

Husserl's Phenomenological Reduction: A Critique of Man's Epistemic Naivety

Anokwuru, Christian Uche, PhD | Kenneth Oduma Chiabuotu Odanwu, PhD

¹Abia State Polytechnic, Aba.

²Candidate. Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike Ebonyi.

Received 11-07-2025

Revised 29-07-2025

Accepted 04-08-2025

Published 06-08-2025



Copyright: ©2025 The Authors. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Abstracts:

All through the ages from antiquity to the contemporary period, the search for knowledge and its certainty has been the concern of many individuals. Both Scientists, Philosophers, Anthropologists, etc have been concerned with this task, yet, the search is still on till now as it has proven to be a very problematic one. The problematic nature of knowledge and its certainty is evident in the various and contrasting positions individuals have taken as the basis for knowledge. Examples abound: For Pythagoras, it is mathematical axioms; for St. Augustine, it is faith; for Descartes, it is Mathesis Universalis; for Leibniz, it is Logic; for Carnap, it is protocol statement; for Russell and Ayer, it is sense data while for C. L. Lewis, it is terminating judgment. In an attempt to contribute his quota to the search for knowledge and its certainty and as well put an end to the various theories and conflicting articulations in philosophy, Husserl posited his phenomenology as an unimpeachable rationalistic basis for not only epistemology but the whole of philosophy. This idea emanates from his deep conviction that there exist forgetfulness on the parts of philosophers before him to answer the disputing questions of knowledge. Hence, they added more complications on the issue thereby constituting what he referred to as epistemic naivety. Using both expository and evaluative method of qualitative research design, this paper aims to understand: (1) The success of Husserl's phenomenology in removing man's prejudices in the way he claims to know the world and suspend his easy answers to fundamental questions (2) How it laid a new foundation for philosophy in the sense of strict science (3) How it placed philosophy on a firm basis to overcome all presumptions transcending to that which cannot be doubted. The discovery is that Husserl's philosophy can be rightly called a deconstructive-constructive-democratic Philosophy. This is because just like democratic principles frowns at the imposition of someone else's will on another, or in practice, the imposition of the will of the monarch or the oligarch on the majority of the masses, the idea of "imposition" is something that is anti-phenomenology. In other words, the Phenomena in the Phenomenological attitude of patience forbearance must be allowed to show themselves as they are without "imposition" of any form of preconceptions, presuppositions, assumptions, prejudices or bias. It is only when this is done that apodeictic knowledge can be achieved. However, this paper claims that in practice, Husserl's phenomenological approach seem to be impossible and therefore renders his attempt at certainty of knowledge problematic. Hence, this paper is of the view that certitude or certainty in knowledge or having a conclusive knowledge remains problematic, yet, it is not a problem as such but a way of doing Philosophy and advancing knowledge. Any attempt at having a conclusive knowledge in the sense that Husserl think of it will remain an exercise in futility since it would amount to the death of epistemology.

Keywords: Phenomeno, Phenomenology, Epistemic, Naivety.

Introduction:

For the purpose of rational convenience, there is a need to start this paper with explication of some of the terms that will feature prominently in the discussions to follow. After all, didn't Ludwig Wittgenstein with other linguistic philosophers opine that the task of philosophy is the logical clarification of terms?

Phenomenology as a term has received divergent meanings from philosophers and scholars in various schools of thought. Each person or group of persons has defined it from a perspective suitable to their philosophical systems or trends of thought. Consequently, arriving at a generally acceptable meaning and application of the term has proved to be difficult. However, phenomenology from its etymology is derived from the combination of the words: phenomenon and logos. Phenomenon itself is derived from the Greek verb 'phainesthai' which means that which show itself – (das sichzeigende) or that which makes itself manifest (das offenbare). Phenomena are the totality of what can be brought to light, what in the original Greek was simply identified with entities (das seinda). Phenomenon, that which shows itself in the manner in which it is, is to be distinguished from appearance (Erscheinung). Phenomena are not simply appearance for appearance is always referential to or of that which shows itself. It is therefore pertinent to know that from the distinction above, phenomenon can have varied meanings. This has also affected its meaning and application by philosophers and scientists alike. Nonetheless, for the purpose of this work, phenomenon shall be adopted as that which shows itself in the manner in which it is or simply as something that is shown, or revealed, or manifest in experience.

On the other hand, 'Logos' means science, word, speech, reason etc. In Husserl, 'Logos' means science or study. The combination of these two words phenomenon and logos results in phenomenology, which literally implies: the science of the manifest or of that which shows itself in itself. In other words, phenomenology has

been used in modern Philosophy as "the subject matter of the science of phenomena."¹

Husserl had criticized the philosophies before him for what he termed the forgetfulness of the philosophies to go back to the root. That is, the inability to allow things reveal, appear or show themselves in themselves. This is as a result of imposition of preconception, presupposition, presumptions, prejudice and bias emanating from lack of phenomenological attitude of patient forbearance to allow things appear as they are in themselves. This attitude of imposition of presuppositions and preconceptions on the object of appearance thereby concealing them for what they are in themselves is what Husserl abhors which lead to his phenomenology that can best be described as a deconstructive-constructive-democratic philosophy.

Epistemic Naivety:

This paper shall start to examine the expression 'epistemic naivety' by first taking a hard look into the words from which it was coined: 'episteme' and naïve(ty).

On one hand, 'Episteme' is a Greek word which means knowledge. It refers to knowledge that is universal, certain and true. Therefore, epistemic from its Greek derivative 'episteme' means universal indubitable knowledge. On the other hand, naivety is a derivative of naive. Naive according to Long Man Dictionary of Contemporary English means, "Having or showing no experience, believing what anyone says... having almost no knowledge or experience."²

Epistemic naivety then would literally mean invalid knowledge, common knowledge, etc. It could be said to be the various information and spontaneous affirmation, including unquestioned assumptions about things which we call knowledge. It could as well be seen as idols of human reason in Bacon's terminology. Of course, according to Bacon, four kinds of idols influence and distort man's interpretation of experience, namely: the idol of the tribe, the idol of the cave, the idol of the market place and the idol of the

theater. These idols of human reason, okogbuo J. O, in his book *Idols of the Human Reason and Fallacy in Logic*, described as:

The whims, false images, phantoms or distortions which wrap and twist the mind. They captivate and turn the focus of reason away from objectivity and the rational process. They are the opium that take the reason prisoner and benumb it to truth or knowledge."³

Having remarked the above, it is pertinent at this juncture to state that this paper aims to bring to limelight the reason for Husserl's deconstruction of Philosophical theories before him to construct a new theory - phenomenology, which for him would result in true knowledge free from bias, prejudice, idols and/or assumptions.

Husserl's Phenomenology as a Rigorous Science

Husserl argues that phenomenology is the first and the only genuine Philosophy, the first and the only rigorous science. This is because, the general theory of phenomenology looks for the things in themselves. It goes back to the root of things and accepts nothing unexamined.

For Husserl, it is only that which is free or presuppositionless and shows itself to consciousness that is real and proper object of knowledge. He deems pure consciousness as necessary and absolute, and identified pure consciousness with intelligibility. For a thing to be, it must be constituted in consciousness, and according to Husserl, to know is to be aware of something, thus, what is, is only that constituted in consciousness which is absolute. It implies then that the objects of knowledge are absolute and necessary. In other words, for Husserl, consciousness is the irrevocable starting point of any genuine Philosophical enquiry. In speaking of consciousness, Husserl emphasizes intentionality, because for him, "To have meaning is a cardinal of the content or feature of consciousness" The doctrine of intentionality sees consciousness as directional. In the words of Husserl, "the stream of consciousness is permeated by the fact that consciousness relates itself to object."⁴ obviously,

consciousness is always consciousness of something and this "something" is what the subject "intends." The implication of this is that intentionality bestows autonomy and recognizes **the self** as the source of meaning.

For the earlier Philosophies criticized by Husserl to arrive at indubitable and presuppositionless knowledge, they must fulfil the demands of Husserl's rigorous science. That is, his phenomenology. Intuition of essence, consciousness, intentionality, pure consciousness and transcendental subjectivity are the basic themes of Husserl's phenomenology as a rigorous science, without which no Philosophical view can qualify to be a 'philosophy,' in Husserl's perspective.

Husserl's Critique of Earlier Philosophies:

Husserl's critique of earlier Philosophies grew out of his deep conviction that "western culture has lost its direction and purpose."⁵ His mood is reflected in the title of his last major philosophical work, *Philosophy and Crisis of European Man*. Commenting on this crisis, Stumpf said, "The crisis consists of Philosophy's departure from its true goal which is to... develop the unique broad range capacities of human reason."⁶

Similarly, in the words of Husserl, the crisis is described as "the seeming collapse of rationalism."⁷ It is this collapse that resulted in Husserl's phenomenology as a remedy. Thus, Sokolowski writes, "Husserl's aim is to establish Philosophy as the radical clarification of knowledge. He wants to remove presuppositions and assumptions..."⁸ Hence, as long as presumptions are still present, we do not have true science or knowledge, thus, man will continue to wallow in ignorance of naturalism, psychologism, empiricism, idealism etc. Therefore, "Phenomenology is to correct this defect, this spiritual distress of our time."⁹ Consequently, David M. L., opine, "Phenomenology, the only rigorous (apodictic) science, offers itself as the one and only road to freedom, to spiritual and social autonomy."¹⁰ David was of the view that the apodictic ground which Phenomenological

critique finally reaches was epistemically first, and expressed in terms of first principles, though it was last in being discovered, the outcome was radical reflection. Husserl's point was that if there were nothing as apodeicticity, then, all talk of a truth valid in itself and all striving for truth would have lost its sense.

Agreed that knowledge is the delight of man, it is the aim of Husserl that man should know nothing but the truth. And for this truth to be achieved and known, all the earlier Philosophies which have not passed through the rigorous examination of his Phenomenology will be dethroned or give way for the enthronement of his rigorous science - Phenomenology, from where the long desired truth will be achieved. On this, David writes:

Rational man, as Husserl interprets him bears a responsibility for full and absolute truth...so long as man is under the sway of prejudice and presupposition and does not understand the fundamental nature of his surrounding world from the standpoint of absolute consciousness."¹¹

It is this latter part of the above quotation that constitutes in Husserl's view, man's epistemic naivety, which if not cleared, the true nature of man's knowledge can never be realized. With this in mind, he launched a critique of the earlier Philosophies which he found guilty of prejudices and presuppositions.

At this point, this paper shall examine Husserl's critique of these earlier Philosophies limiting it to: Idealism of Descartes, Kant's Philosophy of Noumena and Phenomena, Naturalism, Empiricism and Rationalism.

Idealism of Descartes:

Husserl applauded Descartes for his methodic doubt as the greatest model of radical return to what is given beyond the shadow of doubt. Yet, he made it clear that his own reduction was not to be interpreted as Cartesian doubt which denies experimentally or temporarily the existence of things reduced. For Husserl, "the primary purpose of all reduction is to prepare us for a critical stock-taking of what is indubitably given before our interpreting beliefs rush in."¹² Again, for Husserl

as well as Descartes, the sources of all knowledge is the ego. But while for Descartes the ego becomes the first axiom in logical sequence which enables him to deduce as mathematics, a series of conclusion about reality, Husserl sees the ego simply as the matrix of experience. In other words, in perception while Descartes would say, "cogito ergo sum" ("I think, therefore, I am") Husserl would say, "ego cogito cogitatum." This, G. O. Ozumba, as quoted by J. N. Agbo, explains further, "To think your thought, you must remove yourself from yourself, keep a distance, and then think objectively and reflexively of your thought. This distanced self - the transcendental ego which stands outside correlation and sees clearly the essence of Phenomena."¹³ It is consciousness that differentiates and characterizes things in the world. Objectivity is meaningful only on the basis of subjectivity, and vice-versa. In line with this, Stumpf writes, "Husserl puts primary emphasis upon experience instead of logic. His concern is to discover and describe the given in experience as it is presented in the pure form and found as immediate data of consciousness."¹⁴ Husserl, therefore, criticizes Descartes for moving beyond the conscious self, the ego, to the notion of extended substance, a body is high ties the subject to an objective reality thereby creating the mind body dualism. It is on this note that *Encyclopedia Britannica* holds that, "Husserl interpreted the Philosophy of Rene Descartes...as the point at which the split into two research direction physicalist objectivism and transcendental subjectivism came about."¹⁵

Contrarily, Husserl believed that pure subjectivity accurately describes the actual facts of human experience. He argued that Phenomenology must overcome the split and thus help man to live according to the demands of reason, in view of the fact that reason is a typical characteristics of man. Mankind in his view therefore, finds itself again through Phenomenology.

Husserl therefore, believe that a more accurate description of experience is expressed in the three terms: "ego, cogito, cogitatum" as opposed to Descartes "ego cogito." Stumpf captures it thus,

"whereas Descartes emphasized the "I think." Husserl makes the point to "I think something." is the typical human experience."¹⁶ Husserl's analysis according to Stumpf, rests to a significant degree upon the relation he saw between consciousness, thinking, the thing thought including element of intentionality which creates the Phenomena of experience.

More so, Husserl faulted Descartes for subjecting to doubt, everything, including all Phenomena - except his thinking self.

In contradistinction however, Husserl bracketed all Phenomena only to look upon them, without judging whether they are rendering any opinions, judgments or valuations about the world. It is through the 'phenomenological epoche,' this standing back from the Phenomena of experience, this ridding the mind of all presumptions and prejudices that he was able to discover himself as the ego, the life of consciousness, in which and through which the objective world in its entirety exists.

Husserl argued in his *Paris Lectures*, that the world cannot be what it is, or what one is aware of. Hence, it is impossible to live, experience, think, value and act in any world which does not in some sense in me, derives its meaning and truth from me. Thus, he held that we must not make assertion about that which we do not ourselves see.

Consequent upon these facts, Husserl rejects those portions of Descartes Philosophy which go beyond the immediate phenomenal realm or in Husserl's terminology, the transcendental realm. That is the world of experience.

Uwalaka, J. noted in his *unpublished monograph*, that Husserl regretted that Descartes did not use his methodic doubt appropriately in order to arrive at pure data required for a critique of knowledge as to find the essence of things. He above all, accused Descartes of misconceived the problem of knowledge.

Kantian Philosophical Dualism:

Kant's distinction between the Phenomenal and noumenal is unacceptable to Husserl

notwithstanding the many similarities between his and Kant's Philosophies. Husserl round the entire essential content of reality in Phenomena themselves. Thus, he argues, "There will be no need even to speak of things in themselves since what things are is adequately revealed in consciousness."¹⁷ So, to detach the subject or consciousness by showing that one could not possibly apprehend anything as existing unless he first of all exist as was popularized by Kant, for Husserl, means that Kant steps in the wrong direction. On Husserl's contradistinction with Kant, Spiegelberg writes, "Husserl's interpretation of the active synthesis of empirical data does not... involve him in the Kantian dualism of appearance and thing in itself which results from the question of how we can justify our right to predicate our apriori conceptions of the empirical world."¹⁸

The unity of consciousness in Kant is achieved simultaneously with that of the world. Husserl thus accuses Kant's Philosophy of being worldly because according to Merleau-ponty, it makes use of our relation to the world, which is the motive force of the transcendental deduction, and makes the world immanent in the subject, instead of being filled with wonder at it and conceiving the subject as the process of transcendence towards the world.

Naturalism, Natural Science, Science:

Husserl had issues with naturalism because of its attempts to apply the methods of natural sciences to all other domains of knowledge, including the realm of consciousness, thus, reason becomes naturalized. Husserl would rather say that what a Philosopher must examine is the relationship between consciousness and being, and in doing so, he must realize that from the standpoint of epistemology, being is accessible to him only as a correlate of conscious acts. He must thus pay careful attention to what occurs in these acts. This can be done only by a science that tries to understand the very essence of consciousness; and this is the task that Phenomenology has set for itself.

Equally, Husserl argues that there are presumptions and assumptions on natural science and science itself. Thus, as long as these are still present, we do not have true science or knowledge. Further, he maintains that the darkness covering the foundations of empirical science is an indication that they are not fully rationalized. Thus, Sokolowski maintains that, "Husserl's... Phenomenology is...the first Philosophy, the ultimate field of enquiry to which all knowledge must appeal to acquire final rationalization."¹⁹ Husserl thus contend that natural science blocks our vision to reality, and therefore, he complains that, "...the methodic instruments of the natural science are altogether unsuitable for the explication of genuine foundation of all knowledge."²⁰ In support of Husserl's views, Sokolowski writes, "Not until we understand that natural science covers the world with a 'cloak of ideas' to introduce Husserl's felicitous expression, we can recognize the necessity for Phenomenological inquiry into the primordial origins in experience of the abstract, objectified world interpreted by science."²¹

Further, Husserl contend that science had wallowed into an unphilosophical study of mere facts as exemplified by positivistic science. Thus, science had lost its significance for man's life as a whole and for his purpose in particular. Secondly, he holds that 'naturalism' had rendered sciences incapable of coping with the problem of absolute truth and validity. Meanwhile, the incapacity and unwillingness of science to face problems of value and meaning because of its confinement to mere positive facts had seem to Husserl as the very root of the crisis of science and of mankind itself.

Husserl considered his Phenomenology as the only remedy to this fallen state of science just as the reduction he carried out in the naturalistic point of view opens the way to pure subjectivity free from all contamination introduced by any causal relation between psychic facts and stimuli. "By subjecting the natural point of view to reduction, Husserl succeeded also in by-passing the classical epistemological problem."²²

Ultimately, Husserl's Phenomenology becomes the role model, the apodictic science that gives the indubitable and certain knowledge. However, Phenomenology does not intend to undermine the exact science, rather, it grounds and illuminates them. David Michael Levin adds that it exposes the presumptions and setting the scope of their concept. He argues that the demand for a critique of this kind of implicit since for Husserl all natural evidence and every evidence has a problematic title except for Phenomenological evidence which has clarified itself and had demonstrated its ultimacy.

Materialism/Realism:

Husserl's attack on these views is based on the fact that they tried to resolve the subject-object dualism by trying to subordinate consciousness to the pre-established realities of the external world. According to Uwalaka, the error of these positions is that they denied or failed to recognize the intentional rapport between consciousness and the world which Husserl believed alone provides man with the immediate evidence of our life experiences which only can serve as presuppositionless basis of a genuinely Philosophical science which for him is the scientific ideal of knowledge with the rigorous foundation.

Intuition of Essences:

Intuition could mean direct insight into or immediate apprehension. Husserl gave privileged position to intuition for the fact that intuition is that act in which a person grasps something immediately in its bodily presence and that it is a primordially given upon which all of the rest is to be found.

There are divergent views of intuition by many Philosophers. Descartes expresses it thus:

By intuition I understand not the fluctuating testimony of the senses, nor the misleading judgment that proceeds from the blundering construction of imagination but by conception which an unclouded and attentive mind gives us so readily and distinctly that we are wholly free from doubt about that which we understand.²³

For him intuition is the activity of the reason alone. Hence, the famous 'Cogito ergo sum' is gotten through intuition. In affirmation to this, he said that when I say, 'I think therefore, I exist,' it is really the recognition of something as self evidence by the simple intuition of the mind.

Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, equally explained intuition as the only way through which our knowledge can relate immediately to objects. For him, intuition cannot come without objects being given to us in sensibility.

Though these views of intuition are varied, they agree that intuition gives certain knowledge. In contrast to rationalism that stresses conceptual reasoning at the expense of experience, Phenomenology insists on the intuitive foundation and verification of concept and especially, all apriori claims, thus, in man's intuition, conscious occurrences must be given immediately in order to avoid introducing at the same time certain interpretations. However, Husserl stresses that intuition must be understood as a refutation of any merely speculative approach to Philosophy. Above all, he defend that an intuition of essences that are given to essential vision as the individual object is given to individual vision. Thus, in the *Ideas*, Husserl presents, "Intuition of the essence...we (...) understand it - as a consciousness analogous to natural experience, to the apprehension of concrete existence..., and wherein an essence is objectively grasped as an individual in the experience of nature."²⁴

He was of the view that the essential intuition, which confers objectivity, rests on having an awareness of individual instances of the essence but not on their being experienced as empirical real, thus, "...to say that we know essence by intuition is to say negatively, that the truth or falsity of statements about essences is not dependent on the truth about empirical state...the appeal to intuition makes another positive epistemological feature."²⁵ Moreover, Husserl according to Uwalaka declares that we must go back to the primordial way of seeing things which are in our experiences, the original way in which our consciousness have knowledge and meaning

of things. Philosophical attention must be redirected to the primordial ways we perceive the world, prior to the reifying prejudices of the natural attitude, i.e. our natural attitude to things by which we take the world for granted, believing that things are as they seem to appear to us, as outside us by which we see the world as in me and outside of me, immanent and transcendent.

These views, for Husserl, are contra to primordial way as lived experience. So, knowledge must be discovered at its origin by examining how the world first appear to human consciousness for one cannot leave his own consciousness and go back to the objects as they are in the outside world. Going beyond the natural attitude in order to go to the experience of that which is primal or primordial and original, Husserl calls reduction or going back to things in themselves.

Structure of Consciousness and Intentionality:

Consciousness and intentionality are two terms that go together. For instance, for Husserl, all consciousness is intentional and all consciousness is consciousness of something not of nothing.

The term consciousness comes from the Latin 'Consci-Us' meaning knowing with others. This etymological meaning of consciousness does not differ greatly from its conceptual significance. It implies knowing as synonymous with awareness in general and self-awareness in particular. In consciousness, one becomes aware of oneself both as an object and as a subject.

However, consciousness in the Husserlian sense, has an intentional quality. This means that to be conscious or aware of something, one must purposefully consider the object of consciousness. The reason behind this purposeful consideration of the object of consciousness is because as Heidegger puts it:

It is something that lies hidden in contrast to that which shows itself. But at the same time, it is something that belongs to what shows itself and belongs to it so essentially as to constitute its meaning and ground. But that which remains hidden or which shows itself only in disguise but which constitute their ground, is the being of

entities. This can be so covered up that it becomes forgotten and no question asked about it.²⁶

This, I think, is the reason Phenomenological attitude consist in intentional patient forbearance. Accordingly, Heidegger asserts, "The achievement of Phenomenological access to the entities we encounter consists in thrusting aside our interpretative tendencies which keep thrusting themselves upon us and running along with us, and which conceal those entities themselves as encountered of their own accord."²⁷

It is deducible from the above that it is the attitude of forbearance that will help one to suspend judgment as the object of consciousness reveal itself in profiles.

Bearing in mind the nature of the object of consciousness and its mode, Husserl views intentionality as directedness to an object, a target at which intentional awareness aims. Hence, for him, "Intentionality is the structure of consciousness itself and is also the fundamental category of being."²⁸ Writing further, Husserl maintains that, "it is intentionality which characterizes consciousness in the pregnant sense of the term and justifies us describing the whole stream of consciousness as a unity of one consciousness."²⁹ The intentional structure of consciousness is verified in the formula, 'ego cogito cogitatum' showing that, to every cogito of the ego there always belong a consciousness of something. This intentional structure of consciousness could be described in this manner that to any act of consciousness is essentially that of something and as such has an objective and subjective sides: it is simply an operation. The element of consciousness refers to the subjective side and the element of 'something' relates to the objective, therefore, the essence of consciousness is intentionality. In other words:

Following Brentano, Husserl realized that intentionality was the distinctive mark of consciousness, and saw in it a concept capable of overcoming the mind-body dualism. The study of consciousness, therefore, maintains two sides: a conscious experience can be regarded as an

element in a stream of consciousness, but also as a representative of one aspect or "profile" of an object.³⁰

Elaborating on this, Uwalaka asserts that the act is consciousness then involves the very act itself and the intentional object. The relatedness between the act itself and the object is intentionality. However, Husserl called act of consciousness the act of intending - "noesis" and its correlative object, which is meant or intended - "noema" it is constituted as an object by 'noesis.'

Consequently, Uwalaka holds that, "it is because of this that the noema can be grasped and described in an immediate ideation or intuition of essence. Thus the structure of intentionality is the noetic-neomatic structure and through this we reach the essence."³¹

He explained that for Husserl, intentionality is the source which gives meaning to the knowing process. Human experience and meaning consist of reference to the intentional object. And Husserl observed that to intend is the same as the act of giving meaning.

At this point, the view of David M. L. on intentionality is noteworthy. For him, intentionality describe consciousness in its active grasp of its objectifications. These acts of intentionality are acts of meaning, the directed positing experience of objectivation, Husserl defines it as evidence. Evidence signifies the intentional achievement of the giving of things themselves. Put precisely, "It is the general form per-excellence of intentionality of the consciousness of something."³²

David further explained that a study of consciousness must be a Phenomenological study of diverse mode of evidence through which consciousness (as noesis) constitutes intention which is an objectivated sense (the noema), and strives toward the perfect articulation of this activity through intensified intuitive reflection.

It is pertinent to remark that Husserl endeavoured to recover Philosophy's true vocation as Phenomenology by showing how the two poles of objectivity and subjectivity which positive science

tends to segregate are in fact inseparable, each being contained by the other in primordial relation in intentional consciousness.

Pure Consciousness and Transcendental Subjectivity:

Pure consciousness is the apodictic certainty which is achieved only when those things which is not correlate of pure consciousness of essence are bracketed through transcendental reduction.

Transcendental reduction according to Ravel, is the process of complete reduction of uncovering all the layers of appearances and arriving at the pure consciousness of an individual knower or experience as the real starting point of Philosophy.

Consequently, after transcendental reduction, one is left with a new level of being i.e. pure consciousness of an ego and Husserl considered it as the starting point of Philosophy (subjectivity).

On the importance of his act of suspending himself from everything except pure consciousness, Husserl said, "It enables me to discover myself as the ego, the life of pure consciousness within which and through which the content of consciousness, the object of his world in their entirety exists."³³

In the *Ideas*, Husserl argued that consciousness considered in its "purity" must be reckoned as a self-contained system of being as a system of absolute Being, into which nothing can penetrate, and from which nothing can escape which has no spatio-temporal system, which cannot experience causality from anything nor exert causality upon anything. Hence, he opined, "...we direct the glance of apprehension and theoretical inquiry to pure consciousness in its own absolute Being. It is this which remains over as the Phenomenological residuum."³⁴

It is pertinent to note that, the cogito of Descartes according to Uwalaka was Husserl's point of departure to pure consciousness. However, Descartes 'Cogito' was purified in order to attain unconstitutional universal insight into things and essences. Thus, Descartes self 'Res-cogitans' (thinking thing) must itself be bracketed. This

bracketing definitely, yields pure consciousness being in general and the transcendental world in particular.

The pure consciousness for Husserl is grounded in transcendental ego and Hume referred to this consciousness as myself, showing an inward introspection, while Kant recognized it as transcendental self.

Worthy to note, according to Schneider, is that pure consciousness is a pure reference for intentionality. Significantly, Husserl attaches great importance to transcendental subjectivity. Thus, in his article in *Encyclopedia Britannica vol. V., 14th edition*, he saw transcendental subjectivity as "I myself," "we ourselves." Wherein, all the objective world, subjective world and indeed, all the world coupled with its contents is made for "us" and for "me."

For Uwalaka, transcendental subjectivity is a radical consciousness of the self, that is, self that has undergone the process of Phenomenological reduction, whose very being is to relate to objects. Consequently, Elliston said, "the pure subjectivity is called transcendental subjectivity because in it the being of everything which can be experienced in various ways, the transcendent in the widest sense, is constituted."³⁵

Furthermore, Uwalaka argued that to know is to know the world because the world is only in relation to subjectivity of transcendental consciousness. Just like Kant, it is in the transcendental subjectivity that necessity and universality are constituted.

These are the elements that present Husserl's Phenomenology as a rigorous science. Any Philosophy which is not in correspondence with them are as such not qualified for the term Philosophy. Consequently, for any 'Philosophical view' to qualify as Philosophy, it has to be purified in Husserl's rigorous science, that is, Phenomenology. This is made possible through his Phenomenological reductions.

Husserl's Method for Overcoming Epistemic Naivety:

Husserl borrowed his idea of method from the Cartesian legacy. According to *Chambers*

Dictionary, method is "a planned or orderly way of doing things."³⁶ In our context, it means that systematic way of arriving at pure knowledge or in Husserl's terminology, a way of achieving apodictic certainty for knowledge. This is in consonance with Descartes understanding of method, thus, "By method I understand (...) certain and easy rules such that anyone who observes them exactly will never take anything false to be true and without any waste of mental effort but by increasing his knowledge step by step will arrive at a true understanding of all these which do not surpass his capacity."³⁷ Husserl understood Descartes method as such and consequently employed it to form his idea of method or stages of overcoming epistemic naivety. Each of these stages make for a greater purity of knowledge each time they are applied. And, for him, he who applies his methods rigidly will obtain apodictic certitude.

These methods as this paper shall examine include: Phenomenological reduction and epoche, eidetic reduction, transcendental description and transcendental reduction.

To note is that Husserl's method should not be likened to the context of an empirical format used in the laboratory to arrive at a certain knowledge. It is neither the complete inductive method postulated by the classical empiricists nor the idea of the logical positivists. It is rather a reduction. That is, going back to the root. It is logical, intellectual and needs the power of reasoning, that is, it is a reasoned inquiry. It equally needs the pure glance of the ego to carry out. It is a method of meditation and as such, Husserl considered it Cartesian. However, he stated it clearly that his reduction was not to be interpreted as Cartesian doubt for its denial of the existence of things reduced.

The Phenomenological Reduction and Epoche:

By Phenomenological reduction, Husserl meant the suspension of all beliefs characteristics of natural attitude (*naturliche einstellung*). That is, the suspension of empirical and metaphysical presuppositions of the natural attitude that holds

that the world is there extra-mentally independent of consciousness such as Kant's things-in-themselves and everything else which is derived through scientific logical inference.

In his *Ideas*, Husserl explains Phenomenological reduction thus, "Phenomenological reductions are ways of reaching the starting point of serious Philosophy and as they must be thought out in conscious reflection they themselves belong properly to the beginning as is possible indeed only within the beginner as he reflects upon himself."³⁸

Husserl by this recognized the importance of reflective reasoning for a sound Philosophical beginning. He intends this method to make possible a radical form of the autonomy of knowledge. That is, a presuppositionless knowledge.

According to Spiegelberg, the basic goal of Phenomenology, for Husserl, "Always remains that of freeing the Phenomena from all non or trans-phenomenal ingredients, leaving us only with what is indubitably or absolutely given."³⁶

For Husserl, by excluding these things, we concentrate our attention on essences which we know through the act of 'seeing.' Intuition puts us in direct awareness with the objects as they appear in consciousness. In other words, the major goal of Phenomenology is to adopt an attitude of patience forbearance so as to allow the objects of experience reveal themselves as they are. This presuppositionless approach requires that the inquirer should not "impose" his cognitive idiosyncrasies on the objects of investigation. In the words of Unah, "Any Phenomenologist worth the name should cultivate the habit of patiently waiting for and disengaging personal interest in any descriptive analysis of experience."⁴⁰ It is this attitude that Husserl refers to as the "Phenomenological epoche. Epoche is the Greek word for "bracketing," called "angeklammert" in German. In the words of Husserl himself, "the method of Phenomenology consists in focusing on my part or all my experience, and then observing, analyzing, abstracting that experience by

removing myself from the immediate and lived engagement in it. I must observe the experience in question from a distance."⁴¹ This temporal suspension would help us lay aside our prejudices, ignorance, beliefs, etc so that we can address the objects of cognition disinterestedly. This is because, for Husserl, unless this is done, our natural standpoints cannot be transcended to the Phenomenological standpoint.

Husserl's epoche could be likened to Descartes radical return to indubitability but it does not doubt to deny everything as in Descartes' case. He never doubted the existence of the world like Descartes and the skeptics who deny it like sophists. Rather, the suspension (epoche) "bars him from using any judgment that concerns spatio-temporal existence."⁴² Hence, Husserl says:

...we put out of action the general thesis which belongs to essence of natural standpoint. We place in brackets whatever it includes respecting the nature of being: this entire natural world therefore which is continually "there for us" present to our hand, and will ever remain there, is a "fact world" even though it pleases us to put in bracket.⁴³

His adoption of this position stem from his conviction that to doubt reality is to take a position about it. Since he is unwilling to take any position about it, he just bracketed it. That is, to put it out of consideration. With this epoche, whatever is known is known as essential and necessary. Interestingly, most authors hold that the epoche permits a revelation of the primary dimension of consciousness in act by freeing it from all contamination by secondary components. It provides the possibility of describing intuitively the originative constitution of the things. They maintain that it is here that the positive aspect of reduction appears for the first time.

The Eidetic Reduction:

Though the Phenomenological reduction performs the positive task through which the mind is free from the servile attachment to 'literal' reality which we normally take for granted and now comes to know its own intentionality more intimately and more accurately, and being

becomes identical with its manifestation to consciousness. It also performs negative function. That is, as a condition for the knowledge of essence but not as a positive factor in grasping the essence as they are. Thus, Uwalaka says, "After the epoche our vision is not yet on the essence since the given particulars despite the fact that they are no longer meant as existence still confront us as particulars."⁴⁴ Consequent upon this, Husserl introduces his eidetic reduction. He explained that reduction from mere particular facts to general essences, which in accordance with the adoption of the platonic word 'eidōs' is eidetic reduction. Thus, he writes, "Wherein an attempt is made to understand the basic essence from or structure (eidōs) of the given thing in a reflective, selective manner, by not paying any attention to or taking any interest in particular detail of the thing under observation."⁴⁵

Essence is reflective and essential in eidetic reduction. Essence is distinguished from all that is accidental to it. By essence, we mean necessary and invariant feature of an object without which it could not truly be said to be what it is.

It was the view of Husserl that when presuppositions have been suspended, the pure glance is cast on things to discover their essences. He sees the essences as that which remains identical in all possible variations of that which is investigated. It is the thing in itself, just as for the scholastic from whom Husserl got the idea, though there are variations in their conception, application and approach of essence.

Husserl argues that phenomenology should have essence. That is, pure ideas. This is to be effected through epoche cum eidetic reduction. On this, Spiegelberg said, "All that can be safely asserted is that eidetic reduction is a step on the way to the purified phenomena as such, without such complications as are apt to arise from considering particular cases."⁴⁶

The Transcendental Reduction:

Husserl's method of arriving at indubitable or apodictic certainty or knowledge is a process. Hence, the movement from epoche through the

eidetic reduction, beget the transcendental reduction. Thus, the eidetic is further developed into what Husserl called transcendental Phenomenology. That is to say that the original eidetic reduction which reduces particular entitled to essences must be superseded by transcendental Phenomenological reduction, which is the detachment from all that does not correspond to consciousness.

With this, Husserl maintains that one is only left with a new level of being. That is, pure consciousness of an ego and this he considered as the starting point of Philosophy. On the importance of suspending himself from everything except his pure consciousness, he remarked, "...it enables me to discover myself as the ego, the life of pure consciousness within which and through which the content of consciousness, the object of his world in their entirety exists."⁴⁷

The transcendental reduction according to Uwalaka is a much more radical presentation that we must eventually turn away from the 'outside world' and concentrate 'per se' on consciousness. Here, all which is not a correlate of pure consciousness of essence is bracketed. Accordingly, Omoregbe opine that, "...by means of the transcendental reduction, the transcendental ego now takes control and becomes the sole source of all knowledge, all meaning and all values."⁴⁸

Husserl argues that the search for clarity, indubitable and apodectic certainty of knowledge is accomplished in the transcendental ego. Omoregbe would say that Husserl was of the view that the transcendental ego has removed all its natural attitude, the likelihood of error creeping in, is very remote so that the knowledge acquired in this way is absolutely certain.

The Transcendental Description:

Husserl's method of arriving at the indubitable knowledge actualizes itself in the trans-phenomenal description.

From the forgoing, it is deducible that Phenomenology is a descriptive science. And, to describe as Mill would have us believe, is to

affirm a connexion between (an individual thing) and every other thing which is either denoted or connoted by any of the terms used. Describing is based on a classification of the Phenomena. A description, therefore, presupposes a framework of class names, and all it can do is to determine the location of the Phenomenon with regard to an already developed system of classes. So, Phenomenological reduction presupposes the process of giving account recorded of all this steps (Phenomenological method) so that the result will be communicated and will be shared experience.

Consequently, the descriptive phase renders essential intuition permanent and thus eligible to others in the universal pursuit of knowledge. On the importance of this, Spiegelberg explains, "what must be born in mind is that the main function of a Phenomenological description is to serve as a reliable guide to the listener's own actual or potential experience of the Phenomena...its essential function is to provide unmistakable guide posts to the Phenomena themselves."⁴⁹

In Husserl's perspective, it is believed that when these processes (Phenomenological method) are adopted and applied appropriately, man will be detached from natural standpoint. Thus, it leaves over a residuum, the region of absolute or pure transcendental consciousness which should be the appropriate domain of Philosophical beginning.

Conclusion:

Thus far, this paper has been able to bring Husserl's Phenomenology into expository-analytic synthesis which presents his Philosophy as a deconstructive-constructive democratic Philosophy. It is not intellectually out of place to categorize Husserl's Phenomenology as such because just like democratic principles frowns at the imposition of someone else's will on another, or in practice, the imposition of the will of the monarch or the oligarch on the majority of the masses, the idea of "imposition" is something that is anti-phenomenology. In other words, the Phenomena in the Phenomenological attitude of patience forbearance must be allowed to show

themselves as they are without "imposition" of any form of preconceptions, presuppositions, assumptions, prejudices or bias. Consequent upon this, it is pertinent to remark according to J.N. Agbo, that:

the greatest problem with the Kantian merger of the intellect of Descartes (rationalism) and the sense impression of Hume (empiricism) lies in Kant's claim that the mind has 12 apriori categories which it "imposes" on objects of experience. The result is that the objects do not appear as they are, they rather appear as reconstructed, or as Jim Unah puts it, "transformed by the mind's active categorizing."⁵⁰

It is this "imposition" that Husserl's Phenomenology abhors and/or deconstructs. In other words, his deconstruction is not purely a negative one that would lead to a total destruction but one that would lead to a constructive reconstruction which would result in apodeictic knowledge. This is because presuppositions, presumptions and preconceived knowledge encumber the knowing of reality as it is. That is, in its totality rather, it presents a nebulous data. It is on this ground that it is safe in this paper to refer Husserl's Phenomenology as a deconstructive-constructive-democratic Philosophy.

Notwithstanding, Husserl's Phenomenological approach has been criticized by some scholars for some reasons: some say that he purported to bring about scientific Philosophy, which he claimed to be possible through his Phenomenological method. However, a critical look at Husserlian Phenomenological method will reveal that it may not be possible in practice. His effort at birthing scientific Philosophy resulted in a Philosophy more metaphysical and immersed in essence than the ones that he previously criticized. There seem to be a jam of metaphysics and epistemology in his work. It is on this note that Ferando, M. argued that Husserl only succeeded in confusing methodology and ontology. His ontological process of knowing things in themselves was titled the Phenomenological method.

For some, Husserl seems to have recapitulated and transformed the doctrines of past philosophers, whom he claimed to have bracketed all their presuppositions, it is at this level that he is stigmatized with platonic fallacies. His treatment of essences and universals and particulars are influenced by platonic doctrines. In short, his undue objectification of essences comes from Plato while his attachment of intentionality to consciousness comes from the scholastics. Hence, it is argued that Husserl is not totally preaching a new Philosophy as he claimed to do.

In all, this paper is of the view that certitude or certainty in knowledge or having a conclusive knowledge remains problematic, yet, it is not a problem as such but a way of doing Philosophy and advancing knowledge. Any attempt at having a conclusive knowledge will remain an exercise in futility since it would amount to the death of epistemology.

References:

1. Edward. P., (ed.), The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. Iv (New York: Macmillan Publication, 1967), P. 135
2. Paul, P., et al (ed.), Long-Man Dictionary of Contemporary English, (England: Long Man Group Ltd., 1978), P. 722
3. Okogbuo, J. O., Idols of the Human and Fallacies in Logic, (Owerri: Assumpta Press, 1999), p. 14
4. Agbo, J. N., Phenomena, Phenomenalism and Phenomenology: Concept Clarification, (Ebsu: Unpublished monograph, 2014), P. 9
5. Stumpf, S. E. (4th ed.), Philosophy: History and Problem, (New York: MacGraw-Hill Book Co., 1989), P. 487
6. Stumpf, S. E. (4th ed.), Philosophy: History and Problem, P. 487
7. Husserl, E., Phenomenology and the Crisis of European Man, (trans. D. Lauer), (New York: Japer and Row Pub., 1965), P. 6
8. Sokolowski, R., The Foundation of Husserl's Concept of Constitution, (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), P. 116

9. Sokolowski, R., The Foundation of Husserl's Concept of Constitution, P. 116
10. David, M. L., Reason and Evidence in Husserl's Phenomenology, (Evanston: North Western University Press, 1970), P. 9
11. David, M. L., Reason and Evidence in Husserl's Phenomenology, P. 9
12. Merleau-Ponty, M., Phenomenology of Perception, (New York: Humanities Press, 1962), P. Vii
13. Agbo, J. N., Phenomena, Phenomenalism and Phenomenology: Concept Clarification, P. 6
14. Stumpf, S. E. (4th ed.), Philosophy: History and Problem, P. 488
15. The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Halen Hemingway, vol.14 (15th ed), P. 123
16. The New Encyclopedia Britannica, P. 488
17. Husserl, E., Phenomenology and the Crisis of European Man, P. 21
18. Spiegelberg, H., The Phenomenological Movement - A Historical Introduction, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), P. 271
19. Sokolowski, R., The Foundation of Husserl's Concept of Constitution, P. 116
20. Husserl, E., "Phenomenology" (Trans by C. V. Solomon), in Encyclopedia Britannica (14th ed. 1927, vol. XVII. P. 700
21. Sokolowski, R., The Foundation of Husserl's Concept of Constitution, P. 5
22. Elliston, F., "Phenomenology Reinterpreted: From Husserl to Heidegger." In Philosophy Today, (Fall: 1977), P. 92
23. Hutchins, R. M. (ed.), Philosophical Works in Great Books of Western World, P. 5
24. Husserl, E., Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology, (London: Collier Macmillan Pub., 1962), P. 10
25. Edward, P. (ed.), The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. Iv (New York: Macmillan Publication, 1967), P. 140
26. Agbo, J. N., Phenomena, Phenomenalism and Phenomenology: Concept Clarification, P. 12
27. Agbo, J. N., Phenomena, Phenomenalism and Phenomenology: Concept Clarification, P. 11
28. Stumpf, S. E. (4th ed.), Philosophy: History and Problem, P. 474
29. Husserl, E., Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology, P. 242
30. Agbo, J. N., Phenomena, Phenomenalism and Phenomenology: Concept Clarification, P. 4
31. Uwalaka, J., Unpublished Lectures in Epistemology, Owerri,1999.
32. David, M. L., Reason and Evidence in Husserl's Phenomenology, P. 12
33. Walsh, M. J., History of Philosophy, (London: Cassell Limited, 1985), P. 521
34. Husserl, E., Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology, P. 140
35. Uwalaka, J., Unpublished Lectures in Epistemology.
36. KirkPatrick, E. M., (ed.) Chambers Mini Dictionary, (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd., 1985)
37. Copleston, F. C., A History of Philosophy Vol. 4, (New York: Image Books, 1963), P. 26
38. Husserl, E., Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology, P. 17
39. Spiegelberg, H., The Phenomenological Movement - A Historical Introduction, P. 120
40. Agbo, J. N., Phenomena, Phenomenalism and Phenomenology: Concept Clarification, P.6
41. Agbo, J. N., Phenomena, Phenomenalism and Phenomenology: Concept Clarification, P. 6
42. Husserl, E., Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology, P. 11
43. Husserl, E., Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology, P. 110
44. Uwalaka, J., Unpublished Lectures in Epistemology.

45. Uwalaka, J., Unpublished Lectures in Epistemology.
46. Spiegelberg, H., The Phenomenological Movement - A Historical Introduction, P. 119
47. Walsh, M. J., History of Philosophy, P. 521
48. Omoregbe, J. I., Epistemology, The Theory of Knowledge: A Systematic and Historical Study, (Lagos: Joja Press, 1998), P. 54
49. Spiegelberg, H., The Phenomenological Movement - A Historical Introduction, P. 694
50. Agbo, J. N., Phenomena, Phenomenalism and Phenomenology: Concept Clarification, P. 23