



RESEARCH ARTICLE

LIFE-WORLD AS FUNDAMENTAL OF THE SCIENCE IN HUSSERL'S LATE WORK

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ABSTRACT

Husserl saw the crisis of the European science, their loss of significance for life in the advent of modern objectivism and its forgetfulness of the life-world. It was therefore necessary to recover this "ground" for the sciences, on which they, on the one hand, have historically grown up and which, on the other hand, forms their continuing foundation of phenomenology, if phenomenology is to satisfy its own requirement radical sense-clarification of the subset taken as the transcendental guideline for questioning back into the constitutive achievement of subjectivity. Above all, it should not be overlooked that Husserl wanted the crisis as a whole to be understood as a new "introduction" to transcendental phenomenology. The life-world became a theme for Husserl in two respects: First, he found in it the "ground of sense" of the objective sciences. Second, he took it as the "guiding clue" for a transcendental phenomenological return to "the ultimate life". Thus Husserl's requirement of a return to the foundations of the science can mean nothing but the sense-genetic reactivation of those past sense-bestowals which, through all their sediments, are currently in force in present scientific formation. This reactivation is to take place in such a way that the scientific arguments which find their place and their validity within the life-world and also change and transform the life-world through scientific inquiry, are "repeatable"

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INTRODUCTION

The Crisis of European sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology (Translated, 1970) was Husserl's last work which he himself prepared for publication before his death. It remained unfinished through. Nonetheless, it is the work which has found more interpreters than any of his other works. This celebrated work of Husserl, i.e., The Crisis is highly important in contemporary philosophy for its key term, Lebenswelt, life-world. Lebenswelt is not a new term. Husserl uses it before the Crisis in Formal and Transcendental Logic (Janssen, 1974) and in Experience and Judgement (Churchill and Ameriks, 1973). Different Philosophers and Scientist have been interested in investigating and explain the world out there.

However, it was Husserl who first used the integrated concept of Lebenswelt, conjoining the concept of life, which we all experience, and the concept of the world, which is to be investigated by the scientist mainly. 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. The Life-world is the world of immediate experience. In some passages of The Crisis, Husserl describes it as the 'Pre-Predicative World'. Yet this world is also described as the '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 laden with linguistic tradition. It is different from the immediate world of perception. It is not the world which we could found with our bare eyes because it is shadowed by theories. It could be Pre-theoretical, Pre-Predicative, Pre-reflective. By 'Pre-reflective' or 'Pre-Predicative' Husserl means that in it there are no theories but it is full of surprises. The world of a child is a perfect example of a lived world because it is full of surprises. The experience that fire burns or gives heat is an element of the

lived world. We impose a construction on it when we theorize it as combustion. Water exists in the real world. We theorize it when we label it as H₂O. That, two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen make one molecule of water is a theory. We can use water in the real world without this theoretical knowledge of Chemistry.

Husserl introduced the idea of the Life-world to meet the challenge of the Crisis of the science. In *The Crisis*, Husserl says, "there is a general lament all out the Crisis of culture in which science is implicated." The cultural Crisis is originally seen as a Crisis of the natural science. 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 become independent of philosophy then they forget their original role of explaining particular phenomenon 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 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.

'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 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 (*The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, 1970). In another sense 'Crisis' means crisis brought all out by the very attitude of science itself. This may be called Crisis of science. Husserl is not concerned 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 foundation in the whole meaning of their truth."

Crisis of science "concerns not the scientific character of sciences but rather what science in general had meant or could mean for human existence". To be sure, science has made a generous progress and has contributed to our material welfare and prosperity. Husserl says, "In our vital need science has nothing to say to us". 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 arise because scientific intellectualism looses itself in theories alienated from the world; it excludes precisely the meaning or meaninglessness of human existence. The Crisis arise 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 of 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 character 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 have 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, arising out of the Life-World, which provides its foundation of sense. Method of physics is mathematical. The sensuous content of the Life-World objects such as colours, warmth and coldness are mathematized by physics, e.g., colours are measured in terms of wavelength. According to Husserl, not only the idea that the material world is somehow "mathematical", but also the very notion that there is a material world as such at all is due to a hypostatization of the mathematical world. The Newtonian point masses are indeed hypostatization. So are the waves and corpuscles of the theory of light. It is a part of the method of science that it cannot work without hypostatization.

Husserl also shows how Euclidian geometry is constituted on the basis of the Life-World, which is the only real world. The history of technology shows how man gradually brought to perfection artifacts of certain shapes such as circular wheels. If we order these artifacts in series of ever greater perfection of shapes, say circularity, this series points to an ideal, limit which technology will never be able to realize. The perfect circle is nothing but an ideal limit. We conceive ideal limits but never experience them in our Life-World. The objects of geometry, Husserl says, have their origin in the Life-World for example, in the measurement for construction of houses or measurement of land and area. We may add that according to scholars mathematics in ancient Indian had a similar origin. It developed out of the measurement for constructing the sacrificial sites. But when geometry had become an institutionalized science, the Life-World 'origin' of geometrical objects was forgotten. Husserl calls this process of forgetting 'emptying of sense'.

Now the question is: how to overcome this 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 printing. Husserl, in his *Phenomenology*, however is searching for an ultimate and absolute foundation of science. The different stages of his philosophical development are characterized by a constant search for ultimate roots and origins.

Starting from the so-called “given” he does not proceed to construct a new edifice of knowledge, but digs deeper and deeper for the ultimate sources of all knowledge. As a matter of fact, Husserl would have liked to call his philosophy “archeology” if this term would have been still available. Husserl saw that the Crisis of the European Sciences, returns to loss of significance for life, in the advent of modern objectivism and its forgetfulness of the Life-World. It was therefore necessary to recover this “ground” for the sciences, on which they, on the one hand, have historically grown up and which, on the other hand, forms their continuing foundation of validity. Thus a new path appeared to have opened up for phenomenology : if phenomenology is to satisfy its own requirement of radical sense-clarification of the subject and the world, the life-world could be taken as the transcendental guideline for questioning back into the constitutive achievements of subjectivity.

The problem of the life-world emerges with the insight that, behind the theoretical construct of science, must lie concrete human work, carried out by scientist. This human work presuppose the determinant factors of history and culture. As Husserl shows in an example, Albert Einstein’s theory of relativity concretely presuppose the experiments of Albert Abraham Michelson. These experiments in turn, presuppose a series of coincidences and purely human factors. Einstein built his hypothesis, not on an objectified, scientifically tested theory, but on a series of concrete activities which resulted in some pieces of information being available as ground for a scientific hypothesis (Stroker Elizabeth, 1997).

As soon as we recognize the importance of the human activity behind theories, we see that the world of living activities, the world of life, has always been tacitly presupposed in the result of the sciences. These showed the world, not from the side of the development and presupposition of their own functioning, but rather from the side of their result, considered always as ultimate and insurmountable. In effect, this presupposed world of corresponding activities, land-measuring in geometry or Michelson’s experiments in the theory of relativity founds result which would otherwise be meaningless – or, to be more precise, would remain only partially comprehended, caught up in the dream-world of the sciences.

In this world, there are only final result and no processes leading up to these results – most especially, there are no personal activities, in part arriving at, in part surpassing these theoretical constructs. In short Husserl believes that we can sully understand what the so-called objective world of the sciences means, only and exclusively on the basis of the presupposed world of life (Balazs *et al.*, 1995). Thus Husserl’s requirement of a return to the foundations of the sense of science can mean nothing but the sense-genetic reactivation of those past sense-bestowals which, through all their sedimentations, are currently in force in present scientific formations. This reactivation is to take place in such a way that scientific arguments which find their place and their validity within the life world and also change and transform the life-world through scientific enquiry, are “repeatable”.

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