

Skepticism, according to Husserl, is the result of the attempt to found subjectivity on the basis of the world. That is to say, it results from an attempt to solve the problem through an emphasis on the subject as a part of the world. As a component of the world, subjectivity is conditioned through its relation with other components of the world, and thus the acceptance of the world can only be relatively binding. We know there is objective truth and, on reflection, we also know it is always valid for us, or for me. Since my concrete subjectivity, however, is a component of the world, grasped only as an object in the world, my cognition remains a particular fact only relatively binding. It cannot be raised to the level of universal and necessary validity. Husserl often called this "empiricist" or "common sense" view of existence "the natural orientation" toward the world.

Husserl also used the term "psychologism" as the foundation for the skeptical consequences which result from the attempt to found the validity of cognition in the "natural orientation." He never failed to point out that skepticism (also, subjectivism or relativism) involved contradiction. In the L. U. this is revealed logically by showing that skepticism must in the end commit itself to saying that "It is true that there is no truth" or "what is true for someone is false for another" or "the same content of judgement can be both true and false."<sup>18</sup> In Krisis, the contradiction is manifested as an annulment of relativism itself. Psychologism must take as valid, as universal, its cognition of the world and its component relations, which in turn cancels out the self and its relative cognition as ONLY a part of the world.<sup>19</sup>

According to Husserl, therefore, any philosophy or scientific method which grounds itself in the "natural orientation," the uncritical mundane world of "common sense" experiences, inevitably ends in skepticism.<sup>20</sup> And the effect of this skepticism, according to Husserl, is dogmatism.

### III. The Solution: Reduction and Intentionality

As I have noted, Husserl's primary concern was skepticism. His main project was to establish a basis for the acceptance of the world in both the natural and human sciences by founding them on a transcendental, "pretheoretical" experience. This basis, which he also

called "transcendental subjectivity," the stream or process of experience, is the starting point for Husserl's attempt to overcome the cognitive dualism which is the result of remaining in the mundane or empirically given "natural orientation." Phenomenology in this sense is universal in its critical demands and in its attempt to penetrate and solve the problems of skepticism and relativism. According to Husserl, this is what makes phenomenology more than a science among sciences; it is, therefore, first philosophy.

In stressing that phenomenology is not just a method of description I have suggested that what it entails is a definite orientation which Husserl calls "transcendental" in contrast to what we could call a transcendent or "natural" orientation. Phenomenology in this sense continues to have a consistent meaning throughout Husserl's writing and is best described by an examination of reduction and intentionality.

Reduction has two meanings. It means a restriction of interest in that it signifies a turn or a return to something. This is its most general meaning, and in this sense every science implies reduction, a limitation of interest. In other words all scientific interest, engages in the use of that well-known Husserlian term "epoche." An analysis of the reductions used in both the natural and human sciences would reveal therefore, two aspects; on one side a negative aspect which brackets or suspends something, on the other side a positive aspect which is a turn or "orientation" toward the residue resulting from the bracketing.

It is important to notice that from Husserl's point of view this general sense of reduction has nothing to do with the phenomenological transcendental reduction. All such reductions are performed from within what he calls the natural or mundane orientation. The phenomenological reduction which is of central concern in the writings of Husserl is a bracketing of the natural orientation itself. It is a turn to pure subjectivity as the foundation of all cognition and certainty.<sup>21</sup>

Since many phenomenologists of religion have made use of Husserl's notion of "epoche" and "bracketing," it is important that we understand what Husserl means by these terms in the context of the natural orientation. Once we have understood them, it will become very clear that the use of these terms in the phenomenology of religion is at best metaphorical and lacks any methodological substance whatsoever.