

Tomislav Zelić

Columbia University, Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures, 319 Hamilton Hall,
MC 2812, 1130 Amsterdam Ave. USA- New York, NY 10027
tz52@columbia.edu

On the Phenomenology of the Life-World

Abstract

This essay attempts to clarify the ambiguities attached to the term ‘the life-world’ and ‘a priori of the life-world’ in the phenomenological sense. It sketches the phenomenology of the life-world with respect to everyday pre-scientific life and perception, the mathematical and geometrical sciences of the natural world, and the eidetic and phenomenological reductions of pure phenomenology and phenomenological philosophy.

Key words

Edmund Husserl, phenomenology, life-world

Introduction

Edmund Husserl (1858–1938) used the term “life-world” (*Lebenswelt*) for the first time in his manuscripts as early as in 1917,¹ but he did not present an extensive treatment of its phenomenological meaning until the publication of *The Crisis of European Science and Transcendental Phenomenology* (*Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die Transzendente Phänomenologie*) in 1936. As it stands in his last major work, the term is extremely ambiguous. In order to give a general idea of the complications, let us consider some of Husserl’s definitions, before presenting an interpretative analysis and comprehensive explication of the phenomenological term “the *a priori* of the life-world” (*das Apriori der Lebenswelt*).²

Husserl uses it to designate “the only real world, the one that is actually given through perception” (*die einzig wirkliche, die wirklich wahrnehmungsmäßig gegebene, die je erfahrene und erfahrbare Welt*) and “the original ground of all theoretical and practical life” (*der Urboden alles theoretischen wie praktischen Lebens*) on the same page.³ At the same time, it is the “forgotten meaning-fundament of natural science” (*das vergessene Sinnesfundament der*

1

According to David Carr, “Husserl’s Problematic Concept of the Life-World”, in F.A. Elliston and P. McCormick (eds.), *Husserl, Expositions and Appraisals* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), S. 202–212, 203 and fn. 3 in reference to the Husserl archives at Leuven.

2

Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente*

Phänomenologie, in: *Gesammelte Werke, Husserliana, Band VI*, hrsg. v. Walter Biemel (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1954). Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northern University Press, 1970), p. 139ff.

3

Krisis, S. 49; *Crisis*, p. 49.

Naturwissenschaft),⁴ “the constant ground of validity”⁵ (*der ständige Geltungsboden*), “a source of self-evidence” and “a source of verification” (*eine ständig bereite Quelle von Selbstverständlichkeiten*).⁶ Although it is both the “totality” (*Totalität*) and the “horizon” (*Horizont*)⁷ of all recognized and unrecognized reality,⁸ it does not contain in itself the ideal objects of exact mathematics and geometry.⁹ On the one hand, it has a “bodily” (*körperlich*) character and we lead a “living” (*leiblich*)¹⁰ existence in it, but, on the other hand, it is one of our “cultural accomplishments” (*Kulturleistungen*), “a universal mental acquisition” (*eine universale geistige Leistung*), and “the construct of a universal, ultimately functioning subjectivity” (*Gebilde einer universalen letztfungierenden Subjektivität*).¹¹ Although “each of us has his life-world,” it is “meant as the world for all” (*jeder von uns hat seine Lebenswelt, gemeint als die Welt für Alle*).¹² On the one hand, it is “subject-relative” (*subject-relativ*),¹³ but, on the other hand, it is “given prior to all ends” (*vorgegeben allen Zwecken*).¹⁴ Nevertheless, it has a “general structure” (*allgemeine Struktur*).¹⁵ It is simply what it is and remains unchanged no matter how it is cognized in its concreteness,¹⁶ although it incorporates the progressive accomplishments of the objective sciences.¹⁷

At first glance, these varying and seemingly contradictory descriptions and definitions already hint at the problems inherent to the phenomenological concept of the life-world. The task in this essay is to explicate the meaning of the phrase “the *a priori* of the life-world” (*das Apriori der Lebenswelt*).¹⁸ The first part of the phrase, *a priori*, is no less problematic than the second part, life-world. In *Ideas I* (*Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, Erstes Buch, Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie), Husserl had at first assigned *a priori* status to essences and later to the structures of transcendental subjectivity,¹⁹ before finally assigning it to the life-world in the *Crisis*. Hence, let us follow and explain the trajectory of these puzzling changes in Husserl’s two major works before sketching out the phenomenology of the life-world.

A priori

In the trajectory of Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology from the *Ideas I* (1913) to the *Crisis* (1936), we can distinguish roughly three thematic phases. In the first phase, phenomenology evolves as a descriptive science of *a priori* essences constituted as matters of facts in the natural attitude. Accordingly, phenomenology, as the descriptive eidetic *science* of essences, still operates in the natural attitude as the empirical natural sciences, although, strictly speaking, the former presupposes the latter. By performing the *epoché*, the suspension of judgment, i.e., by “putting out of action” the natural attitude in which facts and essences are constituted, the phenomenologist must bracket off the empirical sciences of facts as well as the descriptive eidetic science of essences and reduce both spheres to the universal structures of transcendental subjectivity.

At this point, the question may arise as to whether the life-world might not be the *a priori* horizon of essences, i.e., the meaning-fundament from which all essences arise in the process of eidetic reduction. If yes, then the *a priori* status of essences becomes questionable or it is even lost altogether. In the second phase of Husserl’s procedure, the phenomenological reduction uncovers the sphere of transcendental subjectivity, which constitutes all facts and essences as well as the two respective sciences thereof. In the first phase, phenomenology elaborates the eidetic science and essences as the presupposed

substratum of all empirical natural sciences of facts. In the second phase, both facts and essences fall under the *epoché*, since they turn out to be mundane and constituted by transcendental subjectivity. As a result, essences lose their former *a priori* status. The eidetic variation, the phenomenological method of accessing essences, still operates in the natural attitude. The phenomenological *epoché* thematizes the accessibility of *a priori* essences as fundamental to the intentional structures of transcendental subjectivity.

At this point, the question may arise as to whether the structures of transcendental subjectivity that Husserl laid out in the *Ideas I* capture the meaning of the phenomenological term ‘the *a priori* of the life-world.’ Husserl hyperbolically alleged that the absolute being of transcendental subjectivity would survive even the annihilation of the world.²⁰ According to Husserl’s early phenomenological inquiry, we must reduce the world to the correlative transcendent objectivity, which we posit as actually given in the natural attitude, although transcendental subjectivity constitutes it. Later in the *Crisis*, Husserl puts into perspective his early conviction (which shares the objectivism of the natural sciences under critical examination in the *Crisis*) and clarifies the correlation between the life-world and transcendental subjectivity. On the other hand, the *Crisis* leaves us with another paradox, namely, that transcendental subjectivity is at the same time the constituting subject of the life-world and the constituted object in the life-world. This paradox, however, is far less problematic than it may seem at first glance. It merely underscores “humanity’s responsibility for itself” (*Verantwortung der Menschheit für sich selbst*).²¹

In view of the equivocations resulting from Husserl’s use of the terms ‘*a priori*’ and ‘life-world,’ we should examine the terminology within the entire work, if we are to arrive at a coherent interpretation of phenomenology in

- | | |
|---|--|
| 4 | 15 |
| <i>Krisis</i> , S. 48 und 123–6; <i>Crisis</i> , p. 48–53, and 121–3. | <i>Krisis</i> , S. 142f.; <i>Crisis</i> , p. 142f. |
| 5 | 16 |
| <i>Krisis</i> , S. 124; <i>Crisis</i> , p. 122. | <i>Krisis</i> , S. 59; <i>Crisis</i> , p. 59. |
| 6 | 17 |
| <i>Krisis</i> , S. 124; <i>Crisis</i> , p. 126. | <i>Krisis</i> , S. 131; <i>Crisis</i> , p. 129. |
| 7 | 18 |
| <i>Krisis</i> , S. 432; <i>Crisis</i> , p. 379ff. | <i>Krisis</i> , S. 140ff.; <i>Crisis</i> , p. 139ff. |
| 8 | 19 |
| <i>Krisis</i> , S. 49; <i>Crisis</i> , p. 50. | Edmund Husserl, <i>Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, Erstes Buch, Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie</i> , in: <i>Gesammelte Werke, Husserliana, Band III, 1</i> , hrsg. v. Karl Schumann (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1976). Edmund Husserl, <i>Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book, General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology</i> , trans. F. Kersten (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1998). |
| 9 | 20 |
| <i>Krisis</i> , S. 137; <i>Crisis</i> , p. 139. | <i>Ideen I</i> , §49, S. 103 ff., <i>Ideas I</i> , #49, p. 101. |
| 10 | 21 |
| <i>Krisis</i> , S. 50 und 109f.; <i>Crisis</i> , p. 50 and 107f. | <i>Krisis</i> , S. 348; <i>Crisis</i> , p. 400. |
| 11 | |
| <i>Krisis</i> , S. 115; <i>Crisis</i> , p. 113. | |
| 12 | |
| <i>Krisis</i> , S. 258; <i>Crisis</i> , p. 254. | |
| 13 | |
| <i>Krisis</i> , S. 127f.; <i>Crisis</i> , p. 125f. | |
| 14 | |
| <i>Krisis</i> , S. 141; <i>Crisis</i> , fn. p. 138. | |

general and the phenomenology of the life-world in particular. We should separate the phenomenology of the life-world from the earlier phenomenological enterprise, especially the description of essences, which Husserl later developed into a logical and linguistic theory of meaning. In his final work, Husserl thematizes the life-world itself at length. In this context, the term “the *a priori* of the life-world” becomes problematic because of its equivocations. The *Crisis* mainly deals with the relationship between the *a priori* constituted objects of the mathematical and geometrical sciences of nature and the *a priori* constituting structures of transcendental subjectivity. On the one hand, Husserl maintains that the objective sciences of nature presuppose yet cannot inquire the pre-logical and subject-relative *a priori* of the life-world.²² On the other hand, he states:

“[...] the life-world does have, in all its relative features, a *general structure*. This general structure, to which everything that exists relatively is bound, is not itself relative. We can attend to it in its generality and, with sufficient care, fix it once and for all in a way equally accessible to all.”

“[...] diese Lebenswelt [hat] in allen ihren Relativitäten ihre *allgemeine Struktur*. Diese allgemeine Struktur, an die alles relative Seiende gebunden ist, ist nicht selbst relativ. Wir können sie in ihrer Allgemeinheit beachten und mit entsprechender Vorsicht ein für allemal und für jedermann gleich zugänglich feststellen.”²³

Of course, phenomenology alone is able to disclose the life-world. Although the motivation for the phenomenological reduction to the *a priori* of the life-world is comprehensible – it is, namely, the reduction to a pre-logical and subject-relative experience of the life-world – the goal of the reduction remains dubious, as long as the life-world remains heterogeneous and its conception ambiguous. In order to unfold the heterogeneity even further and resolve the ambiguities in the end, we should provide an interpretative analysis of the meaning facets of the term ‘the *a priori* of the life-world.’ In other words, we should make a holistic distinction between at least four meanings of the term ‘world,’ each of which captures a only a limited aspect of the phenomenological meaning of the term ‘life-world’ as it is used throughout the *Crisis*. The four worlds are, first, the world of scientific objectivity, secondly, the world of perceptual meaning, thirdly, the world of specialized *pre-scientific* interests, fourthly and lastly, the life-world in the strict phenomenological sense of the term ‘the *a priori* of the life-world.’

The World of Scientific Objectivity

The constitution of the world of scientific objectivity presupposes the establishment of mathematical-logical ideal objects that scientists apply to sensible forms, shapes, and qualities according to their theoretical research interests. These ideal objects are the accomplishment of the direct or indirect mathematization of nature, i.e., the scientific process of abstraction and interpretation. Scientific inquiry conceives of and constitutes the world as the sum-total of objects that are accessible to experiential cognition and theoretical thinking, i.e., either as objects of matters of fact constituted through the methods of the natural sciences or essences constituted through the phenomenological method of eidetic variation. The mathematical and geometrical sciences of nature conceive of the world as the totality of objects that we can scientifically cognize in theoretical thinking about matters of fact. According to phenomenology, the mathematical and geometrical sciences of nature presuppose the eidetic science of essences, which are prior to matters of facts. In opposition to the objective scientific view of the world, Husserl emphasizes that the life-world

is the meaning-fundament that scientific thinking presupposes and the horizon in which scientific thinking takes place. In the *Crisis*, he inquires into the relationship of scientific thinking and life-world experience, and the relationship between the world of scientific objectivity and that which the extended phenomenological reduction discloses as the life-world in the strict sense.

The transcendental historical-critical phenomenological reflection reveals that mathematics and geometry have had a practical purpose in Greek antiquity, as for instance required by precise land surveying, in which the theoretical science had a beneficial connection with the life-world and the practical needs that arise from it.²⁴ Husserl suggests that Pythagorean mathematicians were not only aware of the ontological difference between the ideal objects and the sensible world but also about their method of applying the ideal objects to the sensible world to understand it. He juxtaposes the relationship between the mathematical and geometrical sciences and the life-world against the mathematization of nature in modernity. He highlights two highpoints in this process. The first accomplishment was Galileo's geometrization of nature, and the second was Descartes' and Leibniz' arithmetization of geometry. More specifically, the abstraction of an ideal from a sensible object produces, as Husserl puts it, a geometrical "limit-shapes" (*Limesgestalten*) with "sensible plenum" (*sinnliche Fülle*).²⁵ We can geometrically abstract these ideal objects from sensible shapes, without interpreting them any further. We may then apply the arithmetically interpreted plena to elucidate the sensible world. However, ideally thinkable and experientially sensible objects remain unequal. Nevertheless, nature itself "becomes a mathematical manifold and the mathematical techniques provide the key to its inner workings."²⁶ Galileo's mathematical science holds nature to be ontologically mathematizable, and the world to be ontologically reducible to logically or mathematically idealized structures. "Knowing the world in a seriously scientific way, 'philosophically,' can have meaning and be possible only if a method can be devised of *constructing*, systematically and in a sense in advance, the world [...]." (*Die Welt 'philosophisch', ernstlich wissenschaftlich erkennen, das kann nur Sinn und Möglichkeit haben, wenn eine Methode zu erfinden ist, die Unendlichkeit ihrer Kausalitäten, von dem geringeren Bestand der jeweils in direkter Erfahrung und nur relative festzustellenden aus systematisch, gewissermaßen im voraus, zu konstruieren.*)²⁷ David Carr has summarized this twofold step as follows:

"To overcome the vagueness and relativity of ordinary experience, science performs a set of abstractions and interpretations upon the world as it originally presents itself. First it focuses upon the shape-aspect of the world [...], then it interprets these shapes as pure geometrical shapes in order to deal with them in geometrical terms. But it forgets that this first move is an abstraction *from* something and its second an interpretation *of* something [...]. Having forgotten the abstractive and idealizing role of scientific thought, the philosophical interpretation comes up with an ontological claim: *to be is to be measurable* [...]"²⁸

22
Krisis, S. 140; *Crisis*, p. 140.

23
Krisis, S. 142; *Crisis*, p. 139, italics in the original.

24
D. Carr, "Husserl's Problematic Concept of the Life-World", p. 204.

25
Krisis, S. 27; *Crisis*, p. 30.

26
D. Carr, "Husserl's Problematic Concept of the Life-World", p. 205.

27
Krisis, S. 29/30; *Crisis*, p. 32, italics in the original.

28
D. Carr, "Husserl's Problematic Concept of the Life-World", p. 204.

The logical and mathematical truth about the world presents all objects in exact yet idealized measurements and relationships, while the real objects in the world never represent more than just approximations to these idealized objects. Thus, it may occur that “through a garb of ideas [...] we take for *true being* what is actually a *method*” (*Das Idealkleid macht es, daß wir für wahres Sein nehmen, was eine Methode ist [...]*).²⁹

In reference to the mathematical and geometrical science of nature, phenomenology is not the discovery or description of ideal objects, but the attempt to clarify the meaning of ideal objects. Therefore, Husserl does not dismiss scientific idealization processes but rather praises its accomplishments. However, the critical reflection on these accomplishments demonstrates that the modern mathematical and geometrical sciences of nature do not inquire back into the original constitution of ideal objects. Husserl also retains both the eidetic reduction to essences, i.e., of the life-world and transcendental subjectivity, and the transcendental reduction to the *a priori* structures of transcendental subjectivity, which are presupposed by all accomplishments of objective constitution. The mathematical and geometrical sciences of nature have neither the means nor the methods to give a plausible account of the idealization process in which they engage. Thus, they cannot help but engage in abstractions and interpretations of ideal objects without realizing that those ideal objects, which they apply in their understanding of nature, are truly intentional accomplishments of transcendental subjectivity. The point of Husserl’s discussion of the modern scientific mathematization of nature is to show that theoretical scientific thinking conceals and at times may even dismiss the life-world, which, since primitive times, always is and remains the forgotten meaning-fundament of the pursuit of science. The world, as understood by the mathematical and geometrical sciences of nature, is equitable with the idealized models and constructions, which are the results of the mathematization of nature. However, thereby the life-world disappears as certain and *pre-given*. Whereas originally the motivation for the mathematization of nature was the exact measurement of nature, it later became the illumination of the world defined as the totality of ideal objects. After a process of detachment, whereby the abstractions became interpretations on their own accord, the mathematical and geometrical world of objectivity has gradually come to substitute the life-world. Husserl writes:

“[...] we must note something of the highest importance that occurred even as early as Galileo: the surreptitious substitution of the mathematically substructured world of idealities for the only real world [...]—our everyday life-world.”

“Aber nun ist als höchst wichtig zu beachten eine schon bei Galilei sich vollziehende Unterschiebung der mathematisch substruierten Welt der Idealitäten für die einzig wirkliche [...] Welt – unsere alltägliche Lebenswelt.”³⁰

Ironically, the modern sciences fall into a crisis despite or rather precisely because of their purported success. Husserl arrives at the conclusion that “Galileo, the discoverer [...] of physics is at once a discovering and concealing genius” (*Galileo, der Entdecker [...] der Physik ist zugleich ein entdeckender und verdeckender Genius.*)³¹ Taking into consideration Husserl’s historically critical reflection on the mathematical and geometrical sciences of nature, it may seem puzzling that the method of mathematically and geometrically idealizing nature, though unclarified, could produce a great variety of meaningful formulae and beneficent techniques. This puzzle is precisely what Husserl describes as the crisis of European sciences. Succinctly, the crisis is that the modern sciences gradually detach from and become forgetful

of the life-world. The historically critical phenomenological reflection of this crisis demonstrates that the life-world is the *pre-given*, tacitly presupposed yet unthematic meaning-fundament for scientific inquiry. More precisely, it is the horizon of all intentional life of consciousness. The extended phenomenological reduction discloses the life-world as the *a priori* stratum of transcendental subjectivity, while it demonstrates that the scientific objective *discoveries* of ideal objects made by the mathematical and geometrical sciences of nature are truly the transcendental subjective *creation* of ideal objects.³²

The World of Perceptual Objectivity

The second world, i.e., the world of perceptual objectivity, consists of objects that we perceive with determinate shapes, sizes, and qualities. In their determinacy, perceptual objects obtain an aspect of invariance, because of which they become objectively measurable. Although perceptual objects are observable by all of us at least potentially, there are no criteria of exactness in scientific terms. As a result, the intersubjective commonality of perceptual objects holds only in an inexact sense. We must distinguish this world from the world that the phenomenological analysis of the original life-world experiences discloses, namely, the perceptual world of objects, which we perceive indeterminately and subjectively. In this case, the life-world is the pre-objective world of perception where we perceive vague types in an indeterminate mode of givenness.³³

Husserl had already introduced his conception of the life-world as the immediately intuitable horizon in the *Ideas I*. However, he did not deal with the meaning of the life-world as the perceptual horizon there. Describing the “the field of perception” from the perspective of the natural attitude, he meditates:

“I am conscious of the world endlessly spread out in space, endlessly becoming and having endlessly become in time. I am conscious of it: that signifies, above all, that intuitively I find it immediately, that I experience it.... Along with the ones now perceived, other actual objects are there for me as determinate, as more or less known, without being themselves perceived or, indeed, present in any other mode of intuition. I can let my attention wander away from the writing table which was just now seen and noticed, out through the unseen parts of the room which are behind my back, to the verandah, into the garden, to the children in the arbor, etc.... But not even with the domain of this intuitually clear or obscure, distinct or indistinct, *co-present* – which makes up a constant halo around the field of actual perception – is the world exhausted which is ‘on hand’ for me in the manner peculiar to consciousness at every waking moment. On the contrary, in the fixed order of its being, it reaches into the unlimited. What is now perceived and what is more or less clearly co-present and determinate (or at least somewhat determinate), are penetrated and surrounded by an *obscurely intended to horizon of indeterminate actuality*.”

29

Krisis, S. 52; *Crisis*, p. 51, italics in the original.

30

Krisis, S. 48/9; *Crisis*, p. 48/9.

31

Krisis, S. 48/9; *Crisis*, p. 52.

32

It is noteworthy that Husserl’s critical argument against the modern mathematical sci-

ences of nature is similar to that of Nietzsche against Kant’s critical idealism in *Beyond Good and Evil*. See Tomislav Zelić, “Nietzsche’s Theory of Multiperspectivism Revisited,” *Synthesis philosophica* 22 (2007), no. 1: 231–44.

33

Krisis, S. 340; *Crisis*, p. 344.

“Ich bin mir einer Welt bewußt, endlos ausgebreitet im Raum, endlos werdend und geworden in der Zeit. Ich bin mir ihrer bewußt, das sagt vor allem: Ich finde sie unmittelbar anschaulich vor, ich erfahre sie. [...] Für mich da sind wirkliche Objekte, als bestimmte, mehr oder minder bekannte, in eins mit den aktuell wahrgenommenen, ohne daß sie selbst wahrgenommen, ja selbst anschaulich gegenwärtig sind. Ich kann meine Aufmerksamkeit wandern lassen von dem eben gesehenen und beachteten Schreibtisch aus durch die ungesehenen Teile des Zimmers, hinter meinem Rücken zur Veranda, in den Garten, zu den Kindern in der Laube usw. [...] Aber auch nicht mit dem Bereiche dieses anschaulich klar oder dunkel, deutlich oder undeutlich, *Mitgegenwärtigen*, das einen beständigen Umring des aktuellen Wahrnehmungsfeldes ausmacht, erschöpft sich die Welt, die für mich in jedem wachen Moment bewußtseinsmäßig ‘vorhanden’ ist. Sie reicht vielmehr in einer festen Sinnesordnung ins Unbegrenzte. Das aktuelle Wahrgenommene, das mehr oder minder klar Mitgegenwärtige und Bestimmte (oder mindestens einigermaßen Bestimmte) ist teils durchsetzt, teils umgeben von einem *dunkel bewußten Horizont unbestimmter Wirklichkeit*.”³⁴

At this point, we must note that we cannot simply reduce the life-world as Husserl conceives of it in the *Crisis* to the unthematic horizon of perceptual objectivity. Such a conception of the phenomenological reduction would be misleading for at least the following two reasons. First, the *Ideas I* would remain within the confines of explicating the natural attitude. The phenomenological reduction would not reach far enough; it would fail to disclose transcendental subjectivity. Secondly, and more importantly, we would contract the meaning of “the *a priori* of the life-world” to the unperceivable horizon of perception, which certainly contains the vestiges of an adequate phenomenological analysis of perception, but does not exhaust the full phenomenological meaning of “the *a priori* of the life-world.” Moreover, we could think of the second world, i.e., the world of perceptual objectivity, as constituted out of the first world, i.e., the world of scientific objectivity. However, in that case, we would contract the life-world to an idealized objectivity in the manner as the mathematical and geometrical sciences of nature do. As a result, we would thus discover and at the same time conceal the world of perceptual objectivity, as Galileo vis-à-vis the logically and mathematically idealized world of physics.

The World of *Pre-Scientific* Interests

The third world consists of the pluralized world of specialized *pre-scientific* interests and motivations arising from our subjective projects and vocations. We constitute this world out of overlapping and intersecting worlds intersubjectively, insofar as individuals living in the world live and perceive the same objects in a common world. For instance, all participating perceivers perceive the same house. Although the interest in the same object varies depending on whether the perceiver is the dweller of the house, an architect, a real estate agent, or a contractor according to their vocational orientation, the house is an intersubjectively communal object of perception. The various worlds of specialized interests incorporate the same house under different aspects. As a result, the object is a construct constituted out of the different senses defined in terms of the different specialized worlds. To that end, the constitution of the world of perceptual objectivity is reducible to the intersubjectively constituted world of specialized interests. We have already seen above that the world of scientific objectivity is reducible to the world of perceptual objectivity. Now that we have asserted the reducibility of the worlds of specialized interests to the world of perceptual objectivity, the former attains the status of an interim and hybrid sphere of the scientific and *pre-scientific* worlds.

Since we have already elaborated the concealment of the life-world by the idealizations of the mathematical and geometrical sciences of nature, we can

now to rule out the meaning facet of the term ‘the *a priori* of the life-world’ according to which the life-world is the totality of the worlds of specialized interests. On the one hand, Husserl demonstrates how the mathematical and geometrical sciences of nature conceal the life-world as the meaning-fundament that they presuppose in their very efforts. He also calls for the desideratum of a specific philosophical science of the life-world, that is, the phenomenology of the life-world. On the other hand, it is evident that none of the worlds of specialized interest motivates an interest in the totality of all possible worlds of specialized interests. The idea of a total interest is absurd on its own terms. Therefore, the phenomenologist cannot perform the phenomenological thematization of the life-world by conceptualizing the life-world as the totality of all specialized *pre-scientific* interests, and neither can the phenomenological philosopher-scientist devolve the investigation of the life-world upon any of the specialized sciences. Hence, the life-world is also not the totality of the systems and models of the mathematical and geometrical sciences of nature [*Naturwissenschaften*] and the humanities [*Geisteswissenschaften*]. On the contrary, the phenomenological *epoché* must be extended to be understood not only as bracketing the general thesis of the actual world and the putting out of action of the natural attitude, but also as the exclusion of the mode of inquiry into objective sciences and *pre-scientific* interests. Phenomenology prevails over all scientific and *pre-scientific* theories of the world and accomplishes the historical reduction of the natural world concepts to the phenomenological concept of the life-world as the horizon of transcendental subjectivity.

The historical-critical reflection explicates yet another aspect of the interrelation of the worlds of scientific and *pre-scientific* interests. Insofar as we may understand the world of *pre-scientific* interest as a world of culture in the widest sense, the sciences of nature and the scientists themselves belong to the life-world as cultural phenomena. Thus in all the natural world conceptions of the natural sciences and *pre-scientific* interests, the “everyday surrounding world of life is presupposed as existing” (*die alltägliche Lebenswelt als seiende vorausgesetzt*), and yet here are also “the sciences, as cultural facts in this world, with their scientists and theories” (*die Wissenschaften, als Kulturtatsachen in dieser Welt mit ihren Wissenschaftlern und Theorien*).³⁵ Although the natural sciences enrich the life-world culturally, the life-world remains invariant during all of the theoretical changes in the scientific view of the world. In other words, we may subsume the natural sciences under “cultural accomplishments” (*Kulturleistungen*). However, Husserl points out that they presuppose the *a priori* of the life-world “as the construct of a universal, ultimately functioning subjectivity” (*als Gebilde einer universalen letztfunktionierenden Subjektivität*).³⁶ He explains further:

“Before all such accomplishments, there has always already been a universal accomplishment, presupposed by all human praxis and all *pre-scientific* and scientific life. The latter have the spiritual acquisitions of the universal accomplishment as their constant substratum, and all their acquisitions are destined to flow into it.”

“Allen solchen Leistungen ist immer schon vorhergegangen eine universale Leistung, die jede menschliche Praxis und jedes vorwissenschaftliche und wissenschaftliche Leben schon vor-

34
Ideen I, §27, S. 56f.; *Ideas I*, #27, p. 51f.

36
Krisis, S. 115; *Crisis*, p. 113.

35
Krisis, S. 106; *Crisis*, p. 104.

aussetzt und deren geistige Erwerbe sie als ständigen Untergrund haben, in denen ihre eigenen einzuströmen berufen sind.”³⁷

Therefore, the theoretical results of the mathematical and geometrical sciences of nature attain “the character of validities for the life-world, adding themselves as such to its own composition” (*den Charakter von Geltungen für die Lebenswelt* [...], als solche ihrem eigenen Bestande sich immerfort zuschlagend).³⁸ The natural sciences as such are constructs of transcendental subjectivity and its particular praxis, namely, the theoretical-logical, which itself belongs to the life-world. As a result, the world of the theoretical-scientific investigation of logical objectivity falls back into the cultural life-world as one among the *pre-scientific* interests.³⁹

Eidetic Reduction and Mathematical and Geometrical Idealization

We must examine yet another aspect of the phenomenology of the life-world; namely, the methodological consideration of the relation between the process of the scientific idealizations of the life-world and the phenomenological method of eidetic reduction to essences. By virtue of this consideration, we must sharply emphasize the difference between both methods and underscore that the method of idealization cannot explicate the term ‘the *a priori* of the life-world.’ As we have noted at the beginning, the objective logical *a priori* of the mathematical and geometrical sciences of nature result from the process of idealizing the life-world. On the other hand, phenomenology holds that the life-world has its own general structures. If the method of idealization were indistinguishable from the eidetic reduction, then the life-world would be reducible to logical *a priori* ideal objects resulting from the process of scientific idealization. That is, the life-world would be a logical objective *a priori*. However, the life-world in the phenomenological sense, the stratum within the universal *a priori* structures of transcendental subjectivity, is neither thematic in any particular scientific research project of the mathematical-logical type nor is the life-world solely a perceptual object, not to mention a *pre-scientific* object of interest.

In the idealization process, we start with a given sensible shape, e.g. a circular shape, and imagine other possible shapes belonging to the same type, which we arrange in a series of more or less circular shapes. Then we become aware that the series points to a limit-shape, in our example, the perfect geometrical shape called ‘circle.’ We cannot traverse the entire series, since it is infinite; however, we proceed as if we had done so. At this point, the question arises as to whether the ideal limit-shape is presupposed *a priori* or whether we intuitively apprehend the affinity of the series to some ideal form. Husserl accounts for the life-world experience in terms of our encounter with sensible shapes or vague types, which are not ideal objects. The vague types are fully empirical, since they belong to the phenomenologically reduced world in which we perceive indeterminate sensible shapes. Ultimately, we constitute *a priori* given essences through eidetic reduction and the method of idealization. Although essences correlate to *a priori* given structures of empirical vague types, they are not identical with them. Therefore, the structures of the life-world are analogous or correlative to ideal objects that we constitute through either eidetic reduction or idealization. The problem of the life-world consists in the question as to how the original life-world experience of pre-ob-

jective, non-ideal, and vague types could correlate to the ideal objects that are accessible in intuitive apprehension alone, if the former remain phenomenal approximations to the latter. While the method of idealization is non-arbitrary and restrained by the relation to the type in question, the eidetic reduction is free and arbitrary. According to this differentiation, the disclosure of the life-world as a stratum of the *a priori* structure of the life-world and its own essential structures can succeed exclusively through the phenomenological method of eidetic reduction.

At this point, we touch upon the problems of history and the ideality of meaning, which is related to the problem of the life-world and thus the requirements of genetic phenomenology. We can only brush upon this theme. The accomplishment of ideal objects by means of the intuitive apprehension demands a phenomenological account for the genesis of ideal objects. However, this account can never dispense with the requirement that the genesis of ideal objects must be compatible with the meaning of ideal objects. Since this thesis seems to incur the charge of psychologism, Husserl can only circumvent it by asserting that meanings are non-temporal and ahistorical ideal objects. Hence, ideal objects are said to be there before they are discovered by scientific inquiry, be it by means of idealization or eidetic reduction, and it is said that ideal objects never bear temporal predication. We constitute the unity of meaning referring to ideal objects in the transcendental history of meaning, which is not a history of events, but the non-temporal and ahistorical genesis of meaning.

The *A priori* of the Life-World

The phenomenological conception of the life-world supersedes the above treated natural conceptions of the world. According to the full-blown phenomenological conception, the life-world is the horizon within which all of the other worlds, the worlds of scientific objectivity, of perceptual objectivity, and of *pre-scientific* interests, are constituted and given. However, the life-world is not one world beside all of the others. Rather, the life-world is, to put it in a formula of transcendental philosophy, the condition of the possibility of all worlds qua worlds of natural conception. In the *Crisis*, the phenomenological reduction of the natural conception of the world to the transcendental-phenomenological conception of the life-world motivates the considerations on the life-world as the *a priori* horizon of transcendental subjectivity. The phenomenological reductions require an extension that will accomplish these considerations. Another goal of the *Crisis* is to clarify the world of scientific objectivity. This clarification entails the reference to a wide spectrum of natural world conceptions, namely, the world of perceptual objectivity and the world of *pre-scientific* interest, as well as the phenomenological conceptions of the original life-world experience of vague types and the life-world as the *a priori* horizon of transcendental subjectivity. Husserl subsumes all of these meaning facets of the life-world under one title, although only the former satisfies the meaning of the term “the *a priori* of the life-world” in the strictest phenomenological sense.

37

Crisis, S. 115; *Crisis*, p. 113.

38

Crisis, S. 134; *Crisis*, p. 131.

39

Crisis, S. 132; *Crisis*, p. 129. See the chapter entitled “Ambiguities in the Concept of the Life-World” in David Carr, *Phenomenology and the Problem of History* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 190–211.

The Phenomenology of the Life-World

However, the extended phenomenological *epoché* does not penetrate the life-world, nor does the life-world fall under the *epoché*. Rather, the *epoché* makes explicit what is unacknowledged in the natural conceptions of the world by disclosing the life-world as a stratum of the *a priori* structures of transcendental subjectivity – by thematizing the unthematic horizon of all constitutions. We bring to light the constitution of the life-world through transcendental subjectivity, which involves the multifaceted intentional meanings that constitute the equivocation of the phenomenological term ‘the *a priori* of the life-world’.

After all, to think that the life-world is not cognitively accessible would be a mistake. The philosophical and scientific investigation into the life-world encounters diversified phenomena of social practice and praxis such as acting, communicating, and evaluating, and so on as well as cultural, aesthetic, and religious achievements in the broadest sense and sorts of utility and value, beauty and ugliness, sacredness and profanity. Based on our phenomenological description of the world as pluralized worlds of perceptual objectivity and *pre-scientific* interests, we can conclude that they constitute a sphere of social and cultural practice: perceptual meaning is derivable from practical interests and activities. The core of perceptual cognition in the life-world is deeply rooted in action, communication, and evaluation. It would therefore be facetious to argue that the cognition of persons, events, and actions does not represent its objects adequately and exhaustively. Unique individuals always vaguely exemplify idealized types. In social and cultural practice, the life-world is the *pre-given* horizon of all intentional activity and it is cognizable only in purely theoretical investigations of transcendental phenomenology. We may put into question, so to speak, social actions, personalities, and events spatiotemporally. It is common knowledge that Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–61) has drawn on Husserl’s idea of the non-Cartesian “living body” (*Leib*) in contrast to the Cartesian “body” (*Körper*)⁴⁰ in order to demonstrate that perceptual meaning is derivable from its locomotion. The living body becomes a cultural object exercising the power of expressive communication.⁴¹

In conclusion, we can assert, quite generally, that meaning is derivable from the social, cultural, and historical coverage of the life-world. However, due to the complexity of the life-world, we cannot plausibly regard the cognition of such life-world phenomena as highly idealized forms of science. Factual constraints necessarily keep the level of idealization and exactness of the phenomenologically motivated sciences of the life-world lower than that of the mathematical-logical sciences of nature. Transcendental phenomenology accomplishes, first, the phenomenological clarification of ideal objects’ meaning, which describes that the mathematical-logical idealizations of life-world presuppose manifold accomplishments of the full intentional life of transcendental subjectivity. Secondly, with the genetic phenomenology of meaning, it gives a transcendental-historical account of the intentional life of transcendental subjectivity, the prerequisite that ensures the intersubjectivity of the study of the life-world and renounces both objectivism and naturalism. Thus, phenomenology, correctly understood as the transcendental-philosophic clarification of meaning, makes possible the philosophical and scientific investigation of the diversified and complex phenomena of the life-world.

References:

- Edmund Husserl, *Gesammelte Werke, Husserliana* (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954ff.).
- Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book*, trans. F. Kersten (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983).
- Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northern University Press, 1970).
- David Carr, "Husserl's Problematic Concept of the Life-World", in F.A. Elliston and P. McCormick (eds.), *Husserl, Expositions and Appraisals* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 202–212.
- David Carr, "Ambiguities in the Concept of the Life-World", in: David Carr, *Phenomenology and the Problem of History* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 190–211.
- Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. P. Kegan (New York: Routledge, 2002). Translation of the French original *Phénoménologie de la Perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945).

Tomislav Zelić

O fenomenologiji životnog svijeta

Sažetak

Ovaj članak pokušava ne samo pojasniti višeznačnosti vezane uz fenomenološke pojmove 'životni svijet' (*Lebenswelt*) i 'a priori svijeta života' (*das Apriori der Lebenswelt*), nego isto ocrtati fenomenologiju svijeta života u odnosu prema predznanstvenom životu i svakdanje percepcije, matematičkim i geometrijskim prirodoslovnim znanostima te eidetičkoj i fenomenološkoj redukciji čiste fenomenologije i fenomenološke filozofije.

Ključne riječi

Edmund Husserl, fenomenologija, svijet života

Tomislav Zelić

Über die Phänomenologie der Lebenswelt

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Essay versucht nicht nur die Vieldeutigkeiten zu entwirren, die sich um die phänomenologischen Begriffe ‚Lebenswelt‘ und ‚Apriori der Lebenswelt‘ ranken, sondern auch eine Phänomenologie der Lebenswelt in Beziehung zu vorwissenschaftlichem Alltagsleben und sinnlicher Wahrnehmung, den mathematischen und geometrischen Naturwissenschaften sowie der eidetischen und phänomenologischen Reduktion der reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie zu umreißen.

Schlüsselwörter

Edmund Husserl, Phänomenologie, Lebenswelt

40

Krisis, S. 109f.; Crisis, p. 106f.

41

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la Perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945). Maurice

Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. P. Kegan (New York: Routledge, 2002), 202ff.

Tomislav Zelić

Sur la phénoménologie de la *Lebenswelt* (« monde de la vie »)

Résumé

*Cet article tente non seulement de clarifier la polysémie des concepts phénoménologiques « le monde de la vie » (*Lebenswelt*) et « l'apriori du monde de la vie », mais aussi de définir la phénoménologie du monde de la vie par rapport à la vie préscientifique, à la perception quotidienne, aux sciences naturelles, mathématiques et géométriques, ainsi que par rapport à la réduction eidétique et phénoménologique de la phénoménologie pure et de la philosophie phénoménologique.*

Mots-clés

Edmund Husserl, phénoménologie, monde de la vie