

Contributions To Phenomenology 102

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# Hegel and Phenomenology

 Springer

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# Husserl's Phenomenology of Spirit: A Reading of the *Crisis of European Sciences* and Related Manuscripts



Dermot Moran

*It is true not only for nineteenth-century Germany but also for the whole of Europe that philosophy developed under the sign of Hegel.*

(Brunschwicg 1927, 35)

*For the spirit alone is immortal [Denn der Geist allein ist unsterblich].*

(Vienna Lecture, Husserl 1954, 348)

**Abstract** In this paper I trace the revival of Hegel in France and Germany in the early twentieth century and point especially to the crucial role of phenomenology (both Husserl and Heidegger, as well as their students, e.g. Fink, Landgrebe and Marcuse) in incorporating Hegel into their mature transcendental philosophy. Indeed, Martin Heidegger was responsible for a significant revival of Hegel studies at the University of Freiburg, following his arrival there in 1928 as the successor to Husserl. Similarly, Husserl's student, Fink characterised Husserl's phenomenology in explicitly Hegelian terms as "the *self-comprehension of the Absolute*". The late Husserl seems to embrace the Hegelian vision when he presents his approach in the *Crisis* itself as a "teleological historical reflection".

**Keywords** Husserl · Hegel · Phenomenology · Spirit · History · Self-consciousness

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## 1 The Twentieth-Century Revival of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*: The French Wave

Hegel's influence dominated academic philosophy in Germany during the first half of the nineteenth-century. As is well known, his successors could be grouped between Left (Feuerbach, Marx) and Right Hegelians (Karl Friedrich Göschel, the successor to Hegel in Berlin, Georg Andreas Gabier, and Bruno Bauch). But Hegel suffered a significant eclipse in the second half of the nineteenth century. Thus, for instance, in his *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, Karl Barth wonders why Hegel never became a guiding figure for Protestant theology, equivalent to Thomas Aquinas for Catholic theology (Barth 2002, 370). In fact, it was the revival of Kantianism in Germany,<sup>1</sup> along with the rise of positivism (to which versions of Marxism also became aligned), which delivered the death blow to Hegel's influence,<sup>2</sup> both of which movements were suspicious of what they saw as Hegel's speculative mysticism and lack of appreciation of modern scientific method.<sup>3</sup> In this regard, Franz Brentano, in Vienna, was a significant figure in the rejection of Hegel as a windy mystic whose irrationalism marked the final phase of the decline of philosophy understood as a rigorous science.<sup>4</sup> Edmund Husserl, trained as a mathematician but then a student of Brentano in Vienna, from 1884 to 1886, was for a long time also hostile to Hegel. Thus, he regarded Hegel as having no regard from the logical Principle of Contradiction.

The reception of Hegel was somewhat different in France, Italy, and England, where varieties of Hegelianism flourished in the late nineteenth century. Hegelian Idealism became a dominant force in British philosophy after 1865<sup>5</sup> up to the time of Bertrand Russell (Bosanquet, Green, Bradley, McTaggart).<sup>6</sup>

Benedetto Croce famously produced his book *What is Living and What is Dead of the Philosophy of Hegel* in 1906 (Croce 1915), which saw Hegel as primarily interested in charting the very logic of philosophy itself, philosophy as an activity of comprehension that proceeds dialectically and whose aim is to think the universal in all its concreteness and dynamism. Croce claims that the "logic of the dialectic is therefore to be considered a true and original discovery of Hegel" (Croce 1915, 49). Yet Croce also sees Hegel's exploration of the dialectics of the negation as the

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<sup>1</sup>Alexandre Koyré offers reasons for the collapse of Hegel, which include his lack of appreciation for mathematics as an instrument in science in his 1931 *Rapport sur l'état des études hégéliennes en France*, reprinted in Koyré (1961).

<sup>2</sup>In fact, Auguste Comte was somewhat appreciative of Hegel. They shared a view of the organic nature of society, and they had a mutual friend Gustave d'Eichthal, who alerted Hegel to Comte, see Singer (2005, 172 n.11). Comte's view of the evolution of society placed Hegel at the metaphysical rather than the scientific stage.

<sup>3</sup>See Higgins and Solomon (2003) and Beiser (2014).

<sup>4</sup>See, for instance, Brentano (1999, 14–28).

<sup>5</sup>The Scottish Idealist J. H. Stirling published his *The Secret of Hegel* in 1865. He saw Hegel as the exponent of the "concrete universal". See Stern (2007).

<sup>6</sup>See Mander (2011).

culmination of a long history that includes Plato's Parmenides and the work of Nicholas of Cusa, Jacob Boehme, G. B. Vico, among others.<sup>7</sup>

Among Hegel's published works, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) was particularly neglected in the nineteenth century, until it was enthusiastically revived in the 1930s in France by Delbos, Koyré, and Kojève.<sup>8</sup> Victor Delbos taught a course on Hegel and post-Kantian Idealism at the Sorbonne from as early as 1909 to 1929. This revival of philosophical interest in Hegel's *Phenomenology* began not in Germany but in France,<sup>9</sup> primarily inspired by Alexandre Kojève's lectures delivered in Paris between 1933 and 1939 (Kojève 1947, 1980). In fact, Kojève had replaced Alexandre Koyré who had earlier lectured on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* in Paris at the École Pratique des Hautes Études from 1931 to 1933.<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, Kojève himself acknowledged the inspirational impact on him of Martin Heidegger's reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, showing that the German revival of Hegel was in fact behind Kojève. Kojève, inspired by the newly discovered 1844 manuscripts of Karl Marx, presented Hegel's *Phenomenology* as a "phenomenological description of human existence" as it manifests itself to the one experiencing it (Kojève 1980, 261). Both Koyré and Kojève construed Hegel's *Geist* as the specifically *human* spirit and understood the driving force for the historical movement of human existence as *negativity* (equivalent to *freedom*).<sup>11</sup> Inspired by Koyré's and Kojève's interpretations, and by the magnificent French translation of the *Phenomenology* by Jean Hippolyte (Hegel 1939–1941), a new generation of French philosophers—and among them, notably, prominent phenomenologists such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Raymond Aron, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean Wahl, and Paul Ricoeur<sup>12</sup>—combined Hegel's conception of the dialectical struggle for recognition

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<sup>7</sup>In this regard, see also Kolakowski (2005).

<sup>8</sup>I refer to Hegel (1952, 1979). For an excellent discussion of the history of the term "phenomenology" in Hegel and others, see Johannes Hoffmeister's introduction to the 1952 Meiner edition. For a discussion of the historical reception of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, see Pöggeler (1973, 170–230).

<sup>9</sup>See Roth (1988) and Althusser (1997). Althusser records that Kojève claimed that he could not have understood Hegel without the influence of Heidegger (Althusser 1997, 171). Of course, following on the earlier work of Delbos, Jean Wahl had already re-introduced Hegel into France with his *Le Malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel* (Wahl 1929). Koyré reviewed Wahl's book in 1930.

<sup>10</sup>Koyré studied with Husserl in 1908 but left for Paris when Husserl did not approve his thesis. Nevertheless, Koyré always acknowledged the impact of Husserl on him. Indeed, Koyré's reading of Hegel is strongly phenomenological. See Wahl (1966, 15–26). Kojève himself acknowledged that he was following many of Koyré's interpretations. See also Baugh (2003), who claims that the French tradition of interpreting Hegel in an "anthropological" manner began with Victor Delbos' lectures on post-Kantian Idealism in the Sorbonne in 1909 (Baugh 2003, 19). See also Canguilhem (1948). Delbos had been teaching Hegel in Paris since 1909 and it is probable that both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty attended his lectures.

<sup>11</sup>See, for instance, Kojève (1980, 216).

<sup>12</sup>Of course, phenomenologists were not the only French philosophers to take up Hegel; many philosophers inspired by the rediscovered early writings of Marx were similarly enthused. But in this essay, I shall concentrate on Hegel within phenomenology.

between Master and Slave with the Husserlian methodology for the description of consciousness, to produce dynamic and challenging accounts of the intersubjective encounter of free, intentional subjects acting in the world (e.g. Sartre's account of the look and of shame in *Being and Nothingness*, published in 1943).

Later in the twentieth century, Emmanuel Levinas,<sup>13</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer,<sup>14</sup> and Landgrebe (1968, 1977), and others, continued to build on and develop the Hegelian interconnections with phenomenology originally made by Koyré and Kojève, as did more recent commentators such as Hartmann (1988), Marx (1988), Otto Pöggeler, Findlay (1958), and Carr (1974).

A neglected chapter in the revival of Hegel in Germany in the first half of the twentieth century is the role played by phenomenology and especially by Heidegger and his students (Fink, Marcuse and Löwith). It is clear that Hegel was revived within the phenomenological movement, as I shall now explain.

## 2 The Freiburg Revival of Hegel: Heidegger, Fink, Marcuse, Löwith

Prior to this French revival of Hegel, it is a little acknowledged fact that the phenomenologist Martin Heidegger was responsible for a significant revival of Hegel studies at the University of Freiburg, following his arrival there in 1928 as the successor to Husserl in the Chair of Philosophy. Recent publications in the *Gesamtausgabe* series of Heidegger's lecture courses on Hegel confirm the extent and depth of the Messkirch master's sustained engagement with Hegel especially during the 1920s and 1930s, and continuing throughout his career.<sup>15</sup> At Freiburg, Heidegger made a determined effort to read Hegel (and especially his 1807

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<sup>13</sup>Derrida points out that Levinas is closer to Hegel than he is willing to admit (Cf. Derrida 1978, 99).

<sup>14</sup>Gadamer's first publications were primarily on Greek philosophy, but he did publish an article on Hegel (Gadamer 1939). After 1945, Gadamer was instrumental in founding the *Internationale Vereinigung zur Förderung der Hegel-Studien*. Subsequent studies include Gadamer (1976). On Gadamer's reading of Hegel and relationship with Heidegger, see Pippin (2002) and Dostal (2002).

<sup>15</sup>Heidegger had a much deeper interest in Hegel than is often appreciated. He regularly lectured on Hegel in the 1920s and 1930s at Marburg and Freiburg, including courses entitled: *Hegel, Wissenschaft der Logik I. Buch* (1925/1926); *Ontologie des Aristoteles und Hegels Logik* (1927); *Anfänger: Über Idealismus und Realismus im Anschluss an die Hauptvorlesungen (Hegels 'Vorrede' zur Phänomenologie des Geistes)*, (1929); *Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1930/1931); *Hegels Jenenser Realphilosophie* (1934) and *Hegel, Über den Staat* (1934/1935). Volumes relating to Hegel in Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe* include: *Der Deutsche Idealismus (Fichte, Hegel, Schelling) und die philosophische Problemlage der Gegenwart (Sommersemester 1929)* (Heidegger 2011); *Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes (Wintersemester 1930/31)* (Heidegger 1997); *Hegel und das Problem der Metaphysik* (Heidegger 2016), and *Hegel. I: Die Negativität* (1938/39), 2: *Erläuterungen der "Einleitung" zu Hegels "Phänomenologie des Geistes"* (1942) (Heidegger 2009). Heidegger also published a number of essays on Hegel (Heidegger 1970, 1988). On Heidegger's reading of Hegel see Schmidt 1988.

*Phenomenology of Spirit*)<sup>16</sup> in new and exciting ways. In part, Heidegger was signalling his break with the Neo-Kantianism of his teachers, e.g. Heinrich Rickert,<sup>17</sup> as well as distancing himself from the Neo-Kantianism of Ernst Cassirer (whom Heidegger famously debated in Davos in 1929). Heidegger had arrived in Freiburg from Marburg (another centre of Neo-Kantianism under Paul Natorp and others) but he came deeply influenced by the hermeneutics of the Marburg theologians.

Heidegger was insistent that Hegel's conception of phenomenology had nothing to do with the Husserlian method of the same name.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, inspired by Heidegger, a whole generation of phenomenologically trained students, e.g. Eugen Fink, Ludwig Landgrebe, Herbert Marcuse,<sup>19</sup> Karl Löwith,<sup>20</sup> and Hans Jonas,<sup>21</sup> all read Hegel and especially his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, seeking for ways to address the meaning of history and of human being in time. For Hegel, phenomenology refers to the description of the *process* of spirit coming to self-consciousness of itself and in so doing actualising its infinite potential.<sup>22</sup> Heidegger, with his emphasis on the finitude and historicity of Dasein, departed from the classic Hegelian approach that emphasised eternity.

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<sup>16</sup>On the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, see Pippin (1993).

<sup>17</sup>For Heinrich Rickert's interpretation of Hegel in relation to whether his system is 'open' or 'closed', see Przylebski (1993, 154–59). Several of Rickert's students were Hegel scholars, and Wilhelm Windelband himself in his later years had called for a revival of Hegel.

<sup>18</sup>Heidegger rejects a number of misinterpretations of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, including that it is a kind of typology of worldviews (presumably he has Wilhelm Dilthey in mind). For a study of Hegel's relation to Husserl's phenomenology, see Williams (1992, 95–120).

<sup>19</sup>Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979) completed his doctorate in literature in Freiburg in 1922 with a dissertation on the German novel, *Der deutsche Künstlerroman*. Following a period as a bookseller in Berlin, he returned to Freiburg to study philosophy with Martin Heidegger from 1928 to 1932. In 1928 he published an article on the relationships between phenomenology and dialectical materialism (Marcuse 1928, 45–68). In this article Marcuse argued that Marxist thought had rigidified and needed to be vivified through phenomenological exploration. In 1930 he completed his Habilitation thesis, *Hegels Ontologie und die Grundlegung einer Theorie der Geschichtlichkeit* (originally published in 1932 by Vittorio Klostermann; reprinted with a slightly different title, *Hegels Ontologie und die Theorie der Geschichtlichkeit* in 1978. Due to the Nazi rise to power in 1933 the degree was not awarded. Marcuse wrote in a letter to Löwith that the work read Hegel's *Logic* and *Phenomenology of Spirit* as providing the 'foundations for a theory of historicity', quoted in Wolin (2003, 153).

<sup>20</sup>Karl Löwith was writing about Hegel, Marx and Weber, in the early 1930s (Cf. Löwith 1964, 1993).

<sup>21</sup>See Jonas (1966). Jonas was extremely critical of Hegelian dialectics that tried to see history as the abstract "cunning of reason" rather than as the work of mortals, see Jonas (2008).

<sup>22</sup>As is well known, Hegel rarely uses the term "phenomenology" in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The term "phenomenology" appears in the Preface and in the last section "Absolute Knowing", where he writes: "Whereas in the phenomenology of Spirit each moment is the difference of knowledge and Truth, and is the movement in which that difference is cancelled, Science on the other hand does not contain this difference and the canceling of it" (Hegel 1979, § 805). ["Wenn in der Phänomenologie des Geistes jedes Moment der Unterschied des Wissens und der Wahrheit und die Bewegung ist, in welcher er sich aufhebt, so enthält dagegen die Wissenschaft diesen Unterschied und dessen Aufheben nicht..."]. The phenomenology of Spirit documents the self-unfolding and return to itself of conscious culture.



### 3 Edmund Husserl's Engagement with Hegel

In contrast with Heidegger's early championing of Hegel in his seminars and lecture courses, the old Freiburg master Edmund Husserl had comparatively little familiarity with Hegel until the 1930s.<sup>23</sup> Husserl's former assistant, Ludwig Landgrebe, records that "Husserl scarcely knew Hegel's works and at no time studied them" (Landgrebe 1972, 36). Indeed, when Herbert Marcuse sent Husserl a copy of his newly published 1932 *Hegels Ontologie und die Theorie der Geschichtlichkeit*,<sup>24</sup> Husserl replied that he did not have sufficient knowledge of Hegel to enable him to appreciate Hegel interpretations.<sup>25</sup> However, in the same letter, he also attests—against Hegel's speculative approach—that only phenomenology can give a proper treatment of the Absolute.

The person who most awakened Husserl's attention to Hegel was not Heidegger but his own student and assistant Eugen Fink (Bruzina 2004). As a young student, Fink attended both Husserl's and Heidegger's lectures in Freiburg. After Husserl's retirement, Fink continued to attend Heidegger's courses, including his famous 1931/1932 lecture course on Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Heidegger 1997a, b). Fink's Hegelian-style speculative thinking greatly influenced Husserl's thought, especially in the period after 1933, when Husserl was intellectually isolated due to the National Socialist enforced *Beurlaubung*. Recent studies by Bruzina (2004) and Luft (2002), among others, have shown the close and complex relations between Heidegger, Husserl and Fink in the period in question (1928–1938). Fink played a major role in contextualising Hegel in relation to Husserl's phenomenology and indeed in provoking Husserl to take Hegel seriously.<sup>26</sup>

Fink saw it as his own task to keep speculative philosophy alive *within* phenomenology. As he remarked to Ludwig Landgrebe in 1939: "I myself see the task of phenomenology to lie in getting *philosophy* going again in phenomenology".<sup>27</sup> By this Eugen Fink appeared to mean *speculative* philosophy of the Hegelian kind. During the early 1930s, Fink assisted Husserl in the development of his phenomenological system and in expanding the German version of the *Cartesian Meditations*, with which Husserl was still dissatisfied because of "major

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<sup>23</sup> See, for instance, Lauer (1977, 39–60), Staehler (2003) and Geniušas (2008, 27–36). See also Spiegelberg (1994, 12–19). Earlier discussions of the relationship between Husserl and Hegel include: De Waehrens (1959, 221–237) and Janssen (1970).

<sup>24</sup> Marcuse discusses Hegel in relation to Aristotle and Dilthey through the lens of Heidegger's *Being and Time* but without explicitly discussing him. Marcuse sees Hegel in Heideggerian terms, his central category is "movement" (*Bewegtheit*). See Abromeit (2004, 131–51). See also Feenberg (2005). Marcuse's second work on Hegel, *Reason and Revolution* was published in the USA in 1941 and was more explicitly Marxist in orientation.

<sup>25</sup> See Husserl's letter to Marcuse of 14th January 1932 in Husserl (1994, 401). Indeed, Bruzina also contends that Husserl seemed unable to grasp Hegel's thought, see Bruzina (2004, 401).

<sup>26</sup> See Bruzina (2004, 570). Although some of Husserl's students, including Edith Stein, felt Fink was misrepresenting Husserl's relation to Fichte and Hegel, see Luft (2002, 157 n. 40).

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Bruzina (2004, 539–40).

shortcomings in its presentation”, as Fink put it.<sup>28</sup> As Husserl's Assistant, Fink's role was to impose order and system on Husserl's reflections and to make his method more explicit.<sup>29</sup> Between 1930 and 1932, he worked with Husserl on his planned systematic presentation of phenomenology, even drafting a “layout for Husserl's System of Phenomenological Philosophy”.<sup>30</sup> Fink sought to impose a system on Husserl and the system he chose was a version of Kant's framework (architectonic) as found in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Fink was deeply influential not just in ordering Husserl's research notes but in drafting and co-writing texts. As a result, it is in fact notoriously difficult, if not impossible, to disentangle Husserl from Fink in the early 1930s. It is safe to say, however, that Husserl's approach parallels or intersects with Hegel's on many themes. Indeed Husserl's later writings may be regarded as an independent effort to rethink the meaning of transcendental first philosophy and an attempt to understand the trajectory of *spirit* (*Geist*), a term Husserl uses with increasing urgency during the 1930s. We can say therefore that Husserl's own aim was a new phenomenology of spirit, of human consciousness, existence, historicity and sociality, of everything that is included under the concept of *Geist*.

Fink was particularly preoccupied with Husserl's idea of phenomenology as an *absolute science* which therefore had to ground itself by self-conscious reflection, through what both Husserl and Fink will call paradoxically the “phenomenology of phenomenology” (Husserl 1954, 250, 1970, 247), in other words making phenomenology's starting-point and procedures self-transparent and presuppositionless so that phenomenology can be a genuine grounding science for all other sciences. Phenomenology must first ground itself, in order to be the ultimate “first philosophy”. In this regard Fink was especially drawn to the methodological self-awareness and narrative character of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.<sup>31</sup> Fink—perhaps guiding Husserl or perhaps simply expressing Husserl's own intentions in more Hegelian language—characterises phenomenology as “the *self-comprehension of the Absolute*”.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, for Fink, the Absolute exists only in its self-manifestation. Phenomenology, then, Fink argues, is the “theory of the appearance of the Absolute”.<sup>33</sup> In general Fink thinks the Hegel and Fichte are intimately connected with Husserlian transcendental idealism (Fink 1995, 156). For Fink, however, Husserl's use of the reduction is superior to Hegel's, while Hegel's account of the movement of absolute life is superior to Husserl's (quoted in Bruzina 2004, 408).

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<sup>28</sup> Husserl had published the French text as *Méditations cartésiennes: introduction à la phénoménologie* in 1931. He withheld the German text, however, with the intention of revising and expanding it. It was not published until 1950 as *Cartesische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge* (Husserl 1950). The English translation by D. Cairns is Husserl (1960).

<sup>29</sup> See especially Husserl's letters to Albrecht 29 December 1930 and 22 December 1931.

<sup>30</sup> See Bruzina (2004, 212).

<sup>31</sup> See Denker (2003, 107–137).

<sup>32</sup> See Fink (1995, 152). See for instance: “The truth is that the Absolute is not the unity of two non-self-sufficient moments that, while indeed mutually complementary, also delimit and finitize each other, but is the *infinite unity of the constant passage of one 'moment' (constitution) to the other (world)*” (Fink 1995, 146).

<sup>33</sup> Fink as quoted in Bruzina (2004, 407).

Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* presented phenomenology as making the first genuine breakthrough into transcendental subjectivity. Husserl often presents the "self-explication" (*Selbstausslegung*) of the transcendental ego as part of the "great tasks" (Husserl 1954, §29) of transcendental phenomenology. This topic is beset by paradoxes such as: How can the ego be that which constitutes the world and also that which is concretised, mundanised and corporealised in the world? Both Fink and Husserl seriously maintain that the performance of the epoché effectively strips away everything human. As Fink puts it, Husserl's philosophy, because of this reduction, is no longer "captivated in the horizon of the world" (Fink 1995, 158). The natural attitude is much more than one attitude among many, it is the specifically *human attitude*; and once suspended, the phenomenological subject becomes one (in a kind of Hegelian synthesis) with the Absolute process itself. There is a suspension of the human in the *epoché* as Husserl's *Ideas* had already indicated. In this regard, Fink maintained that the traditional interest of philosophy in specifying the nature of non-human (i.e. divine) consciousness and German Idealism's interest in intellectual intuition were forerunners to phenomenology's concept of "the disengaged spectator" or "transcendental onlooker" whose own status is such a puzzle (Fink 1995, 77).

Certainly, Husserl often speaks of a certain internal "splitting of the ego" (*Ichspaltung*) that is brought about by the interruption of the natural attitude by the transcendental *epoché*. Fink in fact pushed the distinction between the constituting transcendental ego and the phenomenologizing ego much further than Husserl wanted (Fink 1995, 1). Fink claims that the phenomenologizing ego (the transcendental onlooker) is not an "ego" at all in the mundane sense, rather it is a kind of "pre-ego" with its own "pre-being", a kind of nothingness, a "meontic" (Fink's term) source for both the self-constitution of the ego and thereby the constitution of the world. Indeed, Fink even claims somewhat cryptically that phenomenological knowledge is *knowledge of the meontic*, i.e. knowledge of the non-being that precedes being (quoted in Bruzina 2004, 377).

#### 4 Husserl on Intersubjectivity, Historicity, and Transcendental Life

Let us now look in more detail at Husserl's evolving understanding of Hegel and German Idealism generally. Although some commentators have claimed that Husserlian phenomenology can never reach to exhibiting the infinite transcendental subject of Hegelian Idealism, there is a great deal of evidence that Husserl from the 1920s on conceived of phenomenology (both constitutive and genetic) as exhibiting the *history of transcendental life* in its inner teleology and full concreteness. Indeed, Husserl's genetic phenomenology is an explicit attempt to comprehend phenomenologically the domains of birth, death, waking, sleep, and other "generative" phenomena (Husserl 1954 §55), regions that cannot be brought directly to intuitive fullness in human experience (a point of course that Heidegger makes in

different register primarily about our anticipation of dying) but which can be accessed indirectly through eidetic variation of the present 'waking' ego in its rational maturity. Husserl even claims (quite frequently) that while humans die and necessarily so, the transcendental ego is immortal (e.g., Husserl 1954, 338). Husserl also wants to understand human spirit in its sociality and historicity. He speaks of the "the discovery of absolute intersubjectivity [*die Entdeckung der absoluten Intersubjektivität*] ...objectified in the world as the whole of humankind" (Husserl 1954, 275, 1970, 340).

Husserl always situates this discussion (as in *Crisis*) in terms of his attempt to understand the inner teleology of modern philosophy. In fact, Husserl's parallels Hegel's interests in several dimensions, for instance: rethinking the meaning Greek "origins" or breakthrough into philosophy, discovery (*Entdeckung*) of the theoretical attitude, the intersubjective constitution of culture, the forms of spiritual life, and the notion of "reason in history".

Edmund Husserl's early training was primarily in mathematics, hence his philosophical formation was somewhat limited. Through his friend and mentor Thomas Masaryk (1850–1937), he was introduced to the classical empiricists; and this interest was reinforced by Franz Brentano, an admirer of J. S. Mill and Auguste Comte (1798–1858), the so-called "father of positivism".<sup>34</sup> In his Göttingen years, as the *First Philosophy* (1923–1924) lectures make clear, Husserl developed a deep understanding of the history of modern philosophy from Descartes to Kant. Earlier he had relied heavily on survey works such as Ernst Cassirer's *Das Erkenntnisproblem* (Cassirer 1906–1907) especially the first two volumes (1906, 1907), for its accounts of modern philosophy. But in later works such as his *Formal and Transcendental Logic* (1929), especially §100 which sketches a history of transcendental philosophy beginning with Hume, "the first to grasp the universal concrete problem of transcendental subjectivity" (Husserl 1969, 256), and *Crisis of European Sciences* (1936), Husserl demonstrates his ability to think through in an original manner this tradition of modern philosophy as in fact a 'breakthrough' into transcendental philosophy.

Nineteenth-century Kantians and Positivists had a particular contempt for Hegel's woolly "mysticism" and Husserl often expresses admiration for the intellectual élan of positivism. In *Ideas I* (1913), he is even happy to call himself a "positivist":

If "*positivism*" is tantamount to an absolutely unprejudiced grounding of all sciences on the "positive," that is to say, on what can be seized upon originaliter, then *we* are the genuine positivists. (Husserl 1983, 39, 1997, 38)

He felt, however, that positivism too quickly denied the validity of intuiting essences (Husserl 1977 §25) and completely ignored the subjective dimension. In that sense, positivism with its refusal to see beyond facts "decapitates" philosophy (Husserl

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<sup>34</sup>Husserl's Second Logical Investigation, for instance, is a sustained critical engagement with empiricist conceptions of knowledge.

1970, 9). Nevertheless, Husserl also sees phenomenology as a completion of both the positivist and the rationalist projects:

Phenomenology is the most extreme completion of rationalism, it is also to be reckoned just as much as the most extreme completion of empiricism. (Husserl 2002a, 288)

His main claim is that previous philosophies—be they positivist, empiricist or rationalist—have underestimated the complexity and diversity of thought forms. Phenomenology then proposes a more inclusive way of attending to the diversity of experience, the diversity of givenness, as he would say. Indeed, as his thought developed, he came to see phenomenology as expressing the inner essence of all genuine philosophy. In this sense, phenomenology, as he writes in 1922/1923, is the “original method (*Urmethode*) of all philosophical methods” (Husserl 2002a, 51).

As a philosopher in Germany in the early twentieth century, Husserl could not avoid exposure to Neo-Kantianism. The slogan “*zurück zu Kant*” had already appeared in German thought in 1865 in Otto Liebmann’s (1840–1912) *Kant und die Epigonen* (Liebmann 1865) and indeed Neo-Kantianism was the dominant philosophical position in Germany in the first part of the twentieth century, challenged primarily by Husserl’s phenomenology. Husserl admired Hermann Lotze (especially his *Cosmology*) and was personally close to Paul Natorp, with whom he regularly corresponded. In his Freiburg years he maintained professional relations with Rickert and Cassirer, as their correspondence attests. Kant, however, always presented a major challenge to Husserl. Already in the *Prolegomena* to the *Logical Investigations* he expressed his unhappiness with then current psychologistic readings of Kant (Benno Erdmann). Later, in his transcendental period, Husserl criticised Kant’s lack of philosophical radicality (in contrast to Descartes). In the *Crisis* Husserl talks about the revival of a “multicoloured” Kant [*ein vielfarbiger Kant*] (Husserl 1954, 198) and complains that this has given rise to confusion and that the “history of philosophy has been substituted for philosophy of philosophy has become a personal worldview” [*zur persönlichen Weltanschauung*] (Husserl 1954, 199, 1970, 196).

## 5 The Early Husserl’s Suspicion of Hegel: The Influence of Brentano

In these extended interpretative engagements with the history of modern philosophy, however, although Husserl regularly engages with Kant, he never confronts Hegel. For instance, in *Erste Philosophie* (1923–1924), Hegel merits only a single mention in connection with the movement of rationalism in modern philosophy from Descartes through Spinoza, Leibniz to Kant and Hegel (Husserl 1956, 182). At least until the early 1930s and his collaboration with Fink, Husserl’s attitude to Hegel had been primarily not just negative but indifferent. He was deeply influenced by his teacher Brentano’s conviction that Hegelian philosophy was a kind of groundless speculation that weakened the claim of philosophy to be a rigorous science. In

his 1895 essay, *The Four Phases of Philosophy*, Brentano maintained that philosophy inevitably progressed in four phases, including alternating phases of abundance and different stages of decline (Brentano 1999, 14–28). According to this periodization, all great periods of growth in philosophy were characterised by the preponderance of the *purely theoretical interest* (*ein reines theoretisches Interesse*) and develop a method proper to the subject matter (Brentano 1999, 9). In this stage philosophy is pursued as a theoretical science. Thus, in the period from Thales to Aristotle, there was the steady growth of pure *theoria* (similarly, with Aquinas in the thirteenth century, and Bacon and Descartes in the modern period).

After a while, theoretical activity weakens, and *practical interests* begin to dominate, (e.g., Stoicism, Epicureanism). This phase of applied philosophy is in turn followed by a third phase when *scepticism* grows, counterbalanced by the construction of sects and dogmatic philosophies (among which Brentano includes Kant). Finally, in a fourth phase, *mysticism*, intuitionism and irrationalist world views, “pseudo-philosophy”, and religious *Schwärmerei*, start to proliferate (e.g., Plotinus; Eckhart and Cusanus; Schelling and Hegel) leading to a moral and intellectual collapse (Brentano 1999, 58). Then the cycle begins again.

Brentano's schematic approach to the history of philosophy strongly influenced Husserl and left him with a permanent distaste for speculative systems in general, and especially the Hegelian. For example, Hegel's is named only twice in the *Logical Investigations* in the *Prolegomena* §40 (Husserl 1975, 147, 2001a, 93). He is listed among philosophers (beginning with Epicurus) who rejected the Law of Contradiction (Husserl 1975, 147, 2001a, 93). For Husserl, this rejection puts Hegel in the company of madmen. Of course, Husserl's real target in *Prolegomena* §40 is in fact not so much Hegel as the Neo-Kantian Benno Erdmann (1851–1921) whom he accuses of psychologism. In *Prolegomena* Appendix to §61 Bernard Bolzano is described as belonging to the time of Hegel (Husserl 1975, 228, 2001a, 143) and it is clear that Husserl contrasting the logical approach of Bolzano with the illogical approach of Hegel.

In his next publication *Philosophy as a Rigorous Science* (1910–1911), Husserl directly targets the “worldview philosophy” of thinkers such as Dilthey, often seen as being a development of Hegelian historicism. Husserl singled out Dilthey's “philosophy of world-views” [*Weltanschauungsphilosophie*] as denying the objective validity of cultural formations.<sup>35</sup> In this essay, Husserl gives a very Brentanian verdict on Hegel's philosophy and its influence. Husserl writes:

However much Hegel insists on the absolute validity of his method and doctrine, his system nevertheless lacks the critique of reason that first makes possible the scientific character of philosophy. Connected with this, however, is that Hegel's philosophy, like romantic philosophy in general, acted in the ensuing years in the sense of either a weakening or a falsification of the drive for the constitution of rigorous philosophical science. (Husserl 1910–1911, 292, 2002a, 252)

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<sup>35</sup>Years later, in his 1925 lectures, Husserl made amends, acknowledging Dilthey's contribution to descriptive psychology.

This last sentence is a purely Brentanian sentiment. In fact, Husserl sees Hegelianism as giving rise to the reaction of *naturalism*, which “with its skepticism, which abandoned all absolute ideality and objectivity of validity, has determined the worldview and philosophy of recent years”, Husserl writes. For Husserl, Hegelianism was right (as was positivism) only in so far as it recognized the demand that philosophy be a systematic *science*, but it failed completely, as a form of Romanticism, to carry through its task.

Hegel’s philosophy had in fact a quite different outcome: “worldview philosophy” that ends in scepticism:

With the sudden turn of Hegel’s metaphysical philosophy of history into a skeptical historicism, the emergence of the new “*worldview philosophy*” was essentially determined that precisely in our days seems to be spreading rapidly and that, incidentally, judging by its largely antinaturalistic and occasionally even antihistoricistic polemics, by no means wants to be skeptical. However, insofar as it shows itself to be, at least regarding its whole intention and procedure, no longer dominated by that radical will to scientific doctrine that constituted the great march of modern philosophy to Kant, the talk of a weakening of the drive for philosophical science referred specifically to it. (Husserl 1910–1911, 293, 2002a, 252)

Even in this essay, however, Husserl, echoing Hegel, recognises that the “life of spirit” [*Geistesleben*], as he calls it, takes many forms. Furthermore, like Hegel, he believes that philosophy has the function of unifying spiritual life and reflecting it:

Every great philosophy is not only a historical fact, but in the development of the spiritual life of mankind it also has a great, indeed unique teleological function, namely as the highest intensification of the life-experience, culture, and wisdom of its age. (Husserl 1910–1911, 329, 2002a, 284)

In this essay, *Philosophy as Rigorous Science*, Husserl also recognizes that there is a need for a systematic *science* of spirit:

If through inner intuition we immerse ourselves in the unity of the life of spirit, we can feel our way into the motivations prevailing therein and also “understand” the essence and development of the respective form of spirit in its dependence on the spiritual motives of unity and development. In this way everything historical becomes “understandable,” “explicable” for us in its peculiarity of “Being,” which is precisely the “Being of spirit,” unity of internally mutually-conditioning moments of a sense and therefore unity of taking shape and developing in accordance with inner motivations and that sense. Also in this way, then, art, religion, morals, and the like can be intuitively inquired into. Likewise the worldview, which is closely related to them and at the same time comes to expression in them, and which, if it assumes the forms of science and lays claim to objective validity after the manner of science, used to be called ‘metaphysics’ or even ‘philosophy’. Hence with regard to such philosophies the great task arises of exploring their morphological structure and typology, as well as their developmental connections, and of bringing to historical understanding the motivations of spirit that determine their essence by living in the most inward accord with those philosophies. How much that is of significance and indeed admirable is to be achieved in this regard is shown by Wilhelm Dilthey’s writings, particularly the recently published treatise on the types of worldview. (Husserl 1910–1911, 323, 2002a, 279)

These sentiments, written during Husserl’s early middle period, is surprisingly close to a Hegelian understanding of the development of spirit.

## 6 The Mature Husserl's Engagement with German Idealism (Kant, Fichte)

During a sustained period of intensive research (and few publications) Husserl devoted an enormous amount of energy to explicating the genuine sense of—and various possible approaches into—transcendental philosophy, which, from around 1908, he explicitly construed as an *idealism*, with a growing sense that he was recovering the true sense of past German idealisms (especially Kant and Fichte). The first published announcement of this idealism (without using the word) came in *Ideas I* (1913), a move widely repudiated by Husserl's more realist Munich and Göttingen followers.<sup>36</sup> Husserl later conceded that this “scandal” affected the reception of *Ideas I*. In the twenties, beginning with his *Introduction to Philosophy* lectures and his *London Lectures* (both 1922) Husserl now planned an ambitious and far-reaching “system” of transcendental philosophy (Husserl 2002b, 49).<sup>37</sup> Although he subsequently explicitly rejected the term “system”,<sup>38</sup> nevertheless he continued to emphasise his idealism in all his later works, e.g. *Formal and Transcendental Logic* (see §99), *Cartesian Meditations* (§41), *Crisis* (§26 ff) and in 1930 Author's Preface to the English translation of *Ideas I* (1930).

Given Husserl's early hostility to Hegel, it is somewhat surprising to find Husserl lecturing regularly on Fichte's *Bestimmung des Menschen* (1800)<sup>39</sup> between 1903 and 1918 (Husserl 1986, 1995). This is an Enlightenment text on human self-development, which is among the more popular of Fichte's works. It focuses on human cultural perfection including treating others with freedom and dignity, recognising the need for a political order and even discussing world peace. In order to achieve this end, one must go beyond the sensible world to the “supersensible world” [*übersinnliche Welt*] or “world of reason” which is governed by rational laws. This “second world” [*zweite Welt*] is the moral world—not in the future but in the now, that in which human beings act. This world has to be seen and envisaged and this needs a spiritual eye.

Husserl's interest in Fichte had been originally stimulated by his student Emil Lask's 1902 study on Fichte, *Fichtes Idealismus und die Geschichte*,<sup>40</sup> as well as through his contact with Jonas Cohn (1869–1947), a professor at Freiburg from 1901 to 1933, who was one of Rickert's first *Habilitation* students and was deeply

<sup>36</sup>Most of Husserl's students, including Adolf Reinach, Edith Stein, Roman Ingarden, Hedwig Conrad-Martius, Gerda Walther and Martin Heidegger, rejected this idealist turn.

<sup>37</sup>See Husserl's letter to Roman Ingarden of 31 August 1923, in Husserl (1968a, 26).

<sup>38</sup>Letter of Husserl to Robert Parl Welch, 17/21 June 1933, in Husserl (1994, 459).

<sup>39</sup>See Nuzzo (2010, 97–118).

<sup>40</sup>Husserl lectured on Fichte's *Bestimmung des Menschen* for the first time in the summer semester of 1903 and repeated the course in the summer semester of 1915 and again in 1918. Husserl had read Emil Lask, *Fichtes Idealismus und die Geschichte* (Tübingen, 1902), reprinted in Lask (2002). See also Schuhmann and Smith (1993). Lask was also an important influence on Georg Lukacs, see Rosshoff (1975) and Heinz (1997). Heidegger was also drawn to Fichte in that period, see Denker (1997). Fichte, in fact, is the source of the term “facticity”.



influenced by Georg Simmel's life-philosophy. Cohn wrote on the history of dialectic, *Theorie der Dialektik. Formenlehre der Philosophie* (Cohn 1923) and on the concept of the infinite, *Geschichte des Unendlichkeitsproblems in abendländischen Denken bis Kant* (1896).<sup>41</sup> Husserl is especially interested in Fink's understanding of Kant's notion of the transcendental ego. He writes in *Fichtes Menschenideal* that the Fichtean ego is not the individual human ego:

The I of Fichte, the pure or absolute I, is nothing other than this subjectivity in which (according to the systematic play of actions) the phenomenal world with all its human I's first comes to be. To write the history of the I, of the absolute intelligence, is therefore to write the history of the necessary teleology in which the world as phenomenal comes to progressive creation, comes to creation in this intelligence. This is no object of experience but a metaphysical power. Because we knowing humans, nevertheless, are I's in which this absolute I has split itself, we can, through intuitive immersion in that which belongs to the pure essence of the I, of subjectivity, reconstruct the necessary teleological processes out of which the world inclusive of ourselves (in what for us is an unconscious holding sway of absolute intelligence) is formed in teleological necessity. (Husserl 1986, 276, 1995, 118)<sup>42</sup>

Husserl is therefore interested in tracking the "necessary teleology in which the world as phenomenal comes to progressive creation". Husserl continues:

If we proceed so, we are philosophers. And the only genuine task of philosophy is to be found here. It consists in grasping the world as the teleological product of the absolute I and, in the elucidation of the creation of the world in the absolute, making evident its ultimate sense. Fichte believes he is able to achieve this and to have achieved this. (Husserl 1986, 276, 1995, 118)

Against Fichte, Husserl does not believe in the idea of "deducing" the world from transcendental subjectivity but he does affirm that transcendental subjectivity is the source of all "meaning and being" [*Sinn und Sein*] or "meaning and validity" [*Sein und Geltung*]. Indeed, Husserl continues to acknowledge the importance of Fichte in the *Crisis* (Husserl 1954, 227).<sup>43</sup>

While many of Husserl's earlier followers at Munich and Göttingen were realists who were unhappy with Husserl's turn to the transcendental ego, Eugen Fink sought to make sense of it by giving it a source in a "pre-ego" [*Vor-Ich*] or "original ego" [*Ur-Ich*]. Of course, Husserl himself often appears quite Fichtean in some of his pronouncements concerning the transcendental ego, e.g.: "the I is not thinkable without a not-I to which it intentionally relates" [*Das Ich ist nicht denkbar ohne ein Nicht-Ich, auf das es sich intentional bezieht*] (Hua XIV 245). In the *Crisis* §54, he speaks of the *Ur-Ich* as the ego that is performing the *epoché* and which is 'personally indeclinable'.

From around 1905, Husserl was reading Kant seriously. Indeed, he sympathised with the Neo-Kantians in their repudiation of naturalism. Thus, in a letter dated 20 December 1915, addressed to Heinrich Rickert, Husserl commented that he found

<sup>41</sup> See Klockenbusch (1989) and Heitmann (1999).

<sup>42</sup> Husserl seems only to have read Fichte's popular works and did not read the *Wissenschaftslehre*.

<sup>43</sup> For Husserl's relationship with Fichte see Fisette (1999), Hyppolite (1959), Rockmore (1979), Mohanty (1952), and Tietzen (1980).

himself in alliance with German idealism against the common enemy: “the naturalism of our time”.<sup>44</sup> In this letter, Husserl says that even “in his naturalistic beginnings” his soul “was filled with a secret nostalgia [*Sehnsucht*] for the old Romantic land of German Idealism” (Husserl 1994, vol. 5, 178). In his 1924 Address to the *Kant Gesellschaft* he sought to address directly the relationship between transcendental phenomenology and Kantian transcendental philosophy and this is an important document for Husserl's growing engagement with Kant.<sup>45</sup> Indeed he more or less repeats this critique of Kant in his *Crisis of European Sciences* more than a decade later.

Kant failed to make a proper breakthrough to transcendental subjectivity and to chart its true domain (Husserl 1954, 202). Husserl insists, with Kant, that transcendental idealism is also an empirical realism. Husserl is not in any way attaching a doubtful or illusory status to the objects in the world. It is rather the *sense* [*Sinn*] of world that is forever altered by the transcendental approach. Moreover, Husserl endorses transcendental philosophy's opposition to scepticism and especially to Hume's mitigated scepticism:

The genuine transcendental philosophy ... is not like the Humean and neither overtly nor covertly a sceptical decomposition of the world cognition and of the world itself into fictions, that is to say, in modern terms, a “philosophy of As-If.” Least of all is it a “dissolution” [*Auflösung*] of the world into “merely subjective appearances,” which in some still senseful sense would have something to do with illusion. It does not occur to transcendental philosophy to dispute the world of experience in the least .... (Husserl 1956, 246–7, 1974a, 22)

In his *Cartesian Meditations*, originally delivered as lectures in Paris in 1929, Husserl proclaims that “... phenomenology is eo ipso ‘transcendental idealism’, though in a fundamentally and essentially new sense” (Husserl 1950, 118, 1960, 86). Here again he affirms that this idealism is not the product of arguments against realism, but emerges rather from close investigations of constituting consciousness in all its possible modalities. Thus, he asserts:

*The proof of this idealism is therefore phenomenology itself.* Only someone who misunderstands either the deepest sense of intentional method, or that of transcendental reduction, or perhaps both, can attempt to separate phenomenology from transcendental idealism. (Husserl 1950, 119, 1960, 86)

Husserl's critical engagement with Kant and his embrace of phenomenology as a radical —indeed the only true version—of transcendental idealism, however, did not immediately lead him explicitly to appreciate the problematic of *history* or the role of Hegel especially in attempting to recognise the inner rationale of history.

An important text for Husserl's commitment to German Idealism, albeit in a renewed and radical sense, is his Author's Preface to Boyce-Gibson's English translation of *Ideas I* that appeared in 1930 which reaffirms that *Ideas I* is a work of

<sup>44</sup>Cf. Husserl's letter to Rickert, 20 December 1915, in Husserl (1994, vol. 5, 178). See Kern (1964, 35).

<sup>45</sup>See *Kant und das Idee der transzendente Philosophie*, in Husserl (1956, 230–87). See also Husserl (1974a, 9–56).

“pure or transcendental phenomenology”, an a priori eidetic science which explores a new “absolutely independent realm of direct experience”—“transcendental subjectivity” (Husserl 1931, 11). Husserl claims that this realm of experience is only reachable through a radical alteration of the natural attitude. By performing the “transcendental-phenomenological reduction” the domain of the ego and transcendental subjectivity comes into view. Husserl is preoccupied with the parallelism between this inquiry and psychological subjectivity of the inner life and hence places a great deal of emphasis on the change of attitude (which he acknowledges can seem like a mere “nuance”, Husserl 1931, 15) required by the *epoché*. In this Preface, Husserl admits that *Ideas I* lacks “the proper consideration of the problem of transcendental solipsism or of transcendental intersubjectivity, of the essential relation of the objective world, that is valid for me, to others which are valid for me and with me” (Husserl 1931, 18). Husserl says these issues should have been addressed in a second volume but opposition to idealism and the alleged solipsism of *Ideas I*, “seriously impeded the reception of the work” (Husserl 1931, 18). Husserl insists he has taken nothing back and his objections to self-standing realism and its opposing idealism remain. Husserl will concede only the “incompleteness” of his exposition (Husserl 1931, 19).

Husserl is constantly seeking a fresh formulation of the transcendental problematic. Husserl wants transcendental phenomenology not to begin with assumptions but to reflect on its own beginning: “Philosophy can take root only in radical reflexion upon the meaning and possibility of its own scheme” (Husserl 1931, 27). One must adopt the “radical attitude of autonomous self-responsibility” (Husserl 1931, 29). Transcendental phenomenology, he insists, is not a speculative theory, but a self-grounding science that lays the a priori framework and condition for all other sciences but the natural and the historical sciences. The sole task of this transcendental science is clarifying the meaning of the world and “the precise sense in which everyone accepts it... as really existing” (Husserl 1931, 21). For Husserl the non-existence of this world always remains thinkable. The existence and meaning of the real world is relative to transcendental subjectivity (Husserl 1931, 21). Husserl speaks of the “transcendental society of ‘ourselves’” (Husserl 1931, 21–22). It is *within* intersubjectivity that the real world is constituted as objective, as being there “for everyone”. This 1931 Preface to the English translation of *Ideas I* is very close to what Husserl had already attested in his 1929 *Formal and Transcendental Logic* (Husserl 1974b, §§100 ff).

## 7 Hegelianism in the Late Husserl’s *Crisis of European Sciences*

Husserl reconciled with German Idealism in his later writings and especially in the *Crisis*. Indeed, Hegel’s name appears most frequently (of all the works Husserl published in his lifetime) in the *Crisis*. Hegel features prominently in Husserl’s

*Crisis* Part Three B, especially in §§ 56 and 57. He now acknowledges that German Idealism had grasped the true sense of philosophy although it had failed to ground it appropriately. Husserl is moving closer to Hegel especially when he develops his historical introduction to transcendental phenomenology. Following the Neo-Kantians, Husserl had been increasingly preoccupied with the problematic of the methodological relationships between the natural and human sciences (*Natur- and Geisteswissenschaften*) especially in his *Natur und Geist* lectures. He saw the need for phenomenology not just to address the growing crises in the natural sciences but also the human sciences. In the *Crisis*, accordingly, Husserl addresses not just modern mathematical and natural sciences, but also the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*). The proper methodology of the human sciences had been, of course, a subject of serious debate among German philosophers, including Wilhelm Dilthey and the Neo-Kantians (especially Windelband, Rickert, Cassirer), as well as among the followers of French positivism (Comte, Durkheim, etc). Husserl had been discussing it not just in *Philosophy as a Rigorous Science* but also in *Ideas II* and in his *Nature and Spirit Lectures* (Husserl 2001b). Already in *Ideas I* § 1 Husserl leaves it as an open question whether the cultural sciences share the method of the natural sciences. Human cultural history, especially as reflected in the history of philosophy, comes to the fore in Husserl's lectures in *Natur und Geist* and also in *Erste Philosophie*. Similarly, in a text associated with the *Crisis* (but written prior to 1930) Husserl raises the question on the methodology of the natural sciences and asks whether there can be a similar methodology also for the human sciences and for history:

Is there a method for encompassing the realm of the “spirit,” of history, in all its essential possibilities, so that one can arrive at “exact” truths through exact concepts for this realm? (Husserl 1954, 301n, 1970, 322n)

Having acknowledged that the natural sciences now claim a privileged position in specifying the “truth of the world”, with almost a desperate tone, he now asks a question concerning the meaning and teleology of history at the outset of the *Crisis*:

Scientific objective truth is exclusively a matter of establishing what the world, the spiritual as well as the material world, is in fact. But can the world, and human existence in it truthfully have meaning if the sciences recognize as true only what is objectively established in this fashion, and if history has nothing to teach us than that all the shapes of the spiritual world [*Gestalten der geistigen Welt*], all the conditions of life, ideals, norms upon which man relies, form and dissolve themselves like fleeting waves, that it always was and ever will be so, that again and again reason must turn into nonsense, and well being into misery. Can we console ourselves with that? Can we live in this world where historical occurrence is nothing but an unending concatenation of illusory progress and bitter disappointment? (Husserl 1954, 4–5, 1970, 6–7)

Husserl's opposition is sceptical relativism and the relativism of competing historical world-views simply replacing one another historically, is as strong here as it was in his 1910/1911 *Philosophy as a Rigorous Science* essay. Over and over, Husserl insists that we are committed as rational beings (following the Greeks) to believing in the inner rationality of history. Furthermore, his reference to the “forms of the spiritual world” has a distinctly Hegelian ring.

In *Crisis* § 56, Husserl attempts to understand the meaning of philosophical progress and why transcendental philosophy failed. As part of a “history of transcendental philosophy” (Husserl 1954, 202, 1974b §100), Husserl rethinks his relationship with Hegel and German Idealism in terms of thinking of the emergence of the “transcendental motif” in Descartes, Hume, Kant and Hegel, and indeed in Mill (Husserl 1954, 198)<sup>46</sup>! He acknowledges that the great system of Hegel had a temporary impact but was not fated to endure (Husserl 1954, 196)—he even speaks of the “collapse of the Hegelian philosophy” (Husserl 1954, 201) and indeed provoked a reaction (especially the positivism of Schuppe and Avenarius) that threatened all of transcendental philosophy. Husserl believes that transcendental philosophy can never be transformed into *techne*. Rather the whole force of transcendental philosophy has been trying to begin, to come to clear self-understanding about its task (Husserl 1954, 202, 1970, 199). Husserl says one can be convinced of the “teleological meaning of history” [*der teleologische Sinn der Geschichte*] (Husserl 1954, 200) but raises the question as to whether philosophy has achieved the purpose originally and essentially accorded to it. Husserl wants to understand why the great project of philosophy failed. It failed because of the difficulty of performing the inversion from the natural outlook and attaining the transcendental outlook (Husserl 1956, 204, 1970, 200). For Husserl, German Idealism too had failed (Husserl 1992, 107), and reaction to it produced a new anti-metaphysical positivism, a new objectivism—a development that has produced the current “existential catastrophe” [*eine existenzielle Katastrophe*] (Husserl 1992, 108).

In the manuscript that the editor Walter Biemel includes as Section 73 of the *Crisis*<sup>47</sup> Husserl sees the period of modern philosophy from Descartes to the present irrationalism as essentially a closed era. He now looks forward to a new era driven by phenomenology and involving the re-appropriation of the Cartesian discovery of transcendental subjectivity and a radical rethinking of the demand for apodicticity. He even speaks obscurely of a “life in apodicticity” [*Leben in der Apodiktizität*] (Husserl 1954, 275, 1970, 340). This new era involves what Husserl calls (in Hegelian mode) “the discovery of absolute intersubjectivity” [*die Entdeckung der absoluten Intersubjektivität*] which he sees as “objectified in the world as the whole of mankind” (Husserl 1954, 275, 1970, 340). Husserl here talks of an “infinite progress” of coming to self-understanding and of ego-subjects as “bearers of absolute reason”. For Husserl, universal intersubjectivity cannot be anything other than humankind (Husserl 1954, 183, 1970, 179). Moreover, everything objective is “resolved” [*auföst*] into this intersubjectivity.

Already in his *Amsterdam Lectures* (1928) Husserl had stressed the importance of transcendental intersubjectivity:

<sup>46</sup>Husserl includes Mill as a line of transcendental philosophy that came from Hume not Kant.

<sup>47</sup>David Carr disputes Biemel’s editorial decision here because the manuscript in question is marked by Husserl as belonging rather to *Crisis* Part One and because the style of the text is radically different from what goes before in *Crisis* Section 72 (Husserl 1970, xx). In my view the text’s Hegelian echoes may owe considerably to the influence of Fink.

Transcendental intersubjectivity is the absolute and only self-sufficient foundation [*Seinsboden*]. Out of it are created draws the meaning and validity of everything objective, the totality of objectively real existent entities, but also every ideal world as well. An objectively existent thing is from first to last an existent thing only in a peculiar, relative and incomplete sense. It is an existent thing, so to speak, only on the basis of a cover-up of its transcendental constitution that goes unnoticed in the natural attitude. (Husserl 1968b, 344, 1997, 249)

Husserl draws on all these locutions to trying to articulate his sense of the meaning of subjective life in its first person, individual consciousness with its many layerings (including those that might properly be described as “pre-ego” [*Vor-Ich*] and “pre-personal”), as well as in its connection with other selves and in its moral, social and rational nature, amounting to its communalised “life of spirit” [*Geistesleben*], the life of “we-subjectivity” [*Wir-Subjektivität*]. In fact, Husserl insists that subjectivity understood as “primordial, concrete subjectivity”

...includes the forms of consciousness, in which is valid nature, spirit in every sense, human and animal spirit, objective spirit as culture, spiritual being understood as family, union, state, people, humanity.... (Husserl 1973, 559, my translation)

From one perspective, Husserl's *Crisis* attempts to recover the meaning of human *historicity* and cultural becoming from within phenomenology. Indeed, the *Crisis* is Husserl's most sustained effort to develop a phenomenological approach to issues concerning temporality, historicity, finitude and cultural and generational development (which Husserl calls ‘generativity’, *Generativität*, see Husserl 1954, 191, 1970, 188).

Almost re-inventing the project of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Husserl presents his approach in the *Crisis* itself as a “teleological historical reflection” (Husserl 1954, xiv n. 3, 1970, 3) or “teleological-historical way” (Husserl 1954, 435, 1970, 102), a kind of intellectual “reconstruction”, backwards reflection [*Rückbesinnung*] (Husserl 1954, 16), “backwards questioning” [*Rückfragen*] of the history of western culture (and philosophy) in order to produce an “eidetic history” and identify its hidden goal (*telos*) and “hidden innermost motivation” [*verborgene innerste Motivation*] (Husserl 1954, 9, 1970, 11). Indeed, in his *Foreword to the Continuation of the Crisis* (Beilage XIII) Husserl himself points out the historical mode of exposition is ‘not chosen by chance’ (Husserl 1954, 441), but rather is central to his task since he wants to exhibit the fact that the whole history of philosophy has a “unitary teleological structure” [*eine einheitliche teleologische Struktur*] (Husserl 1954, 442). Similarly, in *Crisis* §14 Husserl discusses the tension in modern philosophy between objectivism and transcendentalism and speaks of phenomenology as the “final form” [*Endform*] of transcendental philosophy.

This final form of philosophy must include an exhibition of the inner rational teleology of human culture in opposition to the current scientifically-inspired objectivist rationalism that has made history into meaningless nonsense. Several times in the course of the main body of the *Crisis* (and in associated essays such as the *Vienna Lecture*), Husserl emphasizes that the crisis is a crisis of *reason*.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup>As Husserl asserts in the *Vienna Lecture*: “the European crisis has its roots in a misguided rationalism” (Husserl 1954, 337, 1970, 290).

Scientific rationalism has forgotten its source in human subjectivity. According to Husserl, the Greek breakthrough to philosophy has enjoined on Western culture the requirement to live life according to *reason*. Human beings have freely given themselves this task. Repeatedly Husserl endorses the ancient Greek insight that human beings are *in essence* rational animals (see Husserl 1954, 13, 1970, 15):

The human being is called *animal rationale* not merely because he has the capacity of reason and then only occasionally regulates and justifies his life according to the insights of reason, but because the human being proceeds always and everywhere in his entire, active life in this way. (Husserl 1988, 33)

This rationality emerges in practical striving that has given itself the goal of reason, which in its ideal limit, is also the idea of God (Husserl 1988, 34). “All specifically personal life is active life and stands as such under the essential norms of reason” (Husserl 1988, 41).

Husserl’s teleological understanding of rationality as a demand of human beings, a demand that must be instantiated historically, is what brings him closer to Hegel. In the *Crisis* §6 Husserl writes:

To be human at all is essentially to be a human being in a socially and generatively united civilization [*in generativ und sozial verbundenen Menschheiten*]; and if man is a rational being [*animal rationale*], it is only insofar as his whole civilization is a rational civilization, that is, only with a latent orientation toward reason or one openly oriented toward the entelechy which has come to itself, become manifest to itself, and which now of necessity consciously directs human becoming. (Husserl 1954, 13, 1970, 15)

In the *Crisis*, therefore, Husserl openly and explicitly embraces a qualified version of the Enlightenment project, especially in its Kantian sense, whereby enlightened humanity leaves behind enslavement to prejudice and enters the new realm of freedom by giving the law to itself, and freely undertaking to be bound by laws that are commanded by universal reason itself. Today rationalism is in the grip of objectivism and naturalism. The Enlightenment had too narrow a conception of reason (Husserl 1954, 337, 1970, 290). We must return to the “genuine” sense of rationality inaugurated by Greek philosophy, he writes in the *Vienna Lecture*:

Rationality, in that high and genuine sense of which alone we are speaking, the primordial [*urtümlich*] Greek sense which in the classical period of Greek philosophy had become an ideal, still requires, to be sure, much clarification and self-reflection; but it is called in its mature form to guide [our] development. (Husserl 1954, 337, 1970, 290)

The concept of history is closely connected to the concept of “reason”. Husserl is interested in much more than a critique of cognition. He is interested in understanding the meaning of reason. Reason plays an important but often neglected role in *Ideas I*, Part Four where there is a whole chapter devoted to the “Phenomenology of Reason” (§§136–145) and another chapter on the connection between reason and universality. Reason has a number of levels (theoretical, axiological, practical) and covers the whole field of culture. There is a dynamic element to reason, it is seeing to realize itself, come to self actualization and also self-clarity (as Husserl writes in §73, which Walter Biemel placed as the concluding section of the *Crisis*):

Thus philosophy is nothing other than [rationalism] through and through, but it is rationalism differentiated within itself according to the different stages of the movement of intention and fulfillment; it is ratio in the constant movement of self-elucidation, begun with the first breakthrough of philosophy into mankind, whose innate reason was previously in a state of concealment, of nocturnal obscurity. (Husserl 1954, 273, 1970, 338)

## 8 Husserl on the Self-Sufficiency of the Life of Spirit

Husserl's 1935 *Vienna Lecture* employs throughout a strikingly Hegelian tone. There he proclaims:

The spirit, and indeed only the spirit, exists in itself and for itself, is self-sufficient [*eigenständig*]; and in its self-sufficiency, and only in this way, it can be treated truly rationally, truly and from the ground up scientifically. (*Vienna Lecture*, in Husserl 1954, 345, 1970, 297)

The spirit is both “in itself” and “for itself”. There is a dynamic element to reason, it is seeing to realize itself, come to self-actualization and also self-clarity (as Husserl writes in *Crisis* §73, controversially placed as the concluding section of the *Crisis*):

Thus philosophy is nothing other than [rationalism] through and through, but it is rationalism differentiated within itself according to the different stages of the movement of intention and fulfillment; it is *ratio in the constant movement of self-elucidation* [*Selbsterhellung*] begun with the first breakthrough [*Einbruch*] of philosophy into mankind, whose innate reason was previously in a state of concealment [*Verschlossenheit*], of nocturnal obscurity. (Husserl 1954, 273, 1970, 338)

As we have seen, Husserl had been explicating the strata of the “world of spirit” from the time of his *Ideas II* manuscript. Husserl is absolutely clear that human consciousness exists and develops only within a *communal* culture. In a late text of 1934 entitled “human life in historicity” Husserl expresses the manner in which humans live within a spiritual culture:

Man lives his spiritual life not in a spiritless world, in a world [understood] as matter, but rather as a spirit among spirits, among human and super-human, and this world-totality [*Weltall*] is, for him, the all of existing living, in the way of spirit, of the I-being, of the I-living among others as I subjects, life in the form of a universal I-community [*Ich-Gemeinschaft*]. (Husserl 1992, 3)

As with Hegel, Husserl turns to the history of philosophy to supply him with a road-map for the teleological development of reason. As he writes in *Crisis* Section 15:

Our task is to make comprehensible the teleology in the historical becoming of philosophy [*die Teleologie in dem geschichtlichen Werden der Philosophie*], especially modern philosophy, and at the same time to achieve clarity about ourselves, who are the bearers [*Träger*] of this teleology, who take part in carrying it out through our personal intentions. (Husserl 1954, 71, 1970, 70)

This statement has a typical Hegelian ring. Both Husserl and Hegel believe that the development of culture is illuminated by the development of philosophy. Philosophy



is in a particular way mirrors the development of culture; philosophy represents historical humanity's self-reflection and hence it represents (in more Hegelian terms) the human spirit's coming to self-consciousness about itself.

On Husserl's mature view, transcendental phenomenology does not just *describe* life rather it actually leads or guides life into its rational self-reflexive "absolute" form. Transcendental phenomenology is now the science that grasps in a fundamental way the meaning of the *accomplishment of spiritual life* in all its forms, that is, what makes rational human intersubjective life possible as such. Husserl, in a manner increasingly close to Hegel, also believes that transcendental philosophy takes up and completes all previous philosophy; it embraces and redeems the entire philosophical tradition.<sup>49</sup>

Husserl does not claim to be doing history in any straightforward sense of collecting historical facts. This is what he calls "external history" or "factual history". History is not a "storehouse" of items that lay before one; rather one picks and chooses depending on one's motivation. Husserl sees himself as trying to gain access to the "inner meaning and hidden teleology" of history; he is seeking, in quasi-Hegelian fashion, "reason in history":

We shall attempt to strike through the crust of the externalized "historical facts" of philosophical history, interrogating, exhibiting, and testing their inner meaning and hidden teleology. Questions never before asked will arise ... In the end they will require that the total sense of philosophy, accepted as "obvious" throughout all its historical forms, be basically and essentially transformed. (Husserl 1954, 16, 1970, 18)

Husserl's "historical reflections" [*historische Besinnungen*] (Husserl 1954, 58, 1970, 57) aim at "self-understanding" [*Selbstverständnis*] or "inner understanding" [*das innere Verständnis*] (Husserl 1954, 12, 1970, 14). These "sense-investigations" or "self-reflections" [*Selbstbesinnungen*] (Husserl 1954, 72–73) will reveal the "hidden unity of intentional inwardness" which alone is responsible for the "unity of history" (Husserl 1954, 74, 1970, 73), "our history" (Husserl 1954, 72, 1970, 71). It is quite surprising to find Husserl talking about the "inner sense" of history and attempting to trace the teleology of the modern philosophical tradition, for instance. But Husserl thinks of the field of the transcendental as a field of *life*, and individual lives are oriented towards goals and unified in terms of their overall goal or purpose.

Finally, Husserl's former assistant Ludwig Landgrebe sums up Husserl's task in terms that express both his nearness to and distance from Hegel as follows:

The task of describing the human "life-world" therefore includes a higher level. Having brought to light the all-pervading "aesthetic" structures of the world and world-experience the structures pertaining to Nature as the basis of every surrounding world—we must look for the possible types of world, as the surrounding worlds of particular human communities. This may be conceived as an empirical enterprise, namely, as the task of reducing to types the environing worlds and the world-pictures that have in fact been produced by past or present communities of various levels, and investigating their development and the evolutionary levels to which these worlds belong. But the empirical task is, in itself, secondary to the task of elaborating the essential possibilities and fundamental structures, the essentially possible types, of surrounding worlds. (Landgrebe 1940, 47)

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<sup>49</sup>Husserl (1956, 256, 1974a, 30).

A more apt summation of Husserl's efforts to understand the history of culture and the history of philosophy as mirror of culture cannot be found.

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