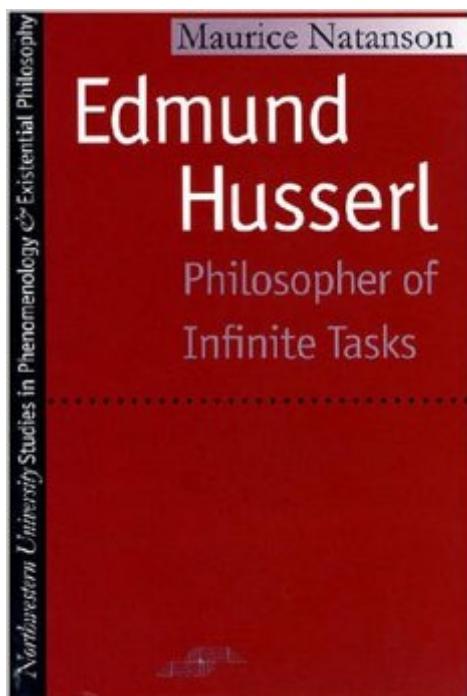


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# Edmund Husserl: Philosopher Of Infinite Tasks



## Synopsis

Winner of the 1974 National Book AwardThe product of many years of reflection on phenomenology, this book is a comprehensive and creative introduction to the philosophy of Edmund Husserl. Natanson uses Husserl's later work as a clue to the meaning of his entire intellectual career, showing how his earlier methodological work evolved into the search for transcendental roots and developed into a philosophy of the life-world. Phenomenology, for Natanson, emerges as a philosophy of origin, a transcendental discipline concerned with consciousness, history, and world rather than with introspection and traditional metaphysical warfare.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Maurice Natanson won the 1974 National Book Award for Philosophy and Religion for this 1973 book. He wrote in the Preface, "What I have tried to do here is to guide the reader through some fundamental aspects of phenomenology, to acquaint him with the essential problems which Husserl faced, and to bring him into relationship with the radical implications of phenomenological method. For this purpose, I have concerned myself with the entire corpus of Husserl's work, but I have focused the discussion on about a dozen books which I consider pivotal. What I offer, then, is a start rather than a finish." He says of Husserl's position: "Essences of unities of meaning intended by different individuals in the same acts or by the same individual in different acts. The White House is essentially the same and the intentional object whether viewed earlier or later in the

day, remembered or directly perceived or even imagined, today or last year. The "real" White House was once burned by the British and the rebuilt White House is subject to fire, but the White-House-as-INTENDED cannot be destroyed, its essentiality cannot be scorched. • (Pg. 14) He summarizes, "Put together, our previewing of Husserl's conceptual terrain amounts to this: Phenomenology is a presuppositionless philosophy which holds consciousness to be the matrix of all phenomena, considers phenomena to be objects of intentional acts and treats them as essences, demands its own method, concerns itself with prepredicative experience, offers itself as the foundation of science, and comprises the philosophy of the life-world, a defense of Reason, and ultimately a critique of philosophy." • (Pg.

What do phenomenologists do? Nowadays they do what the father of modern phenomenology, Austrian-born Professor Edmund Husserl (1859 - 1938), taught his students and readers to do. They philosophize in a distinctly new way. They ask (1) What things in the common-sense, space-time continuum real world can we know beyond doubt or error? and (2) What makes such knowledge possible? Before he was a philosopher, Edmund Husserl was a mathematician and a natural scientist. He began philosophizing as a Cartesian. He agreed with René Descartes that "cogito ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am) is true beyond doubt. Descartes pushed his insights up to the door leading into phenomenological analysis but did not go through that door. Husserl made cogito ergo sum more explicit: *ego cogito cogitatum*. I think something thought. Early on, Husserl focused on the *cogitatum*, the object thought about. The ego/mind passively receives impressions of extra-mental objects presented by the senses. Most of his earliest students, including Adolph Reinach and (future canonized saint) Edith Stein began with Husserl at this first stage in his evolution. In those days Husserl was focusing on the known world as real, extra-mental world. He was busy, everyone thought, re-establishing the ancient Aristotelian and Scholastic *philosophia perennis* of knowable, necessary, pure essences. Then in 1913 Husserl published IDEAS. In that book he fell back, ostensibly, into an earlier German philosophical passion for idealism associated with Hegel. Husserl moved, it seemed, away from the thing thought and its objective reality. He now focused on the act of knowing (*cogitatio*) and the knowing ego (*cogitans*).

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