36

TRUTH AND EVIDENCE

George Heffernan

36.1. Essential distinctions

Evidence differs from Evidenz. The epistemic meaning of the English evidence reflects its legal sense as what enables someone to see that something is the case. The German word for this is Beweismittel. The German Evidenz refers to the seeing or showing that something is so: not a given but a giving, not an entity but an activity, not a product but a process. The “problem of evidence” (Hua XXIV, 153–6) is a “problem of givenness” (Gegebenheit) – “the myth of the given” notwithstanding (Soffer 2003). Evidence is an “experience” (Erlebnis: Hua XXIV, 316) of “givenness” (Gegebenheit) involving “insightfulness”, not “blindness” (Hua XXIV, 155). Insightfulness is not intensity, which is not veracity (Hua XXIV, 7–8). Nor is evidence an index, a criterion, natural light, feeling or taste (Hua XXIV, 155–6). These cannot ground knowledge (Hua XXIV, 166–78). Evidence involves ideal-normative connections between knowing acts and known contents (Hua XXIV, 16–21, 138, 140–1, 158). Givenness is an encompassing concept (Hua XXIV, 155). Types of evidence correspond to types of givens (Hua XXIV, 172). “Of varying perfection” (Hua XXIV, 322), evidence is a matter of degrees; which are achievable, is a function of the evident (Hua XXIV, 214–16, 220–30, 309–25, 344–8). Evidence is said in many senses (Hua XXIV, 316, 351). What evidence is depends on what is evident; analogously for truth and what is true.

36.2. Before Husserl: rationalism, empiricism, psychologism

Descartes seeks to demonstrate that everything that one clearly and distinctly perceives is true by proving that God exists and guarantees the connection between evidence and truth (Descartes 1984, 9, 11, 24, 31–2, 43, 45, 48). Yet it seems that one can know that what one clearly and distinctly perceives is true only if one knows that God exists and does not deceive, and that one can know that God exists and does not deceive only if one knows that what one clearly and distinctly perceives is true. Descartes denies the circularity (Descartes 1984, 100–1, 103–4, 171).

Hume argues that all reasonings concerning experience are founded not on reason but on custom (Hume 1975, 26–47). Such reasonings are based on “feelings” that enable human beings to distinguish between beliefs and conceptions (Hume 1975, 47–55). Evidence emerges as a feeling that attaches to belief and differentiates it from conception (Hume 1975, 48–50). Belief
Truth and evidence

“is nothing but a peculiar feeling, different from the simple conception” (Hume 1978, 624). The only difference between belief and conception is the feeling that accompanies belief (Hume 1978, 623–39, 645–62).

Psychological theories of evidence clouded nineteenth-century logic (Heffernan 2000, 97–118). Mill defines logic as “theory” or “philosophy of evidence” (Mill 1878, 462, 473, 475–6, 478). Sigwart sees logic as focused on “[the] subjective [...] inner feeling [Gefühl] of evidence” (Sigwart 1889, 16). Höfler and Meinong argue that logic articulates the psychological laws of evidence (Höfler and Meinong 1890, 16–17, 129–36). Wundt views the psychology of thinking as more basic than the logic of thought (Wundt 1893, 91). Elsehans claims that logic investigates the psychological aspects of its objects (Elsehans 1897, 203) and that justification involves “feelings of evidence” (Evidenzgefühle) (Elsehans 1912, 289 ff.).

Husserl rejects Descartes’s “theological theory of evidence” as circular (Hua I, 3, 43, 63–70, 116–21; Hua II, 9–10, 45; Hua VI, 76–85, 92–3; Hua VII, 63–9, 79, 86, 116–25, 341; Hua IX, 330; Hua X, 353; Hua XVII, 234–8, 286–8; Hua XXIX, 112; Hua XXX, 323; Hua XXXV, 63, 71–4; Heffernan 1997). He criticizes Hume’s affective account of evidence as unreliable (Hua II, 20; Hua III/1, 132–4; Hua VI, 68–9, 88–100, 233–5; Hua VII, 157–81; Hua XVII, 174–5, 177–8, 217–18, 262–73; Hua XVIII, 94–5, 190–5, 197–200; Hua XXIV, 348–55; Hua XXX, 374–81). He deconstructs the views of the psychologistic logicians, especially Wundt, Sigwart, Erdmann, and Lipps (Hua XVIII, 131), arguing that the notion that evidence is a psychological phenomenon relativizes and subjectivizes absolute and objective logical laws (Hua XXI, 132–3, 135, 141, 203–9, 212, 217, 220, 224–35). He agrees with Brentano’s position that evidence is not a feeling (Brentano 1930, 61–9; Brentano 1969, 66–71, 103–6) but disagrees with his claim that evidence knows no degrees (Brentano 1925/1970, 170, 175–6, 178; Brentano 1930, 148–50; Brentano 1968/1974, 25, 27–31; Brentano 1978, 111).

36.3. Phenomenological description of evidence and truth

The chief sources for Husserl’s description of evidence and truth are Logical Investigations (including Prolegomena to Pure Logic), Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy (I), and Formal and Transcendental Logic.

36.3.1. Evidence as experience of truth

Prolegomena to Pure Logic (1900/1913) describe knowledge as evident true belief (Hua XVIII, 27–37). In psychologism, “evidence”, “a feeling of evidence” (Hua XVIII, 183–4, 194), designates “a unique feeling [that] guarantees the truth of the judgment to which it is attached” (Hua XVIII, 183), “the experience” in which one becomes aware of “the correctness of one’s judgment [...], its approximation to the truth” (Hua XVIII, 188–9). In phenomenology, “evidence” is not “an accessory feeling that follows certain judgments”, “a psychic character [...] attached to every [true] judgment” (Hua XVIII, 192), but rather “the ‘experience’ of truth” (Hua XVIII, 193):

Truth is experienced [...] in no other sense than that in which [...] something ideal can be an experience in the real act. [...] Truth is an idea whose single case in an evident judgment is an actual experience. [...] The experience of the concordance [...] between the actual sense of the assertion and the self-given state of affairs is evidence, and the idea of this concordance, truth.

(Hua XVIII, 193–4)
This concept of evidence, as “a seeing of, an insight into, a grasping of, the self-given” (Hua XVIII, 193), posits a distinction between the “experience of truth” and truth itself (Hua XVIII, 194–5). Evidence has a “psychological character” (Hua XVIII, 69) but is not a “psychic character” (Hua XVIII, 183). The validity of logical laws depends not on fleeting feelings but on constant contents; the psychologistic interpretation of evidence as an accessory feeling that inductively supports assertoric statements misunderstands the apodictic evidence that demonstratively validates these laws (Hua XVIII, 73–6, 92–101, 108–9, 129–30, 141–2, 166–7, 188–9, 231–2, 239–41).

**36.3.2. Evidence as transition from empty intention to fulfilling intuition**

Logical Investigations (1900/1901, 1913/1921) clarify evidence and truth by combining the distinctions between empty intentions and fulfilling intuitions (Hua XIX/1, 30–110) and between static and dynamic fulfillments of intentions (Hua XIX/2, 544–81). Two approaches emerge (Hua XIX/2, 533–775). The first, following “the levels of knowledge” (Hua XIX/2, 596–631), emphasizes the loose concept of evidence in the relative sense: “Then it makes good sense to speak of degrees and levels of evidence” (Hua XIX/2, 651). The second, pursuing “the ideal of adequation” (Hua XIX/2, 645–56), emphasizes the strict concept of evidence in the absolute sense: “But the pregnant sense of evidence in the critical epistemic sense concerns exclusively [...] this most perfect [...] fulfillment, which gives [...] the absolute fullness of content [...] to the intention” (Hua XIX/2, 651).

Husserl distinguishes four senses of truth and evidence: (1) Truth is “the full agreement between the meant and the given”; evidence, the “experience” of “truth” (Hua XIX/2, 651–2). (2) Truth is “the idea that belongs to the form of the act [...] the idea of the absolute adequation”; evidence, the “unity of coincidence” between the “epistemic essences” of the real “acts of evidence” (Hua XIX/2, 652). (3) Truth is “the given object in the manner of the meant object [...] as truth-making”; evidence, the corresponding “experience” (Hua XIX/2, 652). (4) Truth is the “correctness of the intention [...] e.g., correctness of the judgment [...] as its being-adapted to the true object”; evidence, a “relation” between the intention and the state of affairs (Hua XIX/2, 653). Evidence is not a feeling attaching to an act of cognition (Hua XIX/2, 656), but an experience conforming to the content of the act (Hua XIX/2, 652, 656) as determined by its quality, matter, and essence (Hua XIX/1, 377–440). “A is evident” means “A is not merely meant, but rather exactly as that, as which it is meant, also truly given; it itself is present in the strictest sense” (Hua XIX/2, 656). Truth and evidence are said in different senses; knowledge is aimed at adequacy and apodicticity (Hua XIX/1, 24–9; Hua XIX/2, 646–50).

The quest is for absolute, adequate, and apodictic evidence; the question concerns which truths yield these values. Identical meanings and ideal species demand adequate givenness (Hua XIX/1, 97–101, 104–6, 136, 173, 175–8, 208–10). Distinctions between dependent and independent objects and meanings require apodictic evidence (Hua XIX/1, 237, 239, 243, 326, 334–6, 342–51). Some acts and contents of consciousness yield adequate and/or apodictic evidence (Hua XIX/1, 367–71, 455–61, 508). The distinction between adequate and inadequate perceptions does not coincide with the distinction between categorial and sensuous intuitions (Hua XIX/2, 667–85) or between internal and external perceptions (Hua XIX/1, 24–9, 35, 199–206, 365–71, 455–61; Hua XIX/2, 751–75); the perception of physical objects defies the ideal of adequate evidence (Hua XIX/2, 646–50). Husserl calls Logical Investigations a “breakthrough” to solutions to problems blocking his philosophical clarification of mathematics (Hua XVIII, 5–16), but he does not use the work to make logical evidence and truth the measure of all evidence and truth.
36.3.3. Evidence as eidetic intuition

Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy I (1913) describe phenomenology as a pure, not factual, science seeking truth based on eidetic, not empirical, evidence (Hua III/1, 10–55). Against empiricism, which reduces evidential experience to sensuous experience, and idealism, which elevates evidence to a “feeling of truth”, Husserl demarcates a concept of evidence encompassing facts and essences (Hua III/1, 41–7). He argues that

 [...] every intuition that presents [something] in an originary way is a legitimate source of knowledge, that everything that offers itself to us in “intuition” in an originary way [...] is to be accepted simply as what it presents itself as, but also only within the limits in which it presents itself there.

(Hua III/1, 51)

This principle of evidence guides research into truths discovered by means of the shift from the natural attitude, which presupposes the reality of the world and the validity of assertions about it, to the phenomenological attitude, which clarifies the objects of the world in relation to the acts of consciousness that intentionally constitute them (Hua III/1, 56–134).

The question concerns the evidence of phenomenological investigations (Hua III/1, 156–8) – some immanent perception seems absolute, all transcendent is relative (Hua III/1, 77–9, 86–99, 103–10, 118–21). The horizontality of evidence holds for the perception of physical things: “A thing is necessarily given in mere ‘manners of appearance’ [...] necessarily a core of ‘what is actually presented’ is apprehensionally surrounded by a horizon of inauthentic ‘co-givenness’ and [...] vague indeterminacy” (Hua III/1, 91). It also holds for categorial perceptions of acts and contents of consciousness; experiences in which they present themselves are surrounded by other experiences not given (Hua III/1, 73). Things “shadow forth” (Hua III/1, 83–8), and experiences do not (Hua III/1, 88), but experiences are not absolutely given without further ado: “An experience [...] is never completely perceived; in its full unity, it is not adequately grasppable” (Hua III/1, 93). This holds for “the whole stream of experience” (Hua III/1, 94) with its noetic and noematic structures (Hua III/1, 135–294). *Noesis* (thinking) is the act that belongs to the real (*reell*) contents of consciousness; *noema* (thought), the intentional object *including its background* (Hua III/1, 202–32). The horizontality of givenness raises the question whether adequacy and apodicticity are essential features of absolute evidence (Hua III/1, 56–60, 71–3, 91–4, 99–103, 135–7, 145–8, 180–9, 258–62).

“Phenomenology of reason” (Hua III/1, 314–37) defines *evidence* as “the unity of a rational positing with what essentially motivates it” (Hua III/1, 316), identifying *eidetic evidence* as “a peculiar mode of positing”, “an ‘originarily’ presenting seeing of an essence” (Hua III/1, 334).

“Phenomenology of evidence” (Hua III/1, 333–7) specifies scientific evidence as not of “facts” but of “essences” (Hua III/1, 3–55), not of the naïve world of the natural attitude but of the reduced consciousness of the phenomenological (Hua III/1, 56–134). Ideally, such evidence is not inadequate but adequate (Hua III/1, 13–16), not dubitable but apodictic (Hua III/1, 19–20), not relative but absolute (Hua III/1, 91–4, 96–9, 103–10, 118–19). Actually, “perfect evidence” is the exception that proves the rule (Hua III/1, 65, 205, 226, 322). Evidence is not only immediate, originary, and pure, but also mediate, derivative, and impure (Hua III/1, 314–37). One cannot say that facts are many-sided and essences are one-sided (Hua III/1, 93–4). Not all essences are one-dimensional; some are multi-faceted (Hua III/1, 125–30). As in the natural attitude, so in the transcendental, “perfect clarity” is “the universal task and the most encompassing ideal, although it lies in infinity” (Hua V, 104). Self-givenness is a function of the given (Hua V, 103–4).
The question is whether eidetic evidence is necessarily and universally adequate evidence. There are different kinds of eidetic sciences; mathematics deals with ideal laws that govern exact essences and phenomenology works with regional types that order morphological essences (Hua III/1, 23–38, 148–56; Hua XIX/1, 248–52). The horizonality of consciousness pervades the phenomenology of evidence (Hua III/1, 3–9, 184–5, 326–9). The task is to accommodate the quest for adequate evidence within the limits of horizonal consciousness.

36.3.4. Evidence as intentional achievement of self-giving

*Formal and Transcendental Logic* (1929) emphasizes the importance of the distinction between intention and fulfillment for the clarification of evidence (Hua XVII, 170). Husserl observes that the “possibility of deception” attends but does not negate “each and every evidence”: “Even an evidence that offers itself as apodictic can reveal itself as a deception and yet presupposes for doing so a similar evidence, on which it ‘shatters’” (Hua XVII, 164; Hopp 2009a/b; Heffernan 2009a/b). Evidence is not “an absolute apodicticity”, “an absolute criterion of truth” (Hua XVII, 165), but rather “the intentional achievement of self-giving [die intentionale Leistung der Selbstgebung], […] the universal distinctive form of ‘intentionality’, the ‘consciousness of something’, in which there is consciousness of the intended objective something in the manner of its being grasped itself” (Hua XVII, 166). Evidence and intentionality are inseparable: “Intentionality in general – experience of a consciousness of anything – and evidence, intentionality of self-giving, are essentially correlative concepts” (Hua XVII, 168). “The basic lawfulness of intentionality” and the “universal function of evidence” are connected; the comprehensive concept of evidence indicates that “evidence [is] a universal manner of intentionality, related to the whole life of consciousness”; evidence gives consciousness “a universal teleological structure” (Hua XVII, 168–9).

The general definition of evidence does not imply an identical structure of evidence: “Category of objectivity and category of evidence are perfect correlates. To every fundamental species of objectivities […] [corresponds] […] a fundamental species […] of evidence” (Hua XVII, 169). “To speechify from above about evidence” – to reduce it to an “insight […] apodictic, absolutely indubitable […], absolutely finished in itself” – obfuscates knowledge (Hua XVII, 169, 284, 286). Traditional concepts of evidence with untenable demands for absolute, adequate, and apodictic truth are unhelpful (Hua XVII, 184–238, 262–83). “The usual theories of evidence”, “misled by the presupposition of absolute truth”, interpret evidence as an “absolute grasping of the truth”, and “absolute evidence” as a “psychic character of some experiences of judgment, one that absolutely guarantees that the judicative belief is not mere belief, but rather a belief that brings the truth itself to actual givenness” (Hua XVII, 283–4). These theories miss “the relativity of truth and its evidence” in everyday experience, practical affairs, and technical enterprises – similarly for the interdependence of relative and absolute truth and truth as an infinite idea (Hua XVII, 284). Phenomenology critiques “the presupposition of absolute truth and the dogmatic theories of evidence”, the notion that evidence is “a subjective–psychic character” or “feeling”, and the expectation that evidence be absolute, adequate, and apodictic (Hua XVII, 286–7). It legitimizes imperfect evidence: “Experience [Erfahrung], evidence, gives something existent, and gives it itself: imperfectly, if the experience is imperfect, and more perfectly, if […] the experience becomes perfected” (Hua XVII, 287). To understand evidence and truth is to recognize their “relativity” (Hua XVII, 284–5, 288).

“A transcendental theory of evidence” sketches “the essence of evidence” as an “intentional achievement” (Hua XVII, 289). Even God cannot render the evidence of external experience absolute, adequate, and apodictic (Hua XVII, 289–90). For the evidence of internal experience,
Truth and evidence

an isolated perception never yields complete evidence of anything existent (Hua XVII, 290–1). Given inner time consciousness, all evidence is temporal (Hua XVII, 291–5), so that “evidence, as self-giving, has its variant forms, its gradations of perfection in self-giving” (Hua XVII, 293). Not “an isolated special datum” inductively connected to psychic life by causal laws, evidence is “an apriori structural form of consciousness” (Hua XVII, 295). Thus “a life of consciousness cannot exist without evidence”; but “evidence achievements stand in […] coherent connections with non-evidences”, and “essentially necessary modifications occur continuously”; therefore a life of consciousness cannot exist without such modifications of evidence into “non-evidences”, for example, sedimented retentions (Hua XVII, 295). As Husserl’s awareness of “the horizontal intentionality of consciousness” grows (Hua XVII, 17–18, 207–8, 254–5, 274–5, 286–7), so his recognition of a relativity theory of evidence and truth flourishes. Logical Investigations emphasize the perfections of evidence – absoluteness, adequacy, and apodicticity; Formal and Transcendental Logic stresses its imperfections – relativity, inadequacy, and dubitability (Hua XVII, 207–8).

36.4. Development of Husserl’s phenomenology of evidence and truth

As Husserl’s phenomenology of evidence and truth evolves over many essays, the issue of the relation between adequate evidence and apodictic evidence emerges (Himanka 2005, Cai 2013).

36.4.1. Association of adequate evidence and apodictic evidence

In The Idea of Phenomenology (1907), Husserl claims that the phenomenological reduction yields the contents of consciousness in “absolute self-givenness” (Hua II, 8) – “unquestionably given […] in the strictest sense adequately self-given” (Hua II, 60). Absolute evidence and apodictic evidence are associated: “The foundation of everything […] is the grasping of the sense of absolute givenness, of the absolute clarity of being-given, which precludes every meaningful doubt, […] of the evidence that absolutely sees and grasps the thing itself” (Hua II, 9–10). Evidence in the “pregnant” sense is understood as absolute, adequate, and apodictic:

[...] absolute and clear givenness, self-givenness in the absolute sense. This being-given, which precludes every meaningful doubt, and which is a straightforwardly immediate seeing and grasping of the meant objectivity itself, and so as it is, constitutes the pregnant concept of evidence […] understood as immediate evidence.

(Hua II, 35)

Thus adequacy defines evidence: “The fundamental thing is […] that evidence is […] a seeing consciousness that […] directly and adequately apprehends, that it signifies nothing other than adequate self-givenness” (Hua II, 59). Absolute, adequate, and apodictic evidence are inextricably linked, and adequate evidence, “the pregnant concept of evidence” (Hua II, 59), dominates all evidence (Hua II, 65–76). Here Husserl asserts that “givenness is everywhere” (Hua II, 74) but ignores its horizonality.

36.4.2. Distinction between adequate evidence and apodictic evidence

Eventually (1910/1911), concerns with horizons (Hua XIII, 154–94, 211–13) prompt the question: “Is absolute givenness ever to be reached?” (Hua XIII, 156) “Philosophy as Rigorous Science” (1911) still describes absolute evidence as adequate (Hua XXV, 6–7, 16–17, 28–34, 41–5,
Gradually (1917–1918), however, adequate evidence wanes (Hua XXX, 74, 351, 532) and apodictic evidence waxes (Hua XXX, 311–30). Subsequently (1922–1925), Husserl acknowledges that apodictic evidence is easier to obtain (Hua XXXV, 374–411). In 1922/1923, he characterizes adequacy and apodicticity as different features of the same evidence (Hua XXXV, 119), although he anticipates their separation (Hua XXXV, 130). In 1924, he argues that all adequate knowledge is apodictic but not all apodictic is adequate (Hua XXXV, xxxiv). In 1925, he wonders whether one should “retain the talk of adequation” (Hua XXXV, 404). Consequently, in First Philosophy II (1923–1925), he expresses doubts about the feasibility of adequate evidence:

Perhaps […] there lies in each and every evidence […] a certain relativity of such a kind that, whenever we speak of an ‘adequate evidence’ […], there is only a […] process of enhancement of relative evidences, […] a […] constant and free approximation to a goal relative to consciousness, which as such […] remains unattained. (Hua VIII, 34)

He describes the indubitability of adequate evidence: “If I attempt […] to approach [an adequate evidence] as doubtful, the impossibility that the evident […] be doubtful jumps out at me, and again in adequate evidence.” (Hua VIII, 35) He adds:

We can also designate this property of adequate evidence as its apodicticity. Vice versa, every apodictic evidence is clearly adequate. Therefore we can employ both expressions as equivalent, and […] prefer the one or the other, depending on whether we are placing special emphasis […] on the adequation or the apodicticity. (Hua VIII, 35)

Yet this is not a viable solution to the problem: “Must cognitions be apodictic […]? […] And now even adequately!” (Hua VIII, 396–7) If adequate evidence is apodictic and vice versa, and if adequate evidence is unattainable, then so is apodictic (Hua VIII, 472–9). Thus the connection between adequate evidence and apodictic evidence remains vexed (Hua VIII, 33–4, 310–12, 333–5, 336–55).

### 36.4.3. Dissociation of adequate evidence and apodictic evidence

In Cartesian Meditations (1931), Husserl asserts that evidence “can be more perfect and less perfect” (Hua I, 52), articulates adequacy and apodicticity as its two perfections, and attributes “a higher dignity” to apodicticity than to adequacy (Hua I, 55–6). He argues that, because evidence may be apodictic but not adequate, adequation and apodicticity “need not go hand in hand” (Hua I, 62). For example, the evidence of “the living self-present” is apodictic and adequate (Hua I, 62); that of the “I am”, merely apodictic (Hua I, 58–61); that of the existence of the world, neither (Hua I, 57–8). In any case, evidence is “self-givenness”:

In the widest sense, evidence designates a universal primal phenomenon of intentional life, as opposed to another consciousness-of, which can a priori be empty, fore-meaning, indirect, inauthentic; it designates the wholly distinctive manner of consciousness of the self-appearance, of the presenting of itself, of the giving of itself of a thing, a state of affairs, a universal, a value etc. in the final mode of itself there, given immediately intuitively, given originaliter.

(Hua I, 92–3)
In the comprehensive sense, evidence encompasses experience:

Experience in the usual sense is a special evidence; evidence in general […] is experience in a broadest and yet essentially unitary sense. Evidence is, of course, with respect to whatever objects, only an occasional occurrence in the life of consciousness; it designates, however, […] an essential basic feature of intentional life in general. Every consciousness in general either has itself the character of evidence […] or is essentially oriented toward [it].

(Hua I, 93)

Yet the ideal of adequate evidence is unrealizable for external experience and its objects (Hua I, 96–7). Thus claims of a “total evidence”, an “absolutely perfect evidence”, an “adequate fulfillment”, and an “absolute evidence” are tempered:

Not to actually produce this evidence – for all objective-real objects that would be a non-sensical goal, since […] for them an absolute evidence is an idea – but rather to lay clear its eidetic structure or the eidetic structure of the dimensions of infinity that systematically build up its ideal infinite synthesis according to all internal structures, is a very definite and huge task.

(Hua I, 98)

The aim, then, is not to realize the ideal (Hua I, 114–21) but to reflect on the given within its horizons (Hua I, 53, 62, 67, 69, 81–3, 85, 87–8, 91, 95–100, 102, 105, 107, 118).

36.4.4. Confirmation of dissociation of adequate evidence and apodictic evidence

In Experience and Judgment (1938), Husserl expressly rejects the notion that logical evidence is the measure of all evidence: “One believed […] that one could measure every cognition against an ideal of absolute, apodictically certain, cognition, and did not realize that this ideal of cognition […] could […] require a justification” (Husserl 1972, 10). He recognizes both the adequate evidence of formal logic and the inadequate evidence of material experience:

Thus the talk of “evidence”, “evident givenness”, here signifies nothing other than self-givenness [Selbstgegebenheit], the manner in which an object in its givenness can be characterized, relative to consciousness, as “there itself”, “there in the flesh”, in contrast to its mere presentification, the empty, merely indicative presentation of it.

(Husserl 1972, 11–12)

Evidence in this sense is inclusive: “As ‘evident’ […] we designate consciousness of any kind which is characterized with respect to its object as giving this object itself, without any question concerning whether this self-giving is adequate or not” (Husserl 1972, 12). Thus absolute-adequate-apodictic evidence is not the standard for all evidence: “By this, we deviate from the customary use of the term ‘evidence’, which as a rule is employed in cases which, correctly described, are those of adequate givenness […] and apodictic insight” (Husserl 1972, 12). So every kind of given gets its own style of giving:

But every kind of object has its own manner of self-giving [Selbstgebung], that is, evidence, and an apodictic evidence is not possible for every kind, for example, spatio-temporal
objects of external perception. Even they, however, have their own kind of original self-giving and thus their own kind of evidence.

(Husserl 1972, 12)

Hence experiential evidence, knowledge, and truth are as legitimate as logical evidence, knowledge, and truth (Husserl 1972, 339–47).

The shift in Husserl’s thinking about absolute, adequate, and apodictic evidence is a function of his recognition of the horizonality of intentionality. *The Idea of Phenomenology* ignores it and identifies absolute evidence as adequate and apodictic, but *Cartesian Meditations* studies it and distinguishes absolute evidence into adequate and apodictic. *Formal and Transcendental Logic* and *Experience and Judgment* confirm this.

### 36.5. Evidence and truth in the later Husserl

*The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936) focuses on the “life-world” (*Lebenswelt*) as “a realm of original evidences” and truths (Hua VI, 130). Scientific evidence (Hua VI, 131, 143–4, 203–4, 237, etc.) and life-worldly evidence (Hua VI, 131–3, 143, 232, etc.) are related insofar as the abstract, deductive, and objective evidence of the scientific world is founded on the concrete, intuitive, and subjective evidence of the life-world (Hua VI, 133). “Evidence”, a diverse concept (Hua VI, 367), “is not an empty universal, but rather differentiates itself according to the species, genera, and regional categories of being” (Hua VI, 169). Evidence varies with the evident (Hua XXIX, 116, 124, 283–4, 346, 402, 407, etc.).

Life-worldly experience exhibits structures, for example, *horizontality* (Hua XXXIX, 67–144, 332–4), *situationality* (Hua XXXIX, 145–206), *historicity* (Hua XXXIX, 409–556), and *temporality* (Hua XXXIX, 557–602), which indicate the *relativity* of life-worldly truth and being (Hua XXXIX, 673–733). Where evidence involves the self-giving of something life-worldly (Hua XXXIX, 234), there is no adequate evidence (Hua XXXIX, 317–18); there is no complete, final, and perfect experience of any such thing (Hua XXXIX, 212, 725, 785). Life-worldly truth has no “absolute finality” or apodicticity (Hua XXXIX, 191–2); it is contingent on confirming experience (Hua XXXIX, 209–10, 214, 224–30). “The relativism of life-worldly truth” (Hua XXXIX, 704–9) means that truth remains truth so long as experience confirms it: “The relative relativism has become an absolute relativism” (Hua XXXIX, 706). Yet “absolute truth” retains its *relative meaning* for human beings (Hua XXXIX, 725–33). The horizonality of experience assumes primacy over the adequacy of evidence.

According to *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, the concept of horizonality is missing in *Logical Investigations* and emerges in *Ideas I* (Hua XVII, 207; Geniušas 2012). Gradually, Husserl moves from an attraction to the ideal of absolute, adequate, and apodictic evidence and truth to a concentration on the reality of relative, inadequate, and dubitable evidence and truth (Heffernan 2015). The all-encompassing applications of phenomenology of evidence and truth to the investigation of intersubjective relationships (Hua XIII–XV), to ethical, practical, and religious questions (Hua XXVIII, Hua XXXVII, Hua XLII), and to “metaphysical” (or “existential”) “limit problems of phenomenology” (Hua XLII, 137–263), confirm this evolution (Hua XLII, 425–49 (“the universal theory of evidence”)).

### 36.6. Phenomenology of evidence and truth after Husserl

In *Introduction to Phenomenological Research* (1923–1924), Heidegger credits Husserl with recognizing that evidence is a matter of the evident but criticizes him for conceiving evidence in
Truth and evidence

terms of theoretically comprehending and determining objects (Heidegger 1994, 272–3, 317). In Being and Time (1927), Heidegger acknowledges his debt to Husserl but argues that evidence is not only theoretical but also existential for that entity (Seiendes) for whom being (Sein) is a question, namely Dasein (Heidegger 1977, 59, 115, 136, 218, 265, 288, 312). He articulates evidence as disclosure (Erschlossenheit), the process whereby truth discovers itself to Dasein; as there is no truth without Dasein, so there is no evidence either (Heidegger 1977, 200–30). This is consistent with Husserl’s transcendental idealism (Hua I, 114–21; Hua III/1, 120–1; Hua XVII, 239–42; Hua XXXVI, passim). Yet Heidegger’s concept of truth also evolves, from an uncovering “disclosure”, through the hiddenness and openness of the “clearing” (Lichtung), to the occurring of the “event” (Ereignis) (Heidegger 1989, 2004a/b; de Waelhens 1953; Tugendhat 1967; Sheehan 2015).

In Theory of Intuition in the Phenomenology of Husserl (1930), Levinas argues that Husserl overestimates adequate eidetic evidence and underestimates inadequate experiential evidence (Levinas 1930, 50–7, 114–15, 119–20, 162–3). In Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority (1961), he argues against Husserl that an encounter with and account of the relation with the Other (rapport de face à face) cannot be scientifically or sufficiently based on evidence (Levinas 1961, 62, 67, 127–9). Husserl’s detailed accounts of the varieties of evidence, including the evidence of and for others, suggest otherwise (Hua I, 121–77; Hua XIII–XV; Lee 2007).

In Phenomenology of Perception (1945), Merleau-Ponty argues that the primacy of the body in perception requires a new conception of evidence and truth. A “vehicle for being in the world” (véhicule de l’être au monde), the body emerges not as an object of consciousness but as the “view point” (point de vue) of perception (Merleau-Ponty 1945, 93–241). Its kinesthetic functions determine the constitution of worldly things before they become bearers of meanings for the understanding (Merleau-Ponty 1945, 243–424). Because each person lives in a world, interacts with others, speaks a language, and has a history, all of which generate experiences and determine meanings (Merleau-Ponty 1945, 425–96), evidence is tentative, truth is provisional, and neither is presuppositionless (Merleau-Ponty 1945, 17, 434, 455–61). Yet Husserl investigates the evidence and truth of the life-world, embodiment, existence, et cetera in his extensive research manuscripts (e.g., Hua XXXIX on the fallibility of worldly knowledge); Merleau-Ponty’s analyses are generally consistent with his phenomenology of evidence and truth in these areas.

In Speech and Phenomena (1967), Derrida insists that Husserl’s phenomenology represents the latest iteration of “the metaphysics of presence” (la métaphysique de la présence), which defines being as presence (Derrida 1967, 6–7, 9, 27, 60, 70, 83–4, 111, 114–15). Derrida claims that between Logical Investigations and Formal and Transcendental Logic Husserl’s philosophy remains essentially the same (Derrida 1967, 1). Yet the defining development in Husserl’s phenomenology of evidence is the emergence of the horizonality of intentionality (Hua III/1, 59–60, 91–4, 110–16, 144–5, 180–7; Hua XVII, 207–8; Hua XXXIX, passim). It enables his shift from a fixation on absolute, adequate, and apodictic evidence and truth to a focus on relative, inadequate, and dubitable evidence and truth. The development also shows that Husserl’s phenomenology is not merely a metaphysics of presence, because it is also a hermeneutics of absence. Empty intentions and fulfilling intuitions, and absent objects and present objects, are correlative and collaborative concepts. The alleged “logocentrism” of phenomenology is another issue.

In The Archaeology of Knowledge (1969) and The Postmodern Condition (1979), Foucault and Lyotard respectively question the grand narratives about modern science and society, but they hardly mention phenomenology of evidence and truth. In The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity (1985), Habermas suggests that it is impossible to advance reasoned arguments in intersubjective communication without appealing to evidence and truth. Yet, endorsing Derrida’s critique of Husserl’s phenomenology as logocentric (Habermas 1985, 203–11), he claims that evidentiary
experience in Husserl’s sense has only subjective validity and lacks objective (intersubjective) legitimacy (Habermas 1984, 35–59, 154–6). Whether he analyzes truth in terms of coherence, correspondence, consensus, or “pragmatic realism” (Habermas 1999, 7–64), Habermas fails to understand phenomenology on its own terms (Habermas 1984, 127–83).

In his “trilogy” (Marion 2001, xxii), Reduction and Givenness (1989), Being Given (1997), and In Excess (2001), Marion investigates “saturated phenomena” – where givenness overfills intentionality. In Reduction and Givenness, a historical study of the phenomenological method and its limitations as practiced by Husserl and Heidegger, Marion indicates further research regions. In Being Given, a conceptual investigation of givenness, the given, and “the gifted” (the one to whom the given is given), Marion investigates phenomena for which intuitions surpass intentions. In In Excess, a collection of detailed descriptions of particular phenomena, Marion examines saturated phenomena: the event, the idol, the flesh (the self), the icon, and revelation.

Applying the principle of “as much reduction, as much givenness” (“autant de réduction, autant de donation”), or “the more strictly the reduction is applied, the more givenness is increased” (Marion 1989, 303–5; Marion 2001, 20–3), Marion argues that reducing phenomena to their givenness prevents “the gifted” from getting “to the things themselves”, although his notion of givenness is simultaneously enhanced and complicated by the suggestion of a “giver” beyond the given, the giving, and the “gifted”. In any case, Marion thematizes phenomena that Husserl bracketed out of his rigorous descriptions in his published works, for example, God (Hua III/1, 109–10, 124–5, 175). Yet Husserl’s posthumously published writings show that phenomenology encompasses phenomena that cannot be treated within the bounds of the reduction, namely “limit problems of phenomenology” (Hua XXXIX, 875–6; Hua XLII, xix), for example, questions of metaphysics, or monadology, teleology, and philosophical theology (Hua XLII, 137–263).

Leading work in phenomenology of evidence, knowledge, and truth is currently being done not in the “continental” but in the “analytic” tradition (Berghofer 2018a–2020).

36.7. “Limit problems” of phenomenology of evidence and truth

Husserl concentrates on epistemic justification in the theoretical realm, but phenomenology of evidence and truth recognizes that human beings are not only transcendental egos but also natural selves: persons (Hua IV, 172–302). Evidence is only one of the many factors that motivate human belief. Grounds of belief include authority, character, culture, education, embodiment, emotion, ethics, habit, ideology, power, religion, tradition, and tribe (this is a short list). Citizens are not always informed; leaders, not always enlightened; investors, not always rational. Evidence is often not the chief factor in the formation of belief. Genetic analysis uncovers many grounds of beliefs, but it does not convert all of them into reasons for believing. This is an elementary lesson of the phenomenology of evidence and truth. Given his passionate commitment to philosophy as rigorous science, Husserl does not emphasize it. His rationalism without regrets posits that knowledge of truth requires experience of evidence: “so far evidence […] , so far […] knowledge” (Hua XVIII, 29).

References

Truth and evidence


