

Being Reconfigured

Being Reconfigured

By

Ian Leask

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

Being Reconfigured, by Ian Leask

This book first published 2011

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2011 by Ian Leask

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-4438-2551-4, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-2551-1

For Aoife, Éilis and Eimhir

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	ix
Abbreviations	xi
Introduction	1
Part One	
Chapter One.....	9
Husserl, Givenness and the Priority of the Self	
Chapter Two	25
Marion's Dative Subject and the 'Principle of Principles'	
Part Two	
Chapter Three	47
Levinas <i>Contra</i> Fundamental Ontology	
Chapter Four	67
Levinas's Kantian Aporiai	
Part Three	
Chapter Five	81
Otherwise than Otherwise than Being (1)	
Chapter Six	99
Otherwise than Otherwise than Being (2)	
Conclusion.....	123
Index	129

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This monograph is intended mainly as an attempt to repay some of the intellectual debt owed to my former teachers and colleagues in Scholastic Philosophy, at Queen's University, Belfast. The department itself may have suffered a lingering death, but, hopefully, the wider current to which it belonged and contributed will continue to provide the richest sustenance.

Various sections and segments have appeared in articles already published: some of Chapter One in the *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*; some of Two in *Givenness and God: Questions of Jean-Luc Marion*, published by Fordham University Press; some of Three in the *Maynooth Philosophical Papers*; some of Four in the *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*; and some of Five and Six in the *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*. I should like to thank the various editors and publishers involved for their kind permission to reproduce material.

I also thank my colleagues at the Mater Dei Institute, Dublin, for their help and encouragement. I offer particular thanks to the staff of the Institute's library, for their continual good-will and efficiency

In addition, I thank the production team at Cambridge Scholars Press, for their patient professionalism.

Above all, I thank Fiona.

ABBREVIATIONS

Husserl

APAS: *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, trans. Anthony J. Steinbock, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001; Husserliana (Hua) XVII, *Formale und transzendente Logik. Versuch einer Kritik der logischen Vernunft. Mit ergänzenden Texten*, Hrsg. Paul Jannssen, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1974; Hua XI: *Analyzen zur passiven Synthesis. Aus Vorlesungs- und Forschungsmanuskripten (1918-1926)*, Hrsg. M. Fleischer, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988; Hua XIV: *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlaß. Zweiter Teil. 1921-1928*. Hrsg. I. Kern, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1973.

CM: *Cartesian Meditations. An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. D. Cairns, The Hague: Nijhoff, 1960; *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*, Hua I, Hrsg. Stephan Strasser, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991.

EJ/EU: *Experience & Judgement: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*, ed. L. Landgrebe, trans. J.S. Churchill & K. Ameriks, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973; *Erfahrung und Urteil. Untersuchungen zur Genealogie der Logik*. Hrsg. Ludwig Landgrebe, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1972.

FTL: *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, trans. Dorion Cairns, The Hague: Nijhoff, 1969; Hua XVII, *Formale und transzendente Logik. Versuch einer Kritik der logischen Vernunft. Mit ergänzenden Texten*, Hrsg. Paul Jannssen, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1974.

Hua VII: *Erste Philosophie (1923/24)*, Erster Teil: *Kritische Ideengeschichte*, Hrsg. R. Boehm, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1965.

Hua XV: *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlaß. Dritter Teil. 1929-1935*, Hrsg. I. Kern, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1973.

Hua XXIV: *Einleitung in die Logik und Erkenntnistheorie. Vorlesungen 1906/07*, Hrsg. Ullrich Melle. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1985.

Id.1: *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology & to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book*, trans. Fred Kersten, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1983 (Also: *Ideas. A General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. W.R. Boyce Gibson, London: Allen & Unwin, 1931); Hua III/1, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie*, 1.Halbband: Text der 1-3. Auflage, Hrsg. K. Schuhmann, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1977.

Id.2: *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology & to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Second Book*, trans. R. Rojcewicz & A. Schuwer, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989; Hua IV, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Zweites Buch: Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution*. Hrsg. Marly Biemel, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991.

Id.3: *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology & to a Phenomenological Philosophy. Book 3: Phenomenology & the Foundations of the Sciences*, trans. Ted E. Klein & William E. Pohl, The Hague: Nijhoff, 1980; Hua V: *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, Drittes Buch, Die Phänomenologie und die Fundamente der Wissenschaften*, Hrsg. Marly Biemel, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1971.

LI/LU: *Logical Investigations*, 2 vols., trans. J.N. Findlay, New York: Humanities Press, 1970; Hua XVIII, *Logische Untersuchungen*. Erster Band: Prolegomena zur reinen Logik, Text der 1. und 2. Auflage. Hrsg. E. Holenstein, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1975; Hua XIX, *Logische Untersuchungen*, Zweiter Band: Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis. Hrsg. Ursula Panzer, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1984.

Marion

BG/ED: *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*. Translated by Jeffrey L. Kosky. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002/ *Etant donné: essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation*, Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1998.

GWB/DSE: *God Without Being. Hors-texte*. Translated by Thomas A. Carlson. Foreword by David Tracy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991/ *Dieu sans l'être. Hors-texte*. Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1982.

ITN: 'In the Name: How to Avoid Speaking of 'Negative Theology', in *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*, eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999, 20-41.

OFP: 'The Other First Philosophy and the Question of Givenness', trans. Jeffrey Kosky, *Critical Inquiry* 25 (1999), 784-800.

OTG: 'On the Gift: A Discussion Between Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion', moderated by Richard Kearney, in *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*, eds. Caputo & Scanlon, 54-78.

RG/RD: *Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger and Phenomenology*, trans. Thos. Carlson, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998/ *Reduction et donation: recherches sur Husserl, Heidegger et la phénoménologie*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989.

SP/PS: 'The Saturated Phenomenon', trans. Thos. Carlson, *Philosophy Today* 40 (1996), 103-124/ 'Le phénomène saturé', in *Phénoménologie et théologie*, ed. Jean- François Courtine. Paris: Criterion, 1992, 79-128.

SPCG: 'Sketch of a Phenomenological Concept of Gift', trans. John Conley, SJ, and Danielle Poe, in *Postmodern Philosophy and Christian Thought*, ed. Merold Westphal. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999, 122-143.

Levinas

EE: *Existence and Existents*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001/ *De L'Existence à L'Existant*, Paris: Librairie Philosophique J.Vrin, 2004.

EI: *Ethics and Infinity*, trans. Richard A. Cohen, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985/ *Ethique et Infini*, Paris: Fayard/France Culture, 1982.

GDT/DMT: *God, Death and Time*, trans. /*Dieu, la Mort et le Temps*, Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1993.

OB/AE: *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1981/ *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence*, La Haye: Nijhoff, 1974.

TI: *Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, The Hague: Nijhoff, 1968)/ *Totalité et Infini. Essai sur l'extériorité*, La Haye: Nijhoff, 1961.

TO/TA: *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard Cohen, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987/ *Le Temps et l'Autre*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983.

Edith Stein

FEB/EES: *Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being*, trans. Kurt F. Reinhardt, ed. L. Gelber & R. Leuven, Washington: ICS Publications, 2002/ *Endliches und Ewiges Sein. Versuch eines Aufstieges zum Sinn des Seins: Anhang, Martin Heideggers Existenzphilosophie, Die Seelenburg*, Band 11/12 of *Edith Steins Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Andreas Müller, Freiburg: Herder, 2006.

HA: 'Husserl and Aquinas: A Comparison', in *Knowledge and Faith* (see below), pp.1-63/ 'Husserls Phänomenologie und die Philosophie des hl. Thomas v. Aquino', Festschrift Edmund Husserl (zum 70. Geburtstag gewidmet), Supplementband, *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*, Halle: Niemeyer, 1929, pp.315-338; and 'Was ist Philosophie?—Ein Gespräch zwischen Edmund Husserl und Thomas von Aquino', in *Erkenntnis und Glaube*, see below, pp.19-48.

KF/EG: *Knowledge and Faith*, trans. Walter Redmond, Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 2000/ *Erkenntnis und Glaube*, Band XV of *Edith Steins Werke*, ed. L. Gelber, Freiburg: Herder, 1993.

SC/K: *The Science of the Cross. A Study of St John of the Cross*, trans. Hilda Graef, eds. L. Gelber & Romaeus Leuven, London: Burns & Oates, 1960/ *Kreuzeswissenschaft, Studie über Joannes A Croce*, Band I of *Edith Steins Werke*, Freiburg: Herder: 1983.

Michel Henry

EM: *The Essence of Manifestation*, trans. Girard Etzkorn, The Hague: Nijhoff, 1973/ *L'essence de la manifestation*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963.

GP: *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Douglas Buick, Stanford University Press, 1993/ *Généalogie de la psychoanalyse. Le commencement perdu*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985.

PM: *Phénoménologie matérielle*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990.

Merleau-Ponty

PP: *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith, revised F. Williams, London: Routledge, 1981/ *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Paris: Gallimard, 1945.

VI: *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968/ *Le visible et l'invisible*, Paris: Gallimard, 1964

INTRODUCTION

At best neutral, even neuter, at worst suffocating, even evil, Being—so it now seems—is the bane of phenomenology. It is, apparently, the grave burden that phenomenological thinking must escape: not only does it obscure so much important phenomenality, but, more significantly, it stands as and for a kind of Germanic oppression, subordinating all other concerns to an impersonal and fateful priority. As Levinas would have it, Being compromises philosophy with a miring threat to its potential for ethical flight; as Marion might re-phrase this objection, Being (or even ‘beingness’ [*l’étantité*]: an ossified ‘finished state’) imposes itself—like a lid on the light—to the extent that a wider field of phenomena is left oppressed, even crushed.¹ In short, phenomenology today seems to have no choice but to escape its Heideggerian roots and to posit itself, instead, as ‘beyond Being’, ‘otherwise than Being’, ‘without Being’, and so on...

This monograph aims to challenge such *orthe doxa*, by following two distinct yet related paths, the former mapped in Parts One and Two, the latter in Part Three. The first of this pair involves an unfolding—one that is partly genealogical—of both the ‘nature’ of this denegation of Being and, more importantly, the profound *aporiai* it entails. The second, as a constructive counterpart to this *pars destruens*, approaches Being from a radically different perspective: as sustenance, security, and even charity. Together, these two explorations constitute a single and unified attempt, made from within a broadly phenomenological domain, to overcome what is surely phenomenology’s most prominent—and egregious—contemporary fixation.

In terms of its critical engagement, our survey begins with an extensive treatment of givenness—looking not, initially, to the work of Marion, but, instead, to that of Husserl. There are two principal reasons for beginning, here, with the first great phenomenologist:

(1) Husserl’s radicalisation of phenomenological method, whereby phenomenology is pushed so far that it begins to break through to its own presuppositions, provides both the impetus and the ‘foundation’ for so much of the positive work we seek to do in Part Three of this monograph:

¹ See, for example, BG,165/232, for a clear (and typical) statement of the binary opposition Marion establishes between phenomenality and “ontology (metaphysics)”.

without appreciating the extent to which genetic phenomenology reveals the pre-predicative pre-givenness that constitution must always presuppose, any understanding of, in particular, the broadened ontology of the later Merleau-Ponty and the Levinasian description of humans' 'elemental inhering'—crucial for our eventual, Steinian-inspired illumination of Being as 'sustentive'—will remain constrictively partial. Accordingly, the initial exposition of the later Husserl provided in our first chapter is not intended as some kind of 'straw man' that has been set up for easy demolition: on the contrary, so much of the letter and spirit of the later Husserl shapes anything positive that this monograph might have to offer.

(2) Nonetheless, we shall also suggest here that, despite its profound achievement, Husserl's genetic phenomenology is never enough to overcome the 'denied ontology' that characterizes his work as a whole: the ur-given unearthed by the Husserlian 'return to origins', or *Rückgang*, is, we shall see, ultimately sublated, subsumed by a very traditional transcendental subject which comes to regard the product of phenomenological unearthing as the measure of its own power and prestige, rather than as the penumbral index of its limitation and dependency. Ultimately, we conclude, Husserlian autarchy reigns supreme—untroubled by the implications of Husserlian geneticism. So long as Being is downgraded, subjectivity retains its privileges.

All of which, in turn, becomes crucial for locating and situating the explicitly 'anti-ontological' project of Jean-Luc Marion. As Chapter Two seeks to make clear, the key Husserlian legacy in Marion's project is not just the so-called 'principle of all principles' that would (supposedly) allow sheer givenness to shine, in all of its glory; we shall argue that Marion also inherits an attenuated form of the egological problematic that besets even the most radical aspects of Husserl's project. Thus, notwithstanding the power and ingenuity of his 'third reduction', Marion—or, rather, Marion's version of givenness—remains entangled in a post-Husserlian aporia: 'without Being', givenness still requires a prioritised subjectivity (even when that subjectivity is declined in the dative), a subject *to whom* givenness shows itself in itself and as itself. In short, and as Part One as a whole seeks to establish, a phenomenology of givenness that locates itself outside of any ontological matrix will always remain haunted by this old (and, perhaps, Idealist) spectre: the necessary, originary, *foundational* self. It seems that, without Being, the Cartesian subject remains unhindered (in any fundamental sense).²

² As will become evident, the critique offered here differs from the more established charge that Marion merely inverts a 'standard' modern order, by making the phenomenon active and the subject passive. See, for an example of this

This prioritised subjectivity is not, however, the sole critical issue that we seek to examine here. There is another problematic, related to yet distinct from this Cartesian legacy, that also presses itself upon us—namely, the Manichean dualisms structuring the work of our other great ‘anti-ontological’ phenomenologist, and perhaps Marion’s main inspiration, E. Levinas. What we shall suggest here is that a phenomenology ‘without Being’ does not just entail a ‘necessary’ *I*; it also seems to mean that, in order to posit ethical significance, to find or identify value, we must subscribe to a Kantian (or, more correctly, a ‘neo’-Kantian) noumenology, a schematic schism (a ‘schismatism’?) that confirms, rather than challenges, the fundamental assumptions of so much High Modernity. It is this quasi-Gnostic dualism that we explore in Part Two.

Specifically, Part Two locates this dualism in terms of its source: Levinas’s epic confrontation with Heidegger. For Levinas vis-à-vis Heidegger, Being is not a plenitude, but, instead, a suffocating horror. Individual existence is, consequently, not to be regarded as a modality or manifestation of Being, but, instead, as a Separation from the constant, cloying, invasion that is the ‘there is’, the *il y a*. Thus, for Levinas, although the separated existent will be shown to stand alone and autarchic (like authentic Heideggerian *Dasein*), its ultimate source of meaning is not death but *alterity*. From first to last, Levinas will maintain, the Heideggerian odyssey misses what is truly fundamental: the Other. To establish the fundamentality of the Other is ‘therefore’ to reject Heideggerian fundamental ontology.

Such a survey of Levinas’s anti-Heideggerian ‘economy’ is, obviously, crucial, in itself, for understanding Levinas’s overall project; but it is also especially important for understanding the very particular *Kantianism* that informs this same ‘economy’. For, while Levinas’s proximity to Kant is well enough established, what remains largely unexplored—and what Chapter Four seeks to unveil—is the extent to which Levinas’s Kantianism (or ‘neo’-Kantianism) defines and positions itself, quite self-consciously, as antithetical to *Heidegger’s* Kantianism. Thus, as well as the suggestion that Levinas’s Kant-reading needs to be seen within the context of his wider opposition to Heideggerian ontology, what we also find here is that Levinas’s self-conscious (indeed, *necessary*) Separation from Heideggerianism does not just position him within the contours of a quintessentially modern Manicheanism: it ends up as its avid confirmation. Even if Levinas can, on occasion, provide apparently more finessed

‘typical’ criticism, Marie-Andrée Ricard, ‘La question de la donation chez Jean-Luc Marion’, in *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 57, 2001, 83-94.

statements—telling us, for example, that “ex-cendence and happiness necessarily have a foothold in Being [*l'ex-cendence et le Bonheur ont nécessairement pied dans l'être*]” (EE,15/9);³ or insisting that ethics ‘happens’ as a kind of supplement ‘within’ Being (rather than in some dubious ‘eternal order’ entirely outside of ontology)⁴—his fundamental conviction remains constant: Being and the Good are wholly distinct; and the nature of Being is such that it requires—for its salvation—the ‘supplementation’ that its ethical Other might provide.

Overall, then, Parts One and Two seek to establish the fundamental, and related, difficulties that beset a phenomenology without (or in spite of) Being: the primacy of an *I*, and the ‘necessary’ subscription to Kantian ‘schismatics’. Nonetheless, as already indicated, our project is in no sense intended to be wholly critical; it also offers at least indications of a positive alternative. In this respect, Part Three proposes a ‘reading’ of Being that remains (or attempts to remain) phenomenological in method, but that is also distinctly pre-modern in temper: as such, it might avoid the Cartesian and Kantian aporiai demarcated above, by exploring the possibility that Being might be regarded, *primarily and primordially*, as a gift, a security, a support.

This latter point is particularly significant. For, although one could no doubt detect so many sociological or political currents at play, the denegation of Being that we find in Levinas and Marion is still predicated upon a consistent, and distinctly philosophical, common concern—namely, that ontology remains intrinsically entangled with epistemology. Levinas will regularly charge that “Being is inseparable from the comprehension of Being..., [that] Being is already an appeal to subjectivity” (TI,45/15); or that (as OB suggests) Being is about generalities that order, laws that regulate, logical forms that contain and deliver, qualities that reveal; and so on... Marion, meanwhile, providing (quite typically) a more systematized version of the same, will seek to render all modern ontologies as nothing more than the functional constituents of the methodic gaze, in whatever guise it happens to take; ‘Being’, therefore, is always, ultimately, ‘being known’, “Being in the mode of *objectum*” (DMP,91/99). The alternative that we try to sketch here—an alternative that enjoys, as we have already indicated, a pre-modern inspiration—hopes to avoid this problematic, by refusing any primacy to any variation of the *question* of Being. The reconfiguration we offer has, at base, nothing to do with the supposed priority of such a

³ Translation emended.

⁴ See, for example, OB,9/AE,10: “The *otherwise than being* cannot be situated in any eternal order extracted [*arraché*] from time...”

question, or of some cognate concern with knowability, comprehension, manifestation... Being, as we shall try to indicate, is always assumed 'axiologically'—before it is some epistemological issue.

Specifically, Part Three follows the fecund suggestions contained in Edith Stein's (phenomenological) re-working of Augustine's journeying from the sphere of primal self'-awareness to the wider being-certainty that any self must presuppose—and, ultimately, on towards the divinity which this being-certainty seems to imply (but can never prove). In order to elucidate this pilgrimage, we shall draw on certain, and perhaps surprising, 'supplements': to an extent, Michel Henry's exploration of auto-affection; to a greater degree, the later Merleau-Ponty on 'intra-ontology'; also—and perhaps most surprisingly of all—Levinas himself on the fundamental contentment we can experience, as beings within Being. All three, we shall see, help to 'unpack' what might otherwise remain merely adumbrated. The first and second will help to clarify, respectively, Steinian notions of pre-conceptual immediacy and pre-conceptual 'being-certainty'; the third, something of the fundamentally axiological 'nature' of this same certainty. As we shall see, Stein's phenomenological trajectory stretches from (1) the most immediate and intimate experience—illuminated here in terms of Henry's descriptions; to (2) the ontological basis for that experience—illuminated here in terms of Merleau-Ponty's descriptions; to (3) a basis that is not 'simply' Being but, necessarily, *Seinssicherheit*, Being *qua* generosity and support—illuminated here in terms of Levinas's descriptions. And, of course, it is precisely this trajectory—being-certainty that 'becomes' (but already is) being-safe(ty); *Seinssicherheit* that is also, and more fully, *Seinssicherheit*—that is so important here (far more so than any phenomenological heuristic we might employ to help illuminate it). For what Stein offers us, as we have already indicated, is nothing less than Being reconfigured, in terms of charity, and sustenance: Being as a 'sweet and blissful security', as she would have it. This, we shall suggest, is the radical yet venerable insight that sets Stein apart, and that, in turn, might allow us to transcend so much contemporary *doxa*.

Accordingly, our overall conclusion is fairly obvious (given what we have already set out). It is this: if we refuse to 'enframe' Being in quasi-gnostic, neo-Manichean or Newtonian-Kantian terms; and if, by contrast, we accept the alternative to which Stein alerts us; then, accordingly, the profound philosophical difficulties which we demonstrate in Parts One and Two (the primacy of the self; Kant's 'two worlds') may be overcome, and, accordingly, a radically different (and even unsettling) perspective emerges: Being as generosity, as plenitude. In short, our suggestion here is that to think *otherwise* than otherwise than Being may well be the only

valid alternative to that nihilism which anti-ontological phenomenology confronts so robustly yet, ultimately, may confirm.

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

HUSSERL, GIVENNESS, AND THE PRIORITY OF THE SELF

Husserl's later phenomenology seems both to deny and confirm the 'regime' of the inflated modern subject—in other words, the assumption of subjectivity as the 'centre of gravity' around which all else circulates. On the one hand, and in a move of profound radicality, Husserl's geneticism breaks through to the givenness on which intentionality and constitution depend, the affective bedrock beneath and beyond subjectivity; Husserl thereby undoes the priority of the self, and reveals the ego to be dependent, passive, and, 'in the final analysis', constituted. On the other hand, however, Husserl seems to draw back from this radicality and reinstate the supposed primacy of 'mainstream' subjectivity; despite its deconstructive power, genetic phenomenology thereby returns to an idealism—an idealism which is confirmed in its certitude by the same geneticism's breakthrough to givenness. In short, we could say that Husserlian givenness first undermines but then confirms an autarchy barely different from its High Modern formulations.

Both of these aspects of Husserl's thought are foundational for the overall argument we shall put forward here. As will become apparent, so much of what we hope to demonstrate in this monograph presupposes the significance of Husserl's radical dismantling of egological constitution: the 'positive' thesis here (such as it is), and the examples inspiring it (reformulated subjectivity; indications of a pre-constituted 'element'; the overall stress on an excessive plenitude overwhelming intentionality), are all in a sense derivative of the great labours of Husserl's *Rückgang*, or 'questioning-back'. However, as will also become apparent, Husserl's later thought is beset by a profound and egological faultline—the second aspect indicated above—that is not just a problem immanent within his own project, but that continues to reverberate through subsequent investigation of givenness. We turn to this specific investigation in Chapter Two; the continuity between Husserl and Marion is indicated,

and, hopefully, elucidated, by the pairing suggested in Part One as a whole.

In this first chapter, however, our main concern is to show how and why the aforementioned slide—or, perhaps, *Aufhebung*—should take place. In particular, we shall not only identify an ‘egological faultline’ in Husserl’s geneticism, but we shall also seek to demonstrate how this faultline is the outcome of a denied ontology characterizing his œuvre as a whole: in this respect, we suggest, ‘givenness without Being’ is no different from Husserl’s earlier phenomenological efforts in its prioritising of the self.

Accordingly, this chapter will consider four main issues: (1) the geneticism which allows for Husserl’s radical breakthrough to the passive givenness assumed by any constitution; (2) the ambiguous position of intuition *vis-à-vis* this givenness; (3) the way in which, because of this ambiguity, the transcendental ego can appropriate givenness; and (4) the way in which this appropriation is determined by Husserl’s approach to ‘the ontological’ in general. Overall, this should demonstrate how Husserl’s initial radicality gives way to—or is sublated by—a very orthodox autarchy.

All of which is not to deny the significance of the phenomenology of givenness. It is more to highlight certain *aporiai* of self-consciously anti-ontological approaches to this deepest of phenomenological issues. As already stated, the implications of these *aporiai* are not restricted to Husserl’s thought.

Genetic Phenomenology & Givenness

It is a matter of no little surprise that Husserl, apparently the transcendental egologist *par excellence*, should have pursued the question of selfhood to a point where any self-satisfied subjectivity threatens to turn on itself and come undone. For this would seem to be the startling implication of what is surely Husserl’s most rigorous explication of the active, constituting ego—his ‘genetic turn’. Indeed, what he identifies here, in his analysis of ‘monadic becoming’, is something like a rupture within subjectivity, brought about as the subject’s own striving gestures toward a fundamental ‘immersed passivity’ which, it finds, it can never fully grasp yet must always presuppose. A cluster of terms—*Abbau* (‘un-building’), operative intentionality, passive genesis, *Rückgang*—is testament to this centripetal tendency in Husserl’s later work, a tendency toward that primal and original givenness which his earlier, static analysis had effaced. To appreciate the radical force of Husserl’s discovery, we need to chart the genesis of genetic phenomenology itself.

In general terms, we could say that the ‘genetic turn’ comes about as Husserl devotes greater attention to the question of carnal presence (*Leibhaft*), hyletic materiality, and sensuous receptivity: as a ‘transcendental aesthetics’⁵ makes matter and ‘content’ more prominent concerns, so the privileged position of categorical constitution seems to become reconfigured. In LI, sense-data may provide ‘primary contents’, and categorial intuition may be based on sensuous intuition (LI VI, s.60); but there is no question of meaning arising from perception. Instead, formal meanings are deemed timeless, non-spatial and ‘already there’,⁶ and perception ‘merely’ allows for fulfilment: sensory data can only ‘offer themselves’ to an animating, meaning-bestowing stratum.⁷ Sense is, accordingly, ‘ensouled’ by intentional acts (LI V, s.14), and objectifying interpretation, *objektivierende Deutung*, comes ‘on top of’ pure sense-data—it ‘goes to work’ on sensations. What really counts, it seems, boils down to the experiences of thinking and knowing (LI I, s.1;249/ LU, Hua XIX/1, 6). By the time of Id.1 there is a certain redress: perception is more explicitly seen to provide for possible constitution, and Husserl can even talk of “wait[ing], in pure surrender, on what is essentially given” (s.88).⁸ Nonetheless, the noetic-noematic correlation, still treated as ‘eternal’ and ‘ready-made’, remains privileged over hyletic data (which themselves require noetic animation), meaning is ‘located within’ the noema (sensations are, literally, meaning-less), and materiality is all but ignored (the focus is on ‘how’ rather than ‘what’).⁹ It is only once the findings of Id.1 are reformulated in terms of the earlier Göttingen time lectures that the pieces come together, so to speak, and the ego begins to be revealed as constituted within the flux of retention and protention, the noematic as layered and ‘historical’, and the noetic and hyletic as themselves ‘temporal’. Formerly banished,¹⁰ genesis is now allowed in from the cold.¹¹

⁵ See, for example, FTL, Conclusion/*Schlusswort*, 290-91/Hua 297.

⁶ Cf. CM, s.37, 77/Hua 110.

⁷ Cf. Id.1, s.85.

⁸ Boyce Gibson translation., London: Allen & Unwin, 1931, 260. Kersten, whose translation we use on all other occasions, has: “We receive the answer in the pure directedness to *something given* in its essence” (216). See Hua III, 221: “Wir erhalten die Antwort in reiner Hingabe an das wesensmäßig Gegebene, wir können das ‘Erscheinende als solches’ getreu, in vollkommener Evidenz beschreiben.”

⁹ See, esp., Id.1 s.89, where the implicit tendency lurking throughout Id.1 as a whole is made explicit and sensuous *hyle* becomes well and truly idealized.

¹⁰ See, for example, the *Selbstanzeige* for LI, vol.2, Hua XIX,2, 779; and Id.1, s.1, 5, n.2, Hua III/1 p.10, n.1.

¹¹ We should notice, however, at Id.1, s.81, a certain anticipation of genetic developments. See also APAS, 644/Hua XIV, 41, where Husserl credits his earlier,

Accordingly, in Id.2, Husserl begins to address a primal, passive intentionality, an affective aspect to constitution: with his ‘new’ stress on “the foundedness [*Fundiertheit*] of the psychic in the material” (Id.2, s.13;32/Hua 29), on the significance of the ‘sensuous-aesthetic stratum’, indeed, on “the psychophysical subject as a whole [*das gesamte psychophysische subjekt*]” (Id.2, 18c; 80/75), Husserl can now indicate those “ultimate, primitive, primal objects no longer constituted by any kind of Ego-activity whatsoever [*als letzten primitiven Urgegenständen, die nicht mehr durch irgend welche Ichaktivität Konstituiert*]” but which form a “*pregivenness* [*Vorgegebenheiten*] for all the Ego’s operations” (s.54; 226/214).¹² (“They are subjective”, Husserl tells us, “but they are *not states or acts of the Ego*; rather, they are *what is had by the Ego*” (ibid).)¹³

However, it is with the seminal labours of the APAS, EJ and FTL that the realm of pre-predicative, passive, receptivity is given the fuller and more developed treatment which it would seem to deserve (and which had been incubating with the labour of the previous decade or so). We could say that, whereas static phenomenology sought the invariant, eidetic structures that ‘found’ ontic consideration,¹⁴ Husserl now seeks to unveil something of the origin of these structures themselves, something of “the storied structure of constitution” (APAS, s.48, 270/Hua XVII, 219). Uncovering (*Enthüllung*) the hidden methods of formation (*Bildungsmethoden*) can reveal ‘a sort of historicity’ (*eine Art Historizität*), Husserl suggests (FTL, s.85, 208/Hua 215);¹⁵ eventually, we might encounter, in the dynamic strata-formation of meaning, “the deeper-lying genesis pertaining to ultimate ‘cores’ [*Kernen*] and pointing back to

static analysis with providing a ‘leading clue’ (*Leitfaden*) which allows the opening into genetic understanding. Cf. Hua XV, 616.

¹² Cf. Id.3, Hua V, 125-6.

¹³ We might also note, in this respect, Husserl’s prefiguration of the Heideggerian *Zuhandenheit/Vorhandenheit* distinction: where the ‘naturalistic’ attitude is theoretical, the ‘personalistic’ is involved, immersed, inseparably related to its surrounding world; this everyday worldhood is always prior to any theoretical detachment. See, esp., Id.2, ss 49e, 50 & 53.

¹⁴ As Husserl himself will observe of static phenomenology (CM, s.37, 76-77/110): “its descriptions are analogous to those of natural history, which concern particular types and, at best, arrange them in their systematic order. Questions of universal genesis and the genetic structure of the ego in his universality, so far as that structure is more than temporal, are still far away; and, indeed, they belong to a higher level.” See also APAS, 642-4/Hua XIV, 40-41, and APAS, 628-9/ Hua XI, 340, and ibid., 634/345.

¹⁵ Cairns uses ‘historicalness’ for *Historizität*.

their origin” (s.85, 208/216). Thus the aim is “[to] ask the ‘finished’ unities about their constitution” (ibid.), to move ‘backwards’, from idealities, to ‘original consciousness’ (*Original bewußtsein*) (s.86, 209/217), to “*the non-predicative evidence* called experience [or: *encounter* (*Erfahrung*)]” (ibid.). Put otherwise: we retrace our steps, from the likes of propositional certainty, fulfilment and ‘correctness’, to an ‘originally engendering activity’ (*Ursprünglich erzeugende Aktivität*), itself based upon “the givings of things themselves [*Selbstgebungen*]” (s.86, 210/217). We do not just go back to the things themselves: we go back to the givenness of the things themselves.

It seems far from coincidental, in this respect, that Husserl should explicate his new, genetic approach by contrasting it to the ‘naiveté’ of the Cartesian cogito: the distance he establishes here is not just that between his ‘re-turning’, or *Rückgang*, and Descartes’s ‘confusions’ (and their post-Cartesian heritage); it is also recognition of the emerging gap between his contemporary concerns with the “wider concrete nexus” (*Zusammenhang*)¹⁶ and his earlier, static methodology. Thus, when Husserl charges that Descartes is blind to the worldliness of the ego and to that “*sense-moment* [*Sinnesmoment*] *pertaining to externality* [*Äußerlichkeit*]” (FTL, s.93, 230/238) (a moment which is already contained in the psyche, or *mens*), we can detect a certain self-reproach in operation: the ‘new’ Husserl will no longer consider experience, *Erfahrung*, as merely an ‘opening’ through which the world “shines into a room of consciousness” (s.94, 232/239); encounter is in no sense “a mere taking of something alien to consciousness into consciousness” (ibid.). Where the Cartesian cogito (and by implication, perhaps, the ‘static’ transcendental ego) dismissed experience for its lack of apodictic evidence; and where the eternal verity of ‘worldless’, apriori inference and deduction was presupposed; genetic analysis, by contrast, seeks to elucidate how *Erfahrung* is always a necessary condition for any such reductive account.¹⁷

¹⁶ See, for example, APAS, s.9, 31/Hua XVII, 373.

¹⁷ See also APAS, s.5, 18-19/Hua XI, 364: “in contrast to [the *ego cogito*] we have a broad lived-experiential field, or as we can also say, a field of consciousness that has not entered into such a relation with the ego or with which the ego has not entered into such a relation.” See also ibid., 19/364: “the *ego cogito* thus has a constant, broad horizon of background lived-experiences to which the ego is not present and ‘in’ which it does not reside”.

Thus, with this ‘new’ understanding, we start to grasp a sedimented history in sense-bestowal and its various modalities.¹⁸ Now, Husserl suggests, we can trace “a fundamental stratification” (APAS, s.15, 105/64):

... the way in which an object-sense, the particular *cogitatum* of the *cogitationes* in question, becomes fashioned into a new sense in the changing flow of these *cogitationes*... [We] see how what is already at hand has been previously fashioned out of a foundation sense, which originated from an earlier performance... (FTL, s.97, 252/245).

Which is not to suggest that Husserl is ‘merely’ outlining the procession from the judgement ‘S is P’, to ‘SP’ (the categorial inclusion of P ‘within’ S), to the fresh predication ‘SP is Q’, to ‘SPQ’, to ‘SPQ is R’, and so on...¹⁹ Certainly, intentionality itself is now revealed as layered and ‘historical’, containing deposit (*Niederschlag*) upon deposit; furthermore, association and anticipation are now recognized for their central roles in the developmental, teleological structure of intentionality. (Association, the “universal principle [*universale Prinzip*]” of passive genesis” [CM s.39, 80/113], reveals how, despite changes in context and givenness, sensation is ‘organized’ according to previous encounter, how genesis is a development and not a mere series [*Nacheinander*]; sense-data are now viewed in terms of an operative [*fungierende*] proto-intentionality, and thus as ‘anticipated constitution’. Accordingly, the earlier, psychologistic, dualism of sensation and intention is overcome, as the hyletic is revealed as being included ‘within’ the noetic.²⁰) What is of more direct concern for us here is not so much the ‘solid structure’ revealed by this forward momentum within intentionality; it is more the ‘hinterland’, the before rather than the after, implied by the return or descent (*Rückgang*, *Rückfrage*) which are needed to understand this momentum. For what Husserl’s geneticism gestures toward is—as well as the changing flow of *cogitationes* grasped *qua* eidetic structure—that ‘untamed’ core material, or *Kernstoff*, itself allowing for pre-syntactical, primal, forms and structures (*Kernform*, *Kerngebilde*), which such understanding presupposes yet never contains.

¹⁸ Cf. Dorion Cairns, *Conversations with Husserl and Fink*, *Phaenomenologica* 66, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975, 20 (Aug.1931) & 65 (Jan.1932).

¹⁹ See FTL, Appendix II, s.1, trans.313-14/Hua, 314-15.

²⁰ See the later note added to Id.1, Hua, 478: “Zur Noesis gehören also die hyletischen Momente.” See also G.Brand, *Welt, Ich und Zeit: nach unveröffentlichten Manuskripten Edmund Husserls*, The Hague: Nijhoff, 1955, 27.