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## Husserl's *Crisis* as a crisis of psychology

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### ABSTRACT

This paper places Husserl's mature work, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, in the context of his engagement with—and critique of—experimental psychology at the time. I begin by showing (a) that Husserl accorded psychology a crucial role in his philosophy, i.e., that of providing a scientific analysis of subjectivity, and (b) that he viewed contemporary psychology—due to its naturalism—as having failed to pursue this goal in the appropriate manner. I then provide an analysis of Husserl's views about naturalism and scientific philosophy. Some central themes of the *Crisis* are traced back to Husserl's earlier work and to his relationship with his teacher, Franz Brentano, with whom he disagreed about the status of “inner perception” as the proper scientific method for a phenomenological analysis. The paper then shows that Husserl was well aware of at least one publication about the crisis of psychology (Bühler's 1927 book), and it teases out some aspects of the complicated relationship between Husserl and members of the Würzburg School of thought psychology: The latter had drawn on Husserl's writings, but Husserl felt that they had misunderstood his central thesis. I conclude by placing Husserl's work in the wider context of scientific, cultural, and political crisis-discourses at the time.

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### 1. Introduction

In 1936, two years before his death, 77-year-old Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) published parts I and II of his mature work, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*. At this point in his life, though he had converted from Judaism to Protestantism some 50 years earlier, Husserl was no longer allowed to publish in Germany. The article instead appeared in a journal called *Philosophia*, based in Belgrade. Husserl continued to work on the third part of the *Crisis* until his death, but did not finish it. After the war, part III of the crisis work was edited and published along with parts I and II, in the *Husserliana* (Husserl, 1954a), but parts IV and V, which Husserl had also planned, were apparently never written (Carr, 1970).

As has been noted in the literature, in the *Crisis* two concepts play an especially important role: that of the *life-world* (Føllesdal, 1990), and that of *history* (Carr, 1970; Ströker, 1982). However, there is another topic that is also accorded a great deal of attention in the *Crisis*, namely discussions of the relationship between

Husserl's own *phenomenological psychology* on the one hand, and the kind of *naturalistic psychology* that he saw practiced in philosophy and psychology departments around him. In fact, I go so far as to claim that what Husserl variously calls the crisis of European science (Husserl 1954a [1936]) and of European humanity (Husserl, 1995) was for him, at heart, a *crisis of psychology*.

The main aim of this article is to use Husserl's discussion of psychology in order to add some new aspects to the growing literature about the complex cognitive and institutional relationship between philosophy and psychology in the early 20th century. I use the notion of *crisis of psychology* as a tool to (a) highlight some systematic features of Husserl's philosophy, and (b) tease out some of the ways in which *The Crisis of European Science* reveals Husserl's engagement with some central theoretical and methodological questions of philosophy and experimental psychology at the time.

In Section 1, I use the slogan of the “crisis of psychology” to provide a slightly non-standard reading of Husserl's *Crisis of European Science*.<sup>1</sup> This reading will reveal that Husserl saw around him the symptoms of a much more general crisis (i.e., of European

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<sup>1</sup> I view this reading as compatible with some of the existing interpretations, which have highlighted other aspects (e.g., Carr, 2010). While my analysis draws on Part III of the *Crisis*, it is not intended as a comprehensive interpretation of Part III.

humanity). According to his diagnosis, the roots of this crisis lay in the failure to provide an adequate philosophical treatment of human subjectivity. He referred to this failure as a “crisis of psychology.” Having provided a close reading of the content and circumstances of Husserl’s writings about crisis in the 1930s, Section 2 situates these writings within the trajectory of his philosophical development prior to this point (dating back to his 1900/1 *Logical Investigations*). In doing so, I specifically emphasize his ongoing preoccupation with (a) the centrality of psychological analysis (as construed by him) to philosophy, and (b) the importance of conducting philosophy in a rigorous, “scientific,” way. Both of these topics will be traced to Husserl’s engagement with central themes in the work of his teacher Franz Brentano. Section 3 continues to tease out the ways in which Husserl’s crisis diagnosis is linked to his more general views on the role and character of psychology, this time focusing on his relationship to one of his psychological contemporaries, Karl Bühler. Section 4 makes some suggestions as to how Husserl’s *Crisis* should be situated within the larger context of crisis diagnoses at the time.

## 2. Husserl’s Crisis: Background and Basic Ideas

The process leading up to the 1936 *Crisis*-publication started about two years earlier, when Husserl was asked to deliver a talk at the Eighth International Congress of Philosophy, which took place in September 1934, in Prague (*Actes du huitième congrès...1936*). Husserl was invited to participate in a session entitled “The Problem of the Crisis of Democracy,” and he wrote a first draft, entitled “The Present Task of Philosophy” (Bruzina, 2004). Due to time constraints Husserl withdrew his contribution, but wrote a letter to the organizers, which was read out at the conference and also appeared in the Proceedings (*Husserliana* XXVII). The conference saw, among other things, the founding of a philosophical society, the *Cercle Philosophique de Prague pour Recherches de l’Entendement Humain*. Within the following months, the founders of this society (among them Jan Patočka, a professor in Prague and follower of Husserl’s) made Husserl an honorary member and invited him to give a series of lectures there. Before those talks, however, in May 1935, Husserl gave two lectures at the *Wiener Kulturbund* in Vienna, entitled “Die Philosophie in der Krisis der europäischen Menschheit.”<sup>2</sup> Half a year later, on November 14 and 15, 1935, Husserl built upon those lectures and presented a series of talks in Prague: “The Crisis of European Science and Psychology.” These were then turned into the 1936 publication as well as the manuscript for Part III that was published posthumously.

What did psychology have to do with “the crisis of European humanity”? Husserl’s answer was that the crisis of European humanity was at heart a crisis of *rationality*. He identified Descartes’s distinction between the rational subject and the physical world as the starting point of modern rationalism, and argued that early modern philosophy had failed to adequately conceptualize the notion of *subjectivity*. Given that psychology “sought to become the universal science of the subjective”<sup>3</sup> (Husserl, 1970a [1936], p. 112), this amounted to a failure of psychology, which still had repercussions up to the present “Thus we have just witnessed a crisis in... psychology” (op. cit., p. 212).<sup>4</sup> Or even more strongly, “the

history of psychology is actually only a history of crises” (op. cit., p. 203).<sup>5</sup>

### 2.1. From the Crisis of European Humanity to Transcendental Phenomenology

At the beginning of his Vienna lecture, Husserl addressed “the frequently treated theme of the European crisis” (Husserl, 1970b, p. 269), which is, he said, “talked about so much today and documented in innumerable symptoms of the breakdown of life” (Husserl, 1970b, p. 299).<sup>6</sup> He compared the notion of *crisis* to that of an *illness*, thereby raising two questions: (a) who exactly is suffering from it? And (b) how can its cause be removed?

When we look at the title of the Vienna lecture, the obvious answer to the first question is that the subject of the crisis was “European humanity.” Husserl makes clear that by European humanity he does not mean the sum of people that live in Europe. Rather, Europe is characterized in a “mental” or “spiritual” sense, as being united by a particular set of values. The people that share those values share a teleological sense (entelechy) of striving towards an ideal life, characterized by rational self-determination. Husserl attributed the birth of these values to 7th- and 6th-century BC Greek philosophy, but argued (especially in the 1936 article) that the ideal of rationality got on the wrong track with early modern science and philosophy, becoming all too closely associated with a particular notion of scientific method. Thus, he declared, “[t]he reason for the failure of a rational culture... lies not in the essence of rationalism itself but solely in its being rendered superficial, in its entanglement in ‘naturalism’ and ‘objectivism’” (Husserl, 1970b, p. 299).<sup>7</sup>

Given that, according to Husserl, the crisis in question was one of humanity, one might expect the human sciences to be able to deliver a remedy. However, given further the fact that on Husserl’s diagnosis the crisis of rationality was initiated by the emergence of modern naturalism and objectivism, he did not think that the human sciences were in any position to fulfill this task. In Husserl’s view, they were wedded to a misguided understanding of their own status, which resulted from the very presupposition responsible for the crisis (Husserl, 1970b, p. 272): “Blinded by naturalism (no matter how much they attack it), the humanists have totally failed even to pose the problem of a universal and pure humanistic science and to inquire after a theory of the essence of spirit purely as spirit” (op. cit., 273).<sup>8</sup> So, in order to analyze the root cause of the contemporary crisis, Husserl could not avail himself of the existing human sciences, but instead had to question their very foundations and put something entirely different in their place, namely his own philosophy of *transcendental phenomenology*. The method of transcendental phenomenology, which Husserl called “transcendental reduction,” stipulated that all beliefs about the world must be suspended and attention focused on the way in which intentional objects are constituted in consciousness. This turn to an analysis of consciousness pushed Husserl to examine psychology because Husserl found the existing psychologies to be incapable of conducting an “analysis of the spirit.” Since such an analysis was required to get to the root of the European crisis, psychology’s inability to provide the grounds for that investigation was symptomatic of the very problem at hand. It is in this sense that we can attribute to

<sup>2</sup> Published 1954 in *Husserliana* VI, as “Die Krisis des europäischen Menschentums und die Philosophie” (Husserl, 1954b, English translation: Husserl, 1970b).

<sup>3</sup> Husserl (1954a, p. 114).

<sup>4</sup> Husserl (1954a, p. 216).

<sup>5</sup> Husserl (1954a, p. 207).

<sup>6</sup> 1954b, p. 314 (Vienna Lecture).

<sup>7</sup> 1954b, p. 347 (Vienna Lecture).

<sup>8</sup> 1954b, p. 318 (Vienna Lecture).

Husserl the view that *psychology was the starting point for any serious attempt to solve the crisis of European humanity/rationality.*

## 2.2. Transcendental Phenomenology and Psychology

Husserl viewed the early modern period, in particular the emergence of Cartesian dualism, as a crucial turning point in intellectual history. This is because (a) this dualism was arrived at by the kind of method that Husserl himself endorsed (i.e., that of suspending all beliefs about the world for the purposes of philosophical analysis), but (b) according to Husserl, Descartes did not carry it all the way (Husserl, 1970a, §16 ff). Essentially, Husserl argued that by setting up the question the way he did ('how do I know my senses are not deceiving me as sources of knowledge about the physical world?'), Descartes already presupposed the kind of dualism between pure ego and physical world that was to be the conclusion of his argument. Husserl, by contrast, asked instead 'how does the dualism between mind and physical world come to acquire the self-evident status it appears to possess?' His answer, very briefly, was that Descartes's dualism resulted from abstracting away from experience to arrive at the notion of a physical world, which was to be described rationally by means of the language of pure mathematics. Such a process of abstraction, Husserl argued, took place in the mode of the natural scientist, which Descartes adopted from Galileo. In other words, Descartes failed to extend his methodological doubt to the scientific mode and therefore he failed to suspend it. As a result, Descartes's rational ego, rather than transcending his worldly prejudices, turned out to be simply his worldly ego. Husserl proclaimed that the goal of his phenomenology was to conduct the "epoché" (the bracketing of beliefs) in a way that would not fall into the Cartesian trap of presupposing the naturalistic attitude. Instead Husserl wanted to replace it with the natural attitude of the "life world."

While it is clear that Husserl aimed to do what he thought was the proper task of *psychology* (to analyze the intentional structure of subjectivity), he intended to use such an analysis for his *philosophical* project, to provide a *transcendental analysis* of the ways in which intentional objects are constituted in experience. With this in mind, one might think that empirical psychology and transcendental phenomenology are compatible. That is, one might hold that an empirical study of the ways in which objects are phenomenologically presented in human consciousness could serve as a foundation for a transcendental analysis of the conditions of the possibility of objecthood. But for Husserl, the existing empirical investigations of consciousness already took place in precisely the naturalistic mode that his project called into question: "Psychology had to fail because it could fulfill its task, the investigation of concrete, full subjectivity, only through a radical, completely unprejudiced reflection, which would then necessarily open up the transcendental-subjective dimension" (Husserl, 1970a).<sup>9</sup> In other words, it failed to say anything of relevance about its object of research: *consciousness*. If it did say something about consciousness it would automatically be engaging in what Husserl called "transcendental phenomenology." Hence, according to Husserl, the study of subjectivity, properly construed, collapses into the most fundamental of philosophical projects.<sup>10</sup>

However, given that phenomenological analyses will presumably be conducted by an experiencing subject of everyday life (e.g., by Husserl himself, or his students), drawing on the empirical material available to such an experiencing subject, one might wonder how a transcendental phenomenological analysis is supposed

to proceed. Put differently, what is the relationship between the experiencing subject of everyday life (the empirical soul) and the transcendental subject of philosophical analysis? This question is also important in light of the fact that Husserl's phenomenological philosophy did not always have the transcendental component that we find in the *Crisis*, but took a transcendental turn only during the first two decades of the 20th century (Holenstein, 1975; Panzer, 1984). In fact, one commentator argues that phenomenology, as presented in Husserl's 1900/1901 *Logical Investigations*, must be read as decidedly anti-Kantian (Münch, 1997). We will return to this issue later. For now, it will suffice to say that even after Husserl's transcendental turn, he saw his own transcendentalism as differing profoundly from the Kantian variety. In particular, he criticized Kant's understanding of the transcendental ego as a "mythical construction" (Husserl, 1970a, §30). For Husserl the transcendental ego was a particular mode of self-experience of an empirical subject, i.e., a self-reflective one. And the philosophical significance of being in this mode was to gain an understanding of how the ego is constituted in the life-world (Husserl, 2003; Zahavi, 2003 [1925]).

## 3. Husserl's Views about Psychology in Context

After this brief tour through some central themes of the *Crisis*, we may now seek to gain a deeper appreciation of some of its key topics by placing them in the contexts of (a) the development of Husserl's philosophical thought about the status of psychology, and (b) other empirical and philosophical treatments of mental phenomena at the time.

In general terms, we may say that in the *Crisis* Husserl was dealing with several of the most fundamental questions that had informed his philosophical thinking for decades. Central to these questions was the issue of how to integrate a rigorous, even scientific, analysis of mental phenomena into a philosophical system without thereby falling prey to psychologism, i.e., without confusing the empirical descriptions of processes of thought and experience with arguments for their validity. As is well known, Husserl himself is widely considered to have delivered decisive arguments against psychologism in 1900 (Husserl, 1975).<sup>11</sup> However, as has already been suggested, and as shall be explored in more detail below, this does not mean that he thought psychology (as he understood it) to be irrelevant to philosophy. On the contrary, the centrality of psychology, properly construed, to Husserl's project becomes apparent when, at the end of Part I of the *Crisis*, he informs his readers that psychology has long "had to claim (through its historically accumulated meaning) to be the basic philosophical science, while this produced the obviously paradoxical consequences of the so-called 'psychologism'" (Husserl, 1970a, 18).<sup>12</sup> But as laid down in Book II of the *Logical Investigations* (Husserl, 1984a [1901]) and in subsequent works, for Husserl the study of the phenomenology of thinking was not intended to provide the *justificatory basis* for what might be considered prescriptive laws of thought. He thereby avoided the charge of psychologism. Instead, he viewed phenomenological analysis as providing intuitions that *exemplified* the objects of thought, thereby revealing their essences by way of a procedure Husserl referred to as "Wesensschau" (e.g., Husserl, 1986 [1912], p. 53).

We can conclude that Husserl wanted to retain the idea that psychology is "the most basic philosophical science," while avoiding the implication of *naturalism*. This makes it possible to situate Husserl's approach within the context of debates about the status

<sup>9</sup> Husserl (1954a, p. 215).

<sup>10</sup> We will return to the question of how Husserl viewed the relationship between transcendental phenomenology and empirical psychology in Section 3 below.

<sup>11</sup> For an analysis of Husserl's anti-psychologism, see Kusch (1995).

<sup>12</sup> Husserl (1954a, p. 17).



of philosophy in a scientific age. With the rise of the sciences of the mind (sensory physiology, psychophysics, and – increasingly – the psychology of thinking) in the 19th century, the debates in question had become especially focused on the relationship between philosophy and these new sciences.

### 3.1. Husserl, Brentano, and the Notion of a Scientific Philosophy

One obvious place to look to develop an understanding of Husserl's views is Franz Brentano (1838-1917), whose lectures Husserl had attended in Vienna in the 1880s (see Albertazzi, Libardi, & Poli, 1996; Schuhmann, 1977, pp. 13 ff) and who had also been a teacher of Husserl's friend and teacher Carl Stumpf. Brentano helps provide a context for various topics we find in Husserl, in that Brentano (a) famously voiced the opinion that philosophy had to adopt the methods of the natural sciences, (b) emphasized the intentional nature of mental states, and (c) had specific ideas about how psychology was to go about describing and explaining intentional mental states.

We find echoes of the first two themes in Husserl's programmatic text, "Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft" (Husserl, 1965 [1910/11]), written about 25 years before the *Crisis*. This text is sometimes interpreted as a direct response to Wilhelm Dilthey's philosophy of *Weltanschauung* (e.g., Carr, 1970); i.e., as arguing against the perceived threats of historicism and relativism. However, I suggest that even in this earlier text, psychology plays at least as important (if not more fundamental) a role. Thus, Husserl asserts that historicism is the result of drawing on the facts of empirical consciousness, leading to "relativism that is closely related to naturalistic psychologism."<sup>13</sup> Husserl starts the article by stating that he shares with contemporary naturalism the idea that a rigorously scientific philosophy is needed, but then goes on to argue that the naturalistic approach goes about this "in a way that from a theoretical standpoint is fundamentally misguided, and from a practical standpoint implies a growing danger for our culture" (Husserl, 1910/11, *ibid.*). Notice that we see already here a rhetoric that points to the notion (though not the terminology) of *crisis*. He approaches the issue by asking specifically how consciousness might be treated scientifically, and argues that while naturalistic psychology fails to do justice to its object of study, the phenomenological method can deliver what is required: "We thereby encounter a science... it is a science of consciousness and yet is not psychology, a *phenomenology of consciousness* as opposed to a *natural science of consciousness*" (*op. cit.*, p. 23).

The notion of a *scientific philosophy* was widespread at the time, finding its best-known expression in the scientific world-view of logical positivism. The positivist conception of a scientific world-view did not come from nowhere, but was rather throughout the latter part of the 19th century closely tied to a kind of philosophical theorizing that strove to overcome "metaphysics," and that saw this project as closely tied to an analysis of the contents of consciousness, refraining from stronger philosophical commitments. Philosophers like Franz Brentano and Ernst Mach must be placed in that tradition, as must be the immanence positivist Richard Avenarius (1843-1896), the founder and editor of a journal for scientific philosophy (*Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie*<sup>14</sup>). Husserl's project of philosophy as science must also be seen in that context, even though he radically departed from the naturalistic premises of other proponents of scientific philosophy, such as

those of his teacher Franz Brentano. For Brentano the term "scientific" referred to the use of the methods of the natural sciences, though he had very specific views about what form the methods of the natural sciences should take when applied to the subject matter of psychology. According to those views, "scientific" was not to be equated with "physicalistic" or "reductionist." Brentano thereby hoped to secure for psychology an autonomous realm of a pure *description of mental phenomena*. Brentano distinguished between descriptive and genetic psychology, seeing the latter as too closely tied to physicalistic assumptions and experimental methods (Brentano, 1924 [1874], pp. 1f). As we will see, Husserl gradually moved away from Brentano's vision of descriptive psychology, declaring it to be just as entangled in naturalistic prejudices as the physicalistic and experimental psychology from which Brentano had sought to distance himself (e.g., Husserl, 2003 [1925]). However, while criticizing Brentano's specific conception of what it means to proceed *scientifically*, he credited Brentano with having played a decisive role in shaping his early views of *philosophy as a science*: "From his [Brentano's 1884] lectures I gained the conviction, which gave me the courage to pursue philosophy as a profession, that philosophy was a field of serious work, which can, and should, be carried out in a rigorously scientific spirit."<sup>15</sup>

### 3.2. Phenomenology and Intentional Mental Phenomena

The second point on which Husserl acknowledged a profound debt to Brentano is Brentano's insight into the *intentional character of conscious mental states* (see Husserl, 1954a [Crisis], § 68). This is also brought out clearly in Husserl's 1925 lectures about phenomenological psychology, where he argued that Brentano's notion of the intentionality of mental phenomena "for the first time brought into sharp relief a fundamental feature of all mental life, consciousness as being conscious of something"<sup>16</sup>. However, it is important to understand the different ways in which the two philosophers understood this notion, respectively. Husserl's critique of Brentano's conception of intentionality was closely related to his critique of Brentano's views about the scientific methods by which intentional states were to be described.

As is well known, Brentano's concept of *intentionality*, which he put forward in his 1874 *Psychologie von einem empirischen Standpunkt*, had a major impact both on his students and contemporaries and on 20th-century philosophy of mind. However, especially in the former context, part of his impact was due to the fact that his formulation of the intentionality of mental phenomena was less than clear, leading his followers to develop his philosophy in quite different directions. Generally speaking, Brentano's main point was that mental phenomena (unlike physical phenomena) are *about* something. While this characterization was accepted by many, it immediately gave rise to some problems, of which the following two are relevant to an understanding of the way in which Husserl diverged from Brentano. The first problem concerns the question of whether the intended objects of mental acts are purely immanent in those acts, or whether they have some transcendent reality. The second problem concerned Brentano's conviction that the intentionality of mental phenomena could be discovered by empirical means, where the empirical method he used was that of *inner perception*. This raised questions about the status of inner perception as a scientific method, and about the tenability of the distinction between inner and outer perception as distinguishing

<sup>13</sup> Husserl (1965 [1910/11] p. 50). All quotes in English for which only a German source is given are translations by me.

<sup>14</sup> The journal appeared from 1877-1901. It was then continued until 1916 under the name of *Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie und Soziologie*. In the *Crisis*, Husserl himself mentions Avenarius as attempting some blend of empiricism and the transcendental motif, but that his "supposed radicalism falls short of being of the genuine kind which alone can help" (Husserl, 1970a, p. 195).

<sup>15</sup> Quoted by Schuhmann (1977, p. 13; first published in Kraus (1919), see Husserl (1919)).

<sup>16</sup> Husserl (2003[1925], p. 31).

scientific psychology from other sciences, a question to which Husserl devoted some energy in Part III of his *Crisis*.

The question of what the early Brentano meant by his thesis of “intentional in-existence” is controversial even amongst Brentano scholars, and answering it would be beyond the scope of this paper. One reading, however, is that “intentional in-existence” does not mean that the objects of intentional acts do not exist, but rather that they exist *in* the intentional act, i.e., are *immanent* to it (see *Jacquette, 2004*). This kind of *immanent intentionality* of mental phenomena had some counterintuitive consequences, such as making it difficult to understand how the intentional mental states of two people could ever be about the same object.<sup>17</sup> This problem was one of the factors that lead some of Brentano’s best-known students (Twardowski, Meinong, and others) to turn their attention to developing a philosophical *theory of objects* (“Gegenstandstheorie”).<sup>18</sup>

Husserl, already by 1900, worried that the notion of an immanent object in consciousness did not clarify the specific status of mental (as opposed to physical) phenomena (*Husserl, 1984b*, Part II). By the second decade of the 20th century, he had further specified his own approach, which was to *bracket* the question about the mind-transcendent status of the objects of our intentional acts (he referred to this method as the “*epoche*”), and to uncover the very conditions of the possibility of our experience of objects.<sup>19</sup> This approach was closely related to a rejection of one of Brentano’s fundamental methodological tenets: whereas for Brentano the idea of a descriptive analysis of intentional phenomena constituted an *empirical* analysis in the sense of a naturalistic scientific methodology, Husserl viewed his phenomenological description of mental phenomena as providing a method of *a priori* analysis, which involved an unprejudiced phenomenological analysis of the intuitions we have about the conditions of satisfaction for our intentions. This was then supposed to give rise to the above-mentioned *Wesensschau*.

While Husserl departed quite radically from Brentano, we must still read the development of his mature position as strongly influenced by Brentano’s ideas. Husserl had initially endorsed Brentano’s thesis of the immanence of intentional phenomena and the philosophical project of providing empirical descriptions of such phenomena. In this vein, Husserl based his 1887 habilitation on the idea of building the philosophy of arithmetic on a description of the acts of reasoning about the objects of arithmetic. The published version of this work, his 1891 *Philosophie der Arithmetik*, was dedicated to Brentano. This book was then attacked by Frege for its alleged psychologism (*Frege, 1894*) and the received story has it that this prompted Husserl to fundamentally rethink his position on the relationship between descriptive psychology and the foundations of logic (*Albertazzi et al., 1996*).<sup>20</sup> The result was his 1900/1901 work, *Logical Investigations* (see *Husserl, 1900, 1975, 1984a,b*). Roughly, the idea he was striving to articulate was that while the *validity* of certain universal truths of logic and mathematics could not be reduced to psychology (*Logical Investigations*, Book I), a phenomenological description of the inner experience of reasoning about logic and mathematics was still capable of laying the foundations of a philosophical account of

how we can come to *know* such universal truths (*Logical Investigations*, Book II). In this work, Husserl still used the expression “descriptive psychology” for his phenomenological analysis, and even many years later acknowledged that the work represented a “full effect” of Brentano’s ideas (*Husserl, 2003 [1925]*, p. 33), while remarking regretfully that Brentano himself never accepted Husserl’s new approach as a mature exposition of Brentano’s own ideas (*op. cit.*, p. 34).<sup>21</sup>

### 3.3. The Description of Intentional Phenomena and the Question of Inner Perception

As we just saw, Husserl and Brentano’s disagreement about intentional phenomena turns on the question of the status of the *description* of such phenomena. While both viewed such descriptions as *scientific* and as vital to the task of philosophy, Brentano thought of them as an *empirical* undertaking, Husserl as a task for *a priori* analysis. This difference in approach had implications concerning the ways in which they thought about the *method* of phenomenological descriptions. While it may appear obvious that the method must be *observational*, Brentano and Husserl had rather distinct views about what this might mean. An appreciation of the reasons for these differences can provide us with an understanding of some of Husserl’s arguments in part III of *Crisis*, as well as placing these arguments in the contexts of not only his own philosophical trajectory, but also of methodological debates within psychology at the time.

One of the goals of Brentano’s emphasis on the intentional nature of mental phenomena was to delineate the *subject matter* of psychological investigations as distinct from that of the physical sciences. Moreover, this delineation came with specific ideas about the *task* of psychology, namely that of providing descriptions of the autonomous realm of the mental. This task was to be achieved by means of “internal perception”, in contrast to the “external perception” employed by physical scientists.<sup>22</sup> For Husserl, too, ideas about method were closely related to ideas about the subject matter under investigation. But while agreeing that intentional mental states are the subject matter of psychology, he had quite different views about the *objectives* of psychology. The point, for him, was not to describe what we ‘see within,’ but to use phenomenological analysis as a tool for understanding how the intentional objects of mental phenomena are constituted in consciousness, where the intentional objects in question include those that we perceive as located in physical space ‘outside of our minds.’ As he emphasizes in the *Crisis*, this made the distinction between internal and external perception seem quite nonsensical to him, since our perceptions are always mental phenomena, yet the objects we perceive are often located in the physical world. For Husserl, then, the distinction between inner and outer perception had the paradoxical consequence that when we look outside, we have experiences of physical objects, but a scientific description of these experiences supposedly constitutes part of the method of physics, rather than of psychology. Questioning this, he asked: “[W]hy is the experience which actually, as experience, brings this life-world to givenness... not called psy-

<sup>17</sup> Brentano himself, in the 1911 second edition of his *Psychologie von einem empirischem Standpunkt*, came to reject the thesis of the immanence of intentional objects. But at this point, his earlier thesis, and philosophical responses to it, had already taken on lives of their own.

<sup>18</sup> See *Albertazzi et al. (1996)*, for detailed analyses of the various ways in which Brentano’s students engaged with his work.

<sup>19</sup> The literature does not provide a unified answer to the question of when exactly – and for what reasons – Husserl made his transcendental turn. However, there does seem to be agreement that it had been achieved by the time Husserl published his 1913 *Ideen zu einer phänomenologischen Psychologie* (*Husserl, 1976 [1913]*). See section 3.2 below.

<sup>20</sup> According to Dieter Lohmar, Husserl had already begun to question some of the psychologistic underpinnings of his philosophy of arithmetics between 1887 and 1891, i.e., prior to Frege’s critique (*Husserl, 1970c; Lohmar, 2003, XIII*).

<sup>21</sup> Brentano, in turn, was deeply troubled by the allegation that his own position was latently psychologistic (*Jacquette, 2004, p. 106*).

<sup>22</sup> Brentano developed his notion of “perception” in explicit opposition to the notion of “observation”, where the latter by necessity involves some kind of selective process on the part of the observer, which in turn presupposes that the observer can take a step back from what he is perceiving. Acknowledging that this is impossible in the case of the current contents of consciousness, he nonetheless held on to the idea that *inner perception* (as opposed to *observation*) is an essential component of psychological methodology (*Brentano, 1924 [1874]*).

chological experience, rather than outer experience, supposedly by contrast to psychological experience?” (Husserl, 1970a, p. 220).<sup>23</sup>

Husserl does not elaborate this in any great detail in the *Crisis*. However, his grappling with this question in fact goes back to an appendix of Book II of Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, entitled “Äußere und innere Wahrnehmung. Physische und psychische Phänomene” (Husserl, 1984c [1901]), where he explicitly identifies Brentano as the target of his critique. He recounts that Brentano lists two features that distinguish internal and external perceptions: one according to which inner perceptions have the character of being self-evident and indubitable, whereas outer perceptions do not; the other according to which inner perceptions have thoughts, emotions and the like as their objects, whereas outer perceptions have physical things as their objects. With respect to the first criterion he argues that Brentano equivocates between two different concepts of *perception*: when talking about the perception of *mental phenomena*, Brentano mean a direct and immediate event, involving no apperceptive activity on the part of the perceiver. But when talking about the perception of *physical phenomena*, Brentano conceives of perception as a process that is mediated by apperception. Husserl argues that the latter notion of perception is the standard one and should be retained. Furthermore, if we think of the ways in which we perceive mental phenomena, such as emotions, it is clear that we frequently think of them as tied to physical locations (an example Husserl uses is “grief is eating away at my heart”), even though clearly they are not. Hence, we can err about our so-called inner perceptions just as we can err about our so-called outer perceptions. Husserl therefore suggests replacing Brentano's distinction between inner and outer perception with one between an adequate and inadequate *perception/intuition*, where a *perception/intuition* is adequate if and only if the conditions of satisfaction of an intended object are in fact given.

Thirty-five years later, in his *Crisis*, Husserl continued to argue along similar lines. However, given the transcendental turn he had taken in the meantime, he added a new layer to the diagnosis of where proponents of psychology as descriptions of inner perceptions went wrong. Specifically (though not always explicitly) he still targeted Brentano (but also Dilthey) as advocates of a descriptive psychology. This is surprising in some ways, considering that by then there had been some debates about introspection within psychology. We might wonder whether Husserl had kept up with those debates. However, the more likely explanation is that the details of those debates were of little consequence to him, since he still saw the overall project of empirical psychology as based on fundamentally misguided premises. So, how did his transcendentalism shape his response to the problems of psychological description and perception? In two ways: first, in his exploration of how human consciousness is, or ought to be, conceptualized as the intentional object of *phenomenological investigation*. Second, in his examination of whether and how the results of such a genuinely phenomenological investigation might give rise to an adequate *empirical psychology*, quite different from the one that was in fact practiced. The first of these two issues are discussed in the remainder of this section. The second question will be addressed in Section 3.3 below.

According to Husserl's analysis in the *Crisis*, when we conceptualize human phenomenal consciousness as an object of scientific investigation, we can do so either in the mode of the life-world or in the naturalistic mode of the physical scientist. By “life-world”, Husserl meant the pretheoretical mode of human existence, the unquestioned basis of our everyday practices. In the naturalistic mode, Husserl suggested, human beings and animals are viewed

as divided into “strata”, one physical and one mental, where each can be studied and described in their own right. Husserl's reasoning for rejecting the naturalistic picture was very similar to his critique of Cartesian dualism, arguing that it already presupposed the existence of an objective physical world as separate from the mental realm. However, when we conduct a transcendental phenomenological analysis, Husserl argued, we start not with souls as scientific abstractions, but with “how souls – first of all human souls – are in the world, the life-world, i.e., how they ‘animate’ physical bodies” (Husserl, 1970a, p. 211). In contrast, the descriptive psychologies of philosophers such as Brentano and Dilthey rely on the naturalistic stratification Husserl criticized. He therefore charged them with being stuck with a particular notion of what it means to be scientific: “There can no longer be a descriptive psychology which is the analogue of a descriptive natural science” (Husserl, 1970a, p. 223).

#### 4. Husserl's Views about Crisis in Context

Up to this point I have provided textual evidence to support my claim that Husserl viewed what he called the crisis of European humanity, rationality, and science as deeply rooted in a philosophically inadequate treatment of human subjectivity, and that he referred to this inadequate treatment as an ongoing “crisis of psychology.” Going back to Husserl's early work in the philosophy of arithmetic, I showed that this focus on psychology ought to come as no surprise, given not only that the philosophical analysis of consciousness was at the center of his entire project, but also that in developing his position, Husserl repeatedly used the philosophical and methodological views of his teacher Franz Brentano as points of departure. This suggests that Husserl's entire philosophy developed out of an engagement with fundamental issues in psychology.

It might be pointed out that by the time Husserl wrote *Crisis*, Brentano had been dead for almost 20 years, and some of the ideas to which Husserl objected had been published more than 60 years earlier. We may therefore ask ourselves whether there were any more proximate factors that caused Husserl to articulate his concerns about rationality in the language of *crisis*, and moreover, as crisis of *psychology*. These questions are pertinent in the light of the fact that while Husserl's philosophical position did not significantly change after the mid-1910s, he did not employ the language of crisis until the mid-1930s. Since several authors in the first decades of the 20th century had written about the “crisis of psychology”, it is surely no coincidence when Husserl writes that “we have just witnessed a crisis in . . . psychology” (Husserl, 1970a, p. 212). In addition, the language of crisis was widely employed in many cultural and scientific domains at the time, raising the question of how Husserl's diagnosis should be situated vis-à-vis these other discourses. In this section my main focus will be on the question of whether Husserl's usage of the language of crisis highlights some aspects of his engagement with practicing empirical psychologists at the time when he wrote the *Crisis*. In the following section, I will make some suggestions that place Husserl's crisis work in the wider context of other crisis discourses in the Weimar Republic.

##### 4.1. The Crisis of European Science and Bühler's *Krise der Psychologie*

One obvious question to ask is whether Husserl read any of the literature about a crisis in psychology? The most direct piece of evidence linking Husserl to this discourse comes in the form of a letter from Husserl to Karl Bühler on June 28, 1927. In it he thanked

<sup>23</sup> Husserl (1954a, p. 223).



Bühler for sending his book, *Die Krise der Psychologie*, and stated that he was reading it “with great interest”.<sup>24</sup> He went on to say: “However, I do not think I can be swayed in my conviction that the systematic establishment of pure phenomenology, though its primary intent was to provide the foundation of a universal transcendental philosophy, would also mean a radical reform for psychology” (ibid.). Husserl then declared that psychologists might have come to realize this, had they read his *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie* (1976 [1913]), instead of just reading parts of the *Logical Investigations* (though he gracefully acknowledged that Bühler and Külpe had at least read the latter). Elaborating, he explained that “a universal, a priori phenomenology could mean for empirical psychology something similar to the significance of pure geometry, phoronomy etc. for the study of nature” (ibid.), and then pronounced that neo-Kantianism had not been helpful in this respect because its method was so removed from intuition that the “much talked about, but never specifically investigated subjectivity” remains an empty abstraction (op. cit., p. 47). Husserl concluded the letter by suggesting that “as long as psychology does not step back and reflect upon this pre-psychological. . . life, it will remain in its historical naïvete and bound by the prejudices that modernity since Descartes has. . . made almost unsurmountable” (op. cit., p. 48).<sup>25</sup>

This letter is instructive in several respects. First, it provides evidence that Husserl did know at least one instance of the literature about the crisis in psychology, even though he evidently did not agree with Bühler's diagnosis or proposed cure. I would therefore like to make the case that he adopted the language of the “crisis of psychology” from psychologists like Bühler. But apart from this terminological question about Husserl's usage of the expression “crisis of psychology”, Husserl's letter to Bühler contains an interesting remark that we will need to unpack if we want to gain a better understanding of Husserl's relationship to the empirical psychologists of his days. This is his claim that his transcendental phenomenology could have provided a new basis for empirical psychology, if only Bühler and his colleagues had read his relevant work. We can follow up on this claim by asking two questions, one systematic and one historical. First, what exactly did Husserl have in mind when he stated that his phenomenology could lay the foundations of empirical psychology? Second, what is the story behind his evident disappointment with psychologists' failure to take up his ideas?

#### 4.2. Transcendental Phenomenology and the Foundations of Empirical Psychology

As already explained, Husserl considered empirical psychology as fundamentally flawed by virtue of relying on a naturalistic understanding of its subject matter. This misguided understanding, he argued, resulted from a failure to carry out a phenomenological analysis of the intentional objects of consciousness, which – he claimed – would have revealed that the notion of *inner* (as opposed to *outer*) perception, employed by Brentano and Dilthey, did not provide an adequate methodology for psychology. However, this does not mean that he thought that empirical psychology was impossible altogether. Rather, he held that his phenomenological analysis would reveal not simply descriptions of the contents of consciousness, but analyses of the very *essence* of what it is to be an intentional conscious state. Such an understanding, he thought, would provide something like *synthetic a priori* principles that are constitutive of intentional mental states, and this, in turn, would

only begin to make it possible to gather empirical data about intentional mental states, i.e., to do empirical psychology.

A nice explanation of this point is provided in Husserl's 1925 lectures on phenomenological psychology, where he discussed the difference between his own and Dilthey's notion of a *descriptive psychology*. Overall, Husserl was fairly complimentary about Dilthey, and mentioned with regret that he only came to know Dilthey's position rather late, blaming this on the fact that after Ebbinghaus's scathing critique of Dilthey's 1894 article about descriptive and explanatory psychology (Dilthey, 1990), he (Husserl) had not bothered to actually look at Dilthey's work.<sup>26</sup> However, he argued that Dilthey did not correctly differentiate between strict necessity and empirical induction (Husserl, 2003 [1925], p. 14), and therefore did not understand that in order to do provide empirical descriptions, one must establish some basic principles about one's subject matter that are necessarily true. Only a pure phenomenological analysis, Husserl believed, would provide these basic principles. In other words, for Husserl, we must distinguish between two levels of (phenomenological) description: one that is *a priori* and that delineates the constitutive principles of the subject matter of psychology, and one that is *empirical*, and that is only made possible by virtue of the existence of the former.

Husserl first fully developed this idea in his 1913 *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, where he proclaimed that “in the not too distant future it will be a commonly held conviction that phenomenology. . . is a methodologically fundamental science for empirical science, just as the. . . mathematical disciplines (e.g., geometry and phoronomy) are fundamental to physics”.<sup>27</sup> This is clearly what Husserl was referring to in his 1927 letter to Bühler, when he expressed some disappointment at the fact that his views about phenomenology had still not become “commonly held” (or perhaps not held by any empirical psychologists at all). However, as we have seen, his letter also acknowledged that Bühler and some of his colleagues had in fact taken up some of his earlier work (his 1900/1 *Logical Investigations*), though they had not incorporated the changes he subsequently made and which he attempted to articulate not only in his 1913 *Ideas*, but also in the second edition of his *Logical Investigations* that also appeared in 1913.

It seems that Husserl started to rethink his *Logical Investigations* very soon after they first appeared. When the first edition was out of print in 1911, he was torn between the wish to present a new, thoroughly rewritten version of the book, or to simply reprint it in its original form (see Holenstein, 1975; Panzer, 1984). In the end he chose a compromise, designed to walk the reader “up” through the slightly changed *Logical Investigations*, so that by the 6th Investigation they would have reached the level Husserl himself had reached in his *Ideas*. However, this undertaking proved to be more complicated than he thought, and as a result the 1913 edition did not contain the rewritten versions of *Logical Investigations* 5 and 6 (which in fact did not appear until 1921; see Panzer, 1984). This episode reveals how much Husserl was at pains to improve his earlier presentation of his philosophy. The question of whether he actually fundamentally changed his position between 1901 and 1913 (i.e., by taking the above-mentioned transcendental turn), or whether—as he retrospectively saw it himself—his *Ideas* only articulated what he had been trying to say all along, cannot be answered here. However, apparently by 1913 he had come to see quite clearly that the main point of his revisions was to take back the “misleading characterization” of his phenomenology as “descriptive,” which he took to have been (mis)understood by many in a naturalistic fashion (see Panzer, 1984).

<sup>24</sup> Husserl (1994 [1927], p. 46).

<sup>25</sup> Husserl (1994 [1927], p. 48).

<sup>26</sup> See Feest, 2007 for an account of the Dilthey/Ebbinghaus controversy.

<sup>27</sup> Husserl, 1913, p. 159.

#### 4.3. Husserl and the Würzburg School

One group of people that Husserl specifically had in mind when charging that his 1900/01 views about psychology had been misunderstood in a naturalistic fashion were the members of what is often referred to as the Würzburg school of thought psychology, associated with names like Karl Bühler, Oswald Külpe, and Karl Marbe. Two key ideas that this group is known for are (1) the notion of imageless thought, and (2) a particular method of studying such imageless thoughts, i.e., that of “internal observation” (“Selbstbeobachtung”). The former idea put them in conflict with the much stronger tradition of sensory physiology and psychophysics in Germany. The latter idea put them at odds with influential views about the limits of introspection, as they had—for example—been expressed by Wilhelm Wundt (1888). Wundt had argued that while introspection was admissible for the limited realm of sensory psychology (where the sensations in question could be strictly attributed to some experimental stimulus), introspective reports of *remembered* inner experiences were impossible, or at any rate did not constitute proper scientific observations, since they were obviously removed from the relevant experiences themselves.<sup>28</sup> Given that thought processes take place in time, it appeared that any introspective study of such processes would have to rely on memory reports, thereby automatically rendering the empirical study of thinking highly problematic.

In contrast to this assessment, members of the Würzburg School endorsed introspection as a method for the study of thinking. This is explicitly articulated in Karl Bühler’s 1907 publication “Tatsachen und Probleme zu einer Psychologie der Denkvorgänge I. Über Gedanken.”<sup>29</sup> This publication is of particular interest here because in it he pays homage to Husserl, both with respect to Husserl’s *theory* (that it is possible to have thought processes that are entirely devoid of sensory experiences) and to his *method* (that it is possible to study the experiential character of these processes). With respect to the former point, Bühler drew on Husserl’s distinction between “intuitive” and “signifying” intentional acts (Husserl, 1984a [1901], *Logische Untersuchungen* vol. 2, part 1), where the latter (Husserl claimed) have an experiential quality yet are not accompanied by any sensory experiences. According to Bühler, then, the very act of intending to refer to what we might today call a particular propositional content can be studied in its own right (Bühler, 1907, 346f.). The point at which Bühler thought he was drawing on Husserl was where Bühler provided what he took to be a phenomenological analysis of a thought *process* (as opposed to its *results*), and where he bracketed questions about the *mind-transcendent status* of the intended object. Bühler’s method consisted in asking his subjects complicated yes/no questions, and then having them elaborate on the thought processes that led to their answers. These answers, in turn, were interpreted as providing evidence for Bühler’s claim “that there are thoughts without any trace of an intuitive foundation.”<sup>30</sup>

Obviously, this brief characterization of Bühler’s approach cannot do full justice to Bühler. However, based on what we know about Husserl, it should be obvious why he would not have been very happy with this appropriation of his position, especially insofar as Bühler assumed that a Husserlian phenomenological analysis of thinking proceeded by means of *inner observations*, conceived in a naturalistic fashion. While Husserl did not explicitly name Bühler in his *Ideas*, Husserl quite harshly asserted that he had been misunderstood both by critics and proponents of his phenomenological method: The critics were skeptical of his analyses, based on his al-

leged reliance on internal observations; and the proponents (such as Bühler) did not understand his distinction between *a priori* analysis and *empirical* research, and thus were trying to disable skeptical arguments against inner observation by means of empirical results rather than by *a priori* phenomenological analyses (Husserl, 1913, p. 159).

It has been argued (e.g., Münch, 1997, 1998; Ziche, 1998) that the harshness of Husserl’s response to the Würzburg school was unwarranted, since (a) he did not explicitly articulate his transcendental turn until 1913, and so could not expect experimental psychologists to have responded to it before then, and (b) it is unclear whether the transcendental turn really changed his earlier position so completely as to make it incompatible with naturalistic psychology. (Münch, 1997, 1998) therefore suggests that both Husserl’s transcendental turn and his strongly unfavorable response to the Würzburg school were politically motivated rather than being founded on some genuine philosophical difference. Münch relates Husserl’s 1913 negative appraisal of the Würzburgers to two other events that occurred at about the same time: first, the fact that Husserl was one of the six co-authors of the petition against experimental psychologists (all the other co-signers were Neo-Kantians) (see Ash, 1995; Schmidt, 1995); and second his 1910/11 strongly anti-naturalist “Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft” (1965 [1910/11]), which appeared in the first volume of the journal *Logos*, whose editor, Heinrich Rickert, was also a neo-Kantian. In the light of the fact that Husserl’s professional position was precarious (at 54 years of age he was still not a full professor) and that he got appointed as the successor of Rickert’s Freiburg chair shortly thereafter (in 1916), Münch argues that Husserl abandoned his previously anti-Kantian position in order to obtain a job.<sup>31</sup>

While not wanting to rule out that Husserl’s professional and personal circumstances may have played a role in his philosophical development or the tone of voice in which he articulated his views, I do not think that a purely external explanation for Husserl’s treatment of the Würzburgers is satisfactory. As we have seen, Husserl presented two separate arguments against a naturalistic reading of his phenomenological analysis. The first one—already contained in his *Logical Investigations*—stated that the notion of inner perception/observation, as directed exclusively at mental events like thinking, already presupposed a stratification of the world into a physical and a mental part, which he believed a properly phenomenological analysis would overcome. The second argument—presented in his *Ideas*—put more emphasis on the idea that phenomenological analysis would be able to provide the foundations for an empirical psychology. Only the second argument relied on Husserl’s transcendentalism. Hence, Husserl did not have to make his transcendental turn in order to put himself in opposition to experimental psychology.

#### 5. Husserl’s Crisis and Other Crises

One striking feature of the *Crisis* is the way in which Husserl presents himself as a philosophical radical. His diagnosis of a crisis goes hand in hand with a proposal to uproot all of Western philosophy since the 17th century. Striking as it is, however, this radical attitude was by no means unusual at the time. In fact, we must read Husserl’s texts about crisis as typical examples of a genre that was rather widespread in the early decades of the 20th century, and that was pursued by thinkers of otherwise very diverse theoretical approaches. I shall refer to it here as the genre of “crisis-

<sup>28</sup> In this point Wundt departed from Brentano (1874), who had argued that *only* retrospective introspection was possible.

<sup>29</sup> This was followed immediately by parts II and III as well as a reply to a critique by Wundt (Wundt, 1907; Bühler, 1908a, 1908b, 1908c).

<sup>30</sup> Bühler (1907, p. 318).

<sup>31</sup> In addition, Münch suggests, Husserl—the protestant—did not feel comfortable with the fact that many Brentanians wanted to read his *Logical Investigations* as contributing to a neo-scholastic, catholic philosophy.



and-reconstruction” writings. Instances of this genre had in common the notion that the old ways of thinking had gone bankrupt, and that it was therefore necessary to tear down the ruins of the old systems of thought and to fundamentally rethink their very foundations. Viewed this way, we can place Husserl’s analysis in the context described by Peter Galison (1996) in his discussion of the widespread usage of the term “Aufbau” (structure, construction) between 1910 and 1930. Galison specifically situates Rudolf Carnap’s 1928 book, *Der logische Aufbau der Welt*, within the cultural location of this type of rhetoric. Like Carnap, Husserl not only employed the notion of a radical new beginning, but also contended that the foundations of such a new beginning had to be provided by a rigorously scientific philosophy. Moreover, he argued that the logical positivists had not been radical enough in their critique of traditional philosophy: They mistook the idea of a scientific approach with that of a naturalistic approach, hence modeling their own scientific philosophies on the modern sciences rather than questioning the very foundations of modern naturalism. This lay behind his assertion that, historically speaking, the positivist notion of science was a vestigial version of earlier philosophical reflections about science and rationality, which served only to “decapitate” philosophy (Husserl, 1970a, § 3).

We can also situate Husserl with respect to another crisis discourse at the time: that of historicism. One pertinent publication to mention is Ernst Troeltsch’s 1922 article “Die Krisis des Historismus” (Troeltsch, 1922a; see also Troeltsch, 1922b). As Troeltsch explained, the crisis of history (*Geschichtswissenschaften*) concerned the consequences of historicism (*Historismus*) for the formation of our spiritual life and of the new socio-political order (Troeltsch, 1922b, p. 9). The problems at stake had already been discussed since the latter third of the 19th century, and were debated widely and across the disciplinary board in the early decades of the 20th century (Wittkau, 1992). Concerning the specific case of historicism in the history of philosophy, Georg Simmel had written an article in 1904, “Über die Geschichte der Philosophie,” in which he coined “Historizismus” a type of history of philosophy that refrained from any normative claims. This attitude was judged to result in a relativism about values (Wittkau, 1992, p. 124). These debates motivated Husserl’s “Philosophy as a Rigorous Science,” where he argued that philosophy was threatened by the naturalization of the mind (as done in psychology) and of human cultural achievements (including philosophy) by history (1965 [1910/11]). With this in mind, it is evident that in the *Crisis* Husserl tries to strike a balance, arguing on the one hand that it is helpful to study the history of philosophy in order to understand the origins of current philosophical problems, while on the other hand emphatically not wishing to historicize the ideal of philosophy. This is behind his emphasis that we need to distinguish between philosophy as a historical fact and philosophy as an ideal (Husserl, 1970a, § 6). Indeed, he saw it as the task of transcendental phenomenological analysis to unearth this idea! We thereby get an inkling of Husserl’s belief that a proper understanding of transcendental phenomenological analysis was central to an adequate philosophy of (intellectual) history.

One other crisis discourse that is clearly relevant here is that about the crisis of intuition. This debate revolved around the claim that modern science had lost touch with ordinary experience, thereby playing on fears about the alienation of ordinary life from mechanistic and atomistic modern science and technology (see Harrington, 1996). It was also associated with an anti-scientific, anti-rationalist (and frequently anti-semitic) agenda during the time of the Weimar Republic. One classic example of a text making such claims was Oswald Spengler’s book, *Der Niedergang des Abendlandes* (The Decline of the West) (Spengler, 1918, 1922). In turn, various articles by scientific philosophers at the time (e.g., Hahn, 1933; Reichenbach, 1930) responded to this discourse by

attempting to demonstrate that modern science and rationality do not necessarily have to be in conflict with everyday experience. Given the fact that Husserl’s philosophy employed the notion of intuition as fundamental to his approach (intuition, as opposed to inner perception, as the basis of phenomenological analysis), again, we may relate his work to worries about the crisis of intuition. Moreover, Husserl’s concept of the life-world as fundamental to phenomenological analysis also suggests that he intended to capture the ways in which we experience the world in a pre-scientific manner. By arguing that true scientific knowledge can be obtained by analyzing such unmediated experiences—rather than by abstracting from them—Husserl responded to worries about the crisis of intuition in a way that set him apart both from the positivist attempts to reconcile science and ordinary experience and from the reactionary attempt to disown rationality altogether. As he repeats again and again: the fact that modern rationalism has delivered us with an unsatisfactory understanding of rigorous science cannot be blamed on the idea of rationality as such. Spelling out Husserl’s notion of intuition and relating it both to other (e.g., the Kantian) usages in the history of philosophy and the anti-scientific cultural rhetoric of the Weimar republic would be a topic for another article.

## 6. Conclusion

I have provided a reading of Edmund Husserl’s *Crisis of European Science* that emphasizes Husserl’s lifelong engagement with foundational issues in psychology and the question of how a rigorous “scientific” analysis of consciousness might lay the foundations for philosophy and psychology alike. In particular, I situated Husserl’s views vis-à-vis those of his philosophical and psychological contemporaries, such as Franz Brentano and Karl Bühler. Their views were introduced (a) as foils to highlight specific features of Husserl’s approach, and (b) to provide evidence for my claim that Husserl saw his phenomenological analysis as highly relevant to the project of correcting the path of the relatively new empirical psychology, which he viewed as following a misguided naturalism, a naturalism that—according to Husserl—distorted their views about, and usage of, introspection.

I would like to emphasize that this paper has not been concerned with the question of whether there was really a crisis in psychology; either in the various senses employed by Bühler, Driesch, Vygotsky and others at the time; nor in the sense asserted by Edmund Husserl. My aim, rather, was to analyze Husserl’s diagnosis of a crisis in order to (a) better understand it on its own terms, and (b) probe into a particular intellectual and cultural domain, namely that of the complex relationship between philosophers and experimental psychologists in the decades before and after 1900. Thus, I have not only provided a novel analysis of Husserl’s *Crisis*, but have also used it in support of a broader thesis, i.e., that the conflicts between philosophers and experimental psychologists at the time often turned on the question of what was the proper way of dealing with the phenomena of human consciousness and experience.

While my analysis of these conflicts provides an important context for understanding the issues at stake in Husserl’s *Crisis*, I certainly do not wish to suggest that a full understanding of this work can in any way be reduced to that context. To indicate this much, Section 4 provided a brief outline of other Weimar Republic discourses about crisis that also provide an important background for Husserl’s *Crisis*-work. There is, however, one other context for Husserl’s concern with the crisis of rationality, namely that of the more specific circumstances of his life at the time the *Crisis* was written: As already suggested, when Husserl wrote the *Crisis*, his life had been shaken by the Nazi dictatorship. After first stripping him of his right to give lectures, it then briefly reinstated him,

only to finally fire him from his post as professor emeritus in January 1936. Unsurprisingly, Husserl was outraged by these events. The situation was made even worse by the fact that Martin Heidegger, his former student and successor to his philosophy chair at the University of Freiburg, not only joined the Nazi party, but also became the rector of the university. In this capacity he was directly involved in instituting the reprisals Husserl had to suffer.

Beyond these political events there was a more subtle crisis in the relationship between Husserl and Heidegger, one that had been building up in the years just before 1933. It concerned the growing divergence of their views. Husserl had been instrumental in hiring Heidegger as his successor, hoping that Heidegger would continue to work along Husserl's own lines. He was subsequently deeply troubled to see Heidegger's philosophy developing in a new and different direction after Heidegger's 1927 *Sein und Zeit*. More specifically, Husserl was disheartened to see evidence of the kinds of anti-rationalist tendencies that he had been attacking for years. And, as if this were not bad enough, Heidegger was becoming hugely popular. Moreover, Husserl increasingly felt that his own position was being misrepresented in the secondary literature. For example, around 1930 he read a series of articles by Georg Misch (1930) about contemporary philosophy, one of which was entitled "A Debate with Heidegger and Husserl" (Bruzina, 2004, p. 50f.). Husserl was distressed to see his own position characterized as a logic-centered intellectualism, as opposed to Dilthey and Heidegger's focus on life and history. As one intellectual biographer of Husserl's last ten years argues: "In view of this representation Husserl realized he had to provide a far broader apologia of his philosophy if his thought was to be properly understood, one that would show his phenomenology to be at grips precisely with what was most deeply and fundamentally concrete and originate in human life" (Bruzina, 2004, p. 27). In a similar vein, David Carr has also argued that "Husserl's bitterness, especially against his former protégé Heidegger... did not prevent him from seeing that existentialism had given needed expression to something real: a deeply felt lack of direction for man's existence as a whole... a sense of crisis and breakdown" (Carr, 1970, p. xxv). It is this deeply felt lack that Husserl responded to when writing his *Crisis*, thereby attempting to cast his philosophical project in a terminology that he hoped would be more accessible to the spirit of the times.

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