

Manifestations of the Concept of Intuition: From Descartes to Edmund Husserl

PhD student. Khadija Guemida ¹, Dr. Ahmed Zeghmi ²

¹ Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Social Sciences, Kasdi Merbah University – Ouargla, Laboratory of Neuropsychology and Cognitive, Social, and Emotional Disorders, Algeria .Email: khedidjaguemida@gmail.com

² Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Social Sciences, Kasdi Merbah University – Ouargla, Algeria. Email: a.zighmi@yahoo.fr

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Abstract

The project of critiquing reason, developed by Edmund Husserl, gave rise to phenomenological philosophy. Phenomenology restructured the framework of knowledge by questioning the original foundations of human understanding. One of its most significant contributions to epistemology was addressing the problem of objectivity. This problem had preoccupied many philosophical systems. For Husserl, it represented a central concern of human culture—one that demanded the creation of a precise and scientific philosophy.

To reach this goal, phenomenology sought to free philosophy from any prior judgments. It aimed to establish philosophy as an independent science, grounded in final and self-evident intuitions that arise from consciousness itself.

Keywords: Intuition, Truth, Critique of Reason, Objectivity, Phenomenology

Introduction

The task of reforming philosophy has always been one of the most difficult challenges in the history of thought and knowledge. Developing new methods and approaches, different from those of the past, was the goal of many major philosophers. They hoped to build philosophical projects based on a critique of reason. Their purpose was to reach certain knowledge and, as a result, absolute truth.

This pursuit led to the emergence of various philosophical trends. Though their content differed, they shared a common aim: the search for absolute truth. But truth, as known in the history of philosophy, has often appeared only through its opposite. It arises from error, illusion, and doubt—as if its nature depends on denying them. This reveals the paradoxical and original nature of truth.

From this critical position, many philosophical movements emerged. Among them was contemporary Western phenomenology. This philosophical current defined its task as a critique of reason—whether theoretical, practical, or normative. As such, it presented itself as a comprehensive project for philosophical reason.

Given this mission, phenomenology had to revisit the concept of intuition. It did so through its study of the nature of knowledge. Phenomenology is a method for critiquing knowledge. But it is also a general theory of essence. It raises epistemological questions aimed at analyzing and filtering

knowledge. The nature of its essential questions, which emerge from pure reason, demands this approach.

Husserl's starting point was based on foundational elements of Cartesian philosophy. Chief among these was Descartes' principle: "I think, therefore I am." Husserl used this as a starting point for his phenomenological inquiry. His aim was not to reject Descartes' idea, but to clarify and expand it.

The main issue Husserl faced was this: How can we solve the problem Descartes raised, without relying on metaphysical assumptions? Husserl did not reject the cogito. Instead, he submitted it to methodological steps, including the suspension of the external world—an act known as epoché.

The ongoing search for absolute truth was Husserl's core concern. From this search, he came to believe that philosophy must be based on absolute intuition. This intuition must justify itself, be self-given, and not require any external foundation.

Definition of Intuition

A. Linguistic Definition

In Arabic, the root verb "b-d-h" (بَدِه) carries the meaning of “suddenly” or “spontaneously.” The noun *badīha* (بِدَاهَة) refers to something that arises without warning or preparation. It is used in expressions such as: “He surprised him with something” or “He began with it suddenly.” Other forms include:

- *Bādaha* (بَادَاهَهُ): to initiate suddenly or unexpectedly.
- *Ibtedahā* (اِبْتَدَاهَهُ): to begin a speech or similar act without prior preparation, that is, to improvise.
- *Tabādaha* (تَبَادَاهَهُ): to exchange impromptu speeches, poems, or ideas.

In general usage, *badīha* refers to anything that arises without forewarning. In philosophy, however, it refers to the clarity and self-evidence of ideas or propositions—so clear that they impose themselves directly upon the mind.

The related term *badīhiyya* (بِدِيهِيَّة) refers to:

- An immediate beginning.
- Sound judgment in moments of surprise.
- A kind of inner knowledge that requires no instruction or explanation.

In logic and mathematics, a *badīhiyya* (axiom) is a proposition accepted as true without needing to be derived from simpler premises—for example, “The halves of equal things are equal” (Arabic Language Academy, 2004, p. 33).

B. Terminological Definition

The concept of intuition (or axiom in logical contexts) has been defined in several ways. One accepted definition is: “An element from a selected set of propositions within a logical or mathematical system. Its truth is assumed, and from it, other propositions—called theorems—are derived. For instance, the Pythagorean Theorem can be derived from the axioms of classical geometry. Similarly, logical systems consist of axioms and theorems” (Tedhōn Dretsche, p. 140).

Another definition states: “Intuition, in technical usage, is the complete clarity that characterizes a piece of knowledge at the moment it first appears in the mind. It arises in the self, not as a result of thought or reasoning” (Saliba, Philosophical Dictionary, p. 200).

A self-evident truth is one that does not rely on reasoning or inference. It does not depend on additional intuition, experience, or any other process. It is often considered equivalent to what is termed “necessary knowledge.” In some cases, it refers to knowledge that the mind accepts immediately and without reference to anything else. Examples include: the perception of heat and cold, or the affirmation that contradiction cannot both exist and not exist at the same time (Saliba, p. 200).

C. Axiomatic Method and Its Thinkers

The axiomatic (or intuitive) approach is a systematic method widely used by classical and modern thinkers alike. Among its most notable figures are Euclid, Newton, Hilbert, Bentham, Whitehead, and Russell.

They applied the axiomatic method to structure different subjects into formal theories. In such systems, every proposition can be derived from a defined set of primary assumptions. A complete axiomatic system consists of:

- Primitive symbols.
- Formulation rules that distinguish meaningful from meaningless expressions.
- Definitions.
- Axioms.
- Rules of inference that determine how theorems are to be proven (Tedhoh Dretsche, p. 141)

D. Synonyms and Related Concepts

1. Intuition and Innate Knowledge

Often, intuition is closely associated with innateness. When we describe something as innate, we imply that it is intuitive. In both cases, the meaning is similar: something that exists by itself and does not require justification.

The term innateness (*innéité*) refers to a quality that distinguishes what is innate from what is acquired. Innate knowledge is part of a broader category of necessary, certain knowledge. It is closely linked to what are known as first principles.

In philosophy, the doctrine of *innéisme* (innatism) holds that the human mind possesses inborn ideas and principles. Descartes, for example, classified ideas into three types:

- **Innate ideas** (*idées innées*): those that originate within the mind and do not depend on experience.
- **Acquired ideas** (*idées factices*): those constructed by imagination.
- **Adventitious ideas** (*idées adventices*): those that arise from sensory experience.

Descartes considered innate ideas as part of what we now call inner experience or states of consciousness (Saliba, Philosophical Dictionary, p. 151)

B. Intuition and Insight

Intuition plays a vital role in the construction of knowledge. It often overlaps with what is called insight (ḥads). Both are important in the process of understanding. Insight is commonly described as the immediate grasp of a phenomenon without the need for logical reasoning. In the same way, intuition imposes itself directly on the mind, as previously mentioned. This suggests that the two concepts serve a similar function.

Mathematical insight, for instance, is a kind of experience similar to sense perception. It gives direct, non-inferential access to a realm of truths. However, unlike sensory experience, it does not relate to physical or material things. It concerns abstract mathematical objects. This understanding has been known as perceptual intuition. It has dominated Western philosophical thought on mathematical intuition since Plato (Osbeck, 2014, p. 174).

Intellectual intuition has also played a major role in the development of mathematics. It has influenced mathematical discovery through what is known as pure numerical intuition or pure logical form. It illuminates the minds of mathematicians without relying on sense or imagination.

Henri Poincaré once wrote about the mathematician Hermite, saying that he did not form sensory images in his mind. His eyes turned away from the external world. He sought truth within himself. Hermite himself remarked: “It seems to me that numbers exist in the external world and impose themselves upon me” (Saliba & Kamal Ayad, *Logic and the Methods of Science*, 1948, p. 171).

C. Intuition and Truth

One of the close equivalents of intuition is truth. Truth stands in contrast to what is possible or imagined. It refers to the thing as it is, without regard to whether it must exist or not.

In logic, truth refers to the content of knowledge, not its form. This applies whether the content is intellectual, such as in the statement: “The believer conceives of the divine essence as a true concept, not a negative one,” or whether it is empirical, such as Kant’s view of sense perception as proof that a real object exists and has a place (Saliba, *Philosophical Dictionary*, p. 488).

A brief overview of the concept of truth—especially in the field traditionally associated with it, namely mathematics—shows that truth was once tied closely to intuition (axiome). In the early 20th century, the axiom was understood as a self-evident and necessary truth. It did not require justification. It served as the foundation from which necessary conclusions were drawn. These, in turn, produced absolute truths (Al-Aali & Mohammed Sabila, 1996, p. 52).

The meaning of truth becomes even clearer when examined in contrast to its opposites: error, illusion, and doubt. These are not only the conceptual opposites of truth, but may also be its conditions, its starting points—even its ground. Truth often emerges from a background of error, illusion, or doubt, as though it is born through their continuous negation (Sabila & Abdelsalam Benabdelali, 2005, p. 6)

René Descartes based his idea of truth on intuition. Edmund Husserl defined this intuition as the presence of the thing itself—as something that appears directly to consciousness, as it is. In this sense, intuition is also discovery. It is the joy of the soul in freeing itself from constraint. But absolute intuition does not exist in a fixed way. It remains something that must always be recalled or reactivated (Sabila, *Truth*, 2005, p. 16).

2. The Traditional Conception of Intuition

The field of epistemology has undergone many developments since the early stages of human thought. It is a dynamic and evolving discipline. This is due to the constant human need for knowledge. The thinking human being continues to ask: Are my cognitive capacities enough to reach knowledge or grasp its nature? Can I arrive at truth through them? And if so, is this knowledge subject to doubt? If it is, then what are its limits? Are the results I obtain from knowledge necessary and final, or are they merely probable?

Plato's philosophy, for example, considers mathematics to be something close to a religion. This view stems from the precision of mathematical results. Mathematics, in this view, does not belong to the world of sensory experience, which is in constant change. Rather, it exists on its own, independently. Its objects do not refer to physical things. Instead, they refer to what can be measured and counted. This gives mathematics an absolute nature. For this reason, it resembles a belief system or a doctrine that one must follow. Its rules are to be accepted, along with their consequences.

Pythagoras also argued that mathematics is independent of the empirical world. One cannot see the property of a triangle. One cannot observe the actual existence of the number 47. Mathematics is pure and abstract. It is untouched by the physical world. Studying it allows us to avoid contradictions and to better understand the physical universe (Robinson & Groves, 2001, p. 23).

In mathematics, intuition does not require proof. Numbers are eternal. They cannot perish. They hold a truth that is absolute and timeless. This truth can only be revealed to the mind (Robinson & Groves, 2001, p. 23).

Geometrical forms, too, are abstract. They are fixed and incorruptible. They never fail. Two plus two always equals four, regardless of time or place (Robinson & Groves, 2001, p. 17).

Thus, the traditional conception of intuition is deeply tied to mathematics. Mathematics is seen as a tool for deep understanding. It is also seen as a path to absolute truth.

The Modern Conception of Intuition

The human mind during the modern era witnessed several transformations. One of the most significant was the rejection of traditional structures and the embrace of clarity and certainty. This shift distanced itself from myth, superstition, and Aristotelian logic. For example, Kant believed that reason is the standard for all human knowledge. In contrast, the pre-modern period—the medieval era—did not give reason its proper place. It was not a philosophy of method but rather an attempt to reconcile reason with religious authority.

Modern thought, which emerged between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, was adopted by many philosophers and thinkers. It emphasized the human right to use reason and insisted on rejecting myths and superstitions. Enlightenment thought, which had intellectual, technological, economic, social, political, and religious dimensions, gave central importance to reason. Through reason, society could progress. Reason was viewed as free from external authority. However, despite the many achievements tied to this view—such as the scientific and industrial revolutions—it also led to materialism and even the development of destructive weapons.

According to Kant's definition, Enlightenment means humanity's emergence from self-imposed immaturity. This immaturity is the inability to use one's reason without guidance from another. Because our focus is epistemological, discussing the concept of intuition becomes necessary. Intuition plays a key role in knowledge theory. It is one of the most important criteria in the pursuit of truth.

Therefore, it is essential to ask: When do we say that knowledge is intuitive? What is the criterion of intuition? What does a priori knowledge mean? And how can it be attained?

Most philosophical works from the modern era emphasized the need to critique reason. Their titles reflect this approach: *A Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* by Baruch Spinoza, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* by David Hume, *New Essays on Human Understanding* by Leibniz, *Critique of Pure Reason* by Immanuel Kant, and *Discourse on the Method* by Descartes. These works are rooted in method and grounded in the necessity of rational inquiry.

In this section, we aim to present key perspectives from Enlightenment thinkers regarding the concept of intuition. Each philosophical school approached it from its own angle.

a. Intuition from the Cartesian Perspective

In his *Principles of Philosophy*, Descartes outlines a path toward certain knowledge. He argues that one must adopt a method of radical doubt to reach truth. He writes, “In order to examine the truth, it is necessary, once in a lifetime, to doubt as far as possible all things.” (Descartes, 1960, p. 86). He also states “It is useful to consider everything that can be doubted as false” (Descartes, 1960, p. 59).

For Descartes, intuition of the intellect is the very foundation of true knowledge. He affirms, “All conclusions derived from a non-intuitive principle cannot themselves be intuitive, even if the logical structure appears correct” (Descartes, 1960, p. 90). As a result, any inference built upon uncertain principles cannot yield certain knowledge. Even if the reasoning seems valid in form, it will not lead to truth.

In the Arabic tradition, *istidlal* (inference) means the search for evidence. It refers to the connection between cause and effect. If the reasoning moves from effect to cause, it is called deductive reasoning. If it moves from cause to effect, it is inductive reasoning.

Descartes believed that philosophers should begin from nothing. He insisted on freeing the mind from assumptions inherited from parents, teachers, and society (Cunningham, 1997, p. 48)

According to Descartes, intuition takes different forms within the structure of knowledge. It is one of the main standards in the search for truth. This is central to Enlightenment philosophy. For him, the intuition of existence is tied to thought. This idea forms the starting point of his philosophical system.

His famous statement, *Cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am), is an intuitive truth. Without thought, existence would not be confirmed. Once Descartes proves his own existence, he then seeks to understand his nature. He asks, “What kind of being am I?” He concludes that he is not a material body. By applying the method of doubt, he is able to question everything except the fact that he is thinking. From this, he deduces that his essence is thought. His existence does not depend on place or matter (Cunningham, 1997, p. 50).

Through the method of doubt, Descartes was able to affirm the most essential faculty: reason. He argued that reason is equally distributed among all people. It alone can prove existence. It is also capable of constructing a full system of knowledge, starting from the certainty of the thinking self. This ultimately leads to the affirmation of the external world.

The key role Descartes gave to ratio (reason) laid the foundation for what would later be known as rationalism. This became a defining trait of many later philosophies. For Descartes, what is clear and

distinct is true. Hence, truth must be logically and rationally graspable. Reason becomes the only true path to knowledge (Kunzmann, Franz-Peter Burkard & Franz Wiedmann, 2003) This was the essence of Descartes' philosophical project.

The Intuition of God's Existence

Descartes moved from affirming his own existence as a thinking subject to asserting the existence of a higher power. This power governs all things. It is a divine power that cannot be denied. It is innate and intuitive. He states: "It is true that I have a concept of substance, since I myself am a substance. Yet this concept cannot apply to an infinite substance, because I am finite. Such a concept must come only from a truly infinite substance" (Kunzmann, Burkard, & Wiedmann, 2003, p. 105).

He further explains that: "The idea of God is an innate idea (*idea innata*). This means it is a psychological disposition implanted in the soul by God. It is not derived from external experiences, but exists within consciousness itself (Kunzmann, Burkard, & Wiedmann, 2003, p. 105). Thus, the intuition of God's existence is a natural belief for a sound human mind. God exists, and there is no room for doubt about His existence.

b. Intuition According to Leibniz

In another context, the philosopher of monadology, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, gave significant attention to epistemology in many of his works. Known as a rationalist, he saw true knowledge as rational knowledge.

Regarding propositions, he divided all propositions into two kinds: Truths of reason (*vérités de raison*), and Truths of fact (*vérités de fait*).

He defined them as follows: Truths of reason are necessary truths whose opposites are impossible. Truths of fact are contingent truths whose opposites are possible (Cunningham, 1997, p. 71)

In this way, Leibniz linked intuition with rational truths. Rational truths have an intuitive nature. They are absolute and certain, unlike empirical truths, which are probabilistic.

His philosophical system excluded empirical experience as a valid source of knowledge. He stated: "Nothing is in the intellect unless it was first in the senses—except the intellect itself, or innate ideas." (Kunzmann, Burkard, & Wiedmann, DTV Atlas of Philosophy, 2003, p. 115)

He also clarified: "There are certain propositions known as axioms or postulates. They form the principles of the world. Because they are self-evident, we consider them innate. Yet no one I know has ever provided a full explanation for why they are so clearly accepted" (G. W. Leibniz, 1973, p. 195).

On the intuition of God's existence, Leibniz wrote: "We know our own existence through intuition. We know the existence of God through inference. We know other things through the senses. Yet the intuition by which we know our existence is entirely clear. It cannot be proven, nor does it need to be. When I begin to doubt everything, even this doubt does not allow me to doubt my own existence. This is the highest degree of certainty one can imagine (G. W. Leibniz, 1973, p. 235).

He also noted: “True existence, which I consider a fourth type of agreement, can be seen in ideas. But they cannot offer any intuitive certainty. We do not even have inferential knowledge of beings outside ourselves—except for God alone (G. W. Leibniz, 1973, p. 203).

Leibniz affirmed the presence of: “A second major metaphysical doctrine that declares the full clarity of reality. God, in His rational essence, is the metaphysical foundation of all possibilities and truths. He also possesses complete knowledge of them. This level of certainty is beyond human reach. Yet in rare cases, humans may attain a degree of certainty that approaches divine certainty. Still, they usually deal with representations of reality that are somewhat confused or incomplete—but which can be improved” (Natognazza, 2018).

From this, it can be inferred: “Only God can see how the two boundaries—self and existence—are connected. Why do I exist? If we consider intuition in a broader sense as immediate truth or as a proposition that needs no proof, then the statement ‘I exist’ is intuitive. It is a primary truth. It is among the first clarities within the natural order of knowledge. One may not deliberately form this proposition, but it remains innate to us”.

All of this returns to the intuition of essences. Leibniz believed that: “We can understand the order of the universe and even imitate it, at least in part. Thus, he acknowledged that God is the engineer of the universe and the ruler of all minds in the kingdom of God” (Cunningham, 1997, p. 115).

d. Intuition in the Thought of Immanuel Kant

In discussing Kant’s theory of knowledge, it is important to begin with a key observation. Most scholars who study his philosophy tend to reduce his epistemology to a mere reconciliation between empiricism and rationalism. In other words, many frame Kant as someone who simply combined the ideas of David Hume, the empiricist, with those of Descartes, the rationalist. Indeed, this reading appears in numerous philosophical works that portray Kant’s project as a solution that transcends both traditions.

However, this interpretation only captures part of what Kant’s epistemology offers. As a philosopher of the eighteenth century, deeply engaged with the traditions before him, Kant introduced a new direction for philosophy—one that Enlightenment thinkers of the seventeenth century had not yet articulated. While these earlier thinkers emphasized reason and placed it as the supreme authority across all domains, they did not question the limits or capabilities of reason itself.

This is precisely what Kant sought to address in his major critical work, *Critique of Pure Reason*. In Kant’s view, the act of critique is not negative; it is positive. For him, critique involves discernment, separation, and clarification. It is a method for understanding the scope and conditions of reason.

In speaking about a priori knowledge, Kant insists that: “It is self-evident that the principles of reason must precede experience absolutely” (Saliba, *Philosophical Lexicon*, p. 183).

This means that the principles of reason must come before any sensory knowledge. For Kant, this is an intuitive truth. As such, a priori knowledge is, by necessity, logical knowledge. It is not dependent on empirical experience.

Intuition in Husserl’s Phenomenological Framework

Phenomenology, as a philosophical project and research method, raised a central epistemological question: What is the genealogy of concepts? In other words, how are a priori concepts formed? What is their standard? And what are those standards based on?

Phenomenology revisited the critique of reason, but through new methods, with different content and different outcomes compared to earlier philosophical systems. According to Husserl: “The epistemological question does not challenge these models for their own sake, but rather to clarify their relation to the philosophical context—which is, at its core, a context of knowledge. It remains within the horizon of the philosophical inquiry into theoretical reason. The task of epistemology, or the critique of theoretical reason, is, first and foremost, a critical task. It must remove the distortions that natural reflection inevitably falls into” (Husserl, 2007, p. 27).

Husserl’s point of departure in understanding science was inspired by Plato, Descartes, and the rationalist tendencies of seventeenth-century science. This conception focuses on first principles and unconditional criteria, and fundamentally differs from the modern conception of empirical science. It also differs from modern understandings of science more broadly.

For Husserl, and in the Platonic sense, science is absolute knowledge (*épistémè*). It is defined primarily by its intuition of essences. He argues that scientific theories must be grounded in eidetic intuition—the direct apprehension of essences. This contrasts with empirical science, which relies on observable facts: “For Husserl, theories are built upon the intuition of essences, unlike empirical sciences, which are based on facts” (Husserl, *Philosophy as a Rigorous Science*, 2002, p. 6).

The Meaning of Intuition in the Thought of Edmund Husserl

1. Intuitive Existence

Edmund Husserl adopted Descartes’ method of inquiry and used it as a starting point for his own investigations. He relied on Descartes’ foundational claim: “I think, therefore I am.” However, Husserl did not accept this proposition as it stood. He believed it required justification. He stated that the declaration “I think” is itself a belief that results from a long formative process in which the original and the added elements became interwoven. Therefore, it is necessary to dig beneath the layers of the “I think” to uncover its initial core—what he referred to as the transcendental ego (Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 1958, p. 12).

Husserl pauses here and asks: Can we truly doubt the existence of the external world? Is our very sense of its presence not evidence of its reality? He inclined to the view that our awareness of the world results from many elements that have impacted consciousness over time. These elements formed around its core much like geological layers forming around the Earth’s core. For Husserl, the task of thought is to study these layers and penetrate them—just as a biologist studies the layers of living tissue.

He writes: “We take a step from Descartes’ emphasis on clear and distinct perception. Existence, in thought, is assured by its own givenness—pure givenness. In such pure intuition, when we directly perceive an object, we are granted a form of certainty that frees us from the usual doubts” (Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, 2007, p. 38).

In its broadest sense, intuition, according to Husserl, is a fundamental phenomenon of intentional life. It stands in contrast to what is commonly understood as mere awareness of something, which can be

abstract, symbolic, indirect, or vague. Intuition, by contrast, is a mode of consciousness marked by clarity and distinction. It gives us access to a thing itself—as it is given in direct perception. This presence of the object, in its full givenness, allows the ego to aim toward the object without weakening the intention or the meaning involved.

He writes: “In this final mode, the object is present in itself, given through immediate intuition. For the ego, this means that the intended object is not obscured by distance or abstraction, but rather appears directly in experience” (Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 1958, p. 147).

2. Reality as Tied to Intuitive Verification

Husserl also emphasizes the role of intuition in relation to logical and epistemological structures. He notes: “With these brief observations, we have touched only on the formal and general issues related to intentional analysis. These are deeply complex questions, especially concerning the **phenomenological origin** of the fundamental concepts and principles of formal logic. These remarks have led us to an important conclusion: that these ontologically general concepts signal a universal law that is sensitive to the structure of conscious life as a whole” (Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 1958, p. 150)

This view ties logical form to the lived structure of experience. For Husserl, intuitive givenness is not only epistemologically significant—it is also ontologically central. What is real becomes real through the structure of intentional acts and intuitive presentation.

Husserl’s Division of Intuition

1. Ordinary Intuition and Potential Intuition

Husserl distinguishes between two types of intuition: Ordinary Intuition, which pertains to meaning, Potential Intuition, which pertains to the object itself.

He argues that: “There is no doubt that the identity of the object, as it exists in reality, and the correspondence between the intentional object as such and the real object, are not the same as the identity of the intended object itself. These are two real components within the structure of intuition and verified evidence, both of which are phenomena of consciousness. What we are dealing with here is a form of ideal immanence that refers us to essential and synthetic relations—possible or novel” (Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 1958, p. 152).

He continues: “In intuitive experience, particularly in immanent givenness, we find a series of intuitive recollections accompanied by an unlimited horizon of potential meanings that surround me. This horizon can always be reactivated and reconstituted anew” (Ibid).

This horizon, for Husserl, is never fixed. It surrounds each act of perception and can always be accessed again. The object is never fully exhausted in a single experience; rather, it is always accompanied by layers of potentiality that give meaning to its presence.

2. Phenomenological Foundations and the Limits of Empirical Intuition

Husserl insists that if the sciences are to be grounded on solid foundations, we must critically examine the authority and scope of the intuition offered by experience. He writes: “If we are to found the sciences in a radical way, then the intuition we gain from experience about the world demands, in one

way or another, a preliminary critique of its authority and scope. Thus, we cannot consider it, without question, as a form of evidence that cannot be refuted" (Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 1958, p. 74).

He adds: "It is not enough to suspend our acceptance of all sciences or to strip them of their naive authority, which they draw from the level of the lifeworld—that is, the level of empirical reality. The existence of the world, based on the apparent clarity of natural experience, cannot be taken as a self-evident fact. This existence, in itself, is not a given. It is, rather, a phenomenon whose meaning must be clarified in relation to us" (Ibid).

Husserl thus calls into question the assumption that empirical experience provides unshakable knowledge. For him, empirical intuition cannot be equated with intellectual clarity. It does not carry the same epistemic weight. While natural experience plays a role in shaping the sciences, it cannot serve as their unquestioned foundation.

He stresses: "The mental conditions required for intellectual intuition differ from those of empirical intuition. The latter depends on the world of sense experience. But if we are to properly ground science, we must subject this intuitive knowledge to critical evaluation. It is not sufficient to treat it as a source of indubitable truth" (Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 1958, p. 74).

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