Husserl, Jaspers, and Heidegger on Life and Existence

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Abstract In this paper I examine the manner in which Husserl's phenomenology intersects with existentialism in relation to both Heidegger and Jaspers. Husserl does acknowledge facticity (*Faktizität*) and contingency and the peculiarities of personal embodiment and individual "style" (*Stil*), but he does not have a great deal to say about the absurdity of life, quite the opposite, everything is meaningful in some sense. In fact, the overall goal of philosophy, for the mature Husserl, is to rescue human existence from the deep existential crises threatening it. In order to do this, philosophers have again to pay attention to the environing life-world.

Keywords Husserl · Jaspers · Heidegger · Phenomenology · Existentialism · *Lebensphilosophie*

> *I seek not to instruct but only to lead [zu führen], to point out and to describe what I see. I claim no other right than that of speaking according to my best lights, principally before myself but in the same manner also before others, as one who has lived in all its seriousness the fate of a philosophical existence.*
>
> *(Husserl 1976a, 17; 1970, 18)*

1 Husserl: "The Fate of a Philosophical Existence"

Edmund Husserl claimed to have "lived in all its seriousness the fate of a philosophical existence" (Husserl 1970, 18; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 17) and to have made the "practice" (*Praxis: Hua* VI, 494) of philosophy both a personal commitment and a universal duty insofar as philosophers are "civil servants [*Funtionäre*] of

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humanity" (Husserl 1970, 17; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 15). But he was never, strictly speaking, an "existentialist" in the sense in which the term came to be used to characterize the philosophical movement. It is safe to assume that he never read the original existentialists, e.g., Kierkegaard or Nietzsche, although Georg Simmel did send him his book on Nietzsche in 1907 (BW VI, 401).[1]

Husserl did, however, inspire the subsequent existential phenomenologies: directly, Martin Heidegger (especially his account of *Dasein*'s Being-in-the-World); and, indirectly, Sartre, de Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty, and Levinas (as well as, to a lesser extent, Gabriel Marcel). There are aspects of his work, moreover, that are certainly in tune with and that undoubtedly inspired the later existentialist movement, especially his emphasis on concrete, lived experience, the temporal flow and unity of conscious life, the manner in which life is guided by values that must at some point be rationally justifiable and self-consciously embraced in "position-taking" (*Stellungnahme*), and the overall sedimentation of life through habituality into life in tradition (see Hart 1992).

Thus, for instance, Husserl does acknowledge facticity (*Faktizität*) and contingency and the peculiarities of personal embodiment and individual "style" (*Stil*),[2] but he does not have a great deal to say about the absurdity of life (as thematized, for example, in the work of Albert Camus),[3] the total freedom of the will, the voice of conscience, the fundamental mood of anxiety for revealing human being-in-the-world, the solidarity of the shaken, and other themes so central to the mid-twentieth-century existentialists.

The late Husserl, furthermore, perhaps under the influence of Eugen Fink, did look more into marginal phenomena such as dreams, drives, instincts, and so on, which are part of the existentialist interest in the "irrational".[4] In *The Crisis*, Husserl also makes reference to purely *unconscious* intentional acts as part of a discussion of the various modalities of perceptual acts and other acts that co-intend horizons which are more or less unconsciously in the background:

> Yet there are still, over and above these [horizonal intentionalities], "unconscious" intentionalities, as can be shown by a more detailed analysis. This would be the place for those repressed emotions of love, of humiliation, of *ressentiments*, and the kinds of behavior unconsciously motivated by them, which have been disclosed by recent "depth psychology" (although this does not mean that we identify ourselves with their theories). These too have their modalities of validity […]. (Husserl 1970, 237; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 240)

Here Husserl is belatedly recognizing the need for phenomenological analyses of such existential phenomena (*ressentiment* is a reference to Scheler), despite the fact

[1] See Simmel 1907 (in Husserl's personal library). Henceforth references to Husserl's correspondence are by volume and page to BW (*Husserliana Dokumente*, vol. III, *Briefwechsel*, vols. I–X). See Husserl 1994 in the References.

[2] See *Ideas II* (Husserl 1989b), 283; *Hua* IV (Husserl 1952), 270. See also Meacham 2013.

[3] See Heffernan 2017, for a discussion of how Camus is more phenomenologist than existentialist or absurdist.

[4] See especially the recently published *Hua* XLII (Husserl 2014a).

that Karl Jaspers had drawn his attention to these psychopathological phenomena decades earlier.

Indeed, Husserl's exposure to existentialism was decidedly limited. For Husserl, German *Existenzphilosophie* amounted to Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger. As Herbert Spiegelberg wrote in 1960:

> Husserl himself during his lifetime faced only the predecessors of self-confessed existentialism: Karl Jaspers' *Existenzphilosophie* and Martin Heidegger's existential analysis of human *Dasein*. (Spiegelberg 1960, 65)

Husserl never engaged with Karl Jaspers' work, although Jaspers himself was originally deeply influenced by the early Husserl's descriptive psychology, as he found it in the *Logical Investigations* (1900/1901), and applied this phenomenology in his general psychopathology (Jaspers 1963, 1973). Jaspers wanted to adopt phenomenology as a presuppositionless, descriptive method for describing non-objectifiable, subjective, psychological experiences. But Jaspers rejected Husserl's *Wesensschau* and apriorism, and, in later years, distanced himself from Husserl.[5] Jaspers visited Husserl only once in 1913 in Göttingen and was put off by the way in which Husserl treated him as if he were one of his students (see Jaspers 1957).

Husserl's own communication with Jaspers is not particularly illuminating. There are only three extent letters from Husserl to Jaspers (17 October 1911; 19 May 1912; 24 October 1922), collected in Husserl's *Briefwechsel* (see BW VI, 199–201). In 1911 Husserl wrote to Jaspers thanking him for sending him his article on "illusory perception" (*Trugwahrnehmung*: BW VI, 199; see Jaspers 1912a). In this letter, Husserl welcomes the "phenomenological reform of psychiatry" proposed by Jaspers, since Husserl thinks an "immanent phenomenology" of mental states will be more fruitful than a physicalistic or physiologically-informed psychological approach. He also thinks that Jaspers should not worry too much about understanding all aspects of phenomenology, but he refers him to his recently published *Logos* article (see *Hua* XXV [Husserl 1987b], 3–62; 2002a). For Husserl, it was more important to apply specific phenomenological analyses to particular problems with the right attitude and to avoid the "mythological concepts" (*Mythologeme*) of the psychologists. A year later, in 1912, Husserl again wrote a short note to thank Jaspers for sending him an offprint of his article on "the phenomenological research tendency in psychopathology" (Jaspers 1912b, 1968), which he hopes his own students will read. He goes on to correct Jaspers for placing Lipps as a predecessor to Husserl.[6] Husserl is anxious to correct Jaspers' understanding of the history of the

[5] For a detailed discussion of the Jaspers-Husserl relation, see Wiggins and Schwartz 1997. More recently, see Heffernan 2017.

[6] The two Lipps' works that Jaspers refers to, Theodor Lipps, *Einheiten und Relationen. Eine Skizze zur Psychologie der Apperzeption* (Lipps 1902b), and *Vom Fühlen, Wollen und Denken. Eine psychologische Skizze* (Lipps 1902a) – on feelings, emotions, etc. – both appeared in 1902, a year after Husserl's second volume of the *Investigations* was published. Husserl says that the same is true for Alexius Meinong, whose *Ueber Annahmen* (Meinong 1902) also appeared in 1912, after Husserl's *Investigations*. Husserl was very prickly if anyone did not acknowledge his originality! He was particularly upset that Scheler and Meinong did not acknowledge him.

movement. The 1922 letter is even shorter (a single paragraph), recommending Husserl's student Gerda Walther to Jaspers (who had now moved to Heidelberg since 1921). There is no evidence that Husserl saw himself as having anything to learn from Jaspers. The opposite is true of Heidegger. Jaspers, who distinguishes between *Dasein* and *Existenz*, is the proximal source for Heidegger's concept of *Dasein*.[7]

2 Husserl's Universal Rationalism

As is well documented, Husserl was more of an Enlightenment, post-Kantian rationalist who believed in the universalization of reason and freedom and who (inspiring the Frankfurt School) thought that the classic Enlightenment thinkers had flattened out the concept of reason which he was aiming to revivify. Indeed, after 1907, Husserl explicitly aligns himself with Kant and the German Idealist tradition. Husserl's rationalism is summed up in *The Crisis* when he writes:

> To be human at all is essentially to be a human being in a socially and generatively united civilization; and if man is a rational being (*animal rationale*), it is only insofar as his whole civilization is a rational civilization, that is, one 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 1970, 15; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 13)

Husserl emphasizes that the contemporary crisis is a crisis of *reason*. The Enlightenment had too narrow a conception of reason (Husserl 1970, 290; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 337). Rationalism now is dominated by objectivism and naturalism. There is a need to reflect on how this happened and to return to the "genuine" sense of rationality inaugurated by Greek philosophy:

> 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 1970, 290; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 337)

It is in pursuit of understanding a genuine conception of reason that Husserl comes to terms with the existential problems facing humanity. The overall goal of philosophy, for Husserl, is to rescue human existence from its deep existential crises (Husserl 1970, 17; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 15).

[7] Heidegger similarly was not primarily an existential philosopher. He was influenced by Kierkegaard, specifically his conception of anxiety (*Angst*) and being-towards-death (*Sein-zum-Tode*), but his intensive engagement with Nietzsche did not take place until the early 1930s, several years after *Being and Time* (1927). Heidegger did read St. Paul, Meister Eckhart, and Luther, and did have a sense of the importance of life, but he did not really delve into existentialist thinkers. Wilhelm Dilthey and Karl Jaspers, however, were powerful influences on the young Heidegger, as was Heinrich Rickert. See Blattner 2012.

3 Husserl's Late Attention to the Problems of "Existence" ("*Existenz*")

In the late nineteen twenties and early thirties especially, possibly because of his renewed interest in Dilthey, and with his daily contact with Heidegger, Husserl did move towards a new meditation on the nature of historical, communal, human existence. In *The Crisis* especially, Husserl makes his most sustained effort to develop a phenomenological approach to what might be termed "existential" issues, particularly to questions concerning temporality, historicity, finitude, facticity, tradition, and cultural and generational development (so called "generativity"; see Steinbock 1995). Husserl coined the term "generativity" (*Generativität*) in his later writings (e.g., Husserl 1970, 188; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 191; *Hua* XV [Husserl 1973c], 207–209) to express the constitutive processes through which the cultural, human world is the outcome of successive intentional acts of human beings over generations (Dilthey had also discussed the notion of belonging to a generation, which went on to influence Heidegger's discussion of the same theme in *Being and Time*).

Husserl always maintained, however, that the current life- and existence-philosophies were insufficiently grounded and tended to fall into what he regarded as anthropologism. In a telling remark to Helmut Kuhn (whose book on Socrates Husserl greatly admired), Husserl thanks Kuhn for reviewing the French edition of the *Cartesian Meditations* in *Kant-Studien* and remarks:

> I would like to mention that a second interest in the development of your philosophical personality moved me while studying this book. In your surprising review of my French *Méditations Cartésiennes*, you have come as close to understanding the meaning of my phenomenology [*Verständnis des Sinnes meiner Phänomenologie*] as has hardly ever happened before in Germany. Afterwards I thought that you would probably gain further understanding (and perhaps with the help of my *Formal and Transcendental Logic*) that phenomenology is the only and real way to concretion [*Weg zur Konkretion*], and that therefore the problems of human existence in the essential forms of sociality [*die Probleme menschlichen Daseins in den Wesensformen der Sozialität*], the problems of human "existence" [*die Probleme der menschlichen "Existenz"*], and all, and in every sense, historical-philosophical problems [*alle und in jedem Sinne geschichtsphilosophischen Probleme*] – in their basic form – are transcendental-phenomenological problems. (Husserl, Letter to Helmut Kuhn, 28 November 1934, BW VI, 238)

Husserl clearly wants to reinterpret "existential" problems within the scope of a transcendental phenomenology of social and cultural human existence.

Husserl, of course, was not alone in trying to fit the current German trends of life-philosophy and existentialism into a more systematic philosophical framework. Heinrich Rickert was doing the same thing in the early 1920s in his *Die Philosophie des Lebens* (Rickert 1920), which explicitly discusses Jaspers' *Psychology of Worldviews* (Jaspers 1919). Jaspers' book also influenced the young Heidegger, who reviewed it in 1920 but eventually published the essay only in *Pathmarks* (Heidegger 1976, 1998a). Rickert wants to defend the theoretical and systematic standpoint of scientific knowledge against the life-philosophies of Kierkegaard,

Nietzsche, Simmel, Bergson, Jaspers, Scheler, and even William James, as well as others.

In several of his writings, Husserl also (in agreement with Rickert) explicitly positions himself against various unscientific and irrational tendencies of philosophy of existence. Only in late life does Husserl associate "existentialism" with the concept of *Existenz* found in Jaspers and Heidegger (see Hart 2003). Thus, in his 1930 *Afterword* (*Nachwort*) to his *Ideas* (Husserl's addition to the Boyce Gibson English translation), Husserl refers to the dominant German movements of *Lebensphilosophie* and *Philosophie der "Existenz"* (*Hua* V [Husserl 1971], 139), and criticizes those who claim that he neglects "the so-called problems of 'existence'" (*die Probleme der sogenannten "Existenz"*: ibid., 141) (see the English translation, "Epilogue", in *Ideas II* [Husserl 1989b], 407; see also *Hua* V [Husserl 1971], 140–141). Note that Husserl usually puts the word *Existenz* in quotation marks when he means the existentialist notion, whereas in all his other texts he uses the regular German term *Existenz* to mean the real existence or "extantness" of objects (e.g., *Existenz der erfahrenen Welt*: *Hua* IX, 71; *Existenz der Welt*: *Hua* V, 153) – something, for example, which is bracketed by the phenomenological *epoché*. The same holds for when he speaks of both art and phenomenology as suspending questions of actual existence (*Existenz*) (see his Letter to Hugo von Hofmannsthal in BW VII, 133–138).

The phenomenological psychiatrist Ludwig Binswanger, whom Husserl had visited in the 1920s, sent Husserl a copy of his 1930 work, *Traum und Existenz*, in 1931 (see BW VII, 31–34). Husserl does acknowledge to Binswanger that phenomenology can unlock these existential questions. Similarly, Husserl wrote a letter to Rudolf Pannwitz, a Nietzschean-inspired poet, on 21 February 1932, defending scientific phenomenology against the "weak-hearted philosophies of resignation (of the *Existenzphilosophies*)" (*die schwachherzigen Philosophien der Resignation [der Existenzphilosophien]*): ibid., 218).

Husserl's *The Crisis* is in many respects his decisive answer to the philosophy of existence.[8] Here Husserl is responding to the general discussions concerning the crisis of modern existence found in Max Weber, Oswald Spengler, Helmut Kuhn, and others (see Moran 2012). In Part One of *The Crisis*, published in *Philosophia* in 1936, Husserl recognizes that there is an enormous "crisis" not just in the sciences but also in the "total meaningfulness of its [European humanity's] cultural life, its total '*Existenz*'" (Husserl uses the Jaspers/Heidegger word here: Husserl 1970, 12; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 10). Philosophy had sustained the values of the West but contemporary humanity has lost its faith in the "ideal of universal philosophy" (Husserl 1970, 11; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 9). Husserl's remedy is, then, to embark on a "teleological historical reflection" (Husserl 1970, 3–18; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 1–17), a series of "historical reflections" (*historische Besinnungen*: Husserl, 1970, 57; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 58), aiming to achieve "self-understanding" (*Selbstverständnis*) or "inner understanding" (*inneres Verständnis*: Husserl 1970,

[8] See Heffernan 2017.

14; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 12) of the meaning of philosophy as charting the West's development. He sets out the task in *The Crisis*:

> Our task is to make comprehensible the teleology in the historical becoming of philosophy, especially modern philosophy, and at the same time to achieve clarity about ourselves, who are the bearers of this teleology, who take part in carrying it out through our personal intentions. (Husserl 1970, 70; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 71)

Husserl speaks of the "hidden unity of intentional inwardness" that makes possible the "unity of history" (Husserl 1970, 73; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 74), the history that is "our history" (Husserl 1970, 71; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 72). In the appendix entitled "Foreword to the Continuation of *The Crisis*" (*Hua* VI, Appendix XIII), Husserl points out that the historical mode of exposition is "not chosen by chance", but rather is central (*Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 441), since he wants to exhibit the fact that the whole history of philosophy has a "unitary teleological structure" (*eine einheitliche teleologische Struktur*: ibid.).[9] Husserl insists that history is never, as a contemporary put it, one damn thing after another, in an accidental, haphazard way, but has an inner coherence and meaningfulness because of the intentional network of implications and motivations generated by human subjects and agents. For Husserl, then, history is meaningful but its meaning can only be uncovered by transcendental phenomenology. This idea of the intrinsic meaningfulness of history puts Husserl decidedly at odds with existentialists such as Sartre, who see all history as facticity and contingency.

4 Husserl's Links to Existentialism: The Primacy of Subjectivity

Husserl's closest connection to existentialism is probably his constant emphasis on the need to proceed from subjectivity and to construct knowledge on the basis of subjectivity.[10] From the very outset (as he reaffirms in a footnote in *The Crisis*), Husserl pursued the essential a priori correlation between subjectivity and objectivity:

> The first breakthrough of this universal a priori of correlation between experienced object and manners of givenness (which occurred during work on my *Logical Investigations* around 1898) affected me so deeply that my whole subsequent life-work has been dominated by the task of systematically elaborating on this a priori of correlation. (Husserl 1970, 166 n.; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 169 n.)

This led him, in the *Cartesian Meditations* and elsewhere, to begin from subjectivity. Husserl writes in *The Crisis*:

> Only a radical inquiry back into subjectivity – and specifically the subjectivity which *ultimately* brings about all world-validity, with its content and in all its prescientific and

[9] For Husserl's account of the a priori structures governing history, see Moran 2016.

[10] Alphonse de Waelhens sought to link Husserl's phenomenology to existentialism, in de Waelhens 1949.

> 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 [*Seinssinn*] of the world. Thus it is not the being of the world as unquestioned, taken for granted, which is primary in itself; […] rather what is primary in itself is subjectivity, understood as that which naïvely pregives the being of the world and then rationalizes or (what is the same thing) objectifies it. (Husserl 1970, 69; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 70)

Subjectivity has primacy. Throughout his life, in opposition to naturalism, Husserl became more and more concerned with the nature of subjectivity and its ineliminable contribution to the achievement of knowledge, and, even more, to the constitution of the experience of world. Indeed, Husserl's mature transcendental idealism, as expressed in *Ideas I* and thereafter (see especially *Hua* XXXVI [Husserl 2003]), asserts the ontological primacy of consciousness over being, that is, that transcendental subjectivity is ontologically prior to being (see Bernet 2004; Moran 2003). The primacy of subjectivity is certainly a golden rule of existentialism as well. Husserl could easily have embraced the Kierkegaardian dictum in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, "truth is subjectivity" (Kierkegaard 1992, 198). Husserl, however, would not have accepted Kierkegaard's idea of an unscientific approach to human existence. For Husserl, to the very end, philosophy could only exist as justified knowledge, as radical, fundamental science, and to abandon this demand for scientific knowledge was to abandon the very demand of reason.

Husserl not only begins from subjectivity – he begins from the ego-subject, from the "I", from what he often calls the *cogito* (following Descartes), that is, the individual, embodied conscious subject. The self, ego or "I" (*das Ich*) is ineliminable for Husserl – even though it has been forgotten by contemporary objectivist science. For Husserl, Descartes is the originator of modern transcendental philosophy by asserting the ontological primacy of the I. However, Husserl thought that Descartes – like Moses – discovered the land of transcendental subjectivity but did not enter it. Husserl ends the *Cartesian Meditations* with a revealing quotation from St. Augustine's *On True Religion* (*De vera religione*):

> The Delphic motto, "Know thyself!", has gained a new signification. Positive science is a science lost in the world [*Wissenschaft in der Weltverlorenheit*]. I must lose the world by *epoché*, in order to regain it by a universal self-examination [*in universaler Selbstbesinnung*]. "*Noli foras ire*", says Augustine, "*in te redi, in interiore homine habitat veritas*." (Husserl 1960, 157; *Hua* I [Husserl 1950], 183)[11]

Husserl, then, holds, in common with the classic existentialists, that the exploration of the *homo interius* takes primary place.

For Husserl, moreover, the *cogito* is the anchor point for the whole of phenomenology. Husserl accepts the basic truth of the *cogito* as an absolute starting point. I have the direct, immediate, incorrigible, apodictic, necessary truth that "I exist". This truth – this true intuition – cannot be cancelled out. It is, in Husserl's language, *undurchstreichbar.* But Husserl thinks through the nature of the *cogito* more radically than did Descartes. The ego is not a "residuum of the world" (Husserl 1970,

[11] See Moran 2017.

79; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 81). For Husserl, once I recognize the necessary truth of the "I think", I enter immediately and "with one blow" (*mit einem Schlage*: *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 78) into a new *transcendental* domain – the domain of transcendental self-experience (Husserl 1950, and Husserl 1960, § 9). But Husserl has a very particular conception of the transcendental ego as having a unique *life* and a personal trajectory or history, a conception of the ego for which he prefers the term "monad".

Furthermore, Husserl's transcendental ego is much more concrete than Kant's formal principle for the unity of all experience. While the transcendental ego does function to make all my experiences *mine*, it is like a snowball rolling downhill accruing experiences that expand its very nature. Thus Husserl characterizes the "pure" or "transcendental" ego as an "I-pole" (*Ichpol*), or "I-center" (*Ich-Zentrum*) of experiences, "the center whence all conscious life emits rays and receives them; it is the center of all affects and actions, of all attention, grasping, relating, and connecting, of all theoretical, valuing and practical position-taking […]" (Husserl 1989b, 112; *Hua* IV [Husserl 1952], 105). The ego is also the "substrate of habitualities" (Husserl 1950, 1960, § 32), "the substrate of the whole of [its] capacities" (*Substrat der Allheit der Vermögen*: *Hua* XXXIV [Husserl 2002b], 200). The ego in its experiencing over time becomes a *self* with convictions, values, an outlook, a style, a history. According to James Hart:

> For Husserl, because we have prior commitments whose validity is extended indefinitely throughout our lives until revoked, and because we live within the horizon of the infinite ideal of our true selves, we live a life in which a pervasive sense of ought is constant. (Hart 2007, 229)

In his publications from *Logical Investigations* to *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl's approach is predominantly individualist or "egological", describing conscious life primarily in the context of the individual self. Husserl even invokes the title of a then popular book by Max Stirner as a slogan: "the individual and his own" (*der Einzige und sein Eigentum*: *Hua* XXXV [Husserl 2002c], 94).[12] In the second volume of the *Phenomenology of Intersubjectivity*, he writes:

> The clarification of the idea of my pure ego and my pure life – of my psyche in its pure specific essentiality and individual uniqueness – is the basis [*das Fundament*] for the clarification of all psychological and phenomenological ideas. (*Hua* XIV [Husserl 1973b], 438)

Husserl's appreciation of the ego grew from an initial Humean position in *Logical Investigations*, or "non-egological consciousness" as Aron Gurwitsch called it (see Gurwitsch 1941; cf. Métraux 1975), to a full-blown egological idealism in *Cartesian Meditations*.

This concept of the ego, however, opens up on Husserl's research to a wide range of related issues, through unity of consciousness, self, subjectivity, and personhood, to empathy with others (especially in the Fifth Cartesian Meditation) and the

[12] The author who wrote under the pseudonym "Max Stirner" (1806–1856) was a left-wing Hegelian. His best known work appeared in 1844 as *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (reprinted in Stirner 1991) and has been translated as *The Ego and Its Own* (Stirner 1995).

"communalization" of the self (*Vergemeinschaftung*: Husserl 1950, 1960, § 55) in the "open plurality of other egos" (*Hua* XVII [Husserl 1974], § 104), as well as, ultimately, to the whole "intersubjective cognitive community" (ibid., § 96). Husserl has much to say about how the ego relates to its past stages and how it unifies itself with its past in acts of synthetic identification. More generally, he says that "the ego constitutes itself for itself in, so to speak, the unity of a 'history'" (*CM*, 75; *Hua* I, 109), as we have seen. This concept of the ego having its own historical trajectory (note that Husserl puts "history" in inverted commas) moves Husserl broadly in the direction of Hegel and Dilthey, but also in the direction of existentialism insofar as a person's life has to be viewed as an unfolding that somehow makes sense or adds up to something meaningful and is guided by values.

5 The Meaning of "Life" and the Life of Consciousness (*Bewusstseinsleben*)

Husserl's thoughts on *life* did run in parallel with those of German *Lebensphilosophen* (Simmel, Dilthey, but not Nietzsche). Husserl has a deep sense – reinforced by his early reading of William James and by his somewhat later reading of Wilhelm Dilthey – of the uniqueness of the flow of first-person conscious life (see his *Phenomenological Psychology* lectures of 1925: *Hua* IX [Husserl 1962], Husserl 1977]). Husserl does not talk about "existence" in his early and middle writings (though he does, possibly in response to Heidegger and Georg Misch,[13] in *The Crisis*), but he does talk about "consciousness" (*Bewusstsein*), and, more generally, "life" (*Leben*), or the "life of consciousness" (*Bewusstseinsleben*), "the wonderful constitution of consciousness" (*Hua* XXIII, 458). Thus Husserl speaks frequently of "the whole concrete subjective life" (*das ganze konkrete subjektive Leben*: *Hua* IX, 43) and the "life of worldly-consciousness" (*Weltbewusstseinsleben*: *Hua* XXXIV, 387). He constantly emphasizes the unique "nexus of life" (*Lebenszusammenhang*), a term he found in Dilthey. Clearly, *life* itself is a key term for Husserl. But the even more crucial term to express Husserl's sense of the entangledness of life in the world is his concept of "life-world" (*Lebenswelt*), to which we shall shortly return (see Moran 2013).

Husserl always emphasizes the unified flow of conscious life. He took from William James and Wilhelm Dilthey the concept of the unified nexus of life that can generate new mental forms and blends them all together in a unified temporal flowing. As he writes in *Ideas I* of 1913 (see Husserl 2014b; *Hua* III/1 [Husserl 1976b]):

[13] See Misch 1930. Husserl wrote to Misch in 1929 to clarify what he meant by phenomenology and to explain that the "relativity of nature" meant not the interrelation between things in nature but rather the dependence of the concept of nature on the intersubjective community of researchers who define it. See BW VI, 276–277.

> The stream of experience [*der Erlebnisstrom*] is an endless unity, and the form of the stream is a form necessarily encompassing all experiences of a pure ego – with many different systems of forms. (Husserl 2014b, 158; *Hua* III/1 [Husserl 1976b], 184)

Later Husserl further acknowledges that Dilthey also appreciated the seamless unity of life:

> The living life [*das lebendige Leben*] streams on continually, and it not only is, it is lived [*erlebt*], and at every time a notice, a pondering, a valuing, etc., can be directed toward it. But they themselves are merely new pulses of this life [*neue Pulse dieses Lebens*], not external to it, but taking place in it as moments, as lived experience making its appearance in life and directed toward life becoming singly prominent in the unbroken unity of one life and lived experience [*in der ungebrochenen Einheit eines Lebens und Erlebens*]. (Husserl 1977, 5; *Hua* IX [Husserl 1962], 8)

In his 1925 lectures, Husserl offers a new assessment of Dilthey's contribution to descriptive psychology, correcting his earlier critique in "Philosophy as Rigorous Science" (1910/1911), where he implicated him in a historicist relativism (Husserl 1987a, 2002a). Husserl speaks here about the particular genius of Dilthey:

> The great significance of Dilthey's expositions lay above all in what he said positively about the unity of psychic life as a unity of lived experience, and in the demand derived therefrom for a descriptive psychology drawing purely upon intuition. (Husserl 1977, 6; *Hua* IX [Husserl 1962], 10)

Husserl elaborates:

> [Dilthey] had an incomparable capacity for surveying everywhere the concrete life of the mind [*Geistesleben*], individual and socio-historical, in its living concretions [*in seinen lebendigen Konkretionen*], for grasping intuitively its typical shapes [*Gestalten*], its forms of change [*Wandlungsformen*], its motivational connections, and for carrying out with respect to them great surveying explications which make intelligible to us the characteristic being and genesis of historical mentality in its concrete necessity [*Sein und Werden der historischen Geistigkeit in ihrer konkreten Notwendigkeit*]. (Husserl 1977, 4; *Hua* IX [Husserl 1962], 6–7)

For Husserl, conscious life does not just consist of a layered, nested set of presentations (*Vorstellungen*) and judgments (*Urteile*) and willings (or 'phenomena of love and hate', as Brentano and the descriptive psychologists of the Brentano school had theorized). Rather, consciousness is exceedingly complex, many-layered and also develops in an organic, holistic way. Husserl writes:

> The psychic nexus [*der seelische Zusammenhang*] is a nexus of efficacy [*Wirkungszusammenhang*], a nexus of development, and is governed throughout by an immanent teleology, which can be exhibited analytically [*durchherrscht von einer analytisch aufweisbaren immanenten Teleologie*]. A directedness toward values [*ein Gerichtetsein auf Werte*] runs through life, a unitary striving toward happiness, toward contentment, an instinctive or consciously purposeful directedness. Thus, at times instinctively, at times with conscious purposefulness, new mental forms [*Gestalten*] arise from previous ones. (Husserl 1977, 6; *Hua* IX [Husserl 1962], 9–10)

In keeping with Henri Bergson and William James, as well, Husserl appreciated the seamless and holistic nature of consciousness, which is through and through

temporal. For Husserl, it is a phenomenological fact of extraordinary power that conscious life is seamlessly constituted as an enduring unity in all its acts. In any case, Husserl discusses the notion of life in detail in the *Phenomenological Psychology* lectures. He is always interested in how one conscious act emerges from and modifies an earlier act. He has a specific account of the now-moment, protentions, and retentions, involved in time-consciousness, but also of the manner in which perceptions seamlessly transmute into memories of perceptions, and can be further explored through retrievals and reactivations or further "modalisations" into fantasies or daydreams. Furthermore, feelings are founded on perceptions, and willings are founded on feelings. Conscious life is an ever-changing Heraclitean flux, but it is also governed, for Husserl, by strict a priori laws, which phenomenology can discover.

Interestingly, although he does not specifically refer to Husserl, in developing his concept of *Dasein*, Heidegger quickly rejected the term "life" (*Leben*) as too vague and ambiguous (Heidegger 1994, 81; 2008, 61). Initially, Heidegger does see phenomenology as a concrete description of life as it is lived. In his 1920 lecture course on *Phenomenology of Intuition and Expression*, Heidegger presents one of the chief tasks of philosophy as the attempt to awaken and strengthen the sense of facticity:

> Philosophy has the task of preserving the facticity of life and strengthening the facticity of existence [*Die Philosophie hat die Aufgabe, die Faktizität des Lebens zu erhalten und die Faktizität des Daseins zu stärken*]. (Heidegger 1993, 174; 2010, 133)

Heidegger writes in his notes for this 1920 course: "life [is] the primary phenomenon!" (*Leben Urphänomen*: Heidegger 1993, 176). Similarly, in his 1921/1922 lecture course on *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle*, he writes: "'Factical life': 'life' expresses a basic phenomenological category; it signifies a basic phenomenon [*Grundphänomen*]" (Heidegger 1994, 80; 2008, 61). The key to life, for Heidegger, is its "facticity". He writes: "This facticity is something life is, and whereby it is, in its highest authenticity" (Heidegger 1994, 87; 2008, 66).

Already in 1920, however, Heidegger had commented on the irreducible polysemy of the word "*Leben*" (Heidegger 1993, 18). Furthermore, Heidegger repeated this critique in his review of Jaspers' *Psychology of Worldviews* (published in *Wegmarken*).[14] Heidegger thinks that Jaspers' conception of life is vague and unphilosophical and he rejects Jaspers' conceptions of the infinite and "the encompassing" ("das Umfassende"). Heidegger goes on to criticize Jaspers for his assumptions about the *wholeness* of life (Heidegger 1998a, 14), which he thinks has a Bergsonian ring. Heidegger thinks that one's immediate entanglement in life is anything but straightforward. Instead, Heidegger thinks that we have to begin from the basic phenomenon of each person "having" himself or herself in an "anxious concern" (ibid., 28).

Heidegger also acknowledges Dilthey's major contribution but believes his philosophical analysis was too thin. Heidegger thinks that there has been – among life philosophers – "a vociferous but nebulous emphasis on orienting our *Dasein* to the

[14] On the Heidegger-Jaspers relation, see Krell 1978.

immediate reality of life, and to the need for enriching, fostering, and intensifying life" (Heidegger 1998a, 13). In *Being and Time*, Heidegger is critical of the relatively superficial way in which contemporary life-philosophies and indeed contemporary theology have dealt with the "primordial phenomenon" of life (Heidegger 1977, 249 n. vi; 1962, 495 n. vi). Heidegger is even critical of Dilthey (the "high-point" in the philosophy of life: Heidegger 1998a, 12), as well as of Simmel, Scheler,[15] Nietzsche, and Bergson (Heidegger 1994, 80–81). He even includes in his general criticism Heinrich Rickert, who himself had published a virulent critique of life-philosophy on the grounds that life had to be conceptualized (Rickert 1920).

Thus it is clear that the existential element in Heidegger's concept of *Dasein* is in part a rejection of both Husserl's and Jaspers' conceptions of *life* (themselves both rooted in Dilthey). On the other hand, one should not simply accept Heidegger's implicit criticism of Husserl. It would be unfair to suggest that Husserl neglected facticity in his description of life. Husserl was the first to admit that human existence is finite, temporal, bound to a very specific body ("leibgebunden": as his student Edith Stein puts it), and is "embedded" in a specific time and place in history (indeed, the first use of the term *Einbettung* appears to be by Husserl's student, Gerda Walther). There are, for Husserl, countless factors over which the ego has no control. This is "facticity" (*Faktizität*), although this Neo-Kantian term itself is somewhat uncommon in Husserl (but see *Hua* XIX/1 [Husserl 1984a], 9, 239, 255, 368; *Hua* V [Husserl 1971], 64) and is rarely thematised until the late writings (see *Hua* XVII [Husserl 1974], 25, 220, 279).[16] Husserl acknowledges a "hyletic facticity", which refers to all that is given in the sensuous and material domain of the body. In *The Crisis*, he speaks of the Heraclitean flow of constituting life "in its individual facticity" (*in seiner individuellen Faktizität*: *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 181; see also the facticity of history, ibid., 362, 385, 386). Generally speaking, Husserl treats facticity as a fundamental natural fact, a given, and, as such, as fundamentally unintelligible (see *Hua* VI, 477; *Hua* IX [Husserl 1962], 38, 245; *Hua* XXV [Husserl 1987a], 80, 115, 257). Husserl always wants to put to one side the world's facticity in order to gain the *eidos*. Free variation removes whatever is merely factical, contingent, and accidental (*zufällig*). Thus he writes in a supplement to the *Phenomenogical Psychology* lectures of 1925:

> The formal Eidos, "region [of] human being" ["*Region Mensch*"], is gained in a free variation. I leave nothing of the factual world that is there for the subject, nothing of its individual facticity, through which it can find itself as this [individual], I vary in regard to all and retain only the identity of the ego-human being [*Ich-Mensch*] in the coincidence of the variations [*in der Deckung der Varianten*]. I do not retain anything contingent, not even the hyletic species, and [thus] I gain the formal region "I" overall [*überhaupt*], as subject of a life in general as a human ego-life, to which belongs any modification [*Abwandlung*] of this world that is there for me, and, again, a formal variation that leaves variable the contingent species. (Husserl 1977; *Hua* IX [Husserl 1962], 492)

[15] Heidegger mentions Max Scheler's essay, *Versuche einer Philosophie des Lebens* (1913).

[16] See Dodd 1998, Kim 1976.

6 Freedom of the Will and of the Conscious Agent

To continue to explore the parallels with existentialism, Husserl is committed not just to subjectivity but also to the intrinsic, essential *freedom* of the subject in its willing and acting. For Husserl, freedom is essentially inherent in all conscious states (something that clearly inspired Sartre). Husserl focuses primarily on the freedom inherent in adopting specifically *cognitive* states, such as judging, affirming, denying, doubting, which explicitly take a position in relation to propositions (*Sätze*) or states of affairs (*Sachverhalte*). He has less to say about the intrinsic freedom involved in emotional states, such as anxiety or resentment (domains he left to other phenomenologists such as Scheler and Heidegger), but he does believe that a degree of self-conscious position-taking can occur there as well. Husserl does discuss the intentionality of feelings already in the *Fifth Logical Investigation*. Somewhat surprisingly, given the early contribution of Alexander Pfänder (Pfänder 1967) and the later contribution of Dietrich von Hildebrand, he says little about the intentionality of *willing* in his published works (mostly, this discussion is found in his Ethics Lectures, but see *Ideas I*, § 95), yet will is a central component of consciousness and essential for knowledge, since it posits values and initiates decisions. In fact, Husserl (following Descartes) takes a voluntarist position that treats all mental acts, especially acts of judging, as exercises of the will, but the will itself does not receive close attention in his main published works and lectures, although he does discuss moral willing in his *Lectures on Ethics*, where he characterizes willing as a kind of *fiat*, a "let it be" (*es werde*: *Hua* XXVIII [Husserl 1988], 107).[17] The ego achieves itself in its specific "I-acts" (*Ich-Akte*), such as decisions. In *Experience and Judgment*, Husserl writes about the centrality of the will as a relation of making real what is possible:

> Every step of cognition is guided by the active impulse of the will to hold onto the known as the same […]. Knowledge is an act of the ego, the goal of the will is the apprehension of the object in the identity of its determinations. (*EJ* [Husserl 1975], 198; *EU* [Husserl 1939], 232)

Husserl is very clear that "position-taking" (*Stellungnehmen*) and "position-changing" (*Einstellungändern*) are essential to consciousness: "All life is taking position" (*Alles Leben ist Stellungnehmen*). Consciousness is constantly shape-shifting. Husserl writes that the possibility of changing from one attitude to another is an essential characteristic of all acts; it belongs as an "ideal possibility" to all acts (*Ideas II* [1989b], 10; *Hua* IV [1952], 8). As Husserl states later in *Ideas II*:

> A change of attitude means nothing else but a thematic transition from one direction of apprehension to another, to which correspond, correlatively, different objectivities. (*Ideas II* [Husserl 1989b], 221; *Hua* IV [Husserl 1952], 210)

[17] See Melle 1997. Dietrich von Hildebrand also speaks of willing as a *fiat* in his *Christian Ethics* (1953).

Furthermore, all conscious life involves striving, for Husserl, and the whole of life is "a whole of striving" (*ein Ganzes des Strebens*: *Hua* VI, 485). Indeed, Husserl often speaks of "*Leben und Streben*" (ibid.). Knowledge begins in a desire, a "striving" (*er-kennen*), and ends have to be willed. Husserl's entire account of consciousness rests on the intuition (given in direct experience) that consciousness has an inbuilt freedom to change its stance, take "positions" (*Stellungen*), adopt attitudes (*Einstellungen*), acquire "convictions" (*Überzeugungen*), hold "values" (*Werte*), form habits (*Habitualitäten*), shift focus, and "modalize" (*Modalisierung*: *Hua* III/1, 214), that is, transform one attitude into another, for example move from certainty to doubt, from possibility to probability, from acceptance to questioning, and so on. Consciousness is free to perform higher-order actions such as altering the value of a judgement, or even, in the transcendental attitude, suspending position-taking altogether.

Life is imbued with an orientation to objective "value" or "worth" (*Wert*: Husserl and Scheler agree here). Human beings are oriented to values; they have "value-consciousness" (*Wertbewusstsein*: *Hua* III/1, 220); they have *Wertwesen* (a Schelerian term). Holding a value, *Wertnehmen*, is a kind of position-taking, a kind of axiological *Wahrnehmen*. Furthermore, it need not be rationally formulated in explicit judgments. Life is also constantly able to embrace or reject attitudes, to affirm or negate drives (like hunger, thirst or the drive to smoke). John Wild has written incisively about the human relation to values in an essay on existentialist philosophy:

> […] in my personal existence I am a living bias, opening into a moving world-horizon that is filled with ambiguity, and where even the urge towards clarity and objectivity represents a choice ruling out other possibilities, and therefore bearing with it a certain risk. For a human person to give up all bias is simply to commit suicide. To be alive is to pursue certain values rather than others, and these values cannot be placed in a separate realm or region of their own. They are necessarily involved in the act of existing. (Wild 1960, 50)

Husserl, similarly, holds that all perceptions can be transmuted into mere theoretical contemplations of perceptions. The world of ideas and the world of perceptions are not two distinct worlds but rather are the correlates of two fundamentally different *attitudes*. Indeed, what we think of as "nature" in the physical sense is the outcome of the natural or naturalistic attitude (depending on how much the outlook of modern post-Galilean physicalistic science superimposes itself).

My individual stream absorbs new acts and habits and collects them into unities in the context of a single "streaming psychic life":

> However, the psyche is not just streaming life [*strömendes Leben*], but a life in which, inevitably, distinctive new unities, habitualities, are constituted, that is, passive and active abilities, abilities of perception, abilities of feeling, abilities of memory, intellectual abilities, etc. (Husserl 1977, 107; *Hua* IX [Husserl 1962], 140)

The primary drive of consciousness is towards *living* itself in the sense of thriving, flourishing: "being is self-preservation" (*Sein ist Selbsterhaltung*: *Hua* XV [Husserl

1973c], 367). Especially in the twenties (e.g., in *Analyses of Passive Synthesis*[18] and *Phenomenological Psychology* lectures), Husserl analyses the complex layerings of our pre-predicative life, our drives, our being affected, our being drawn towards certain things through a kind of "attraction" or "allure" (*Reiz*), our "habits", "convictions" (*Überzeugungen*), our "attitudes", and other "sedimentations" (*Sedimentierungen*). There are unacknowledged horizons of *cogitationes* below and belonging to the unconscious. Husserl is more usually focused on the manner in which our conscious products settle down or sediment into convictions which I hold but which I do not consciously have to frame (the domain usually referred to as "pre-conscious"). Clearly, Husserl did acknowledge the role of instinct, drives, and what he broadly calls "interests" (see Lee 1993). He recognizes that some impulse or stimulus has to *awaken* consciousness in the first place, that there belongs to it at a most primitive level a passive being-affected but also a kind of reaching out or desire, a focusing of interest, leading to something becoming a "theme" (*Thema*) for consciousness. Conscious life is a "life of interests" (*Interessenleben*), beginning with sensuousness and gradually focusing outwards and rising to rational desires. But there is also the broadening out of subjective spirit to intersubjectivity.

7 The Life-World and the Idea of a Science of the Life-World

Husserl's turn to the life-world can be seen as an attempt to grasp the whole of human existence. In the early nineteen thirties, Husserl abandoned the egological approach of the *Cartesian Meditations* to turn towards the cultural and historical "life-world" (*Lebenswelt*), which is most evident in *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. Contrary to what Hans-Georg Gadamer has claimed,[19] Husserl did not coin the term *Lebenswelt*,[20] which was already in use by biologists as a synonym for what is now called the "biosphere". Husserl, however, made the term his own and expanded its meaning in important ways. In fact, both Husserl and Heidegger began to use the term *Lebenswelt* around the same time, that is, both explicitly begin using the term around 1917. It shows up in Heidegger's first lecture course in Freiburg in 1919, and Husserl uses it in a fragment now included in the *Beilage* to *Ideas II*, around 1917.

As we know from the text of *The Crisis*, Part III A, §§ 28–55, titled "The Way into Phenomenological Transcendental Philosophy by Inquiring Back from the Pregiven Life-World" – which was prepared for publication by Husserl in late 1936/1937, but which was then abruptly withdrawn (to be published only in 1954 in the critical edition by Walter Biemel) – Husserl became convinced that

[18] See *Hua* XI (Husserl 1966); trans. *Edmund Husserl Collected Works* IX.

[19] See Gadamer 1989, especially 243–254, where he discusses Husserl's later conception of life in relation to Dilthey, Count Yorck, and Heidegger.

[20] On the background to Husserl's use of *Lebenswelt*, see Orth 1999. The word *Lebenswelt* is listed, for instance, in Grimm's *Deutsches Wörterbuch* of 1885. See also Sowa 2008, 46.

phenomenological clarification must begin from what he calls the "pregiven life-world", which is "always already there" (*immer schon da*: Husserl 1970, 142; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 145), as "simple" (*schlicht*), "straightforward" (*geradehin*) "ongoing life" (*Dahinleben*: Husserl 1970, 150; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 153). Husserl speaks of *Dahinleben*, which means something like "living in the moment", "going with the flow". Husserl had already written to his friend Roman Ingarden in 1932 stating that life needs a transcendental phenomenological explication:

> I have come to the conclusion that only a really concrete explication that ascends from the natural possession of the world and of being to the "transcendental"-phenomenological stance […] can serve. (BW III, 285)

In *The Crisis*, Husserl claims that the life-world is the "forgotten fundament of natural science" (§ 9h) and that the "concrete life-world must first be taken into consideration" in terms of its "truly concrete universality" (Husserl 1970, 133; *Hua* VI [Husserl, 176a], 136). The life-world is the "ground" (*Boden*: Husserl 1970, 143; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 145) of all possible experience and action. The life-world, then, takes primary place in Husserl's late thought as the "universal problem of philosophy".

The life-world, as Husserl characterizes it, is the world of the pre-given, familiar, present, available surrounding world, including not just what has traditionally been designated as "nature" but also the world of "culture" that is always there as taken for granted in the development of the individual natural sciences. The life-world is, in Husserl's terms, the "fundament" for all human meaning and purposive activity. Furthermore, the life-world also provides the *horizon* for all human activity. This conception of the life-world as both ground and horizon is challenging. Husserl sees the science of the life-world as a radically new science, one that is essentially subjective ("subjective-relative") and prescientific in character. As he writes in *The Crisis*:

> There has never been a scientific inquiry into the way in which the life-world constantly functions as subsoil [*Untergrund*], into how its manifold prelogical validities act as grounds for the logical ones, for theoretical truths. And perhaps the scientific discipline which this life-world as such, in its universality, requires is a peculiar one, one which is precisely not objective and logical but which, as the ultimately grounding one, is not inferior but superior in value. (Husserl 1970, 124; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 127)

8 Intersubjectivity and the Life of Spirit

In his reflections in the 1930s, Husserl develops the theme (already broached in his "Philosophy as Rigorous Science" of 1910/1911) of humans as involved in the collective life of *spirit*, which involves addressing how human beings develop culture and constitute themselves as possessing a history and tradition. Already in 1934, for instance, Husserl had written, in a fragment entitled "human life in historicity" ("Menschliches Leben in [der] Geschichtlichkeit"):

> 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*]. (*Hua* XXIX [Husserl 1993], 3)

Human beings live collectively and this collective community is called "spirit" (*Geist*), following on from the tradition of German Idealism.

Husserl initially neglected the issues of community and intersubjectivity. The term "culture" (*Kultur*) is not even mentioned in the *Logical Investigations* (1900/1901) and the term *Geist* there is restricted to mean individual "mind".[21] Husserl began to think of individual conscious life as necessarily embedded in a network of intersubjectivity only around 1905 when he began to work on "empathy" (*Einfühlung*: see *Hua* XIII [Husserl 1973a]). For the mature Husserl (and his students especially Gerda Walther and Edith Stein), human life is always social, life with others (the late Husserl even speaks of *Mitsein* and *Miteinandersein*), life in community, the "we-community" (*Wir-Gemeinschaft*: *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 416), which is, at the same time, historical life, life in tradition.

We are not just experiencing and embodied subjects, we are also social and autonomous moral persons living in a communal world. Beginning in *Ideas II*, and continuing in his later writings (including the *Kaizo* articles of the early 1920s), Husserl builds up from the experience of the natural object to a rich and distinctive philosophy of the person and the inter-personal world (which Husserl, following Dilthey and Hegel, calls "spirit" [*Geist*]). In *Ideas II*, he speaks of a "plurality of subjects in mutual intersubjective understanding" (*eine Mehrheit sich intersubjektiv verständigender Subjekte*: *Hua* IV [Husserl 1952], 290).

In his mature works, Husserl elaborated on his conception of the life of consciousness as a life in community, in "co-humanity" (*Mitmenschheit*), operating as a social or political unity. Thus, in his first *Kaizo* article, "Renewal: Its Problem and Method", Husserl writes:

> A nation, a people [*Menschheit*] lives and creates in the fullness of power when it is sustained by a perpetual faith in itself and in a beautiful and good sense of its cultural life [*Sinn ihres Kulturlebens*]; when it does not merely survive, but instead, lives for what is great in its own eyes and takes pleasure in its increasing success in actualizing [*Verwirklichung*] its genuine and growing values. (*Hua* XXVII [Husserl 1989a], 3)

In *The Crisis*, personal life is explicated as essentially communal:

[21] In fact, *Geist* is mentioned only a few times in *Logical Investigations* (in the Appendix to the *Sixth Investigation*, *Hua* XIX/2 [Husserl 1984b], 223), where it is used more or less as the equivalent of "soul" in a discussion of Locke. Husserl speaks of "geistige Erlebnisse", by which he means our "mental experiences". In *Ideas I*, *Geist* is used primarily to mean "mind", as when centaurs are described as free productions of the mind (*Ideas I* [Husserl 2014b], 42; *Hua* III/1 [Husserl 1976b], 49). In *Ideas I*, § 48, Husserl does talk of the "world of spirit" (*Geisterwelt*), which Dahlstrom translates as the "unified world of minds (the universal expansion of the human community)" (*Ideas I* [Husserl 2014b], 88; *Hua* III/1 [Husserl 1976b], 103).

> Personal life means living communalized as an I and we [*als Ich und Wir*] within community horizon, and this in communities of various simple or stratified forms such as family, nation, supranational community [*Übernation*]. (Husserl 1970, 270; *Hua* VI [Husserl 1976a], 314)

Although there has been enormous development in the natural sciences, Husserl maintains in the first *Kaizo* article (and repeats in *The Crisis*) that there is still no proper science of the human spirit:

> Thus, as always, in this natural-technical sphere of human activity, science made a truly practical rationality possible, and it provided the paradigm for how science in general must become a model of practical action [*Praxis*]. But we entirely lack a practical science of humanity and of the human community [*Wissenschaft vom Menschen und der menschlichen Gemeinschaft*], a science which would establish a rationality in social and political activity and a national, political technique. (*Hua* XXVII [Husserl 1989a], 6)[22]

According to Husserl, we lack a methodology for the science of the human person that would accomplish what mathematics (with Galileo) did for the natural sciences in modernity (ibid.).

The idea of spiritual being is, for Husserl, a distinct region of being (he discusses "regions" of being at the end of *Ideas I*) and is the equivalent of "nature", encompassing everything that the human sciences study. There is currently no a priori science of the human; only many empirical sciences. Only phenomenology can provide this fundamental human science.

Husserl believes that philosophy is called on to address the fundamental questions relating to human spiritual existence. Thus, in his Prague letter of 1934, he speaks of philosophy, from its "primordial founding" (*Urstiftung*) in ancient Greece, as the great cultural product of Europe, its gift to the world, and says that the challenge of philosophy is to live a life of self-answerability or self-responsibility (*Selbstverantwortung*):

> Philosophy is the organ for a new kind of historical existence [*Dasein*] of humankind, that of existing out of a spirit of autonomy. The primordial form [*Urgestalt*] of autonomy is that of the scientific self-responsibility. […] Philosophical self-responsibility necessarily gets itself involved in philosophizing community. […] Herewith the specific sense of European humanity and culture is designated. (*Hua* XXVII [Husserl 1989a], 240)

Similarly, a year later, in his Prague lectures in November 1935, Husserl writes:

> What did it [modern European humanity] grasp as what is essential to ancient humanity? Nothing other than the philosophical form of existence [*Daseinsform*], freely giving itself in its whole life its law out of pure reason, out of philosophy. (*Hua* XXIX [Husserl 1993], 109)

[22] Also, Husserl's article, "Die Idee einer philosophischen Kultur. Ihr erstes Aufkeimen in der griechischen Philosophie" ("The Idea of a Philosophical Culture. Its Original Germination in Greek Philosophy"), was published in 1923 in *Japanisch-deutsche Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft und Technik*, and is reprinted in *Hua* VII (Husserl 1956), 203–207 (cf. ibid., 8–10, 11–17).

9 Conclusion

We have shown that Husserl was deeply interested in the meaning of human conscious life and in this regard came to hold Dilthey's *Lebensphilosophie* in higher esteem, although he always maintained that only transcendental phenomenology could clarify the problems of human existence. Husserl, as we have seen, had less time for Scheler, Jaspers, and Heidegger, because he thought that their work lacked scientific grounding and collapsed into anthropologism. But Husserl himself had a very high appreciation of philosophy as addressing the most profound issues of human existence in its essential meaningfulness. In his draft Introduction to Part Three of *The Crisis*, Husserl fears that his labors in the development of phenomenology were in danger of being discarded as irrelevant and outmoded, especially with the growing interest in life-philosophy, existentialism, and what Husserl broadly characterizes as "irrationalism" in philosophy. Husserl's urgent tone reflected not only his own sense of impending mortality, but also the need to confront the intellectual crisis shaking Europe at a time – the mid-1930s – when the Nazification process was in full swing in Germany. Husserl had the strong sense that the whole scientific culture of Europe was being threatened and undermined by a descent into irrationalism. Indeed, Husserl's last work, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, can be seen – a decade before Heidegger's famous critique of humanist ideals in "Letter on Humanism" (1947)[23] – as a profound critical interrogation of and reflection on the meaning of human existence in the historical and communal life-world.

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[23] See Heidegger 1998b. Heidegger's letter was originally written to the French philosopher Jean Beaufret in 1946 as a response to certain questions put to Heidegger regarding his relations to Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism. In his letter, Heidegger argues that "humanism" is an essentially metaphysical position deriving from Roman philosophy that fails to capture what is essential to human existence: "Humanism is opposed because it does not set the *humanitas* of the human being high enough" (ibid., 251).

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