

EDITORIAL

Husserl at the Threshold of a New Century

This special issue of *Manuscripto* is dedicated to the philosophy of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) in celebration of the centenary of publication of one of his greatest and most influential, although most often misunderstood works, the *Logical Investigations*.

The reader will find here the works of a group of scholars from both shores of the Atlantic and both sides of the Equator, written in three languages and covering a wide range of aspects of Husserl's philosophy. This is enough to testify to the interest that Husserl's philosophy still raises among philosophers belonging to different cultural traditions. In fact, today more so than ever before.

Despite his enormous influence on the development of philosophy on the continent of Europe in the twentieth century, for too long Husserl was almost completely ignored by philosophers in the so-called analytic tradition. Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Max Scheler and Lévinas, to mention only a few, are among those continental thinkers who are heavily indebted to the ideas of Husserl, but until recently we would hardly have found even a single mention of him among analytic thinkers. One of the reasons for this, I believe, is the horror Frege instilled in analytic philosophers towards any mention of subjectivity in philosophy, too often interpreted as idealism or, worse, psychologism.

This is deeply ironic because the *Logical Investigations* begins with what is probably the most devastating criticism and thorough refutation of psychologism ever written. However, it is true that the role given to subjectivity later in this work has puzzled many readers, who have thought that Husserl was falling back into the errors he himself had pointed out earlier and apparently given up (after having indulged in them in his previous work, the *Philosophy of Arithmetic*, published in 1891.) This misunderstanding, probably together with many other fac-

tors, not least of which is Husserl's heavy and convoluted style, has helped to prevent his philosophy from becoming a very fashionable item in analytic circles.

However, in fact it is undeniable that Husserl's philosophy and analytic philosophy both derive from the same sources and share many fundamental problems. In particular, both give the philosophy of logic and mathematics an important position. As mentioned above, Husserl's first major work was precisely in this field; expanding his *Habilitationschrift* of 1887, the *Philosophy of Arithmetic* was an attempt at a satisfying philosophical account of the notion of number. Moreover, I believe that the *Logical Investigations* were born, at least in part, out of Husserl's failure to extend this account to larger classes of number, such as negative, rational, real and complex numbers (the second volume of *Philosophy of Arithmetic* was never published.) Given the importance of the philosophy of mathematics in analytic philosophy it is indeed surprising that analytic philosophers have thought for so long that they could afford to ignore what Husserl has to say in this area. Similar observations apply to the philosophy of logic, the theory of meaning, and mereology, among other disciplines to which Husserl dedicated his attention, all of which are of central importance to analytic philosophers.

Fortunately the situation is changing. Today more and more analytic philosophers are becoming aware of Husserl's relevance for their agenda of problems. It is symptomatic of this change that those contributors to this issue who could be counted as analytic philosophers have chosen to write on topics related to the philosophy of logic and mathematics (the refutation of psychologism, Russell's paradox, the notion of completeness, formal ontology.)

But of course Husserl's importance cannot be measured only by the yardstick of analytic philosophy. My point is that with the overcoming of the prejudices and misunderstandings that had previously hindered the acceptance of Husserl's philosophy in analytic

quarters, his triumph is now complete. The vitality and fecundity of phenomenology, either in the form in which it is presented in the *Logical Investigations*, or in its later transcendental version (principally in and after *Ideas I* of 1913), and its relevance to contemporary philosophy in any of its variants, fully justify the decision of the editors of this special issue of *Manuscrito* to celebrate Husserl's philosophy as we cross the threshold of a new century.

Philosophers in the continental tradition will find here reasons to believe that Husserl devoted great deal of attention and effort to problems that they sometimes consider, with their share of prejudice, not very important and almost exclusively "technical"; analytic philosophers will find, for their part, reasons to take Husserl seriously in many fields of their interest; and so, in the end, philosophy in general will gain.

Many articles in this collection show also, in different degrees, a preoccupation with the interpretation and explanation of Husserl's philosophy and the study of its relation with other philosophies with respect to various particular questions. This approach, more "historic" and "exegetical" in nature, is the obvious complement to that, also exemplified in some of the papers of this collection, which prefer to use, rather than to mention, Husserl's philosophy in order to tackle contemporary philosophical problems. Both perspectives are useful, both are worthy of our efforts.

We believe that this collection of essays, written by a team of internationally recognized scholars, offers a multi-perspective focus on Husserl's philosophy, does justice to the non-partisan tradition of *Manuscrito*, and is a fitting manner of celebrating the diversity of a living philosophy.

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