

Two Idealisms: Lask and Husserl

Karl Schuhmann and Barry Smith

from: *Kant-Studien*, 83 (1993), 448–466.

1. Neo-Kantianism and Phenomenology: Antagonism and Convergence

The changes which took place in philosophy at the turn of the present century were of a quite peculiarly dramatic sort. ‘With the year 1900,’ as Bertrand Russell was to recall later on, ‘there began a revolt against German idealism’¹ which marked not only the philosophy of the Anglo-Saxon world and of the Austria of Brentano and Meinong, but also German philosophy itself. The idealist philosophy of Neo-Kantianism, both in its Freiburg and in its Marburg versions, lost ground – gradually, but irreversibly – especially after the ‘new movement’ of phenomenology² began to crystallize around Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* of 1900/01. This decline of Neo-Kantianism was becoming clear already before Heidegger’s call to Marburg in 1923, and indeed the fate of Neo-Kantianism even in its very bastions was sealed when Husserl took over Heinrich Rickert’s Freiburg chair of philosophy in 1916.³ Husserl publicly adverted to this fact in his Freiburg inaugural lecture of 1917 when he pointed out, with regard to the new, re-tooled Kantianism of his predecessor, that ‘in contrast to the secondary productivity of such re-birth philosophies, it is in most recent times the demand for a wholly radical philosophy that is forcing itself upon us.’⁴ This sentiment prevailed not only in phenomenological quarters. In the same year also the Neo-Kantian Arnold Ruge conceded in an obituary to Wilhelm Windelband who – together with Emil Lask –

1. *Sceptical Essays*, London 1928, 70.

2. See Husserl’s *Ideas* III, written in 1912 (*Husserliana* V, 59). Husserl’s works are quoted from the *Husserliana* edition by referring to the volume and page number.

3. One might also point to the 1914 Marburg lecture “Concerning Phenomenology” of Adolf Reinach, one of Husserl’s early associates, in which Paul Natorp’s conception of cognition was attacked (see the translation by Dallas Willard in *The Personalist* 1969 (50), 194–221). On the personal level, Neo-Kantianism may even be said to have yielded to phenomenology as early as 1912, when Rickert’s son Heinrich Rickert Jr. (who was later killed in World War I) went to Göttingen to study philosophy with Husserl and Reinach.

4. “Die reine Phänomenologie, ihr Forschungsgebiet und ihre Methode”, *Husserliana* XXV, 69.

had been a colleague of Ruge in Heidelberg, that the time of Neo-Kantian idealism 'had come to an end.'⁵

Neo-Kantianism is characterized by three major traits. Firstly, and most obviously, it is a philosophy that is grafted onto the thinking of Kant. Secondly, it is ego-centred, which is to say that it attempts to reconstruct all types of cognition, both everyday and scientific, exclusively in terms of something called 'subjective spontaneity'. Thirdly, it is desperately abstract, to a degree that in Neo-Kantian writings (as Husserl once said of one of Rickert's works) 'one does not find one single example – and also does not miss one.'⁶ A title like Rickert's *Das Eine, die Einheit und die Eins*⁷ – almost untranslatable for its abstractness – seems to be characteristic of the neo-Kantian way of thinking.

Neo-Kantianism, then, is a philosophy 'from above', excelling in speculative constructions – as opposed to the attitude of patient description which is exemplified by the phenomenological slogan 'To the things themselves!' It is, therefore, somewhat surprising to read that 'Windelband's as well as Rickert's investigations are fundamentally phenomenological in character, because rooted in the descriptive determination of the specific peculiarities of things.'⁸ One could no doubt dismiss this affirmation by pointing out that its author, the Hungarian Akos von Pauler, was in no way an authorized spokesman of phenomenology. But even Max Scheler was able to remark – this time of Lask, pupil of Rickert and friend of Windelband – that his works on *The Logic of Philosophy and the Doctrine of the Categories* (1911) and on *The Doctrine of Judgment* (1912) are 'strongly influenced by phenomenology',⁹ a view that is shared also by Heidegger.¹⁰ The suggestion that Lask is to be ranked with the phenomenologists among the progressive minds of his day is implied also in Georg Lukács' conviction that it is the 'drive toward concreteness' that is the guiding force behind Lask's thinking.¹¹

5. *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* 162 (1917), 55.

6. *Husserliana* XXII, 147 (review, first published in 1897). Concerning Lask, Husserl's complaint is echoed by Wilhelm Szilasi, who deplors 'the rigid abstractness, the want of details and examples' in Lask's work (see his "Das logisch Nackte", in *Phantasie und Erkenntnis*, Bern and Munich 1969, 100).

7. Published in *Logos* 2 (1911/12), 26-79.

8. Akos von Pauler, *Grundlagen der Philosophie*, Berlin and Leipzig 1925, 283.

9. "Zusätze" in his *Deutsche Philosophie der Gegenwart*, in Scheler's *Gesammelte Werke* VII, Bern and Munich 1973, 329 (see also 312).

10. *Sein und Zeit*, 218n.

11. "Emil Lask. Ein Nachruf", *Kant-Studien* 22 (1918), 350.

The picture becomes blurred also from the opposite direction when we recall Husserl's later view that, though the idea of a Kant renaissance was now certainly obsolete, there existed none the less 'a manifest essential affinity' between Husserl's own transcendental phenomenology and the transcendentalism of the Neo-Kantians.¹² Thus, while Lask's refashioned version of the Neo-Kantian creed was conceived in the spirit of Windelband's 'To understand Kant, is to go beyond him,'¹³ phenomenology came gradually to the view that it could not understand itself except by reflecting upon the – German – historical roots from which it sprang. At least in its Husserlian version, therefore, phenomenology came to the conclusion that it had in some sense to go back to Kant, and it is very much to the point that Husserl's last great work, the *Crisis of European Sciences*, has been called his 'Kantian Meditations.'¹⁴

2. Lask and Husserl

However close Husserl's own relation to other Neo-Kantians may have been, there is no doubt that Emil Lask was the one who felt closest to Husserl. Already in 1902 Lask seems to have sought to establish contact with the author of the then recently published *Logical Investigations*,¹⁵ even though he was still a devoted student of Rickert. And from 1905 on,¹⁶ as he himself testifies, Lask began to work Husserlian ideas into his own philosophy.¹⁷ When, in 1908, he published the article "Does a 'Primacy of Practical Reason' exist in Logic?", he mailed an offprint thereof to Husserl. It is not known exactly when Lask wrote his first letter to Husserl, but the two were in contact at least from early 1910 on.¹⁸ Around Christmas of that year,

12. See Husserl's "Kant und die Idee der Transzendentalphilosophie", *Husserliana* VII, 230 (public lecture, given in Freiburg in 1924).

13. *Präludien*, Tübingen 1884, IV.

14. Iso Kern, *Husserl und Kant*, The Hague 1964, 50.

15. This may be gathered from the fact that Husserl's library at the Husserl Archives in Louvain contains both the dissertation printing and the published edition of Lask's Ph.D. thesis of 1902 on *Fichtes Idealismus und die Geschichte*.

16. 1905 was the year in which Lask published his habilitation thesis on "Rechtsphilosophie". This work appeared in the Festschrift for Kuno Fischer, *Die Philosophie im Beginn des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts*, the two volumes of which are to be found in Husserl's library. It is however more than unlikely that Husserl should have received the work from Lask.

17. Letter to Husserl of 25 December 1910, quoted in Hanspeter Sommerhäuser, *Emil Lask in der Auseinandersetzung mit Heinrich Rickert* (Ph.D. thesis, Zurich), Berlin 1965, 340.

18. Lask's letters to Husserl are kept at the Husserl Archives under the signature R II Lask. The earliest piece is a – regrettably now empty – envelope bearing the postmark '26.2.10.' Husserl's letters to Lask seem to have been lost.

Lask sent to Husserl a copy of his newly published *Logic of Philosophy*.¹⁹ In early 1911, Husserl in return mailed to Lask an offprint of his *Logos*-article “Philosophy as a Strict Science” which had just appeared. Lask responded on 29 March of the same year, thanking Husserl especially for the invitation to visit him in Göttingen. Though he could not go, it is nonetheless important that Lask had caught Husserl’s interest to a degree that Husserl would have liked to discuss philosophy with him. On 24 December 1911, Lask wrote to Husserl about the influence the latter had exerted upon him and at the same time (or shortly afterwards) he mailed Husserl his *Doctrine of Judgment*.²⁰

There is not much known about the further developments of the relations between the two philosophers. Husserl continued to appreciate highly Lask’s work and talents. When Husserl’s *Ideas I* appeared in 1913, Lask was among those to receive a copy of the work as a gift from its author.²¹ Lask responded by sending Husserl an offprint of his 1913 review of Sigwart’s *Logic*. The most moving testimony of the high esteem in which Lask was held by Husserl is contained, however, in the latter’s letter to Rickert of 5 November 1915, written shortly after Lask had been killed in action: ‘The death of this extraordinary man who – as each of his writings has shown – strived for the highest philosophical goals, has struck me deeply. With him there has departed one of the brightest hopes of German philosophy. I regret very much that I never got to know him personally.’²²

Rudolf Malter could still in 1969 remark: ‘A special investigation of Lask’s relation to Husserl’s phenomenology is completely missing.’²³ This statement remains to some extent true even today,²⁴ and the lacuna will be filled only in part in the remarks that follow. The same applies to the question of a possible Laskian

19. Lask’s (already mentioned) letter which accompanied the volume is dated 25 December 1910. The work itself, bearing a handwritten dedication by Lask, is still in Husserl’s library.

20. The copy (with Lask’s dedication) is in Husserl’s library.

21. This transpires from a list of recipients of the work which is kept at the Husserl Archives under the signature K III 9/56b. We want to thank Professor S. IJsseling, Director of the Archives, for his kind permission to quote from Husserl’s unpublished materials.

22. Letter at the Husserl Archives (signature R I Rickert).

23. “Heinrich Rickert und Emil Lask”, *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 23 (1969), 96n. Iso Kern’s *Husserl und Kant*, though bearing the subtitle “An Investigation into Husserl’s Relation to Kant and Neo-Kantianism”, does not even mention Lask’s name. Also the few remarks in Reinhard Kynast, *Intuitive Erkenntnis*, Breslau 1919, 171f., are not really helpful.

24. The only notable exception is Steven Galt Crowell’s perceptive article “Husserl, Lask and the Idea of Transcendental Logic”, in Robert Sokolowski (ed.), *Edmund Husserl and the Phenomenological Tradition. Essays in Phenomenology*, Washington D.C., 1989, 63-85.

influence, however weak, upon Husserl himself.²⁵ We prefer, rather, to assess the relation between their respective *philosophies* considered as abstract bodies of thought, hoping to establish that there is a sense in which each can throw light on the other and on the project of idealist philosophy in general. To this end we shall take both Lask's Neo-Kantianism and Husserl's phenomenology in their most mature versions. Thus we take seriously Lask's claim that both his *Logic of Philosophy* and his *Doctrine of Judgment* are 'provisional' (II, 3)²⁶ and 'preliminary' (II, 285), so that they are but preludes to a more comprehensive and systematic treatment of the problem of logic. It is true that Lask did not live to publish the work he had in mind. The third volume of Eugen Herrigel's edition of the *Collected Writings*, published in 1924, does however contain a draft by Lask of his system of logic, together with the still more comprehensive draft of a system of philosophy in general. It is clearly only on the basis of these latter texts that there becomes possible an adequate appreciation and evaluation of the place of Lask's published writings in his overall thought.

From a properly historical perspective we would of course need to concentrate on Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, the only major work by Husserl with which Lask was really familiar.²⁷ This, however, would eclipse the fact – crucial in our present context – that from *Ideas I* onwards Husserl explicitly interpreted his phenomenology as a sort of Kantian transcendentalism.²⁸ Husserl from that time on liked to emphasize what he saw as the fundamental significance of the 'Copernican deed [*kopernische Tat*]' so dear to Lask: the turn toward the subject. Yet there is no explicit (or, it seems, implicit) discussion of *Ideas I* in Lask's posthumous writings. And even with respect to the *Logical Investigations*, Lask was convinced that, as he himself told Husserl on 24 December 1911, 'the real discussion of the work cannot begin until later.'

It should be mentioned, finally, that Lask's name does not figure at all in Husserl's published writings, and even in his manuscripts it occurs only sporadically. In one of them he refers to 'Lask's objection, in the *Doctrine of*

25. In addition to what has been said about Husserl's relation to Lask, one may remark that Husserl's library also contains an off- print of Dietrich H. Kerler's article "Kategorienprobleme. Eine Studie im Anschluss an Emil Lasks 'Logik der Philosophie'", *Archiv für systematische Philosophie* 17 (1912), 344-57. Kerler clearly did not present this text to Husserl because he would have been aware of some special interest in Lask on Husserl's part, but rather because he himself was a student of Husserl. Yet it is still worth while to note that a student of Husserl was ready to treat this topic.

26. References give the volume and page number of the Herrigel edition of Lask's works.

27. Lask had also studied Husserl's article "Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft" of 1911. See his critical remarks on this text at III, 252.

28. See *Ideas I*, § 62 (*Husserliana* III/1, 133).

Categories, to the distinction between meaning and object.’²⁹ But it is characteristic that he later crossed out this note, and seems to have lost interest in it. Husserl indeed does not seem to have been well-versed in the Laskian philosophy. This is also suggested by questions in his manuscripts such as: “Doctrine of the categories: Whether Cohn’s and Lask’s writings could here be of some help?”³⁰ or: ‘Lask’s “Logic of Philosophy”’: What does he mean by that?”³¹ Moreover, it is pretty certain that Husserl never took cognizance of the 1923/24 Herrigel edition of Lask’s *Collected Writings* which contains, as was said, his draft of the systems of logic and philosophy. Perhaps Husserl’s note: ‘auch Lask muß endlich gelesen werden’,³² jotted down in 1923, refers to this edition. At all events it indicates the Husserl had only a superficial knowledge of Lask’s philosophy) and it is quite certain that this was to remain so far the rest of his life.

We prefer, therefore, to discuss Lask’s and Husserl’s respective philosophies, leaving to others the job of tracing influences. Lask’s thought will be seen to reinforce some of the tendencies motivating Husserlian phenomenology. Above all, however, it will prove to run counter to certain lines of Husserlian thinking. As a matter of fact, Lask’s philosophy is more than a mere mixture of Rickertian and Husserlian fragments combined in such a way as to make it easily resolvable into ingredients from either source. Lask maintained an independence of mind with respect to both Rickert and Husserl, and succeeded in developing a type of thought which is of a piece and genuinely original. It is therefore no surprise to learn that Rickert himself felt stimulated by Lask³³ and publicly recognized the ‘eminent significance of this thinker.’³⁴ On the other hand, notwithstanding his

29. MS D I 13 II/225b. Husserl refers here to pp. 44f. of the first edition of Lask’s *Logik der Philosophie*, i.e. to the section “Das Sinnliche als das Nichtgeltende oder Geltungsfremde” (II, 45ff.). But Lask mentions the ‘separation of object and “meaning”’ some pages earlier (II, 41). Husserl’s note should be seen in the context of Lask’s letter to him of 25 December 1910, where Lask, too, refers to II, 41 when stating: ‘I do not deny a realm of truth consisting of the sense and meaning of the propositions and which is distinct from the objects. Only, there exists also a truth which coincides with what is objectual.’ On II, 41 Lask had said that ‘truly the two realms of objects and truths about them move together to the single realm of the object which is identical to the totality of truths.’

30. MS F I 15/4b. The work of Jonas Cohn referred to here is his *Voraussetzungen und Ziele des Erkennens* of 1908. Husserl’s manuscript stems from 1911 and was apparently written shortly after he had received Lask’s work, so that he had not yet had the time to read it.

31. MS B I 7/57a (about 1928). This text, too, is crossed out.

32. MS F II 7/162b.

33. This is suggested by Martin Heidegger in his *Zur Sache des Denkens*, Tübingen 1969, 83.

34. H. Rickert. *Der Gegenstand der Erkenntnis*, 4th edition, Tübingen 1921, XIII. From 1915 (the year of Lask’s death) onwards, the successive editions of this work were dedicated ‘To Emil

acknowledgement of Husserl's influence upon his thought, Lask retained a certain distance from Husserl. Thus on 14 November 1912 he wrote to Rickert in defence of his view that Plato's philosophy was more than merely the expression of a rather diffuse enthusiasm for the ideality of theoretical formations. Otherwise, Lask writes, Plato 'would probably have been not *der göttliche* Plato, but merely the author of Husserl's *Logical Investigations*' (III, 52). Thus Lask in this remark effectively relegates Husserl to the second rank. Lask, the 'end-point of Neo-Kantianism,'³⁵ and Husserl, the starting-point of phenomenology, may thus be considered to be two poles which both attract and repel each other.

3. Cognition and Its Object

Central to Lask's philosophy is the thesis

1. that there is an opposition between fact and value,
and
2. that it is 'experience' that is the locus of all value or validity or sense or meaning.³⁶

Re-expressed in Laskian terms: there is 'an experienceability of validity, a possibility of encountering validity in acts of experience'. Such sense or validity cannot be experienced of itself alone, however: 'all sense that as a matter of fact can be found in experience, is tied to *factual* experiencing' (III, 67 and 80). The realm of the 'factual', here, or of what happens and is the case, is divided up by Lask into the field of (psychic) experience as such and of that which is 'given' to us (or 'found' by us) *in* experience.

Within the framework of the Husserlian theory of intentionality this distinction is of course a truism. Acts, on the one hand, make up the realm of experience as such) as opposed to the objects *given* intentionally in those acts. In Lask, however, this comes near to a reversal of one of the basic tenets of Neo-Kantianism according to which nothing may be accepted as 'given'. Neo-Kantianism rather calls for the (re-)construction of all objects out of 'transcendental forms' and categories seen as

Lask, a dear friend, in faithful memory'.

35. R. Malter, "Heinrich Rickert und Emil Lask", 90.

36. In equating validity (*Gelten*) with value (*Wert*), sense (*Sinn*) and meaning (*Bedeutung*), Lask goes even beyond Rickert's and Windelband's equation of validity and value, as also beyond Husserl's equation of sense and meaning. Lask's usage does not, it must be said, meet modern standards of rigour and precision; thus we have to some extent found it necessary to fight our way through the surface jungle of his murky terminology, in order to unearth the positive content of the theories underneath. Note that the concept of validity first came to prominence in the logical works of Hermann Lotze, one of Windelband's teachers. According to Lotze, validity is a character of things that obtain [*bestehen*] but do not exist. True propositions, for example, are said to obtain or to 'have validity'. This view clearly anticipates Lask's own somewhat broad use of this term.

residing in ‘pure consciousness’ or ‘consciousness-in-general’. Lask was indeed aware of the fact that, by introducing into Neo-Kantian constructivism the notion of the given or found,³⁷ he was in some sense stepping outside the Neo-Kantian project. On 24 December 1911 he wrote to Husserl: ‘When mentioning your influence upon me as to my view concerning the relation between subject and object, I may perhaps specify this by hinting at the fact that I make the type of intentionality you defend take the place of all [Neo-Kantian] notions of consciousness-in-general.’³⁸ The acceptance of intentionality thus furnishes a first common ground shared by Lask and Husserl.

Factuality, then, has two sides, a psychical and (what for Lask is) a physical. Further, no matter whether on the side of psychical experience or on the side of its physical objects, what is factual is, Lask says, always empirical and spatiotemporal in nature. He talks of it as of a ‘mass’ of ‘being’, or of a ‘psychophysical mass’ (II, 7), i.e. as something which, in and of itself, lacks form and articulation.

On the other hand, however, we have the non-factual realm of sense, meaning and truth, i.e. all types of ‘validity’. Compared with factual being, i.e. with what is spatio-temporal, this realm of ideal validity must be said to be a kind of non-being. It is, from Lask’s point of view, something like a halo or subtle ether surrounding the opaqueness of what is.³⁹ Lask does not, however, defend a two worlds theory in which the sensible world of being and the suprasensible world of validity would dispose of equal rights. To him, the two realms are rather two incomplete elements which stand to each other as the ‘material’ on the one hand - an underlying stuff, substrate or carrier of properties - to an accidental form or shape or structure on the other. The two elements together make up just one world, i.e. precisely that world which is given in experience.

What is given in experience is therefore more than mere factuality. But it is never less than factuality, for transparency or intelligibility cannot exist except as tied to some (irrational) matter. There exists no Platonic realm of separable and self-sufficient ideas. All forms are ‘enclitic’ (II, 93), and validity obtains only as something valid with regard to a prior material. This does not imply that – as Renaissance naturalism would have it – matter would become the ‘mother of forms’. Validity is referred, intrinsically, to underlying material elements; but it comes to the

37. For a phenomenological analysis of these notions see Herbert Spiegelberg, “Three Types of the Given: The Encountered, the Search-found and the Striking”, *Husserl Studies* 1 (1984), 69-78, which shows that the notion of the given as it occurs in Husserl was developed out of a Kantian use of this term.

38. Lask continues, characteristically: ‘It is because of this that I am accused by my teacher Rickert of abandoning Kant and going back in a reactionary way to antiquity.’

39. This conception, as well as Lask’s terminology of being and non-being (II, 6f.), may call to mind Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*. Lask’s non-being is however not consciousness or subjectivity but rather the objective realm of meaning and truth.

fore only where there are subjects who turn towards this underlying stuff (just as a comet develops its coma only when approaching the sun). The bearer of experience – which Lask refers to as ‘subjectivity’ – is therefore ‘the scene where the actualization of objectively valid content takes place’ (III, 96). On the other hand, however, subjectivity can serve as such only insofar as it is itself real and hence belongs to the totality of materials to which validity relates. Thus it is only as founded upon the total mass of being, consisting of both psychical and physical ‘phenomena’ in Brentano’s sense,⁴⁰ that sense and value can exist.

Lask thereby supplies the matter of factuality with a prominence otherwise unheard of in Neo-Kantian thought.⁴¹ On the other hand, however, he would oppose all attempts to reduce forms to matter. This applies not merely to the forms of objects, but to the forms of subjects, also. Thus Lask will not try to convert sense or meaning into mere reflections or products of our real psychic acts. He wholeheartedly embraces Husserl’s anti-psychologism, conceiving Husserl’s chief merit as lying in the fact that he had ‘insisted on the separability of sense from the real structures’ of the acts which underlie it (II, 425; cf. also II, 292). It is, therefore, correct to maintain that for Lask ‘the subject receives that which is valid from the side of the realm of objects. The subject depends upon that which is valid, while validity remains what it is independently of the subject.’⁴² Sense or validity are always detachable from empirical acts. But now if, as according to Windelband’s famous phrase, idealism is to be defined as ‘the dissolution of being into processes of consciousness,’⁴³ then at least in so far as the mind-independence of truth, meaning and validity is concerned, Lask must be called a realist, and this in contradistinction to Neo-Kantianism in general.

Lask, it is true, sets out from the thesis of the sheer givenness of validity in experiencing acts. But this is to say only that it is impossible to gain access to sense and truth apart from the factual experience of given matters or stuffs. Now the

40. See Franz Brentano, *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*, Leipzig 1874, 10ff. The definite traces of Brentanism in Lask’s thinking cannot, unfortunately, be pursued in this context.

41. Cf. Friedrich Kreis, “Zu Lasks Logik der Philosophie”, *Logos* 10 (1921/22), 234.

42. H. Sommerhäuser, *Emil Lask in der Auseinandersetzung mit Heinrich Rickert*, 135. Validity (as irreducible to the subject) must be said to be pre-given, too. Hence one may also speak of ‘the experience of form as form’ in Lask (cf. Tercio Sampaio Ferraz Jr., *Die Zweidimensionalität des Rechts als Voraussetzung für den Methodendualismus von Emil Lask*, Meisenheim am Glan 1968, 112 and 129) – a suggestion which may recall Husserl’s notion of categorial intuition. In order to avoid misleading Platonizing interpretations, however, it would be more correct to say that ‘validity gains its character of being a norm, a demand or an “ought”, only in confrontation with the subject’ (Hanspeter Sommerhäuser, “Emil Lask 1875-1915”, *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 21 (1967), 142).

43. *Geschichte der Philosophie*, Tübingen and Leipzig 1900, 463n.

omnipresence of validity obtains for the very same reason that matter is omnipresent too. Validity is a necessary element of the objective side of all intentionality, not something that is created by grace of the subject. For nothing can be given unless it be subsumed under a concept or category and understood as a this or a that. This ‘transsubjectivity’ of sense is presupposed in all experience (III, 110; the term is taken over by Lask from Johannes Volkelt). Sense taken in itself is thus incomplete and involves of necessity some material which underlies it. The latter is nevertheless only the substrate of validity, not a cause producing it. Sense is dependent upon the psychophysical mass, but at the same time cannot be reduced to it.

On this general level, Lask and Husserl agree as to the basic function and nature of intentionality. Consciousness is neither its own object, nor is it confined to its own immanent contents, ideas or images. On the contrary, it ‘touches’ reality, as Lask (using an Aristotelian notion) likes to put it.⁴⁴ But it is not exhausted by the transcendent object, either. To reach out to the things is also to be at a distance from them, and to grasp them is also, in a certain sense, to recede from them. Intentionality holds open the difference between two poles of equal weight, and it is precisely thanks to this difference that consciousness has the power to transcend the given individual thing and to embrace also the generalities of sense or meaning. In this way, and in virtue of the fact that the subject’s recedes from the object, there is introduced into the world of matter what one might call ‘intelligible order’, order *qua* capacity to be taken up into consciousness or *qua* rationality of structure. The ‘panarchy of logos’ so vigorously defended by Lask (II, 133; III, 251), consists more precisely in this: that consciousness in fact hits the object, but never coincides with it. The subject is immersed in the world of validity, and objects become *phenomena* through the imposition of form. ‘The last and immediate datum is for us sense that is valid for or in respect of subjectivity’ (III, 91). It is no doubt correct to conclude from this that for Lask – as also for Husserlian phenomenology – ‘there exists nothing but a phenomenal world – no thing in itself.’⁴⁵ But one could even go one step further and affirm, in a style not alien to Nietzsche,⁴⁶ that in abolishing the seemingly ‘true’ world of the in itself, Lask has abolished also the seemingly merely phenomenal world of the ‘objects for us’.

This leads to an important qualification of Husserl’s thesis that all intentional acts are governed by some sort of correlation between, in Husserl’s terms, the noetic and noematic structures, the structures of acts and the structures of intended objects. According to the Husserl of *Ideas I*, the spatiotemporal world has a ‘merely

44. Compare III, 253 with *Met.*, 1072 b 21.

45. Hartmut Rosshoff, *Emil Lask als Lehrer von Georg Lukács*, Bonn 1975, 61.

46. Cf. Nietzsche’s *Götzendämmerung*, section entitled “How the ‘True World’ Became a Fable”.

intentional being' and thus depends on our consciousness.⁴⁷ To this there corresponds at least in part Lask's doctrine that form (i.e. the 'sense' of things) 'needs to lean upon' the subject (II, 94 and III, 111; this is precisely the 'enclitic' character of form mentioned above). The sphere of validity is not self-contained but rather 'points beyond itself' (II, 44); it is 'tied to a basis which is the subject' (II, 426). Lask and Husserl are up to this point in agreement. Both conceive the relation between the subject and the world in a dualistic way. But subjectivity, for the author of *Ideas I*, is the original locus of the constitution not only of any putative external reality but of sense or meaning, too. Consciousness is hereby conceived after the manner of a Cartesian substance as a self-sufficient realm in its own right. For Lask, on the other hand, 'the only self-sufficient "world" is the domain of being' (II, 94), i.e. the psychophysical mass to which all meaning must refer. Lask, therefore, pursues 'a strictly objectivistic tendency' (III, 91). He defends a 'standpoint of transcendence' (II, 414), conceiving the psychical mass as transcending itself both in the direction of reality and in the direction of meaning or sense. He thereby rejects not only the role played by subjectivity in Neo-Kantianism but also Husserl's notion of a subjectivity as the locus of all constitution of objects. There is a sense, indeed, in which Lask may be said to pay more attention than either Husserl or the Neo-Kantians to the fact that there are many egos, that the world is a public world out there, so that each individual subject would transcend itself also in the direction of the world as well as of other subjects (a notion which may reflect the close relations Lask enjoyed with his colleague Max Weber in Heidelberg).⁴⁸

As we have seen, both Lask and the Husserl of *Ideas I* subscribe to the Copernican turn brought about by Kant. Both see the world *qua* meaningful as being in some sense dependent on the subject. But the subject, for Husserl, acquires an ontological primacy to the extent that its very being is understood as something absolute. For Lask, in contrast, Copernicanism means only a priority of the subject from an epistemological point of view. In transcending ourselves toward the world, real things are (somehow) disclosed, and this givenness of what is real cannot be dissolved into constellations of meaning or meaning-bestowal, as it can for Husserl.

In this respect Husserl is without doubt a more orthodox Kantian than Lask. Husserl's method consists in stripping experience of all higher-level ingredients until one arrives at the bare Kantian manifold of hyletic data which make sense only insofar as they are 'animated' in meaning-bestowing acts.⁴⁹ Lask, in contrast, when turning to the world of things, does so in order to keep hold of these very things themselves. What he wants to do is 'to think through the Copernican doctrine to the end, to immerse validity and value precisely into the objects themselves' (II, 389).

47. *Husserliana* III/1, 106.

48. Cf. III, 186. See Marianne Weber, *Max Weber. Ein Lebensbild*, Heidelberg 1950, 528-530.

49. Cf. *Husserliana* III/1, 226f.

Husserl starts, it is true, with consciousness in the ‘natural attitude’, with that consciousness which takes for granted the existence of an independent world. He goes on, however, to point out that the relation of this natural consciousness to the world is in fact derivative, resting on a deeper soil of constituting acts. The result of Husserl’s efforts is, therefore, in conflict with that very natural consciousness with which he began. This turnabout is achieved by means of the so-called ‘transcendental reduction’, the upshot of which is the thesis that our ‘ordinary talk of being’ is to be reversed in order to make room for its very opposite.⁵⁰ In Husserl’s view, it is not reality but consciousness which ‘is’ in the fullest sense of the term.

In this, too, he is following Kant’s original doctrine (at least in some degree). Kant’s philosophy has been judged by his successors to be incoherent in that it does not show how empirical and transcendental notions hang together. Hence it does not show, either, how one is to effect a transition from the ordinary world-view to the world view of philosophy. Husserl tried to remedy this by opening up various ‘paths’ that would lead from natural consciousness to the realm of the transcendental. Lask, too, feels the necessity ‘to apply Kantianism once more to itself’ (II, 90). He does not, however, look around for some means by which to bridge the supposed gap. Rather, he prefers to show the inadequacy of the very terms in which the problem is posed. He first of all transfers some of the so-called subjective forms and categories to the side of the object, so that they become conditions for our cognitive access to the world. He then shows that on this basis there is no longer any need to assume either things-in-themselves or a transcendental subjectivity in order to explain our everyday experience of the world and of ourselves.

Lask’s interpreters were eager to characterize this procedure as implying a relapse into pre-Kantian dogmatism.⁵¹ One should remark, however, that Lask’s approach is ‘transcendental’, at least in Rickert’s usage, which is to say that ‘it searches after the transcendent objects which in the last instance are the standard of cognition.’⁵² But still more important is the fact that cognition for Lask – and this is a shamefacedly Neo-Kantian trait – is no affair of our passively mirroring an objectively existing world; it is no ‘picturing’, as he himself prefers to put it. Rather, in dealing with sense and truth, consciousness has a certain creative or productive role to play. Direct experience in the sense of sensation or perception does indeed have things *given* to it. But it does not simply take in things in their full and massive

50. *Ibid.*, 106.

51. Cf. Eugen Herrigel, “Emil Lask’s Wertsystem”, *Logos* 12 (1923/24), 102, and H. Sommerhäuser, *Emil Lask in der Auseinandersetzung mit Heinrich Rickert*, 154. This was, as has been mentioned above (n. 38), also Rickert’s view.

52. Rickert, *Der Gegenstand der Erkenntnis*, 20. See II, 414n.

givenness, as if subjectivity were a neutral and indifferent receptacle in which to store a pristine world. Cognition is not a mere intuitive having of things. Certainly if it is to be *of* things, then it must presuppose some intuitive givenness as its indispensable first substrate. But merely to be struck by things is not yet to understand them (a golf-ball, too, may be struck by certain things). Cognition has to go beyond sensation. It is essentially tied to the realm of judgment, of our actively deciding *about*, predicating determinations *of*, the things. And the judgment correspondingly does not bear upon the thing in its undifferentiated givenness. Rather, it refers to it *qua* intended.

How, then, are we to understand the contribution of subjectivity to the process which leads from experience to cognition? We can say, roughly, that it consists in the adopting or selecting of some point of view from which to apprehend the thing – in such a way that the latter will become decomposed or split apart into a manifold of distinct aspects, properties, features. The object of cognition is accordingly no longer the thing as it was originally given to sensation, but the thing as split apart into a plurality of aspects or properties, all of which can be said to have or carry meaning. The judgment, correspondingly, is differentiated into its own correlative elements of subject, predicate, and the like.⁵³ The content of the judging act is ‘an antagonistically divided sense’ (II, 306) which contains both the categorial forms introduced by the cognizing subject and the pre-given and experienced materials to which these forms have been applied. The proper object of cognition is a product brought forth from the transcendent material that is given in sensation through a process of structuring or articulation. And this process consists in the imposition of forms which fit this material precisely and raise it thereby to the level of validity. Sense or meaning, therefore, is not radically and rigorously transcendent to subjectivity as is the object of sensation. The world to which judgments refer is no longer the transcendent realm of things as experienced, but rather a layer of ‘quasi-transcendence’ founded thereon (II, 421).

Seen from the phenomenologist’s perspective, this will entail two widely diverging consequences. Husserl and Lask agree, first of all, as to the absolutely primary character of direct sensory givenness. This original mode of awareness is presupposed in all intentional acts. All other types of conscious activity must be derivative, because their constructs must draw from this pre-given fundament. Consciousness, that is, is structured in such a way that a secondary level is built up on a more original one. And this implies a similar distinction on the side of the objects. Here, too, we have a fundamental layer which is, as Lask expresses it, ‘truly transcendent’ to the subject experiencing it (II, 425). Lask goes on to describe this

53. A more detailed account of Lask’s doctrine of judgment would have to take into account the various levels of opposites he distinguishes (hitting and missing the object, conformity and contrariety to truth, etc.). However, with the sole exception of Lask’s notion of judgmental sense, these distinctions play no significant role in a comparison of his thought with that of Husserl.

fundamental layer as the domain of ‘oppositionlessness’ or ‘transoppositonality’⁵⁴ (terms close to the thought of Plotinus⁵⁵) – in contradistinction to the level of judgment, which is characterized by multiformity and difference. The world of transcendent things is accessible only in acts of ‘plain dedication’ or ‘*Hingabe*’ (II, 396) in which the subject is ‘given away’ to the world. But where, in Husserl, a painstaking description of these lower-order acts and their correlates, i.e. a phenomenology of perception, is an indispensable prerequisite for the understanding of the emergence of higher-order acts, Lask skips any analysis of this fundamental sphere. He focuses exclusively on the doctrine of judgment and of categories, caring not a hoot about the material world of things. Thus Husserl and Lask hold in principle the same view about the relation between the direct and indirect types of awareness of the world, but they differ in their emphases as concerns the respective terms of this relation. Husserlian phenomenology may therefore be understood as furnishing here a necessary supplement to the Laskian type of thought.

If, however, we look more closely at the nature of the objective correlates of our cognitive acts, then the two philosophers will be seen to differ greatly, not merely in their emphases but in their conclusions. For Husserl, the direct object of judgment is a ‘*Sachverhalt*’ or state of affairs, something ontologically ‘positive’ in the sense that it is an entity in its own right and does not point beyond itself in the manner of a mere sign or proxy for something else. It has an irreducible being of its own. States of affairs may in some sense involve real things as their members or fundamentals. Moreover, one and the same state of affairs may be grasped by different people in different acts and is, in this sense, repeatable. States of affairs thereby resemble real things which can also be grasped in a multitude of acts and by different perceivers on different occasions. This very association between things and states of affairs is, however, rejected out of hand by Lask (II, 391f.). The object

54. In one place Lask also speaks of the ‘manifoldness’ of the primary region (II, 401). This is obviously an allusion to, or better, a tilting at, Kant. In Kant, sensation yields a chaos of qualities which is a sheer manifold, a buzzing confusion. In Lask, however, sense-experience refers to unitary objects which are already in themselves complete. Multiplicity arises only in the subject’s analysis of the given. Where in Kant the way from sensation to reason leads teleologically from a manifold to the uniform idea, in Lask it goes from oppositionlessness to oppositionality, from what is unitary to what is split apart into a multiplicity of aspects.

55. As is attested, e.g., by his posthumously edited course of lectures on Plato (III, 1-56) and by the extensive discussion of Aristotle in his published writings (e.g., II, 223ff. and 317ff.), Lask was ‘intimately familiar with the Greeks’ (E. Herrigel, “Vorwort des Herausgebers” in I, XVII). He was, above all, one of the few thinkers of his time to have made a close study of Plotinus (see II, 235-240), whose *Enneads* he had read in the Creuzer and Moser edition of 1835 (see the reference to this edition in II, 20n.). Lask’s understanding of Plotinus owed much to Eduard von Hartmann (II, 223n. and 237n.). It should also be noted that the motto to the original edition of *Die Logik der Philosophie* (Tübingen 1911) – regrettably omitted in the *Gesammelte Schriften* – is drawn from Plotinus.

of judgment, as Lask conceives it, is something that must be sharply distinguished from any thing of perception. For a sense involves of necessity distinction and multiplicity, where things present themselves in every case in unitary fashion. In order to raise the thing to the level of the judgment, the subject must rework and reshape it – which will mean that cognition can relate to the thing as such only in an indirect way. The thing in its condition of undisturbed oppositionlessness remains, it is true, the only standard by which to evaluate the judgment with respect to its adequacy and correctness. But the judgment itself refers directly only to certain fragments of sense carved out of the full original datum. The world of judgment-sense and truth, then, is a collection of ‘imitations holding a secondary position’. It is cut apart from the plain world of real things by what Lask calls a ‘chasm of artificiality and imagery’ (II, 352f.).

This implies that cognition is a kind of violence exerted upon the given. It breaks up the thing encountered, putting it beyond the reach of immediate ‘dedication’. From this, however, it follows that the world of meaning results from a mutilation of the contents of immediate experience. Consciousness in its active phase is accordingly by no means truly productive or creative, but rather destructive. ‘It is not the intact objects which become the ‘matter’ for the ‘form’ of judgment; what enters into the judgment is only their dismembered and isolated elements’ (II, 375). This is to reverse all Platonizing views of cognition, i.e. of the general scheme of an ideality preceding and somehow serving as the standard for reality. In a way similar to British empiricism, the realm of ‘ideas’ for Lask is secondary and derivative; it rests on something comparable to Humean ‘impressions’. But the copies and pictures are not exact renderings of the original thing. They result, rather, from its dispersion into a myriad of fragments of sense or meaning which can never be combined in a way which would reconstitute the unity of the thing. The spontaneity of consciousness so important for Kant consists only in making us irretrievably lose the freshness and vivacity of perception. And the will to cognition is therefore irrevocably ‘a negative faculty of subjectivity’ (II, 418), a faculty which leads to an atomization of the original object into isolated bits and pieces.

4. Cognition and Life⁵⁶

The acts discussed thus far were all of the theoretical sort, and in them there became constituted theoretical objects – objects of judgment and cognition. The theoretical

56. The literature on Lask deals in the main either with his logical works or with his philosophy of law. The notion of life, though central in his posthumous writings, has not thus far been treated. This is all the more regrettable as this idea (with its Diltheyan ring) seems to furnish the framework for an adequate understanding also of Lask’s early works. It is therefore a real loss that Lask could not work out his paper on “Contemplation and Life” (mentioned by Herrigel in his “Vorwort” in I, XX). In what follows, however, only a few details will be selected for the purposes of a comparison with Husserl.

process, as Lask conceives it, is set in motion by a will to control and dominate the world; yet its first achievement is a detached looking at things and an inhibition of the drive to manipulate them. This is not as paradoxical as might at first appear. For a dispassionate investigation of the objective nature and properties of things will in the long run facilitate our control and dominion over them. In his later thinking, however, Lask came to see this theoretical attitude as something set apart from our ordinary modes of existence. With Husserl, he saw that it could be characterized most effectively as the way in which an impartial and uninvolved spectator would behave towards the world. Pure theory is ‘contemplation’ (Lask) or ‘meditation’ (Husserl), and is just one of a host of ways in which a subject may legitimately function and express himself. It is in this very power to shape itself and to choose its own actualizations that conscious life consists. Now life in general is the performance of acts not only with regard to, but also in interaction with, things. Theoretical behaviour, then, is of a very peculiar type in that it at least temporarily suspends this interaction. Its function is therefore comparable to that of a pause in a piece of music. Theory may be said to be action postponed (or for that reason anticipated); it is life presently repressing itself. It is therefore a way in which the life itself may be ‘crowded out of life’ [*aus dem Leben abgedrängt*] (III, 219).

The objects of the theorizing attitude are as it were stripped of their momentum and weight; they lose their active powers, their relevance for life. ‘The living subjectivity establishes itself as a contemplative subjectivity, and thereby creates a region of shadows, an impersonal region of objects’ (III, 179). Plato’s ‘true world’, the world of ideas, is thus unveiled once more as a Homeric realm of the dead. It is an artefact, and its phenomena are but phantoms. The world of objectivity is ‘an artificially floating region’ (III, 231), filled with ‘artificial formations which themselves are not alive’ (III, 228). This world is in fact a netherworld, a relic and faint memory of our original life.

The world in which real life is experienced ‘is never pure nature’ (III, 241), i.e. nature as objectified in natural science. Nature as experienced is rather a totality of things in processes of interaction. Accordingly, any subject which would be the counterpart of a world reduced to pure nature could be nothing better than a reduced subject, an eye out of any connection with a hand, a ghastly Cartesian thinking being ungraspable in, and therefore absent from, the world of everyday experience. This subjectivity is ‘constituted’ out of the living subject in an exclusively negative way. It is brought about not by specific acts or actions, but precisely through an abstention therefrom. It results from a ‘fall out of the fullness of life’ (III, 232).

Much as this may at first sight sound anti-theoretical and even anti-scientific, it has nevertheless some interesting parallels in Husserl, who of course unwaveringly propagated the ideal of strict science (an ideal which, as he thought, was to be fulfilled only via his ‘phenomenology’). For Husserl, too, the exercise of scientific reason presupposes a radical inhibition of the natural life-process, an *epoché* with regard to all those lazy positings of the world of the natural attitude. The subjectivity

which is reached by this device is the ‘residue’ of an elimination of all functions which refer to this natural world or are performed within it.⁵⁷ This stage Husserl reaches already in *Ideas I*. It is only much later in his career, in fact in the thirties, that Husserl also pays full attention to the other side of this coin, viz. to the complementary fact that for the very reasons just mentioned the whole business of cognition must have a ‘seat in life’ from whence it is undertaken and sustained.⁵⁸ This holds for theoretical cognition both in its ‘naive’ form, which leads to science as normally conceived, and also in its radicalized version which leads to phenomenology.⁵⁹ Human life as such is practical, Husserl comes to realize,⁶⁰ and one of the means by which it puts itself into practice is the theoretical attitude which yields objective science.

As in Lask, so also in Husserl, theorizing activity is a special way in which human life shapes itself. It is part of the historical development of man, and both thinkers consider ‘theoretical practice to be something peculiar and historically late’.⁶¹ Its success is due, in part at least, to its deliberately overlooking and ignoring certain aspects of the everyday world. Theory, as Lask conceives it, springs from the will to give up the attitude of ‘dedication’ in favour of that of control over an ‘emptied’ or depleted universe. According to Husserl, this process was set in train with Galileo’s conception of an idealized nature in which the qualities of experience could be mathematicized.⁶² In a comparable way Lask states that ‘the natural science of modern times, with its “nature” deprived of all mystique, was established after the time of the Renaissance’ (III, 242).⁶³ Moreover, both Husserl and Lask are convinced that the object of natural science is not a world of

57. *Ideas I*, § 53 (*Husserliana* III/1, 68). Husserl’s considerations in *Ideas I* leading up to this result, start explicitly from what he calls our ‘natural life’ (*ibid.*, 56).

58. Manfred Sommer, *Lebenswelt und Zeitbewußtsein*, Frankfurt am Main 1990, 20 correctly underlines the fact that the later Husserl’s turn to the *Lebenswelt* in fact takes up one of the earliest themes of his thought, present as early as 1893.

59. The fact that transcendental reflection upon natural life in its totality is just one minor and peripheral event in the network of activities which together make up this natural life, leads to intricate speculations in Husserl’s later thought. For a perceptive study of these problems see Ronald Bruzina, “The Enworlding (*Verweltlichung*) of Transcendental Phenomenological Reflection”, *Husserl Studies* 3 (1986), 3-29.

60. *Husserliana* VI, 467 (MS of 1936).

61. *Ibid.*, 113.

62. See *ibid.*, 20-60.

63. Lask took over the notion of the ‘disenchanted world’ from the article “Über einige Kategorien der verstehenden Soziologie”, *Logos* 4 (1913), 258, of his Heidelberg colleague Max Weber.

theoretical entities which would form the canvas underlying and supporting the variegated world of experience. Rather, science bears upon an emptied world, a world from which life has been withdrawn. A certain will to superficiality and shallowness – which in Husserl’s view becomes manifest in the exclusion from theoretical science of all questions about the value and significance of life⁶⁴ – is part and parcel of the project of attaining objectively valid knowledge.

Theory comes into being where life has grown numb. A paralyzed gaze brings forth a ‘castrated and *blasé* sort of knowing’ (III, 240). It is clear that this Laskian diagnosis seems to imply an important shortfall in his own philosophy. For how, and in the name of what, could one devise a coherent theoretical argument to the effect that cognition would be nothing but the pale copy of life? Would not such an argument fall prey to its very success? It is tempting to avoid this pitfall along Heideggerian lines, i.e. by imputing to science the devastating effects of objectivism (and its various technological progeny), while reserving for philosophy questions about the sense of *Sein* and *Dasein*. But unlike Heidegger (and, indeed, the later Husserl), Lask doubts whether the redemption of mankind from spectres it has itself invoked is part of the historical mission of philosophy. If philosophical thought is to be coherent and meaningful at all, it has no choice but to be scientific, so that in this respect it in no way rises above the other sciences. Natural science and systematic philosophy are equally ‘the most remote from life’ (III, 286).⁶⁵ Already Plato’s philosophy could become established only through a ‘break with ordinary consciousness’ (III, 4). And one may safely add that this still holds for Husserl’s ‘transcendental phenomenology’.

Is, then, the philosopher’s reflection upon theoretical activity to be unmasked as a kind of shadow-boxing? For an answer to this question, Lask turns once more to the already established fact that all cognition proceeds from life.⁶⁶ Life is the pre-given horizon which no cognition can ever transcend. Even a life that is ‘fixed’ (Lask) or ‘parenthesized’ (Husserl) is still, for all that, a life. Theory is, to be sure, a way of ‘merely picturing the world’. But one must realize that ‘the mirror is indeed part of that real process’ which it mirrors (III, 187). Objective cognition is itself an activity, and as such interferes with the world; but in contradistinction to all other

64. See *Husserliana* VI, 4.

65. Already Fichte, the subject of Lask’s first major study, had remarked: ‘To live is, properly speaking, not to philosophize; to philosophize is, properly speaking, not to live’ (*Rückerinnerungen, Antworten, Fragen*, No. 8). This Fichtean factor pervades Lask’s philosophy from its inception to its mature phase. The third chapter of Lask’s Ph.D. thesis on Fichte is entitled “Philosophy and Life” (I, 160ff.), and the theme of the ‘opposition between life and cognition’ (II, 87), and therefore of the irrationality of ‘fact’, is present also in Lask’s *The Logic of Philosophy*. Fichte’s influence upon Lask has however not thus far been investigated.

66. See, e.g., *Husserliana* III/2, 640: ‘Prior to all objectivation there exists already a life, and objectivation itself is a new form of pure life.’

types of practice it ‘leaves the universe as it is’ (III, 185); it is the sustained effort to inhibit the spontaneous and unreflective course of life. Science, now, is the result of simply performing actions of this exceptional, contemplative sort; the peculiar task of philosophy, on the other hand, is to elucidate the roots of the scientist’s activity in human practice in general. Philosophy thus mediates between life as the specific activity of the scientist, barring the way to straightforward practice, and life *qua* human experience as such.

This side of Lask’s philosophy, too, has some affinity with Husserl’s thought, since for Husserl it is the job of First Philosophy (as he calls it) to ground all sciences in that common soil which is subjective life. But when it comes to determining the nature of this ‘life’, Lask and Husserl differ sharply. In Husserl, it consists in the ‘self-actualization’ of a transcendental subjectivity: that the latter becomes worldly is just one aspect of its immanent ‘unfolding’.⁶⁷ In Lask, on the contrary, mundane life is the ultimate horizon in which cognitive as well as practical life is forever enmeshed.⁶⁸ Cognition may focus either upon part of what presents itself in the world of life – and then we deal with science – or else upon life and the life-world in its totality, which is the philosopher’s affair. It is in this idea of the disclosedness and transparency of life to itself that there consists the idealist strain in Lask’s philosophy. But there is in practice no way to transcend this life, either cognitively or otherwise – a thesis which characterizes his realism.

According to Lask, philosophy had from its very beginnings in Plato’s time advocated a two worlds theory. In his own early writings Lask had to some extent still accepted this traditional dual scheme, though he toned it down by claiming no more than a two *elements* theory concerning being and validity (or matter and form). Nevertheless, as he later puts it, ‘the former type of my philosophy was divisive, too’ (III, 283). In his later thought, however, Lask probed into the common fundament of sensorily given matter and logical or judgmental form, thus arriving at the processes of interaction and interwovenness of the subject and its world which in their totality constitute life. Lask’s self-criticism implies in fact a critique of philosophical reason in general as it had developed out of Plato. And it therefore applies also to that specific version of the two worlds scheme which is present in

67. S. G. Crowell (“Husserl, Lask and the Idea of Transcendental Logic”, 77) criticizes Lask’s objectivism for leaving the ‘concept of the (transcendent) object’ unclarified, pointing instead to Husserl’s attempt to understand the transcendence of the object in terms of the ‘sphere of transcendental “immanence”’ (*ibid.*, 82). We, however, would prefer to criticize precisely the unclarified notion of immanence (and in this respect Crowell’s own use of inverted commas are significant). Crowell claims that such a ‘reduction to the sphere of immanence, to transcendental subjectivity in Husserl’s sense’ would ‘in no way “bracket” the object itself’. Yet it is highly revealing that Crowell is left, in the end, not with the object itself but with no more than an ‘object as meaning’ (*ibid.*, 84)) where he himself has gone out of his way to show that the sphere of meaning is by no means identical to the sphere of transcendent objects.

68. This calls to mind once more a basic tenet of Dilthey’s thought.

Husserl's thinking. Transcendental phenomenology indeed asserts the existence of an 'abyss of sense' between consciousness and reality.⁶⁹ This conception could, when rigorously pursued, lead in the extreme case to the idea of a reality devoid of all sense and intelligibility, and correspondingly to that of a sense-bestowing subjectivity entirely out of contact with the world of reality. A phenomenological ontology along Sartrean lines could be interpreted as coming close to a view of this sort, which is not completely alien to Husserl's own. In Lask, on the other hand, such stories are given no chance to take a hold. On the one hand 'a purely atheoretical behaviour is', as he affirms, 'but an abstract notion' (II, 186), yet the idea of a purely theoretical subjectivity is for the same reasons an abstraction too. On the other hand, a life not illuminated by some type of cognition would be as contradictory as is a cognition setting out from principles which are intrinsically alien to life. The world of things is neither completely opaque, nor can it borrow its light from some 'place beyond heaven' (as Plato supposed). The multifaceted process of a psychic subject's behaviour in its world is not only the starting-point of cognition and philosophy, it is also the last word.

'Essential to philosophy is only its cognitive character; all the rest it shares with the sphere of life' (II, 199). The elucidation of this life is the goal of philosophy as Lask conceives it in his later thought. Husserl's phenomenology of perception and of the life-world no doubt goes some way towards living up to this goal, but it is fortunately not the job of this paper to determine precisely how far it goes.

69. *Husserliana* III/1, 105.