

J. N. Mohanty: *Edmund Husserl's Freiburg Years, 1916–1938*

Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 2011, 512 pp, \$85.00, Hardcover, ISBN 978-0-300-15221-0

Bob Sandmeyer

Published online: 24 July 2013
© Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2013

This work, a significant achievement by itself, completes J. N. Mohanty's comprehensive two-volume study of Edmund Husserl's body of writings. With the publication of this second volume, Mohanty has produced an immensely detailed and profound analysis of Husserl's philosophy. At nearly one thousand pages for both volumes, the scale of this achievement cannot be overstated. As Robert Sokolowski notes in his review of the first volume (*Husserl Studies* 25, p. 256), Mohanty's work offers an immeasurably helpful manual for those who seek to work their way through parts or the whole of Husserl's corpus. Where the first volume, *The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl: A Historical Development*, ranges from his early years at Halle to the publication of *Ideen I* and the conclusion of his teaching career at Göttingen, this second volume begins with Husserl's "Inaugural Lecture" at Freiburg and works its way through his lectures, research manuscripts, and published writings to the *Krisis* texts produced in retirement.

The break between the first and the second volume insinuates something of an artificial caesura in Husserl's thought, a complication of which Mohanty is keenly aware. In Chapter 1, accordingly, Mohanty provides the reader with a *précis* of his first volume. His typical procedure when summarizing the results of Husserl's investigations is to tabulate them in numbered lists, and he follows this procedure here. In the second section of this chapter, then, Mohanty advances a view originally proposed by (but not attributed to) Eugen Fink in the latter's essay, "Die Spätphilosophie Husserls in der Freiburger Zeit." Mohanty asserts that a correlation can be found between the main works of the Freiburg period and those of the Halle and Göttingen periods. *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, *Cartesian Meditations*, and the Vienna Lectures are related to the *Logical Investigations*, *Ideas I*, and the *Logos* article, respectively, in such a way that the later writings elevate the earlier to

B. Sandmeyer (✉)
Department of Philosophy, University of Kentucky, 1429 Patterson Office Tower,
Lexington, KY 40506-0027, USA
e-mail: bob.sandmeyer@uky.edu

a higher niveau. With this insight in mind, Mohanty expresses a thesis at the outset of this particular volume which he sees evinced in his own study of Husserl's writings. Indeed, this thesis is nearly identical to the position he staked out in his 2003 article "The Unity of Husserl's Philosophy," published in *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* (57, pp. 115–132). There is, he suggests in this newer work, a tendency in Husserl scholarship to see a radical break in Husserl's conception of transcendental phenomenology. Where the early writings focus intently on scientific thinking and its theoretical attitude, the later writings are more thoroughly culture-oriented and articulate a genetic or explicitly historical method. "By subscribing to this idea [of a radical change] one tends to miss the underlying unity of his thinking, despite the surfacing of new themes" (p. 7). While there are indeed definite points of contrast, surprising shifts in vision, and a deepening of insights evident in Husserl's development, there is in Mohanty's opinion no radical break between the earlier and the later Husserl.

This is of course a highly contentious claim, and, taken together, the two volumes of Mohanty's study offer perhaps the most well documented effort to date to substantiate this unity thesis. Whether or not he succeeds, Mohanty's book achieves two immensely important goals simultaneously. First, chapter by chapter it provides deeply penetrating analyses of Husserl's most significant writings. Second, it anchors these analyses in an understanding of the project of transcendental phenomenology as a whole. Consequently, Mohanty's study is at once a masterly explication and an authoritative interpretation of Husserl's philosophical project.

Mohanty divides this volume into six parts. Looking over these divisions, though, one is immediately struck by the emphasis he places on Husserl's efforts to systematize transcendental phenomenology during the Freiburg period. A full half of the content of this volume—indeed the subject matter of Parts I, IV, and V—concerns Husserl's efforts toward this end. Parts II and III, on the other hand, focus on Husserl's important investigations into time and temporalization, intersubjectivity, and the genesis and activity of logical thinking. He concludes the work in Part VI by viewing Husserl in the light of "those to whom his thought stands related by its internal dialectic as well as by its own structure and motivation," i.e., Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger (p. 441). In the closing chapter, Mohanty leaves us with "a final overview." This takes the form of thirty distinct propositions marking out the contribution Husserl's theory of intentionality makes to philosophy. These are divided into three sections: (i) static phenomenology, (ii) genetic phenomenology, and (iii) intentionality in intersubjectivity.

Looking now to the six parts individually, Part I concerns Husserl's attempt to fulfill the desideratum of a complete system of phenomenology in the three volumes of *Ideen*. That *Ideen I* remains outside the scope of Mohanty's volume does not harm the internal coherence of the work, since Chapter 2 takes up Husserl's "Inaugural Lecture" at Freiburg, in which Husserl presented a definition of phenomenology for those of his new colleagues unfamiliar with his philosophy. Thus by turning to this lecture Mohanty lays out the aims and central problems of transcendental phenomenology briefly and effectively without needing to revisit his earlier study in great detail. Chapters 3–5 offer a careful explication of Husserliana IV, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*,

zweites Buch: Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution. Following the structure of this work, Mohanty traces Husserl's investigations into the constitution of nature (Chapter 3), of living beings and mind (Chapter 4), and of the spiritual world (Chapter 5). It is in these studies, Mohanty suggests, that Husserl moves beyond the programmatic conception of transcendental constitution articulated in *Ideen I*. "To give but one example, nature is not simply constituted but also plays a constituting role, it contributes to the constitution of full intersubjectivity. Constitution does not work, to use a metaphor, simply from above, it also works from below and laterally" (pp. 60–61). These constitutional studies point to new directions of research that will dominate Husserl's later work, work that forms the central concern of the next two parts of Mohanty's study.

Here one can see the latter's great strength, i.e., the efficacy by which it details the motivations underlying Husserl's revision of the transcendental problematic. Mohanty, in other words, does not so much explicitly argue for the unity thesis throughout this volume as he, rather, demonstrates its cogency in the unfolding of the problematic of transcendental phenomenology by Husserl. He thus concludes this first part with an explication of Husserliana V, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, drittes Buch: Die Phänomenologie und die Fundamente der Wissenschaften*. Here Mohanty notes that though the published text belongs to the Göttingen period and so should properly have been included in the first volume of his study, he places it in this second volume so as to remain faithful to the intended sequence of investigations. He closes out this first part, as he does each of the six parts of the book, with a series of propositions summarizing the main investigative results obtained by Husserl in those writings under consideration.

Part II details Husserl's investigations into time and intersubjectivity. Chapter 7 covers both Husserl's middle and late time manuscripts, i.e., the investigations contained within Husserliana XXXIII, *Die Bernauer Manuskripte über das Zeitbewusstsein (1917–1918)* and the C-manuscripts now available in volume 8 of the *Materialien* series of Husserliana, *Späte Texte über Zeitkonstitution (1929–1934)*. Mohanty's explication of the Bernau manuscripts largely follows the ordering and grouping of manuscripts in Husserliana. He focuses on seven themes particularly: the new account of Brentano's thesis of "inner perception," the development of a noematic description of time-consciousness, the relation of time-consciousness to the pure ego, the relation between hyletic temporality and the temporality of experience, the development of genetic phenomenology, the discovery of a secondary form of passivity, and the temporal constitution of individuality. Since Husserl's later investigations into time and temporalization, i.e., the C-manuscripts, had not been published at the time Mohanty was working on his study, the exposition here mainly refers to the manuscript numbers without page reference. Mohanty remarks near the end of the chapter that he "cannot but place on record my thoughts on why the time manuscripts are so exhilarating after all" (p. 94). This is a rare personal effusion by an author who has, almost to a fault, devoted himself to the articulation of problems in the texts as published.

In Chapter 8, Mohanty turns to the main results obtained by Husserl within the three-volume collection of his writings on intersubjectivity, Husserliana XIII–XV,

Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass: 1905–1920, 1921–1928, and 1929–1935, respectively. He expands his purview to include intersubjectivity as treated in the 1923–1924 lectures, *Erste Philosophie*, in *Husserliana* VII and VIII. The discussion in Chapters 7 and 8 are highly compressed. Chapter 8 offers an especially dense presentation of the developing analyses of empathy, intermonadic relations, and the problem of other minds from writings Husserl produced between approximately 1918 and 1927.

Though Mohanty generally remains steadfast to the chronological parameters he set for this volume, he does allow himself an exception here in order to look back to Husserl's earlier lecture course, "Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie" (1910–1911), and other important texts and addenda contained in *Husserliana* XIII. And in another departure, while the *Cartesian Meditations* is detailed later in Part IV, here in Chapter 9 Mohanty lays out an illuminating historical study of Husserl's developing analyses of intersubjectivity. Although this leaves the work rather opaque regarding the actual sequence of the *Cartesian Meditations* as published, this seems justified by Mohanty's clear articulation of the constitutional problems articulated in the various *Meditations* in light of their historical development by Husserl.

Part III concerns Husserl's investigation into passive synthesis and the origin of logic. The four chapters that make up this section provide an especially authoritative reconstruction of the development of genetic phenomenology and the deepening of the transcendental project this entails. Mohanty argues that the idea of passive synthesis was anticipated as early as the *Logical Investigations*, and that it emerged clearly in §118 of *Ideen* I and §9 and §61 of *Ideen* II. Thus Part III provides some of the most significant evidence substantiating his unity thesis. Chapter 10 deals with the materials brought together in *Husserliana* XI, *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis. Aus Vorlesungs- und Forschungsmanuskripten, 1918–1926*. As Mohanty moves from the synopsis of Husserl's lecture course materials to highly fecund comparisons with Brentano, Kant, and the Indian philosopher, Samkara, this short chapter is one of the book's richest but also one of its densest. The chapter treats perception as self-giving in primordial impression, its modalization (both active and passive), evidence, association, recollection, expectation, and the being-in-itself of consciousness. He concludes with a brief appendix on "active and passive synthesis," taken up in the supplement to *Husserliana* XI, i.e., *Husserliana* XXXI *Aktive Synthesen: Aus der Vorlesung 'Transzendente Logik' 1920/21. Ergänzungsband zu 'Analysen zur passiven Synthesis.'*

The materials in this supplementary volume are taken up again in Chapter 11, which investigates the accomplishments of ego-activities. Here Mohanty explores the way Husserl develops the contrast between activity and passivity, different layers of objectification, and the explicit development of static and genetic methods of phenomenology relevant to the theory of judgment. Mohanty notes that these investigations culminate in two works, *Formale und transzendente Logik. Versuch einer Kritik der logischen Vernunft* (hereafter *FTL*) and *Erfahrung und Urteil: Untersuchungen zur Genealogie der Logik* (hereafter *EU*). These two sets of writings provide the subject matter of Chapters 12 and 13. Here Mohanty is at his most analytically astute and his most effusive in praise of Husserl's achievements.

Chapter 12 deals with *EU*, while Chapter 13 details the main results of *FTL*. Where one would expect an analysis of *FTL* to precede that of *EU*, Mohanty treats *EU* as propaedeutic for two reasons: first, it relies for its content on investigations produced much earlier than those of *FTL*, and second, it is written in a relatively nontechnical manner. “For the same reason, I have regarded *Formal and Transcendental Logic* as Husserl’s final version of transcendental logic” (p. 256).

Parts IV and V detail Husserl’s second and third attempts, respectively, to articulate a system of phenomenological philosophy. Mohanty opens Part IV in Chapter 14 with an examination of Husserl’s winter semester lectures of 1923–1924, *Erste Philosophie* (Husserliana VII and VIII). After a rather quick review of Husserl’s historical analysis in Husserliana VII, he turns to the more systematic volume of *Erste Philosophie* and offers a detailed examination of Husserl’s reflections on the theory of phenomenological reduction. This examination is divided into two parts: a critique of mundane experience and the temporality of the transcendental stream of subjective life. Mohanty concludes the chapter with a reference to Husserl’s own conclusion in Beilage XXXII, i.e., the sentence: “History is the great fact of absolute being” (p. 335). Instead of revisiting Ludwig Landgrebe’s well-known essay here, Mohanty simply remarks that “This sentence is not further explained, and it seems we are left in the vicinity of Hegel.” Again and again Mohanty restricts himself simply to the texts at hand. This respectful dedication is the defining feature of his study.

In Chapter 15, Mohanty takes up Husserl’s phenomenological psychology lecture course, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article and famous “collaboration” with Heidegger, and the 1928 Amsterdam Lectures, all found in Husserliana IX. The chapter includes a rich, albeit brief, discussion of the philosophical relationship between Dilthey and Husserl. In turning to the *Britannica* article, Mohanty focuses primarily on Husserl’s drafts. He does, however, recount the debate between Husserl and Heidegger documented in these texts and quotes extensively from Heidegger’s letter to Husserl of 22 October 1927. The chapter closes with a review of the content of the Amsterdam Lectures. Finally, Chapter 16 is devoted to a detailed analysis of the first four of the *Cartesian Meditations*, first as articulated in the Paris Lectures and then as Husserl rewrote and augmented them in the work now published in Husserliana I. He presents a very nice historical contextualization of the lectures and illustrates how the development of themes in the *Meditations* reflects Husserl’s response to Roman Ingarden’s skeptical arguments. In the context of these analyses Mohanty traces correspondences between the first four *Meditations* and *Ideen I*.

Part V concludes Mohanty’s explication of Husserl’s corpus. Chapter 17 is titled “The Vienna and Prague Lectures,” and it presents a very helpful schema of the thinking articulated in the Vienna Lecture. But most of the chapter concerns the Prague Lecture, the published text of the *Krisis* lecture, and the materials that make up Parts II and III of Husserliana VI, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaft und die transzendente Phänomenologie*. Mohanty at once offers a clear articulation of Husserl’s analyses and emphasizes the significance of this line of investigation within transcendental phenomenology. He concludes this chapter with an articulation of the basic questions at work in the Vienna Lecture. Chapter 18 is one of the most interesting chapters of the whole study, as it takes up the “Origin of Geometry” fragment produced in 1936, published by Eugen Fink in 1939, and

translated by Jacques Derrida in 1962. Mohanty presents an overview of the text and the significant questions it raises, the “new light Derrida throws on Husserl’s ideas” (p. 425), and an analysis of what he terms “the Fink phenomenon.” Thus the chapter offers an examination of Husserl’s project of transcendental phenomenology in light of Derrida’s analysis and as contraposed with Fink’s *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*. In many respects, Mohanty’s analyses here foreshadow the penultimate chapter of the study in which he examines Husserl’s philosophy against that of Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger. But this sort of examination is, as I have suggested, a departure from the more typical method of textual analysis that defines this study. Chapter 19, a brief chapter of only two pages, concludes Part V with an overview of Husserl’s analysis of the transcendental constitution of birth and death advanced in the manuscript “Die phänomenologische Problematik von Geburt, Tod, Unbewusstsein zurückgeleitet zur allgemeinen Theorie der Intentionalität” (A VI 14). This marks the end of Mohanty’s textual analysis in the book. Poignantly, though, he closes with Malvine Husserl’s description of Husserl’s last days and night of death.

Mohanty concludes his study in Part VI briefly with two final chapters. In Chapter 20, he discusses Husserl’s thought in relation to that of Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger, philosophers who, according to Mohanty, provide helpful foils for understanding Husserl: “Husserl, in other words, is to be understood by his difference from Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger – three philosophers who occupy this status of being truly his others” (p. 441). Mohanty’s study here is brief, however, as the entire chapter comes to just under twenty pages. He devotes the comparison with Kant primarily to the question of the form of “transcendental” philosophy articulated by both men. In his comparison with Hegel, Mohanty offers an appreciation of Husserl’s “nearness” to Hegelian thought, particularly in relation to the latter’s *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. A more extensive comparison with Heidegger closes out the chapter in which Mohanty clearly and concisely traces the development of Heidegger’s own conception of phenomenology during the years from 1919 to 1929. The virtue of Mohanty’s treatment of Heidegger—indeed of Husserl’s relation to Kant and Hegel also—lies less in its novelty than in the clarity with which the basic opposition is set forth. Mohanty then concludes the entire work in Chapter 21 with the tabulated thirty-proposition “final overview.”

The level of exactitude and fidelity to Husserl’s work in this study is exemplary. There are many moments when the reader feels as if they are reading line by line alongside Husserl. For this very reason, however, the volume does not offer much relief to those who may be uninitiated in the language and style of the master. In addition, there are numerous terms and passages quoted in German, and these are not always translated into English. Nevertheless, Mohanty’s careful articulation of the arc of these studies, his expert analysis of their problems and obstacles, and especially his selection of fundamentally important Husserlian manuscripts offers an unparalleled vision of Husserl’s philosophy. For the novice, this work highlights what is truly essential in Husserl’s enormous corpus of writings and provides penetrating analyses of the main concepts. For the specialist, it collects together into a single (double) volume a lifetime of thought and research by one of the best students of Husserl’s philosophy. J. N. Mohanty has thus provided us all with a treasure of inestimable worth.