

CHAPTER IV

THE DISCOVERY OF THE LIFE-WORLD

The idea of the life-world, as conceived by Husserl in his *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*,¹ is seen as a discovery. Yet, it is not quite unrelated to what Husserl had achieved in his phenomenological career. It is related both to his concerns with the world and his transcendental philosophy. But the relation is different in each case. On the one hand, the life-world “appears to be a return to, and re-emphasis of the idea of the natural standpoint.... On the other hand it also seems to stand for limiting the transcendentalism and sovereignty of the subject of transcendental phenomenology.”² Yet, the theme of the life-world as Husserl presents it has bearing on different aspects of transcendental phenomenology - its method and research subject matter. So, in a way, it is something new, novel, a discovery and at the same time a re-interpretation. We have already pointed out, in the very first chapter that the titles of Husserl’s major published works are subtitled “introduction” to phenomenology. An introduction is deemed necessary to provide access to fresh problems and radical transformation of enquiry.

I

The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology (henceforth *The Crisis*) was Husserl’s last work which he himself prepared for publication before his death. It remained unfinished though. Nonetheless, it is the work which has attracted more critical attention than any of his other works. For, although it was conceived of as an

“introduction” to phenomenology – as was also the case with *Ideas I*, *Formal and Transcendental Logic* and *Cartesian Meditations* – *The Crisis* obviously contains something completely new inasmuch as it documents the often discussed “turn” in Husserl’s later philosophy. According to some Husserl scholars, this “turn” evidently cannot but mean Husserl’s turn away from transcendental phenomenology.³ More balanced assessments of this work are now in vogue.

The celebrated work of Husserl, i.e., *The Crisis* is highly important in contemporary philosophy for its key term, *Lebenswelt*, life-world. The problem of the life-world forms the subject matter, of Part IIIA of *The Crisis*. But it is not an altogether novel conception, for Husserl. The “*Lebenswelt*” is a rather predictable outgrowth of his earlier works. This term appears even before *The Crisis* in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*⁴ and in *Experience and Judgement*⁵. We may also trace the beginning of the thematic of the *Lebenswelt* back to *Ideas II*⁶, when Husserl pointed out the need for a genetic phenomenology to supplement the static analysis that had been the hallmark of his work in mid-career, that is the period around the time of *Ideas I*.

In tracing the development of Husserl’s thought, J.N Mohanty observes that in his later writings there was no radical transformation of the motifs and themes of the Gottingen period. They were reinforced with shifts in importance. He remarks, “not even the theme of the life-world was a completely new discovery.”⁷ However, this concept came for thorough development in *The Crisis*.

What does that word “life-world” mean? The juxtaposition of those two words is intriguing but not surprising. The concern for the world, out

there, permeates the history of thought; similarly, the curiosity for life is also as ancient as philosophy. The different philosophers and scientists have been interested in investigating and explaining the world out there. Many of them were curious to explore the inner secret and dynamism of life. We all know about Descartes' *Discourse on Method* and *Meditations*⁸. But we should not forget that his keen interest in the nature of the world led him to prepare the text of *Le Monde*. We also know about Henry Bergson who described life as the primary inner experience and explained how this "original *elan vital*" pervades the whole evolutionary process.

It was Wilhelm Dilthey, the noted historian-philosopher, who centered his philosophy on the notion of life. The life is not a mere biological concept. It encompasses the entire external, physical and socio-cultural environs of human beings. Hence, we must remember the contribution of Dilthey and there are enough reasons to presume that his *Lebensphilosophie* plays an important role in Husserl's formulation of the content of the life-world. Husserl could not ignore Dilthey's philosophy of life. Dilthey, together with Heidegger, made him to review his attitude towards the then science and positivism. Husserl inherited the *Nature/Geist*, *Nature/Spirit* distinction from the late 19th century debate between Wilhelm Dilthey and the Neo-Kantians. This debate had a decisive impact on the categories and terminologies Husserl used to situate the discipline of phenomenology within the modern scientific enterprise in general. The categories important for our purpose are the pre-theoretical natural attitude and the environing world (*Umwelt*).

However, it was Husserl, who first used the integrated concept *Lebenswelt*, conjoining the concept of life, which we all experience, and

the concept of the world, which is to be investigated by the scientists mainly. The unity of the concept of the life-world retains the importance of the constituent elements but it also reveals some gestalt quality of synthesis. It shows the inalienable interconnection between our lives and the world we inhabit. We cannot conceive of our life apart from this world, nor can we conceive of the world apart from the perspective of any living beings. When we experience and explain the world it is only from the point of view of a concrete living person. Of course, it may be possible to bracket the one concept from the other, i.e., we can suspend judgment regarding one and focus our attention on the other - but all such suspension is possible only at the level of speculation. On the level of practice or actual experience, there can never be any such abstraction. This shows the inevitable interconnectedness of our life experience in the world.

The life-world is the world of immediate experience. For this reason, in some passages of *The Crisis*, Husserl describes it as the pre-predicative world and its experience as pre-predicative experience. The life-world is often described as “pre-given”, or “already there” or “pre-theoretical”. It means the life-world is prior to all theory; it is a pre-theoretical attitude of naïve world life. By this Husserl means that there are no theories in it; it is full of surprises. The experience that fire burns or gives heat is an element of the life-world. The world of a child is a perfect example of a lived world. But there are also other descriptions. Husserl refers to it as “the world of immediate experience”, prior to any conceptualization. In the *Formal and Transcendental Logic* of 1929, Husserl insisted upon what he called the life-world as the fundamental order of existence. In *Experience and Judgment*, Husserl defines phenomenology as a *Rückgang auf die ‘Lebenswelt’*, a going back to the

pre-predicative or pre-thematic region of experience which is prior to any thought and judgment. By life-world is meant, the world as we encounter it in everyday experience, the world in which we pursue our goals and objectives, the world as the scene of all our human activities, praxes. Not only must the life-world be distinguished from the universe of science in the specific modern sense – the universe of science being constructed and not immediately experienced – but the experience of the life world, which is perceptual experience, must also be taken in its original immediacy, i.e., as we have it independently of and prior to conceptualization of any kind. The life-world is the object of an immediate experience (intuition) which is the necessary part of departure of phenomenological research. It is by a return to the *Lebenswelt* as such, Husserl says, that we will overthrow the dogmatic positions of “standpoint philosophies, like empiricism, realism, naturalism, idealism, etc., which are prejudiced by an interpretation of experience antecedent to experience itself.”⁹

Husserl called his philosophy an archeology of human experience, a search for the ultimate, constitutive functions of experience of the world as the world of human consciousness. The function of phenomenology truly becomes archeology of human experience in the most radical sense of a digging-down-to, an uncovering the pre-predicative and pre-conscious structures of experience which are the essence of consciousness. Now, the life-world is also described as a ‘cultural world’ – the basic human world, the communal world, where the community lives. This basic human world is constituted by human praxis or activity, oriented to practical ends and laden with linguistic tradition. This world has a very social or inter-subjective character. It is different from the immediate world of perception. It is not the world which we could find with our bare eyes because it is shadowed by theories. How are we to

reconcile the two? David Carr says, "Such a world could be pre-theoretical but could hardly be called pre-predicative. And of course its very social and inter-subjective character places it, on Husserl's earlier scheme, in a secondary position in regard to the immediate world of perception."¹⁰

We may say that what Husserl means is that the cultural/social world could be pre-theoretical, pre-predicative. Although the life-world includes the social and cultural world, the basic substratum is the sensible phenomenal world. Husserl gives us vivid description of the life world. This can be recounted in Husserl's own words:

...the life world, for us who wakingly live in it, is always already there, existing in advance for us, the "ground" of all praxis whether theoretical or extra-theoretical. The world is pre-given to us, the waking, always somehow practically interested subjects, not occasionally but always and necessarily as the universal field of all actual and possible praxis, as horizon. *To live is always to-live-in-certainty-of-the-world. Waking life is being awake to the world, being constantly and directly "conscious" of the world and of oneself as living in the world, actually experiencing [erleben] and actually effecting the ontic certainty of the world.*¹¹

Another significant feature of the life-world in *The Crisis* is that the life-world is an actual world of human beings, of embodied consciousness in which the psychical and physical aspects are fully

integrated. In a long section of *The Crisis*¹² Husserl speaks of the 'living body' functioning as an ego, primarily through seeing, hearing, lifting, carrying, pushing and the like. The data of sense experience are coordinated and structured on the basis of bodily movements. This may signify a difference from Descartes. For Descartes a subject may be disembodied existence. For Husserl of *The Crisis* will not speak of a disembodied subject.

In this context, that is, in the context of being an ego through the living body, Husserl emphasizes the distinction between German *Leib* on the one hand, and *Körper* on the other.¹³ The first is always said to signify the body of the subject, which has a radically different function in perception from that of other bodies (*Körper*). Through this analysis Husserl intends to show the subject's involvement in the life-world. This idea was developed further by Merleau-Ponty in his *Phenomenology of Perception*.¹⁴ He followed it up in his reflections on language. Language cannot be thought of independently of the bodily processes that give rise to speech. Speech does not emanate from 'pure ideas' or 'pure meaning'. To understand speech, "we only have to lend ourselves to its life, to its movements of differentiation and articulation and to its eloquent gestures".¹⁵

II

This description of the life-world in *The Crisis* as the primary horizon of all our life praxes and life interests comes very close to the description of the natural world in the *Ideas I* and the involvement of the human activity with tools, implements, etc., as useful, in *Ideas II*.

Here, there is an unmistakable shift from seeing of essences to perceptual experience. The philosopher who characterized his own thought as the 'phenomenology of essences' corrects this attitude to some extent in his last work. If the world is there as pre-given, if living means living in the world, it is because "the world announces itself along with the appearances of every particular mundane existence with which we might be dealing".¹⁶

The life-world becomes a theme for Husserl in two respects. First, he found in it the "ground of sense" of the sciences. Second, he took it as the guiding clue for a transcendental phenomenological return to "the ultimate life". Its sense-constituting achievements confer sense not only on all the sciences but also on the life-world itself. Husserl was never tired of emphasizing the phenomenality or givenness of the life-world. As the foundational order of existence, the life-world is foundational. It underlines all other orders, including the conceptual orders, like those of logic and mathematics; also the several cultural domains belong here. On phenomenological grounds all orders of existence have to be accounted for in terms of specific acts and functions of consciousness. But the privileged status of the life-world is manifest in that the mental functions in question operate upon and in this sense presuppose findings encountered in the life-world. This life-world is much more than the sumtotal of the physical objects. It is the horizon of meaning without which objects cannot exist, cannot be understood or interpreted as part of my life-world in which I act and react, with which I am concerned. It is in the life-world, in which I find food as a means to nutrition, or I find coal as a heating material, a hammer for driving a nail in, etc. These objects have, meaning as objects of use in the life-world. Though orders of existence other than the life-world preserve their specific nature and also

their autonomy with respect to the life-world, they can be understood only on the basis of the latter. In accounting for them, one has to start from the life-world. It is because of this that the life world becomes in Husserl's characterization, the ground of sense, origin of sense, foundation of sense.

The Husserlian concept of the life-world is not unrelated to his concept of the world (we have just mentioned that). We do not mean to say that the concept of the life-world can be understood merely on the basis of his ideas about the world. Nevertheless, to see the problem of the life-world in its fullness, we have to understand the Husserlian problem of the world and the importance Husserl attributed to it.

Husserl's words quoted earlier from *The Crisis* bear striking resemblance to his concept of the natural world in the *Ideas I*, where the world is described as the world of facts and affairs, as well as the world of values, of goods, a practical world. What is important to note is that *things in their immediacy stand there as objects to be used*. The distinction between the two lies in that the natural world is suspended by the *epoche* to reveal the transcendental structures of consciousness. The life-world, on the other hand, is taken as basic, as foundational and as such there is no question of suspending it or putting it under brackets. It is in the second book of *Ideas* that Husserl's attention turns to an exhaustive description of the idealized world of natural sciences, thereby allowing him to characterize the essentially different character of what he already called in this work the life-world. Here also we find a brief discussion on the principles of natural sciences. The natural science does not know such predicates as valuable, beautiful, nice, exciting, perfect, good, useful, etc. What we find are merely the objects measurable by the means of natural

science, objects that are in short, mathematizable. The natural- scientific attitude is a theoretical attitude, "Nature is an object of possible knowledge but it does not exhaust the realm of such objects. Nature, as mere nature, contains no values, no works of arts, etc." ¹⁷

However, it is in the long introduction to *Experience and Judgment* that the Husserlian notion of world seems to start gathering the character of the life-world, we know from its editor Ludwig Landgrebe that Husserl wrote the introductory sections of *Experience and Judgment* in 1935, the time when he was already at work on *The Crisis*. It is not unlikely that some of the motifs of the life-world as introduced in *The Crisis* would be discernible here. In this work, i.e., *Experience and Judgment*, Husserl still refers to the world as the 'existing world', as prior to any judgment of the subject, much in the manner of the *Prolegomena* and *Ideas I*. An element of novelty is the return to the lived world from the passively given world. Yet, what Husserl here calls life-world seems to be used in a sense equivalent to 'nature'. This life-world in which 'life' is pre-eminently the life of sense perception in its most elementary form, is not yet identical with the wider concept of life-world in *The Crisis* even though closely related to it.

III

What led Husserl to initiate the theme of the life-world? The most offhand answer is: Husserl introduced the idea of the life-world to meet the challenge of the crisis of the than science. In *The Crisis*, Husserl says "There is a general lament about the crisis of culture in which science is implicated". ¹⁸ The cultural crisis is originally seen as a crisis of the

natural sciences. Interestingly enough Husserl did not attribute the essence of this crisis to such facts as, say, the potential discovery through the sciences, of weapons of mass destruction. Rather he is interested to investigate the universal meaning of the natural sciences. In *The Crisis* Husserl claims that the natural sciences were originally only branches of the universal science of philosophy; in their development, they first became independent of philosophy, than they forgot their original role of explaining particular phenomena in the empirical world. These new sciences sought, rather to offer their own universal view of the world, and of man's place in it. In a sense 'crisis' refers to something far deeper. It refers to the crisis of philosophy in the literal sense of 'splitting apart' of philosophy from its authentic source and meaning. The crisis of philosophy is the loss of the dream of philosophy as rigorous science. Husserl says, "Philosophy as a science, as serious, rigorous indeed apodictically rigorous science – the dream is over... Philosophy is in danger, i.e., its future is endangered, ..." ¹⁹ But this crisis of philosophy as the loss of the dream of philosophy as rigorous science is only a part of the crisis of the sciences in general.

'Crisis' when used with reference to science may have two quite different senses. In one sense 'crisis' means conceptual theoretical crisis *in or within* science; such a crisis develops when the available scientific data, concepts and theories seem to lead nowhere, and there crop up anomalies in scientific experiments. That is not Husserl's intended use of 'crisis'. This is the sense in which Thomas Kuhn uses the word.²⁰ In another sense 'crisis' means crisis brought about by the very attitude of science itself. This may be called crisis *of* science. Husserl is concerned not with 'crisis in science' but with 'crisis of science'. This is clear when he says in *The Crisis*, "This is a crisis which does not encroach upon the

theoretical and practical areas of special sciences. Yet it shakes the foundations in the whole meaning of their truth".²¹ It actually represents, according to Husserl, a collapse of the belief in reason. Modern science with its dominant positivism has lost faith in reason, a faith so vital for securing a mooring of science in our *Lebenswelt*.

Crisis of science "concerns not the scientific character of sciences but rather what science in general had meant or could mean for human existence".²² To be sure, science has made a generous progress and has contributed to our material welfare and prosperity. But frustratingly enough, it insists on excluding in principle precisely the questions whose answers we require most and these are "questions about the meaning or meaninglessness of the whole human existence."²³ It insists that the scientist ought not to adopt any value position in his investigations. This non-evaluative position of science results in hostility towards or if not hostility, indifference to human needs and wants. Husserl says, "In our vital need science has nothing to say to us".²⁴

The theoretical structure of science moves it away from the pail of our lived world. Science, as it were, becomes rootless resulting in a fragmented and fractured view of human existence and this is the 'crisis of science' according to Husserl. The crisis arises because scientific intellectualism loses itself in theories alienated from the world; it excludes precisely the meaning or meaninglessness of human existence. It remains indifferent to the questions, which are decisive for genuine humanity. The crisis arises because science forgets its original role of explaining particular phenomena in the empirical world. It seeks rather to offer its own universal vision of the world and man's place in the world. It forgets that as a theoretical, logical superstructure science requires a

foundation and that foundation is the *Lebenswelt*. The crisis begins because of the theories, which overshadow the lived world. Theories create, as it were, a screen between man on the one hand and his world on the other, so that the theories themselves appear as the lived world. Thus the crisis of sciences in general is a result of splitting apart science from its relation to the life-world, the source of all original evidence and intelligibility. The scientific of science has been called into question precisely because its original sense has been lost in its development into an abstract and formal technique. This ‘technization’ of science is an historical development from its historical beginning and original aim. Only a recovering of this beginning and aim can resolve the crisis – bring together again what has been split apart.

With regard to the life-world, what is impressive in *The Crisis* is the detailed exposition of the modern science, and especially Galilean physics. Galileo inherited the traditional Euclidian geometry which he accepted as a self-contained science having no roots or foundations outside of itself. However, perceptual experience of common everyday occurrences within the world in which we live and within which we pursue all our activities, the life-world, is prior to, and underlies geometry as a “foundation of sense”. In the life-world we encounter bodies whose spatial forms are determined within a more or less vaguely determined range of variability. Spatial forms, magnitude, etc., present themselves as variable and fluctuating under varying conditions. Practical necessities lead to the development of art of measurement, by which the lack of precision and relativity of the perceptual configurations are overcome according to the demands of situations and conditions of social life. The circularity of a cow-cart wheel is far from the ideal circle of geometry. But the practice of measuring, the technique of measurement is oriented

toward practical goals and tasks. Whatever measurement fits a given practical situation is accepted as sufficiently accurate.

Geometry arises by the process of *idealization*, a specific mental operation *sui generis* through which there is constituted a universe of ideal entities, ideal limit-forms, the geometrical figures in the proper sense. Such figures can be determined with absolute accuracy, i.e., exactness; their properties can be ascertained in a totally unambiguous manner. Moreover, geometry develops methods of constructing more and more complex geometrical figures out of a few elementary ones like straight lines, triangles, circles, etc. Geometry provides a method of overcoming the relativism of perceptual experience and the limitations of the practical art of measurement. Geometrical methods yield a body of results valid in all situations and under all conditions. In other words, the methods of geometry lead to the discovery of absolute truths, truths holding for everybody.

Established, developed and practiced for centuries, the method of geometry grows into a technique which may be acquired and become habituated. This process is, at the same time, one of consolidation and obfuscation, i.e., obscurization of the historical intentional "origin" of geometry, viz., its rootedness in the pre-geometrical experience of the life-world. The latter remains what it is, and we continue living and pursuing all our activities in it, whether or not in the possession of the geometrical method or for that matter of any scientific method. In the life-world we speak of water and not of H_2O , we see the color red and not a particular wave length, we see coal as a heating material and not as combustible and so on. In the process of origination of geometry from the

life-world, the last phase of the process, the accomplishment of result is retained but the process is forgotten.

Now the question is: how to overcome the gap between the life-world and the theoretical constructs of science? Husserl recommends that science should return to the original insights, which were generated within the life-world. By removing the sedimentations which have been gathered on it by the formation of laws, theories, statements, teaching of these theories in academic institutions and by printing.

There are Husserl scholar who feel that Husserl is too rigid in his stricture of science and that there are good reasons for rejecting his claim.²⁵ The first is that there is nothing wrong with the idea that the material world exists independently of consciousness and this idea is as old as philosophy itself. Secondly, Husserl's reconstruction is historically inadequate for it fits at best Galileo and Descartes only. Most philosophers of the 17th Century did not believe that the material world is 'mathematical'. Matter is often thought to possess other 'primary' qualities besides the mathematical ones such as Locke's "solidity". Finally Husserl's analysis is not quite clear, because he does not specify what exactly is hypostatized. The Newtonian point masses are indeed hypostatization. So are the waves and corpuscles theory of light. It is a part of the method of science that it cannot work without hypostatization. It seems that Husserl is not always fair to science; however, the value of Husserl's critique of science brings about the fragmentation of reason and the philosophical disorientation of modern science due to its lack of rootedness in the life-world resulting in the exclusion of all essential questions which are the questions of reason. No wonder that such a truncated view of science has nothing to tell us as we have already said (quoting Husserl) in our vital

needs. This almost seems to echo proposition 6.52 of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. "We feel that when all possible scientific questions have been answered the problems of life remain completely untouched."²⁶

IV

In this section, we intend to make certain observations on Husserl's notion of the life-world. He seems to play with different senses of the life-world. Does Husserl conceive of the life-world as a bare perceptual-experiential world, a fullfledged cultural-historical world? There is a lot of debate and the Husserl scholar are divided on this.

David Carr²⁷ argues that Husserl vacillates between the two conceptions. Another Husserl scholar, Iso Kern²⁸ draws a similar distinction and maintains that while in Husserl's early writings (i.e., before 1920) the notion of a pre-theoretical world of natural experience is dominant, in *The Crisis*, the life-world are many rather than one and relative to the various cultural contexts. G. Soffer²⁹ says that neither of these views is correct. Husserl in numerous passages of *The Crisis* does distinguish between the two senses of the life-world and also indicates their relations. Which of these is Husserl's position is not easy to say, for Husserl could not finish his project- part III of *The Crisis*.

A second and related issue may be taken up. In so far as the life-world is understood as the concrete world of human experience, Husserl maintains unquestioningly that it is relative to a specific inter-subjective community but he also speaks of 'contact with other human beings'. He says,

...in our continuously flowing world-perceiving we are not isolated but rather have, within it, contact with other human beings. Each one has his perceptions, his presentifications, his harmonious experiences, devaluation of his certainties into more possibilities, doubts, questions, illusions. But in *living with one another*, each one can take part in the life of the others. Thus in general the world exists not only for isolated men but for community of men; and this is due to the fact that what is straightforwardly perceptual is communalized.³⁰

There is a plurality of life-worlds. Once the plurality and relativity are admitted the question of truth poses a problem. How do we account for the truth of the knowledge of the objects encountered in the world? Further, how would he accommodate relativism within his essentialistic framework? Indeed, Husserl's life-world has generated the same kind of puzzlement and controversy regarding the relativity and plurality of it as has been generated by Wittgenstein's concept of the form of life. The controversy in this regard between Garver³¹ (only one form of life) and Hacker³² (many forms of life), is strikingly parallel to the Iso Kern- David Carr controversy regarding the life-world. At this stage we can only provide tentative answers to these critical questions.

With regard to the relativity question we can say that relativity does not mean total breakdown in communication. One may not participate in the life-world of another but this does not suggest he cannot understand the goings-on in the life world of others. We may also note that social convention and practices differ from one community to

another. That need not particularly disturb us. These conventions which have become a practice with us are accepted unreflectively. They have a social role to play. They help smooth relations to others making certain activities more predictable and easier for performing and participating. They make it possible for one to relax in various social situations and reduce tensions.

It is artificial to treat different cultures as self-contained systems. A fully individual culture is at best a rare thing. Cultures, sub-cultures, fragments of cultures constantly meet with one another, exchange and modify practices and activities. Social practices could never come forward with a certificate saying that they belong to genuinely different cultures, so that they were granted immunity to alien judgments and relations. It is true that when a society is exposed to another culture it is like a 'confrontation'. The new situation requires the society to confront it, to see beyond its existing rules and practices. People can and must react when they are confronted with another culture. They do so by using their existing notions. The components of a given culture can always stress beyond the boundaries. However, the possibility of surmounting the boundaries is a matter of hope and aspiration. Even if there is no way in which divergent belief-systems and practices can be brought to convergence by independent inquiry or rational argument this fact will not necessarily imply relativism. Each outlook will still be making claims it intends to apply to the whole world not just to that part of it which is its 'own' world.

It has been claimed that, Husserl evolved a radical historicism in *The Crisis*. This is announced decades ago by Merleau-Ponty³³ and more recently by David Bell³⁴ and James Edie³⁵ among others. Their claim is that Husserl's notion of meaning constituted in conscious experience changed. He came to see that the constitution of meaning was first and fundamentally, set in the *Lebenswelt*. And second that the meanings fundamentally and basically constituted in the *Lebenswelt* are all given to us from historical, cultural, and social settings. In other words, though we may 'put' the world together, although we may 'constitute', we use, as *ingredients*, that which our time, our society, our culture give us. Thus, even though there may be some transcendental function of constitution which is characteristics of reason, or more generally the characteristic of any form of cognition, and which is time-escaping, time-less, (consciousness as viewed in phenomenology is an ideal timeless realm) the 'material' constituted is always temporal, historical, finite and contingent. Constitution is no longer an accomplishment of the transcendental ego; it is rather a social accomplishment; constitution is accomplished by 'we', and not by an 'I'. Thus, any adequate account of this world and our experience of it must be historical, which is but another way of stating the historicist thesis.

Further, if we were to explore in more detail the specifics of how we constitute the *Lebenswelt*, which is our own, we would have to understand the insertion of tradition and historical 'pre-judgment/prejudice' into our lives as well as the configuring role played by expectation. In other words, we would need to make sense of our actual existential situation, we would move our phenomenological

investigation from the 'view from nowhere'³⁶ to the inescapable conditions and restrictions set on us by the undeniable and non-ignorable fact that we are creatures of time and place and hence, creatures bounded by history and finitude. The transcendental ego has become the existential subject. This is the claim of Bell and Edie.

Anyone who reads *The Crisis* chapter dealing with the *Lebenswelt* will have to agree that the notion of layered, additive, genetic, historically conditioned, developmental meaning is the operative view of constitution in the *Lebenswelt*. This is not controversial. The controversy concerns the structure of that meaning - is it purely factual, historical, contingent; and the source of the meaning? Again, is it merely factual, historical, and contingent? If the meaning that makes up the intelligibility of the world, it must be traced back to the founding in the *Lebenswelt*. And if the structures and the content of meaning in the *Lebenswelt* are merely contingent and accidental and their source is only historical and incidental then there is a radical historicism that easily outstrips Dilthey, and introduces a degree of contingency into intelligibility that overradicalizes Heidegger's presence. In such a case, we could have to look to a Nietzsche, a Foucault or a Rorty to find a position as thoroughly free of the type of necessity Husserl had previously advocated for his entire career.

But from what we have said so far we think it is rather that the 'radical historicist Husserl' is the more difficult for interpretation to sustain. Indeed Paul Ricoeur poses a question that occurs to all discerning readers of Husserl who came to *The Crisis* after studying his earlier works, namely: how can a philosophy of the *cogito*, of the radical return to the ego as foundation of all being, become capable of philosophy of

history?³⁷ So the question is not “Is there a developmental structure to the *Lebenswelt*?” Rather the question is: “What is the source of and the status of the intelligibility that arises in the *Lebenswelt*? Can we see necessary structure in the historical formations that inform the *Lebenswelt*? It is not enough to say that they are historical, one must figure out what ‘historical’ means for Husserl.

Historical does not mean contingent, accidental which is the view of Heidegger. Husserl objects to it in “The Vienna Lectures” and in *The Crisis*. In Husserl’s *Crisis* to say that ‘all is historical’ is readily to say that constitution is genetic and not just static. Secondly, there is a domain, which is the origin of all forms of meaning, i.e., the *Lebenswelt*. But the point of origination is bound to an a-historical necessary pattern, which is the essence of reason, which is followed or exemplified or instantiated by the temporal, historical genesis of meaning. The necessary pattern of development is not the kind that Kant claims since there are not empty forms or concepts waiting to be filled with sensory content. Rather what we see in historical genesis is a dynamic pattern inscribed in the structure and meaning of reason itself. At bottom, human existence cannot be held only within the narrow sphere of science and philosophy, or even of pure consciousness, rather it embraces such aspects as the religious, the aesthetic, the ethical, the political, the practical, the technical and others. Human existence is first and foremost existence in the life-world. Thus, it is natural that reason has to exert an active influence on those aspects as well. Through putting forward the concept of the *Lebenswelt* Husserl still tries to reduce European man primarily to the philosophical and scientific man, human life to the philosophical and scientific life and thus regards the life-world as one that is of significance, first of all in the field of epistemology and scientific knowledge. As a

result, the other more practical fields of human existence along with the active role of reason seem to vanish over the horizon of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, which is mainly concerned with pure consciousness.

Schools of irrationalism as Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's voluntarism, Bergson's philosophy of life, Heidegger's and Sartre's Existentialism and so on really undermine not only modern rationalism but also the rational spirit itself. Of course, there is neither absurdity nor error in rationalism itself as the essence of human beings, but when rationalism places special stress only on the rational, namely, the universal and necessary aspects of human existence and overlooks and even dismisses the significance of its sensual, individual and contingent aspect, rationality itself becomes one sided and even an evil. It is to be noted that not only would human existence be fragmentary without the latter aspects as intrinsic constituents, which cannot be simply reduced to and neglected by the rational but they also have become more and more important in the real and daily life of European man since the 19th Century. In the final analysis it is the especially historical situation that gives rise to the irrationalist reactions. The significance of the irrational opposes the rational not only in the field of scientific knowledge but also in the more practical fields of human existence and thereby attempts to deconstruct reason as the centre of western life.

In the *Lebenswelt* Husserl seems to exercise a reduction. The life-world is by no means immediately accessible as much to the average person in the 'natural attitude', spatially insofar as he has come under the spell of the scientific interpretation of the world. As Husserl sees it, a peculiar kind of first reduction, a suspension of science is indispensable

in order to get sight of the life-world and its structures. In other words, even the study of the life-world is already a type of phenomenology, though this may still be a 'mundane phenomenology'. The first step toward a discovery of the characteristic features of the life-world would be through inspection, analysis and description of the life as we encounter it. Husserl has made some such studies in the field of perception and other intentional acts. Nevertheless, Husserl was always aware of the significance of 'fringes' or as he called them "horizons" for the phenomena as the essential features of their make-up.

Herbert Spiegelberg in his *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*³⁸ opines that the reduction of various levels has to be traced to the structures of the life-world which will function as a sound basis and proper guide of Husserl's phenomenological reduction.

CHAPTER IV

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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