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# HUSSERL'S *CRISIS OF THE EUROPEAN SCIENCES*

## The “teleological-historical way” into transcendental philosophy

*Dermot Moran*

### **The development of *The Crisis of the European Sciences***

Husserl's last work, entitled *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Philosophy* (German edition, Husserl 1954; English translation, Husserl 1970),<sup>1</sup> was his most ambitious and sweeping project, and, although it had a disrupted history, it went on to have a significant, posthumous impact on mid-twentieth-century European philosophy. The subtitle states that it is “an introduction to phenomenological philosophy;” and, as such, it ranks alongside Husserl's other introductions, most notably *Ideas I* (published in 1913), and *Cartesian Meditations* (published in French in Husserl 1931). Indeed, Husserl's intention was for *The Crisis* to replace his *Cartesian Meditations*, which has appeared only in French, as the introduction to transcendental phenomenology. *The Crisis* is designed to complement the “egological self-reflection,” as he calls it (Husserl 1970, 259), of the earlier *Cartesian Meditations*. Whereas *Cartesian Meditations* introduced the transcendental ego “in one blow” (*mit einem Schlage*; Husserl 1970, 77, 150, 239), in *The Crisis* he wants to proceed through an examination of the intersubjective lifeworld.

In the early 1930s, Husserl abandoned his attempt to complete the German edition of *Cartesian Meditations* (only the French translation had been published in 1931) and began *The Crisis* as the ultimate statement of his vision for phenomenology. Already, on June 11, 1932, Husserl wrote to his former student Roman Ingarden to say that he now believed that transcendental phenomenology needed to begin from the “natural possession of the world and of being” (Bruzina 2004, 214). *The Crisis* will offer a new *intersubjective* approach to transcendental phenomenology, correcting the one-sided “Cartesian way” of *Cartesian Meditations*. In *The Crisis*, Husserl also addresses his critics – both the Neo-Kantians (Heinrich Rickert) and the followers of life-philosophy and phenomenology (Max Scheler, Martin Heidegger) – who thought that his phenomenology of consciousness was outmoded. Thus, in his 1937 “Foreword to the Continuation of the *Crisis*,” Husserl regrets that readers have taken him as an old conservative, “schlerotically” stuck in his ways, and merely regurgitating his old themes rather than facing up to the new criticisms (Husserl 1954, 439–440). Quite the reverse is true: he proclaims

himself the most radical philosopher of the present age, rethinking the meaning of philosophy and phenomenology as the ultimately grounded science.

The *Crisis* project unfolded from around 1933 to mid 1937, in the form of essays, lectures, and working notes. In late 1937, Husserl became ill and he died in April 1938. Husserl was, at the time, facing extremely difficult circumstances in National Socialist Germany (from January 1933 to his death), in which, classified as a Jew, he suffered victimization and exclusion as his professorship was revoked and he was forbidden from publishing. According to a short outline (circa 1936) for the continuation of the work prepared by his young assistant Eugen Fink (1905–1975), *The Crisis* was planned in five parts (Husserl 1970, 397–400). Husserl managed to publish the first two parts in 1936 in a journal, *Philosophia*, edited by Arthur Liebert, another German Jewish philosopher, who was in exile in Belgrade. Husserl completed a third part in a typescript that he continually reworked, but it remained unpublished until Walter Biemel's Husserliana edition (Husserl 1954). As Husserl wrote: "Insurmountable complications, as a result of my fluctuating health, had forced me to leave aside some of the already prepared drafts" (Husserl 1954, 435, my translation). Husserl's "Foreword to the Continuation of the *Crisis*" outlines plans for continuing the work, with emphasis on what he calls a "teleological-historical way" (*teleologisch-historischen Weg*; Husserl 1954, 435) or "royal road" (*Emporleitung*; Husserl 1954, 438) into transcendental phenomenology. Clearly, the reflection on the historical evolution of modern philosophy in *The Crisis*, then, is not a mere supplement to transcendental phenomenology but is supposed to reveal its deepest meaning through an interrogation of "origins."

Besides the three written parts of *The Crisis*, Husserl also left behind a large collection of draft research manuscripts in shorthand and sorted roughly into bundles ("convolutes" – manuscripts gathered together in one binding), labelled the "K-series" ("K" stands for "*Krisis*"). These were essentially working notes that Fink had assembled in cooperation with Husserl himself. Biemel's edition of *The Crisis* collects 32 of these manuscripts, including the 1935 Vienna Lecture, entitled "Philosophy in the Crisis of European Humanity" (Husserl 1970, 269), which is an important addition to the historical reflection Husserl was carrying out in *The Crisis*. According to his draft plan, Part Five was to cover "The indispensable task of philosophy: humanity's responsibility for itself," and one can find elements of this theme in the Vienna Lecture as well as in 34 further supplementary texts collected by Reinhold Smid in the supplemental Husserliana Volume XXIX to *The Crisis* (Husserl 1993).

An important text included by Biemel in the Husserliana edition is the fragmentary essay, "The Origin of Geometry" (Husserl 1970, 353–378), edited by Eugen Fink, and first published in the French journal *Revue internationale de philosophie* (Husserl 1939). This essay was translated in 1962 with a long commentary by Jacques Derrida (1930–2004, Derrida 1978). It is significant because of the status Husserl attributes to the *written* sign (e.g., Pythagorean theorem) in the fixing of ideal meanings for the transmission of scientific knowledge through exact repetition.

A related text – not included in Biemel or Smid – is the crucially important fragment "The Earth Does Not Move," written in 1934 and published by Marvin Farber in 1940 (Husserl 1940 and 1981). This text discusses the phenomenological experience of being on the ground that does not move, despite Galileo's science stating the opposite. Although not strictly speaking part of *The Crisis* bundle, it was quickly associated with *The Crisis* by Merleau-Ponty, Derrida, and others.

To summarize, then, Husserl's *The Crisis* should be understood as a loosely connected series of manuscripts composed by Husserl between 1934 and the Autumn of 1937 around the themes of science, culture, the nature of psychology, the inner teleology of the history of philosophy, and the true meaning of transcendental phenomenology.

Husserl presents *The Crisis* overall as a *self-reflection* on the aims and methods of philosophy and specifically transcendental philosophy as inaugurated by Descartes and made canonical by Kant. Husserl aims at nothing less than the “rebirth” (*Wiedergeburt*) of Europe “from the spirit of philosophy” (Husserl 1970, 299), in part through a historical–conceptual reflection on the “original sense” (*Ursprungssinn*, Husserl 1970, 58) of the new sciences that burst onto and transformed the world in the seventeenth century. He wants to develop “a critique of Kant that refers back to the Cartesian primary establishment of the whole of philosophical modernity” (Husserl 1954, 438, my translation). Husserl’s overall aim is to secure philosophy as a genuine science “in times of danger”: “*Reflection is required in every sense* in order to right ourselves” (Husserl 1970, 392). This backward reflection (*Rückbesinnung*) involves a sustained critique of modern philosophy from Descartes through Kant and German Idealism to the rise of positivism. In *The Crisis*, to the surprise of his readers, the elderly Husserl introduced several new themes, including his rich concept of the intuitively experienced “lifeworld” (*Lebenswelt* – a concept unknown to *Logical Investigations*, published in 1900/1901, and *Ideas I*, but which receives brief mention in *Cartesian Meditations*), as well as a critical reflection on Galileo’s radical transformation of scientific method that led to the naturalization of the sciences, and finally, a reflection on the meaning of historical culture and historicity in general (see Husserl 1993, 1–17, for a text explicitly on historicity [*Geschichtlichkeit*]).

*The Crisis* is the first work to introduce the specific themes of *history* and the development of culture from a phenomenological perspective. At the outset of *The Crisis*, he asks rhetorically whether history has nothing to teach us but the contingency of human events, a meaningless cycle of progress and disappointment (Husserl 1970, 7). Or, as Husserl will maintain, is there meaning and reason in history (Husserl 1970, 9)? To address these questions, he proposes a methodological approach of “questioning back” (*Rückfragen*), or “backwards reflection” (*Rückbesinnung*) that he believes will allow him to penetrate through to the essential meaning at the heart of various forms of historically evolving cultural institution.

Another innovation is Husserl’s discussion of “functioning subjectivity” (*fungierende Subjektivität*, Husserl 1954, 265, 310, 416; see also Husserl 1993, 60), the pre-reflective anonymous or collective intentionality that constitutes our latent sense of the *world* as such, that would later strongly influence Merleau-Ponty, who, in his *Phenomenology of Perception*, translated it as “*intentionnalité opérante*” (Merleau-Ponty 2012, lxxxii, 472), and contrasted it with Husserl’s more explicit “act intentionality,” and which he compared to Heidegger’s concept of the transcendence of *Dasein*. Other new themes in the *Crisis* include the idea of historical interpretation as a kind of “poetizing” (*Dichtung*) of history (according to which each person selects subjectively what motivates them in the tradition); and the notion of “streaming-in” (*Einströmen*), the manner in which transcendental life shapes natural life (Husserl 1970, §§59–60 and Husserl 1993, 77–83; see also Dodd 2004, 215). Preeminently, *The Crisis* offers a new way of thinking about reason and rationality. Philosophers, for Husserl, are “functionaries of humankind,” with the duty to promote and protect reason and to oppose all forms of irrationalism threatening the progress of humanity.

### **The crisis of both the natural and the human sciences**

Husserl opens *The Crisis* with the claim that a crisis in a science means that its whole scientific approach has become questionable (Husserl 1970, 3). Despite the undeniable progress of the natural sciences, there is a one-sided distortion at the heart of the modern scientific enterprise itself. Husserl’s critique of the “European sciences” addresses both the natural sciences (chiefly physics), founded in mathematics, and, later, the human sciences (chiefly psychology, but also

philosophy and, tangentially, history). Thus, in Part One, he treats Galileo and mathematical physics. The modern revolution in the natural sciences, exemplified by Galileo, brought forward the “mathematization of nature” (*Mathematisierung der Natur*; Husserl 1970, §9), involving the idealization of space and time, the application of causality to the whole of nature, and the emergence of the new concept of infinity (Husserl 1970, §9). In consequence, the modern natural sciences have essentially reified and objectified a methodological, mathematical construction, changing the very concept of objectivity, and obscuring (if not distorting) the lifeworld in which humans have traditionally lived. The scientific enterprise has devolved into a distorted *scientism* (with its commitment to what he calls “objectivism”) and *naturalism*, that ultimately leads to skepticism, relativism, and *irrationalism* that threatens all humanity.

Husserl's proposed solution requires first and foremost “clarification,” bringing to *clarity* (*Klärung* or *Klarheit*) through reflection the meaning of the modern scientific achievement (and its implications for the development of modern philosophy). This reflection needs to be transcendently clarified through a radical “full transcendental *epoché*” (Husserl 1970, 263).

In Part Two of *The Crisis*, Husserl analyzes the nature of the opposition between objectivity and subjectivity as it emerged in modern philosophy from Descartes to Kant. In Part Three (itself divided into two parts – A and B), Husserl introduces his novel conception of the pregiven, always taken-for-granted, “lifeworld” (*Lebenswelt*), that, he claims has never before been a topic of systematic scientific inquiry, even for Kant. In *The Crisis* Part Three B, he offers an extended analysis of the problematic status of empirical psychology, which for him has illegitimately naturalized the domain of subjectivity. In Part Three, also, Husserl renews the task of transcendental philosophy through a radicalization of Kant's project. Here he addresses directly what he calls the paradox or “riddle” (*Rätsel*) of transcendental philosophy, namely that humans are both natural objects in the world and also transcendental “subjects for the world,” *constituting* the world as such and hence not part of the constituted world.

In the supplementary essays (e.g., Vienna Lecture, “The Origin of Geometry”), Husserl addresses larger topics including the shift from mythic thought to rationality brought about by philosophy, the meaning of human temporality and “historicity,” cultural development (the “shapes of the spiritual world,” Husserl 1970, 7), the inbuilt teleology of Western civilization towards universal rationality and the threats facing it, intercultural understanding, and the concept of nationality, internationality, and “supranationality” (*Übernationalität*, Husserl 1970, 276), a theme Husserl also discusses in his letter to the anthropologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (Husserl 2008a). Do different cultural and spiritual forms simply appear and pass away, or is there an inner rationality? Furthermore, and parallel to this scientific crisis, there was a growing crisis in modern philosophy and in the human sciences generally. Philosophy also needs *self-reflection*, a reflection that includes thinking seriously about the meaning both of its Greek origins and its ultimate directedness towards its goal, what Husserl calls its hidden, inner “teleology” (Husserl 1970, 18, 70, 74, 273).

In *The Crisis*, then, Husserl wants to uncover the “inner sense” of history and the *teleology* inherent in philosophical tradition of European modernity. Human life is oriented towards goals. Husserl proclaims: “being human is teleological being and an ought-to-be [*ein Teleologischsein und Sein-sollen*], and that this teleology holds sway in each and every activity and project of an ego” (Husserl 1970, 341). But living a life is also a communal act, carried out in a “we-community” (*Wir-Gemeinschaft*, Husserl 1954, 416) where the historical dynamic is uppermost.

In previous works, Husserl's main approach to phenomenology had employed a more static form of constitutional analysis, examining the “levels and strata” (*Stufen und Schichten*, Husserl 1970, 168) of meaning involved in constitution, but not particularly addressing issues of temporal and historical development. Husserl now specifically addresses historical and temporal

development through a kind of “genetic” phenomenology. Husserl’s “The Origin of Geometry” text discusses the need to understand the “genetic origin” (*genetische Ursprung*, Husserl 1970, 370) of concepts.

Husserl had been addressing the themes of the meaning of history, tradition, and what he broadly called “generativity” (*Generativität*, the manner in which cultural meanings become established, laid down in sedimentations, and then handed on from one generation to another) from around 1911 onward, and specifically in reaction to Dilthey, as well as to the neo-Kantian discussion of the appropriate methodology for the human sciences. Husserl, too, has his own version of the “destruction”– or “reconstruction”– of the history of philosophy from Descartes to Kant. *The Crisis* is the first work to bring together the analysis of the history of philosophy with a deepened account of the meaning and importance of transcendental phenomenology.

### **Transcendental phenomenology as self-reflection (*Selbstbesinnung*) in the epoché**

Husserl’s *Crisis* is a sustained exercise in phenomenological “self-reflection” (*Selbstbesinnung*, Husserl 1954, 437) or “self-understanding” (*Selbstverständigung*, Husserl 1954, 435). Husserl employs several variations of the notion of “reflection.” He frequently characterizes his reflection as a “backwards reflection” (*Rückbesinnung*, Husserl 1970, 17) or “questioning back” (*Rückfragen*, or *Zurückfragen*; see Husserl 1970, 56, 69), a regressive inquiry into the “original motivation” (*Ursprungsmotivation*, Husserl 1970, 57) that gave rise to modernity. This concept of reflecting or questioning back is central to what he calls “genetic” or “genetic–historical” inquiry. Thus, in *The Crisis* §9, he speaks of the “task of self-reflection which grows out of the ‘breakdown’ situation of our time” (Husserl 1970, 58).

Husserl intends *The Crisis* as a work of critical and historical reflection that looks backwards over the cultural development of modern science and culture since its Greek origins. In his 1936 letter to the Professor Dr. Rádl, President of Eighth International Congress of Philosophy in Prague (Husserliana XXVII, Husserl 1989, 240–245) (Husserl sent a letter to this International Congress of Philosophy that was read out by his student Jan Patočka, a key text that announces the new themes to be investigated in the planned *Crisis*), he says his “self-reflection” is in the radical spirit of Descartes (Husserl 1989, 24), continuing a theme he had earlier developed in his 1929 Paris lectures that became *Cartesian Meditations*. As in the Cartesian way, radical, transcendental self-reflection requires performance of a suspension of commitment or epoché towards all existing tradition and all naïve concepts in order to uncover transcendental subjectivity that functions in hiddenness. As Husserl says at the end of *The Crisis* Part Three:

But great difficulties had to be overcome in order not only to begin the method of *epochē* and reduction but also to bring it to full understanding of itself and thus for the first time to discover the absolutely functioning subjectivity, not as human subjectivity, but as the subjectivity that objectifies itself, [at least] at first, in human subjectivity.

Husserl 1970, 262

*The Crisis* differs from *Cartesian Meditations* in that Husserl now wants to uncover the hidden subjectivity that constitutes the world, culture, and tradition.

Phenomenology begins from the intentional relationship between constituting subjectivity and its correlated constituted object. Thus, Husserl states in *The Crisis* that “[I]ntentionality is the title which stands for the only actual and genuine way of explaining, making intelligible” (Husserl 1970, 168). Phenomenology is to be understood as sense–investigation or clarification

of sense, an inquiry into how any kind of object of state of affairs has the kind of sense or meaning that it has as an achievement of subjective intentionality. In *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl states, “every sense that any existent whatever has or can have for me – in respect of its ‘what’ and its ‘it exists and actually is’—is a sense *in* and arising *from* my intentional life” (Husserl 1967, 91).

Husserl always links “sense” with “validity” (*Sinn und Geltung*, Husserl 1970, 76, 96, 199, 204, 278). The sense something has is intrinsically normative; it sets up a system of values and validities for the manner in which it is to be treated, chains of “intentional implication.” As Husserl writes in *The Crisis*: “And meaning is never anything but meaning in modes of validity [*Geltungsmodi*], that is, as related to intending ego-subjects which effect validity” (Husserl 1970, 168). The sense something has determines its being. Hence Husserl speaks of “being-sense” (*Seinssinn*, Husserl 1954, 124) – which David Carr translates as “ontic sense” (Husserl 1970, 122) or “ontic meaning” (Husserl 1970, 100) – or “ontic validity” (*Seinsgeltung*, Husserl 1970, 77). As Husserl asserts: “[A]ll real, mundane objectivity is constituted accomplishment” (Husserl 1970, 204). He writes in a crucial passage that sums up his understanding of intentional constitution:

In this regard we speak of the “intersubjective constitution” [*intersubjektiven Konstitution*] of the world, meaning by this the total system of manners of givenness, however hidden, and also of modes of validity [*Geltungsmodi*] for egos; through this constitution, if we systematically uncover it, the world as it is for us becomes understandable as a structure of meaning [*Sinngebilde*] formed out of elementary intentionalities. The being of these intentionalities themselves is nothing but one meaning formation operating together with another, “constituting” new meaning through synthesis. And meaning is never anything but meaning in modes of validity, that is, as related to intending ego-subjects which effect validity. Intentionality is the title which stands for the only actual and genuine way of explaining, making intelligible. To go back to the intentional origins [*Ursprünge*] and unities of the formation of meaning is to proceed toward a comprehension which, once achieved (which is of course an ideal case), would leave no meaningful question unanswered.

Husserl 1970, 168

Husserl speaks of the need to go back to the “intentional origins” and attempt to follow the buildup of “sense-formations” which we eventually experience in a completely immediate way what Husserl calls here “the world as it is for us,” i.e., the whole intuited lifeworld, understood as a “nexus” or “integrated framework of sense” (*Sinnzusammenhang*, Husserl 1970, 284) or unified “sense formation” (*Sinnbildung*, Husserl 1970, 378). The greatest puzzle of phenomenology is the givenness of the world as such, a givenness that is intrinsically and essentially historical.

### **The dawn of the theoretical attitude (*die theoretische Einstellung*)**

In the late 1930s, Husserl frequently reflected on the “ingress” or “breakthrough into” (*Einbruch*, Husserl 1970, 283) philosophy and the life of reason that occurred in ancient Greece and set up Western science through the discovery of the “theoretical attitude.” According to Husserl, “spiritual” Europe has a birth place in ancient Greece and specifically in a new form of life ushered in by a “few Greek eccentrics” (*ein Paar griechischen Sonderingen*, Husserl 1954, 336; 1970, 289), i.e., the Pre-Socratic philosophers, who singlehandedly developed “a *new sort*

of attitude" (Husserl 1970, 276) – the theoretical attitude – towards life and the surrounding world, thereby inaugurating *philosophy* (through wonder) and with it science (as detached theoretical understanding) with a universal outlook. Building on this Greek foundation, contemporary Western culture (now made universal by the expansion of techno-science) has a "mission" (*Sendung*) to accomplish nothing less than the development of universal "humanity" (*Menschheit*) itself (Husserl 1970, 299).

Husserl's conception of this "spiritual Europe," characterized by its theoretical attitude with its inherent universality, transcendence of all limit, and commitment to the ideal of infinite inquiry, leads him to distinguish this universalist culture from other cultural forms (he calls them "empirical types"), even within geographical Europe, that do not embrace the ideal of universality. Most notoriously, in his Vienna Lecture, he casually instances the European Roma Gypsies (*die Zigeuner*), who constantly "wander around" (*herumvagabondieren*, Husserl 1954, 319; 1970, 273), as not contributing to this ideal. Similarly, other "types" (*Typen*) of humanity, even such rich and ancient civilizations as China and India, also, for Husserl, lack this "absolute idea" of European universality and remain "empirical anthropological types" (Husserl 1970, 16).<sup>2</sup> The global domination of Western science, in fact, has led to the "Europeanization" of the world. However, its current narrow technicized nature (techno-science) means that this scientific culture is distorted and flattened because it has ignored the subjective and intersubjective lifeworld from which it has emerged. Therefore, Husserl's *Crisis* presents transcendental phenomenology as the science that restores the true sense of human, subjective, intentional participation in the communally shared lifeworld. Universal science must be grounded in the science of accomplishing subjectivity.

### Transcendental subjectivity and intersubjectivity

In *The Crisis*, Husserl explicitly begins from the "pregiven" (*vorgegeben*) public *world* of the natural attitude (indeed part of his project is to recover this world from the scientific world that has been overlaid on it) rather than from the inner consciousness of the solitary meditating subject. Thereby, *The Crisis* is in a position to open up phenomenology to engage with the meaning of different and broader phenomena, including the modern scientific revolution, the meaning of "nature" as defined by the exact natural sciences (especially physics), the meaning of culture and historical tradition, the nature of the relation of European cultures to non-European cultures, which raises problems of interculturality, as well as raising penetrating questions concerning the nature and vitality of philosophy and psychology (as a misconstrual of the true nature of subjectivity).

Husserl proposes a meditative return to the ineliminable roles of human subjectivity and intersubjectivity, hitherto neglected in this pursuit of scientific objectivity, not just to set the newly emerged science of empirical psychology on a proper footing, but also to address issues of central relevance to human existence as the free exercise of reason. In terms of subjectivity, Husserl insists it must be recognized as a transcendental condition for the possibility of objectivity (and hence a condition for the very possibility of there being anything like a *world* as such). Husserl writes of the ontological primacy of subjectivity:

Only a radical inquiry [*ein radikales Zurückfragen*] back into subjectivity – and specifically the subjectivity which *ultimately* brings about all world-validity [*Weltgeltung*], with its content and in all its prescientific and scientific modes, and into the "what" and the "how" of the rational accomplishments – can make objective truth comprehensible and arrive at the ultimate ontic meaning of the world [*letzten Seinssinn der Welt*]. Thus

it is not the being of the world as unquestioned, taken for granted [*das Sein der Welt in seiner fraglosen Selbstverständlichkeit*], which is primary in itself; [...] rather what is primary in itself is subjectivity, understood as that which naïvely pre-gives the being of the world and then rationalizes or (what is the same thing) objectifies it.

Husserl 1970, 69

But the problem of understanding subjectivity also raises the issue of the relation between subjects in this world-constitution. How can my ego also belong to what Husserl calls “transcendental intersubjectivity”? Husserl states: “The consciousness of intersubjectivity, then, must become a transcendental problem” (Husserl 1970, 202). The concept of intersubjectivity is introduced in *The Crisis* initially and primarily in terms of the manner in which the objectivity of the experienced world is achieved through intersubjective confirmation and validation (see Husserl 1970, 128). But Husserl also raises the issue of how subjects (“ego subjects”) communicate and agree with one another and form larger communities united with common purpose (see, e.g., Husserl 1970, 163). The phenomenon of cooperating intersubjectivity is read back from the experience of a common world “for all”: “Constantly functioning in wakeful life, we also function together, in the manifold ways of considering, together, valuing, planning, acting together” (Husserl 1970, 109). This is the domain of what Husserl calls “we-subjectivity” (*Wir-Subjektivität*; Husserl 1970, 109) and which he regards as inaccessible to traditional psychological reflection since it is always presumed by the psychological approach (Husserl 1970, §59).

In *The Crisis* Part Three, Husserl offers a deep and important analysis of what he calls the “paradox” or “enigma” (*Rätsel*) of subjectivity (e.g., Husserl 1970, 5), according to which human subjects must be considered both as transcendental subjects “for the world” as well as embodied subjects objectified “in the world.” Husserl’s struggle to articulate and resolve this paradox is one of the most significant philosophical achievements of *The Crisis*. In fact, this discussion leads Husserl to a consideration of Kant’s achievement and to reflect on the meaning of transcendental philosophy in general.

Husserl’s solution is to propose that the given world be understood not as a world *in itself* (*Welt an sich*, for him an idealized abstraction, Husserl 1970, 265) but as the world for us, i.e., world as correlated to the “natural attitude” (*die natürliche Einstellung*, a notion that is first discussed in print in *Ideas I* §27 but was already being discussed as early as Husserl’s 1906/1907 lectures, see Husserl 2008b). The natural attitude, however, carries within it the danger that it can deteriorate into what Husserl terms *the naturalistic attitude* which both *reifies* and *absolutizes* this world. The natural attitude is a complex constellation of attitudes that presents the world as “pre-given” (*vorgegeben*) and simply is “there” for me, spread out in space and time, and so on. All sciences take place within the natural attitude; they simply *assume* the existence of the world. These sciences are “naïve,” as Husserl puts it, precisely because they accept the world as “present” or “on-hand” (*vorhanden*), “actual” (*wirklich*), and “there” (*da*). But, how should this mode of givenness of the world be understood? To understand the givenness of the world is already to transcend the natural attitude and to raise a transcendental question concerning the “being” of the world. This is Husserl’s version of the question made canonical by Heidegger in *Being and Time* (published in 1927) – the question of the meaning of being. In a certain sense, *The Crisis* is Husserl’s answer to Heidegger. For Husserl, however, being is always correlated with transcendental subjectivity and intersubjectivity. It is only the transcendental attitude (an attitude Husserl particularly characterizes in the *Crisis* and in the associated Vienna Lecture as the attitude of the “disinterested” or “disengaged spectator”) that highlights the true nature of the natural attitude. The natural attitude is, as it were, unknown to itself until one applies the

transcendental epoché (bracketing, or exclusion), whose very function it is to break with the world and transcend the natural attitude. As Husserl writes:

Philosophy as universal *objective* science – and this is what all philosophy of the ancient tradition was – together with all the objective sciences, is not universal science at all. It brings into its sphere only constituted object-poles and remains blind to the full concrete being and life that constitutes them transcendentially.

*Husserl 1970, 176; 1954, 179*

For Husserl, the focus of the phenomenologist is not on the *ready-made world* (*die fertige Welt*, Husserl 1970, 177) but rather on the constituting function of intentional life as “accomplishing life” (Husserl 1970, 177) to which we are simply “blind” (1970, 205) in the natural attitude.

### **The problematic science of the lifeworld**

Part Three A (IIIA) of *The Crisis* is focused on the “lifeworld” in critical confrontation with Kant. Kant, too, seeks to account for the constitution of the objective world, but, according to Husserl, Kant naively assumes that the real world is the one revealed by modern science with its specific notions of space, time, causation, continuity, identity, and so on. Kant did acknowledge the need to project a conception of the world as an unconditioned whole and as having a certain continuous and harmonious flow, but he neglected the lifeworld, understood as the world experienced by embodied, fleshly subjects who act with the assumption that their world is shared intersubjectively. A new Kantian transcendental critique, therefore, must be undertaken, one that reveals the lifeworld as the “fundament” for the scientific world.<sup>3</sup>

### **Philosophy and the project for a new humanity of reason**

For Husserl, philosophy was once the source of the sciences but has now become separated from the scientific enterprise and thereby philosophy is in danger of becoming irrational. Faith in reason must be restored by making philosophy truly scientific. Reason, *logos*, is the enduring legacy of the Greek philosophical tradition. He confidently reasserts his faith in a transformed and expensed version of what were traditional Enlightenment values. Husserl does write that the rationalism of the Enlightenment itself is now out of the question as it contains an inner absurdity but claims nevertheless that “true and genuine philosophy or science and true and genuine rationalism are one” (Husserl 1970, 197). Husserl maintains that the current crisis has been brought about because, since the Enlightenment, we have lost faith in this reason:

Now, if the new humanity [*Menschentum*], animated and blessed with such an exalted spirit, did not hold its own, it must have been because it lost the inspiring belief in its ideal of a universal philosophy and in the scope of the new method.

*Husserl 1970, 10; 1954, 8*

Husserl’s defense of so-called “European” values has been criticized, by Jacques Derrida and others, as a form of “Eurocentrism” (Derrida 2003, 154–157). Husserl insists, however, that what he means by “Europe” is not a geographically or politically defined place but rather a certain constellation of intellectual and spiritual achievements, and outlooks and values that, moreover, have universal significance and set “infinite tasks.” For him, “Europe” signifies the

commitment to rational life as first discovered in the “breakthrough” (*Durchbruch*) of ancient Greek philosophy. For Husserl, the “primal establishment” (*Urstiftung*) of philosophy is, at the same time, the primal establishment of modern European humanity (Husserl 1970, 12). Husserl believes that ancient Greek philosophy made an extraordinary breakthrough with its discovery of the *logos*, the infinite and the detached theoretical attitude which eventually, with Galileo, unleashed the overwhelming force that is modern mathematical science. No other culture defining itself in terms of finite ends (which mytho-religious societies all do – for Husserl) was capable of making this breakthrough. The fact that it happened in the West is part of the mysterious facticity of history. Other cultures remained embedded in the “mythical-practical attitude” (Husserl 1970, 285) and were unable to universalize their local knowledge systems.

The allegation from some critics that Husserl's view amounts to an ethnocentric chauvinism sits somewhat uneasily with the recognition that he himself was explicitly struggling against the appeals to race, “blood and soil” (*Blut und Boden*) being propagated by the National Socialists and their fellow travelers during the 1930s. Husserl's careless remarks about Gypsies “wandering” (using the pejorative term “vagabonding”) around Europe and not contributing to the ideal of universal humanity, and his condescending remarks about the humanity of Papuan natives, sound out of place for someone who, as a Jew, was himself subjected to discrimination. As I have argued elsewhere (Moran 2011), in opposition to the particularist claims of the National Socialists, Husserl was struggling to defend a certain universalist version of culture. Husserl's assertion in the Vienna Lecture that “there is, for essential reasons, no zoology of peoples” (Husserl 1970, 275) is clearly a repudiation of race-based doctrines. On the other hand, Husserl was by no means alone in emphasizing the uniqueness and universality of European scientific culture; such views were commonplace among German academics of the time, especially in the writings of Max Weber, for instance (see Weber 1930).

Husserl is sharply aware of the complex relationships, both dependencies and separations, between different cultures and traditions. There are, in his terms, different “historicities” (*Geschichtlichkeiten*, Husserl 1970, 274) and indeed there are, as Husserl indicates in his 1935 letter to Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, even cultures which as self-enclosed unities do not know history (Husserl 2008). But he is also acutely aware of the new kind of universality and globalization brought about by the modern scientific and technological attitudes. This has been a “revolution,” brought about by the breakthrough to ideality, in the historicity of European culture (Husserl 1970, 279). The effects of this revolutionary transformation have not completely worked themselves out, but by no means have they been understood. The turn to history, then, is an inevitable part of any phenomenology that seeks to understand humanity as such.

### Reason in history and life in tradition

Husserl, especially after his reading of Dilthey in 1910/1911 (Husserl 2002), as well as his exposure to the neo-Kantians, notably Heinrich Rickert, became preoccupied with the problem of the relations between the natural and the human or cultural sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*), including the status of philosophy as a science, and the inner significance of the history of philosophy (see his *First Philosophy* lectures of 1923/1924 for example, Husserl 2019). The explicitly *historical* orientation Husserl offers with his narrative about the evolution of modernity is different from his earlier introductions to phenomenology, as even Hans-Georg Gadamer (1989) and Paul Ricoeur (1967, 143–174) have recognized.

In *The Crisis*, Husserl offers a sustained meditation on what the concept of “tradition” itself involves, how past philosophy achieves a continuation in present thinking, and what the

meaning of modernity itself is, themes also prominent in Heidegger, Gadamer, Hannah Arendt (who does not mention *The Crisis* in *The Human Condition*), and Hans Blumenberg (1987). Husserl talks about the manner in which in developing a history, we are acting creatively, in the manner of poets. He speaks of history as a kind of “poetic invention” or “poeticizing” (*Dichtung*, Husserl 1970, 394), which might be understood as a kind of narrative reconstruction of the story of history to address current concerns. For Husserl, history should not be approached as a “storehouse” of facts about the past. Rather we must find the inner rationale that makes sense of the dynamic development of culture:

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.

Husserl 1970, 18

This concept of a kind of fictive poetic narrative of philosophy is very similar to what is to be found also in Heidegger and Gadamer. We are in a creative dialogue with the past, and our conversation brings Plato and the tradition to life and sustains its vitality.

### The ongoing influence of *The Crisis*

*The Crisis* had considerable impact on European philosophers in the latter part of the twentieth century. Maurice Merleau-Ponty read the typescript of *The Crisis* in the Husserl Archives in Leuven, Belgium, on his week-long visit there in 1939, and it deeply influenced his 1945 *Phenomenology of Perception* (Merleau-Ponty 2012). It also influenced Aron Gurwitsch, who reviewed Biemel’s Husserliana edition in two long articles (Gurwitsch 1956, 1957), as well as Hans-Georg Gadamer, who discussed *The Crisis* in depth in his *Truth and Method* (Gadamer 1989). Alfred Schutz’s overall philosophy of the lifeworld was also deeply influenced by Husserl’s *Crisis* and, indeed, Schutz wrote an interesting assessment of *The Crisis* in his 1943 letter to Eric Voegelin (see Schutz 1996). Through Schutz, Husserl’s *Crisis* influenced Habermas. Habermas, in his *Theory of Communicative Action* (Habermas 1984, 1987), acknowledges that he borrowed his concept of the lifeworld from Husserl and Schutz. He defines lifeworld as the “horizon within which communicative actions are ‘always already’ moving” (Habermas 1987, 119). Following Husserl, Habermas emphasizes the “always already there” (*immer schon da*) character of immediate certainty that belongs to this world (Habermas 1998, 243). Similarly, for Habermas, as for Husserl, the lifeworld is the overall “horizon” within which human agents act. It is the culturally transmitted and linguistically structured backdrop of all meaningfulness in our human lives. For Habermas, Husserl’s lifeworld “forms a counter-concept to those idealizations that first constitute the object domain of the natural sciences” (Habermas 1998, 239). It is an explicitly concrete notion. However, Habermas criticizes Husserl for not recognizing (due to what Habermas claims is Husserl’s blindness to “linguistic intersubjectivity”) that the lifeworld itself demands certain idealizations, namely the *validity claims* that transcend local circumstances, and are carried by the linguistic practices of the community. Lifeworld, for Habermas, is made possible only through intersubjective communicative action. Nevertheless, Habermas remains deeply indebted to Husserl’s *Crisis* for the conception of the lifeworld. Finally, Husserl’s critique of one-dimensional technicized reason remains a powerful diagnosis of modernity that stands credibly alongside the well-known positions of Heidegger, Marcuse, Adorno, and others.

## Notes

- 1 Husserl's *Crisis of the European Sciences* was published in part (Parts One and Two) in 1936 in the journal *Philosophia*. The full German text, including appendices and supplementary articles, was published in the Husserliana series in 1954 edited by Walter Biemel (Husserl 1954). A partial English translation by David Carr was published in 1970 (Husserl 1970).
- 2 For a critical engagement with this idea, see the chapter by Marín-Ávila, Chapter 32 in this volume.
- 3 See Pradelle and Crowell, Chapters 6 and 11 in this volume for a discussion of the relation between Kant and Husserl.

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