

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

**MASTER THESIS**

**HUSSERLIAN PHENOMENOLOGY AS A CRITIQUE OF  
EMPIRICIST METHODOLOGY IN HISTORY**

**S M TOHA SALIM**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR: PROF. IBRAHIM KALIN**

**ISTANBUL, 2020**

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by

**S M TOHA SALIM**

**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in  
Philosophy**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR: PROF. IBRAHIM KALIN**

**ISTANBUL, 2020**

## ACADEMIC HONESTY ATTESTATION PAGE

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## ÖZ

### TARİH DİSİPLİNİNDE DENEYÇİ METODOLOJİNİN BİR ELEŞTİRİSİ OLARAK HUSSERL'İN FENOMENOLOJİSİ

Yazar Salim, S M Toha

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Tarihçiler, tarih disiplinini deneyçi metodoloji ile bağdaştırmaktadır ve böylece pozitivist tutum tarihsel araştırmaya hakim olmaktadır. Öte yandan fenomenolojik gelenek içindeki filozoflar ve bu tarzdaki daha sonraki araştırmalar, tarih disiplininin teorik yönünü sıklıkla metafizik perspektiften tartışmışlardır ve bu nedenle, fenomenolojinin tarihin epistemolojik boyutuna ilişkin potansiyelleri keşfedilmemiş olarak kalmıştır. Bu araştırma, fenomenolojik geleneğin tarih disiplininin epistemolojik yönüne ilişkin kapsamını, ilgisini ve potansiyellerini Husserlci fenomenoloji perspektifinden baskın deneyçi metodolojiyi eleştirerek ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Bunun için, önceki araştırmalardan farklı olarak, bu çalışma analizine ve deneyçilik eleştirisine hem Comte'un pozitivismi hem de Mill'in psikolojizmini dahil etmektedir. Bu araştırma, Husserl'in saf mantık, bilinç ve yaşam dünyası kavramına iki büyük eserinden (Mantıksal Araştırmalar ve Kriz) yaklaşmakta ve bunları tarih disiplininin teorisi ve metodolojisi ile ilişkilendirmektedir. Araştırma, deneyçiliğin tarihsel tecrübe anlayışımızı sınırladığını göstermekte ve fenomenolojinin tarih disiplininin altında yatan temelleri aydınlayabileceğini ve tarihsel araştırmanın kapsamını genişletebileceğini savunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** fenomenoloji, Husserl, pozitivism, deneyçilik, tarih, metodoloji.

## ABSTRACT

### HUSSERLIAN PHENOMENOLOGY AS A CRITIQUE OF EMPIRICIST METHODOLOGY IN HISTORY

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Historians associate the discipline of history with empiricist methodology and thus positivist attitude dominates historical research. On the other hand, philosophers in the phenomenological tradition and later researches in that genre have often discussed and debated the theoretical aspect of the discipline of history from metaphysical perspective and hence the potentials of phenomenology with regards to the epistemological dimension of history has remained unexplored. This study aims at demonstrating the scope, relevance and potentials of phenomenological tradition with regards to the epistemological aspect of the discipline of history from the perspective of Husserlian phenomenology by critiquing the dominant empiricist methodology. To investigate that, unlike previous works, this study incorporates both Comte's positivism and Mill's psychologism in its analysis and critique of empiricism. It draws on Husserl's concept of pure logic, consciousness and intentionality, and life-world from his two major works *Logical Investigations* and *Crisis* and relates with the theory and methodology of the discipline of history. The research demonstrates that empiricism limits our understanding of historical experience and argues that phenomenology can elucidate the underlying foundations of the discipline of history and widen the scope of historical research.

**Keywords:** phenomenology, Husserl, positivism, empiricism, history, methodology.

*To Mohammad, Ahmet, Efe & Nur*

*who changed the course of my life paving the way for a new journey*

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Phenomenology as a philosophical tradition has been widely discussed and debated but has not been developed much as a methodological tool for historical research and as such, its potentiality in this regard has remained underdeveloped. As a founder of modern phenomenology, Edmund Husserl's intervention is an important starting point for such methodological pursuit. When it comes to the question of history, the current state of affairs of research pertaining to Husserlian phenomenology mainly concerns itself with the history of philosophy and the philosophy of history. The main text in focus there is Husserl's *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*.<sup>1</sup> Although *Crisis* holds enormous value to the discussion of human sciences in general and there have been some works in this regard, history as a discipline of research has not been discussed from such an angle. If we widen our approach towards Husserl's thought, there are elements that can bring methodological insight with regards to historical research. Along with Husserl's *Crisis*, another important work of his, the *Logical Investigations*,<sup>2</sup> can engage the ongoing theoretical issues in this field.

This study brings insights from Husserlian phenomenology to critique the existing framework of historical research. The primary aim of this research is to investigate the nature of the phenomenological critique of the empiricist methodology connecting it to the science of history from the perspective of Husserlian phenomenology.

Generally speaking, philosophy of history is often associated with the tradition of speculative philosophy of history. Husserl's *Crisis* is also a contribution in that genre and can be considered as the last attempt to revive the speculative philosophy of history. However, the concept of the 'life-world' from *Crisis* has enormous value in

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<sup>1</sup> Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

<sup>2</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations* (London: Routledge, 2012).

developing theory for social studies. We will shortly elaborate on this and other themes from Husserl's works. While philosophy of history has mostly been understood from the speculative perspective i.e. metaphysical sense, this research will mainly engage the discussion from an epistemological perspective, and thus in the genealogy of epistemology of historical research.

History as a discipline came to the forefront in the 19th century dominated by positivist theory following the footsteps of Auguste Comte. In this approach, the scientific truth becomes the standard and historical fact remains an independent source of truth. Comte's method comes from the empiricist attitude in the name of naturalistic understanding of social phenomena. If we take the methods of John Stuart Mill in history, it also has empiricist attitude towards social phenomena. However, Mill and Comte sharply differ when it comes to the logic of such empiricist attitude, where Mill articulates a psychologistic theory of logic. Husserl in his *Logical Investigations* articulated a critique and limitation of psychologism. His arguments became the starting point of phenomenological critique of empiricism. Husserl's critique of psychologism came with a vision of establishing logic as a technology of science and as well as a theory of science instead of technology for activity. Such theory of science would serve as the foundation for all the other sciences.<sup>3</sup> As a result, though he confined himself in the realm of logic and envisioned its applications in other disciplines, its implications in the discipline of history needs more elaboration. Rather than putting forward an alternative framework, this study shows the epistemological limits of empiricism when applied to history. It argues that the phenomenological approach addresses the subject-object dichotomy and presents history from a holistic point of view rather than an individual writing history.

Empiricist view of history approaches history having a confidence in the objectivity of historical facts. Such an approach is built upon two modes of thinking. The first one is about thinking history as merely the output of the historian's mind. Here the historian investigates the past and puts forward his thought about the past. But if that is the case, then the question of objectivity and subject-object dichotomy are not resolved. The second approach is thinking of the past as speaking for itself. Here the

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<sup>3</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations* (London: Routledge, 2012). 1:14.

assumption is that facts speak for themselves. But such epistemological articulation is not free from philosophical objections and the limits of facts should be investigated.<sup>4</sup>

Taking Husserl's intervention as the point of departure, this study engages the epistemological questions in the domain of history. Having this phenomenological insight in mind, we can engage the epistemological debates surrounding history as a discipline. The dominant trend in the discipline of history is that the theoretical foundation of this discipline is not of great concern and that we should indulge ourselves in the scientific research of particular past(s). Such outlook makes history vulnerable to the onslaught of surface level research. The main focus of a theoretical articulation of such foundation is not to undermine the role or activity of the historian but to 'uncover the fundamental idealization of the life-world'.

History as a discipline has been overwhelmingly dominated by the empirical approach since its origin as a profession. However, in recent years the influence of postmodernism has questioned the empiricist understanding of historical knowledge. A vast literature is available on the topic. But apart from postmodernist critique, other methodological critiques are not at the forefront of the discussion. Though phenomenology is robust in its critique of empiricism, its relation to history has not been elaborately explored or studied.

Husserl's unique work *Crisis* especially has a rigorous philosophical framework towards human sciences. The connection between this posthumously published work and history has not been studied adequately. Hence, this study would be crucial to shed light on the missing dimension on this issue amongst contemporary literature on history.

Secondly, phenomenological investigation towards history would not only present the critique of the empiricist approach, but also would resist the postmodernist tendency in the field of history. Postmodernist approach to history, although not dominant, at least philosophically does challenge the objectivity of history. This study would pave the 'third' way of a methodology of understanding history which would bridge the gap between empiricist and postmodernist approach.

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<sup>4</sup> Larry Shiner, "A Phenomenological Approach to Historical Knowledge," *History and Theory* 8, no 2 (1969): 273.

Finally, history is often identified as a discipline concerned with scientific methodologies i.e. empirical research. And thus the theoretical rationale and grounds are often ignored having in mind that such discussions do not lead to any change in practical research. That is why most history programs in the universities are merely concerned with facts and documents. Such specialized research is due to the compartmentalized nature of education since nineteenth century, such that the historian is just another scientist whose mission is to uncover the pattern of laws in the realm of the social world. Facts and documents are taken for granted as if these are given and self-evident. Such tendencies lead to euro-centrism, binary attitudes etc. in empirical research which we will partly deal with at the end of this study.

The second chapter of this study investigates the empiricist understanding of history. Here we will examine the theoretical and philosophical framework of empiricist vision of history as a discipline. We will mainly engage with the works of two philosophers August Comte and John Stuart Mill. We will limit our discussion to them for a couple of reasons. The logic of understanding society and the sciences which were built upon them i.e. social sciences or human sciences, whatever we name it, are largely shaped by the works of these two philosophers. However, Comte and Mill differ in their understanding of the foundation of logic. Nonetheless, both figures are crucial to understand the nature and foundation of the modern disciplines which seek to understand social phenomena. Secondly, Husserl's *Logical Investigations* and *Crisis* correspond with the critique of psychologism of Mill and naturalistic attitude of Comte. Here we need to keep in mind that we are not engaging with the logical positivist tradition or analytic philosophy of history as these have been recent developments and Husserl's works do not primarily address those philosophical reasoning. So in brief, in this chapter we will investigate the conceptual framework of empiricist method in history and examine the key paradigms such as logic of social science, objectivity.

This chapter also elaborates some of the methodological differences between Mill and Comte. Mill's emphasis on the deductive method in relation to the science of mind puts human nature at the center of the philosophy of social science. Mill also introduced another new method known as Inverse Deductive Method making observation harmonious with the laws of mind. On the other hand, Comte's methodology resembles biology and thus integrates observation as a method in social

science. Our discussion of Mill and Comte's project on social science are specifically based on two respective sections of their individual works, which include *The Logic of the Moral Sciences* from Mill's *A System of Logic and Social Physics* from Comte's *Positive Philosophy*, and does not involve previous sections, even though they are interrelated. The theoretical framework provided with reference to their articulation of social science suffices for this study.

The third chapter brings the phenomenological insight as a critique of the philosophical paradigm of empiricist methodology in history. The critique of psychologism, the idea of pure logic and concepts such as consciousness and intentionality from *Logical Investigations*, the concept of 'life-world' from *Crisis* will be the main themes of this chapter. The idea of pure logic deals with the dominance of psychologism in constructing logic. It presents a critique of Mill's understanding of logic by rejecting the idea that the laws of mind are the basis of the logic of various sciences and seeks to give a new foundation for all the sciences. The objective here is to demonstrate the limits of empirical methods. Consciousness and intentionality deal with the prevalent binary framework of subject and object. This helps us reconsider the way we understand phenomena appearing to us. As an extension of this discussion, we also include Husserl's notion of evidence and truth. Here Husserl differentiates between logical truth and ideal truth based on his distinction of evidence such as adequate evidence and apodictic evidence. This helps us understand the phenomena behind the empirical world and construct the epistemological foundation of sciences.

Finally, from Husserl's *Crisis* we discuss the concept of 'life-world' which is an essential critique of positivist attitude. With this concept, Husserl argues that the scientific methods limit our experience, meaning that, by scientific propositions we are able to know the logical truth and the empirical world. But there is a pre-scientific world that Husserl's life-world helps us experience. According to Husserl the empirical world is conditioned by that pre-scientific world. It helps us understand social phenomena beyond the sociological laws that we construct. This understanding relates Husserl's project to that of Auguste Comte and challenges Comte's positivist foundation of social science. This can be called the theory of science or the science of the sciences. All of these together demonstrate the limits of empiricism in terms of theoretical formation. One has to acknowledge the fact that the philosophical language of phenomenology is quite complex compared to the positivist and empiricist tradition.

Therefore, this poses a challenge in initiating a conversation with the works of Comte and Mill. Thus this chapter attempts to make sense of Husserl's work with regards to Mill and Comte's philosophy in question.

The last section of this chapter engages with some literature on phenomenological method. These works assess the potentiality of phenomenology as a method for different types of research and discuss the scope of such method. These literatures give some directions to understand how phenomenology would make sense for history as a discipline of research. There have been some developments in the field of oral history which we have discussed. We have shed light on some progress in the domain of psychology and anthropology that can be useful to help develop phenomenological method in history. However, we have argued that phenomenological approach does not completely disregard the importance of empirical research. This study has demonstrated how phenomenological method contributes to the existing empirical research both in theoretical and applied terms.

In the last chapter, as a conclusion, we discuss the potentials of the outcome of this study in other fields of history. We explain how phenomenology can widen the scope of history beyond nineteenth century scientific historical research based on facts and documents.

## CHAPTER II

### EMPIRICISM AND HISTORY

Historiography is commonly understood as the science of the interpretive method of history. It deals with the method of dealing with the sources, facts and documents and events. However, the philosophical reasoning working behind such interpretive methods should not be taken for granted. Although these methods seem value-free while understanding history, studying the historical development of these methodologies would uncover their philosophical orientation and structure.

Since its inception, history as a discipline has progressed along the lines of various philosophical movements. In this study, we will limit our investigation to the initial phases of the discipline of history, which was overwhelmingly influenced by the scientific, positivist, naturalistic and empiricist attitudes. Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) can be considered to be the first historian in Europe who systematized history as a discipline of research for past events. The main feature of his historical investigation was the assumption that history is basically fact-based. Ranke wanted to free history from any teleological or metaphysical dimension. His method was also very cautious about the impact of myth or tradition in interpreting history. Thus history was seen as a discipline which brings certainty about the past events based on critical investigation of the sources.<sup>5</sup> Stephen Davies argues that Ranke's historical reasoning is influenced by nominalism. In historical study, historical categories are just analytical categories which do not have any real existence.<sup>6</sup> We can trace his empirical tendencies in historical reasoning to the growing influence of scientific methodologies to understand social behavior.

Influenced by Ranke's obsession with facts, nineteenth century historical practice was mostly concerned with sources of history. This later paved the way for giving more attention to the archival documents as part of historical investigation. However, several

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<sup>5</sup> George Peabody Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1913), 52.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Davies, *Empiricism and History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 31.

problems associated with the obsession with facts later haunted the theorists in this field. Facts are enormous, it is the historian who chooses facts from among that vast array of documents or archival sources. Thus the facts that a historian is concerned about are historical facts. But are historical facts objectively sorted out? Here, the role of the historian as a mediator challenges the claim of objectivity claimed by Ranke and others.

The second problem associated with fact based historical research is that of the interpretation. Some historians argue that facts speak for themselves. E. H. Carr discusses this problem in relation to the positivist influence. He says,

The Positivists, anxious to stake out their claim for history as a science, contributed the weight of their influence to this cult of facts. First ascertain the facts, said the Positivists, then draw your conclusion from them. In Great Britain, this view of history fitted in perfectly with the empiricist tradition which was the dominant strain in British philosophy from Locke to Bertrand Russell. The empirical theory of knowledge presupposes a complete separation between subject and object.<sup>7</sup>

Later developments in this discipline sought to systematize more the approach to social and historical phenomenon that has led to seek the unifying principle. The following passage reflects this quest for scientific understanding of history,

Historical work has rarely been formulated with any consistency: much basic documentary work is empirical, but in much interpretative writing transcendental idealisms appear in many forms, ranging from the romantic individualism of the simpler types of the great-man concept to the collectivistic ideals of Marxism and alternative ideal culture types.<sup>8</sup>

This brings us to the core of the discussion of this study. We will see how both Auguste Comte and John Stuart Mill have addressed these problems of history as discipline. We have discussed how Ranke and others are influenced by a particular philosophical school in their historical research. We will discuss the philosophical foundation of such approach in history.

## **2. 1 August Comte and Social Physics**

August Comte envisioned to establish a 'science of society' based on his positivist philosophy. The primary goal of his positivist project is to generalize the scientific

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<sup>7</sup> E. H. Carr, *What is History* (London: Penguin, 1990), 9.

<sup>8</sup> Abbott Payson Usher, "The Significance of Modern Empiricism for History and Economics," *The Journal of Economic History* 9, no. 2 (1949): 153.

conceptions and systemize the understanding of social phenomena.<sup>9</sup> However, it is not limited to just deriving the law as it occurs in the domain of natural science. In the context of the ‘science of society’, Comte sought to predict the future development of society as precisely as we understand natural phenomena. As we see in his writing, his goal was to generate a new understanding of politics and society and transform society in that direction. This came with the background understanding of what philosophy should aspire for. For Comte, the objective of all true philosophy is to construct a framework so that it can put forward a systematic understanding of life and thus can be the foundation of any attempt to overcome the imperfections of life.<sup>10</sup> History as a discipline of knowledge emerged out of that quest to understand social phenomena, and as we have illustrated, positivist theoretical framework had a dominant influence on this.

Comte’s project dealt with two other challenges from different perspectives. According to his estimation, theology and metaphysics were the two disciplines that failed to engage the practical dimensions of human life. Theology being limited to the concept of Will and metaphysics being confined to the issues such as ontology which is very theoretical in nature are unable to address practical questions.<sup>11</sup> This theological and metaphysical infancy, as Comte argued, needs to be addressed by developing a new science. Here we see the extensive focus of Comte’s philosophical quest, i.e. positivist philosophy, on uncovering the social phenomena and dealing with issues relevant to social and political arena.

Comte was aware of the potential limitation of this new science. However, he was eager to integrate the method of positivism into the social science as it is applied to other sciences. Comte named this new science Social Physics, which resembles the scientific method as it is evident in its name. In the new science, Comte combined the two notions which are Order and Progress as something inseparable from this science.<sup>12</sup> These two notions need to be further clarified to apprehend the impetus behind Comte’s positivist project. Comte viewed the positive spirit as a unifying factor for the organization of human knowledge that would deter the current chaos in the

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<sup>9</sup> Auguste Comte, *A General View of Positivism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 9-10.

<sup>12</sup> Auguste Comte, *Positive Philosophy* (Ontario: Batoche Books, 2000), 2:118.

realm of thinking.<sup>13</sup> The theological and philosophical quest of knowledge had failed to deliver a coherent and unified understanding of the natural world and social phenomena. In their place, positivist principle would bring a uniformity in this realm by subordinating all sorts of knowledge under this principle. So Comte hoped to accomplish an intellectual order and progress that would bring order and progress in the society. Although order and progress are often understood to be something opposite to each other, in Comte's philosophy order and progress complement each other. Once the indubitable natural laws are applied to social phenomena, as Comte argues, it will predict and control the undesired tendencies of society and thus establish a socio-political order. Such social and political arrangement would ignite a positive spirit in the society that would lead to progress in social ideas and morals.

However, Comte's zeal for establishing this new science is not merely an adaptation of scientific method into the social sphere. He is quite conscious of the fact that scientific investigation as a method has its limitations if we take it for granted at its current form. As he argues,

It might have been hoped that the renovation we are anticipating would have been largely aided by scientific society, as that which must be familiar with positive science. But it is not so. At present, the anarchical tendencies of that class appear to be as strong as any. The indifference of scientific man to the most interesting and most urgent of all classes of problems may be partly accounted for by their deep intellectual disgust at the irrational character of the social doctrine of the day; but there are other reasons, even less honorable than this. They are themselves defective in scientific discipline. They abhor generalities, and have a systematic predilection for specialties.<sup>14</sup>

Here we see a distinct focus of social science, which is to discover the generalities. Scientific discipline has historically restricted itself to the pursuit of very specialized enquiry as part of the organization of labor. Such infrastructure of research cannot cater to the need of social science which embarks on an investigation to understand society as a whole.

There are some other crucial aspects with regards to the inability of science in constructing the new science of society. Comte's theorization of this new science follows with his inculcation of positivist spirit in the domain of natural science. According to Comte, natural science along with all the other sciences were always

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 153-154.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 160-161.

under the grip of the theological-speculative method. Due to such framing of natural science, rational exploration of physiology did not reach the height that it should attain. Without this, according to Comte, any rational investigation into social phenomenon is prone to failure. Besides that, the dearth of historical facts is an obstacle to the establishment of a rigorous science to understand society.<sup>15</sup> We will shortly deal with these two aspects i.e. the science of physiology and historical research in relation to social science.

Comte discussed some of the treatises from the time of Antiquity and later period, Aristotle's treatise on politics being one of them, to explore the potential of these works in relation to social science. However, his contention with such works has two aspects which have to do with the two notions we discussed before i.e. Order and Progress. First of all, these works failed to assert the general laws of the social phenomena which Comte's project aspires towards. Without the understanding of general laws, social science would be deficient in an orderly understanding of society and thus succumb to whims of speculation to predict the nature of social phenomena. Secondly, the notion of progress is quite missing in these treatises. Aristotle, for example, engages the metaphysical issues of the nature of the government without having any basis for the progressive understanding of society.<sup>16</sup>

After setting the background and dealing with the pertinent issues pertaining to this new science, Comte moves onto the issues of doctrine and method regarding social science. The methods of any particular science stand on the doctrinal foundation of that particular science. Methods are always susceptible to modifications depending on the realities and the challenges while the doctrine remains as it is.

The doctrinal understanding of the positivist spirit with regards to social phenomena articulates the scientific method as something delivering the relative ideas and laws as opposed to absolute ones. By laying out this principle, Comte seeks to differentiate his philosophy from the theological-metaphysical enquiry. Theological-metaphysical method delivers the absolute ideas by contemplating the nature of things and discovering the first and final causes. While this kind of enquiry is a must for understanding the nature of beings, the laws of phenomena must be understood by the

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 162-163.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 165.

relative ideas based on the observation. Positivist philosophy concerns itself with the relative ideas positing progressive conceptions of the society. That means that the scientific conceptions here are always free from any static notion of the society paving the way for subsequent modifications and development. One might argue that this engenders a sense of skepticism in social science. Comte argues that by shifting the focus from absolute to relative the positive philosophy needs not be vulnerable to arbitrary understanding. He puts forward the notion of positivist state as opposed to an absolute one. Here the repeated observation on social phenomenon reaches to the point of general law. According to him, “Adhering to our relative, in opposition to the absolute view, we must conclude the social state, regarded as a whole, to have been as perfect, in each period, as the coexisting condition of humanity and of its environment would allow.”<sup>17</sup>

In summary, there are three fundamental principles of social science based on the positivist spirit. These are as follows, understanding social realities based on the observation, enquiring relative ideas as opposed to absolute ones and limiting the social action by determinate laws.<sup>18</sup>

Comte extends his application of scientific principle into the understanding of social phenomena by comparing it with the discipline of biology. For Comte, the apparent distinction between the science of biology and the science of society is merely for the sake of operational purposes. Social science is a physiological study of the society as he takes society as an organism that has its own laws. The implications of such an understanding is visible in the way Comte’s method deals with the social science. As Comte says, “The whole social evolution of the race must proceed in entire accordance with biological laws and social phenomena must always be founded on the necessary invariableness of the human organism.”<sup>19</sup> He argues for a holistic understanding of society rather than a particular specialized research isolated from the whole organism. Thus the scientific research of a particular topic in social science should incorporate the relevant phenomena as part of the understanding of the whole organism.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 196.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 181.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 217.

Discovering this relational aspect between social phenomena is a crucial part of any social science research.<sup>20</sup>

We can now explore the functional aspect of the social science that Comte proposed. Keeping in mind the doctrinal issues of this new science, Comte lays out how social science works. First of all, it amasses the facts of the social phenomena based on observation, connects each phenomena with relevant phenomena, investigates the relations and then attempts to discover the general laws taking society as a whole unit.

Comte resisted against two kinds of objections in this aspect. The first one is whether observation can render a valid understanding of society. It means whether observation can hold its claim of authenticity amidst other modes of investigation such as rationalism. Comte argues that certainty of observation does not depend merely on the observation of the investigators, it acquires its validity from direct observation and the repeated success of such observation. Hence there is no reason to avoid such proof in framing positive theories and the skeptical argument about observation cannot be relevant. Another challenge Comte addresses is the prevalent understanding of empiricism. In the name of impartiality, empiricism resists the use of any theory in its mode of observation. For Comte, every observation in social science should be directed and interpreted by a theory which is the very foundation of the social science project. He contends that an isolated form of empirical investigation does not have any value in social science. If we analyze it from another perspective, social science is only concerned about such observation of social phenomenon that are interconnected and generates law.<sup>21</sup>

In this aspect, the facts are not just here to dictate the general laws, these are ground for developing the preparatory theories which Comte named as positive theories. This is the cornerstone of the new science that Comte proposed and such positive theories act in the same manner in the natural sciences as well. Without having well-grounded social theories, any analysis of the society would remain incoherent and chaotic.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, we can examine how Comte integrated history as a method in this whole project of social science. It is obvious in Comte's project that historical studies is a

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 183.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 202-203.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 204.

method that helps develop the social science. While sociology can be seen as a whole, history is its part. Along this line, Comte constructed history as a positive science as opposed to general historical narratives. General historical research is not concerned with finding positive laws while Comte's positive history would excavate the past to discover the antecedents so that we can generate the general laws from the present to predict the future.<sup>23</sup> History as a discipline may not be as precise as natural science, however, it can discover the direction of the progress of a particular time and thus it can guide the future mode of discovery in all the disciplines.

Comte's understanding of history as a discipline is formulated and defined by his larger project 'Social Physics'. Behind this project, there are certain assumptions about theological and metaphysical understanding of society. Alternatively, Comte articulates a scientific understanding of society based on the positive laws. This raises two important questions which are pertinent to our study. Firstly, Comte's characterization of scientific understanding of society needs further investigation. His pronouncement on what constitutes a rigorous scientific understanding and its nature are quite different from phenomenological understanding of science. We will explore how Husserl, as a phenomenologist, critiques such characterization of scientific understanding and then provides a new meaning of science. Secondly, what is the role and meaning of historical research? Should history only be a tool of explaining social laws? Positivist understanding of history is quite narrow in its scope and cannot grasp the true nature of historical reality. This study argues that, apart from generating positive laws, we can widen the scope of historical research based on the new understanding of science.

## **2.2 John Stuart Mill and the Moral Sciences**

The introductory statement of John Stuart Mill in his chapter On the Logic of the Moral Sciences reflects the fundamental principle Mill is willing to deploy in understanding and explaining society. He asserts, "The background states of the Moral Sciences can only be remedied by applying to them the methods of physical science, duly extended and generalized."<sup>24</sup> It is evident from Mill's assertion that the foundation of the study of man and society should be the scientific method. He elaborates the evolution of

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 212-213.

<sup>24</sup> John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic: Ratiocinative and Inductive* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 2:833.

scientific method in various disciplines. While it is true that the elementary stage of any discipline lacks the rigorous scientific method, as the phenomenon becomes complex it requires the application of scientific method for greater comprehension and accuracy. But Mill's contention is that the study of man and society has yet to reach that stage of scientific investigation. Moreover, the controversy about whether this could be a scientific discipline at all is still prevalent.<sup>25</sup> Mill's theorization of the moral sciences particularly addresses these challenges.

Mill cautions that the idea of science does not need to be limited by exact sciences. He cites meteorology as an example which does not correspond with the level of exact science due to the nature of the object it studies. Similarly the science of human nature lacks the precision which sciences like astronomy embodies. This is not due to the impossibility of knowing the causes of human character; the nature of human has many other variables beyond personal feelings, thoughts and emotions which cannot be predicted. The circumstances which determine the nature of the human does not solely depend on the present. That is why, even if the theoretical rigor were given for such science, it would not be able to generate the positive laws as we see in astronomy.<sup>26</sup> Mill concludes that the possibility of positive prediction and discovering universal laws is not within the purview of this science. However, he does not deny the capacity of generating tolerable certainty in this scientific quest.

Mill elaborates this to formulate a proposition for establishing the moral science. He contends that the laws that are derived from this science are of lower empirical laws representing approximate truths based on approximate generalizations. A solid scientific characterization of these truths must relate deductively with the laws of nature from which they are derived.

In Mill's project, the formulation of the science of psychology and the science of the formation of character precedes the formulation of the science of society. However, in Comte's theorization, psychology does not correspond with the idea of science as he places physiology as the ultimate basis to understand mental states corresponding mental states to the laws of the bodily states. However, Mill is willing to investigate the succession of mental states as mental phenomena directly by observation and

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 847.

experiment considering the fact that all our mental states do not necessarily correspond with the bodily states.<sup>27</sup> With regards to the science of the formation of the character, Mill distinguishes between the empirical laws and the universal laws. Empirical laws demonstrate the approximate generalizations of the human nature while the universal laws are the inevitable laws for the formation of human nature. Empirical laws are not the principle of the science of human nature, they are just limited to the observations we make relevant to a particular case. Neither it is possible to apply the experimental method due to the impossibility of reproducing the human nature in a general way. Hence, Mill emphasizes that the deductive method should be the way of understanding the law of the formation of character. Here the deduction should be based on the laws of mind and thus this science should subordinate itself to the science of the mind. As such, the laws of this science are derivative laws in nature.<sup>28</sup>

Having systematized the sciences of individual man, Mill proceeds towards developing the science of society. This indicates Mill's consideration of the science of mind and character as the basis for the science of society. Mill therefore extends the laws of mental science to social science considering the fact that social science would not reach the level of certainty as astronomy or other exact sciences. The following passage clarifies this in a succinct manner,

All phenomena of society are phenomena of human nature, generated by the action of outward circumstances upon 'masses of human beings' and if, therefore, the phenomena of human thought, feeling, and action, are subject to fixed laws, the phenomena of society cannot but conform to fixed laws, the consequence of the preceding.<sup>29</sup>

Mill considers this new science as a deductive science in nature. He relates this deductive method to the complex physical sciences more than any other sciences. Mill termed this as Concrete Deductive Method as it examines the laws of all the causes which have an impact on the effect in a compounding manner.<sup>30</sup> Although Mill insists upon this method as being the authentic process of social science, he integrates history as a method which is termed as Inverse Deductive Method or Historical Method. Here, historical method derives the empirical laws of the society but this method is not the primary criterion or basis of social science. The task of social science is to demonstrate

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 851.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 869.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 877.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 895.

that such empirical laws inevitably conform to human nature i.e. derivative laws emerging from the ultimate laws of the science of mind would necessarily lead to these empirical laws of society. Therefore, psychological laws and ethological laws must verify the empirical laws emerging out of the historical method.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, Mill subjects historical facts to uniform laws which would be verified by statistics.<sup>32</sup> These uniform laws will be the basis to predict the directions of social phenomena.

### **2.3 Comparative Analysis of Comte and Mill**

Both Comte and Mill greatly concern themselves with providing a solid scientific foundation for the science of society. Mill has great appraisal of Comte's works with regards to the attempt of establishing a science of society. However, they fundamentally differ with regards to its basis. While Comte considers biology as the foundation of the logic of social science, Mills considers psychology to be the foundation. While Mill's framework views the nature of society as a necessary reflection of the laws of the nature of human, Comte sees the nature of human in the light of the social organism as a whole unit and not the vice versa. Michel Bourdeau summarizes Comte's critique of psychologism as follows: methodological (the methods resorted to were contradictory or barren), architectonical (psychology infringed the encyclopedic scale of the sciences), and scientific (the results and doctrines at which psychologists arrived were either false or illusory).<sup>33</sup>

Apart from the foundational aspect, methodologically Mill and Comte have different approaches. Mill's articulation of social science is based on the deductive method. Even if we consider the case of Inverse Deductive Method in Mill's philosophy, this method is something complementary to the deductive method and not an independent method per se. Having said that, in the realm of the science of mind which acts as the basis for social science, Mill incorporates observation as a method of deriving the laws. Therefore, we can say Mill combines both the inductive and deductive method at large. Comte's methodology is highly inductive in its nature as it is evident from his emphasis on the observation of social phenomenon similar to the observation of the natural phenomena. The crucial point here is that both Mill and Comte's philosophy

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 917.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 931.

<sup>33</sup> Vincent Guillin, "Comte and Social Science," in *Love, Order, and Progress: The Science, Philosophy, and Politics of Auguste Comte*, eds. Michel Bourdeau and Mary Pickering (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018), 142.

are influenced by empiricism in the form of psychologism and positivism. We will engage this aspect which is relevant to our study from the perspective of Husserl's critique of both psychologism and scientific attitude.

In dealing with the historical method in relation to social science, Comte invokes the science of history as an independent science that would help discover antecedents of the general laws of the present time. But Mill subordinates historical research to psychology and ethology as we have just discussed.

We should also take into account the outcome of Mill and Comte's social understanding at the social and political level. Comte aspired to bring a social and political order out of his quest for establishing social science on a positivist basis, whereas Mill was in favor of individual liberty and thereby any enforcement of a positivist order would be against individual liberty.<sup>34</sup> This is crucial as we will see how Husserl's phenomenological understanding of history would resist such positivist remaking of the society. In his *Crisis* Husserl connected this empirical attitude to the crisis of European society as we will briefly discuss in the following chapter.

Comte and Mill also differed regarding the compartmentalization of social sciences. Comte viewed social science as a whole unit and that is why Comte dismissed deductive method as it would pave the way towards dividing the fields. However, Mill stressed upon having different fields of social science. That is why, according to Mill, Comte has not been able to develop sociology in a proper manner; rather he has just provided a general outline of sociology.<sup>35</sup>

Comte's project should also be understood from within the three stages he framed to distinguish his age from the previous ones. After theological and metaphysical ages of understanding the world, we have entered into a new age where scientific understanding would prevail. This kind of differentiating between science and metaphysics bears the mark of observing the society as law without any meaning in itself.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Michael Singer, *The Legacy of Positivism* (Berlin: Springer, 2005), 22.

<sup>35</sup> David Lewisohn, "Mill and Comte on the Methods of Social Science," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 33, no. 2 (1972): 324.

<sup>36</sup> Robert C. Scharff, *Comte after Positivism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 8.

As we have discussed empiricism and history and then examined the philosophy behind this, we can see that this raises some fundamental questions about the nature of our experience, the validity of observation and subject-object relations. Cornelius Benjamin sums it up well when he says,

Do ideas come from experience alone, or from experience plus an active experiencer? Is the individual merely the recipient of the ideas, contributing nothing except the tabula rasa upon which experience writes its message, or does the individual in some sense create the ideas through a modification of the stuff of experience?<sup>37</sup>

In his *The Idea of History*, R. G. Collingwood seeks to overcome the limitation of empirical methods in history. The philosophy of history that he envisages is a philosophy of the historian's mind. However, he distances this project from the philosophy of mind or psychology.<sup>38</sup> This, according to Collingwood, needs a special form of philosophical enquiry that neither belongs to epistemology nor metaphysics. For him, history is not just discovering the past. History is the re-enactment of the past in the historian's mind. By this he is challenging the view that history is just about facts or laws; rather it is a thought of the historian. Here Collingwood later articulates that history itself turns into the knowledge of mind. This is because the past is also the outcome of a mind and hence the mind can only be understood in a historical way.<sup>39</sup> But the problem with Collingwood's argument is that it does not delineate the structure of the historian's thought. It also does not provide the foundation or logic of such historical thought. Collingwood's framing of mind on the basis of history and vice versa still makes it empirical even though it frees itself from the scientific discovery of laws in the domain of human phenomena.

We will discuss these from the perspective of Husserlian phenomenology and see how his philosophy resolves this problem. However, we should keep in mind that Husserl's intervention is limited to the empiricism of his time and therefore we exclude the later developments of empiricism such as logical positivism. Another crucial point to be noted is that many literatures on empiricism only emphasize upon the attitude of natural science as empiricism whereas in Husserl's philosophy the science of mind is also part of empiricist project as he discusses in *Logical Investigations*.

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<sup>37</sup> Cornelius A. Benjamin, "The Essential Problem of Empiricism," *Philosophy of Science* 10, no. 1, (1943):13

<sup>38</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (London, Oxford University Press, 1994), 4.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 83-87.

## CHAPTER III

### HUSSERLIAN PHENOMENOLOGY AND EMPIRICISM

In this chapter, we explore some relevant concepts from two of Husserl's works *Logical Investigations* and *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. Pure logic from Husserl's prolegomena of *Logical Investigations* is a critique of psychologism in the domain of logic and consciousness and intentionality from the same work challenges the empirical understanding of our experience. 'Life-world' is a concept from the second book we have mentioned here and it presents an alternative way of understanding the world beyond the scientific naturalistic method. Also we discuss Husserl's understanding of evidence and truth so that we see the differences between the empirical understandings of evidence in the domain of history vis-à-vis a phenomenological way of understanding. Finally, we explore the possibility of developing a phenomenological method for the science of history and the nature of the relationship between this method and the empirical one.

Before that let us briefly evaluate the broader context that Husserl addressed in his several works and more especially in the *Crisis*. While Husserl's *Logical Investigations* is primarily concerned with the critique of psychologism articulating the idea of pure logic, *The Crisis* deals with the naturalist attitude in the domain of sciences. For Husserl, the reduction of the natural science and human science to positivist understanding is the fundamental crisis of the European sciences. Positivist attitude leads to a fact oriented approach and Husserl relates his project to this philosophical crisis of modern man. This is a crucial point as it suggests that the crises that are affecting the sciences are not merely methodological crisis but also crises of human worldview. If we elaborate further, for Husserl, positivist attitude makes humanity concerned about only the factual dimensions. It cannot deal with the fundamental questions of the world. The context in which Husserl was engaging in this discussion is very crucial. After the shock of the First World War, Europe was in a quest for meaning and Husserl precisely was able to figure it out and was attempting to overcome it. Positivist attitude or scientism per se is unable to deal with the

cognitive dimensions of these problems. This is the same in the realm of human sciences.<sup>40</sup>

Husserl states that the hope that Renaissance in Europe brought for humanity in the name of science over the time had been limited to a restricted positivist notion of science. Consequently, the study of natural and human life and more importantly study of history itself became devoid of any meaning making process and value based understanding. The following statement captures Husserl's disappointment with such approach and also hints what sort of relevance Husserl's project has for history,

But can the world, and human existence in it, truthfully have a meaning if the sciences recognize as true only what is objectively established in this fashion, and if history has nothing more to teach us than that all the shapes of the spiritual world, all the conditions of life, ideals, norms upon which man relies, form and dissolve themselves like fleeting waves, that it always was and ever will be so, that again and again reason must turn into nonsense, and well-being into misery? Can we console ourselves with that? Can we live in this world, where historical occurrence is nothing but an unending concatenation of illusory progress and bitter disappointment?<sup>41</sup>

However, Husserl does not concede with the dominant notion that any scientific project would have to discard the fundamental human questions in the name of objectivity. Positivist understanding of reality fails to conceive the unity of meaning due to its emphasis on the factual dimension. The new rigorous scientific understanding would be an all-encompassing endeavor that seeks to bring a theoretical unity and explains the factual and non-factual realm in a cohesive manner. Husserl is calling for an independent foundational enquiry and thinking beyond current segmented disciplinary understanding.

For Husserl such project is not merely a theoretical project but an essential metaphysical reflection that would inspire the future trajectory of European humanity. Hence, at the end of this study, we will place and examine the theoretical and applied aspects of historical research in this larger context.

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<sup>40</sup> Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, 6.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 6-7.

### **3.1 The Idea of Pure Logic in Husserl's Prolegomena**

Husserl's investigation into logic started with the vision of articulating logic as a pure theoretical science. To accomplish this, he stressed upon a new discussion on the definition and content of logic. Husserl went beyond the traditional dispute of articulating logic as a theoretical discipline which is formal and demonstrative and independent of psychology vis-à-vis as a technology which is not formal and demonstrative and dependent on psychology. Husserl acknowledged that he is not new in this discussion of pure logic. But he thought that his predecessors like Kant had not been able to deal successfully with this issue.

Husserl argued that different sciences like mathematics and so on demonstrate a level of excellence but these disciplines do not necessarily show any logical validity. The underpinnings upon which these disciplines are built need to be investigated.

#### **3.1.1. Debates about the Definition and Content of Logic**

The dominant tendencies in logic are three. The first one is psychological, the second one is formal and the last one is metaphysical tendency. Husserl depicted the scenario of his time arguing that the psychological tendency had been able to prevail over other tendencies.

There is a problem here in the definition of logic itself among these different tendencies. Husserl embarked on a new discussion on the definition and content of logic to overcome the psychologistic domination in this field. He did so by posing the need for a theory of science which will free the understanding of logic from individual conviction. He denied logic as a branch of psychology. He put forward key questions that need to be answered for this attempt- whether logic is a theoretical or practical discipline? Is it independent of other sciences, especially psychology and metaphysics? Is logic formal or also takes into consideration 'matter'? Is it a priori, demonstrative or empirical, inductive? His entire project of embarking on a new science has the following objective. As he argues, "The outcome of our investigation of this point will be the delineation of a new, purely theoretical science, the all-important foundation for any technology of scientific knowledge, and itself having the character of an a priori, purely demonstrative science."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 14.

### **3.1.2. Logic as a Normative Discipline**

Traditionally it has been understood that logic is a normative and practical discipline, i.e. logic merely helps to guide reasoning. Husserl doesn't deny that but it is not the whole story. He is eager to uncover the theoretical dimensions of different sciences. Generally we think that mathematicians know the theoretical underpinnings of their discipline. It is a general perception among us about other disciplines as well. Husserl argued that the artist cannot define the rules of art, it is the people who define it and this is true for others as well. He differentiates between two things- knowing and acts of knowing. Science is basically involved with knowing but the acts of knowing do not belong to the realm of science. Therefore to address the deficiency in the theoretical realm a separate science is needed. To further clarify, knowledge, first of all, is inwardly evident. Our knowledge is not something isolated that we gather. Knowledge is based upon some grounded validations. But science has a much greater task. It helps to reach a higher stage of understanding through our knowledge. So such grounded validations are not isolated phenomena, there is unity among them. Logic as a theory of science can investigate these grounded validations.

What we understood so far is that Husserl is articulating logic as a normative discipline instead of logic as technology. Here logic as a theory of science will not just function as a tool of science but it will act as a standard for the grounded validations of science. Thus it will differentiate valid science from invalid science and match the empirical sciences with the Idea of science. He acknowledged that Schleiermacher's definition of logic is closer to the truth which defines logic as the technology of scientific knowledge but pointed out the deficiency in it that it does not acknowledge logic as a discipline that would set up rules for the demarcation and construction of the sciences.<sup>43</sup>

### **3.1.3. From Normative Discipline to Theoretical Discipline**

As we discussed, according to Husserl, every science has a theoretical foundation. He exemplified it further by showing how chemical technologies are connected with chemistry, and so on. Based on this, he argued that like any other discipline, logic as a technology has its roots in a theoretical science which he termed as pure logic.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 26-27.

He asserts, “Logical laws and forms, in the pregnant sense of these words, belong to a theoretically closed round of abstract truth that cannot in any way be fitted into previously delimited theoretical disciplines....”<sup>44</sup> As we see here Husserl is arguing for a theoretical science of logic which will act as foundation for logic as normative discipline. This is the goal of pure logic in *Logical Investigations*.

Normative science plays the role of “should” but this science is based upon a theoretical foundation. This particular theoretical science of that particular normative science investigates the underpinnings of the normative science. The theoretical science tells about the background discussion of what should be. As we see that behind the understanding of good and bad there is a theoretical presupposition; the same is true for logical normativity.

#### **3.1.4. Logic and Psychologism: Arguments and Counter-Arguments**

Husserl delivered a lengthy and well-grounded critique of psychologism in his *Prolegomena to Pure Logic*. Before that, he articulated the arguments against psychologism from his predecessors and made his remarks on them.

Before Husserl, the opposition to psychologism comes first as an argument to differentiate between two disciplines i.e. psychology and logic. For them psychology deals with the factual i.e. what it is and logic deals with the normative side, i.e. what should be. They argue that logic being normative in its character should not base itself on contingent laws which come from psychology. The psychologistic response to this is that when you think about what it should be it also means what it is. What we should do definitely follows from what something is. The nature of thought must guide that logical principle. Hence the argument that psychology and logic are completely different does not work.

The second opposition comes from the ground that psychology is basically concerned about the mental connections. These are causal connections and such laws do not have any logical value. Logical principle is mainly concerned about its truth content independent of any causal relationship. Causal relationship has its causal antecedents and consequents while logic has only ideal connections. The response to that argument is that we cannot derive ideal connections without studying the natural ones.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 32.

The third opposition is about the very nature of any science like psychology. The argument is that logic can never be dependent on any science let alone psychology. It is logic itself which defines psychology. It is circular to base logic on psychology as it will prove its own rules. The counter response is that such is the case about logic itself. Logic also has to proceed logically which can end up being circular in its proof. Husserl dismissed this argument by showing that this argument holds true if logical reasoning always follows from the rules it wants to establish.

By analyzing all these responses from psychologistic logicians, Husserl argued that none of these prove that psychologism is the theoretical foundation of logic; they merely prove that psychology partakes in building the foundation of logic. He reiterated the need and possibility of pure logic as a theory of science.

Psychologistic approach to logic subverts the objectivity of logic to the subjectivity of mental phenomenon. Husserl addresses this by formulating logic as normative laws as opposed to natural laws understood by psychologism. Psychological laws are based on empiricism and thus lack precision. Thus, psychologistic approach in the domain of logic lacks precision as well. As a result, this makes logic a factual category, not a normative one. Hence, Husserl identifies psychologism with real laws, not ideal ones.

For Husserl, such analysis was necessary to envision logic as a technology for science and as a theory of science instead of just technology for activity. Psychologism has failed to uphold the normativity of logic and it cannot overcome the relativistic and skeptic attitude which is a hindrance to ideality. As we see in Husserl's writing, this ideality is an essential feature of logic as a theory of science which is the foundation of normative logic. Thus psychology cannot become the theoretical foundation for logic.

He further argued that natural laws are not a priori, and they are not established by our insight. We only know about natural laws through induction. But by induction we cannot get any logical principle or law because induction only gives lesser or greater probability. Logical laws cannot be probable like this. Logical laws must be a priori and they must be justified by inner evidence or insight.

While defining knowledge, he argues that there are gradations of knowledge and degrees of knowledge. Sometimes we have knowledge in the strictest sense and sometimes we have a degree of knowledge which is probable. Psychology can give us

probable knowledge as we saw earlier. But theoretical science cannot be built upon probable knowledge. The aim of science is to build a unity of theoretical foundation. To establish a science going beyond knowledge we need some sort of grounded validations which psychology cannot provide.

One of the great limitations of psychologism is that it does not distinguish between the object of knowledge and the act of knowing. The act of knowing involves time, space etc. which can have a mental connection. But the object of knowledge is not dependent upon these things. Our consciousness about something ideal is not similar to the real physical acts of knowing.<sup>45</sup>

Husserl discusses about the psychologistic prejudices that are prevalent among the philosophical writings. Judgments, deductions, and demonstrations all become psychological phenomena in psychologism. But such logical formations cannot be psychic phenomenon but objective formations. We should distinguish between judging and judgment, deducing and deduction etc.<sup>46</sup> Husserl's staunch criticism of psychologism prepared the ground for pure logic as a theory of science in his *Logical Investigations*.

### **3.1.5. The Idea of Pure Logic**

Husserl began the discussion of pure logic focusing on the unity of science. As we discussed above, Husserl envisioned logic as a theory of science. Here he deemed science as acts of thinking and thought process which have a unity in approach. Here he pointed out the relevance of interconnection in this whole process. Science gives an objective interconnection of truths. And through this interconnection of truths the actual existence and interconnection of things reveals itself. The concept of truth is not merely judgment, it is a truth actually realized through abstraction i.e. "individualized in the experience of the inwardly evident judgment".

He further raised the discussion to enquire about the constituents of the unity of science. He asserted that not every truth is relevant from the Idea of Science. One might say that related interconnection of truths would be the essential components for the Idea of Science. But that still does not answer the question what type of unity of

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<sup>45</sup> Dan Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 9.

<sup>46</sup> Suzanne Bachelard, *A Study of Husserl's Formal and Transcendental Logic* (Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 1990).

proof can form a science. Husserl argues that scientific knowledge is always grounded knowledge and knowing this sort of knowledge means we know the necessary truth. Here necessary truths are actually general truths which become law. He divided truths in two parts i) Individual truths and ii) general truths. Individual truth is about our conviction regarding the individual case while general truth does not belong to any particular case and is independent of any factual experience. So general truth is related to some general laws. These laws become basic laws which are not further provable. These basic laws in total or as a single one function as the fundamentals of the unity of a systematically complete theory. Here his classification of truths is related to his ideal conditions of knowledge i.e. noetic conditions which lead to a priori knowledge and logical conditions which leads to factual knowledge.

Finally Husserl moved on to the discussion of what makes truths limited to a particular science and gives it a unity. Here he asserted two principles in this regard. One is essential principle and the other is extra-essential principle. By essential unity he meant the unity of the truths of a single science in their explanation. Here there is teleological unity among the explanations which lead them to a single science. Thus we can establish abstract science which Husserl articulated in his *Prolegomena* as theoretical science. This abstract or theoretical science is the basic science which is genuine in its principles. All the other concrete sciences derive their theoretical justification from this kind of theoretical science. The following passage illustrates the inner structure of Husserl's project,

We are dealing with the systematic theories which have their roots in the essence of theory, with an a priori, theoretical, nomological science which deals with the ideal essence of science as such, and which accordingly has parts relating to systematic theories whose empirical, anthropological aspect it excludes. In a profound sense, we are dealing with the theory of theory, with the science of the sciences.<sup>47</sup>

Husserl's pure logic is basically concerned with ensuring the ideal conditions of making science and scientific knowledge possible. Pure logic is involved with three tasks: first of all it deals and exemplifies the concepts which creates unity within a theory such as object, matter of fact, singularity, plurality etc. Second, it attempts to

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<sup>47</sup> Husserl, *Logical Investigation*, 152.

discover the laws that give foundation to the theoretical sciences. Third, pure logic attempts to define the theory of the possible form of theories.<sup>48</sup>

Husserl ended his discussion about pure logic discussing the role of mathematicians and philosophers in this regard. His investigations reveal that mathematicians are not able to create such theoretical discipline but they must be aided by the philosophers. Philosophers are able to investigate the theories behind all concrete sciences.<sup>49</sup> This is also quite pertinent to social and human sciences. We have analyzed before how the rules of natural sciences under positivist spirit has been dominant in the field of social sciences. Husserl's proposition helps us understand the limitations of a scientist in theorizing the foundations of social sciences. Historians, inspired by the same scientific spirit, are unable to discern the true nature of the underlying assumptions of their discipline. At the end of this chapter, we have discussed elaborately the implications of such theorizations in applied historical research.

Moreover, Husserl's concept of ideal laws is not limited to any specific genre of empirical sciences. Basic laws, according to Husserl, are just 'putative theories' which does not explain the whole foundation of our knowledge system. As he states, "The whole complex apparatus of knowledge processes in which the theories of empirical sciences arise, and are frequently modified in the course of scientific progress, is certainly not merely subject to empirical, but also to ideal laws."<sup>50</sup> Thus Husserl attempts to construct an ideal foundation that widens our horizon beyond the understanding of the factual world be it in the realm of physical science of social science.

Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, particularly its Prolegomena to Pure Logic is a key text in defining a new epistemology and building the foundation of phenomenology. The subsequent six investigations bear the mark of his analysis of pure logic. His contribution influenced German philosophy immensely in its critique of psychologism. Psychology also works on consciousness but it can't get the whole picture because it is empiricist in its nature. Husserl's transcendental subjectivity is

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<sup>48</sup> Martin Kusch, *Psychologism: The Sociology of Philosophical Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2005), 57-58.

<sup>49</sup> Marvin Farber, *The Foundation of Phenomenology: Edmund Husserl and the Quest for a Rigorous Science of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2017), 146.

<sup>50</sup> Husserl, *Logical Investigation*, 160.

between idealism and empiricism which gives it a unique place in the history of philosophy.

### **3.2. Consciousness and Intentionality in Husserl's Logical Investigations**

The concept of intentionality is very central in the discussion of phenomenology. Before Edmund Husserl, Franz Brentano discussed the concept of intentionality in his philosophical writings, often going back to classical philosophers. His ideas later influenced Husserl and Husserl made it a foundational concept in his phenomenology. He presented a critique to Brentano's understanding of intentionality.<sup>51</sup> In this section, we will explore the concept of intentionality in Husserl's phenomenology based on Investigation V and Investigation VI of *Logical Investigations*.

#### **3.2.1. Consciousness and the Concept of Experience**

Husserl began the discussion in *Logical Investigations* criticizing the dominant psychologistic trend. This is important to note even when discussing his understanding of consciousness. Husserl is not referring to consciousness as a part of physiology or brain science.<sup>52</sup> His approach is primarily epistemological. Husserl's concept of intentionality tried to break through the division between subject and object prevalent among the previous philosophers. He is also against the casual nature of consciousness which according to him does not provide us with the nature of consciousness. Husserl deals with the obscurity around the understanding of the term consciousness. He starts at first discussing about the first sense i.e. consciousness as the real phenomenological unity of the ego's experiences and the concept of experience. Here he puts forth the idea of experience as something going beyond empirical and real. His concept of experience is purely phenomenological. For Husserl the way we understand perception is quite different. Generally we do not distinguish between perception as something sensory and perception which is something objective. For example, if we take a red apple we take the color red as something part of sensory as opposed to the idea of redness itself. Husserl does not take consciousness as something which is in a box or mind. That means that he rejects the Cartesian way of dealing with the objects as something external. There is a sort of unity in Husserl's phenomenological

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<sup>51</sup> Charles Siewert, "Consciousness and Intentionality," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, spring ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta (Metaphysics Research Lab, 2017). <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/consciousness-intentionality>.

<sup>52</sup> Farber, *The Foundation of Phenomenology*, 335.

understanding of experiences. We generally understand ego as something empirical but here he argues that phenomenologically reduced ego is something different. Phenomenologically reduced ego is connected with the contents which are also phenomenological contents and marked by their own interconnected unity among themselves.

### **3.2.2. 'Inner' Consciousness as Inner Perception**

Secondly, Husserl discusses consciousness in the sense of 'inner' consciousness as inner perception. Here by inner consciousness what is meant is that something which is a kind of inner perception that constitute present experiences. Since every perception deals with the grasping of the object in its present form, here the notion of self-evidence may be attributed. Such self-evident adequate perception is understood as real perception. We recognize a perception as adequate when the object is fully present and we are able to grasp the object as it is. Here only the inner perception is adequate. Through this kind of understanding of consciousness, according to Husserl, "The epistemologically confused and psychologically misused distinction of inner and outer perception would then vanish; it has been put in the place of the genuine contrast between adequate and inadequate perception which has its roots in the pure phenomenological essences of such experiences."<sup>53</sup>

As he argued here he moved to the discussion of adequate and inadequate perception instead of distinguishing between inner perception and outer perception.

### **3.2.3. Consciousness as Intentional Experience**

Thirdly, Husserl discusses consciousness as intentional experience. He started his discussion bringing the contribution of Brentano in this aspect. Brentano divided phenomena into physical and psychical. But Husserl has reservation in this kind of division since for example not all kinds of all psychical phenomena are necessarily psychical and can be included under the category of physical phenomenon.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations* (London: Routledge, 2012), 2:87.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* 94.

For Husserl, intentional experience has three kinds of dimensions. These are act, meaning and object. If we elaborate, these are as follows- immanent content of the act, intentional content and intentional object.<sup>55</sup>

While talking about intentionality, we do not refer to the meaning of purpose or intent. That would be misleading. Also when Husserl is talking about consciousness, he is referring to different sorts of consciousness. As there are different types of consciousness related to, for example loving, hating, etc., there are different types of intentional experiences. So intentional experience is also like experience of loving, hating, etc.

There is quality of the act, and also matter of the act, but it is the matter of the act which defines the way we direct towards an object. This matter of the act is something which is ideal and not real. Besides talking about the matter of the act, Husserl is also dealing with the immanent content of the act. When for example we see the moon and again see it after an hour the intentional content and the intentional object remains the same according to phenomenological understanding. But what makes it different is the immanent content itself. What is meant here by immanent content? Immanent content can be referred to as subjective intention. When we have different acts with the same intentional content and intentional object, it is the immanent content of the acts that differ.<sup>56</sup>

Intentional content refers to the way we see or perceive the intentional object. For example, when I see my mother, I see her from the perspective of a son. I could have also seen her from the perspective of my aunt, my sister etc. So intentional content includes the features or characteristics I give to the intentional object. We also have to distinguish between the descriptive content and intentional content. It means that the real phenomenological content of an act is actually something abstract and describing such experience is part of an empirical investigation such as psychology. So phenomenological description of the content is stripped off from the natural-scientific and psychological one. So our insights which are purely phenomenological is a kind of ideation which is free from experience i.e. from presupposition of real existence. Ideation is mainly concerned with the invariant aspects of our experience. This notion

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<sup>55</sup> Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology*, 22.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 35.

differs from the naturalist attitude which is centered on the factual dimension. Ideation includes the eidetic experience which makes an apple red i.e. the invariant aspects that produce redness instead of just factually narrating that an apple is red. When we talk about the intentionality of consciousness, we do not consider that this sort of intentionality is a product of some influence from outside. Intentional content itself is the main reason of making a consciousness intentional.

While discussing about intentional object, we must distinguish between two things – the object as we intend it and the object as it is. We can perceive an object in different ways such as through judgmental, emotional, etc. In each case the object is presented to us in different ways. However, the intended object remains the same in all the cases. The same kind of demarcation should be drawn between the objective reference of the act and the object to which the act refers. Whatever the intentional act is, the way it is connected to the object there is an objective reference for each one but the object itself remains the same in all the cases.

Here it is also noteworthy that when Husserl is discussing about intentionality, intentional objects are not necessarily real objects. That means the consciousness that we are speaking about when it comes to intentionality is not always consciousness of real objects only, it can also be consciousness of imaginary things.

### **3.2.4. Act-Character and Act-Matter**

Husserl further elaborates his discussion on intentionality around two concepts which are act-character and act-matter. By act-character, he means merely the nature of it such as judgement etc. and by act-matter he refers to the content of the act. He writes,

The two assertions ‘ $2 \times 2 = 4$ ’ and ‘Ibsen is the principal founder of modern dramatic realism’, are both, qua assertions, of one kind; each is qualified as an assertion, and their common feature is their judgment-quality. The one, however, judges one content and the other another content. To distinguish such ‘contents’ from other notions of ‘content’ we shall speak here of the matter (material) of judgment. We shall draw similar distinctions between quality and matter in the case of all acts.<sup>57</sup>

Act-character involves different forms. First of all, there are positing acts and non-positing acts. When we talk about a possibility, for example we say that John may pass the examination, we are indicating a possibility, thus non-positing act, but when we

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<sup>57</sup> Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 119.

say John passes the examination we are certain and thus it is a positing act. The character of an act can also be empty and fulfilled. Empty intentional act refers to when the intentional act does not have evidence. When we hope of something in the future, that is actually an empty intention. But in case of seeing a bird, our intention becomes fulfilled since we possess the evidence.

Act-matter involves two things. First of all, the object to which the act refers itself and how the thought presents it as being. Here Husserl is discussing about act-matter beyond the linguistic way. For Husserl in our experience, intentionality is something essential and linguistic dimension can be secondary. So non-linguistic intentionality is possible.

Exploring the structure of consciousness and intentionality in Husserl's phenomenology, we can come to the conclusion that Husserl attempted to overcome the limitation of Cartesian and Lockean bias which views mind as something internal and also argues against the notion 'appearing thing as it is'.<sup>58</sup> Intentionality in phenomenology also helps us to understand different forms of appearances in a much more complex way as there are different types of intentionality. Whereas if we think about perception in a non-phenomenological way, we understand appearances as something general and there are no varieties. Therefore, the notion of intentionality poses a very strong challenge to the dominant understanding of philosophy under the umbrella of Descartes, Locke etc.

### **3.3. Husserl's Notion of Evidence and Truth**

The notion of evidence is crucial to scrutinize the experience that we encounter and to form our understanding of truth. Husserl articulated his understanding of evidence and truth in a new way in his *Logical Investigations*.

Husserl is classifying evidence in two different forms. The first one is adequate evidence and the second one is apodictic evidence. Here adequate evidence means evidence which is self-given. Self-evidence is related to the truth of disclosure where we experience truth as it is. However, self-evidence cannot be equated to the understanding that it is a perception of truth. Rather it is an objectifying intentional act

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<sup>58</sup> Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 15.

where truth is present. Nor can we say that Husserl is referring understanding truth to feeling. Self-givenness elevates from seeing things to things themselves.

While adequate evidence means self-givenness, apodictic evidence means indubitability. Apodictic evidence refers to essential truths such as logical truths. This sort of evidence is concerned with the truth of correctness without experiencing the truth itself. Apodictic evidence increases the level of evidence adding to adequately evident truth.

Evidence as self-given is the strongest one in Husserl's understanding of truth. He emphasizes the level of direct experience through this concept of truth instead of just presenting logical correctness. Thus at this point, it does not explain rather it describes, i.e. the nature of original experience. It is at this stage where intent is at its fullness, the object is present and it is experienced as it is. This process of experiencing truth is called adequation.<sup>59</sup> As we see, Husserl's understanding of evidence and truth is based on the structure of fulfillment. Here signitive acts are mere postulates without any fullness and intuitive acts are with fullness.<sup>60</sup> When it comes to fulfillment, it is not something either full or none. There are degrees of fulfillment. For example, when we see a bird from afar we can recognize it is a bird but when we see it from near we can discover various details.

We should also note that in experiencing the object, Husserl is viewing perception in a different way. Perception in Husserl's philosophy is not mere representation, hallucination or imagination. Through perception we come to know the object as such.

This phenomenological view of truth is much stronger than the naturalistic attitude to truth. For example when we discuss how the brain works, we focus on description rather than explanation.

Husserl shared concern about the assumption of taking physics i.e. natural science as the ultimate form of constructing theory. From such approaches, other fields of knowledge such as history, sociology takes their validity and framework. Husserl is critical of such validations as we can also see in his *Logical Investigations*.

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<sup>59</sup> Juha Himanka, "Husserl's Two Truths: Adequate and Apodictic Evidence." *Phänomenologische Forschungen* (2005): 101.

<sup>60</sup> Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 263.

### 3.4. Husserl's Crisis and Life-World

Husserl in the beginning of his *Crisis* pointed out the problem that, apart from natural science, psychology is dominating the world of philosophy rather than just simply acting as positive science. Thus Husserl places psychology within the realm of empirical sciences.<sup>61</sup>

To overcome the limitations of naturalist attitude in the domain of sciences, Husserl introduced the concept of Life-World as the basis for sciences. Husserl framed the whole project in the following passage in a succinct way,

The title "life-world" makes possible and demands perhaps various different, though essentially interrelated, scientific undertakings; and perhaps it is part of genuine and full scientific discipline that we must treat these all together, though following their essential order of founding, rather than treating, say, just the one, the objective-logical one (this particular accomplishment within the life-world) by itself, leaving the others completely out of scientific consideration. There has never been a scientific inquiry into the way in which the life-world constantly functions as subsoil, into how its manifold pre-logical validities act as grounds for the logical ones, for theoretical truths.<sup>62</sup>

It is evident from Husserl's articulation of the life-world that this notion is not something opposite to science. Husserl viewed the world of science as part of the concept of life-world. The scientific conceptions are strongly embedded in the life-world as opposed to the popular understanding that scientific propositions are objective on their own. To elaborate it more, scientific conceptions are justified by the notion of the life-world and not the vice-versa.<sup>63</sup>

Husserl here distinguishes between the objective science and science in general. Objective truth derived from the objective science is conditioned with the pre-scientific truth. However, there has never been a rigorous investigation into this pre-scientific phenomenon and how it provides the ground for scientific truth which Husserl is attempting to overcome. This pre-scientific truth is the most fundamental and pure experience that presents itself in a subjective-relative manner.<sup>64</sup> The science of the life-world is intuitable in principle as opposed to the theoretical and logical construction. The subjective-relative notion of the life-world is something self-evident

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 124.

<sup>63</sup> Dagfinn Føllesdal, "The Lebenswelt in Husserl," in *Science and the Life World*, eds. David Hyder & Hans-Jorg Rheinberger (New York: Stanford University Press, 2009), 43-44.

<sup>64</sup> Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, 125.

and possible to experience 'in things itself'. Therefore, the life-world is not an anti-scientific concept rather it is the foundation of the sciences. It just limits the claim of objectivity by science.

Husserl then moves on to discuss the challenges in theorizing the understanding of 'life-world'. The first step he argues is the epoche of the objective science. Here Husserl intends to adopt an epoche that would distance itself from all sorts of conceptions of objective science, establishing validity and achieving objectivity. It does not have any interest to form any objective theory as such. This is not to dismantle the whole scientific project or disregard the role of the scientist but to accept reality that the philosopher's interest in 'life-world' does not share the same interest, activities and goals of that of the scientist.<sup>65</sup>

Husserl then proceeds to discuss the possibility of experiencing 'life-world' after the epoche of objective science. The objective here is to establish the science of 'life-world' that would make this concept universal. Merely the suspension of scientific judgment does not lead to the understanding of 'life-world'. The first step in that regard is to set the goal 'life-world' needs to reach. Empirical facts ignore the diversity of experience since the goal of the objective science is to establish the universal laws and thus life-world remains elusive. Life-world has a generality in its structure with all the relative features. It also has bodies in actual nature but these bodies are not defined according to physics. These bodies need new forms of investigation to understand and to explain how this objective truth is conditioned with the truth of 'life-world'. Husserl divided these into two categories- universal objective a priori and universal life-world a priori, and sought to understand how the objective a priori is grounded in the life-world a priori.<sup>66</sup> This understanding will pave the way for "a radical reflection upon the great task of a pure theory of essence of the life-world."<sup>67</sup>

This radical reflection sees the world as pre-given and as a horizon where objects are always objects of the world horizon and the world horizon is a horizon of objects. There are two ways of making the life-world thematic for this investigation. One is the naïve and natural straightforward attitude where our international horizon-consciousness makes us realize the objects in the world horizon and this horizon

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 135-37.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 139.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 141.

includes all our acts. But the second one concerns itself with how this world-horizon appears to our consciousness. Husserl calls it synthetic totality in which the world-horizon becomes 'pre-given' for us. This is the main task of the *Crisis* i.e. to investigate the how of this pre-givenness. This needs a new form of science different from the objective sciences.<sup>68</sup>

The next would be a universal epoche after the epoche of objective science. Universal epoche means the transformation of the natural attitude and suspends the thinking that our natural world is effecting the life-world. Only in this way can we initiate our real investigation as mentioned before.<sup>69</sup>

This would be possible through what Husserl terms as 'transcendental reduction'. Transcendental reduction is the reduction of the world into a transcendental phenomenon, to the 'conscious life' of the world. The way of reduction differs from the Cartesian way of understanding.<sup>70</sup>

Husserl provides an example to make it more understandable. When we see an object from one side, we do not apprehend the whole of it. Viewing it from different perspectives increases our understanding of the object as it carries the understanding it has in each step as a continuous flow. This is just from the perspective of seeing. There are other sense perceptions such as touching, hearing etc. which enrich the understanding of the object. The object, during the process of continuous understanding, retains its ontic validity and opens up to the observer in each stage.<sup>71</sup> This is how we methodologically prefer understanding the givenness of the world to knowing the object in a scientific manner.

He relates this mode of understanding to kinesthetic process where everything is involved with 'I do' or 'I move'. This kinesthetic process should occur in harmonious perception that would be the intentional background of a thing. Moreover, our perception of things has external and internal horizons. Within an internal horizon perceptions have multiplicity and in the external horizon a thing is within a field of things. Husserl widens this experience by extending this perception from the individual to the communal level as we are not isolated in this constant flow of perception.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 143-146.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 148.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 152-155.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 158.

Husserl argues that philosophers have ignored this dimension for a long time, and all of them have discussed philosophy primarily as an individual observing an object. This provides an intersubjective unity to the perception. The following passage summarizes this concept,

In this communalization, too, there constantly occurs an alteration of validity through reciprocal correction. In reciprocal understanding, my experiences and experiential acquisitions enter into contact with those of others, similar to the contact between individual series of experiences within my (one's own) experiential life; and here again, for the most part, intersubjective harmony of validity occurs, [establishing what is] "normal" in respect to particular details, and thus an intersubjective unity also comes about in the multiplicity of validities and of what is valid through them; here again, furthermore, intersubjective discrepancies show themselves often enough; but then, whether it is unspoken and even unnoticed, or is expressed through discussion and criticism, a unification is brought about or at least is certain in advance as possibly attainable by everyone.<sup>72</sup>

This multiplicity of perception with its communalized understanding along with different validities makes our experience wider than the sensible fact. Here the multiplicity way of givenness consists of the potential process and intention is repository of this givenness and this intention is the cogito for each subject.<sup>73</sup> However, the world of perception, as we have analyzed so far, only constitutes a part of the whole life-world. This ground leads to new grounds that opens up to new horizons as a continuous flow which would never be possible to be explored by the objective science. The next investigation is to uncover and understand these horizons in a universal way.

To elucidate this, Husserl explains in a Cartesian manner based on three things- ego-cogitatio-cogitata. This is to understand the different dimensions of intentionality we have discussed so far. The different aspects of intentionality covers direction towards something, appearance of something and an objective something which form a unity of appearances. Husserl's way here differs from the Cartesian approach and intends to investigate these different forms at a time and not in a separate manner.<sup>74</sup> This leads to the complex nature of this multiplicity of intentionality and the nature of ego. Here we see how the phenomenological understanding accommodates a subjective understanding and that subjectivity is correlated with other things. The subjectivity

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 163.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 167.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 171-172.

here is a universal inter-subjectivity in the sense that it incorporates the givenness of the world, ego-poles and the multiplicity of appearances of the object-poles.

The givenness of the world as we have demonstrated so far raises the question about the paradox of the human being the subject and object of the world at the same time. The dominant positivist understanding claims to resolve it in a scientific way but Husserl argues in a radical manner,

The epoche, in giving us the attitude above the subject-object correlation which belongs to the world and thus the attitude of focus upon the transcendental subject-object correlation, leads us to recognize, in self-reflection, that the world that exists for us, that is, our world in its being and being-such, takes its ontic meaning entirely from our intentional life through a priori types of accomplishments that can be exhibited rather than argumentatively constructed or conceived through mythical thinking.<sup>75</sup>

In Husserl's phenomenology such subject-object relation turns into a transcendental subject-object relation based on self-reflection. However, the question remains as to whether the subjects are really human beings or they are themselves phenomenon in this understanding of epoche. The whole world life acts as a pole that includes the ego-poles, object-poles and appearances in multiplicity, making human beings as the phenomena of this process. This further can be resolved by giving a correction to the first epoche and turning it into an absolute unique ego, an ego that would be apodictic in nature.

According to Husserl, the significance of 'life-world' is that it focuses on understanding rather than securing the objective dimension of it. It does not concern itself with deducing laws but with explaining the phenomena before reducing it to the laws. Here we see how Husserl's understanding presents a strong critique to the 'law' centered understanding of Mill and Comte which we have explained in the previous chapter.

It is commonly understood that his concept of 'life-world' is a departure from his early understanding of phenomenology. However, Føllesdal challenges this and holds that there were elements of this concept in Husserl's early writing.<sup>76</sup> Zahavi argues that the concept 'life-world' has been the most influential concept of phenomenology that has

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 181.

<sup>76</sup> Føllesdal, *The Lebenswelt in Husserl*, 41. Carr has also similar view and argues that *Crisis* is a systematic treatment of 'Life-world' though the elements are found in the early writings.

been able to influence other disciplines such as sociology. We will explain now how the later research on phenomenological method is overwhelmingly based on ‘life-world’.<sup>77</sup>

### 3.5. Phenomenological Method and History

We will now briefly explore the relationship between phenomenology and history. The dominant relationship between history and philosophy is metaphysical in nature which is known as speculative philosophy of history. Speculative philosophy of history discusses the nature of the historical process and not how we experience it. On the other hand, critical or analytic philosophy of history investigates the epistemology of historical knowledge which is the object of this study. Critical philosophy of history is heavily influenced by the empiricist philosophy as we have discussed in the previous chapter. The question is how phenomenology makes sense in all these discussions.

There have been debates over the relevance of phenomenology with regards to history. David Carr, a well-known scholar on Husserl’s phenomenology, seems to be doubtful about the usefulness of Husserl’s project in relation to critical philosophy of history. In that context, Carr only takes Husserl’s *Crisis* into account and argues that it makes indirect contribution to the epistemology of history.<sup>78</sup> Rather, *Crisis* is more immersed in the discussion of the historical nature of science and philosophy.<sup>79</sup> Carr thinks that *Crisis* neither belongs to the epistemology of history nor it can be understood as metaphysics of history rather it deals with the concept of ‘historicity’. Carr seems to dismiss many literatures suggesting that phenomenology can contribute to this field. Though Husserl did not precisely discuss the epistemology of historical knowledge, his phenomenological project has the insights which can be integrated to form a new epistemological foundation for the science of history.

For example, Larry Shiner presents a coherent argument based on Husserl’s concept ‘life-world’. He argued that the current form of understanding historical research is overwhelmingly dominated by the operational constructs rather than laying down any solid foundation. Phenomenology, according to Shiner, can help us understand the

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<sup>77</sup> Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology*, 125.

<sup>78</sup> David Carr, *Experience and History: Phenomenological Perspectives on the Historical World* (London: Oxford University Press, 2014), 157.

<sup>79</sup> David Carr, *Phenomenology and the Problem of History: A Study of Husserl's Transcendental Philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2009), ix.

historical dimension of any operational constructs of the concepts employed in historical research. This, however, does not provide us any phenomenological method as such. But it questions Carr's view about the role of phenomenology in critical philosophy of history. Shiner rightly points out that phenomenology should not just disregard the practice of the historians and impose itself as a dogma. However, he is also cautious of the fact that we should provide history with a new theory of science as a foundation and phenomenology has the potentialities to provide that.<sup>80</sup> Shiner has been able to diagnose the precise point that we are attempting to address in this study. He argues,

The most important task of the critical philosophy of history today is to gain the perspectives which can give the discipline of history a foundation appropriate to its own aims and accomplishments. I believe that the phenomenological approach outlined above can play a major role in the achievement of this task, since it is an approach which does not prescribe to the historian what he ought to do or what historical reality must be like, but rather describes the dialectical relation of the structures implicit in the historical attitude and those implicit in the historical dimension of the life-world.<sup>81</sup>

While Shiner rightly pointed out the relevance of phenomenology in theorizing critical philosophy of history, in this study we will argue that phenomenology can provide some real insights for historians in their applied research. In addition to exploring the theoretical foundation of history discipline, phenomenology can widen the scope of contemporary historical research to a great extent as we will demonstrate in the concluding part of our study.

In addition to the concept 'life-world', we have made Husserl's critique of psychologism relevant to the discipline of history as Mill's theory of social science is fundamentally based on psychologism. The question remains as to whether phenomenology can deliver a method of research apart from providing the philosophical framework of research. Sheree Dukes develops some sort of methodological framework for human sciences from phenomenological perspective though he himself is hesitant to qualify it as a methodology in the strictest sense. As phenomenological process is highly oriented towards experience through phenomenological bracketing, he suggest there should be repeated, prolonged and in-depth engagement with the object of research so that we can uncover the fundamental

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<sup>80</sup> Shiner, "A Phenomenological Approach to Historical Knowledge," 272-273.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 273-274.

structure of that experience avoiding the factual particulars. The sample size of the research should be little so that it allows more in-depth interaction with the object.<sup>82</sup> This differs from the empirical research where the researcher limits the experience through the questionnaire or theorizes the phenomena with the existing scientific theories. Here in phenomenological method the subject should be made to express itself in an open-ended manner.

However, Dukes asserts that the goal of a phenomenological research is understanding rather than finding the empirical facts. In that sense, he acknowledges the limitation of a phenomenological research as much as empirical research has its limitation. Here he insists on the complementary role of phenomenological research that can provide empirical research with the fundamental pure structure of the object it researches.<sup>83</sup> Stephan Strasser explained this phenomenon as two different modes of objectivity. According to him, empirical research helps us to discover the ‘second objectivity’ while phenomenological research discovers the ‘first objectivity’ suggesting that empirical data is the flesh of a skeleton. The task of phenomenology is to overcome the ‘empiricist, objectivist and scientific prejudice’ and reach the first level of objectivity. He views phenomenological philosopher as a “midwife” who will help build the ideal of a new science.<sup>84</sup>

Martin Farber, while discussing the common misunderstandings of phenomenology, explains that it would be mistaken to conclude that phenomenology denies the external world or inductive truth and completely substitutes positivist approach with other methods. Similar to Strasser’s argument, he argues that phenomenology, on the contrary, acts as the first method of knowledge which brings ‘things in themselves’ and thus foundational to the understanding of external world.<sup>85</sup> Self-givenness instead of facts is the primary concern of phenomenology. It investigates into the essential structure of the facts rather than the facts themselves. He also reiterates the point that phenomenology provides the intuitive foundation of knowledge.<sup>86</sup> None of these

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<sup>82</sup> Sheree Dukes, "Phenomenological Methodology in the Human Sciences," *Journal of Religion and Health* 23, no. 3 (1984): 200.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 203.

<sup>84</sup> Stephan Strasser, *Phenomenology and the Human Sciences: A Contribution to a New Scientific Ideal* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1963), 308-313.

<sup>85</sup> Farber, *The Foundation of Phenomenology*, 567.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, 572.

demonstrate any antagonism towards the factual understanding of reality per se but places such exploration in the proper context.

Although phenomenological methodology needs more elaboration and justification, we can understand the potentials of such method for historical research. Kenneth Kirby in his essay on oral history inductively argues that oral history has been always phenomenological in nature even though the historians are not aware of this fact.<sup>87</sup> However, he suggested some principles to make the informants open about their experience. These principles resemble the methodology that Dukes has suggested. As we see the phenomenological method in history is yet to develop in a detailed manner. But the current state of affairs in this field of research indicates the future trajectory and possibilities.

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<sup>87</sup> R. Kenneth Kirby, "Phenomenology and the Problems of Oral History," *The Oral History Review* 35, no. 1 (2008): 22.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

This research aimed at presenting and examining an elaborate phenomenological critique against empiricist method in history. It differs from other researches with respect to elucidating the logical and epistemological dimension of history as a discipline. Philosophical discussion has been mostly marginalized in the context of historical research and its methodology. This study asserts the necessity of such discussion, challenges the empirical method which is taken for granted in the domain of history and substantiates the relevance of phenomenology in articulating the framework of such philosophical discussion.

Many studies on phenomenological method are based on Husserl's concept of 'life-world' and does not integrate other works of Husserl such as *Logical Investigations*. Neither do these works deal with empiricism in a holistic way which should include Mill's psychologism as empiricism. This study contends that critique of empiricism demands a full-fledged engagement and thus incorporates *Logical Investigations* to critique the psychologistic foundation of social science. It widens the focus of phenomenological method by accommodating various concepts of Husserl's project.

This study also argues against the dominant research that phenomenology is relevant only with regards to speculative philosophy of history and contends that phenomenology can contribute to critical philosophy of history. Through a comparative analysis of Husserl's key texts and those of founders of modern social science, it demonstrates the potentials and insights of phenomenology in this field.

This research goes beyond positivist and psychologistic attitude and argues that phenomenology shares a new framework of scientific understanding that can widen the scope of social science. In the nineteenth century understanding of social science, subjective experience beyond positive laws is completely irrelevant. However, phenomenology revolutionizes the understanding of society by integrating this

dimension of human phenomena. This research argues that history as a discipline should consider such subjective experience.

Phenomenology contributes to the elucidation of the underlying principles of the historical research and complements the dominant empirical method. However, to what extent phenomenology can affect historical research is beyond the scope of this research. Nevertheless, phenomenology possesses the theoretical capacity which can expand the nineteenth century understanding of the scope of historical research. The complexity of the modern world demands meticulous investigation and understanding of social phenomenon from multi-dimensional perspectives. Beyond the general understanding of the fields of history such as political or social history, it lays down the framework of other fields of history such as history of religious phenomena, history of violence etc. and also provides different dimensions of the existing fields of history. For example, when we do research on the history of war, we might exclude the experiences of people by focusing on the data, political cause, social loss etc. Phenomenology can elucidate the experience of violence through oral history. If we consider the history of nationalism, the construction of cultural memory and the discourse on nationhood is not merely a discussion of positivist social laws. Phenomenology makes it possible to conduct historical research beyond facts, documents, laws and causation.

The systematic development of some new fields of history in relation to the phenomenological method requires more investigation and elaboration. Historians and historical studies should imbibe new ideas from phenomenological tradition and make social or cultural history more accommodating in terms of social experience and cultural configuration. This requires further studies on the potentials of phenomenology to understand the group experiences and cultural behavior. Such studies would be crucial to navigate the relationship between anthropology and history. This study prompts the urgency and significance of such research.

However, the significance of phenomenology should not be limited to the historical research and unlike other studies we emphasized on the pertinence of Husserl's project to the broader crisis of human sciences. From that perspective, our investigation into the theoretical problem of historical research seeks to connect history with those critical challenges. This research provides a new imagination to place history as a

discipline under a meta-narrative which would bring a unity in our understanding related to life and the world. As Husserl discussed in the *Crisis*, the historical trajectory of the modern European sciences made us forget the meaning of life itself. Therefore, history like many other disciplines cannot be devoid of the meaning of life. The phenomenological approach can render the discipline of history a noble meaning and a higher goal.

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