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AN OVERVIEW OF EDMUND HUSSERL'S VIEWS ON PHILOSOPHY OF LOGIC AND MATHEMATICS

Edmund Husserl is a famous German philosopher of 20th Century whose contributions to the field of philosophy are well recognized. The main contribution for which Husserl is known is the development of phenomenological model of analyzing the philosophical problems. The phenomenological method is a well established and widely accepted tool for deconstructing and describing various objective and subjective phenomenon. However much before Husserl developed his Phenomenological method, he was developing a Philosophy of Logic and Mathematics where his core interests lied in understanding the foundational issues of these disciplines. It was this investigation of Husserl in discovering the ontological status of mathematical and logical entities which ultimately led him to formulating phenomenology. But there is very little awareness of this aspect of Husserl's research, deliberately or otherwise, which makes it necessary that his contributions to the fields of Philosophy of Logic and Mathematics be discussed and debated, so that these fields may be benefitted by some brilliant and original insights from his writings on these topics. Husserl argues in the favor of Logic as an objective science and offers some refreshing alternatives to the established views on its foundational issues. The majority of the works, published as well as unpublished, has been written by Husserl in the period between publishing of his first major book, 'Philosophy of Arithmetic' in 1890 and the second major title, 'Logical Investigations' in 1901. Both these books are also dealing with similar issues of foundations of arithmetic as well as all other mathematical entities with focus on resolving the epistemological concerns in their explanation. It was the difficulties Husserl encountered in logical clarification of these issues which led him to focus on the problems of logic itself and in turn develop ideas on philosophy of logic. The one example of Husserl's Intellectual Crisis, as it may be called, can be found in his paper 'On the Logic of Signs', written in 1890 where he argues that various arithmetical functions and signs etc. have been in use for centuries, providing a certain utility with accuracy but without the slightest insight into the logic of the matter. He believed and stated that there would have been a much faster and deeper progress in these disciplines if there had been clarity concerning their logical character. There is another instance of this intellectual crisis which is found in Husserl's Personal Notes where he mentions about being tormented by those incredibly strange and real worlds, the world of purely logical and the world of actual consciousness when dealing with problems concerning the logic of mathematical thought. By 'Pure Logic' Husserl meant the traditional syllogistic logic which is entirely formal in nature and does not include anything mental or refer to any subject or real people. However Husserl was not comfortable with such a conception of logic and was convinced that although one can considerably advance logical understanding without taking recourse to elementary processes of intuition but a full and truly satisfactory understanding of symbolic thought or any logical process would be incomplete without these insights. Therefore, we see that Husserl has attempted to achieve a novel understanding of Logic on the basis of his phenomenological insights, leading to a different approach in philosophy of logic and understanding its foundational issues. In this paper, the endeavor would be to present an overview of these views of Edmund Husserl on Philosophy of Logic and Mathematics.

References:

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