

Philosophy Seminar November 2016 Paper Abstract

Does Philosophy need a radical beginning to overcome its perpetual crisis and finally make progress? In search of an answer in Husserl's Phenomenology.

In his *Cartesian Meditations: An introduction to Phenomenology* (1950), Husserl sets off on his "First Meditation" with a call to:

"... make a new beginning, each for himself and in himself, with the decision of philosophers who begin radically: that at first we shall put out of action all the convictions we have been accepting up to now, including all our sciences." (p.7)

As is well known, Husserl's overarching objective for transcendental phenomenology (at least up to the publication of his *Cartesian Meditations*), was to establish philosophy as a rigorous science which would be built on the solid foundations of indubitable knowledge gleaned from the immanent sphere of experience to which we could gain access through the application of the transcendental *epoché*. It would seem that such a "radical beginning" would require that this tool for phenomenological investigation, the transcendental *epoché*, would therefore allow us to reach a sphere of experience which is prior to, or beyond, any historical or cultural shaping of our experience.

Is it still possible for us contemporary thinkers to aspire to this type of "pure" access to knowledge, especially in the light of Derrida's analysis of the dual ontological and nomological principles of the *Arkhē*, which principles both ground and lead our thinking?

In the final years of his life, Husserl engages very closely with the problem of the archontic implications for phenomenology. However, the fact that what he probably planned to be his final and definitive work on phenomenology, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology; An introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy* (1970) was never completed, leaves the question of the extent of these implications open for debate. (Carr, 1970)

In this paper I will suggest, that phenomenology does not do away with or ignore the archive's influence and hold on our experience, but that on the contrary, it provides a tool to engage with the archive in such a way that it marries the seemingly contradictory demands for both making progress in our quest for ideals such as wisdom, peace, justice, happiness and truth, while also maintaining contact with, and drawing on the vitality of the point of radical beginning.