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Crisis and Lifeworld

New Phenomenological Perspectives

Phänomenologie

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Hernán Gabriel Inverso | Alexander Schnell [Eds.]

Crisis and Lifeworld

New Phenomenological Perspectives

VERLAG KARL ALBER



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Introduction

The notion of crisis plays a fundamental role in contemporary philosophy. A sense of anxiety, instability, and rupture dominates the scene during turbulent times, but it is also present in the even calmest periods. A world of increasing communication and interconnectedness is sensitive to global processes that have rendered traditional parameters obsolete, exposing a wavering horizon populated by fickle phenomena. When the meeting that gave rise to this book occurred, neither the pandemic nor the current war situations had yet occurred. However, the essential diagnosis linked to the crisis has remained the same. These events entered the collective experience highlighting the relevance of some fundamental questions. It is clear that the improvement of material resources compared with previous centuries has nothing to do with this sensation, but rather, as Husserl rightly saw, the crisis involves a cultural and spiritual condition that requires more profound intellectual efforts.

The polysemy of this notion is well known. The Greek origin of the term ›crisis‹ points to various elements derived from *krinein*. In its most basic sense, it means ›to sift‹, to separate with the sieve the flour from the bran, or any other element, so that the densest remain on the filter and the subtler fall into the storage place. This act implies disorder and shaking, the loss of the initial composition, but also a breakthrough in the distinction of what was mixed, a clarity that was not there before, and a new reconfiguration of the parts. By this double-sidedness, *krisis* was also the climax of an illness that allows us to infer the outcome of the disease, the agitation and confrontation that arises in the face of a disruptive event, but also the choice made in distinguishing the elements of a situation and the resulting judgment.

Indeed, phenomenology is the offspring of this kind of scene. It appeared at the beginning of the 20th century on a convulsed horizon. Metaphysical models seemed ruined. Psychologism and historicism were exhausted, and everything called for a complete redefinition. At the same time, the social and political crisis was taking on its worst face in the form of war. Husserl was personally struck by this political

instability, which underlines a vital dimension reflected in the view of the crisis and the lifeworld as connected elements. This theme is central to his thought.

The lifeworld underlies the »natural attitude« and puts in the forefront significant phenomena related to communal features and »homeworld«. Far from being a late inclusion, or even a reaction to the philosophy of Heidegger, the notion of *Lebenswelt* has deep roots in Husserl's thought. Although the word is not usual in his first works, the idea of a »natural concept of the world« (*natürliche Weltbegriff*), taken from Richard Avenarius and also present in Dilthey, is already in *Thing and Space* (1907) and the *Fundamental Problems of Phenomenology* (1910/11). He states that the description of that level would require quite complex reflections, as it occurs with other relevant matters whose treatment is deferred. The first appearance of the word *Lebenswelt* in a manuscript goes back to 1917, and it keeps growing during the decade of 1920 up to the *Crisis*. The notion of *Lebenswelt* also includes some aspects of the concept of *Umwelt*, the »surrounding world« related to the environment and everyday life. Through the reduction, it is possible to reveal its constitution.

From this perspective, the substantial contribution of the *Crisis* is based on its statements about teleology and the requirement of a *Rückfrage*. This retrospective question tries to bridge the gap concerning the origin. Indeed, it is a vacuum, so it is necessary to think about it in the teleological framework of a symbolical horizon of meaning. This horizon gives way to a history of histories and points to the *Urstiftung* associated with the symbolic institution of meaning. This search leads to the transcendental conscience, its link with time and language, and the features of the symbolic institutions and their givenness in the horizon of historicity. Hence, the *Lebenswelt* implies the primary level of the phenomena in their radical indeterminacy and phenomezalisation. The lifeworld concerns the horizon of all praxis, and the crisis involves a modality that breaks it, giving rise to the cancellation of what is customary, i.e., to instability. Still, it also produces »stupendous happenings«, as Husserl points out in the opening of his inaugural lecture at Freiburg.

Because of this complex condition, despite the evolution of the later phenomenological variants, the importance of this theme remained unchanged and constitutes today one of the most important contributions to philosophical thought in general. Within this framework, these issues were the central topics addressed at the conference

held in September 2018 at the Bergische Universität Wuppertal, which brought together experts on the subject to discuss different perspectives linked to Husserl's contributions, their reception, and the new strategies for addressing contemporary phenomena.

The presentations and discussions were lively and enriching, which led to sharing the results with the broader community by publishing a selection of papers. The result is this book. The first part, oriented towards methodological questions of phenomenology, begins with David Carr's contribution, »Phenomenology: Metaphysics or Method?«. It offers a set of arguments to support the second option, pointing out that phenomenology is a critical metaphysically neutral method, which is a proper condition to understand the nature of experience. Taking a different perspective, Alexander Schnell presents in »Transcendental Phenomenology and the Lifeworld« a study of transcendental idealism in Husserl's *Crisis of the European Sciences* aimed to reject the opposition between idealism and materialism and propose a new beginning. The projection beyond Hume's empiricism also suggests how this path can be continued.

The historical dimension of phenomenology and its trans-historical aspects are addressed in Claudia Marsico's paper, »Philosophical generativity. Turn to Antiquity, Institution of Meaning and *Denkergemeinschaft* in the *Crisis*«. She explores the notions of tradition and institution of meaning in the *Crisis*, the logic of Husserl's reception of ancient thought, and his conception of philosophy as *Denkergemeinschaft*, connected with the philosopher's task as *Funktionäre der Menschheit* in line with the nature of philosophical communities. This section closes with Roberto Walton's paper, »Crisis as the lack of response to an interpellation«, which focuses on the notion of crisis as a disruptive event at the level of actual history. The study of the layers of history in transcendental phenomenology leads to Husserl's identification of three moments of every crisis. This analysis is complemented by other phenomenological views on this issue, opening up new perspectives on interpellation and teleology.

The second part explores the reception of Husserl's *Crisis* in the subsequent evolution of phenomenology. Indeed, phenomenology has grown in very different soils adopting various features. Trying to provide a comprehensive view of these developments is beyond the scope of this book and should be addressed in the framework of a broader project. On the contrary, this section focuses on a group of approaches that have been highly prolific in their readings of the *Crisis*

in the environment of the French tradition. Indeed, my work, »Echoes of the *Krisis* in Contemporary French Phenomenology«, explores this relationship taking as starting point Husserl's warning about the link between the crisis and the sciences. On this basis, this work studies central issues in the philosophies of Michel Henry, Jean-Luc Marion, and Marc Richir, stressing the innovative aspects of these approaches, their diverse diagnoses about the current challenges, and the role of intellectual circles. Within the same horizon, in »Is life sensible? Husserl and Henry: Two Paradoxes about the Lifeworld«, Paula Lorelle studies the topic of return to life as a phenomenological answer to the crisis of sciences and culture as a return to sensibility. This turn involves contrasting features related to auto-affection, insensibility, and self-sufficiency, which must be unraveled to comprehend life's original sensibility as the genuine phenomenological approach to life and its fragility.

In »Topics in Merleau-Ponty's Reading of the *Krisis*«, Esteban García explores the reception of this work in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, trying to go beyond the labels of continuity or break. Relevant issues such as reduction, transcendental intersubjectivity, and the link between philosophy and psychology are seen from the fruitful intra-phenomenological dialogue in which Merleau-Ponty develops views that were *in nuce* in Husserl's work. Through the study of these echoes, this section highlights the relevance of the notion of crisis in some s phenomenological developments of the second half of the 20th century as a sign of its beneficial influence.

By moving one step further, the third part is organized around some explorations of the notion of lifeworld to understand contemporary processes. Klaus Held's paper, »Phenomenology of the Crisis and Digitalization«, starts from Husserl and Heidegger's diagnosis of the danger of European culture to shed light on current challenges related to virtual life. From studying the lifeworld and virtual life, new insights on forgetfulness, responsibility, and mindful reflection come to light. In the same line, Ismail El Mossadeq's paper, »Lifeworld Forgetfulness in the Digital Age. Reflexions Following Husserl's *Krisis*«, connects the contrast between analog and digital with the distinction between the lifeworld and the objective world to comprehend their similarities and differences. On this basis, he carries out a thoughtful analysis of lifeworld forgetfulness in the digital age.

For his part, Luis Román Rabanaque, in his »Crisis and the Unconscious: Another Look at the Lifeworld«, analyzes subjective life

and the broad range of issues related to the transcendental problem of constitution focusing on the unconscious and affection, the cases of dream and dreamless sleep as an extreme that cannot be recovered through recollection, and their link with the living body, as neglected aspects of subjectivity that illustrate a relevant element of the crisis described by Husserl. The heart of Hye Young Kim's work, »Intersubjective Subjectivity: Language, Diversity of Language«, also addresses generative issues. It explores the notion of »we« beyond the mere collection of individuals and describes that phenomenon as »minds in the we-mode«. Considering that it can be recognized in language, especially in their trans-linguistic instances, the phenomenological description of some Korean and Malagasy examples sheds light on the extended self and intersubjective subjectivity.

The volume closes with Christoph Durt's contribution, »Subjectivity and World: The Roots of the Crisis in Husserl's The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology«. It addresses the various senses of crisis related to the sciences and the loss of meaningfulness for human life as indicators of the deeper problem of the bond between subjectivity and the objective world. Phenomenology appears as the way to understand these issues, thus contributing to facing contemporary challenges.

Finally, we offer our gratitude to all those who made it possible for us to accomplish this task. This book would not be possible without the support of the National Agency for Promotion of Science and Technology (ANPCyT, Argentina), the University of Buenos Aires, the Bergische Universität Wuppertal, and the Université Libre de Bruxelles. Most of all, we thank the colleagues who contributed with their valuable texts about relevant phenomenological issues as a key to comprehending our contemporary world.

Brussels, February 2022

Hernán G. Inverso

Abbreviations

Immanuel Kant's work is quoted following the volume and page of the German Academy edition: *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, edited by the Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, later the Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin (De Gruyter, and predecessors, 1902-), apart from the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In that case, the Academy edition is taken into account, but it is cited according to the pagination of the first (A: 1781) and second (B: 1787) editions. When needed, the page number of the English translation is also mentioned in square brackets. The following volumes are referred to in the book:

- KrV.* Kritik der reinen Vernunft; Critique of Pure Reason, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Prol.* Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können; Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics. Tr. P. Carus rev. J. Ellington. Indianapolis, Hackett Publishers, 1977.

Edmund Husserl's works are quoted following the volumes of *Husserliana. Gesammelte Werke*. Dordrecht, Springer, 1950–2019 (formerly Martinus Nijhoff and Kluwer Academic Publishers), vols I–XLII. This series is quoted as ›Hua‹ followed by volume and page number. When available and relevant, the page number of the English translation (and if needed the year of publication) is also indicated in square brackets, except in the case of translations by the authors. The following volumes and translation are referred to in the book:

- Hua I. Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge, ed. S. Strasser, 1950; Cartesian Meditations, transl. Dorion Cairns. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960.

Abbreviations

- Hua III/1. Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie, ed. Karl Schuhmann, 1976; *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, transl. Fred Kersten, The Hague/Boston/Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983, and *Ideas for a pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book*, transl. D. Dahlstrom. Indianapolis, Hackett Publishers, 2014.
- Hua IV. Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Zweites Buch: Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution, ed. Marly Biemel, 1952; *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, transl. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 1989.
- Hua V. Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Drittes Buch: Die Phänomenologie und die Fundamente der Wissenschaften, ed. Marly Biemel, 1971.
- Hua VI. Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie, ed. Walter Biemel, 1976; *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, transl. David Carr, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970.
- Hua VIII. Erste Philosophie (1923/24). Zweiter Teil: Theorie der phänomenologischen Reduktion, ed. Rudolf Boehm, 1959.
- Hua IX. Phänomenologische Psychologie. Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1925, ed. W. Biemel, 1968; *Phenomenological Psychology. Lectures, Summer Semester, 1925*, transl. John Scanlon, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977.
- Hua XI. Analysen zur passiven Synthesis, ed. Margot Fleischer, 1966; *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis. Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, transl. A. J. Steinbock, Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001.

- Hua XIII. Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Erster Teil. Texte aus dem Nachlass 1905–1920, ed. Iso Kern, 1973; *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Tr. I. Farin and J. Hart, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006.
- Hua XIV. Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Zweiter Teil. Texte aus dem Nachlass 1905–1920, ed. Iso Kern, 1973.
- Hua XV. Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass. Dritter Teil: 1929–1935, ed. Iso Kern, 1973.
- Hua XXXIII. Phantasie, Bildbewusstsein, Erinnerung. Zur Phänomenologie der anschaulichen Vergegenwärtigungen. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1898–1925), ed. Eduard Marbach, 1980; *Phantasy, Image Consciousness, and Memory (1898–1925)*. Transl. J. Barnett Brough. Dordrecht, Springer, 2005.
- Hua XXV. Aufsätze und Vorträge (1911–1921). Mit ergänzenden Texten, ed. Thomas Nenon and Hans Rainer Sepp (*Husserliana XXV*), 1987.
- Hua XXVII. Aufsätze und Vorträge (1922–1937). Mit ergänzenden Texten, ed. Thomas Nenon and Hans Rainer Sepp (*Husserliana XXVII*), 1989.
- Hua XXIX. Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie. Ergänzungsband. Texte aus dem Nachlass 1934–1937, ed. Reinhold N. Smid, 1993.
- Hua XXXIV. Zur phänomenologischen Reduktion. *Husserliana* 34. Ed. Sebastian Luft, 2002.
- Hua XXXVII. Einleitung in die Ethik. Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1920/1924, ed. Henning Peucker, 2004.
- Hua XXXIX. Die Lebenswelt. Auslegungen der vorgegebenen Welt und ihrer Konstitution. Texte aus dem Nachlass, 1916–1937, ed. Rochus Sowa, 2008.
- Hua XLII. Grenzprobleme der Phänomenologie. Analysen des Unbewusstseins und der Instinkte. Metaphysik. Späte Ethik. Texte aus dem Nachlass, 1908–1937, ed. Rochus Sowa and Thomas Vongehr, 2013.

Abbreviations

Husserliana Materialen

Hua Mat IV. Natur und Geist. Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1919. Ed. by M. Weiler. Dordrecht, Kluwer, 2002.

Hua Mat 8. Späte Texte über Zeitkonstitution (1929–1934). Die C-Manuskripte, ed. Dieter Lohmar. Dordrecht, Kluwer, 2006.

Husserliana Dokumente

Edmund Husserl, Dokumente 1–4, Dordrecht, Springer, 1981–1999 (previously: Den Haag, Martinus Nijhoff; Dordrecht/ Boston/London, Kluwer Academic Publishers).

Hua Dok III. Briefwechsel, part III: Die Göttinger Schule, eds. Karl Schuhmann and Elisabeth Schuhmann, 1994.

Additionally, the following works by Edmund Husserl not included in the *Husserliana* edition are referred:

Erfahrung und Urteil, Hamburg, Claassen Verlag, 1964; Experience and Judgment, transl. James Churchill and Karl Ameriks, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973. Quoted as EU.

Foundational Investigations of the Phenomenological Origin of the Spatiality of Nature: The Originary Ak, the Earth, Does Not Move. In Leonard Lawler with Bettina Bergo (eds. and transl.). Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology. Including Texts by Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 2002.

Grundlegende Untersuchungen zum phänomenologischen Ursprung der Räumlichkeit der Natur. In: Marvin, Farver, (ed). Philosophical Essays in Memory of Edmund Husserl. Cambridge (Massachusetts), Harvard University Press, 1940 (re-impression: New York, Greenwood Press, 1968).

Martin Heidegger's works are quoted following the volumes in *Gesamtausgabe*. Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann, 1975-. The following volumes and translations are referred:

- GA 2. Sein und Zeit, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm von Herrmann, 1977; Being and Time. Transl. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. Oxford, Blackwell, 2001.
- GA 65. Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis) (1936–1938), ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Gesamtausgabe 65). Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann; Transl. Parvin Emad and Kenneth Maly, Contributions to Phenomenology (From Owing). Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1999.
- GA 71. Das Ereignis, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm von Herrmann, 2009.

Part A
Perspectives on the *Crisis*

David Carr

Phenomenology: Metaphysics or Method?

I borrow my title from a book by Gerhard Funke, originally published in 1966 (see references), and I want to consider the same question he raises. Like Funke, I consider phenomenology to be essentially a method. It has its origin in the context of modern philosophy and thus bears a certain relation to other philosophical disciplines, notably metaphysics and epistemology. But I think it is distinct from both of these, and its place in philosophy is best understood apart from them. While metaphysics asks what exists, how it exists, and sometimes whether it exists, and while epistemology asks how we can know what exists, phenomenology asks, of anything that exists or may exist: how is it given, how is it experienced, and what is the nature of our experience of it? Not everyone has agreed with this distinction between phenomenology and metaphysics; and in any case, even if they are distinct, what is the relation between them? These are the issues I raise in this paper.

The primary source for my conception of phenomenology is Husserl, and the tradition he inspired. But my purpose is not to produce an exegesis of Husserl, though I will be citing his writings; and I'm not claiming he would have agreed with everything I say. But I do think I'm being true to the spirit if not the letter of his work. I also develop a notion of the phenomenological method as a *critical* method, and the idea of phenomenology as a *critique of experience* reveals the Kantian as well as Husserlian inspiration of my approach.

1. Husserl and the phenomenological method

We begin with some familiar passages from Husserl. He introduces the phenomenological method in the second section of *Ideas I* with a chapter called »the thesis of the natural attitude and its suspension«. It is this »suspension« that will be reformulated as the »*epoché*«, which

in turn becomes the »phenomenological reduction«. But before he gets to this point, Husserl must explain some of the terminology he has introduced. In order to explain what he means by the »natural attitude«, and its »thesis«, he begins with a section called »the world of the natural attitude: I and my environment« (GA III/1, 56 [2014, 48]).

There are two things about this first section that deserve to be noted: the first is that Husserl describes what he is doing as »simple meditations that are best conducted in the first person (*in der Ichrede*)«. And indeed he uses the *Ichrede* in what follows: »I am conscious of a world (...) I immediately find it intuitively, I experience it«, and so on (GA III/1, 56 [2014, 48]). This form of discourse, described significantly here as »meditations«, alerts us to the fact that Husserl is following the lead of Descartes, and this thinker is mentioned by name later in this chapter. Of course, this association exposes Husserl to certain misinterpretations, and he frequently has to back away from it later. Furthermore, Husserl is somewhat offhand in introducing this first-person discourse – he says it is »best«, he doesn't say it's obligatory – and he is not always consistent in using it in what follows. Nevertheless, this introduces something that is, at least tacitly, hereafter associated with the phenomenological approach: It is an inquiry conducted in the first person, and to some extent we could also say that it is *about* the first person. It is centered on the first-person point of view.

The second thing that is introduced here, no less important, is the concept of »world«. This concept, so familiar to us in its distinctively phenomenological sense, occupies an increasingly important position in Husserl's work and in the whole phenomenological tradition he founded; yet surprisingly, it had hardly been present at all prior to *Ideas I* of 1913. Even the term was rarely used in the *Logische Untersuchungen* (1901) and in the lectures of the ensuing decade. The important exception is the lecture course »*Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*« (Hua XIII) from the winter semester of 1910–11. Here a new element entered the picture, which would become prominent in *Ideen I*, namely that of the »natural attitude« and of the »world of the natural attitude«. While there are hints of this in the lectures of 1907, *Die Idee der Phänomenologie* and *Ding und Raum*, they are not developed as they are in 1910. The general idea here is that the life of consciousness, as described in the *Logical Investigations* and in the various lecture courses that followed, with its acts and their meaningful or intentional objects, also involves certain attitudes