

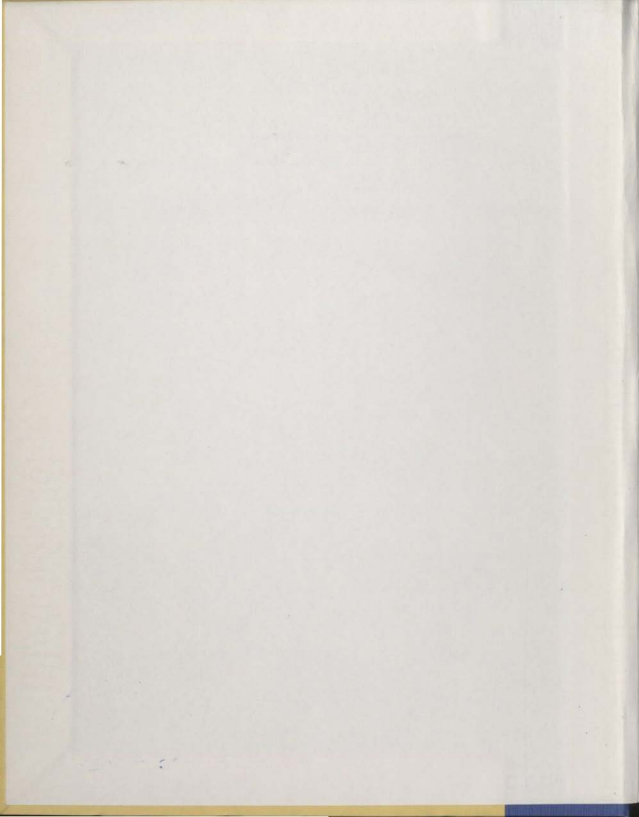
THE LIFE-WORLD AND THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL  
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THE LIFE-WORLD AND THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL

EPOCHÉ

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A Study of these concepts in Edmund Husserl's

The Crisis of European Sciences and

Transcendental Phenomenology

A Thesis

Presented to

07  
the Faculty of the Department of Philosophy

Memorial University of Newfoundland

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Antoinette M. Stafford

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## ABSTRACT

The clearly stated goal of Edmund Husserl's transcendental phenomenology was to enable philosophy, for the first time, to achieve a "rigorously scientific knowledge" of the contents of human experience. Throughout his entire career, Husserl strove to realize this goal, through the development and use of the techniques of epoché and reduction. In his last major work, The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology, Husserl claims that these procedures have at last given him access to the "life-world," a primordial sphere which is the presupposition of all experience, and which, therefore, comprises the ultimate field for phenomenological study.

The thesis presented here has as its central aim a critical clarification of the relationship between the two fundamental phenomenological themes of the "epoché" and the "life-world." This takes the form, in Chapter I, of a consideration of the use of the concepts of "world" and "epoché" in Husserl's work previous to the Crisis. In Chapter II, the meanings and function of the term "life-world" within the Crisis, particularly Part IIIA, are examined in detail, with the specific intention of revealing why Husserl views the "life-world" as the

ultimate field of study for phenomenological science. The final chapter is a critical analysis of Husserl's attempt to conduct an epoche with respect to the life-world, and leads to the conclusion that a complete life-world reduction is, in principle, impossible. Therefore, it is argued, if the phenomenological ideal of a rigorously scientific philosophy entails an epoche of the life-world, then, for reasons arising out of Husserl's own philosophy, this ideal must be abandoned.

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## INTRODUCTION

The philosophical career of Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, spans a period from 1891, when his first major work, The Philosophy of Arithmetic, was published, to his death in 1938. During that time, although his thinking underwent several major reorientations,<sup>1</sup> attention to his overall development reveals that, underlying these changes, is a sustained commitment to a specific philosophical ideal. This commitment may be characterized as the determination to uphold, in the face of the increasing influence of the various "irrationalist" philosophies of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the ideal of philosophy as a quest for apodictic truth, or certainty.

The movement of modern thought, Husserl quite rightly contends, derives its impetus from the Cartesian turn to the subject as the indubitable foundation of knowledge. With Descartes, the absolute authority of consciousness, as guarantor of human knowledge, and thus, ultimately, as guarantor of the being of the world, is asserted for the first time. This recognition that subjectivity is an essential element in any judgment concerning the status of the objective world, constituted a major philosophical achievement, and in a crucial sense, determined the direction of future speculative thought.

No longer could the metaphysician "naïvely" assume the validity of his ontological statements. Rather, after Descartes, a new concern necessarily preceded ontology--a concern with the validity of human reason as an instrument of knowledge.

For every post-Cartesian thinker, then, the central philosophical issues were epistemological in character. The task for philosophy became the working out of a critique of pure consciousness, or reason, which, by providing philosophy with an indubitable method for knowing, could serve as the groundwork for any future metaphysics. Husserl readily acknowledges his role as successor to Descartes and Kant, and accordingly, adopts a philosophical position which takes as its starting point the supremacy of the subject. Both his affinities with the rationalist tradition, and his fundamental disagreement with nineteenth century forms of rationalism, are clearly portrayed in an early essay, Philosophy as a Rigorous Science.

The defining characteristic of western philosophy, for Husserl, "is its telos to establish itself as a strict science. This telos, which opposes all forms of skepticism, has been particularly evident in three great philosophical revolutions--the Socratic-Platonic, the Cartesian, and with the most radical vigour, in Kant's critique of reason. In Husserl's mind, phenomenology is the fourth, and, so far as the future of rationalism is concerned, decisive,

revolution. The radicalism of phenomenology will consist in its not merely consciously striving towards a scientific philosophy, but in its making possible the achievement of that goal. Previous philosophers, while affirming "humanity's imperishable demand for pure and absolute knowledge," had been unable to develop a methodology adequate to its attainment. It is the distinction of phenomenology that, because it fully comprehends what such a demand requires of the knower, it can provide the method whereby philosophy will be elevated to the status of a strict science.

The first requirement which must be met if philosophy is to become a science is the carrying out of an exhaustive analysis of previous philosophical systems, in order to discover what conditions of strict science were overlooked by past thinkers. According to Husserl, both Descartes and Kant, while aspiring to scientific philosophizing, were hindered in their efforts by certain presuppositions, which their very mode of thinking made it impossible to eradicate. Those nineteenth-century philosophies, particularly various forms of neo-Kantianism, which claim to have established philosophy as scientific, share the defects of their predecessors. Thus, while they may be one with Husserl in nurturing the spirit of rationalism, the actual outcome of such philosophizing is the erection of a barrier to the realization of a truly

scientific philosophy.

The chief enemy of genuine philosophy, Husserl says, is naturalism. While naturalist philosophers are motivated by the ideal of a rigorously scientific philosophy, and may even believe themselves to have now realized this ideal, the consequences which follow from any attempt to found a philosophy on the basis of naturalist principles, Husserl argues, are absurd. Naturalism as a philosophical standpoint is dependent upon the prior positing of a spatio-temporal universe which is capable of being completely comprehended in terms of a system of causal laws. But while this empirical world is a necessary presupposition for the activities of the natural (or positive) sciences, says Husserl, it is a grave error to conclude that it is also the precondition for the development of a scientific philosophy. It is precisely this mistake, however, which lies at the heart of philosophical naturalism, and which ultimately engenders such fallacies as psychologism.

Much of Husserl's early work took the form of a polemic against the prevalence of what he termed the "psychologizing" of consciousness. The natural scientist acts under the presupposition of an objective world which can be subjected to exhaustive empirical investigation. Given as part of that empirical world is the human psyche, which reveals itself as intrinsically related to the physical world. Obviously, then, the psyche, too, as

part of the psycho-physical complex which is nature, can be treated "scientifically." Further, since the psyche can only be thus studied because it is an element of nature, any judgment made from the psychological standpoint, like all other natural scientific judgments, "involves the existential positing of physical nature, whether expressly or not."<sup>5</sup>

This latter point is, in Husserl's view, critical. In fact, he argues, that by adopting the "naturalistic attitude" with respect to consciousness, naturalism as a philosophical position refutes itself. Any theory of knowledge based on natural science is also necessarily a psychological theory of knowledge--since it is only as an empirical datum that natural science can investigate consciousness. The result of such a theory, however, is to naturalize even those formal-logical principles, or "laws of thought," which are presupposed by the naturalist's own goals. Motivated by his ideal of achieving a radically scientific philosophy, the naturalist, paradoxically, must carry his "rational" principle to its necessary conclusion, and reduce reason itself to a merely natural phenomenon. Thus, Husserl argues, while apparently establishing philosophy as a strict science, naturalism in fact refutes the absolute validity of the principles underlying the ideal of scientific rigor. It is for this very reason, says Husserl, that many philosophers deny the possibility a

scientific philosophy, and turn instead to "Weltanschauung" philosophy, and the historical relativism it implies.

This alternative, however, is for Husserl a spurious one, based on the erroneous assumption that if philosophy cannot be characterized as a positive science, then it cannot be scientific at all. Such a view, he claims, partakes of the common belief that scientific thinking is necessarily "naïve in its point of departure," viewing that world which it investigates as real, or as "simply there." But while this is true of natural science, to argue that the objectivity of the world is an absolute requirement for scientific truth is to misconstrue the essential meaning of science. The essence of scientific knowing is not that one be able to make universally valid statements about the objectivity of the world, but that the totality of human experience, as it presents itself to consciousness, be known apodictically. The biggest stumbling block to the realization of this truly scientific aim is precisely that "assumption of objectivity," or of real existence, which is the *sine qua non* of positive science. If one could somehow be freed of this assumption, then the true meaning of the objectivity of human experience could be revealed--and genuinely presuppositionless knowledge achieved.

Phenomenology hopes to supercede all pseudo-scientific, psychologistic philosophies by means of a truly

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radical approach to the problem of knowledge. This approach is embodied in the techniques of epochē and reduction, which are only adumbrated in Philosophy as Rigorous Science,<sup>6</sup> but which ultimately become the focal point of Husserlian phenomenology. Their primary function will be to enable the philosopher to totally detach himself from the "existential positings" inherent in the naturalistic attitude, and, Husserl argues, for the first time free him to study the relationship between consciousness and being in a truly scientific manner. Although Husserl's phenomenology develops from a philosophy of the intuition of "objective essences," to a full-blown transcendental egology, the themes of reduction and epochē form a central and unifying strand in his thought. To the end of his career, Husserl characterized phenomenological knowledge as knowledge within the epochē. Hence, if one accepts that for Husserl, the epochē is primarily a technique for achieving scientific philosophy, then one must also accept that in his final works--particularly The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology,<sup>7</sup>--the goal of philosophy as rigorous science has not been abandoned.

Many interpreters of Husserl argue that in the Crisis Husserl at least tacitly conceded the incapacity of a philosophy conceived as strictly "scientific" to deal with such problems as the historicity of rational-



objectivist science. In order to cope with such issues, it is claimed that the central tenets of phenomenology must be revised, and that the emphasis upon such concepts as the "life-world" is indicative of Husserl's own turn in that direction.<sup>8</sup>

But such a view is not the only possible one with respect to Husserl's last works. It is clear from his own comments in Crisis Part I that the underlying motivation for this work is in many ways comparable to his reasons for the earlier attacks on psychologism. In his early works, Husserl presented phenomenology as an alternative to philosophical naturalism, which he viewed as a distortion of the rationalist ideal. While in the Crisis naturalism is no longer his chief opponent, his mission is even more pressing, since at this point in human history, the very significance of the ideal of a scientific philosophy has been thrown into question. No longer is the issue a choice between philosophy as a natural science; and philosophy as a "strict" science. Rather, with the general realization that the natural sciences are, and must be, positivistic, there has arisen a crisis in meaning--a crisis which, says Husserl, strikes at the validity of the ideal of scientific knowledge, and with it, the ideal of a universal, apodictic philosophy.

Many contemporary thinkers, Husserl points out, argue that since philosophy cannot have a positivist basis,

then it therefore cannot be scientific. But this conclusion ignores the fact that our present concept of science is actually a "residual concept"--the outcome of a gradual narrowing of the much more comprehensive notion of rational scientific knowledge held by its founders. Descartes, whom Husserl recognizes as the originator of the modern scientific impulse, conceived philosophy as a universal method for achieving genuine certainty. Using this method, not only questions about the material universe, but questions which presuppose man as a "metaphysical being"--questions of knowledge, value, and ethical action--could, ideally, find an answer. Contemporary positivist science, however, has systematically ruled out "the ultimate and highest" issues, as having no content which could possibly be treated of by positivistic procedures. It is thus, says Husserl, that the crisis in modern thought has arisen. Having agreed that science is positivistic, and that therefore philosophy as science is impossible, we have adopted an attitude of skepticism concerning the possibility of achieving universal philosophical knowledge.

With the further realization that science is developmental--i.e. that it has a history, so that the truths of today rapidly become the errors of tomorrow--this skepticism seems complete. For if philosophy is considered to be the "queen of the sciences," and not even the least

of these sciences can be said to attain eternal and apodictic truths, then surely this objection applies, a fortiori, to philosophy itself? Philosophy, to be sure, has a history--and is not this very fact sufficient to discredit its claim to achieve universal certainties?

It is primarily to questions such as these that the Crisis is addressed. This work is not, for Husserl, a rejection of the ideal of philosophy as a rigorous science. Rather, it is his final attempt to reinstate this ideal, in the face of that "crisis of meaning" which now threatens to engulf not only the concept of philosophical truth, but even the concept of truth within the positivist sciences. What this work involves, then, firstly, is a reconsideration of the whole meaning of the scientific ideal; and secondly, an attempt to understand the relationship between this ideal and the concept of historical relativism which, paradoxically, has arisen in the course of the pursuit of "scientific truth." Finally, the Crisis consists in Husserl's argument that only within the context of phenomenological reflection can such an understanding be achieved. Therefore, its overriding purpose will be to reestablish, on phenomenological grounds, the validity of the scientific ideal, and with it, the validity of the goal of philosophy as a strict science.

The thesis to be presented here grows directly out of the foregoing considerations. If one accepts the

interpretation of the Crisis as Husserl's attempt to overcome the restrictive narrowness of traditional "rationalism," by replacing it with a "genuine rationalism" based upon the phenomenological method, then many urgent questions arise. Central among these is the problem of the life-world--a concept which is used extensively for the first time in the Crisis.

Having developed a complex philosophy, the primary aim of which is the attainment of apodictic (essential) knowledge of being, Husserl's sudden introduction of a concept which, at least *prima facie*, stresses the contingency and historicity of human experience, may appear paradoxical. Indeed, it is the appearance of the life-world in Husserl's final work which has led many contemporary existential phenomenologists to argue that, in his later years, Husserl was preparing to abandon his transcendental idealism in favour of a phenomenology based on the primacy of the concrete, historically-conditioned life-world. But, as we have already pointed out, Husserl himself did not present his turn to the life-world as a rejection of his long-standing ideal of a "scientific" philosophy. Therefore, before one accepts the path taken by many later "phenomenologists," it is imperative to examine Husserl's own use of the life-world, in the context of the Crisis, in order to determine to what degree their views are justified. In interpreting a thinker of such earnest

single-mindedness as Husserl, it would indeed be presumptuous to assume that the life-world constitutes a radical departure from his original goals, simply because the concept has strong "existential" overtones. While there may well be good reason for concluding that the introduction of the life-world does have far-reaching implications for the meaning of phenomenology, this conclusion can only be drawn on the basis of a detailed study of the meaning of this concept, as it functions within the relevant sections of the Crisis.

It will be the primary purpose of this thesis to undertake such a study, using as a central reference point Crisis Part IIIA, which is entitled, "The Way Into Phenomenological Transcendental Philosophy by Inquiring Back from the Pre-given Life-World." As Husserl's choice of title indicates, the explicit intention of this work is to reveal the life-world as a new mode of access to the sphere of transcendental phenomenology. Therefore, whatever our investigation reveals concerning the meaning of this term, a serious effort must then be made to render this meaning compatible with Husserl's wider aim of achieving a consistent transcendental philosophy. In particular, this will entail a consideration of the life-world in its relationship to the fundamental phenomenological concept of epoché, since, as we have already intimated, without the techniques of epoché and

reduction Husserl's ideal of philosophy as a "strict science" can have no meaning.

In preparation for this analysis, the first chapter will consist in a brief discussion of the antecedents of the life-world within Husserl's earlier writings. Since our aim is to present the introduction of the life-world as a natural development of his initial phenomenological goals, it is important to show that the concept has roots in Husserl's previous major works. Chapter one, therefore, will also introduce other central phenomenological themes, especially the themes of horizontality, epochē, and eidetic (or essential) intuition, mainly to indicate a continuity between these and the more recent elements of Husserl's philosophy.

The subsequent chapters will cover three central points. Firstly, we shall consider closely the text of Crisis Part IIIA, in order to reveal the many, and often seemingly contradictory senses which Husserl ascribes to the term "life-world." We shall argue, however, that these contradictions can in fact be resolved, if one considers Husserl's "turn to the life-world" within the general context of his thought. Secondly, and on the basis of this argument, we shall proceed to an examination of the life-world in relation to the phenomenological technique of epochē. Our primary aim here will be to show that while Husserl's use of the life-world does not imply

his rejection of the ideal of scientific philosophy, there are other crucial issues which the introduction of this concept does raise. A discussion of these issues, and their implications for Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, will comprise the third major section of this thesis. Drawing on all three of these main points, our conclusions will hopefully suggest their significance for the work of those contemporary thinkers--philosophers of science, existential phenomenologists, and "pure" phenomenologists alike--who look to the later writings of Husserl for guidance in their attempt to comprehend and to realize the "phenomenological ideal."

## CHAPTER I

### 1. THE WORLD AS HORIZON

Whereas the term "life-world" became prominent only toward the close of his complex philosophical development, Husserl undertook investigations that "move, so to speak, in the realm of the 'world-problem'," as early as the period of the Logical Investigations (1900-1901).<sup>9</sup> We shall examine this concept briefly, since the meanings which Husserl ascribes to it, and the philosophical issues to which it gives rise, reoccur, much later, in connection with the concept "life-world." An investigation of the significance of "the world" will therefore provide a framework for the questions we will eventually raise concerning the "life-world."

Husserl first made use of the notion of a world in his early work on the nature of perception. Dealing with the problem of adequate intuition, he concluded that the primordial basis for all judgments lies in the act of perception, and its various "modes," such as remembering, imagining, etc. Analysis of the perception of any individual thing reveals that the objects of perception are never simply isolated phenomena. Viewed in its full concreteness, any entity announces more than it actually is. Thus, in order to understand fully the meaning of



what is perceived, Husserl argued that it was necessary to describe not only what is "immediately given" at a particular spatio-temporal moment, but also what is implied by our perception of that moment. To take a specific example: What I may "actually" see is a tree. But part of the meaning of the tree, qua perceived, is that it stands on a hill, in a meadow, among other trees, against the sky, and so on, ad infinitum. Not only are there accompanying data of a spatial order, but the tree also has its existence as part of a temporal context. Thus, part of the "sense" of the tree is that I intend to chop it down, or that it is over a hundred years old. In a very significant way, these spatio-temporal accompaniments form the background--or horizon--for the perception of the tree itself. While this horizon may not be explicitly included in one's reference to the tree, it is nevertheless co-meant as something which could, at any time, become thematic.

It seems, then, that the only way one could ever "intuit" the tree in its total concreteness would be to thematize all of the co-meanings involved in its perception. But, if any particular perception always points beyond itself to further possibilities of perception, the necessary thematization would, ideally, extend to include its relation to the totality of possible experience. The analysis of the individual perceptual object, then, leads to at least the beginning of Husserl's later characterization

of the "world" as the horizon, or background, of all particular conscious acts.

Husserl's use of the term "world" becomes truly significant, however, in Ideas I: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology. It is here that the concept is first expounded in connection with the central phenomenological themes of epoché, reduction, and the suspension of the "natural attitude." In the first section of this work, Husserl relates the notion of the "world" to that of the "natural standpoint":

Natural knowledge begins with experience (Erfahrung) and remains within experience. Thus, in that theoretical position which we call the 'natural' standpoint, the total field of possible research is indicated by a single word: that is, the World. The sciences proper to this original standpoint are accordingly, in their collective unity, sciences of the World, and so long as this standpoint is the only dominant one, the concepts 'true Being' . . . and 'Being in the World' are meanings that coincide.<sup>10</sup>

What Husserl hopes to do is to replace this natural standpoint with the phenomenological one, and thereby erase what he considers the fruitless distinction between the knower and "true (i.e. worldly) Being." But the clear indication of this passage is that, within the natural attitude (defined here as a theoretical position) the world is primarily to be viewed as the absolute terminus for the research activities of the natural scientist.<sup>11</sup>

In the second section of Ideas, however, Husserl broadens his conception of the natural standpoint, and,

correspondingly, his concept of the world. While in section I the term "natural standpoint" derived its meaning not from its "naturalness" for the individual who adopted it, but rather from its importance for the procedure of acquiring scientific (natural) knowledge, Husserl now uses the term to indicate that attitude automatically assumed by every human being with respect to the world.

Our first outlook upon life is that of natural human beings, imaging, judging, feeling, willing, "from the natural standpoint."<sup>12</sup>

There is no sign in this section that the natural standpoint is in any sense "theoretical." In fact, Husserl is careful to emphasize the opposite. I am aware of a world, he says; which is simply there, "in verbal or figurative sense 'present', whether or not I pay it specific attention." The knowledge I possess of this world "has nothing of conceptual thinking in it, and first changes into clearing intuiting with the bestowing of attention, and even then only partially and for the most part very imperfectly."<sup>13</sup> Once the requirement that the natural attitude be theoretical is removed, the world, as the correlate of that attitude, also ceases to be simply the totality of possible objects of scientific knowledge.

At this juncture, then, Husserl is apparently maintaining two contradictory views of what the term "world" means. On the one hand, the world is posited by the natural scientist as a kind of "absolute object";

but, on the other, the world simply exists, prior to all such positing, as presupposed by all human actions. What seems to unite these two diverse conceptions, however, is Husserl's further characterization of the world as horizon. The concept of horizonality had already arisen in his earlier analyses of perception, where it was argued that every particular perceived object points beyond itself to further indeterminate possibilities of perception.<sup>14</sup> Now Husserl is extending the bounds of the horizon, so that it becomes the "infinite limit" of human experience.

But not even with the added reach of this co-present margin, which forms a continuous ring around the actual field of perception, does that world exhaust itself which in every waking moment is in some conscious measure 'present' before me. It reaches rather in a fixed order of being into the limitless beyond.<sup>15</sup>

The significant result of this equation of world with the concept of an infinite horizon is its removal of the requirement that the world have a determinate content. If one claims that the essence of the world is its quality of encompassing, and indeed, transcending, the facts of concrete human experience, then the dichotomy between the world as the totality of posited scientific objects, and the world as the presupposed basis for non-scientific human activity, can be resolved. For the scientist and for the ordinary non-theoretically-oriented individual, the world can be made up of different experiences, but at the same time both can retain a common conception of world

as the horizon, or sphere, within which these diverse experiences occur. For the scientist, the "world as horizon" takes the form of a permanent field for the advancement of scientific knowledge. For the non-scientist, the "world as horizon" is likewise an ever-present field, but for practical (i.e. non-theoretical) activities.

But having drawn this distinction between the "scientific" and the "lived" worlds, the question of what motivates the transition from one standpoint to another remains unanswered. Is one standpoint primary, the other secondary, or do both worlds possess equal status for human consciousness? Husserl's final answer, while not clearly formulated until he deals explicitly, in the Crisis, with the concept of the life-world, is foreshadowed in his treatment, in Ideas I, of the notion of an "ideal world."

The difference between an ideal world, and the so-called natural world, can be stated in two ways. Firstly, each world has its specific kind of objects. The objects of the natural world may be characterized as physical, or "real" objects--houses, trees, animals, men. The objects of an ideal world, however, do not ordinarily possess this dimension of concreteness--they depend for their existence upon express acts of human consciousness. Thus, for example, in the "world of arithmetic" which

Husserl mentions, the pure numbers have no existence apart from that which they possess through the mathematician's consciousness of them. The mathematician, while living in the ideal world of arithmetic, has access to a sphere of objects which one who lives straightforwardly in the natural world cannot experience.

This leads to the second way of distinguishing the two worlds. As Husserl has already stated, the essence of the meaning of a "world" lies in its horizonality. But while both the natural and ideal worlds are horizons for human activities, they differ in terms of their constancy. The world of the natural standpoint, "the world in the ordinary sense of the word, is constantly there for me, so long as I live naturally and look in its direction."<sup>16</sup> In contrast to this, "The arithmetical [i.e. the ideal] world is there for me only when and so long as I occupy the arithmetical standpoint."<sup>17</sup> Thus, the natural standpoint, and the world which is its horizon, are a permanent dimension of conscious life, whereas the numerous ideal worlds are generated out of this primary horizon.

As we have suggested, this distinction between the ideal and natural worlds prepares us for Husserl's eventual solution to the problematic relationship between the "worlds" of science and of everyday life. He argues in the Crisis that the scientific world is itself an

"ideal world," and that the world of the "natural standpoint" is the life-world, which alone is constantly present for everyone.

What is not resolved by this argument, however, is the crucial problem of how one can comprehend the notion of a world as horizon, if one is at the same time living within the world. As Husserl himself asserts, the horizon of our experiences is a background, which is itself not thematized. The scientist studies the objects, the "~~facts~~" within the world--not the world as horizon of those facts. The non-scientific man directs himself to his ongoing practical affairs--he does not turn his attention to the horizon within which these affairs proceed. But if we are to understand what the term "world" means, clearly the world, as horizon, must somehow become thematic.

Further examination of the relation between the ideal and natural standpoints will shed some light on this difficult issue. What is required, if one is to know not the contents of a world, but that world "in itself," is a standpoint which frees one from immersion in that world. Further, this "detached standpoint" cannot be simply immersion in an alternate world, since such a situation merely repeats the same difficulty. Thus, for instance, one cannot meaningfully study the "natural world" from the ideal standpoint, since, once within the horizon of

an ideal world, it is the objects of that world which are thematized. Even if the ideal standpoint one occupies is that of the natural scientist, what is thematic for him are "natural objects," and not the natural world itself.

What is needed, then, is a standpoint which takes us beyond the distinction between the ideal and the natural worlds, and at the same time reveals the relationship between all such worlds. Husserl himself is aware of this requirement, as is shown by his statement that, even though the natural and ideal worlds may be present together, they are "disconnected", apart, that is, from their relation to the Ego, in virtue of which I can freely direct my glance or my acts to the one or to the other."<sup>18</sup> It seems that the adoption of this "standpoint of the Ego" is to provide the required link between the various world-horizons, and, moreover, enable the subject to move freely from one world to another.

The introduction of this third standpoint suggests, also, a way of further clarifying the complex relationship between the ideal and natural worlds. Husserl claims that while occupying the standpoint of an ideal world, the natural world still remains "present" to me, so that "I am at the natural standpoint after as well as before, and in this respect undisturbed by the adoption of new standpoints."<sup>19</sup> Clearly, then, the natural world is much



{ more fundamental to our experience than are any of the ideal worlds--so much so that even when I am within the horizon of an ideal world, the natural world remains, unconsidered, but nevertheless the "background for my consciousness as act."<sup>20</sup> Indeed, one can claim that the natural world has a kind of "double" horizonality. In the first place, as we have already said, it is the ever-present background for all the objects experienced within the natural standpoint. Now, however, it is seen also to form the horizon of "my consciousness as act"--in other words, besides being the horizon for the objects of my experience, it is also the horizon for my experiences of the objects.

It is this second sense of horizonality which permits the natural world to be the background, not only for objects viewed from within the natural standpoint, but also the final background against which we actualize the many ideal worlds. The adoption of the standpoint of an ideal world, says Husserl, is a "free act" of consciousness. This act is performed upon the ground of the natural world horizon--so that at any time I can discontinue my inherence in an ideal world, and return to the "always present" natural world. Thus, the natural world is revealed as the fundamental horizon of all human experience, including the experience of consciously adopting a standpoint beyond that of the natural world.

But if the natural world is the horizon for all possible acts of human consciousness, how then does one ever achieve a standpoint from which this natural world-horizon can itself become thematic? Husserl's answer has already been suggested in his reference to the standpoint of the Ego. Although he contrasts the natural and ideal worlds--the former being "constantly there for me," the latter, subject to my free choice--Husserl also equates these two worlds by claiming that "I can freely direct my glance or my acts to one or the other." Now the use of the term "freedom" here seems to contradict the immediately preceding claim that the natural standpoint is not subject to my will, but is necessarily "present to me."

The contradiction can be resolved, however, if one distinguishes between two senses of the term "free." In the first instance, Husserl is using the term to indicate choices made within the horizon of the natural world--thus, one is free to direct one's attention either to concrete, natural entities, or to involve oneself in an ideal world, such as the "world" of arithmetic or poetry. The second sense of freedom, however, implies the possibility of a choice which is much more radical than that. This is the choice between acting within the natural world horizon, or of somehow transcending that horizon, in order to know it "in itself." In other words, while it is true

that the natural world is the necessary presupposition for all human acts; Husserl wishes to claim that there is a "higher" standpoint--the as yet unclarified standpoint of the Ego--which can be freely adopted, and within which knowledge of the world as horizon can be achieved. Beyond the horizon of the natural world, it appears that Husserl postulates a kind of Absolute Horizon, such that the objects--both "real" and "ideal"--of our conscious acts, and also the conscious acts themselves, "find their true and proper place only within it."

Our analysis of the concept "world" has led to some important insights. Central to its meaning, we have seen, is the notion of horizonality--a notion which enables Husserl to distinguish between various "worlds," or categories of human experience, and at the same time to suggest that both the "natural" and the "ideal" can be united within one all-embracing horizon. It is also now clear that the concept of the "world" is closely bound up with Husserl's goal of achieving philosophical certainty. The world has been presented as the fundamental presupposition of all human theory and praxis, and it is such presuppositions which Husserl regards as the chief obstacle to the attainment of absolute knowledge. Finally, this discussion has brought out the important distinction between the freedom to change one's standpoint within the natural world-horizon, and the freedom

to transcend this horizon, in order to know it. This distinction leads directly into the central phenomenological theme of the epochē, since it is through this technique which Husserl claims that the philosopher can overcome his inherence in the natural world, and achieve the goal of absolute knowledge.

The above issues will all reappear, in more radical form, when we examine the concept of the life-world. In fact, we shall maintain that the introduction of this concept is an attempt by Husserl to resolve problems which already suggest themselves in the foregoing discussion of the "world." As further preparation for our central arguments, however, we must now briefly discuss the phenomenological epochē. Since this concept will figure prominently in our later analysis of the life-world, it is important to understand its role in Husserl's original philosophical program.

## 2. THEMATIZING THE WORLD--THE EPOCHÉ

As we have already indicated, the primary significance of the term "world," for Husserl, is that it acts as the "infinite limit," or horizon, of all human action and knowledge. It is precisely because of this function, however, that the standpoint of the natural world must be transcended, if a genuine critique of human knowing is to be conducted.

In order to escape our inherence in the natural world, Husserl, in Ideas I, proposes a drastic methodological step. "Instead of now remaining at this standpoint, we propose to alter it radically."<sup>21</sup> What this radical alteration involves is the total suspension, or epoché, of the General Thesis of the natural world. This thesis, Husserl has already said, is not an explicit positing of reality, but is rather the natural acceptance of the continuous and necessary presence of a world, which gives itself to us as existing, independently of any decision on our part. The thesis is presupposed in all the activities of the natural sciences, whose function it is not to criticize the world-horizon itself, but to know the content of the given world "more comprehensively, more trustworthily, more perfectly than the naïve lore of experience is able to do, and to solve all the problems of scientific knowledge which offer themselves upon its ground."<sup>22</sup>

The suspension of the natural thesis is of crucial importance for Husserl's whole program. With the introduction of the technique of epochē, the realm of strictly phenomenological philosophy is disclosed. The task of "knowing the world" is revealed to be genuinely fulfilled, not through the methods of natural science, but only if these methods, along with all other elements within the natural world, are subjected to the radical generality of the epochē. It must be emphasized that the performance of the epochē does not involve a denial of the reality of the world. Having argued that no one can avoid living within the thesis of the natural standpoint, Husserl does not now wish to contradict this claim. The required suspension of the natural attitude entails only that the philosopher withhold his natural consent to his conviction that the world "exists out there." Thus, the performance of the epochē "is not a transformation of the thesis into its antithesis, of positive into negative. . . . Rather it is something quite unique. We do not abandon the thesis we have adopted, we make no change in our conviction."<sup>23</sup> Within the epochē, our faith in the reality of the world remains unchanged. The only difference is, says Husserl, that "we make no use of it." By refusing any existential commitment to the world, and by withholding consent to any judgments based upon belief in its reality, Husserl argues that we

thereby overcome our inherence in the natural attitude.

But if this were all that were meant by the epoché, one could gain nothing in terms of philosophical knowledge by its use. "Knowledge" entails some kind of relationship to the object of one's knowing; thus, a total withdrawal from the world is futile, if one's aim is to "know" that world more fully. Husserl is careful to emphasize that the epoché is, then, not an end in itself, but a method for reaching a new field of knowledge. The epoché cannot, he says, be used in its full universality, since this would eliminate the possibility of attaining scientific knowledge through its employment.

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On good grounds we limit the universality of the epoché. For were it as inclusive as it is in general capable of being, ~~no~~ no field would be left over for unmodified judgment, to say nothing of a science. But our design is just to discover a new scientific domain, such as might be won precisely through the method of bracketing. . . .<sup>24</sup>

In other words, something must be retained as an horizon within which the new "science" can be pursued--there must remain, after the epoché, a field, wherein judgments can be made, and "theoretical praxis" is possible.

It is important to note that the possibility of the epoché rests, for Husserl, on its being an "act of our perfect freedom." Earlier, in reference to our relationship to the ideal worlds, the same concept appeared. But the ideal world could be actualized only within the

natural attitude, with the natural world remaining as horizon. Here, however, while the motivation to suspend the natural thesis must, logically, arise from within the horizon of the natural world, the outcome of this "free act" is the bracketing of this horizon, since the acceptance of the world as background for all human activities is surely a part of the natural attitude.

Thus, to choose to suspend the natural attitude is to choose to suspend the possibility of knowing, if the meaning of horizon as the presupposition for any "scientific knowing" is retained. But while Husserl is careful to point out that the totality of natural science is held in suspension (i.e. is subject to the phenomenological epoche),<sup>25</sup> he retains as the goal of his

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method, as we have seen, the discovery of a "new scientific domain." By scientific here he means a domain which can be known "absolutely," which will yield the same results to anyone who applies to it the correct methodology. There seems, then, to be no radical difference between the goals of theoretical science, functioning within the horizon of the natural world, and the goal of phenomenological science--except that, (and of course, this difference is crucial) the phenomenologist wishes to know "the world" not as a presupposition, but in itself! Both are seeking universal knowledge, but phenomenology is claiming "essential intuition" of the



horizon/object totality, and not simply knowledge of the contents of the world-horizon.

Because he upholds the validity of the ideal of scientific knowledge, Husserl's determination that the epoché must be limited in its scope becomes understandable. The method of bracketing cannot abolish all horizons, since to do so would, on Husserl's own principles, also be to abolish the possibility of achieving scientific knowledge. What Husserl requires of the method of epoché, then, is two-fold. Firstly, he wants a means to "put out of action the general thesis which belongs to the essence of the natural standpoint . . . this entire natural world therefore. . . ." <sup>26</sup> This is absolutely essential, if our knowing is to be freed of all presuppositions. On the other hand, however, Husserl's goals require that, after this epoché, there remain a "world," which has a horizon structure, and which is therefore knowable. He attempts to combine these two requirements by claiming that, indeed, after the epoché, we do have "the same" world, stripped only of that dimension of "reality" which was a barrier to absolute knowledge. Within the epoché, Husserl claims, there is still the world, and the only judgments prohibited by the brackets are those which are founded on a belief in that world's independent "existence out there." As long as we remain at the standpoint of the epoché, however, we are free to use our judgment without

restriction. "I may accept [a truth concerning the reality of the world] only after I have placed it in the bracket. That means: only in the modified consciousness of the judgment as it appears in disconnection."<sup>27</sup> Thus, while one function of the *epoché* is to bracket the entire natural world-horizon, its complementary, positive, function is to reveal, at the same time, a new level of experience, a "world-in-brackets," as it were, which is the horizon for a kind of knowing which does not have as its foundation the thesis of the natural attitude.

It is now clear that while the concept of "world" has been retained within the *epoché*, it has necessarily undergone a radical revision of meaning. The bracketing of the natural world, which included "ourselves and all our thinking," would seem to have left nothing over which could conceivably be known. But Husserl has argued that the *epoché* is limited in its scope, so that the bracketing of the natural world reveals another world, a new horizon for knowledge. To this new "world," the methodology of natural (inductive) science cannot be applied, since such methods depend for their validity upon the presupposition of a real world. Therefore, the concept of a "world within brackets" entails the development of a new method for achieving scientific knowledge. It is this method--which Husserl terms *essential intuition*--which we shall discuss briefly in the final pages of this chapter.

### 3. EIDETIC INTUITION AND "THE CRISIS IN MEANING"

Through the application of the epochē, as we have just seen, the world of the natural standpoint has been reduced to the status of a "world-in-brackets." Divested of the dimension of "reality," this world can no longer serve as the ground, or presupposition, for human theory and praxis, but must be seen as having "reality" only insofar as it is an appearance for consciousness. The central insight to which the epochē leads, then, is that it is solely in and through an investigation of "consciousness" that the "world" can be known absolutely. After the epochē, it is consciousness alone which remains unaffected by the radical denial of reality. Hence phenomenological knowledge will be knowledge of a unique category of Being--that of "Being-for-Consciousness."

Consciousness in itself has a being of its own, which in its absolute uniqueness of nature remains unaffected by the phenomenological disconnection. It therefore remains over as a 'phenomenological residuum', as a region of Being which is in principle unique, and can become in fact the field of a new science--the science of phenomenology.<sup>28</sup>

The science of phenomenology will have as its object, then, the world of Pure Consciousness--or what amounts to the same thing, the field of Pure Experience, uncontaminated by a prejudicial faith in the "real" world.

What Husserl means by the term "consciousness" is an extremely complex question. In the present context,

however, it is important only to note that he most distinctly separates it from our ordinary (natural world) conception of consciousness as the empirical human ego. In the world prior to the epochē, the human psyche exists both as part of the content of that world; and as the subject of all possible world-experiences. Since both these roles, as part of the natural world, have been bracketed, the consciousness which remains as a field for phenomenological study cannot be individual, or psychological consciousness. The psychological self necessarily regards the objects of its awareness as real--and it is precisely this element of "reality" which Husserl wishes to eliminate. The aim of the epochē is to discover a field of essential knowledge--knowledge which is unconditional, and independent of the empirical facticity of the natural world. Hence, within the epochē is retained, not natural (empirical) consciousness and its world, but what Husserl terms Transcendental Consciousness, or Transcendental Subjectivity. The true object for absolute knowledge is not consciousness regarded as inhering in the world, but consciousness in itself--and to reveal the essence of this transcendental consciousness is the goal of the new phenomenological science.

A clue to this essence manifests itself already within the actual world, wherein we discover that,

whether or not we judge our thoughts, perceptions, memories, etc. as corresponding to a "real" object, this judgment does not alter the fact that to be conscious is always to have an object. Consciousness says Husserl, is necessarily "consciousness-of"--or put another way, consciousness is essentially intentional. Thus, in explicating transcendental consciousness, it is to intentionality which we turn--to the essential relatedness of experiencing subject and experienced object. Husserl is emphatic that:

There is no question here of a relation between a psychological event--called experience (Erlebnis) and some other real existent (Dasein)--called Object--or of a psychological connection obtaining between the one and the other in objective reality. On the contrary, we are concerned with experiences in their essential purity, with pure essences, and with that which is involved in the essence 'a priori', in unconditioned necessity.<sup>29</sup>

We have here clearly come a long way from Husserl's original characterization of the "world" as the horizon of human theoretical and practical affairs. Within the world of the *epoché*, the ascription of independent existence has no meaning, and the world is only as a necessary correlate of transcendental consciousness.

Since the object of scientific knowledge has been thus transformed, the methodology for knowing also changes. Knowledge of the "real" world involved the use of inductive techniques designed to yield general laws

on the basis of empirically given (and therefore contingent) facts. A world which is the necessary correlate of consciousness cannot be known by such a method. The world within transcendental consciousness is an "eidos world," an a priori essence, stripped of the element of contingency. The goal of phenomenology is the attainment of essential knowledge--knowledge which describes the a priori possibility of the empirically given world. Thus, from the transcendental standpoint, the natural (empirical) world can be viewed only as one possible variation on the absolute eidos-world of transcendental consciousness.

The 'real world' as it is called the correlate of our factual experience, presents itself as a special case of various possible and non-possible worlds, which, on their side, are no other than correlates of the essentially possible variations of the idea 'empirical consciousness.'<sup>30</sup>

The actual world, for Husserl, has its philosophical significance as a transcendental clue permitting the knower to gain access to the sphere of the a priori essential. Once the empirical has been transcended, the eidos-world is uncovered as a "beheld or beholdable universal, one that is pure, "unconditioned"--that is to say: according to its own intuitional sense, a universal not conditioned by any fact. It is prior to all "concepts", in the sense of verbal significations, indeed, as pure concepts, these must be made to fit the eidos."<sup>31</sup>

Now it is clear that the kind of knowledge here

outlined is radically different from that knowledge which is the goal of objective science. The relationship between empirical data and the laws which describe them is one which is arrived at within the horizon of the natural world. The eidetic knowledge which the phenomenologist seeks, is however, radically a priori, in that it can only be achieved outside the realm of natural experience--in fact, by placing the "real" world in epoche.

The temptation at this point is to equate the phenomenology of essences with Kant's transcendental deduction of the categories of the understanding. However, while the analogy, prima facie, seems appropriate, there are crucial differences between Husserl's and Kant's conceptions of transcendental knowledge. Although an obvious over-simplification, it can be said that for Kant, the concept of an a priori category implies that this category is capable of being deduced, independently of all empirical experience. The Kantian categories, then, are the transcendental conditions of the possibility of experience, but they are in no way given in experience. For Husserl, on the other hand, the realm of transcendental consciousness is the sphere of "Pure Experience." By this is meant that while knowledge gained within this realm is not the outcome of the inductive method of natural science, neither is it based upon a transcendental deductive procedure. It is rather the result of an

immediate apprehension of a priori essences, or eide. Husserl himself calls his method eidetic intuition, thereby embracing a kind of intellectual intuition, the very possibility of which Kant rejected.

Husserl's method, then, attempts to incorporate within the sphere of the transcendental two approaches to the problem of knowledge which epistemologists have traditionally contrasted--the approaches of rationalism and empiricism. On the one hand, he agrees with Descartes and Kant that, in order to be philosophically valid, knowledge must be of the essential (a priori) principles of human experience. Thus, he aligns himself with traditional rationalism. However, he disagrees with his rationalist predecessors' view that the contingencies of the empirical world must therefore somehow be transcended, and expressed in terms of "laws", whether naturalistic or transcendental. Through the method of epoché, which renders "the world" completely immanent in consciousness, and through the epistemological procedure of eidetic analysis, Husserl wishes to claim that the totality of human experience--the entire natural world therefore, with all its "contingencies"--can be revealed as a concrete manifestation of transcendental reality. Thus, those elements of experience which Kant termed contingent, or "subjective-relative", are, for Husserl, capable of being contained, and known, within the a priori



unity of transcendental consciousness.

It is because of this underlying certainty that no aspect of human experience can be omitted from the sphere of the transcendental, that Husserl, in his later writings, attempts to come to terms with the notion of the historicity of the world. In his early work, notes Paul Ricoeur, Husserl emphasized that phenomenological truth, being knowledge of universal essences, must be a-historical.

"The history of the concept, as an expression of the sense, is of no consequence to the truth of the sense."<sup>12</sup> If the entire world of the natural attitude--and that world is undeniably a changing, historical world--falls under the phenomenological epoché, then so, too, does the history of the world. Thus, history, for the Husserl of Ideas I, is regarded as simply another level of mundanity within transcendental consciousness.

But in his later work, the concept of historicity came to play a much more central role. The issues raised by such thinkers as Dilthey and Heidegger, who placed such emphasis upon man's nature as a concrete, historical individual, led Husserl to renew and strengthen his attacks upon what he considered the unscientific relativism these philosophies fostered. While rightly claiming that eighteenth century rationalism was a naive and inadequate basis for philosophy, Weltanschauungsphilosophie and Existentialism, Husserl argued, reject rationalism

entirely, and foolishly defend, "with rational considerations and reasons" an irrationalism which is "rather a narrow-minded and bad rationality, worse than that of the old rationalism."<sup>33</sup>

If Husserl thus granted the importance of historical considerations, however, he was determined that the element of historicity should be incorporated into eidetic phenomenology, rather than that his philosophy of essences should fall into the trap of relativism. Therefore, he gradually introduced the concept of genetic phenomenology, whereby the temporal (historical) dimension of phenomena could also be investigated eidetically, and shown to have its meaning in its relationship to transcendental subjectivity. Thus, Husserl's goal remains that of resuscitating and reshaping the perennial aim of true philosophy--the aim of achieving a complete rational comprehension of the world. Insofar as this world is admittedly subject to change--or historical development, this element, too, must be taken up and explicated by phenomenology. Thus, in his later philosophy--and particularly in the Crisis--Husserl, while retaining his emphasis upon the concept of eidetic truth, adds to it the notion that the phenomena under investigation may be essentially temporal. Hence, he maintains, their essence, can be fully known only in and through a phenomenological explication of their

historical, or temporal growth.

In fact, in an essay composed during the same period as the Crisis, Husserl argues for the necessity of a "universal-historical a-priori," as the transcendental precondition of all historical study carried out within the natural attitude. Husserl's discussion of the origin of the science of geometry is presented as one example, which, he says, is "historical in an unusual sense, namely, in virtue of a thematic direction which opens up depth problems quite unknown to ordinary history, problems which, in their own way, are undoubtedly historical."<sup>34</sup> Starting from the premise that the science of geometry, as a spiritual-cultural accomplishment, is given to present day geometers as a tradition, Husserl argues that while the development of the science is historical, its varying forms have not arisen "merely causally."<sup>35</sup> The very concept of tradition includes, he says, the idea that it is a human--i.e. spiritual--accomplishment. Thus, what a contemporary geometer, for instance, inherits as "the science of geometry," is "not only a mobile forward process from one set of acquisitions to another, but a continuous synthesis in which all acquisitions maintain their validity, all make up a totality such that, at every present stage, the total acquisition is, so to speak, the total premise for the acquisitions of the new level."<sup>36</sup> The same can be said, Husserl further argues, for any

deductive science. Part of the ontic meaning of a deductive science is that it is an (ideally) reactivatable totality of propositions, each of which self-evidently follows from those preceding it, but all of which ultimately, can be traced to their source in prescientific culture. Without this sense, the whole tradition of deductive science becomes vacuous, "without the 'what' and the 'how' of its prescientific materials, geometry would be a tradition empty of meaning."<sup>17</sup>

The appearance in this context of the notion of "prescientific culture" introduces into Husserl's philosophy a dimension which will become increasingly important, along with his growing emphasis upon the historicity of experience. By claiming that part of the essential meaning of science is its rootedness in a world which exists prior to science, Husserl at once stresses the developmental nature of the scientific enterprise, and also its relationship with the total horizon of world-experience. If we recall our earlier discussion of the contrast between the "natural world," and "ideal worlds," it can be seen that the present distinction between the prescientific and scientific cultures is a development of that original dichotomy. Here, however, the intrinsic relatedness of one world to the other is strongly emphasized--and, significantly, emphasized by means of the concept of history.

The phenomenological understanding of the concept of natural science, says Husserl, will entail an explication of its historical development--an explication, however, which moves not on the ground of the natural world, as do ordinary historical studies--but takes as its starting point the world--and its history--reduced to the status of phenomenon. Such a study, he says, has never before been attempted. The concepts used by geometers, and other scientists, have been treated as ready-made, or self-evident in their own right. The only kind of "reactivation" which has been considered necessary is a tracing of the logical links between the premises, within the already constituted framework of the world of natural science. This kind of study of history, Husserl argues, omits precisely what gives meaning to the scientific ideal. Since it assumes the validity of its own concepts, it cannot then conduct that "re-enactment" of its own growth of meaning, which phenomenology, because it is free of the prejudice of the natural attitude, is uniquely qualified to do.

The contents of this essay clearly reveal that Husserl was keenly concerned about the relation between the notion of the world as fundamentally historical, and his original project of achieving a truly scientific philosophy. If one accepts his argument that all positive science is historical, then this has immediate

implications for the ideal of scientific philosophy. If philosophers must explicate the historical sense of the deductive sciences, then surely, a fortiori, they must do the same with the concept of philosophy as a strict science. Indeed, it is this very conclusion which Husserl attempts to work out in the Crisis. Contemporary philosophy, he argues here, is caught in an epistemological dilemma, precisely because it has no method for comprehending the essential meaning of its own historicity. While modern thinkers are forever seeking an epistemological grounding for the sciences and for philosophy, he says, "clarity has never been achieved about what the much admired sciences are actually lacking."<sup>29</sup>

Such a grounding, he argues, in principle cannot be achieved, so long as the presupposition of the natural world is retained. All questions regarding the essence of human cultural achievements--and this includes questions regarding both science and philosophy--can only be asked if the universal horizon in which they exist can be thematized. Further, the only way of carrying out such radical thematization is through the use of the phenomenological epoché. Thus, Husserl's solution to the problem of the historicity of the world involves his declaration that the world, qua historical, can indeed become the theme for transcendental analysis.

To the totality of concrete, historical human

civilization, he says:

There corresponds essentially the one cultural world as the surrounding life-world with its (peculiar) manner of being; this world, for every historical period and civilization, has its particular features and is precisely the tradition. We stand then, within the historical horizon in which everything is historical . . . but it has its essential structure that can be revealed through methodical inquiry.

The meeting place for Husserl's idea of history, and his conception of eidetic knowledge, then, is this universal historico-cultural horizon which he here entitles the "life-world." In the foregoing citation, Husserl interprets this life-world as comprising the sedimented history of every human institution--including the institution of science. The life-world, however, clearly does not coincide with any particular, historical period or milieu in which the individual human being finds himself. These vary infinitely, and, as Husserl says, each given civilization has its own peculiar features. Underlying them, however, is the one surrounding life-world--the "eidōs" life-world which provides the essential structure for all particular historical life-worlds. Phenomenological explication of this transcendental life-world, argues Husserl, will solve the epistemological problem of the apparent relativity and historicity of world-experience, since it will reveal the ultimate unity of the historical flux, in the a priori of the transcendental world-horizon.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In this chapter several themes have been introduced which will figure crucially in our analysis of the concept of the "life-world."

1. We have argued that Husserl's early use of the terms "world," and "horizon," and the accompanying distinction between the natural and ideal worlds, prepares the way for later issues, such as the relation between the scientific and pre-scientific worlds.
2. Our discussion of the phenomenological epoche, and its function as a method for establishing a genuinely scientific philosophy indicates that, for Husserl, no phenomenological investigation of a "world" can be conducted on a purely mundane, or naturalistic level. This conclusion will clearly be important to keep in mind in our examination of the concept of the "life-world," since many contemporary thinkers regard this concept as having no transcendental dimension.
3. We have very briefly indicated some important differences between the methodologies employed by natural science, and by Kantian transcendentalism, and the unique method of eidetic intuition, which Husserl regards as the only valid method of achieving absolutely presuppositionless



(i.e. rigorously scientific) knowledge. We have further pointed out that while Husserl grants the need for a philosophy which can come to terms with the historicity of world-experience, he considers the techniques of epoche and eidetic intuition adequate to this task. Thus, although in the period of the Crisis, Husserl pays increasing attention to the historicity of the world, and indeed argues that history must become the central theme for phenomenology, he does so in conjunction with a renewed emphasis upon the importance of essential knowledge.

It is in the light of the foregoing considerations that our discussion of the "life-world" will proceed.

Husserl's introduction of this concept is regarded by many as his admission that the ideal of scientific rigor in philosophy must be abandoned, in view of the fact that a human world, at its foundations, must be historical, and thus can never be the ground of "absolute knowledge."

While such a view may ultimately be justifiable, we shall not base this examination of the life-world on the assumption that the appearance of this concept signals a radical departure from Husserl's original program.

Rather, we shall trace its development and use within the Crisis, in an effort to show both how it is related to other phenomenological themes, and why Husserl regards it

as an innovation adequate to resolve the problem of the historicity of human experience, and the consequent "crisis in meaning" which has paralyzed both science and philosophy.

## CHAPTER II

### 1. GALILEO, POSITIVE SCIENCE AND THE LIFE-WORLD PARADOX

We have seen in the preceding chapter that while Husserl agrees that philosophy must be able to cope with the problem of the historicity of the world, he nevertheless does not regard this problem as a threat to his underlying goal of achieving a rigorously scientific philosophy. In fact, he suggests that because their methodology permits a return to the origins of scientific and philosophical experience in the prescientific life-world, phenomenologists will be the first philosophers for whom the attainment of apodictic knowledge is a genuine possibility. The central purpose of the present chapter will be to examine this claim, through a consideration of the many senses which Husserl ascribes to the "life-world" in the Crisis.

We shall first discuss Husserl's evaluation of Galileo's ideal of achieving the total mathematization of human experience, since it is here that the concept of the life-world is first emphasized. Significantly, this emphasis takes the form of a distinction between the "world" which natural science traditionally studies, and the life-world as the necessary presupposition of

scientific praxis. The analysis therefore leads naturally into a discussion of Husserl's crucial claim that it is the life-world, as presupposition of all human praxis, and not the objective world of the natural attitude, which must become the subject-matter for any philosophy which purports to achieve truly "scientific" knowledge of the ultimate foundation of human experience.

Husserl's discussion of Galilean science occurs in the context of the broader problem of the genesis of the philosophical Idea of "universal knowledge," which he regards as the spiritual core of European civilization. This Idea, he wishes to argue, has roots in the "idealizing" activity of the Greeks, and is teleologically oriented toward a culmination in the final "transcendental turn" to be effected by phenomenology itself.

The movement toward idealization began with the conceptualizing of number by the early Greeks--but it was only with later developments, particularly in the field of geometry, that the concept of an infinite totality, together with the corresponding concept of a universal theoretical knowledge, became the guiding motif of thought. The real cut-off point in this ongoing process of idealization comes with Galileo, the seventeenth century thinker for whom the world of nature itself is totally idealized--i.e. becomes a mathematical manifold.

Husserl's attempt at a phenomenologico-historical

reconstruction of the process of the mathematization of nature begins with the assertion that "prescientifically, in everyday sense-experience, the world is given in a subjectively-relative way."<sup>1</sup> It is a commonplace of ordinary experience that any individual's opinions or perceptions often differ from others--but beyond the relativities of experiences we nevertheless postulate one world, the contents of which are "really" the same for everyone. Thus, to Galileo, immersed as he was in his subjective world, it was "obvious," says Husserl, that the content of his experience must somehow relate to this one "real" world. For example, the various typicalities of shape in his "intuitively given surrounding world," while appearing to Galileo in a variety of fluctuating forms, nevertheless approximated some idea of perfection, to which they were necessarily linked. Within the pregiven life-world, however, such standards of perfection are as subjective-relative as the "typicalities" which they regulate. The "typicalities" exist in the life-world, and, Husserl claims, this world is essentially a horizon for practical interests. The "typicalities" which arise within the life-world, then, are correlates of varying subjective goals on the part of individuals. When the interests of the individuals change, the criteria of perfection they employ may also change--what was satisfactory before now being inadequate

to fulfill new technological requirements. Hence, as man's practical horizon expands, so too is his ideal of perfection pushed further.

Without going into detail, suffice it to say that Husserl then argues for the development, out of these practical interests, of various "limit-shapes," which in turn serve as the basis for the appearance of a mathematical praxis, which has these idealized shapes as its world, but is still firmly rooted in its origins in the lived world of non-ideal typicalities. The difficulty is however, that "immediately with Galileo there begins the surreptitious substitution of idealized nature for pre-scientifically intuited nature."<sup>12</sup> This prescientific nature Husserl equates with "the only real world, the one that is actually given through perception, that is ever experienced and experienceable--our everyday life-world."<sup>13</sup> Hence, the scientist's substitution of mathematical nature ultimately obscures, rather than clarifies, man's relationship to his world.

The term "prescientific" in the preceding citations obviously refers to a historical relationship between "the world as experienced prior to the discoveries of Galileo," and the post-Galilean world. The relationship, as Husserl sees it, is also a teleological one--present scientific praxis being the outcome of a purposeful structure which arose within prescientific life. But the historico-

teleological sense of contemporary science has been lost, he argues, due to our total substitution of the "ideal structure" for the primary reality out of which it grew. As a result of this substitution, Husserl claims, when the meaning of natural science is discussed by contemporary epistemologists, the problem of the relationship of the scientific world to the everyday world of life is never raised. The two worlds have been collapsed under ~~the~~ title real world--and this real world is conceived as intrinsically mathematizable. The origin of the concept "mathematical world" is itself never questioned--so that science is interpreted not as a means of knowing a set of "ideal entities," but rather as a methodology which enables the practitioner to grasp the contents of immediate experience. According to Husserl, however, while the goal of achieving knowledge of immediate experience may be a valid one, positivist science deludes itself when it claims to know the immediately given world. What natural science truly knows is a "garb of ideas . . . [which] encompasses everything which, for scientists and the educated generally, represents the life-world, dresses it up as objectively actual and true nature."\*

.. In stark contrast to the ideal world which is the world for scientific praxis, Husserl claims, stands the pregiven life-world. This world he characterizes as:

what is given immediately, as actuality presupposed in all idealization . . . the actually

intuited, actually experienced and experience-able world, in which practically our whole life takes place . . . and which remains unchanged as what it is, in its own essential structure and its own concrete causal style, whatever we may do with or without techniques.

Toward the end of Chapter I, we quoted Husserl as drawing a distinction between the many concrete, historical life-worlds, and the universal, a priori life-world in which they were all rooted. We claimed that the one essential life-world to which Husserl referred could only be a transcendental world, since the existential sphere was obviously subject to constant change. In the present context, while Husserl is also referring to one, unchanging life-world, this time he contrasts it, not with the changeable world of everyday practical life, but with the ideal, mathematical world of natural science. In fact, it appears that in this situation, the life-world is being equated with the world of everyday practical affairs, rather than contrasted with it.

The situation becomes even more confusing when we recall that Husserl has already used the distinction between the scientific and prescientific worlds in such a way that the prescientific world was characterized as the constantly changing basis upon which the eternal truths of scientific praxis are erected. The non-ideal "objects" of this world, he argued, "fluctuated in general and in all their properties in the sphere of the typical; their identity with themselves, their self-sameness, are



merely approximate, as is their likeness with other things."<sup>6</sup> Thus, the only "identity" which Husserl permits the prescientific world is what he terms "an empirical causal style," whereby the things of the life-world have typical habitual ways of behaving. He is careful to emphasize that "in the life of prescientific knowing we remain in the sphere of the merely approximate, the typical."<sup>7</sup> The primary importance of the life-world in this context lay in its function as the pregiven source of theoretical hypotheses and all objective (natural scientific) knowledge ultimately referred back to this vital ground.

But it is difficult to reconcile this view with Husserl's assertions that the life-world possesses an unchanging structure, regardless of the progress or breakdown of particular techniques. On one hand, Husserl is claiming that the life-world, although subject to constant change, is the horizon for scientific praxis--indeed, is asserting a positive feedback relationship between science and the life-world, when he claims that technologies progress along with mankind, so that the horizons of science are pushed ever further.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, however, he is arguing that, although science may change and progress, the meaning-fundament out of which it arose remains forever the same.<sup>9</sup> In these statements, the relation between science and the life-

world seems to be exactly reversed: in the first instance, the life-world is the everflowing basis for the eternal truths of science; in the second, science is viewed as a growing tradition relative to the life-world, which serves as the stable touchstone for scientific progress. Similarly, the life-world is interpreted as both historical and non-historical. The conditions of the life-world, Husserl argues, were at a specific point in history, conducive to the appearance of the scientific (theoretical) consciousness. Also, however, Husserl speaks of our life-world, which remains unchanged, regardless of the advances of science. But are not these two uses of the term incompatible--and surely this conflict would have been immediately obvious to Husserl? The life-world cannot, from one and the same standpoint, both change, in order to motivate the appearance of natural science, and then not change, despite its appearance. It is clear that we must either accuse Husserl of a blatant contradiction, or search for a hidden equivocation on the use of the term "life-world."

This problem arose out of an examination of Husserl's critique of Galileo--whom he portrays as both a "discovering and concealing genius." By this he means that by discovering the idea of mathematical nature, and thereby inaugurating a significant new era in the history of thought, Galileo at one and the same time

initiated a process of concealment which has led scientists and non-scientists alike to take for absolute truth what is essentially an idealization. It is Husserl's contention that only transcendental phenomenology can reveal the ground of this idealization, and hence the final--and original meaning of scientific truth.

In Chapter I, we maintained that there is a tension between the undeniable temporality of experience and Husserl's claim that there can be knowledge only of a-temporal essences. Husserl attempts to resolve this tension by incorporating the element of historical flux into the sphere of eidetic knowledge. He admits, with the historicists, that the human world, including the accomplishments of science, undergoes constant change--that, indeed, it is fundamental to the meaning of scientific truth that it form part of a cohesive tradition of thought. But, he argues, even the perpetually changing life-world can be subjected to the method of bracketing, and, held within epoche, will reveal itself as a correlate of transcendental consciousness. In The Origin of Geometry, Husserl emphasizes that like every other level of mundane experience, any particular, cultural world can be shown to have its eidetic correlate--and it is this eidos-world, alone which is the object of phenomenological knowledge. This view is reiterated in the Crisis, where Husserl characterizes the method he plans to use in his subsequent

investigation of the life-world. This method, he says, involves the bringing to "original intuition" of the "pre-scientific and extra-scientific life-world, which contains within itself all actual life, including the scientific life of thought." <sup>50</sup> By returning to the naïveté of life, he hopes, "... by a reflection which rises above this naïveté, ... to overcome the philosophical naïveté which lies in the (supposedly) scientific character of traditional objectivist philosophy." <sup>51</sup>

By characterizing the life-world here as both pre-and extra-scientific, Husserl at once includes within its meaning both its historical relation to the scientific tradition, and its non-historical, epistemological status as the "world of immediate experience." But more than this--by claiming that the life-world "contains within itself all actual life," Husserl also gives the term a transcendental significance as the precondition of all particular life-world experiences.

In this way, a path is suggested along which a resolution of the contradiction may be sought. From within the natural attitude, there are indeed many historically unique life-worlds. But within the transcendental-phenomenological epoché, these ever-changing cultural horizons are concrete examples (to use a phrase from The Origin of Geometry) of the one transcendental life-world.

The questions which must now be answered, however, are how Husserl proposes to achieve a standpoint from which this life-world can become an appropriate subject for phenomenology, and, even more importantly, why he regards the study of the life-world as such an urgent undertaking. The remaining sections of this chapter will explore these questions, through a consideration of some of the ways in which the concept of the life-world is used in Crisis IIIA.

## 2. KANT'S "UNEXPRESSED PRESUPPOSITION" OF THE LIFE-WORLD

One of the most important and revealing uses of the life-world occurs in the context of Husserl's lengthy discussion of Kantian transcendentalism. He claims that the reason why Kant could not achieve a truly radical (presuppositionless) philosophy was because the method of transcendental deduction, like the methods of the natural scientist, was unable, in principle, to attain immediate knowledge of the absolute foundation of human world-experience. Husserl views his critique of Kant as revealing, once and for all, the inadequacy of traditional rationalism to establish a scientific philosophy. His critique, further, discloses the life-world as the necessarily anonymous presupposition of Kant's philosophizing--a presupposition which Kant, like the positive scientists, could not thematize. We shall now examine this critique briefly, in order to determine the nature of the life-world presupposition as it functioned within Kant's thought, and how it can, and indeed must, become the fundamental theme for Husserl's phenomenology.

So long as one continues to philosophize within the natural standpoint, the theme of one's thinking is not this life-world presupposition, but the "natural world"--characterized as an objective, independent field for theoretical investigation. The difficulty is

however, that philosophy, when undertaken from this standpoint, leads to the epistemological paradoxes of Cartesian dualism. The world, defined as the unitary horizon for the achievement of apodictic (theoretical) truth, reveals itself, upon philosophical investigation, to be through and through historical and relativistic. Thus, the very possibility of achieving absolute truths about this "objective" world is thrown into question--and the pursuit of philosophic knowledge seems to culminate in the denial of the validity of the scientific ideal.

The skeptical implications of such a conclusion were worked out by both Hume and Kant--with the latter arguing that knowledge could be saved only by rejecting the concept of a world which can be known "in itself," in favor of the position that "we only know appearances." According to Husserl, Kant's "Copernican revolution" marks a crucial turning-point for philosophy. With the introduction of the concept of Transcendental Subjectivity as the condition of the possibility of knowledge, he claims, it at last becomes possible to achieve a genuinely scientific (presuppositionless) philosophy.

But it must be made clear why Husserl views Kant as the first important transcendental thinker. Husserl's use of the term "transcendental," he admits, is exceedingly broad. It is, he says,

the motif of inquiring back into the ultimate source of all formations of knowledge, the

motif of the knower's reflecting on himself and his knowing life, in which all scientific structures that are valid for him occur purposefully, are stored up as acquisitions, and have become and continue to become freely available. Working itself out radically, it is the motif of a universal philosophy which is grounded purely in this source, and thus ultimately grounded.<sup>52</sup>

The ultimate source he takes to be the "I-myself" or Ego--and the problems for a genuine philosophy must centre around the relation of this "Ego" to the "world" of which it is conscious. It is in this sense that Kant is regarded as a transcendentalist--since he is on the way to a philosophy which "undertakes to understand the existing world as a structure of sense and validity, and in this way seeks to set in motion an essentially new type of scientific attitude and a new type of philosophy."<sup>53</sup>

Keeping in mind Husserl's conclusion that transcendental knowledge is scientific knowledge, it becomes easier to see why he nevertheless dismisses Kant's transcendentalism as "insufficiently radical" for the purposes of genuine philosophy. For, while Husserl agrees that, with Kant, there occurs the first significant employment of the transcendental motif, as a solution to the problems of post-Cartesian rationalism, he claims that Kant was ultimately unable to transcend the dominance of rational objectivism. The fundamental Cartesian dichotomy between "inner" and "outer"--pure a priori reason, and the sense-world upon which reason imposes its categories, thereby



yielding objects of experience--is retained within the Kantian schema. While it is possible for Kant to show that both the a priori truths of mathematics, and the whole empirical world which is the field of study for natural (objectivist) science are dependent for their validity upon the meaning-giving activity of the understanding, his argument still requires the presupposition of an unknowable world-in-itself--a transcendent cause of the sense-appearances which form the raw material for the meaning-giving operations of consciousness.

Kant's fundamental adherence to rationalism prevents him, says Husserl, from becoming aware of another, much more pervasive presupposition of his philosophizing. "Naturally, from the very start, in the Kantian manner of posing questions, the everyday surrounding world of life is presupposed as existing."<sup>54</sup> This experience of the life-world goes far beyond the idealizing activity of the scientist, or the transcendental deductions of Kant. For the scientists and philosophers who themselves carry out these operations are already "objects among objects in the sense of the life-world, namely, as being here and there, in the plain certainty of experience, before anything that is established scientifically." <sup>55</sup>

The kind of certainty characteristic of this mode of being is systematically excluded from any theoretical

approach to experience. For, while both the theoretician, who treats the world as a field for scientific study, and the non-theoretician, with his straightforwardly practical attitude toward his world, may claim that the absolute determinant of truth is "immediate experience," they are using the phrase in different ways. For both, "perception is the primal mode of intuition,"<sup>56</sup> but for the ordinary, nonscientific man, the act of perception leads him straight to the object itself, as it is given in its unity--as Husserl says, "in the mode itself-there." In other words, within the life-world, as the subjective-relative horizon for all theoretical activities, the appearances of an object, and the "object itself" are one and the same thing.

If we are directed straightforwardly toward the object and what belongs to it, our gaze passes through the appearances toward what continuously appears through their continuous unification: the object with the ontic validity of the mode 'itself present.'<sup>57</sup>

The reorientation of consciousness which occurs with the development of the theoretical attitude causes a change in the meaning of perceptual experience. This involves a standing back from the appearances, in order to make them, as appearances of something, thematic. The natural scientist necessarily sets himself the task of interpreting the world which is immediately given, in order to get beyond the mere appearance to the being of which these appearances are evidence. Thus, immediate

experience, for the scientist, has the sense of pointing beyond itself--of acting as an indicator of non-immediate truths.

But while, for both Kant and Husserl, the foregoing analysis of the meaning of scientific activity would be acceptable, Husserl claims that the success of the scientist's inquiry rests on certain presuppositions which Kant, restricted as he was by his fundamental adherence to the natural attitude, was unable to make thematic. For the ability to ask theoretical questions, as we have seen, is grounded in the kind of certainty found only in the life-world.

It belongs to what is taken for granted, prior to all scientific thought and all philosophical questioning, that the world is, and that every correction of an opinion, whether an experimental or other opinion, presupposes the already existing world, namely as a horizon of what in the given case is indubitably valid as existing. . . 56

Thus, the scientific activity of questioning a given set of "appearances" in order to discover the scientific truth-in-itself, can only take place if the scientist is already firmly rooted in circumstances which he necessarily does not regard as "mere appearances," but as things themselves.

Not only is there, then, as Husserl has earlier argued, an historical era which can be called "pre-scientific," but every act of scientific praxis positively requires an opposing sphere of unquestioned experience.

Further, once one adopts the rational-objective attitude, the entire sphere of lived experience takes on a peculiar sense, for the scientist, of being "prescientific." It is prescientific insofar as it is necessarily viewed as an infinite field for potential scientific research. It is, indeed, part of the meaning of science as a methodology that, ideally, all of the world can be thus objectively known.

It was this world--the world which was either already "objectified" by science, or which had that unusual sense of prescientific outlined above--to which Kant's questions concerning the possibility of theoretical knowledge were directed. And it is because of his rationalist conception of "world," says Husserl, that Kant was unable to penetrate to the true meaning of transcendentalism, but rather, like the natural scientist, stopped his critique at "idealized nature." Kant's questions could not, in principle, be directed to the life-world, since the kind of question he was asking demanded an answer in terms of "laws" or "transcendental conditions of the possibility of." The life-world, Husserl has here pointed out, is, however, a realm where this kind of question is inconceivable--the mode of verification within the life-world is not the deductive, inferential method of mathematical science or of Kantian transcendentalism, and to apply such alien methodology

would be to misconstrue the nature of the "world" one was seeking to know.

One cannot try to infer back from the appearances in the life-world to the laws determining these appearances, without having replaced one conception of the meaning of "appearances" by another. In order to make the life-world thematic, a whole new methodology must be introduced--one which does not require that appearances be treated either as evidence for general empirical "laws" or as ultimately dependent upon a transcendental, noumenal "world." If philosophy is to become genuinely scientific, says Husserl, it must be able to achieve knowledge which is truly immediate, and yet at the same time universal. Such a goal in principle cannot be attained by a rationalist methodology, which necessarily presupposes both the objective reality of an external world, and the accompanying, all-pervasive subjective-relative life-world. But since it is this life-world which any philosophy which seeks to be presuppositionless must know, the techniques of traditional rationalist epistemology must be supplanted by Husserl's phenomenological method of knowing, which he characterizes as an "intuitive exhibiting method."

### 3. THE LIFE-WORLD AND THE PARADOX OF SUBJECTIVITY

The "intuitive exhibiting method" of eidetic intuition is distinguished from what Husserl calls Kant's "regressive, inferential method" of transcendental deduction in this way. While the former is a technique for gaining a kind of "intellectual insight" into transcendental essences which appear within the realm of experience, the latter is a method whereby the "conditions of the possibility of experience" are shown to be outside the scope of any form of "intuitive" knowledge.

Kant's categories of the understanding, because of their function as the anonymous transcendental principles of objective experience, may at first glance seem to be that "absolute presupposition of experience" which, Husserl claims, a truly scientific philosophy must be able to "know." But, Husserl further argues, it is useless to delimit the scope of natural scientific knowledge, as does Kant in his claim that "we only know appearances," and then, while ascribing the status of "presupposition of scientific knowledge" to the transcendental categories, also claim that this sphere is completely beyond the scope of intuitive knowledge. Such a procedure, says Husserl, can lead to only formal knowledge of the transcendental sphere--and hence, it

cannot lead to any knowledge which is genuinely philosophical. For Kant, once the awareness of the function of the categories as transcendental principles has been achieved, the work of philosophy is finished, and the field is given over to positive science. Kant's method, then, fulfills its goal when it has deduced, and thereby secured, the objectivity of rational science. But, Husserl claims, "to deduce is not to explain . . . the only true way to explain is to make transcendently understandable."<sup>5,9</sup> By giving the sphere of the transcendental a negative status--as the limit beyond which scientific knowledge cannot go, Kant fails in the task of making the transcendental world intelligible--i.e. of giving it any positive (concrete) content of its own.

This failure to ascribe any content to the field of the transcendental Husserl again attributes to Kant's rootedness in the Cartesian tradition; and his dependence upon a rational-objectivist notion of what apodictic knowledge must be. For Kant, the notion of intuitive knowledge, says Husserl, is completely bound up with a conception of concrete human consciousness which takes as its starting-point the naturalist psychology of Locke. Following guidelines laid down by rationalism, Locke's psychology held that the human mind, like all other entities in the external world, could be completely comprehended in terms of empirical laws. Thus, the

meaning of human subjectivity, at least theoretically, could be completely exhausted by the application of psychological (naturalistic) categories. Any intuitive knowledge of which the human mind was capable, then, could only be characterized as a product of "inner sense," which was an empirically determinable mode of human thinking.

If the psychic is thus equated with the natural, obviously, for Kant, transcendental subjectivity must be separate from concrete, human subjectivity. Similarly, if intuitive knowing is psychologically motivated, then the results of intuition cannot be applied to transcendental subjectivity. Thus, Husserl argues, there remains no way for Kant to make his transcendental categories apodictically clear. They rest outside the sphere of the natural subject, and hence cannot be known intuitively. But the ideal of apodicticity includes the requirement that the object of such knowledge be given in immediate self-evidence--the kind of self-evidence that, for Kant, can only be found in the realm of human subjectivity (as opposed to transcendental).

According to Husserl, although he recognized that the foundations of scientific experience had become a problem, Kant did not see that all natural sciences were, after all, the accomplishments of humanity--hence, the accomplishments of that very "subjectivity" which empirical psychology, although itself a natural science,



purports to explain. The paradoxical nature of the view that it requires the presupposition of human subjective life in order to develop a science of human subjectivity, demands a resolution. However, says Husserl, this resolution clearly cannot be found in Kant's "mythical construction" of transcendental subjectivity, because Kant too, uses the pregiven life-world as an assumption of his philosophizing, and is only thus enabled to deduce an "anonymously functioning transcendental subjectivity," which "with unswerving necessity, forms the world of experience."<sup>60</sup>

The dilemma thus remains--: either transcendental subjectivity is a particular aspect of the concrete, individual human psyche, while at the same time, paradoxically, the constitutor of that world whose validity is under discussion--or it is a subjectivity which is totally distinguishable from the human subjects of the presupposed world, in which case its relationship to that world, as the "condition of its possibility," becomes unintelligible. There is an either/or quality about Kant's characterization of subjectivity which renders impossible any radical explanation of its paradoxical nature.

In the return to the life-world, says Husserl, lies the only hope for overcoming this seemingly insurmountable paradox. It is important to note that

Husserl is not at this point employing his "intuitive exhibiting method"--but is rather presenting a suggestion for a solution, which he frames in the form of a hypothesis:

Were the Kantian theory nevertheless to contain some truth, a truth to be made actually accessible to insight . . . it would be possible only through the fact that the transcendental functions which are supposed to be explained in the above enigmas concerning objectively valid knowledge belong to a dimension of the living human spirit that had to remain hidden . . . whereas this dimension can be made accessible to scientific understanding, through a method of disclosure appropriate to it, as a realm of experiential and theoretical self-evidence.<sup>61</sup>

In the above passage, Husserl is proposing a compromise between the two kinds of subjectivity allowed by Kant. He agrees that transcendental subjectivity is required if objective knowledge is to be explained. But he further suggests that if the transcendental subject is to adequately fulfill this function, it is essential that it somehow be rooted in the concrete human world. Thus, he proposes the possibility that the field of transcendental subjectivity is accessible through a dimension of the living human spirit that has hitherto--for essential reasons--remained hidden. Thus, while the empirical subjectivity engendered by the scientific (naturalistic) attitude cannot, in principle, point beyond itself, Husserl is arguing that there is another order of subjective existence--which he calls the "life of the

depth"--which can and does contain within itself an ultimately functioning transcendental subjectivity. This hidden aspect of the human spirit, then, holds the position of a mediator between the concrete and the transcendental spheres--and holds within itself the final meaning of both, so that its explication must be the central task for any possible "science of subjectivity."

In the preceding citation, the "life of the depth" is not definitely equated with transcendental subjectivity--but is rather that sphere of human spirituality to which transcendental functions belong. On the other hand, the temptation to equate it with Husserl's previous clarification of the life-world as the horizon which contains within it all concrete, practical life is precluded by his contrasting with it the "life of the plane." This latter dimension includes within it

...everything of which men--the scientists and all the others--can become conscious in their natural world-life (experiencing, knowing, practically planning, acting) as a field of external objects--as ends, means, processes of action, and final results related to these objects. . . . all this remains on the plane, which is, though unnoticed, nevertheless only a plane within an infinitely richer dimension of depth."

This passage can be interpreted as referring to what Husserl earlier termed our ongoing subjective-relative world-life. But this world-life is now clearly depicted as a facet of a much more complex dimension of "spiritual

functions which exercise their accomplishments in . . . each and every preoccupation of the human world-life."<sup>63</sup>

Here, yet again, we are faced with Husserl's dual usage of the concept of the life-world. He has already argued that Kant's philosophy rests on the ultimate presupposition of a pregiven horizon in which all human praxis--including the theoretical praxis of philosophy--is rooted. Yet here he is portraying that very presupposition as the accomplishment of a hidden form of human spirituality which is now to become a "realm of experiential and theoretical self-evidence." And, as we have done before, so too in this instance must we turn to Husserl's "intuitive exhibiting method," and its implications for the concept of experiential knowledge, if we are to clarify the apparent ambiguity within the concept of the life-world--this ambiguity whereby the concrete, historical, (and yet, as Husserl himself says, ultimate) life-world presupposition within which Kant philosophized, is revealed as a "plane within an infinitely richer dimension of depth."

As we have already indicated, Husserl's central criticism of the Kantian categories was that it was impossible to ascribe to them any content. For Husserl, the sole possible source of content for the transcendental sphere must lie in the experienced world--for him, knowledge of appearances does not imply an unknowable

thing-in-itself. But the "experienced world" cannot mean the actual empirical sphere, since here the thesis of objectivity prevails, and the possibility of self-evident knowledge is ruled out. What is needed is a world which, while related to the natural world-life of the plane, does not possess its theoretical limitation. Just such a world, says Husserl, is the life-world. Clearly, when we are theorizing on a merely mundane level, we can see that this world is constantly presupposed as horizon of all our activities, including the idealizing process of scientific praxis. But such an awareness of the function of the life-world is useless, unless we can extricate ourselves from the natural attitude. If we cannot, the outcome of any attempt to study the life-world within normal objective science must fail--since we are merely repeating the paradoxes of rationalism at another level, by treating the subjective-relative life-world as an "objective entity" and, thus, misconstruing the essential meaning of the concept of life-world.

Husserl consistently presents the contents of actual experience as transcendental clues--as "examples" which permit us access to the only sphere wherein truly essential insight is possible, the transcendental. The relationship between the two fundamental senses of life-world thus far distinguished--i.e. its sense of being the only real world, the fluctuating horizon of all our

concrete activities, and its sense of being the unchanging a priori correlate of any concrete world--can be interpreted as an extension of this primary concept. No particular cultural milieu--not even the one world of nature which is common to all, and the basis for all scientific knowledge within the natural standpoint--can exhaust the significance of the life-world as an ultimate presupposition. The final meaning of this concept rests in the fact that, as phenomenologists, we are no longer bound to accept the actual world as the final arbiter of truth. Through his capacity to imaginatively vary, in complete freedom, the contents of any concrete experience, the phenomenologist arrives at eidetic insight into the transcendental meaning of this experience. Similarly, Husserl is saying, the total concrete life-world of any particular spatio-temporal setting can be transformed, by the process of eidetic variation, to reveal its essential relationship to the one transcendental life-world, which supports the "actuality" of all its concrete variation. It is not only that a relationship between the two life-worlds is thus revealed--more importantly, for Husserl, through the use of a concrete "transcendental clue," the being of the transcendental sphere, in its concrete truth, appears.

It now becomes clear why Husserl viewed the life-world presupposition of Kant's thought as "a plane within a richer dimension of depth." When Husserl refers

to Kant's "unexpressed presupposition of the life-world" he is speaking of the concrete historical world of lived experience. There was no way that the transcendental life-world could be known by Kant, since the mode of access to it is through its concrete actualizations, through the life-world viewed as a clue to its transcendental correlate--and this clue could never be interpreted as such within Kantian rationalism. Attention to the concrete life-world would have revealed to Kant, says Husserl, that the mode of knowing in this world involves the unity of the appearances of things, and the things themselves. Thus, the objects of the life-world give themselves immediately--are self-evidently there. The realization that the style of verification which occurs in our life-world is the foundation upon which all subsequent modes of knowing (including the scientific) are based, leads, says Husserl, to the insight that it is this kind of "intuitive" knowledge which must be recaptured, if we are to get beyond the presuppositions of the idealized objective world.

Throughout his career, Husserl defended this "intuitive disclosing method" of eidetic intuition. It is significant to note, however, that now a new element has been added to the discussion. The stratum of mundane experience which he has termed the ultimate presupposition of knowledge (the life-world), is now being exhibited as

containing within itself a paradigm for the phenomenological method itself.

Thus, when one turns to the life-world, one is accomplishing the turn to phenomenology, because it is only in the analysis of the life-world that the truth of eidetic analysis, as a method for achieving "experiential and theoretical knowledge" can reveal itself.



#### 4. THE LIFE-WORLD AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO TRANSCENDENTAL SUBJECTIVITY

But in suggesting that the life-world is the fundamental theme for transcendental phenomenology, one is surely treading on dangerous ground. In his later work--particularly the Cartesian Meditations, Husserl is firm in his view that the task confronting a universal phenomenology is

the self-explication of the ego, carried out with continuous evidence and at the same time with concreteness.

How can he now (in the Crisis) claim that this central task has shifted so radically, and that the phenomenologist must henceforth concern himself with the clarification of the life-world?

In the Meditations the starting point for phenomenology was located in the reworking of the ego-cogito of Descartes. By beginning here, one is led, says Husserl, to the realization that the only way out of dualistic paradoxes is through a thoroughgoing transcendental egology. Thus any level of concrete experience is reached via an initial reduction of the concrete self to the transcendental ego. Having accomplished this reduction, it can then be seen how each stratum of concrete experience is constituted through the anonymous transcendental functions. One of the problems of

constitution which arises is that of the constitution of the

specifically human surrounding world, a surrounding world of culture for each man and for each human community . . . likewise the problem of the genuine, though restricted, kind of Objectivity belonging to such a world. Its Objectivity is restricted, though concretely the world is given to me and to everyone else . . . as having the sense: accessible to everyone.<sup>65</sup>

The sense of this world's accessibility differs, for essential reasons, from "that absolutely unconditional accessibility which belongs essentially to the constitutional sense of Nature . . . everyone, as a matter of a priori necessity, lives in the same Nature, a Nature moreover . . . that he has fashioned into a cultural world in his individualized and communalized living and doing. . . ."<sup>66</sup>

Even beyond the primary "world" of this schema--the one world of Nature--Husserl distinguishes a primordial "immanent world, which we call the stream of subjective processes."<sup>67</sup> This immanent subjective flux apparently is the starting point for the constitution of any world whatsoever--and the kind of world which Husserl later designated the "life-world," partakes of a level of Objectivity<sup>68</sup> far beyond this primordial stream of consciousness. The cultural world is constituted on the basis of the one world of Nature--and the natural world arises at an even more fundamental level of transcendental consciousness.

There are several crucial points to note here.

Firstly, Husserl sees the reduction to the transcendental ego as opening up a field of problems of constitution, among which is the problem of the life-world. In no way does he attribute to the life-world any logical, historical, or epistemological priority. Further, he is careful to distinguish it as a static stratum within the "apodictic ego"--a world which is de facto, culturally varipus, but which is also invariably built upon the underlying stratum "nature," and which certainly cannot be said to have any influence upon the transcendentially prior levels of experience. Finally, and most significantly for our present problem, it is through

the systematic progress of transcendental-phenomenological explication of the apodictic ego that the transcendental sense of the world must also become disclosed to us ultimately in the full concreteness with which it is incessantly the life-world for us all."

In other words, it is as part of the outcome of phenomenological investigation that the life-world is revealed--it does not form a starting-point for the investigation. It is a world governed by "essential necessities," deriving from the "transcendental ego and then from the transcendental intersubjectivity which discloses itself in that ego. . . "70

There is certainly no hint in the foregoing exposition that the life-world is to become the fundamental field of study for phenomenology. It is viewed

as an interesting aspect of the future investigations which will be the life-work for phenomenologists. The concept arises within the transcendental epochē, and has meaning as a correlate of transcendental consciousness.

In the Crisis, this meaning is of course retained--Husserl never abandoned his fundamental certainty that all of experience could ultimately be seen as "transcendentally constituted." But the whole emphasis has been changed. The analysis, in the first place, does not begin with the epochē and transcendental reduction. The discussion (until Crisis #35) is conducted on a "mundane" level, and all references to transcendental conclusions have the status of suggestions as yet unverified.

Nor is the apparent reversal of procedure accidental. It is indicative of the general reorientation of Husserl's thought that the Crisis should have this structure. If the life-world is to be the primary path to phenomenological knowledge, then one cannot begin with the life-world qua phenomenon--to do so would be to presuppose the validity of the whole transcendental procedure (epochē, reduction), and to deny the necessity for treating the concrete world as a clue to the transcendental. Thus, the life-world must first be seen in its concrete actuality, before the epochē can be effected and the life-world revealed as transcendentally constituted. If the life-world is truly

to be a means of access to the transcendental sphere, then, we must be somehow able, through an act of ordinary theoretical knowledge, to comprehend this potentiality. Husserl cannot say that the life-world reveals itself once the turn to transcendentalism is accomplished, if he also wishes to claim that in the life-world we find the most fundamental pathway to transcendental experience.

If we wish to render the positions of the Cartesian Meditations and the Crisis consistent, it would seem that there is one extremely radical option available. If Husserl is to retain his central insight that all of being is being within Transcendental Subjectivity, and yet claim that the task of explicating the "apodictic ego" must give way to the task of explicating the life-world, then he can do so by, at least implicitly, admitting that ultimately the Transcendental Ego and the life-world are one and the same.

In the Cartesian Meditations, there is certainly little to support this hypothesis. The life-world here plays a very limited role--it is not, for instance, so fundamental as is the "one world of Nature," which Husserl sees as the absolute horizon of all actual (non-transcendental) experience. But given the arguments of the first sections of the Crisis, the hypothesis becomes much more plausible. If the life-world is indeed merely one rather narrow layer of constituted reality,

why would the failure to comprehend it result in the failure of Kantianism to grasp the meaning of Transcendental Subjectivity?<sup>71</sup> And, if the life-world is only one among many constituted levels of transcendental experience, how account for the much emphasized all-pervasiveness of life-world experience--the tendency of the life-world to engulf all other levels of constituted realities, including theoretical science? Finally, if we accept Husserl's earlier position to the effect that all actual (empirical) realities are clues to their transcendental correlates, it would seem to follow that the concrete life-world is a clue to its correlate--the One transcendental life-world. Indeed, we have already argued that for Husserl this is the case. But if the actual life-world is a clue only to its own transcendental correlate--how can it be at the same time a mode of access to the entire realm of Transcendental Subjectivity?<sup>72</sup> Either the life-world is a notable exception to one of Husserl's most clearly stated principles concerning the relation between actual and transcendental experience, or the life-world has a status much more significant than we have heretofore supposed.

Support for the latter possibility appears in Crisis #33. Here, the concept of the life-world is taken from being a "partial problem within the general problem of objective science" to being a "universal

problem for Philosophy." In this section, the life-world possesses both of the earlier meanings already uncovered. It is the intuitive surrounding world of life, "pregiven as existing for all in common," presupposed both historically and for each individual, whether theoretician or practical man, as "the constant ground of validity, an ever available source of what is taken for granted. . . ." This kind of awareness of the life-world occurs prior to phenomenological reduction--it involves no insight that the life-world is transcendently constituted. Indeed, Husserl is careful to point out the difficulty of even conceiving of the possibility of treating this "pregiven world" scientifically (i.e. phenomenologically).

Coming to a realization of the importance of the life-world via our attempt to make the positive sciences comprehensible, we must necessarily view the life-world as "an ancillary and partial problem within the full subject of objective science in general." We come to see that, as the presupposition of natural scientific activity, it is the life-world which must be explicated if objective science is to be fully grounded. But it is the accomplishments and experience of objective science that primarily concern us, so that the study of the life-world is a means to a more vital end. The end of understanding objective science as an accomplishment of transcendental subjectivity, was already proposed in the

Cartesian Meditations so that in this way, the dimension of transcendentalism is added to the concept of life-world. If the life-world is to be studied qua presupposition of objective science, it cannot itself be studied using the techniques of objective science. Hence, the methodology of eidetic intuition reappears--we adopt a standpoint above science, survey "in generality its theories and results . . . and on the other side we must also survey the life of acts practised by working scientists . . . and also what comes under consideration here is the scientist's repeated recourse . . . to the life-world. . . ." <sup>75</sup> Thus, says Husserl, it can be seen that the subjective-relative life-world becomes a transcendental problem, but within the context of the broader problem of the constitution of scientific objectivity.

But now comes a crucial turn in the argument--a turn which may be regarded as opening up the possibility of an entirely new meaning for the concept of life-world. It is clear, says Husserl, that one cannot discuss the function of the life-world as presupposition of scientific praxis without first inquiring as to "the life-world's own and constant ontic meaning for human beings who live in it." <sup>76</sup> For after all, scientists do not constitute all of humanity, and we have already seen that the life-world is a universal practical presupposition. We must therefore, have a general concept of the sense of the



life-world, if we are to understand its specific meaning as presupposition of natural scientific praxis.

But having put forward the problem of the manner of being of the life-world, having put out of play (held in epoché) the cognitions of objective science, a peculiar thing happens. For suddenly a "vast theme for study" presents itself--which, while it first appeared as merely a special topic within the general problem of science, now is seen to be that very "third dimension"--the life of the depth--which we earlier discussed, and which is "immediately destined in advance to engulf the whole subject matter of objective science, as well as all other subject matters on the 'plane.'"

This conclusion of Husserl's may not at first appear to go beyond anything which he has earlier intimated concerning the nature of the life-world. But if we recall firstly, his argument that it is this "third dimension" which will resolve the paradox of Kant's "two subjectivities",<sup>78</sup> and secondly, his position regarding the rôle of actual experience as a "clue" to the transcendental, it becomes clear that, if it is to fulfill the wide-ranging task which Husserl seems to assign it, it can only do so if its meaning is correspondingly widened.

Firstly, let us consider how this change in the meaning of the life-world would offer a solution to the paradoxical relationship between human and transcendental

subjectivity. Husserl has claimed that Kant's dilemma concerning the relationship between the "two subjects" is soluble only if there is a hidden dimension of human spirituality, to which the transcendental functions which supposedly explain the paradoxes of knowledge belong.<sup>79</sup>

If this is granted, then presumably we have thereby mediated the gap between human and transcendental subjectivity--since we have discovered a sphere of reality which includes both. But there is a difficulty here. Surely it is not sufficient that this third dimension--however it may eventually be defined--contain within itself these crucial transcendental functions? For is it not, as Husserl repeatedly asserts, of the essence of transcendental subjectivity that it forms the primary,--ultimately, the only--reality?<sup>80</sup> Surely we cannot admit the existence of a sphere within which this very transcendental subjectivity belongs, as does a part, or dimension, to a whole? If we argue this, are not Kant's paradoxes simply repeated--i.e. does not the central problem of how an element of reality can be responsible for the constitution of the whole, remain? Husserl cannot intend this contradiction to be his final conclusion. Therefore, we must turn to the "third dimension"--the life-world--in order to attempt a revision of its meaning which will resolve the dilemma we have raised. And, as we have suggested, it seems that

a fruitful alternative is to equate the life-world and transcendental subjectivity. Having done this, it then becomes possible that human subjectivity can "constitute" universally, since, although human subjectivity is completely bound with the life-world, this life-world has now become the all-encompassing transcendental realm.

\* This leads us to a second consideration which helps support the suggested new meaning for the life-world. We have repeatedly stated that concrete (i.e. actual) experience, is, for Husserl a starting point for the process of eidetic intuition, whereby, through the imaginative variation of that which is actually given, there is gradually revealed that which is ultimately (i.e. transcendently) given. Thus, any particular concrete entity--whether real or ideal--can yield its eidetic essence--or its intentional correlates--all of which are grounded in transcendental subjectivity. We have further pointed out that the life-world, by an extension of this principle, can be interpreted as a "particular" entity, which serves as a transcendental clue in the above manner.

But as with the idea that the life-world can "contain within it" the constitutive accomplishments of transcendental subjectivity, surely there is a similar peculiarity about the possibility of the life-world's being either an "ordinary" concrete entity or an "ordinary"

stratum within transcendental consciousness. Let us examine, briefly this view that the life-world is of a kind with all other concrete "examples" of transcendental eidē.

The non-transcendental life-world has been repeatedly characterized in the Crisis as the pregiven horizon for all human activities, both theoretical and practical. Thus, even on the "mundane" level, the life-world is viewed as an all-encompassing presupposition, upon which human praxis and knowledge are founded, and into which the results of human action necessarily flow. To know such a "world" in final self-evidence is clearly not possible for anyone who is immersed in its flowing universality. While it is possible to "know" entities within this world--either as scientific-objective entities, or as subjective-relative goals of praxis--the goal of knowing the life-world qua universal presupposition is not fulfilled by such knowledge. If one is to know the life-world "as it is in itself," then a standpoint beyond the scope of its function as universal presupposition must be attained.

But the very fact that the life-world has been portrayed as the absolute presupposition for all theory and praxis would seem to preclude the possibility of ever achieving such a standpoint.<sup>81</sup> In a very important sense, the life-world, since it includes within its all-pervasive

unity every particular, concrete actuality, cannot itself be treated as a particular example of a transcendental eidos. The life-world, by its very nature, is not "one entity among others"--but the presupposition of all Objectivities. Hence, any attempt to isolate it, and, through the method<sup>of</sup> eidetic analysis, reveal its transcendental correlate, would appear to differ radically from all other applications of the phenomenological method.

Insofar as the life-world cannot be treated as merely another "clue" to specific regions of the phenomenologically-reduced "world," neither can it be regarded as merely another "stratum" within transcendental subjectivity--since these two meanings of the life-world are inextricably related. Since the actual life-world is admittedly a world of perpetual change--in fact, is an infinite number of "worlds"--and also a world that engulfs every other level of experience which, like natural science, claims to transcend it by overcoming its subjective-relativity, then must not its essential nature as the all-embracing horizon of actual experience, carry over into the transcendental life-world? Is it justifiable for Husserl to exclude from the transcendental meaning of the life-world that aspect of all-embracing universality which, as we have seen, is its most fundamental characteristic? If the life-world is the all-encompassing horizon of actual experience, must it not also become the all-encompassing horizon of

transcendental experience--in other words, is there not strong reason for considering the life-world and transcendental subjectivity--which has already been defined as the absolute horizon of reality--as ultimately one and the same?

In the concluding paragraphs of Crisis #34, Husserl himself appears to be suggesting this very possibility. Having initially stressed the fact that the life-world is a partial problem within the wider aims of the phenomenological enterprise, he gradually follows a line of discussion which leads to the conclusion that "the magnitude, the universal and independent significance of the problem of the life-world has become intelligible to us in anticipatory insight."<sup>82</sup> Further, this "anticipatory insight" now urges us to begin an investigation of the life-world,

in terms of the truly concrete universality whereby it embraces, both directly and in the manner of horizons, all the built-up levels of validity acquired by men for the world of their common life, and whereby it has the totality of these levels related in the end to a world nucleus to be distilled by abstraction; namely the world of straightforward intersubjective experiences.<sup>83</sup>

These passages indicate Husserl's heightening awareness of the scope of the problem of the life-world, in relation to the other, now apparently minor aspects of the problem, such as its meaning for objective science. They further emphasize that this new awareness had yet to be

subjected to any methodological treatment--in fact, says Husserl, faced with this "genuine and most universal problem," we are "absolute beginners," who "do not yet know how the life-world is to become an independent, totally self-sufficient subject of investigation."<sup>84</sup>

Husserl, then, does not regard the life-world as a problem within transcendental subjectivity. He sees it rather as the most profound dimension of actual experience, which, even before we attempt to undertake its phenomenological investigation, we cannot fail to see as a unique problem for philosophical thought. Our method, he says, must arise in the course of our attempts to understand this problem. The solution to this methodological impasse, he suggests further, will be bound up with a new awareness of the significance of intuitive thinking, the mode of knowledge, which as we have seen, is intrinsic to the life-world. It will be seen that in comparison to the "illusion of pure thinking" which is at the root of scientific objectivism, and which is held up, in opposition to intuition, as the only way of achieving self-evident truth, a return to the life-world will reveal the priority of intuitive thought. This form of intuition, says Husserl, will not recognize the ineradicable separateness of subject and object, which is the initial premise where "thought" is objective, and "intuition" is subjective. Rather "as soon as the empty and vague notion of

intuition . . . has become the problem of the life-world, there occurs the great transformation of the theory of knowledge. "85 Thus, the all-embracing presupposition of the life-world can be said to contain that most central of all possible transcendental clues--the clue to the method of achieving transcendental knowledge.

These considerations can surely be interpreted as further evidence in support of the view that, ultimately, the transcendental subject and the life-world must be seen as one. The study of the life-world will embrace all those problematics which earlier phenomenology regarded as independent issues--the problems of the meaning of objective science; of culture and history, and finally, of the meaning of the phenomenological method itself. Such a fundamental theme--a theme which Husserl himself designates as the starting-point for all further phenomenological investigations--and whose significance is not exhausted by the inclusion within it of all concrete, human experience--clearly cannot be dismissed as simply another constituted level of transcendental subjectivity. It must be accorded a unique status within transcendental phenomenology, and any attempt to understand Husserl's later thought must pay serious attention to the meaning of this crucial concept.



## 5. CONCLUSION

In the foregoing chapter, we have tried to indicate the importance for Husserl's phenomenology of the concept of the life-world, through a consideration of the various ways it is used in the Crisis. From an analysis of the relationship between the life-world, and the ideal world of natural science, we concluded that Husserl moves between two apparently contradictory groups of meanings. On the one hand, he defines the life-world as a subjective-relative, constantly changing, historical horizon. On the other, however, he regards it as the absolute, unchanging, transcendental presupposition of all human experience. We suggested that these two meanings were equally necessarily, and, in fact, could be reconciled, if Husserl's ambitious goal of achieving a completely presuppositionless (scientific) philosophy, while at the same time accounting for the historical flux of human experience, were kept in mind.

We then proceeded to a discussion of Husserl's critique of Kant's transcendentalism, wherein the function of the life-world as the hidden presupposition of all human praxis--including the theoretical praxis of philosophy--was brought to light. We concluded that, for Husserl, only a phenomenological explication of this "unexpressed presupposition" would fulfill the teleology of Western philosophical thought.

The third important function of the life-world, for Husserl, was its role as a mediator between the two kinds of subjectivity--transcendental and human (psychological)--which previous transcendental philosophy, for reasons indicated in Section 2, was unable to unite. We suggested that Husserl's introduction of the concept of the life-world, with its dual meaning as both "existential" and "transcendental," could be regarded as his attempt to bridge that gap between transcendental and concrete experience which is exemplified in such issues as the "paradox of subjectivity."

Finally, on the basis of these three interrelated meanings, we argued that the life-world can be interpreted as standing in a unique relationship to Transcendental Subjectivity. Indeed, we suggested that Husserl's own evaluation of the significance of the life-world opens the way for a radical revision of the very meaning of transcendental phenomenology.

Our explication of the many senses of the term 'life-world' has by no means been exhaustive, and it is clear that some of the issues raised, particularly in Section IV, have been scarcely touched, and cry out for expansion. However, the central aim of this chapter will have been realized, if we have established that the life-world indeed occupies a position of crucial significance for Husserl's aim of achieving a "rigorously

scientific philosophy."

Having at least indicated the direction which further analysis of the meaning of the life-world would take, we shall now, in the final chapter, present a critique of Husserl's attempt to incorporate this ambiguous concept into the general structure of transcendental phenomenology. The discussion will concentrate on the relationship between the life-world, and the concept of the phenomenological epoché, since it is precisely here that the tension between a philosophy which purports to be transcendental and idealistic in orientation, and the conflicting dimensions of the life-world concept, are most apparent.

## CHAPTER III

### INTRODUCTION

The decisive new turn in Husserl's thought which we discussed in the previous chapter presents us with several important questions. In the light of the conclusions we have thus far reached, it is indeed clear that some of Husserl's other major themes will have to be reexamined, if the concept of the life-world is to be accommodated within his overall phenomenological program. The chief reason for this requirement is that, while we have been able to uncover a multiplicity of meanings for the life-world, we have also shown that there is a fundamental ambiguity within the concept--an ambiguity which, as we shall see, has important ramifications for the meaning of such crucial concepts as the phenomenological epoché.

Our analysis of the life-world reveals that its many senses fall into two separate, but interrelated, categories. On one side stands the so-called actual (or "existential") life-world. This world was variously characterized as: an infinite horizon, depending for its content and meaning upon the particular culture of those living within it; a constantly changing, historical world; the prescientific world, which forms the basis for both historical scientific development, and the scientific knowledge of any individual; finally, it was


described as that world which is given immediately, the only real world, that world in which practically our whole life takes place.

On the other side of this fundamental dichotomy stands the transcendental life-world, to which, again, were ascribed numerous shades of meaning. It was viewed as an absolute horizon, which remains unchanged and exists for everyone, regardless of his particular actual life-world horizon. It was defined as the "universal historical a priori," upon which the concrete historical world depends. It further was described as that world which is the absolute presupposition of all actual life, including the scientific life. Thus, it was the prescientific ground of all objective, scientific knowledge. Lastly, it was characterized as an anonymous presupposition of all actual experiencing, a world which is accessible only through the intuitive exhibiting method of transcendental phenomenology, a world which can be reached only by an epoché with respect to our straight-forward acceptance of reality--an acceptance which, as Husserl has already stated, is the sine qua non of our ongoing practical life.

We have already explored in some detail the relationships between these two fundamental senses of life-world, senses which we shall hereafter refer to as, respectively, the Existential, and the Transcendental senses. We concluded that a dual meaning was positively

required, if the concept of the life-world was to fulfill the role for which Husserl intended it--i.e. the role of establishing transcendental phenomenology as rooted in historical reality, while at the same time effectively protecting it from accusations of relativity.

The task of the present chapter will be to discuss whether or not this concept is actually capable of sustaining its essential ambiguity, when it is considered in relationship to the central phenomenological technique of epoche. We have already maintained that Husserl's introduction of the life-world, as the final sphere of apodictic knowledge, is part of his enduring ideal of achieving a rigorously scientific philosophy. It is also true, however, that this ideal requires the application of the phenomenological epoche, without which, Husserl argues, truly presuppositionless knowledge cannot be attained. Therefore, it is imperative that these two central themes be analyzed in their relation to one another, if we are to determine the final significance of the life-world for Husserl's phenomenology. In this chapter, therefore, we shall first discuss briefly some of the important features of the phenomenological epoche, in order to indicate its general function in Husserl's thought. We shall then proceed to a more detailed analysis of its meaning within the Crisis, and, finally, on the basis of this discussion, we shall examine the crucial question of the compatibility



of the concepts of life-world and epoche, and the implications of their relationship for Husserl's program of achieving a "scientific philosophy."

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## 1. THE EPOCHÉ PRIOR TO

THE CRISIS

As we have already seen, Husserl is aware that any return to the life-world involves difficulties which do not accompany the attempt to treat any other dimension of reality scientifically. This is because the life-world, by its very nature, is not a possible subject for objective science, which always must stand upon the ground of the world--i.e. must presuppose the "reality" of the world--in order to know that world. The life-world, as the presupposition of objective science, cannot be objectively known. If objective knowledge were the only possible mode of knowing, therefore, the life-world would remain as the horizon of knowledge, but, in principle, could never itself be thematized.

For Husserl, however, such is not the case. The life-world is not simply a presupposition--a world of which we are constantly aware, as a horizon, but which cannot be "scientifically" elucidated. If we can adopt a standpoint above the natural standpoint of the objective scientist, it is precisely this life-world which ultimately becomes for us the new field of study. It is this world which reveals itself as that "dimension of depth" to which all previous epistemology was, for reasons given earlier, unable to penetrate. Thus, the life-world, besides its existential meaning, and in fact, supporting that meaning, has the



sense of being the one field of apodictic knowledge--the field of transcendental subjectivity.

What Husserl had very early realized was that the central problem for any rationalist epistemology is always how one can ever claim to have gained apodictic truth about the objects of cognition, when by definition, they exist independently of the knower. In other words, while one may feel certainly regarding the validity of one's cognitions, there is no way that this subjective certainty can ever coincide with an immediate apprehension of the object as it is in itself. The same difficulty recurs in different ways in all philosophies based upon the thesis of the natural attitude, including, says Husserl, the Kantian effort to ground objective truths in transcendental subjectivity. For, while Kant's epistemology stressed that theoretical knowledge was limited to "appearances," he nevertheless based this claim upon the presupposition of an unknowable "thing-in-itself."

Husserl's introduction of the technique of *epoché* is an attempt to resolve the impasse generated by such philosophies. The concept of suspending one's natural assumption of the reality of the world, for the purpose of achieving philosophical truths, was, however already part of the methodology of Descartes. Husserl indeed applauds the Cartesian method of radical doubt--and claims it as a precursor of the phenomenological *epoché*. He

points out, however, that Descartes' use of the technique was insufficiently radical, so that while he did temporarily suspend the thesis of the natural attitude, Descartes did so only in order to reinstate it with a new objective significance. Thus, Descartes used an "epoché" in the service of the method of knowing of the natural standpoint, not in order to achieve knowledge from a new standpoint.<sup>86</sup>

For Husserl, however, it is this latter aim which defines the rôle of the epoché. The application of the phenomenological epoché entails a total suppression of that element of transcendence which is the cause of our present epistemological dilemmas.<sup>87</sup> Husserl argues thus; if one starts with the presupposition that cognition is something apart from its object--i.e. that the object is necessarily independent of the knower--then how can one ever account for the relationship wherein the knower apprehends the nature of that object?

... how can I understand this possibility? Naturally the reply is: I could understand it only if the relation itself were given as something to be seen. As long as the object is, and remains, something transcendent, and cognition and its objects are actually separate, then indeed he can see nothing here, and his hopes for reaching a solution, perhaps even by way of falling back on transcendent presuppositions, are patent folly.<sup>88</sup>

One cannot then, deduce the nature of the relationship between knower and object. What is required, Husserl is saying, is a methodology which dispenses with all

transcendent presuppositions and which therefore allows a direct apprehension, a "seeing," of the "how" of cognition. A "complete epistemological reduction," says Husserl, will enable us to achieve this direct apprehension. Such a reduction requires that

everything transcendent that is involved must be bracketed, or be assigned the index of indifference, of epistemological nullity, an index which indicates: the existence of all those transcendencies, whether I believe in them or not, is not here my concern; . . . they are entirely irrelevant.<sup>89</sup>

The failure to bracket the transcendent, however, in Husserl's view results in the errors of psychologism, anthropologism, and biologism--epistemological standpoints which, he claims, treat as absolute truths the transcendent propositions of the particular natural sciences, thereby presupposing an understanding of the meaning of cognition, and rendering their own arguments circular.

Through the use of the phenomenological epoche, we attain, for the first time, says Husserl, a realm of pure phenomena. This is possible only because the new, bracketed field of investigation is a field of completely immanent data, which alone could ever be absolutely given. It makes no sense to ask of such a field, to what "reality" its "appearances" point--for these appearances no longer have the sense of being appearances of any ontologically transcendent object. Only within such a reduced sphere, says Husserl, can the concept of "immediate givenness" be

anything other than an illusion. To be sure, the ideal of science, within the natural standpoint, is to achieve absolutely apodictic knowledge of reality--but since that reality is composed of transcendent objects, this apodicticity remains only an ideal, and the "givenness" of objects to natural science merely a quasi-givenness.<sup>90</sup>

It must be emphasized that the central function of the epochē is the very positive one of revealing a field of cognitive objects appropriate to a truly philosophical science. Thus, by suspending the thesis of the natural attitude one is not, says Husserl, suspending the possibility of knowing itself. What one is doing is simply removing the possibility of judging as to the reality-status of the world, and withholding consent from any explicit existential judgments performed on the basis of that reality. In one sense, then, every element of experience is indeed held in abeyance--both the world of "real objects," and the acts of consciousness wherein I assent to this real world. But in another sense, he argues, "I lose nothing." The universality of the epochē does not extend to the prohibition of all acts of judging--if this were the case, its application would result in complete paralysis. After the epochē, what remains is. "the entire natural world therefore, which is continually "there for us," present to our hand, and will ever remain there . . . a "fact-world" of which we continue to be conscious, even though

it pleases us to put it in brackets."<sup>91</sup>

So far, we have given a general account of the role of the epochē in Husserl's thought. We have seen that it is the key to the reduced sphere, where alone truly scientific knowledge is possible. We have also pointed out that while the epochē is a suspension of the reality of the world, it is not the suspension of the possibility of scientifically knowing that world. Finally, and most significantly, we have seen that, for Husserl, the withdrawal of the element of involvement in the world—i.e. the reduction of the world to a "fact-world," towards which we make no existential commitment, does not detract from the meaning of the world, but rather allows us for the first time to truly know it.

We shall now turn from this general exploration of the concept of epochē, in order to study its use in the Crisis, and particularly its relationship to the life-world. It will be seen in the course of this discussion that, given Husserl's previous explication of the meaning of the life-world, the application of the epochē to this sphere will require a revision of the meaning of the epochē. Indeed, we shall ultimately claim that, if the application of the epochē to the life-world is demanded by Husserl's aim of a rigorously scientific philosophy, then the possibility of ever achieving this ideal is open to serious debate.

## 2. THE EPOCHÉ IN THE CRISIS

Prior to his development of the concept of the life-world within the Crisis, Husserl's discussions of the natural attitude clearly emphasized that the suspension of this standpoint did not prevent one from continuing one's ongoing practical existence. In Ideas I, the performance of the phenomenological epoché and reduction were characterized as acts of our "perfect freedom," which could be begun, sustained and terminated whenever one chose, without influencing or interfering with those preoccupations which derived their motivation from within the natural standpoint. Thus, although, in Ideas I, Husserl does indicate that the thesis of the natural attitude is the presupposition of both theory and praxis, he generally neglects the latter function of this concept, and tends to regard the natural attitude as primarily a theoretical standpoint and the natural world therefore as the "total field of possible research." When he does refer to the natural attitude as the presupposition of praxis, it is with practical (prescientific cognition that he is mainly concerned. The significance of the natural attitude as the presupposition of all human praxis is not emphasized until the period of the Crisis.

In the Crisis, it is one of Husserl's chief contentions that the ideal world of the scientist is in fact itself a "founded" world, one dependent for its meaning upon the always pre-given life-world--and that the

natural standpoint, from which the scientist conducts his investigations into objective reality, depends upon an all-pervasive, implicit certainty that "the world" exists. This certainty is common to all men, both the scientist and those engaged in non-theoretical activities. Thus, if one is to achieve radically scientific knowledge of the foundations of human experience, much more is required than an epoché with respect to the attitude of objective scientists. Beyond this attitude is the much more fundamental presupposition of the life-world, which encompasses both the ideal world of the scientist, and the practical world of the non-scientist. It is this presupposition, then, which must be thematized, if the goal of absolutely presuppositionless knowledge is to be realized.

In the Crisis, therefore, the epoché becomes much broader in its scope, since it must now be expanded to include the practical presupposition of the life-world. Thus, while the epoché with respect to the objective sciences is retained in the Crisis, it is quickly relegated to the status of a moment in a much more comprehensive life-world epoché. "The first necessary epoché" is how Husserl describes the epoché "in regard to all objective theoretical interests, all aims and activities belonging to us as objective scientists or even simply as [ordinary] people desirous of [this kind of] knowledge."<sup>3</sup> Once this epoché has been achieved, there is revealed a "universal

scientific subject matter" which is called the life-world, a pregiven horizon which "includes all our goals, all our ends, whether fleeting or lasting, in a flowing but constant manner, . . . ." <sup>94</sup>

The difficulty, however, is how such a flowing, pregiven world can ever become the field for universal scientific knowledge, without somehow forfeiting its function as a constantly changing presupposition of knowledge and praxis. Yet this is precisely what can be accomplished, Husserl argues, through "a total change of the natural attitude, such that we no longer live, as heretofore, as human beings within natural existence, constantly effecting the validity of the pregiven world." <sup>95</sup> This second application of the epoché, the aim of which is to enable us to "clarify the pregiven world's character of universally 'being the ground' for all objective sciences and . . . for all objective praxis" is obviously of a much more radical nature than was the initial epoché, which suspended only scientific praxis, and therefore still permitted us to "stand on the ground of the world." If we are to study the "pregivenness of the world" as such, however, what is required is a "total transformation of attitude, a completely unique, universal epoché," <sup>96</sup> which will enable us to see what natural world-life and its subjectivity ultimately are.

It is clear from the foregoing that when he



advocates a "return to the life-world" Husserl has not abandoned his search for a rigorously scientific philosophy. Indeed, his extension of the range of the phenomenological epochē is motivated by his attempt to render this life-world a valid subject matter for his science of subjectivity. Husserl's criticism of objective science is that in principle, it is insufficiently radical to achieve knowledge of this ultimate foundation of human experience. He argues that transcendental phenomenology, however, through its epochē with respect to the life-world, will for the first time enable the telos of that philosophical Idea which gave impetus to the scientific ideal of absolute certainty to be fulfilled.

It is false, he constantly argues, to claim that scientific knowledge must be objective knowledge. The ontological status of one's field of research is, for Husserl, secondary to the mode of consciousness which motivates and sustains the scientific ideal. Thus, throughout the Crisis, Husserl everywhere stresses that, to be scientific, knowledge must be universal, self-evident, apodictic, and directly experienced by a disinterested practitioner. It is these characteristics which constitute the essence of scientific experience, and not whether the objects of scientific praxis are ontologically transcendent.

By suspending the thesis of the natural attitude,

it can be argued that Husserl is, in fact, pushing the rationalist ideal, which inspired the development of positive science, to its logical limits. His persistent claim is that science does not, and in principle, cannot, go far enough. But the epoché he portrays as a liberator, whereby man for the first time becomes truly free to achieve absolute scientific certainty. Through his abstention from the belief in the reality of the world,

the gaze of the philosopher in truth first becomes fully free: above all, free of the strongest and most universal, and at the same time most hidden, internal bond, namely of the pregivenness of the world. Given in and through this liberation is the discovery of the universal, absolutely self-enclosed and absolutely self-sufficient correlation between the world itself and world consciousness.<sup>97</sup>

Thus, for Husserl, the goals of philosophy are fulfilled, and science receives its ultimate vindication, through the use of the phenomenological epoché. As Husserl explicitly declares:

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The empiricist talk of natural scientists often, if not for the most part, gives the impression that the natural sciences are based on the experience of objective nature. But it is not in this sense true that these sciences are experiential sciences, that they follow experience in principle, that they all begin with experiences. . . . the objective is precisely never experienceable as itself.<sup>98</sup>

It is rather, he says, the life-world which will ultimately fulfill the intention of science, since it is "the subjective, the life-world, (which) is distinguished in all respects precisely by its being actually experienceable."<sup>99</sup>

Phenomenological science is therefore the only truly experiential science, and it is the life-world alone which provides this science with a realm of original self-evidences.<sup>100</sup>

Not only does the reduction to the life-world supply Husserl with the field of pure phenomena required by his concept of knowledge. He also argues that, although phenomenological experience can only occur within the immanence of the world-after-epochē, the attitude of the phenomenologist possesses that quality of 'disinterestedness' which necessarily eludes the natural scientist, functioning as he does within the natural attitude. Thus, here again, transcendental phenomenology is characterized as fulfilling the telos of traditional science, through the liberating effect of the epochē. The natural scientist, while necessarily aiming at a standpoint above, and hence unaffected by, the world which he investigates, always partially presupposes this world, thereby limiting the validity of his conclusions. Indeed, says Husserl, the objective sciences can be shown to be subjective constructs of a "particular praxis", namely, the theoretico-logical, which itself belongs to the full concreteness of the life-world.<sup>101</sup> The epochē, by freeing me from inherence in this life-world, as pre-given ground, enables me to finally "stand above the world, which has now become for me, in a quite peculiar sense,

phenomenon.<sup>102</sup> Through the epochē, then, we are purged of all presuppositions, so that

as fully 'disinterested' spectators of the world purely as subjective-relative world; (the one in which our whole everyday communal life--our efforts, concerns, and accomplishments--takes place:), let us now take a first, naive look around. Our aim shall be, not to examine the world's being and being-such, but to consider whatever has been valid and continues to be valid for us as being and being-such in respect to how it is subjectively valid. . . .<sup>103</sup>

But although we are now directing our "experiencing-gaze" to the how of the world's being, and not to its objective reality, we are nevertheless still doing so in the manner of the scientist, the "detached observer." Also, we are approaching this "world" naively--in the innocence of that total lack of prejudice for which natural sciences can only strive. The phenomenologist, thanks to the transcendental epochē, can make an absolute beginning, "starting purely from natural world-life, and by asking after the how of the world's givenness."<sup>104</sup> He can, further, "actually . . . accomplish a reduction to the absolutely ultimate grounds . . . and . . . avoid unnoticed, non-sensical admixtures of naturally naive prior validities."<sup>105</sup>

The return to the life-world thus fulfills one absolutely crucial requirement of Husserl's phenomenology. As the ultimate foundation of experience--both theoretical and practical--it is a field of investigation beyond which it is truly meaningless to inquire. It thereby enables

the phenomenological scientist to achieve that goal which remains merely an ideal for natural science and the rationalist philosophy out of which it grew--i.e. the goal of achieving absolutely presuppositionless knowledge.

The epochē of the life-world also has a further importance for Husserl's phenomenological program within the Crisis. Because it is the absolute horizon of all possible experience, says Husserl, if one can gain access to the life-world, one thereby has entered a sphere in which concrete knowledge can be attained. It will be recalled that Husserl's chief criticism of previous transcendental philosophy was that the transcendental sphere (e.g. Kant's categories of the understanding) could be reached only through the procedure of transcendental deduction. The transcendental world, therefore, was a realm of purely formal knowledge. For Husserl, as we have seen, such knowledge cannot fulfill the demand of scientific philosophy for a field of universal, yet immediately given (i.e. intuitable) truths. With the introduction of the life-world, however, the achievement of such intuitive truths at last becomes possible. While the life-world can be subjected to the epochē, and hence can be the source of truly apodictic knowledge, this knowledge is not merely formal, because the life-world, even after the epochē, is a realm which is infinitely rich in content. The ability of phenomenology to perform

a reduction to this life-world, therefore, supplies what was lacking in previous transcendental philosophies--it supplies a field wherein universal knowledge is combined with the concreteness of the "actually experienced world."

That the life-world epochē is designated to occupy this crucial position within Husserl's phenomenology is perhaps more significant than might at first glance appear. The importance of the "turn to the life-world" can be seen, however, if we briefly examine Husserl's use of the concept in the Cartesian Meditations, and his subsequent criticism of that use, in the Crisis.

In the Cartesian Meditations, Husserl is defending the view that phenomenology is a thoroughgoing egology. One must begin one's philosophizing, he argues, with a turn to the ego, and the realization that this ego is the necessary presupposition of all possible knowledge. This Cartesian turn to the ego, he further claims, must be supplemented by a reduction of the concrete self to the transcendental ego--a reduction which gives the philosopher access to the entire range of experience, both actual and possible, which human being can achieve. This is because, he says, once the phenomenological epochē has been performed, one can then comprehend the all-encompassing nature of transcendental subjectivity. Freed at last of the presupposition of the objectivity of the world, we

come to see that all straightforward world-experience is constituted within the immanence of the transcendental ego. In particular, we see that the concrete, inter-subjective, cultural life-world, in which all praxis is rooted, is itself a constituted stratum of transcendental subjectivity.

But the status of the life-world changes drastically from the Cartesian Meditations to the Crisis. It is no longer merely another constituted layer of transcendental subjectivity, but has become the ultimate pre-supposition of all experience, itself a "way back" to the transcendental sphere. In fact, Husserl criticizes his former approach, the so-called Cartesian Way, by arguing that

... (since it is thought of as being attained merely by reflectively engrossing oneself in the Cartesian epoché of the Meditations, while critically purifying it of Descartes' prejudices and confusions), it has a great shortcoming: while it leads to the transcendental ego in one leap, as it were, it brings this ego into view as apparently empty of content . . . so one is at a loss, at first, to know what is gained by it; much less how, starting with this, a completely new sort of fundamental science, decisive for philosophy, has been attained.<sup>186</sup>

Husserl cannot be satisfied with a transcendental sphere of unknowable categories. It was precisely because of its lack of content that he earlier criticized the transcendentalism of Kant, and he is now levelling the same criticism at his own attempt to know "the world"

through a straightforward reduction to the "pure ego."

One cannot, Husserl argues, regain the world, in its concreteness, simply by bracketing out this world and directing our attention exclusively to the transcendental ego, wherein it is constituted. To be sure, he says, the investigation of the ego does give us the necessary content, but because of a lack of "preparatory explication," we can be easily dissuaded from this certainty. It is thus that he justifies his turn, in the Crisis, to the use of the life-world as the new starting point for phenomenology. It is eminently rich in content; in fact, in our discussion so far, we have seen that it comprises all possible content, and is the presupposition of all human experience.

The role of both the life-world and the phenomenological epoché, within the Crisis, is clearly a crucial one. Upon the performance of the reduction to the life-world depends the success of Husserl's underlying goal of achieving a rigorously scientific philosophy. Having shown in this section to what extent these two central concepts are interrelated in Husserl's phenomenology, we are now in a position to discuss the fundamental question of whether or not an epoché with respect to the life-world can indeed be performed.



### 3. THE INCOMPATIBILITY OF THE LIFE-WORLD AND THE EPOCHÉ

Thus far then, in this chapter, we have discussed the general meaning of the epoché within Husserl's phenomenology, and have argued that those qualities which give it its invaluable role within the phenomenological method, are precisely those qualities which are the never-to-be-attained ideals of the natural scientist. We then went on to assert that because Husserl's aims are in fact the culmination of the aims of objective science, (stripped, however, of the inessential requirement that the results of one's inquiry be truths about a transcendent world) he must, within the epoché, be able to attain apodictic, universal knowledge about all possible content of experience. The reduction to the life-world, (which has already been characterized as the unified horizon of all human praxis, including the praxis of theoretical science) is the only way that Husserl can hope to satisfy this need for absolutely valid scientific knowledge, while fulfilling the demand for a concrete content which can be thus known.

Thus the claim with which we opened this chapter i.e. that both the life-world and the phenomenological epoché are essential elements in the structure of transcendental phenomenology, is justified. We must now

ask whether or not these two critical concepts are, in fact, compatible. In so doing, we shall draw on our earlier analysis of the ambiguous dual meaning of the life-world (Ch. II). We shall juxtapose this analysis with evidence from the Crisis IIIA, in an attempt to show that the relationship between the life-world and the epochē is, at the very least, problematic.

The return to the life-world is achieved through a series of steps, each of which has the character of an epochē, in the sense already discussed. The first of these steps is, as we have seen, "the epochē in respect to all objective sciences." This preliminary epochē involves the withholding of all critical position-taking with respect to the truth or falsity of the objects of theoretical science, but it does not require a rejection of scientific knowledge.

within the epochē . . . neither the sciences nor the scientists have disappeared for us who practice the epochē. They continue to be what they were before, in any case: facts in the unified context of the pregiven life-world; except that, because of the epochē, we do not function as sharing these interests. . . .<sup>107</sup>

From this passage, it is clear that the only difference between the world of science before and after the epochē, is that, through the epochē, our existential commitment to--our practical involvement in--that world, has been totally suspended. It was this fundamental commitment to reality--i.e. the presupposition of the life-world--

which, for Husserl, blocked Kant from the attainment of ultimate knowledge. But, through the epochē--which begins by suspending natural science, but ends with a total suspension of the thesis of the natural attitude, Husserl is proclaiming the dawn of a new era, wherein absolute knowledge is finally attainable by anyone prepared to undergo the discipline of a phenomenological training. Husserl's revealing declaration that after the epochē, phenomena "remain what they were before, facts in the . . . pregiven life-world," reaffirms our claim that the role of the epochē is to give us, not a new world, but rather a pristine edition of the old one, cleansed only of the troublesome aspect of transcendence. Thus, the epistemological ideal of the "detached observer," who sees all, without thereby influencing or changing what he sees, is supposedly fulfilled,

In order to achieve the goal of a rigorously scientific philosophy, Husserl clearly must claim that the suppression of transcendence takes away nothing from the meaning of pre-reductive phenomena. They are, after the epochē, essentially the same as before. If this were not the case, Husserl's claim that, within the epochē, we achieve absolute knowledge, would be unjustified, since through the very application of the epochē, one would have forfeited part of the meaning of the world. The element of transcendence--or the faith in the independent

reality of the world--must have had no essential significance in our relationship to this world prior to the epochē!

Now, in the case of the epochē with respect to the objective sciences, this conclusion is perhaps defensible. In the context of natural science, as we have said, all truth must, ideally, be purged of any element of relativity, particularly relativity to the knower. The results of scientific praxis, then, within the natural attitude, (i.e. within the world prior to the epochē) are already regarded as facts--truths whose validity is in no way contingent upon whether or not the knower attaches any value to them. While the "search for scientific truth" is itself a value-laden activity, and perhaps demands "passionate commitment" on the part of the practitioner, the conclusions which are the outcome of this activity are, by definition, independent of the quality of our relationship to them. The further application of the phenomenological epochē to these "facts", it can be argued, does not, then, alter their essential significance. It simply enables us to know these facts absolutely--i.e. as having their final meaning within the unified context of the always pregiven life-world. Thus, the claim that the epochē takes away nothing from the meaning of experience can be defended, when this claim is made with reference to objective experience.

But it is not so easy to see that this is the case when, as the inexorable logic of Husserl's search for absolute truth demands, we go on to apply this technique to the pre-supposition of all knowing, the life-world itself. The difficulties of this final stage in the daring attempt to get to the "things themselves" reveal themselves as hinging upon our understanding of the phrase, "suspension of the transcendence of the world." If the life-world is to become the new field for phenomenological investigation, it can only be through an epoché whereby we suspend our natural belief in the reality of this world, and treat it as "mere phenomenon." We must, in other words, carry the ideal of scientific detachment to its furthest possible limit, and adopt a standpoint not only above the "facts" of objective science, but above that world which forms the "always pregiven" context for those facts. Our inherence in the life-world must be totally suspended, if Husserl's epistemological ideals are to be attained.

But while a reduction to the life-world may be necessary to complete Husserl's phenomenology, this necessity does not guarantee the possibility of such an epoché. In his "preliminary discussions" of the life-world, Husserl presented, as one of its crucial functions, its role as the always presupposed ground of any human praxis. Thus, all human activities take for granted the being of the world, and are directed toward various goals

within its universal horizon. The life-world itself is necessarily unthematic--the pregiven basis for knowledge.

Now Husserl is careful to argue that the phenomenologist's return upon the life-world, his attempt to know it scientifically, is not just higher level objective knowledge. It is ridiculous, he says, to criticize phenomenology for being merely "a new, purely theoretical interest, a new 'science', with a new vocational technique,"<sup>108</sup> or to argue that "a separate investigation under the title 'life-world' is an intellectualist enterprise born of a mania, peculiar to modern life, to theorize everything."<sup>109</sup> Yet, within the epoche, as we have seen, Husserl clearly retains the "form" of the scientist's interest--he wishes to achieve universal knowledge, and regards the attitude of complete disinterest as essential to that achievement. He further claims that the philosopher in the attitude of epoche is motivated by

a coherent theoretical interest (directed exclusively) toward the universe of the subjective.<sup>110</sup>

We begin our new investigations, he says

by devoting an exclusive, consistently theoretical interest to the life-world as the general 'ground' of human world-life. . .<sup>111</sup>

It would appear that this emphasis upon the theoretical nature of phenomenology somehow contradicts Husserl's claim that phenomenological science is not merely another natural science. However, it is important

to note that while phenomenology must be scientific, and therefore, in a sense, theoretical, Husserl draws a distinction between the theoretical praxis of natural science, and that of the new phenomenological science. The natural scientist's theoretical activity is conducted upon the ground of the life-world, and presupposes the ontological transcendence of its objects. For Husserl, however, we have seen that what is essential to scientific (theoretical) knowledge is not that it be objective, but rather that its results be apodictic and universal--i.e. intersubjectively valid. To be sure, the theoretical activity of the phenomenologist is directed toward Objects--but these Objects are immanent, and have the sense of being intentionally, rather than ontologically, transcendent. Thus, the apparent inconsistency in Husserl's conception of phenomenology as a science is resolved.

But the resolution of this issue does not touch upon another problem which is raised by these same two citations. While Husserl can indeed claim that the life-world can become thematic (be studied theoretically) because it is not thereby made an "object" in the sense of the natural sciences, this is to ignore the more fundamental issue of whether or not the life-world is such that it can be subjected to the phenomenological epoche, and thereby rendered immanent within transcendental

subjectivity. In the above citations, Husserl has declared that the phenomenologist displays a coherent theoretical interest in the life-world. It is crucial that we now consider whether or not one can meaningfully establish such an "interest" in the life-world itself.

Husserl repeatedly characterizes the life-world as given-in-advance of all human praxis, as the ground of human accomplishments. It is, he says at one point, "that which is taken for granted . . . presupposed by all thinking, all activity of life with all its ends and accomplishments. . . ." <sup>112</sup> He further asks, in connection with a discussion of the paradoxical relationship between the truths of natural science and the truths of the life-world:

Do not all goals, whether they are 'practical' in some other, extra-scientific sense or are practical under the title of "theory", belong eo ipso to the unity of the life-world, if only we take the latter in its complete and concrete fullness? <sup>113</sup>

These statements become highly problematic when one compares them with Husserl's later arguments. He readily admits that the results of the objective sciences must be reabsorbed into the pregiven life-world, just as are the results of any other human praxis. On the other hand, however, he seems to assume that it is possible to establish, via the epoche, a new interest in that life-world qua presupposition of all interests! But what, precisely, can be the status of this unique new interest?



Husserl argues that it is, first of all a vocational interest, whose universal subject matter is called the life-world, [and which] finds its place among the other life-world interests or vocations. . . .<sup>114</sup>

He goes on to assure us that this does not mean

that the life-world epoché . . . means no more for human existence, practically and 'existentially', than the vocation of a cobbler, and that it is basically a matter of indifference whether one is a cobbler or a phenomenologist. . . .<sup>115</sup>

He clearly wishes to indicate that the interest in the life-world has a superior value to any other vocational interest. But this distinction in value does not get at the central problem that, whether or not it is viewed as "superior" to other interests, the life-world interest is not clearly separated from them in other respects. Like other interests, the return to the life-world has a goal. To be sure, the goal is, supposedly, to gain access to that which is the ground of other interests, the life-world itself. But this does not obviate Husserl's earlier statements, to the effect that all goals, "belong eo ipso to the unity of the life-world,"<sup>116</sup> and that this life-world is "presupposed by all thinking."<sup>117</sup> We are faced, then, with a paradoxical situation. The attempt to establish a new interest, and to thereby gain knowledge of a unique kind, (i.e. knowledge free of the element of transcendence) seems to force us back on the admission that this attempt presupposes its goal, and is indeed, a project

arising out of this very presupposition.

Husserl himself is clearly aware that the establishing of an interest in the life-world horizon itself is not strictly comparable with the development of any particular interest within that horizon. However, he appears to be claiming that the performance of an epochē with respect to the life-world is sufficient to ground this unique interest. Since the effect of the life-world epochē is to "put out of action, with one blow, the total performance running through the whole of natural world life. . .",<sup>118</sup> the philosopher thereby achieves a status which is

above the pregivenness of the validity of the world . . . and . . . above the universal conscious life (both individual and intersubjective) through which the world is "there" for those naively absorbed in ongoing life, as unquestionably present, as the universe of what is there, as the field of all acquired and newly established life-interests.<sup>119</sup>

It is clear that the epochē with respect to the life-world gives one an epistemological status which is unique--and hence, presumably, places any object of interest which is studied from within this standpoint in an equally unusual position with respect to normal life-world interests. Indeed, Husserl claims that this epochē enables one to effect a total change of interest, through which is revealed, for the first time, the

universal, absolutely self-enclosed and absolutely self-sufficient correlation.

between the world itself and world-consciousness (by this latter of which is meant) . . . the conscious life of the subjectivity which always has the world in its enduring acquisitions and continues actively to shape it anew. And there results, finally, taken in the broadest sense, the absolute correlation between beings of every sort and meaning, on the one hand, and absolute subjectivity, as constituting meaning and ontic validity, in this broadest manner, on the other.

This epoché then, does not render, as a field for investigation, the existential (concrete, historical) life-world. The life-world to which it grants entry is rather the transcendental life-world, that unchanging, essential world which is a correlate of transcendental subjectivity. It is in making the transition from the existential to the transcendental sphere that one is freed from the pregiven ground of the concrete life-world. If the subject of the phenomenologist's new theoretical "interest" were the existential life-world, then, one could without doubt argue that this interest presupposes its object, and hence cannot render it truly thematic. But it would appear that Husserl escapes this difficulty when he argues that the interest of the phenomenologist is rather in the transcendental life-world, and that the transcendental standpoint achieved through the performance of the epoché guarantees one a status above inherence in the existential life-world.

To be sure, in the past, this transition from the existential to the transcendental life-world has resolved

many seeming inconsistencies in Husserl's thought. In those instances, however, the possibility of making the transition was itself never questioned--it was simply affirmed that one could move from the pre-given ground of the natural world to the transcendental standpoint "above" that world, by an "act of our perfect freedom." This goal of overcoming the presupposition of the life-world, and thereby establishing an interest which is oriented toward the transcendental sphere, depends upon the possibility of including the entire existential sphere within "brackets." But the question which now arises, is whether or not, given Husserl's use of the concept "life-world" with its important dual senses, this transition from one sphere to the other is as straightforward as Husserl seems to think.

Husserl himself consistently argues that the concrete, "existential" life-world cannot be a matter for phenomenological knowledge, and that only its eidetic correlate, the transcendental life-world, can be "scientifically" known. Yet he also maintains that the attitude of epoché is preceded

not accidentally, but essentially, by the attitude of natural human existence which in its total historicity, in life and science, was never before interrupted.<sup>121</sup>

It is, he argues, through the use of the epoché, first of objective science, and then with respect to the life-world itself, that we attain for the first time, the

freedom to comprehend the true nature of this ongoing historical world-life. But if this is so--if the epoche gives us the means of making the transition to the transcendental life-world, then the performance of the epoche itself can only occur outside the transcendental sphere. And, outside this sphere, Husserl has claimed, every action is taken up into the concrete unity of the life-world, the life-world as presupposition of all possible human praxis. This act of epoche, then, whose aim is to free us of inherence in the life-world, by its very performance appears, on Husserl's own arguments, to bind us to this ground ever more firmly! If one begins by claiming that all human action is action within the life-world, then, even an act whose goal is to transcend the life-world must assume that world, in order to be able, through transcending it, to know it.

The only way to avoid this conclusion would be to accord to the act of epoche some unique status, whereby its performance could not be considered an ordinary human action. It could be argued, for instance, that the epoche is really the act of the transcendental subject, and not the act of a concretely existing human subject. But such an argument would be accompanied by its own difficulties--not the least of which being that Husserl's use of the life-world, as the basis for clarifying the relationship between concrete and transcendental,

subjectivity<sup>122</sup> would become vacuous. Indeed, Husserl himself precludes this interpretation of the epochē by emphatically declaring that this transcendental epochē is to be regarded, like the epochē with respect to the objective sciences, as a habitual attitude.<sup>123</sup> What this means for Husserl is well-expressed in the following lines:

It is a habitual epochē of accomplishment, one with periods of time in which it results in work, while other times are devoted to other interests of work or play; furthermore, and most important, the suspension of its accomplishment in no way changes the interest which continues, and remains valid within personal subjectivity--its habitual directedness toward goals which persist as its validities.<sup>124</sup>

Clearly, then, the epochē is an act of personal subjectivity, and, as such, is on a par with those other interests of work and play which can be temporarily suspended while the interests engendered by the epochē are pursued. Husserl, then, seems to regard the unique goal of the epochē as sufficient to distinguish it qualitatively from other interests. But he does not realize that, whether one's goal be to know the world objectively, or to know it as absolute subjective presupposition of all theory and praxis, the setting of this goal must still occur within the concrete life-world, and so, in a significant sense, must also terminate there.

It is this latter conclusion which Husserl wishes to avoid. He appears to be arguing that, although the goal which motivates the total epochē of the life-world

originates within this life-world, its point of termination transcends any life-world context, so that the unique intentionality of this action ensures it a status above the relativity of the existential life-world dimension. He explicitly defends this position when he states:

In natural life all purposes terminate in the world and all knowledge terminates in what actually exists as secured by verification. [but] . . . The interest of the phenomenologist is not aimed at the ready-made world, or at external purposeful activity in it, which itself is something 'constituted'. . . .<sup>128</sup>

But however valid this point may be with respect to the actions of the phenomenologist who is already within the epoché, this does nothing to resolve our central difficulty: i.e. that the performance of the epoché itself necessarily takes its starting point within the concrete life-world. Thus, regardless of whether the results attained by the phenomenologist are intended to have any reference to the actual world, the fact remains that the use of the epoché as a technique for getting beyond the presupposition of the life-world is itself originally a project which derives its motivation from within this world. And, if this is the case, Husserl's own conception of the function of the life-world requires that any results achieved through its application must, ultimately, also be reabsorbed into its all-embracing unity. "All human praxis and all prescientific and scientific life . . . have the spiritual acquisitions of

this universal accomplishment as their constant substratum, and all their own acquisitions are destined to flow into it. . . .<sup>126</sup> But if this must be our conclusion, then we must also admit that the phenomenologist's aim of attaining a standpoint above the presupposition of the life-world, thereby achieving absolute knowledge, has, at the very least, become open to serious question.

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The foregoing arguments can be supplemented by considering this problem of the relationship between the life-world and the epochē from a slightly different angle. Instead of asking directly whether or not an epochē of the life-world is possible, let us approach the question in another way, and ask: If such an epochē were performed, what would be its implications for the already established meanings of the concept of the life-world? In other words, is a successful (i.e. complete) reduction to the life-world compatible with these meanings?

As a preliminary to this discussion, it is important to recall what Husserl takes to be the central functions of the phenomenological epochē. It has two crucial, and closely interrelated features. Firstly, within the epochē, it is essential that we have, not a mere abstraction of the real world, but that world just as it always was. As we have already pointed out, unless the world remains the same after the epochē, Husserl cannot claim that the epochē permits a complete reduction, and the accompanying



attainment of presuppositionless and absolute knowledge. Secondly, the epochē is a total withdrawal, on the part of the phenomenologist, from the attitude of natural life. This means that, within the radical epochē, one pays no attention to the "actuality-status" of the world--its natural "transcendence" is completely suspended. However, in the following discussion, it will become clear that there is a tension between these two essential functions of the epochē, which is revealed only when an epochē with respect to the life-world is attempted.

When Husserl performed the epochē with respect to the objective sciences, we saw that this first characteristic was maintained because, prior to the epochē, scientific results were already considered to be "facts." Thus, the claim that after the epochē, this world continues to be what it was before, a "fact world," can be defended. But Husserl's contention that after the epochē the life-world, like the results of objective science, remains what it was before, is not so easily accepted. The difficulty with such an attempt to apply the epochē to the life-world is this. Husserl must show that the epochē in no way changes the essential meaning of the life-world--it must remain "what it was before." Therefore, within the epochē, the life-world must retain its significance as a universal practical presupposition. However, we shall see that, when we try to retain this function, a conflict

arises with the second dimension of the epochē. The suspension of our faith in the independent existence of the world, and the accompanying suspension of any activity performed on the ground of this faith, has crucial implications for the meaning of the life-world as an horizon for praxis. Whether or not Husserl can resolve this conflict without sacrificing part of the significance of either the life-world or the epochē is the question we shall now discuss.

Husserl's epistemological position, as we have already stated, is such that, in order to attain absolute knowledge, the knower must assume an attitude of complete detachment vis à vis the objects of his knowledge. This attitude is supposedly achieved by the transcendental-phenomenological epochē of the life-world, whereby our practical orientation toward the being of the world is totally suspended. All natural interests are put out of play--so that the philosopher "forbids himself to ask any questions which rest upon the ground of the world at hand, questions of being, questions of value, practical questions. . ."<sup>127</sup> Later, Husserl makes the same point, but adding a strong reminder that the life-world interests of the phenomenologist are included within this epochē:

Our epochē. . . denied us all natural world-life and its worldly interests. It gave us a position above these. Any interest in the very, actuality, or non-being of the world, i.e., any interest theoretically oriented toward knowledge of the world, and even any interest which is practical in the usual sense,

with its dependence on the presuppositions of its situational truths, is forbidden; this applies not only to the pursuit, for ourselves, of our own interests (we who are philosophizing) but also to any participation in the interests of our fellow men--for in this case we would still be interested indirectly in existing actuality.<sup>128</sup>

This passage highlights Husserl's insistence that, within the epochē, we must suspend all elements of transcendence, if we are to attain that "position above the world" which is the requirement for absolute knowledge. The attitude of the phenomenologist, after performing the epochē, can only be one of complete indifference to the existential life-world out of which his activity arose. Any "knowledge" which is gained within this epochē, then, necessarily can have no application to the concrete, existential life-world, since it is precisely not the world, considered as "real," which is the field for phenomenological investigation. The phenomenologist's interest is directed toward the life-world as phenomenon, and if he then attempts to take the results of his investigation outside the bracketed sphere and apply them to the concrete life-world, these truths cease to be meaningful. Their meaning and validity depend upon the withdrawal of one's faith in the reality of the world, and to ignore this requirement, once the investigation has yielded results, is to contradict the essential meaning of phenomenological knowledge.

Within the natural attitude, the life-world is

necessarily always a presupposition--it cannot, therefore, be theoretically known. If one attempts to return from the transcendental standpoint, wherein the life-world presupposition can be known, one thereby reinstates its presuppositional nature. Any truths attained within the life-world epochē, then, once taken outside the epochē, could only have as their object a life-world which is ontologically transcendent. But since, within the natural attitude, the life-world can only be a horizon, never a transcendent object, we are forced to conclude that knowledge of the life-world can only be had so long as one remains at the transcendental standpoint.

This conclusion clearly has crucial ramifications for Husserl's project of achieving absolute knowledge. Briefly put, the situation is this: if the transcendental-phenomenological epochē is successful, and the phenomenologist is indeed freed of the presupposition of the life-world, he has also thereby forfeited the right to carry the insights attained within the epochē back into the existential realm. The truths which he may uncover concerning the life-world as phenomenon cannot be given any meaning outside the epochē, since if they are taken outside the bracketed sphere, they necessarily become either "objective" truths, or else part of the subjective-relative world of doxa--in either case, their meaning as phenomenological (essential) intuitions is lost.

Further, Husserl's conception of the existential life-world as a horizon into which all truth is necessarily reabsorbed must also apply to phenomenological truth. If it is taken out of the context of the epochē, phenomenological truth flows back into the realm of the pre-given, and necessarily loses its character as phenomenological. Indeed, it becomes part of that naively presupposed world which is to be subjected to the phenomenological epochē. Thus, the entire procedure of epochē and reduction must be repeated, ad infinitum, so long as Husserl's conception of the meaning and function of the life-world is retained. Yet, without this conception, the ideal of performing a complete reduction--i.e. a reduction which can encompass the foundation of both theory and praxis--becomes vacuous.

One could perhaps avoid this conclusion by claiming that there is no need to even attempt a transfer of knowledge back from the transcendental to the existential life-world, once this radical epochē has been performed. But to claim that, once within the immanence of the post-epochē world, there is no need to venture again into the practical, existential sphere, is to severely limit the generality of the relationship between human praxis (including the praxis of obtaining knowledge) and the life-world presupposition. Husserl has already affirmed that all human action, since it takes as its starting-point the ground of the pre-given world, must also

ultimately be reintegrated into that world. Indeed, he declares that the project of achieving phenomenological knowledge of the life-world will exert an unprecedented effect upon the course of human history:

... the total phenomenological attitude and the epochē belonging to it are destined in essence to effect, at first, a complete personal transformation, comparable in the beginning to a religious conversion, which then, however, over and above this, bears within itself the significance of the greatest existential transformation which is assigned as a task to mankind as such.<sup>129</sup>

Thus, Husserl is defending the view that there is a relationship between knowledge obtained within the epochē, and knowledge based upon an "interest" in the existential life-world. To do so, however, he must resolve the problem of how the phenomenologist within the epochē can both give up his natural life-world interests (which the goal of achieving phenomenological knowledge demands) and yet not "turn away from" these interests entirely (as his conception of the life-world demands). The way in which he appears to approach this issue is to argue that a transition from the bracketed world of the epochē to the concrete life-world is possible because there is no radical break between the two "worlds" in the first place! Thus, while he claims that, within the epochē, all interests in the existential life-world, including the interests of the philosophizing individual, are abandoned, he also argues that the epochē with respect to all natural

human life-interests is not a complete "turning away" from them. In other words, Husserl is proposing a kind of compromise, whereby the phenomenologist, although within the epochē, can at the same time, participate in an ongoing natural world-life. Husserl explicitly inquires:

How could we take perception and the perceived, memory and the remembered, the objective, including art, science and philosophy, and every sort of verification of the objective, as a transcendental theme, without living through these sorts of things as examples and indeed with their full self-evidence?<sup>131</sup>

The claim that, once within the epochē, the phenomenologist has forever abandoned the life-world, is founded, then, Husserl is arguing, upon a misconception of what can or cannot be enacted from within the transcendental standpoint. The phenomenologist does not, he claims, totally abandon his life-world attachments. "In a certain sense the philosopher within the epochē must also 'naturally live through' the natural life."<sup>131</sup> His ultimate interest, Husserl says, of course does not terminate in the life-world, since he is not attempting like the natural scientist, to know this life-world as a ready-made (objective) world. Rather he is attempting to see how this already-constituted sphere is a "system of poles for a transcendental subjectivity."<sup>132</sup> At the same time, however, he claims:

The phenomenologist carries out every sort of praxis, either actually or in sympathetic understanding, but not in such a way that its

fulfilling 'end' is his end, the one in which end he terminates.

In these passages, Husserl is clearly trying to retain the distinction between the transcendental and existential standpoints, while also arguing that, there is the possibility of amalgamating the two. And, if we had not earlier pointed out that one of the central functions of the phenomenological epochē is to give us, within the brackets, a world which is essentially the same as the "world" prior to bracketing (except, of course, that we can now see it as a transcendently constituted), this solution could, perhaps, be accepted. As it is, however, it can be shown that there is a definite clash between the concepts of the life-world and the epochē at this point.

Husserl repeatedly has emphasized that any activity which is performed from within the natural attitude is necessarily performed on the basis of a fundamental, and unquestioned faith in the reality of the world. In other words, he argues that any human praxis presupposes a ground upon which this praxis can be initiated, and in which its goals can terminate. Now, by placing oneself within the transcendental-phenomenological epochē, one "brackets" this implicit thesis of the natural world, so that one's subsequent praxis can no longer be said to be performed on the pregiven ground of the existential life-world. But, if the epochē of the life-world is to give us that



world, possessed of those "invariant structures" which continue to comprise the essence of the life-world, regardless of whether we are experiencing it from a natural or a transcendental standpoint, it would seem that it must also give us that world in its character of being the presupposition of for all praxis.

But this is something that the epochē, by its very nature, systematically excludes. The life-world, given as "pure phenomenon," cannot be "the same" as that world given to us as the real--i.e. independent--ground of our activity, simply because, from within the epochē, we, as agents, necessarily adopt a completely new attitude toward this ground. From within the epochē, Husserl himself states, we do "live through" those activities which make up natural world-life, but as examples. Further, we do not take their fulfilling ends as our end--rather, they become, for the phenomenologist, means to a supposedly higher, "non-worldly" end. Surely, Husserl cannot claim that such radical visions in the mode of consciousness motivating our praxis are inessential, and that, after the epochē, life-world activity can be carried on in the same manner as before it? A crucial change in consciousness accompanies the performance of the epochē--a change through which we achieve a certain "detachment" from our ongoing practical life, so that, while we may indeed be performing life-world activities while retaining the transcendental



standpoint, these activities (like the "facts" of which Husserl earlier claimed the scientific-objective world was composed) have become themselves "phenomena." They no longer carry that element of existential commitment to a goal, because even this commitment, for the philosopher of the epochē, is phenomenal. Hence, to claim that within the epochē, we "lose nothing" of the concrete meaning of the life-world, is already to assume that this faith in the reality of the life-world, in no way determines the quality of ~~the~~ relationship to this world! It assumes that one can study the life-world, then, in its character of being a universal practical presupposition, while at the same time, through the use of the epochē, it robs that world of that very "reality" which, for Husserl, is its fundamental characteristic.

Thus, at the very point where Husserl's concept of the life-world ought to be most fruitful, we seem to be faced with insoluble difficulties. On the one hand, we can accept the possibility of a radical epochē. However, it then becomes impossible to explain how the phenomenologist, once within the reduced life-world, can effect a transition back to the existential world--a transition which is nevertheless demanded by Husserl's conception of the relation between the two spheres. On the other hand, we can affirm the validity of this separation between the two life-worlds. To do so, however,

renders a complete reduction impossible, since we are granting that any interest which takes its starting-point within the concrete life-world necessarily presupposes that world as "real"--i.e. not reduced. The difficulty becomes even more acute when we recall that neither the epoche, nor the life-world, can be abandoned, without introducing serious changes into the structure of Husserl's thought--and such changes might well prove so wide-ranging as to alter his original phenomenological goals drastically. We seem, then, to have ended in precisely the kind of situation which the introduction of the life-world was designed to help us avoid. By the use of this concept, Husserl hoped to incorporate within the transcendental sphere those elements of experience which had been stumbling blocks for previous philosophies--the elements of historicity, and praxis--while at the same time retaining his basic thesis that all knowledge must be knowledge of transcendental essences. The life-world, as we have seen, is in many ways admirably suited to its role--but by its very nature, it now appears that this concept also erects insurmountable barriers to the achievement of a complete reduction.

On the basis of these conclusions, we can now return briefly to a question raised in Chapter II: "Does Husserl's introduction of the concept of the life-world represent a real solution to those 'paradoxes of

subjectivity" which, according to Husserl, were the cause of Kant's failure to escape the bonds of traditional rationalist philosophy"? We have just argued that, despite the fact that the inherent logic of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology seems to demand just such a return to the "foundation of experience" as is provided by the return to the life-world, yet other essential aspects of his philosophy (i.e. the epoche) dictate that this return cannot be successful in the way Husserl intended. We shall now briefly discuss the implications of this conclusion for Husserl's view that, within the life-world, transcendental and personal subjectivity find a meeting-point, and that the problematic relation between the two is thereby resolved.



#### 4. THE RELATION BETWEEN PERSONAL AND TRANSCENDENTAL SUBJECTIVITY

In the foregoing section, we evaluated the epoché and the life-world in terms of their general "compossibility," and concluded that, in fact, given Husserl's own criteria, the two were, in a significant sense, mutually limiting. Husserl himself, however, regards this concept of the life-world as an appropriate solution to many of the thorny issues raised by previous philosophers. Among these, as we earlier remarked, is the question of the relationship between concrete, personal subjectivity, and universal transcendental subjectivity--a question which assumed urgency for Husserl because of its importance within Kantianism. Husserl's contention was that by beginning our philosophizing with a reduction to the life-world as the "pregiven ground of all experience," one could overcome the presuppositions implied in Kant's analysis of subjectivity--thus transcending the limitations and contradictions of traditional rationalism. As we have seen, however, the concept of the life-world is in itself highly problematic, and its relation to the epoché, at best, ambiguous. It is therefore crucial to assess Husserl's discussion of the paradox of subjectivity, if we are to determine whether the reduction

to the life-world actually does constitute its valid resolution.

Husserl's own conception of the meaning of subjectivity follows Kant, insofar as he too makes the distinction between the transcendental and human subjects. But whereas Kant argued that all scientific knowing necessarily occurred in the phenomenal realm--and that the transcendental ego, in its status as noumenon, stands beyond the scope of intuitive knowledge, Husserl's claim is that the transcendental alone is truly knowable. Because he at last makes explicit, via the epoché, the unexpressed presupposition of the life-world, Husserl argues that the phenomenologist can supply that "concrete content" which Kant's transcendental subject necessarily lacked. By rendering the totality of lived experience--i.e. concrete human subjectivity and its subjective-relative life-world--immanent within the transcendental subject, Husserl hopes to bridge that gap between "being" and "knowing" which he finds at the heart of Kantianism.

But as we have already argued, Husserl's conception of the life-world is such that it ultimately cannot be subjected to a complete transcendental reduction. Since concrete human subjectivity is definitely an intrinsic element of this life-world unity, it is therefore possible that it too is incapable of being "reduced" in the manner required by Husserl's

program. Husserl is aware that this possibility constitutes a definite threat to the validity of his entire system. Indeed, the paradox of human subjectivity in a sense sums up the central difficulty of his mature philosophy--i.e. the difficulty of justifying the transition from the concrete, historical sphere to the transcendental sphere, without thereby sacrificing the essential meaning of either. The problem was previously argued out in terms of how a transcendental epochē could be performed which would reduce the life-world, already defined as the ground of all human praxis, to a "mere phenomenon." But the question of who performs this epochē is equally pressing, when one considers the complex relationships which Husserl has developed among the concepts of human subjectivity, transcendental subjectivity, and, most difficult of all, intersubjectivity. The issue is clearly stated by Husserl himself, who, while emphasizing that, within the epochē, a universal concept of the subjective encompasses everything, goes on to add:

But precisely here lies the difficulty. Universal intersubjectivity, into which all objectivity, everything that exists at all, is resolved, can obviously be nothing other than mankind; and the latter is undeniably a component part of the world. How can a component part of the world, its human subjectivity, constitute the whole world, namely constitute it as its intentional formation, one which has always already become what it is and continues to develop, formed by the universal interconnection of intentionally accomplishing subjectivity,

while the latter, the subjects accomplishing in cooperation, are themselves only a partial formation within the total accomplishment?<sup>134</sup>

We concluded section III with a discussion of Husserl's argument concerning the attitude of "disinterestedness" which one adopts within the epoché. He there pointed out the paradoxical requirement that the phenomenologist must, at one and the same time, detach himself from any commitment to the life-world as his ground of praxis; and yet also "naturally live through" the activities which, under normal circumstances, that ground supports. Husserl himself admitted that should this paradox be irresolvable, no transcendental enquiry would be possible.<sup>135</sup> It was our contention that Husserl in fact could not resolve the paradox, because of his prior (necessary) commitment to a conception of human praxis which depends upon its rootedness in the existential life-world. The same issue, is being raised here yet again--this time, with reference not to the object-poles of the life-world, but rather to the subject of that world. The paradox, however, remains the same--how can the human subject retain his identity as a member of the pre-given, intersubjective life-world, with its historical and cultural concreteness, and at the same time be viewed as the constitutor of that entire world? The two requirements appear absurdly contradictory, and yet absolutely necessary, if Husserl is not to end in a dualism



as irresolvable as Kant's. Indeed, as he himself declares:

If the paradox just developed were insoluble, it would mean that an actually universal and radical epochē could not be carried out at all, that is, for purposes of a science rigorously bound to it.<sup>136</sup>

But problems similar to those already raised in section III beset the phenomenologist's attempts to "make the transition" from the sphere of human to that of transcendental subjectivity. The crucial question of who performs the epochē--the human or transcendental ego--involves us in a reassertion of the paradox, rather than its resolution. If we argue that it is the concrete human ego who is the agent, do we not end in that psychologism which Husserl is at such pains to avoid?

If the disinterestedness and the epochē were merely those of the psychologist, to which no one objects since they move on the ground of the world, then anything that is really tenable about our insights would be reduced to objective-psychological essential insights, though of a new style.<sup>137</sup>

Perhaps the disinterestedness is not that of the psychologist, with his presupposition of the objectivity of experience--but this does not rule out the fact that any human subject--be he scientist or otherwise, for Husserl, necessarily moves, if not on the ground of the objective world, certainly on the ground of the perennially pregiven life-world. What this means is that the reality of the world as a horizon for praxis is presupposed by the

human act of performing the epochē--so that, if it is a human subject who performs it, this presupposition is unavoidable. Thus, because of Husserl's own concept of the relation of human subjectivity and the life-world, the attempt to perform the "complete reduction" seems to reaffirm the irreducibility of this world, rather than the opposite.

Husserl, while agreeing that it is I, as a philosopher--and therefore, surely, as a member of a concrete life-world tradition and community--who performs the epochē<sup>138</sup> does not place much emphasis on the issue of the possibility of moving from the existential to the transcendental sphere. All his concern lies with the other side of the question--i.e. the problem of how one can relate the transcendental ego back to the individual human subject, once the epochē has been effected. It is here that he locates the real threat to a consistent transcendental phenomenology. But we shall argue that even if one accepts Husserl's view that a radical epochē can be performed, the "paradox of human subjectivity" is retained as a problem within the transcendental sphere.

After the epochē--wherein, presumably, the life-world is a "mere phenomenon"--the paradox of human subjectivity becomes, if anything, more difficult to resolve. Husserl himself again poses the crucial questions:

Who are we, as subjects performing the meaning-and-validity accomplishment of universal constitution--as those who, in community, constitute the world as a system of poles, as the intentional structure of community life? Can 'we' mean 'we human beings', human beings in the natural-objective sense, i.e. as real entities in the world? But are these real entities not themselves phenomena, and as such themselves object-poles and subject matter for enquiry back into the correlative intentionalities of which they are the poles, through whose function they have, and have attained, their ontic meaning?<sup>139</sup>

Husserl clearly does not want to claim that anything "human" remains within the reduced sphere. He is adamant that the bracketing of the life-world includes a bracketing of all concrete human subjectivity, so that, "in the radical consistency of the epochē, each 'I' is considered purely as the ego-pole of his acts, habitualities, and capacities, . . . [whereas] . . . concretely, each 'I' is not merely an ego-pole but an 'I' with all its accomplishments and accomplished acquisitions, including the world as existing and being such."<sup>140</sup> Within the epochē, he concludes, "nothing human is to be found, neither soul nor psychic life nor real psychophysical human beings; all this belongs to the 'phenomenon,' to the world as constituted pole."<sup>141</sup>

But by thus excluding the human from the sphere of the transcendental, Husserl makes the question "for whom has the concrete unity of life-world and ego-subject become 'mere phenomenon'?" almost incomprehensible.

Having already earlier stated that the interest in performing the epochē--i.e. the interest of detaching ourselves from the presupposition of the life-world, in order, ultimately, to know it--is an accomplishment of personal subjectivity,<sup>142</sup> it seems contradictory to now claim that the agent who performs the act of knowing this life-world, within the epochē, is not a human subject. Given Husserl's definition of the meaning of the life-world as the horizon for all human praxis, including the praxis of knowing, is it not the case that only a human subject--i.e. a philosopher within the western tradition--could possibly retain the interest which initially motivated the epochē? For any other possible "knower", would not that very interest itself have become, along with other life-world interests, a "mere phenomenon," and, as such, incapable of serving as the motive for further phenomenological investigation? It would seem that, unless the epistemological goals of phenomenology--which are, themselves, historically conditioned goals--are to be completely meaningless, the active, human, ego, the "I, with all its accomplishments and accomplished acquisitions," must somehow remain after the epochē--indeed, is the sole knower for whom the phenomena within the epochē could have meaning. And yet, it is also precisely this human subject who, Husserl insists, must be bracketed out, if the presupposition of the life-world is to become the

desired pure phenomenon, and a radical reduction performed. Again then, we have ended in a paradox: because of his concept of the life-world, as absolute practical pre-supposition, it seems that Husserl must exclude concrete subjectivity from the transcendental world, and give it a central role as the subject for whom alone the very concept "transcendental realm" can have any significance!

It indeed appears that we have arrived at a reformulation of Kant's "paradox of the two subjectivities" --precisely that paradox which Husserl's "Rückgang auf die Lebenswelt" was intended to overcome. It will be recalled that Husserl's central criticism of Kant lay in the latter's failure to disclose that "dimension of the living human spirit" wherein transcendental functions had, for essential reasons, previously remained inaccessible. Because of this failure, Husserl argued, Kant's philosophy ended in a bifurcation of reality, epitomized in a corresponding hiatus between transcendental and personal subjectivity. It was Husserl's view that a reduction to the life-world would reveal that "absolute foundation" wherein these two subjects could be united, and their paradoxical inter-dependence resolved.

However, having now followed Husserl in his effort to conduct a total epoché of the natural attitude--and the accompanying reduction to the pregiven life-world--we have arrived at a startling conclusion.

It now appears that it is the very nature of the life-world as "absolute presupposition" to resist all efforts to treat it as a "mere component", so to speak, within concrete transcendental subjectivity.<sup>143</sup> Whether we are dealing with the concrete, existential life-world, in its incessant variety, or with the transcendental life-world--the absolute transcendental correlate of all possible concrete-historical "worlds"--the same conclusion follows: because we must take our starting point from the life-world, we are, it appears, by that very act, forever bound to it. Since, as we have argued, it requires an agent who is a human subject--and because, further, for Husserl, that subject is a human subject only in and through his inherence in his intersubjective life-world, the transition from one sphere to the other can never culminate in a complete suspension of the natural attitude. There is always necessarily a "residue". In the movement from the existential to the transcendental level, that "residue" may perhaps be best characterized as the human agent, whose life-world aim it is to transcend his, and every life-world, via the performance of a total epoché. Within the transcendental sphere, although Husserl claims that the human psyche exists as "mere phenomenon," we have argued that this cannot be entirely the case, since at the very least, the human subject must retain his concrete life-world identity as knower, in order to save

the reduced sphere from sheer meaninglessness.

Rather than resolving the paradox of subjectivity, therefore, it can be argued that the return to the life-world in fact reinforces it. Husserl's philosophical orientation, as he himself claims, is within the tradition which began with Descartes--a tradition which takes as its starting point the epistemological, and indeed, ontological primacy of "consciousness." While definitions of consciousness differ widely, the term nevertheless can retain its significance only when it is somehow correlated with a "world." Thus, for Descartes, thought is the antithesis of extension; for Kant, transcendental subjectivity is the condition of the possibility of empirical experience; and, for Husserl, consciousness is defined as being, in its very essence, "consciousness-of." For such philosophies, the central issue, then, becomes one of accounting for the relationship between the two poles of subject (consciousness) and world (object)--i.e. how subjectivity can be "in the world," and more importantly, how we can be certain that it is.

Indeed, this ideal of certainty motivates the entire historical progression of modern philosophy, as it does Husserl's own "rigorous science" of phenomenology.<sup>14</sup> In the name of the goal of presuppositionlessness, the development of Husserl's thought has led, through a series of reductions, to this final paradoxical attempt to render

a priori within the unity of transcendental subjectivity, that very practical ground out of which the ideal itself arose. But while it may be Husserl's contention that, in order to resolve the paradox of subjectivity, one must conduct a reduction to the life-world, is it not also the case that this contention has meaning for us only because we share the further "presupposition" of the "ideal of certainty"--an ideal which cannot be held within the epoche without paralyzing the entire project. The very aim of the epoche is the attainment of certainty--thus, if the performance of the epoche included a suspension of this ideal, any investigation, within the bracketed sphere, which is directed toward its achievement, would be meaningless. Indeed, it appears that the ultimate paradox to which the attempt to realize the ideal of absolute certainty leads is phenomenology itself. The phenomenological ideal can be seen, in the very process of trying to establish itself as a presuppositionless philosophy, to "veer around into its opposite," and culminate in a virtual denial of the possibility of achieving this ideal. Husserl's aim of performing a complete reduction to the life-world--regarded as the ultimate solution to the problems of rationalist epistemology--can be carried out, only if, at one and the same time, it cannot be carried out.

Put another way: the ideal of achieving an



absolutely presuppositionless knowledge of the totality of experience is itself an aim which arises within a particular philosophical context. This context may be characterized as that of modern rationalism, which, in turn, takes its starting point from the further presupposition of the separation of consciousness and the world. This positing of consciousness as the absolute starting point for further philosophical investigations can be said to carry within it the necessity for the endless attempt to reunite subjectivity and the world. At the same time, however, as Husserl's dilemmas reveal, this attempt to realize the goal of absolute certainty ultimately leads us back to the historical ground from which it derived its meaning. Further, the return to this ground does not culminate in the hoped-for resolution of the paradoxes which were its presupposition and its motive, but rather, reaffirms them. For it is a paradox in itself that Husserl's phenomenology--a philosophy whose fundamental theme is the primacy of consciousness, or the all-inclusiveness of transcendental subjectivity, should in its final phase, claim that this primacy can be secured only through a return to the very antithesis of pure consciousness--the life-world as concrete, historical unity of the human subject and his world. The end result of such a return, however, would seem to be the affirmation of the absolute irreducibility of this ground<sup>145</sup>--and

therefore, apparently, the denial of the possibility of achieving the ideal of absolute certainty.

If one accepts the conclusion that there is such a fundamental paradox at the very core of Husserl's project of "returning to the life-world," then his final rather obscure effort Crisis, #54b, 55) to resolve the problem of subjectivity becomes somewhat more comprehensible, although it is not, we shall argue, ultimately satisfactory. Having introduced the concept of the life-world, with its accompanying implications for the concepts of both human and transcendental subjectivity, Husserl is now faced with a radical dilemma. On the one hand, he wishes to maintain that the ontologically primary category is absolute transcendental subjectivity, in and through which all levels of human experience are constituted, and in relation to which alone they can be truly known. At the same time, however, his arguments throughout the Crisis have been in constant conflict with this position. Having presented the life-world as the absolute presupposition (horizon) of all concrete experience, it then followed that an epoché of this presupposition would bring the entire range of human experience, both actual and possible, within the immanence of transcendental subjectivity. Thus, the implicit aim of phenomenology--i.e. the aim of rendering experience in its totality completely accessible to absolute (intuitive) knowledge--

would be fulfilled.

As we have seen, however, there were numerous difficulties which were in fact created by the attempt to conduct this reduction of the life-world. Central among these is the fact that, insofar as the life-world must be defined as the absolute presupposition of all human activity, both theoretical and practical, it necessarily resists any effort to render it completely immanent within--and therefore, ontologically dependent upon--the transcendental subject as an absolute constituting agent. This resistance leads to a regeneration of Kant's paradoxes, since while Husserl wishes to maintain that the human intersubjective life-world is necessarily pregiven, and hence not immanent within transcendental subjectivity, he also must hold that universal transcendental subjectivity is the sole constituting source of all actual experience. To claim that it is the transcendental life-world which is constituted within transcendental subjectivity does nothing to resolve this problem, since we have already seen that the meaning which Husserl ascribes to this "eidos life-world" is inextricably bound to the meaning ascribed to its existential correlates. Somehow, then, Husserl must strike a balance whereby neither the life-world nor transcendental subjectivity--both essential concepts within phenomenology--sacrifices its significance, and becomes a mere

"epiphenomenon" with respect to its transcendental counterpart.

Husserl's preliminary answer to this dilemma involves an attempt, not to banish the problem of paradox from his philosophy, but rather to embrace it, as essentially necessary to the meaning of phenomenology.

It's fate [i.e.--that of phenomenological-transcendental radicalism]--understood subsequently, to be sure, as an essentially necessary one--is to become involved again and again in paradoxes, which, arising out of uninvestigated and even unnoticed horizons, remain functional and announce themselves as incomprehensibilities.<sup>146</sup>

But does a declaration that transcendental phenomenology necessarily deals in paradoxes absolve us of the responsibility of dealing with this particular paradox? Surely not, since the problem of human subjectivity is not simply another constitutive dilemma which can be resolved within the immanence of transcendental subjectivity. This paradox threatens the validity of the very concept of transcendental subjective constitution itself, and hence, cannot be resolved by an appeal to the meaning of that concept.

Although he does not seem to realize the uniqueness of this paradox, (and indeed its crucial importance for the whole phenomenological program) Husserl does assert that the paradox is one which must somehow be resolved. "What is the status, now, of the paradox

presently under discussion--that of humanity as world-constituting subjectivity, and yet as incorporated in the world itself?<sup>147</sup> His proposed solution is contained in the same paragraph. Up until now, he claims, we have neglected a crucial dimension of transcendental experience. While it is true that the ego was mentioned as the subject matter of the highest level of reflection, he says, these passing remarks were not seriously considered. Indeed, throughout the whole analysis so far, he says

What was lacking was the phenomenon of the change of signification of the form 'I'--just as I am saying 'I' right now--into 'other I's', into 'all of us', we who are many 'I's', and among whom I am but one 'I.' What was lacking, then, was the problem of the constitution of intersubjectivity--this 'all of us'--from my point of view, indeed "in" me.<sup>148</sup>

Thus, according to Husserl, the resolution of the paradox of subjectivity lies in a reconsideration of the meaning of the "we", a term which has already seen much use in the context of this analysis. Precisely who, he asks, is this "we", this intersubjective community which performs the "meaning-and-validity accomplishment of universal constitution"?<sup>149</sup>--and, most importantly, must our concept of intersubjectivity be revised in order to resolve the paradox which phenomenology at this juncture faces?

Although Husserl argues that the nature of the transcendental epoché is such that, within the reduced

sphere, no trace of concrete human subjectivity remains, he also claims throughout the Crisis that the starting point for an adequate transcendental phenomenology must be the existential life-world, a world which was characterized as a "world for all"--constantly pregiven as having the ontic meaning of being for us:

... in whatever way we may be conscious of the world as universal horizon . . . we, each "I-the-man", and all of us together, belong to the world as living with one another in the world, and the world is our world, valid for our consciousness as existing precisely through this "living together". 150

The actions of an individual "I-the-man", within such a life-world are, then, performed under the thesis of the community of all men. Even when the meaning of his action lies in the denial of his inherence in an intersubjective unity, this community is necessarily presupposed.

But if the phenomenologist must take his starting-point in this intersubjective life-world, he cannot, when he performs the epochē, bracket out that intersubjective totality within which all concrete human subjective experiences are rooted. After the epochē, the transcendental life-world thus uncovered remains an intersubjective world. When one is explicating the transcendental correlate of the concretely pregiven life-world, one is not uncovering the constitutive accomplishments of the transcendental ego:

While we are dealing with the total intentional accomplishment having many levels, of the

subjectivity in question, it is not that of the isolated subject. We are dealing, rather, with the entire intersubjectivity which is brought together in the accomplishment.<sup>151</sup>

For Husserl, the reduction of the concrete life-world to its transcendental counterpart reveals that the former, "the world which is, and as it is concretely and vividly given (and pregiven for all possible praxis)"<sup>152</sup> is the result of an "intersubjective constitutive accomplishment." In other words, Husserl is here affirming that even within the transcendental sphere, "subjectivity is what it is-- an ego functioning constitutively--only within intersubjectivity."<sup>153</sup>

What is the significance of this conclusion for Husserl's present claim that we must now reexamine the notion of intersubjectivity, in order to resolve the paradox of human subjectivity? His hope is that by now reintegrating the notion of the intersubjective community back into the absolute unity of the transcendental subject, as a constituted level within it, we shall be able to show that the notion of intersubjectivity does not in fact challenge the supremacy of the transcendental ego. The same problem--i.e. the transcendental constitution of the Other--appeared in the Fifth Cartesian Meditation--and the question of whether or not Husserl there succeeded in overcoming the problem of transcendental solipsism is at least debatable.<sup>154</sup> However, in that context, the

attempt was at least not incompatible with his preceding analyses, firmly based as they were on the initial assertion of the primacy of the Cogito. In the Crisis, however, as we have repeatedly argued, the unique status of the cogito is perpetually--and, necessarily--called into question by the reduction to the life-world, which is treated as the fundamental mode of access to the concrete transcendental sphere. But, because of its function as the absolute ground, or horizon, wherein all human experience occurs, a successful "return" to this life-world would seem to require a revision of the meaning of transcendental subjectivity itself. No longer would it be possible to claim that transcendental subjectivity could be equated with the self-identity of one absolute ego, since, as we have seen, the reduction of the existential life-world to its transcendental correlate--and the accompanying attempt to bracket out human subjectivity--does not lead us to the apodictic transcendental ego--but rather to a community of constituting egos.

There is thus no ultimate justification for Husserl's claim that the reduction has led to a comprehension of the life-world, as a "mere stratum within the transcendental ego"<sup>155</sup>--rather, through the epoché, there is revealed the final, transcendental subject-object correlation<sup>156</sup>--a correlation, however, wherein



the mundane (constituted) relationship between a community of subjects and their co-intended world is simply repeated, in terms of its transcendental counterpart (eidos). This time, however, the dualism of ego-community and world is an irreducible correlation, beyond which it is indeed meaningless to question.

Having arrived, through the application of the epochē, at the irreducible "facticity" of the subject-world correlation, it would be futile to attempt a further epochē, as a means of ascertaining the ultimate "identity" of the ego-world dichotomy within the self-enclosed and self-constituting transcendental ego. The grounds for performing the transcendental-phenomenological reduction lay in a free act of the (human) will, which, motivated by the aim of attaining a realm of absolute (apodictic) experience, chooses to place in suspension the entire thesis of the natural attitude. Ultimately, this epochē recoiled upon itself, in its attempt to hold in brackets even that "free subject" whose act it was--indeed, this recoil was demanded by Husserl's goal of making the totality of experience "transparent" to itself. But, once this epochē is attempted, its equivocal and paradoxical nature is manifested and, we have argued, it becomes clear that the phenomenological aim of achieving absolute self-evidence, via a return to the unified (yet concrete) ego, is very seriously challenged.

But even if Husserl has succeeded in performing a complete reduction to the life-world, he cannot then reasonably introduce a further "final epochē," in order to establish the ontological dependence of the intersubjective world upon the transcendental ego, without contradicting the very meaning of the concept of a "reduction to the life-world." The life-world epochē was intended to eliminate, at one blow<sup>17</sup> the thesis of the natural attitude--and if, after this epochē is performed, there still stands a community of selves and their intended world, then only two conclusions are possible. Either a truly radical epochē (i.e. a reduction to the absolute Ego) is impossible, or since the result of the reduction is to reveal a transcendental intersubjective world, then such must be the only possible "field of absolute experience" which phenomenology, as conceived by Husserl, can ever achieve. *Y*

But it is precisely this "epochē within the epochē" which Husserl proposes (in the concluding section of Crisis IIIA) as a means of salvaging that primacy of the transcendental ego, upon which his phenomenology, has always been based. His final solution to the paradox of human subjectivity--which has now been regenerated on the transcendental level as the problem of the relation between the community of transcendental selves and the one transcendental ego--consists in the claim that.

it was wrong, methodically, to jump immediately into transcendental intersubjectivity and to leap over the primal 'I', the ego of my *épochè*, which can never lose its uniqueness and personal indeclinability.<sup>158</sup>

Further, he asserts,

Only by starting from the ego and the system of its transcendental functions and accomplishments can we methodically exhibit transcendental intersubjectivity and its transcendental communalization, through which, in the functioning system of ego-poles, the 'world for all', and for each subject as world for all is constituted.<sup>159</sup>

But if our conclusions concerning the meaning and function of the reduction to the life-world, in its relationship to the goals of transcendental phenomenology, are valid, then surely such assertions cannot be justified?

It was precisely this "starting from the ego," it will be recalled, which Husserl earlier rejected as an inadequate way of approaching the concrete transcendental subjectivity, and which he argued must be replaced by a reduction to the pregiven (intersubjective) life-world.<sup>160</sup>

The return to the life-world, while it was characterized as a mode of access to transcendental subjectivity, in no way entailed that one must begin with an initial reduction to the unified transcendental ego. What Husserl sought through this methodological innovation was a realm, or field, of absolute apodictic evidences,<sup>161</sup> and it could not be given in advance that this field must be the self-identical transcendental ego. Indeed, as we have argued, the attempt to apply the *épochè* to the

presupposition of the life-world positively excluded the possibility that experience could be "reduced" in this way--and indeed, culminated in the conclusion that the ideal of apodicticity, interpreted as the possibility of making a presuppositionless beginning, when pushed to its logical conclusion, as it is within the final phases of transcendental phenomenology, is self-refuting. The only way that such apodicticity can be achieved is if the world becomes the "absolute (transcendental) object" of a total (i.e. horizonless) act of reflection--and the explication of the ambiguities within the life-world concept strongly suggests that such total reflection is, in principle, impossible.

Clearly, the foregoing implications of his introduction of the life-world as an operative concept within phenomenology were not drawn by Husserl himself. Having, as he argues, successfully achieved a reduction to the life-world, and thus, having annihilated the radical distinction between the human and transcendental egos--he claims that the sole remaining requirement for a complete transcendental phenomenology is a further epochē, which will "do justice to the absolute singularity of the ego and its central position in all constitution."<sup>162</sup> In other words, he wishes to claim that a further reduction--a reduction which would "hold in epochē" the intersubjective community of transcendental selves--

is possible, and, in fact, demanded.

We have argued that there is a crucial difference between conducting a phenomenological explication of that field of absolute experience which the reduction to the life-world uncovers, and attempting, on the basis of this radical reduction, to perform a further epoché, the aim of which is to reduce the transcendental subject-world correlation to "the absolute ego, as the ultimately unique centre of function in all constitution."<sup>163</sup> The success of the original epoché, given Husserl's dual concept of the life-world, is, as we have seen, highly debatable. But, were the validity of this reduction established, the possibility of another epoché, initiated, as it would have to be, upon the ground uncovered by the life-world epoché, would be thereby excluded, on grounds arising from within Husserl's own philosophy. For these reasons it seems necessary to conclude that, however much a final reduction to the absolute ego is required for the fulfillment of Husserl's aim of achieving a consistent egology, on grounds equally insistent, he is unable to effect this reduction. Thus, through the introduction of the concept of the life-world, we have seen that the structure of Husserl's thought is forced to undergo drastic changes--the most fundamental of which is this final conclusion whereby the absolute unity of the transcendental ego itself is seriously challenged.

## CONCLUSION

The central aim of this thesis has been, through an analysis of the concept of the life-world, to indicate certain problems inherent in the Husserlian ideal of establishing philosophy as "rigorously scientific." The arguments which have been presented may be summarized as follows.

Firstly--on the basis of an examination of Husserl's actual employment of the term life-world, it was concluded that one can attribute multiple meanings to this concept. These meanings, however, fall into two main categories--those which refer to the life-world as the temporal, historical presupposition of all human praxis, and those which refer to the life-world as the transcendental correlate of this "existential" life-world. These two primary meanings, we argued, were both absolutely essential, if the concept of the life-world was to perform the role within phenomenology for which Husserl intended it.

Secondly--it was argued that Husserl's goal of achieving a "rigorous science of subjectivity," which had motivated the development of the concepts of epoché and reduction, had also created the demand for a "return," by means of this methodology, to a "field of absolute experiences."

Although the life-world could undoubtedly be identified with this "field," we presented important reasons for concluding that the meanings of the life-world and the phenomenological epochē were incompatible, so that a complete reduction to the life-world was, in principle, impossible.

Thirdly--Husserl had presented the return to the life-world as a solution to the problematic relationship between human and transcendental subjectivity. Because of our conclusion concerning the incompatibility of the life-world and the epochē, we suggested that such a unification of the two "subjects" was also rendered questionable. If it is impossible to completely subsume the concrete, human subject and his world within the bounds of transcendental subjectivity, then the dichotomy, far from being resolved, is reaffirmed by Husserl's attempt to conduct an epochē of the life-world. Indeed, even assuming it is possible to perform a reduction to the life-world, we further claimed, such a reduction leads not to the one transcendental subject, but rather to an entire intersubjective, transcendental world. Thus, the concept of an absolute transcendental ego is seriously challenged, for it would seem that by admitting that transcendental constitution is intersubjective constitution, it then becomes difficult to show how this intersubjective world

could itself, in turn, be reduced to a "stratum" within an ontologically prior "absolute" Ego.

Ultimately, then, the project of a "return to the life-world," although intended as the consummation of Husserl's effort to render experience completely immanent within transcendental subjectivity, culminates in precisely the opposite conclusion. Clearly, however, this conclusion was not reached by Husserl himself. He consistently held that his introduction of the life-world enabled contemporary philosophy to resolve the epistemological stalemate in which adherence to the presuppositions of traditional rationalism had inevitably culminated. The return to the life-world, he argued, opened the way to a "genuine" rationalism, which would be characterized by the phenomenologist's ability to achieve, through the radical employment of the phenomenological epoché and reduction, an absolutely presuppositionless philosophical standpoint.

The arguments presented in this thesis have as their central import the conclusion that Husserl's goal of establishing a strict "science of subjectivity," having as its primary field of investigation the pregiven life-world, must necessarily remain unfulfilled. Husserl's failure, however, cannot be attributed to some philosophical "oversight," which could have been seen and corrected by future generations of phenomenologists. Rather, it is intrinsically related to the nature of the



phenomenological project itself. The movement of Husserl's thought consisted in a ceaseless inquiry into the pre-suppositions which hinder the philosopher from achieving absolute scientific certainty. In the Crisis, he claimed that the ultimate presupposition--i.e. the historical, practical life-world--had been ~~revealed~~, and, more importantly, revealed as susceptible to phenomenological analysis. But with the attempt to conduct a complete epistemological epoché--an epoché which would reduce the very ground of all human praxis to the status of "pure phenomena"--Husserl necessarily met with opposition. For, paradoxically, such a reduction implies the destruction of an essential element of that world which is to be reduced. What had defined the life-world as the ultimate presupposition which Husserl's methodology required, was its status as the presupposition, or horizon of all human praxis, including the philosophical praxis of phenomenology. The very attempt to render this pregiven horizon "purely phenomenal", however, reveals that such a reduction is intrinsically contradictory. To reduce the pregiven life-world, we have argued, means to divest it of its quality of givenness--that very unique quality whereby it is the only suitable field for phenomenological investigation.

Thus, Husserl's ideal of achieving a presuppositionless philosophy culminates in a compelling impasse.

The radical pregivenness of the life-world, and its function as the horizon of all concrete human experience, ensures that this "world" alone could be an adequate terminus for the phenomenologists' search for absolute certainty. Yet, at the same time, its very nature as "pregiven" also constitutes it as an insurmountable barrier to the attainment of this epistemological goal.

In the light of this paradoxical conclusion, the well-known words of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, eminent French philosopher, and disciple of Husserl, take on a new significance.

The most important lesson which the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction. This is why Husserl is constantly reexamining the possibility of the reduction. If we were absolute mind, the reduction would present no problem. But since, on the contrary, we are in the world, since indeed our reflections are carried out in the temporal flux onto which we are trying to seize, there is no thought which embraces all our thought. . . . 164

While denying the validity of his ultimate conclusions, Merleau-Ponty attaches, as does this thesis, much importance to the final work of Husserl. The central significance of the Crisis lies in the fact that, within this last "introduction" to transcendental phenomenology, the implications of regarding the subjective standpoint--the standpoint of consciousness--as absolute, are thoroughly and consistently worked out. Thus, Husserl's unswerving dedication to a particular philosophical ideal, can be interpreted as, in fact, freeing

future philosophers from the grip of a deceptively "liberating" metaphysical position. The danger in such a position is that it entails a correspondingly restrictive vision of the meaning of philosophical truth--and if Husserl's effort to conduct a reduction to the life-world indirectly serves to highlight this fact, then it's philosophical value is great indeed.

Thus, although we have argued that Husserl's pursuit of the ideal of scientific rigor ultimately reveals the incapacity of that ideal to support a philosophical comprehension of those practical pre-suppositions which underlie it, we agree with Merleau-Ponty, when he says that "the picture of a well-behaved world, left to us by classical philosophy, had to be pushed to the limit--in order to reveal all that was left over."<sup>16</sup> It was the task of Husserl to carry the goals implied in classical rationalism to their logical limit--and it is surely the task of present philosophers to see that this limit is both understood, and transcended.

## FOOTNOTES

### INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup>Phenomenology, ed. Joseph Kockelmans (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1967). In his introduction to this collection, Kockelmans distinguishes four main periods in Husserl's development--beginning with the pre-phenomenological period of the Logical Investigations (1900), and ending in a period in which the life-world occupies a central role (1928-1938).

<sup>2</sup>Edmund Husserl, Philosophy as a Rigorous Science tr. Quentin Lauer. (New York: Harper and Row, Inc., 1965).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 71-76. See also Lauer's comments, p. 31; Footnote 36. It is his view that the significance of the "phenomenological revolution" lies in Husserl's intention of transcending Kant, by showing how not only the forms of knowing, but also the content of the act of knowing, has its source in transcendental consciousness. Put another way, Husserl's goal is to completely "a priorize" experience. If this is indeed his central project, it goes a long way toward explaining his later determination, in The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology, to show how the life-world, as the pre-given horizon of all concrete human life, must be a stratum of the transcendental Ego.

<sup>4</sup>The kind of naturalism to which Husserl objected is defined by S. P. Lamprecht, in Naturalism and the Human Spirit ed. V. H. Krikorian (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), p. 18, as "a philosophical position, empirical in method, that regards everything that exists or occurs to be conditioned in its existence or occurrence by causal factors within an all-embracing system of nature, however spiritual or purposeful or rational some of these things and events may in their functions and value prove to be."

<sup>5</sup>Philosophy as a Rigorous Science, p. 86.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>7</sup>Edmund Husserl, The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology tr. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970). References to this edition will hereafter be given simply as Crisis.

<sup>8</sup>This is especially true for such existential phenomenologists as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who, while acknowledging his debt to Husserl, interprets his later works as an abandonment of the ideal of a complete reduction, and hence as supporting, in principle, the existentialists' revision of the notion of philosophical truth. See Phenomenology of Perception (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. xiv.

## CHAPTER I

<sup>9</sup>L. Landgrebe, "The World as a Phenomenological Problem," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, I, 1 (September, 1940), p. 39.

<sup>10</sup>Edmund Husserl, Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology, tr. W. R. Boyce Gibson (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1952), p. 51, italics mine. References given hereafter as Ideas refer to this edition.

<sup>11</sup>Husserl does not define the term "theoretical" here, but from the context, the theoretical attitude is apparently a synonym for the standpoint of objectivity adopted by all natural scientists as part of their standard methodology. Husserl's immediate following characterization of the World as "the totality of objects that can be known through experience, known in terms of orderly theoretical thought on the basis of direct present experience" (Ideas, p. 52) supports the conclusion that World here is simply the correlate of this objectivist standpoint.

<sup>12</sup>E. Husserl, Ideas, p. 101.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 101-102.

<sup>14</sup>Above, p. 16.

<sup>15</sup>E. Husserl, Ideas, p. 102.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 106, italics mine.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., pp. 119-120.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Edmund Husserl, Cartesian Meditations tr. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), p. 71.

<sup>32</sup>Paul Ricoeur, Husserl: An Analysis of his Phenomenology (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967), p. 146.

<sup>33</sup>Crisis, p. 16.

<sup>34</sup>Crisis, Appendix VI "The Origin of Geometry," p. 373 ff.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 354.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 355.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 368.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 373.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 368.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 369.

## CHAPTER II

<sup>41</sup> Crisis, p. 23.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp. 50-51, italics mine.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>49</sup> See (45) above; the same view is also strongly expressed in the conclusion to the Origin of Geometry (Crisis, p. 370). "If, after these expositions, we lay down the following as something completely secured . . . that the human surrounding world is the same today and always . . ."

<sup>50</sup> Crisis, p. 59.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., italics mine.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 104-5.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 119, italics mine.



<sup>62</sup>Ibid., italics mine.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Cartesian Meditations, p. 85.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>68</sup>It must always be remembered that the term "Objectivity" has a unique sense for Husserl. In the Cartesian Meditations he affirms that "every sort of existent, . . . real or ideal . . . is a 'product' of transcendental subjectivity." (p. 85), and that "transcendency in every form is an immanent existential characteristic, constituted within the ego." (pp. 83-4). Thus, when Husserl speaks of levels of Objectivity he is referring to that intentional Objectivity which arises within pure consciousness. This can be confusing, however, since, especially in the Crisis, he frequently refers to "objective science" or "objective knowledge," or simply "object," without indicating whether he means the term in the transcendental sense, or in the sense which it has within the natural attitude. To avoid a similar confusion in this thesis, I have used a lower case "o" when referring to the ordinary (natural attitude) sense of objective, and a capital "O" when referring to Husserl's specialized, transcendental usage.

<sup>69</sup>Cartesian Meditations, p. 136.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 136, italics mine.

<sup>71</sup>See Chapter II, Section 3.

<sup>72</sup>Husserl characterizes the whole project of Crisis IIIA as an attempt to get to the transcendental sphere by inquiring back from the pregiven life-world. Clearly, then, this life-world is here intended to provide a "clue" to the entire world of Transcendental Subjectivity, whereas in earlier works (i.e. Cartesian Meditations) the life-world was expressly portrayed as simply a stratum within the Apodictic Ego.

<sup>73</sup>Crisis, pp. 121-122.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 123, *italics mine.*

<sup>78</sup>See Chapter II, Section 3.

<sup>79</sup>Crisis, p. 118.

<sup>80</sup>In the Cartesian Meditations, for example, Husserl argues that, since transcendental subjectivity is "the universe of possible sense, then an outside is precisely--nonsense" (p. 84).

<sup>81</sup>The issue here raised will be dealt with extensively in Chapter III, where the relationship between the life-world and the phenomenological epoché is explored.

<sup>82</sup>Crisis, p. 133.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 134-5.

### CHAPTER III

<sup>86</sup> Crisis, pp. 79-82.

<sup>87</sup> It is important to note that, in The Idea of Phenomenology, Husserl distinguishes two senses of the term "transcendence." The first kind of transcendence is that which is ascribed to objects of "natural" cognition. All natural cognition, says Husserl, and "especially the prescientific, posits its objects as existent, and claims to reach matters of fact which are not 'strictly given to it,' are not 'immanent' to it." (Idea of Phenomenology, p. 27, italics mine.) This kind of transcendence, then, may be termed ontological transcendence. The second kind of transcendence is ascribed only to Objects of cognition within the immanence of transcendental subjectivity. Here, the element of existence has been bracketed out, but the objects of knowledge may still be said to transcend any particular act wherein it is "known", since no one act of cognition can adequately apprehend any immanent Object in its total self-givenness. Thus, Objects within the transcendental realm, while ontologically immanent, are intentionally transcendent. When Husserl describes the epoché as suppressing the "element of transcendence," it is always to the first kind of transcendence (ontological) that he refers.

<sup>88</sup> E. Husserl, The Idea of Phenomenology (The Hague: Martinus-Nijhoff, 1964), p. 30.

<sup>89</sup> Idea of Phenomenology, p. 31.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 35. The distinction drawn here between appearances of ontologically transcendent objects, and appearances in which the "object itself" is given has already been made in Chapter II, 2. The important point to note is that Husserl is not saying that within the epoché the distinction between "object" and "appearance" disappears, but that the distinction no longer has any ontological significance, and therefore does not preclude the possibility of intuitive knowledge.

<sup>91</sup> Ideas I, p. 110.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 110. The validity of applying those judgments made within the epoché to the "real" world is an issue which will be raised later in this chapter, in connection with the compatibility of the concepts of life-world and epoché.

- <sup>93</sup> Crisis, p. 135, italics mine.
- <sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 144.
- <sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 148.
- <sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 148.
- <sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 151.
- <sup>98</sup> Ibid., pp. 128-9, italics mine.
- <sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 127.
- <sup>100</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 129.
- <sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 152.
- <sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 157, italics mine.
- <sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 154, italics mine.
- <sup>105</sup> Ibid., italics mine.
- <sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 155, italics mine.
- <sup>107</sup> Crisis, p. 136, italics mine.
- <sup>108</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 132.
- <sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 146, italics mine.
- <sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 155, italics mine.
- <sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 113.
- <sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 131.
- <sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 136.
- <sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 137.
- <sup>116</sup> See (113) above.
- <sup>117</sup> Crisis, p. 113.
- <sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> This use of the life-world as a means of uniting the concrete human ego with the transcendental ego was discussed in Chapter II. The implications of this aspect of the life-world's meaning will be further discussed in the next section of the present chapter.

<sup>123</sup> Crisis, p. 150.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 137, italics mine.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., pp. 176-177.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p. 176, italics mine.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., italics mine.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., italics mine.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., p. 179, italics mine.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 176, italics mine.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p. 180, italics mine.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 184.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>144</sup>See Edward G. Ballard's article "On the Method of Phenomenological Reduction, Its Presuppositions, and Its Future," in Life-World and Consciousness, ed. Lester Embree, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972) where he contends that the ideal of certainty is a presupposition which Husserl does not subject to the phenomenological epoche. However, he suggests that an epoche of this ideal ought to be attempted--"might, though, such an epoche of the ideal of rigor not be made? Must it not be made if presuppositionlessness is to be pursued?" (p. 118)

On the basis of our discussion, however, such an application of the epoche would seem, in principle, bound to fail, since even the suspension of the ideal of certainty is guided by the same ideal. Thus, the presupposition of certainty would be reaffirmed by any such attempt, rather than the reverse.

<sup>145</sup>In Chapter II, we suggested that Husserl might ultimately have to identify the life-world with transcendental subjectivity. In view of the discussion in the present chapter, however, the possibility of this identification is rendered questionable. Such an identification presupposes the possibility of performing a complete reduction to the transcendental sphere. We have suggested, however, that a complete reduction of the existential life-world to its transcendental correlate is problematic--hence, so too is a complete identification of the life-world and the Transcendental Ego.

<sup>146</sup>Crisis, p. 181.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid., italics mine.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid., p. 108. See also pp. 163-4, where Husserl speaks of perception--the primary mode of intuition in the life-world--as being constituted within inter-subjectivity, not by one transcendental ego.

<sup>151</sup>Ibid., p. 167, italics mine.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>155</sup> Quentin Lauer, (in Phenomenology: Its Genesis and Prospects. (New York: Harper and Row, 1965) gives an excellent analysis of the Fifth Meditation; and suggests that, while Husserl's discussion of the problem of the ego which is at once "constituting and constituted" opens up new vistas in philosophy, it is questionable whether his "heroic effort to re-establish metaphysics according to the canons set up by science" can really resolve this issue which it, more than any other philosophy, must resolve.

<sup>155</sup> Crisis, p. 174.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., p. 186.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., pp. 154-155, where Husserl argues that the "Cartesian Way" of approaching the transcendental sphere gave us only an ego, "empty of content," and that only by "beginning anew," with a reduction to the pregiven life-world, could this defect be remedied.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., p. 186.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p. 186.

CONCLUSION

<sup>164</sup>Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Phenomenology of Perception (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1962), p. xiv. *Italics mine.*

<sup>165</sup>Maurice Merleau-Ponty. "The Philosopher and his Shadow," in Signs. Translated by R. McCleary. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 180.



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