hearing in educated circles"¹¹.

Contemporary philosophers have seen the great havoc that the spirit of authoritarianism and intolerance of foundationism has done to philosophy. There is therefore the popular belief that foundationalism is stale, misconceived and should be totally rejected. In all branches of philosophy there is this

10. Ibid., p. 157

11. William James, Op. Cit., p. 25.

loud cry for tolerance, democracy and open-mindedness. In ethics there is the belief that absolute justification of ethics is impossible. Present day ethicists like Joseph Fletcher and the existentialists are championing the assault on ethical foundationalism. The same is true of philosophy of science where Karl Popper and his disciples, especially Paul Feyerabend, are challenging the absolutist and authoritarian tendency of the logical positivists.

Contemporary philosophical movements such as pragmatism, existentialism, marxism and even phenomenology have seen the need to replace the traditional way of philosophising with a more realistic approach to philosophy. In all their philosophical ideas there are inherent oppositions to foundationalism. There is therefore embedded in virtually all contemporary philosophical schools an opposition to the closed system and authoritarianism of the traditional philosophy.

The present study is in line with this agitation, we have shown how Husserl's presentation of a foundationalist epistemology in this century is out of tune with contemporary feeling of tolerance and open-mindedness. Our belief is that foundationalism ought to be challenged in the light of its negative implications. What is more, Husserl had within his philosophic system a genuine theory of knowledge before he embarked on foundationalism. Our contention is that Husserl's foundationalism should be rejected and be replaced with contextualism which, as we have shown in the thesis, is a more realistic theory of knowledge and more in line with the spirit of tolerance and open-mindedness in all spheres of life.

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