In the beginning was the *logos*: Hermeneutical remarks on the starting-point of Edmund Husserl's *Formal and transcendental Logic* *

GEORGE HEFFERNAN

Department of Philosophy, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN 46556

Abstract. According to the leading commentators and the author himself, Edmund Husserl's *Formal and transcendental Logic* is the most important work on phenomenological logic ever written. Nonetheless, it has, in general, gained far less attention than the *Logical Investigations* and the *Ideas on a pure Phenomenology and phenomenological Philosophy*. In particular, the argument of § 1 of the *Logic*, namely, that it is fruitful to start with the meanings of the expression "logos" in order to develop a genuinely transcendental logic, has received virtually no consideration. This paper takes a step towards filling this empty space by analyzing and criticizing the argument of § 1 as a problem to which (a) solution(s) must be found: First, it offers an introduction to the problem *per se*, which is one of the relationship between speech and reason; second, it tries to bring the given senses of "logos" to a higher grade of conceptual clarity and distinctness than that in the text; third, it attempts to decide whether and how far these senses of the word can be documented according to principles of Classical philology; fourth, it endeavors to determine exactly the relationship between the meanings of "logos" in § 1 and the senses of "logic" in §§ 1-107; finally, it strives to show that, with respect to the account of the relationship between speech and reason provided by Husserl in the *Logic*, there is, at best, a conflict and, at worst, a contradiction between the strategy outlined in § 1 and the tactics adopted in §§ 2ff. Throughout, the paper reads Husserl's "descriptions" as 'arguments' for his positions, thereby avoiding any of the obscurity sometimes infecting work in "Continental philosophy".

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“In the beginning was the Logos...”  
_Evangelium secundum Ioannem_, 1,1

“Geschrieben steht: ‘Im Anfang war das Wort!’”  
Hier stock’ ich schon! Wer hilft mir weiter?  
Ich kann das Wort so hoch unmöglich schätzen,  
Ich muss es anders übersetzen,  
Wenn ich vom Geiste recht erleuchtet bin.  
Geschrieben steht: im Anfang war der Sinn.  
Bedenke wohl die erste Zeile,  
Dass deine Feder sich nicht übereile!  
Ist es der Sinn, der alles wirkt und schafft?  
Es sollte stehn: im Anfang war die Kraft!  
Doch, auch indem ich dieses niederschreibe,  
Schon warnt mich was, dass ich dabei nicht bleibe.  
Mir hilft der Geist! Auf einmal seh’ ich Rat  
Und schreibe getrost: Im Anfang war die Tat!”  
_Goethe, Faust_, I, 1224–1237

“Ausgang von den Bedeutungen des Wortes Logos: ...”  
Husserl, _Formale und transzendentale Logik_, § 1 (heading)

1. Introduction

Not without reason, some leading commentators have praised Edmund Husserl’s _Formal and transcendental Logic_ as the architectonically most beautiful work by the Phenomenologist. Surely, the structural well-formity of this “Attempt at a Critique of logical Reason” is connected, _inter alia_, with the fact that the author, who at the time was almost seventy years old, wrote the treatise quite quickly from the end of 1928 to the beginning of 1929. In this respect, it is worthwhile to compare the origin and development of the _Logic_ with that of the _Logical Investigations_, which appeared in 1900/01, respectively, 1913/21 and may be regarded as Husserl’s other _magnum opus_ on logic. Remarkably, the author himself hesitated to designate the _Investigations_ as “a book or work in the literary sense”, at least without considerable qualification. While the _Investigations_ are born, grow and develop into that which someday may be called “a patch-work”, the _Logic_ is suddenly simply there. Or, at least _prima facie_, that is how it seems to be. After all, in the “Introduction” to the _Logic_ Husserl does mention that the book was written only after “the problems named