

Filippo Nobili

The Historical Nexus: Historicity, History and Historical Method in Husserl's Phenomenology

...ist das Historische zwar wirksam, aber verdeckt¹

Introduction²

The historical afflatus of Husserl's thought became manifest after the appearance of his last project on *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*³. The reader of the time might have been stunned by phenomenology's "unexpected" historical twist.

In 1949, for instance, Ricœur seemed taken aback and captivated by the "transformation of Husserl's set of problems", apparently at odds with "this thinker, naturally alien to political worries, – apolitical [...] by education, by taste, by profession, by concern for scientific rigour". According to Ricœur, it was the dreadful political situation in Germany during the 1930s, that is "the very tragedy of history that led Husserl to think historically" after decades spent dealing with logical problems and performing eidetic analyses hinged upon the pure Ego. Therefore, to Ricœur, it was only in the aftermath of Nazism's uprising that "the most unhistorical of professors was challenged by history to interpret himself historically". There is no doubt that relying on this merely exogenous explanation, and believing that "nothing in Husserl's earlier work" seemed "to prepare the way for a shift [...] towards a philosophy of history", one ended up disputing "the consistency of transcendental phenomenology"⁴.

¹ E. Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie. Ergänzungsband: Texte aus dem Nachlass 1934-1937* [Hua XXIX], Kluwer, Dordrecht 1993, p. 399.

² Unless otherwise stated, all translations from non-English works are my own.

³ As well known, this work stems from the lectures hold by Husserl in Vienna and Prague, respectively, in May and November 1935. From those conferences, a partial version of *Crisis* came out in the periodical "Philosophia" (Belgrade) in 1936.

⁴ P. Ricœur, *Husserl et le sens de l'histoire*, in "Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale", 3/4, 1949, pp. 280-282. To be honest, in what follows Ricœur seems to soften his position by looking for

In this respect, it makes little difference if one antedates the “intrusion” of history from the prelude of WWII to WWI⁵. The point to consider is that no exogenous influence could have led to the magnitude of the *Crisis* project without any endogenous preconditions. In order to present itself as a historically relevant philosophy, transcendental phenomenology had to conceal in itself from the outset the reason and the resources to deal with the historical dimension⁶. Accordingly, instead of stressing a supposed discontinuity in Husserl’s philosophy regarding history, this latter reading accounts for its fundamental continuity. Transcendental phenomenology was progressively unfolding its endogenous historical reasons before those exogenous spurs could intervene accelerating and specifying its own ongoing development. As stated by Lembeck, “history seems to become less a theme of phenomenology than, conversely, phenomenology becomes a historical subject in its turn”⁷.

Since the appearance of *Crisis* unfinished project, the release of numerous unpublished lectures and manuscripts enabled many scholars to delve deeper into Husserl’s historical thinking, alternatively focusing on the historicity of transcendental (inter)subjectivity, on his reconstruction of the history of philosophy (as well as phenomenology’s place therein), and on the methodological presuppositions of any historical *Betrachtung*.

In this paper, my aim would not be to scope any of these topics in and for itself, but to highlight their mutual relationship and interdependence within Husserl’s phenomenology. Indeed, there is a kind of inevitable cross-reference among his understanding of the historicity of transcendental subjectivity, the history of philosophy and the historical (genealogical) method thereof. In order to make this *historical nexus* evident, I will first trace its origin in Husserl’s corpus (section 1), then address his conception of historicity according to its onto- and phylogenetic accounts (section 2), and finally outline his historical method as applied in his reading of the history of philosophy (section 3).

some premonitions of phenomenology’s historical “turn” in Husserl’s earlier works. Moreover, the impression of the irrelevance of history for phenomenology was fostered by Husserl’s criticism of “historicism as an epistemological aberration” in the 1911 essay *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft*, although even there he “fully acknowledge[d] the tremendous value of history in the broadest sense for the philosopher” (*Philosophy as Rigorous Science*, in “The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy”, II, 2002, p. 283).

⁵ Cfr. J. Farges, *Husserl et la Grande Guerre: l’irruption critique de l’histoire dans la phénoménologie*, in “Transversalités”, 132, 2015, pp. 43-59.

⁶ Cfr. L. Landgrebe, *Phänomenologie und Geschichte*, Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, Gütersloh 1968, chap. 1; Id., *Die Phänomenologie als transzendente Theorie der Geschichte*, in “Phänomenologische Forschungen”, 3, 1976, pp. 17-47.

⁷ K.-H. Lembeck, *Gegenstand Geschichte. Geschichtswissenschaftstheorie in Husserls Phänomenologie*, Kluwer, Dordrecht 1988, p. 3.

1. A very brief prehistory of Husserl's historical breakthrough

According to Melandri, from a transcendental phenomenological perspective “the premises for an adequate analysis of historicity” are the following: “a) genetic intentional analysis; b) phenomenology of *Zeitbewußtsein*; c) phenomenology of the pre-predicative (*Lebenswelt*); d) definition of spiritual sciences’ regional ontology; e) theory of intersubjectivity”⁸. Consequently, it is not surprising that Husserl came to history only after a long phenomenological apprenticeship, i.e. after having dealt with such preliminary themes and developed a suitable methodology. We can roughly reconstruct this apprenticeship by identifying some key stages of development⁹.

To begin with, let us focus on an interesting excerpt from 1898 on the relation between the history of philosophy and philosophy itself (in this case, theory of knowledge). Introducing the lectures on *Erkenntnistheorie und Hauptpunkte der Metaphysik*, Husserl complains to his students that, since “historically transmitted problems [...] of the main philosophical schools, remain intrinsically unclear [...], [he would] grant little room to historical matters”. This means that, as a result of such historical confusion, the “demand for scientific rigour” of philosophy could not be historically satisfied. Nevertheless, history is not discredited *sic et simpliciter*; its fruitfulness is rather subordinated to a preliminary philosophical clarification: “History is an informative book for those knowledgeable enough to understand how to read it. Anyone without a philosophy cannot learn anything from it. But we wish to possess a philosophy”¹⁰. The pursuit of a genuine philosophy prevails here, and the informative value of history heuristically depends on its prior acquisition.

The point is that, before clarifying his own philosophy, Husserl could not engage in a fruitful reading of the philosophical tradition, since he would lack “a framework against which to see a pattern in history”¹¹. Only in the early years of the 20th century, after the rupture with Brentano’s descriptive psychology and after mastering phenomenological reduction, did Husserl achieve this self-clarification. It was particularly between 1906 and 1908 that he came to understand phenomenology as

⁸ E. Melandri, *Logica e esperienza in Husserl*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1960, p. 234.

⁹ For a more comprehensive examination of Husserl’s conception of history see D. Carr, *Phenomenology and the problem of history: a study of Husserl’s transcendental philosophy*, NUP, Evanston 1974; K.-H. Lembeck, *op. cit.*

¹⁰ E. Husserl, *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie. Vorlesung 1902/03* [Hua Mat III], Kluwer, Dordrecht 2001, p. 228.

¹¹ R. Sokolowski, *Husserl’s Interpretation of the History of Philosophy*, in “Franciscan Studies”, 24, 1964, p. 262.

a transcendental discipline, articulating for the first time the main thesis of phenomenological idealism¹². Nearly concomitant with the transcendentalisation of phenomenology was the (re)discovery by Husserl of a genetic intentional analysis¹³, to be distinguished from the research of genetic psychology into the empirical (physiological) and causal origins of conscious states.

Two interrelated outcomes stem from this reassessment of phenomenology. The first concerns Husserl's rereading of the history of (ancient and modern) philosophy. Over the years, this led to a series of introductory courses to philosophy aimed at laying the groundwork for phenomenology¹⁴. It is only at this stage that history becomes *truly informative*. Once in fact the phenomenological canon is clearly established according to its fundamental principles, Husserl could profitably compare and contrast his own work with that of previous philosophers, identifying convergences or divergences, as well as anticipations of transcendental phenomenology. This is why the latter, prior to any exogenous input, could

¹² During the winter semester of 1906-07, the procedure of the epoché is fully described and aptly characterised as propaedeutic to a first philosophy distinct from psychology (cfr. E. Husserl, *Introduction to Logic and Theory of Knowledge. Lectures 1906/07* [CW XIII], Springer, Dordrecht 2008, chap. 5); in the summer of 1907, the themes of intentional correlation and constitution are explicitly addressed (cfr. Id., *The Idea of Phenomenology* [CW VIII], Springer, Dordrecht 1999); the main theses of phenomenological idealism are stated in some manuscripts dating from 1908 (cfr. Id., *Transzendentaler Idealismus. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1908-1921)* [Hua XXXVI], Kluwer, Dordrecht 2003, Nrr. 1-4), as well as the first occurrence of the locution "transcendental phenomenology" (CW XIII, p. 431). On Husserl's trajectory between *Logische Untersuchungen* and *Ideen I* see J.-F. Lavigne, *Husserl et la naissance de la phénoménologie (1900-1913)*, PUF, Paris 2005.

¹³ This topic is controversial, because many scholars usually trace back the birth of genetic phenomenology to later periods, mainly after the first volume of *Ideen* (1913), in works such as *Ideen II* (the first drafts date from 1912-1915), *Bernauer Manuskripte (1917-1918)* or *Analyses zur passiven Synthesis (1918-1926)*. Nevertheless, this contrasts with Husserl's statement to Natorp in 1918: "For more than a decade now, I have moved beyond the stage of static Platonism and given phenomenology as its main theme the idea of transcendental genesis" (K. Schuhmann, E. Schuhmann (a cura di), *Edmund Husserl. Briefwechsel* [Hua Dok III/1-10], Kluwer, Den Haag 1994, 5, p. 137). The key point here is that the transition to transcendental phenomenology authorises Husserl to develop a different conception of (intentional) genesis as opposed to that of genetic (empirical) psychology. The fact that the elaboration of Husserl's main genetic works follows by several years this turning point should not mislead us on this. Moreover, as aptly noted by A.J. Steinbock, "Husserl had already engaged in genetic analyses before phenomenology became aware of itself as having a quite distinct genetic dimension" (A.J. Steinbock, *Home and Beyond. Generative Phenomenology after Husserl*, NUP, Evanston 1996, p. 37).

¹⁴ Cfr. E. Husserl, *Einleitung in die Philosophie. Vorlesungen 1916-1920* [Hua Mat IX], Springer, Dordrecht 2012; Id., *Aufsätze und Vorträge (1911-1921)* [Hua XXV], M. Nijhoff, Dordrecht 1987, pp. 125-144; Id., *Einleitung in die Philosophie. Vorlesungen 1922/23* [Hua XXXV], Kluwer, Dordrecht 2002; Id., *First philosophy. Lectures 1923/24 and related texts from the manuscripts (1920-1925)* [CW XIV], Springer, Dordrecht 2019.

be historicised and conceptualised as “the secret yearning [*geheime Sehnsucht*] of all modern philosophy”¹⁵. Progressively, phenomenology develops into a historical phenomenon and acquires its historical relevance¹⁶.

The second outcome arises from Husserl’s analyses of time-consciousness undertaken from 1904-1905 onwards, and concerns the innermost structural junction among *temporality*, *genesis* and *history*¹⁷. We can already appreciate this breakthrough in some texts from 1907-1908, where Husserl describes intentional constitution as permeated by a kind of inner teleology. The point is that the acts of consciousness

are not free-floating particularities, coming and going in the stream of consciousness. Rather, [...] they display teleological *mutual inferences* [*Zusammengehörigkeiten*], and corresponding connections of fulfilment, corroboration, confirmation, and their counterparts. And everything depends upon the *interconnections* that present intelligible unity. And it is only in these interconnections that the objectivity [...] constitutes itself – not in one blow, but in a gradually ascending process.¹⁸

Accordingly, and correlatively to this temporal process of interconnected lived experiences, objectivity presents itself as historically constituted. In fact, “showing the origin of the presentation of the thing” – as Husserl specifies here, in non-psychological terms – implies “showing the ‘history’ of the presentation of the thing, i.e. attesting to the gradation of acts, teleologically built upon each other”¹⁹.

Hence, what is already ascertained at this stage is the necessary historical trajectory of transcendental phenomenology. If the latter is meant to clarify objectivity *via* the intentional accomplishments of consciousness and both objectivity and consciousness themselves present a temporal – that is, historical – organisation, then phenomenology must also be con-

¹⁵ Id., *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy I: General introduction to a pure phenomenology* [CW II], a cura di M. Nijhoff, Den Haag 1982, p. 142, transl. mod. One could even argue that to clarifying this cryptic sentence the *Crisis* project is explicitly and ultimately devoted.

¹⁶ About a decade before *Crisis* this is confirmed in the *Fünf Aufsätze über Erneuerung* (in Id., *Aufsätze und Vorträge (1922-1937)* [Hua XXVII], Kluwer, Dordrecht 1989, pp. 3-94) commissioned by the Japanese periodical ‘Kaizo’. Here, after the catastrophe of the First World War, Husserl attempts to address the issue concerning the renewal of European humanity by resorting to the phenomenological method.

¹⁷ Cfr. L. Ni, *Horizontal-Intention: Time, Genesis, History – Husserl’s Understanding of Their Immanent Relationship*, in D. Lohmar, I. Yamaguchi (a cura di), *On Time – New Contributions to the Husserlian Phenomenology of Time*, Springer, Dordrecht 2010, pp. 187-211.

¹⁸ CW VIII, p. 55, transl. mod.

¹⁹ Hua XXXVI, p. 13.

sidered, in certain respect, a historical science. Before questioning this specific aspect, let us see how the inner historicity of intentional constitution is confirmed in later works by Husserl:

- i. time-consciousness displays a “genetic ‘history’”²⁰;
- ii. for its part, “the Ego always lives in the *medium* of its ‘history’”²¹;
- iii. each “synthesis, as a synthesis having this form, has its ‘history’, evinced in the synthesis itself”²²;
- iv. “within its doctrine of genesis”, phenomenology reveals “the essence of transcendental subjectivity” as “thoroughly teleological”²³;
- v. thus, intentionally speaking, “history is a graduating process of constituting higher and higher formations of sense through which prevails an immanent teleology”²⁴;
- vi. consequently, “‘constitutive’ phenomenology, phenomenology of genesis, follows [...] the necessary history of this objectivation”²⁵.

2. Historicity: from ontogenesis to phylogenesis

For Husserl, “history in the usual sense of its relation to human culture is only a highest level”²⁶ with respect to the inner historicity of intentional constitution. But how to interpret this sentence? How to make sense of the attempt to explain human history by analogy with the historicity of human consciousness?

Of course, it is not easy to bridge the gap between the “genetic ‘history’” of a certain ego objectifying its own intentional correlate, and the proper history of humankind on Earth. It would require an analogical transition, so to speak, from an *ontogenetic* account to a *phylogenetic* one²⁷, that is the generalisation of the two intentional correlates: no

²⁰ E. Husserl, *Die “Bernauer Manuskripte” über das Zeitbewußtsein (1917/18)* [Hua XXX-III], Kluwer, Dordrecht 2001, p. 27.

²¹ Id., *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy II: Studies in the phenomenology of constitution* [CW III], Kluwer, Dordrecht 1989, p. 350.

²² Id., *Cartesian Meditations. An Introduction to Phenomenology* [CM], M. Nijhoff, Den Haag 1960, p. 79.

²³ Id., *Psychological and transcendental phenomenology and the confrontation with Heidegger (1927-1931)* [CW VI], Kluwer, Dordrecht 1997, p. 102.

²⁴ Id., *Analyses concerning passive and active synthesis: Lectures on transcendental logic* [CW IX], Springer, Dordrecht 2001, p. 270.

²⁵ Ivi, p. 634.

²⁶ Ivi, p. 270.

²⁷ Of course, the two terms used by Husserl should not be understood in their biological sense, but in the context of a phenomenological “intentional” genesis (cfr. E. Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass. Dritter Teil (1929-35)*

longer an ego and its object, but humanity as a full-fledged intersubjectivity²⁸ and its life-world²⁹. It is not by accident that Husserl spent so many years dealing with these preliminary steps before he could properly thematise history³⁰.

In what follows, I am not covering in details these developments, nor questioning the legitimacy of Husserl's analogical transition. Instead, I will assume its viability in order to portray his conception. In addition, I will provide some methodological remarks so as to show how Husserl's *modus operandi* is the same in both scenarios – whether it be the individual historicity at stake or that of human communities.

2.1 Historical ontogenesis

As stated in a 1932 manuscript, according to Husserl, experience acquires a historical form via apperception³¹. In general, apperception refers to the way in which consciousness deals with pure experiential sense or sense-value (*Sinngehalt*), independent of the intuitive presentation of what is actually meant, i.e., in our case, aside from the intuitive loss of the historical past. Now, intentionally speaking, history is just a sense-formation resulting from the peculiar dynamic of sense-apperception.

Every such proper historicity is a layer of sense [*Sinnschicht*] that must have inserted itself into the already constituted capacity for constitution, one that obviously demands a founding original establishment [*Urstiftung*]. This applies to each individual object as historically understood and again to the

[Hua XV], M. Nijhoff, Den Haag 1973, p. 595; Id., *Grenzprobleme der Phänomenologie. Analysen des Unbewusstseins und der Instinkte. Metaphysik. Späte Ethik. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1908-1937)* [Hua XLII], Springer, Dordrecht 2013, p. 98; Id., *Späte Texte über Zeitkonstitution (1929-1934). Die C-Manuskripte* [Hua Mat VIII], Springer, Dordrecht 2006, p. 170).

²⁸ Cfr. Id., *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass. Erster Teil (1905-1920)* [Hua XIII], M. Nijhoff, Den Haag 1973; Id., *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass. Zweiter Teil (1921-1928)* [Hua XIV], M. Nijhoff, Den Haag 1973; Hua XV.

²⁹ Cfr. Id., *Die Lebenswelt. Auslegungen der vorgegebenen Welt und ihrer Konstitution. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1916-1937)* [Hua XXXIX], Springer, New York 2008.

³⁰ Cfr. Id., *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie* [Hua VI], M. Nijhoff, Den Haag 1976; Hua XXIX.

³¹ Cfr. Hua XXXIX, Nr. 44. In this manuscript Husserl emphasises the noetic side of apperception: “The title ‘apperception’ denotes the law according to which newly constituting experience not only originally establishes its acquisition or habituality for effective and potential repeating experiences, but also an implicit habituality for an entire genre of altered experiential sense, for experiences *as if* they had originally been established” (ivi, p. 503).

possible whole historical style of a given perceptual present. Once it has been constituted, a transposing apperception to every other similar real present that confronts me necessarily takes place, and again as a re-transposition to the surrounding past world [...].³²

For the late Husserl, apperception operates according to a dual modality: as a transposition (*Übertragung*)³³ of past (sedimented/experienced) sense onto new experiences *and* as a re-transposition (*Rückübertragung*) of new (bestowed/acquired) sense to the sedimented/experienced one³⁴. At the very heart of Husserl's understanding of intentional constitution, lies this kind of recursiveness. Experience should not be understood as a linear (temporal) process; rather, it is always characterised by a sort of retroactivity rooted in subjectivity, which enables and drives its development and enhancement.

This retroaction [*Rückwirkung*] on the past being value, this re-transposition of subsequently acquired apperceptions, knowledge, and corrections onto the mnemonic reservoirs [*Erinnerungsbestände*] is a universal fact and must be carefully elucidated.³⁵

So, we must consider this “fundamental dual pace [*Doppelschritt*] of constitution: as a constitution that proceeds and recedes [*fortschreitende und rückschreitende*]”³⁶. There is no doubt that this pivotal dynamic is prescribed to apperception by the inner structure of time-consciousness, and in particular by what Husserl calls the intertwining (*Verflechtung*) or the being in each other (*Ineinander*) of protentions and retentions³⁷.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ More occurrences in Id., *Experience and Judgement. Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic* [EJ], Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1973, p. 124 (translated as “transference”); Hua Mat VIII, pp. 15, 161, 210, 337; Hua XXXIX, *passim*.

³⁴ To fully grasp the process of intentional “sedimentation” would require further specifications and technicalities (see my *La prospettiva del tempo. L'idealismo fenomenologico di Husserl come autoesplicitazione della soggettività trascendentale*, Mimesis, Milano-Udine 2022, § 3.2). For our purposes here, the geological metaphor, to which each constitutive accomplishment precipitates (being preserved) in what Husserl calls secondary passivity, should suffice.

³⁵ Hua Mat VIII, p. 160.

³⁶ Hua XXXIX, p. 505.

³⁷ Cfr. Hua XXXIII, Nrr. 1-2. In a nutshell: each retention preserves former experiences (including previous protentions) synthesizing the unity of the elapsed phases of the stream of consciousness; on this (motivational) basis, each protention can anticipate experience to come and further phases of the stream (including further retentions) in a kind of stylistic projection of the past into the future, and so on. This interlacement of protentional and retentional tendencies gives consciousness its peculiar recursive dynamic of *protentional projection* beyond itself (forward to the transcendence of the

Due to this non-linear, i.e. recursive (self-)temporalisation, subjectivity penetrates the historical dimension:

The upward-advancing constitution into the future integrates the successive acquisitions of each new present phase, acquisitions that it habitually preserves. Thus, it is historical, as it constitutes the 'I' as a *historical being*.³⁸

At this point, we should underscore the *epigenetic* status of this historical being. The subject should not be considered historical from the outset; rather, it becomes historical by retaining (sedimenting) the sense-value of its previous experiences in a sort of “continuously integrally cohesive system of sediments existing in concealment”³⁹. This is the domain of what Husserl labels *secondary passivity*, describing it as a “constant reservoir [*beständige Reservoir*]”⁴⁰ or a “stock of sense [*Sinnesbestand*]”⁴¹, which is corroborated or reshaped over and over, in the light of every new experience. It is the domain of an “implication of consciousness [*Bewußtseinsimplikation*]”⁴², namely a stage of intentional latency in which “the sense remains identical, it has only become veiled, it has shifted from an explicit sense to an implicit one”⁴³. Nonetheless, this latency to which each “sense is still implicitly there in a ‘dead’ shape” and “without streaming life”⁴⁴ is the precondition for its actual preservation and possible reactivation.

Historicity is thus a noetically acquired form. But this is also true of the noematic side of constitution, in that this intentional retroactivity correlative involves objectivity. That is why “‘objects’ do not fall out of the sky into our consciousness”, but result from “an intentional hereditary transmission [*Vererbung*] [...] that henceforth co-shapes the present itself”. According to Husserl, the apperceptive noematic correlate of the noetic habitualisation of the ego is the formation of objective types. Here, too, we find the “formation [*Bildung*] and the continuous integration of a *permanent* intentional acquisition”, from which follows that “everything we perceive [...] is somehow already ‘apperceived’ already ‘apperceived’

world) and *retentional introjection* within itself (backward to its own immanence). See once more my *La prospettiva del tempo*, cit., § 2.3.2.

³⁸ Hua XXXIX, p. 506.

³⁹ CW IX, p. 234.

⁴⁰ Ivi, p. 227.

⁴¹ EJ, p. 34.

⁴² Hua XXXIII, p. 43.

⁴³ CW IX, p. 223.

⁴⁴ Ivi, p. 227.

according [*Typus*]"⁴⁵. This typification amounts to a pre-categorisation of reality, ensuring a schematic-apperceptive pre-cognition of actual experience. If "the type is forged and gets impressed on us [...] and it determines an apperceptive form"⁴⁶, then "at the first glance at the new we have a sense schema [*Sinneschema*] of what to expect"⁴⁷.

In the light of the above, the noetic-noematic (habitual-typical) system of sense sediments represents an epigenetically developed *a priori*, from which the meaningfulness of the surrounding world results. Since "each subsequent [case] *eo ipso* has the 'character of familiarity [*Bekanntheit*]' and creates 'apperception' *a priori*"⁴⁸, then the world always appears to us as filtered through a general "sense framework [*Sinnesrahmen*]", to which experience unfolds according to certain "sense predelineations [*Sinnesvorzeichnungen*]"⁴⁹. In the end, due to the implicit sedimentation of sense, we obtain a "typical pre-cognition [*Vorbekanntheit*]" of the world, which is always given to us according to a certain degree of "pre-knowledge [*Vorwissen*]" and "pre-validity [*Vorgeltung*]"⁵⁰.

Thus, also the world, apperceptively constituted as the total horizon of all possible experiences, reveals itself as historically become: "I do not assume the pre-given world in its pre-givenness and in its being so, but rather I make [*mache*] the pre-givenness of the world"⁵¹. "The lifeworld is always in motion [*im Bewegung*]", constantly "re-edited" by the apperceptive re-transposition of new "sense coverings [*Sinnesauflagen*]"⁵².

Finally, due to apperception, reality is thoroughly historicised:

the constitution of enduring realities, as to [their] seed [Keime], includes a moment of historicity. But in the advancement of experience [...] the far historicity is constituted in what is effectively remembered, and this then en-

⁴⁵ Id., *Natur und Geist. Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1927* [Hua XXXII], Kluwer, Dordrecht 2001, p.145. On types see D. Lohmar, *Husserl's Type and Kant's Schemata: Systematic Reasons for Their Correlation or Identity*, in D. Welton (a cura di), *The New Husserl. A Critical Reader*, IUP, Bloomington (IN) 2003, pp. 93-124; E. Diaz, *Transcendental Anticipation: A Reconsideration of Husserl's Type and Kant's Schemata*, in "Husserl Studies", 36, 2020, pp. 1-23. See also A. Pugliese, *Rinnovamento e mediazione. Husserl e Dilthey di fronte alla storia*, in L. Auteri, M. Di Gesù, S. Tedesco (a cura di), *La cultura in guerra. Dibattiti, protagonisti, nazionalismi in Europa (1870-1922)*, Carocci, Roma 2015, pp. 265-274, for a possible derivation of the notion of *Typus* from Dilthey and its historical import.

⁴⁶ CW 3, p. 285, transl. mod.

⁴⁷ Hua XXXIX, p. 2.

⁴⁸ Ivi, pp. 10 f.

⁴⁹ CW IX, pp. 44 f.

⁵⁰ Cfr. EJ, § 8.

⁵¹ Hua Mat VIII, p. 41.

⁵² Hua XXXIX, p. 514.

ters in the apperception of new experiential typicalities. Thus, the typicality of becoming [*Typik des Werdens*] is constituted. But from the experiential typicality of realities, there occurs a constant re-transposition onto what was apperceived in an earlier past, so that it now apperceptively acquires a *historical form*.⁵³

At the ontogenetic level, historicity is rooted in this intentional retro-activity⁵⁴, that is in the capacity of consciousness to keep trace of and constantly remodel – through apperception – its constitutive achievements.

2.2 Historical phylogenesis

As mentioned above, the transition to phylogenetic history involves the shifting from the genesis of subjectivity to the *generativity* of intersubjectivity. In turn, this presupposes the passage from immanent time to *intersubjective* or *objective* time, i.e. a “socialised temporality”, through a sort of “intermonadic temporalization”⁵⁵. In *The Origin of Geometry*, Husserl reports that

the whole of historical time implied in [the present] is that of a historically unitary-unified humanity, unitary through its generative connection and constant communalization [*Vergemeinschaftung*] in cultivating what has already been cultivated before, whether in cooperative work or in reciprocal interaction, etc.⁵⁶

Just as the ontogenetic historicity implies the (self-)constitution of the individual subject, history in the phylogenetic sense presupposes the constitution of a plural subject (groups, communities, nations, etc.). Thus, hu-

⁵³ Ivi, p. 506.

⁵⁴ Speaking about the birth of the modern conception of history, R. Koselleck underscored “this retroactive structuration of the past”, remarking how “historical time acquired a quality of generating experience [*erfahrungsstiftende Qualität*], which, retroacting [*rückwirkend*], permitted the past to be seen anew” (R. Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt A.M. 1995; transl. by K. Tribe, *Futures Past. On the Semantics of Historical Time*, CUP, New York 2004, pp. 141 and 138, transl. mod.).

⁵⁵ See respectively L.M. Rodemeyer, *Intersubjective Temporality. It's About Time*, Springer, Dordrecht 2006; D. Lohmar, *On the Constitution of the Time of the World: The Emergence of Objective Time on the Ground of Subjective Time*, in D. Lohmar, I. Yamaguchi (a cura di), *On Time*, cit., pp. 115-136; A. Pugliese, *Unicità e relazione. Intersoggettività, genesi e io puro in Husserl*, Mimesis, Milano-Udine 2009, pp. 383 ff.; I. Yamaguchi, *Intermonadic Temporalization in Simultaneous Reciprocal Awakening*, in D. Lohmar, I. Yamaguchi (a cura di), *On Time*, cit., pp. 295-317.

⁵⁶ E. Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology. An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy* [C], NUP, Evanston 1970, p. 374, transl. mod.

man history in common sense can be seen as the intentional correlate of an ongoing process of humanisation, i.e. the (self-)constitution of humanity as a unitary whole: “Only once we have entered into the sense-formation of the all-humanity [*Sinnbildung der Allmenschheit*], we have this all-humanity”⁵⁷. The point is that our “social-historical world [...] is historical only through the inner historicity of the individuals”, but only insofar as their historicity is “together with that of other communalized persons”⁵⁸.

Husserl addresses this crucial aspect in a 1934 manuscript entitled *Menschliches Leben in der Geschichtlichkeit*. Here, he portrays different degrees of historicity, each corresponding to a particular stage of development of human society. Inspired by the works of the French anthropologist L. Lévy-Bruhl⁵⁹, the most primitive stage is characterised by a sort of “original animism”. At this level, we find a yet “latent” or “hidden historicity” according to which humanity lives in a “concrete historical present without an essential historical consciousness, if we understand by it the kind of knowledge that is generally accessible through the reconstruction of what we ‘call’ world history or national history”⁶⁰. The absence of an individual historical consciousness is precisely correlated with an underdeveloped degree of communalisation, i.e. to a lack of what Husserl elsewhere calls “communal self-cognition [*Gemeinschaft-Selbsterkenntnis*]”⁶¹.

While humans surpass animals in that they have steadily constituted the unity of their lifetime [*Lebenszeit*] and possess it as their horizon of life, [...] within the original communal historicity they do not yet possess a historical time in the full and usual sense, in which their individual-historical existence is consciously embedded. That is to say, they have not developed it as available knowledge, as objectualisation and explicitation of generative temporality – the totality of communal time-life – which allows the intersubjective coexistence [*Miteinander*] to be bound within [the] life community, as available community-past, community-present, and community-future [...]. Correlatively, the explicit history of the surrounding world is not fully developed.⁶²

For Husserl, the emergence of an explicit form of history – for example, in the Greek world with Herodotus and Thucydides – means

⁵⁷ Hua XXIX, p. 347.

⁵⁸ C, p. 372 n.

⁵⁹ Cfr. D. Moran, L. Steinacher, *Husserl's Letter to Lévy-Bruhl: Introduction*, in “The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy”, VIII, 2008, pp. 1-23.

⁶⁰ Hua XXIX, pp. 3 f.

⁶¹ CW XIV, p. 487.

⁶² Hua XXIX, p. 5.

acknowledging that “*historiography* is a function for a higher mode of human existence”⁶³. However, to penetrate this new existential dimension implies the pre-constitution of a “community horizon [...] for the multiplicity of the current co-representing, co-thinking, co-evaluating, co-operating, co-producing, a coexistence of conflict-free concordance or of conflicting disagreement”. Of course, the possibility of such a “communalisation of *cogit[at]iones*”, through “mutual understanding and doing”, requires an “empathising appresentation [*empfindende Appräsentation*]” by which “one’s own perception and memory are complemented by those of others”. The result is a sort of “generative overlapping [*Überschiebung*]”⁶⁴ that unifies a multiplicity of life(time) trajectories in a whole historical community with its unitary communal history⁶⁵.

If, on the spatial axis, the historicisation both requires and has required human communalisation through exchange between different people or populations, on the temporal axis, the constitution of a “historical past” for a given community entails at least “a layer of living traditionalisation [*Traditionalisierung*]”. As much as the “unknown history of humanity is the analogue to the forgotten past of [individual] memory”⁶⁶, the making of tradition mirrors the above-mentioned process of sense sedimentation and reactivation via apperception. Husserl depicts geometry as traditionally shaped by a sort of intergenerational synthesis, wherein each spiritual accomplishment resumes all the previous ones and serves as a premise for further acquisitions⁶⁷.

Accordingly, each tradition is something like a “chain [*Kette*]” of sense, the rings of which are added to one another over time⁶⁸. Alternating phases of active production, passive preservation and reactivation of sense, this concatenation mimics the recursive dynamic of ontogenetic constitution. Indeed, the goals set by past generations in their original establishment (*Urstiftung*) “live on in sedimented forms [and] can be reawakened again and again” by means of their “reestablishment [*Nachstiftung*]”⁶⁹. Of course, as attested in *The Origin of Geometry*, this phylogenetic sedimentation requires the “linguistic embodiment [*Verleiblichung*]”⁷⁰ or,

⁶³ *Ibid.* Just as science in general, but before it becomes a proper science, historiography represents a “tendency of humanity”, its “motivation for developing a reconstruction [...] of epochs and, possibly, the entire past of a people”, through the “documentation of significant facts [...] memorials, inscriptions, literary objectivation” (*ibid.*).

⁶⁴ *Ivi*, pp. 6 f.

⁶⁵ Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 234 f.

⁶⁶ *Ivi*, p. 343.

⁶⁷ Cfr. C., p. 355.

⁶⁸ *Ivi*, p. 363.

⁶⁹ *Ivi*, p. 71.

⁷⁰ *Ivi*, p. 358.

more broadly, some kind of documental reification of the underlying intention that enables the “virtual” communication across generations⁷¹.

The crucial point however is that, by virtue of a “passive taking-over [Übernahme] of being-validity”, “what was a passive sense configuration has now become one that is being shaped through active production”⁷². To reactivate a tradition always entails (re)articulating out (*herausartikulieren*⁷³) of its sedimented form the ‘original’ implicit intention, so that the latter undergoes “a more or less radical reshaping”⁷⁴. This clarifies why, on closer inspection, the “resumption [Wiederaufnahme]” of tradition is never a neutral operation, since “normally the taking-over and the correction combine with each other”⁷⁵.

Ultimately, the recursiveness of the dynamic is also evident in Husserl’s phylogenetic definition of history: “History is from the start nothing other than the vital movement of the being with and in each other [Miteinander und Ineinander] of original sense-formations and sense sedimentations”⁷⁶. Compared to the primordially of ontogenetic historicity, the difference lies in the amplitude of the same dual pace of constitution: “Through the intersubjectivity of existence, the finitude of the primordial world with its primordial spatiotemporality obtains an expansion in its backward and forward extensibility [Rückerstreckbarkeit und Vorerstreckbarkeit]”⁷⁷.

To complete the analogy between ontogenetic and phylogenetic historicity, we must reconsider the issue of the *a priori* and grasp its historical and generative significance – that is to decipher what Husserl terms “*a priori* of history”, “*a priori* of historicity” or “historical *a priori*”⁷⁸. Just as every individual experience is implicitly loaded with sedimented sense, each intersubjective “historical temporality” owns its “historical presuppositions”⁷⁹. These presuppositions are nothing but “sense implications concealed through sedimentation or traditionalization”⁸⁰, which confer upon a certain epoch and community a “unified traditional praxis”, shaped by the “performances of a sedimented style”. Throughout the generative *Sinnbil-*

⁷¹ Ivi, p. 361. Elsewhere Husserl stresses the “need for a recording of history” (Hua XXIX, p. 40).

⁷² C, p. 364, transl. mod.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Ivi, p. 71.

⁷⁵ Ivi, p. 393.

⁷⁶ Ivi, p. 371, transl. mod.

⁷⁷ Hua XXXIX, p. 501.

⁷⁸ See for example Hua VI, pp. 362 f., 380-383, 553; cfr. A.S. Aldea, A. Allen (a cura di), *Special Issue: Historical A Priori in Husserl and Foucault*, in “Continental Philosophy Review”, 49, 2016, with essays among other by D. Moran, J. Dodd, S. Crowell, D. Carr.

⁷⁹ Hua VI, p. 344.

⁸⁰ C, p. 52, transl. mod.

dung, the *a priori* of history precisely concerns the possibility to inscribe (*hineinschreiben*) and prescribe (*vorschreiben*) “a total lifeworld style” of experience⁸¹ within and to a certain historical community. Once again, considering the special status of this *a priori*, we are led back to the intentional implicitness of sense, albeit this time in a phylogenetic fashion:

The whole of the cultural present, understood as a totality, “implies” the whole of the cultural past in an undetermined but structurally determined generality. To put it more precisely, it implies a continuity of pasts which imply one another, each in itself being a past cultural present.⁸²

For this reason, “to understand geometry or any given cultural fact is to be conscious of its historicity, albeit ‘implicitly’”, since only in the light of this “*inner structure of sense*” or “ground of sense [*Sinnesboden*]”⁸³ can one think or act meaningfully, partaking of this socio-historical framework of meaning.

At this point we should question, as Husserl does, the peculiar status of such a historical *a priori*, trying to escape from what seems to be an inexorable *contradictio in adiecto*. How can we reconcile the ideal validity of the *a priori* with its historical origin, that is, with its being “a formation within human, in us who form it”? In other words: “Historical facts [...] are objective only on the basis of the *a priori*. Yet the *a priori* presupposes historical being?”⁸⁴

Without pretending to solve the question here, I would distinguish, on the one hand, 1) the formal ideality and universal validity of the laws governing the historical formation of certain sense configurations (i.e. the *aprioricity* of history, its *historicity*); on the other, 2) the specificity, the contingent and historically developed determinacy of this configuration (the *historicity* of the *a priori* itself, its *generativity*)⁸⁵.

⁸¹ Hua XXIX, pp. 345 f.

⁸² C, p. 371.

⁸³ Ivi, pp. 370 f., transl. mod.

⁸⁴ Ivi, pp. 349 f.

⁸⁵ Let us clarify with an example: the crisis of Western rationality described by Husserl in his last work is by no means a historical necessity (counterfactual alternatives are easily conceivable). Rather, it is a spiritual (sense) formation resulting from a specific contingent course of history, shaped by a particular generativity. Nevertheless, this crisis is implicitly sedimented within the Western community and permeates the *Zeitgeist* of the current epoch, by and large pre-determining people’s attitudes, actions, thoughts, values, etc. In this sense, with respect to this specific epoch, it could and should be considered a “historically developed *a priori*” according to 2) but not 1). Conversely, the “*a priori* of history” in terms of 1) refers to what constitutes *historicity* as such – both ontogenetically and phylogenetically – namely, the eidetic laws (habitualisation, typification, communalisation, traditionalization, etc.) that necessarily govern any possible historicisation in terms of 2).

The validity of 2) is “*a priori*” only insofar as it acts as a “hidden spiritual heritage”⁸⁶, uncritically permeating and swaying a given epoch or society, as it were, as an ideology. This is why it is crucial for Husserl to understand the ideality of 1), in order to reveal the contingency of 2), whose validity remains “*a priori*” as long as its genesis is not uncovered and its sense-value is not criticised.

3. Historical method and the history of philosophy

3.1 From intentional historicity to historical method

In the 1920s, the discovery of the process of sedimentation and the attempt to develop a “doctrine of intentional intertwinement”, i.e. a “doctrine of implications”⁸⁷, led Husserl to specify and rephrase his own phenomenological method. If “[the solving of] all secrets lie[s] in the clarification of implication”⁸⁸, phenomenology must achieve the explicitation (*Auslegung*) of such intentional implicitness. Thus, at the end of the 1920s, the notion of *Auslegung* was employed by Husserl to reformulate the two branches of phenomenological analysis in terms of “*statische intentionale Auslegung*” and “*intentionale Auslegung der Genesis*”⁸⁹.

This new insight becomes paramount to the point of equating phenomenological idealism as such with transcendental subjectivity’s self-explicitation (*Selbstausslegung*)⁹⁰. Therefore, in the 1930s, after the failed attempt to reorganise the *Pariser Vorträge* into a full-fledged phenomenological system⁹¹, the new paradigm of the *Auslegung* becomes the innermost tenet of the *Crisis* project. In fact, Husserl’s aim here is to make explicit the specific *telos* latently hidden in the history of thought and expressing the historical need for transcendental phenomenology. But what does Husserl’s methodological self-clarification consist of? To what extent can this method be considered inherently historical?

As F. Schiller pointed out, the principle of historical reflection requires the historian to begin by considering a present state of affairs, and, only

⁸⁶ Hua VI, p. 488.

⁸⁷ CW XIV, p. 516.

⁸⁸ Ivi, p. 571 n.

⁸⁹ E. Husserl, *Formal and transcendental logic* [FTL], M. Nijhoff, Den Haag 1969, Appendix II, § 2a-b.

⁹⁰ FTL, § 104; CM, § 41. More on that in my *La prospettiva del tempo*, cit., chap. 4.

⁹¹ Cfr. I. Kern, *Einleitung des Herausgebers*, in Hua XV, pp. xv-xx; D. Welton, *The Other Husserl. The Horizons of Transcendental Phenomenology*, IUP, Bloomington 2000, pp. 117-130.

then to move upstream to the origins of the state in question: “World history thus begins from a principle that stands in direct opposition to the beginning of the world”. Historical research cannot escape the assumption of one or more alleged starting points capable of steering the analysis through the past, towards its own goal. Accordingly, the historian openly contrasts the actual order of succession of events: she “climbs up in thought [*in Gedanken hinaufsteigt*]” the unfolding of history in order to *regressively* collect those facts that contain the explanation of the following ones. In so doing, the historian relies on the resulting collection of facts as a set of “guiding threads [*Leitfäden*]” to *progressively* reconstruct, according to nexuses of causal or motivational dependence, the effective course of such development⁹². More recently, but in a similar vein, M. Bloch has emphasised such a “backwards [*à rebours*]” reading of history, the “prudently retrogressive method” of the historian, whose attempt is “first to unwind the spool in the opposite direction to that in which the shootings were taken”⁹³.

Not surprisingly, this account of the work of the historian aligns with the procedure of genetic phenomenology. The latter consists of a double movement of *Abbau-* and *Aufbau-Analyse*⁹⁴ that reverses the ordinary course of constitution. Assuming certain (already constituted) sense-validities or configurations as many *Leitfäden*⁹⁵, Husserl performs his well-known *backward questioning* (*Rückfrage*) to retrace the intentional genesis of what was merely presupposed.

The *Rückfrage* consists of a kind of “deconstructive reduction [*Abbau-Reduktion*]”, whose purpose is to dismantle all the “deconstructive layers [*Abbauschichten*]”⁹⁶ corresponding to as many constitutive achievements as have been sedimented all along the *Sinnbildung*. This

⁹² F. Schiller, *Was heißt und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte?* [1789], in R. Boxberger (a cura di), *Schillers Werke. X/1 Universalgeschichte*, De Gruyter, Berlin-Boston 1974, pp. 14 f. A digital edition is available here: https://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/book/show/schiller_universalgeschichte_1789 (pp. 24 f.)

⁹³ M. Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire ou métier d'historien* [1940-43], Armand Colin, Paris 1949; transl. by P. Putnam, *The Historian's craft*, Vintage Books, New York 1953, pp. 45 f., transl. mod.

⁹⁴ Cfr. E. Fink, VI. *Cartesianische Meditation*. Teil II: *Ergänzungsband* [Hua Dok II/2], Kluwer, Dordrecht 1988, pp. 6 ff.; Hua Mat VIII, pp. 69, 185 ff.

⁹⁵ The preliminary eidetic clarification (*Aufklärung*) of these sense-validities is the assignment of static phenomenology viewed as the “phenomenology of guiding threads, phenomenology of the constitution of guiding types of objectualities” (Hua XIV, p. 41).

⁹⁶ Hua Mat VIII, p. 394. More occurrences of the *Abbau-Analyse* in *ivi*, pp. 50, 53, 89 n., 107 n., Nr. 23, 134 f., 166, 224, 402; CW IX, p. 516; Id., *Zur phänomenologischen Reduktion. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1926-1935)* [Hua XXXIV], Kluwer, Dordrecht 2002, p. 386; cfr. J. Claude Evans, *Phenomenological Deconstruction: Husserl's Method of Abbau*, in “Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology”, 21, 1, 1990, pp. 14-25.

first *regressive* movement amounts to what Husserl labels “phenomenological archaeology”⁹⁷. Thence, a second movement conducts a *progressive* reconstruction (*Neuaufbau, Rekonstruktion*)⁹⁸ of what has previously been dismantled, rebuilding the intentional nexuses and explaining (*Erklärung*) the genesis of the actual *Sinngebilde* according to its teleological development.

Having outlined the historical-genealogical character of Husserl’s method, let us now examine how it is productively applied in the *Crisis* project. In doing so, the essential link between phenomenology and history will appear fully evident.

3.2 Inner historiography and performative teleology

When Husserl claims that “what is historically primary in itself is our present”⁹⁹, he is in fact acknowledging the *situational perspectivity* presupposed by any historical reflection¹⁰⁰. If “the most essential of the historical performances” is the one that “from humanity’s actual self-consciousness [...] inquires back to the past that is contained in it”¹⁰¹, then we should not overlook the “higher form of self-responsibility” that characterises the historian as “co-living [*Mitlebender*]”¹⁰² in a certain communal world¹⁰³.

⁹⁷ Hua Mat VIII, p. 356; cfr. CW XIV, p. 234; Hua Dok III/2, p. 260. Cfr. B. Bégout, *La généalogie de la logique. Husserl, l’antéprédicatif et le catégorial*, J. Vrin, Paris 2000, pp. 241-248.

⁹⁸ Cfr. Hua Mat VIII, pp. 157, 437.

⁹⁹ C, p. 373.

¹⁰⁰ According to R. Koselleck, a first understanding of the historian’s standpoint constraint or commitment (*Standortbindung*) and the consequent “temporalisation of the historical perspective” goes back to the work of J.M. Chladenius in the 18th century. Precisely this understanding led to the abandonment of the naïve belief in the historian’s suprapartisanship (*Überparteilichkeit*) in favour of a growing pressure for actively participating to (*Parteizwang*), for taking sides in the course of history, especially after the French Revolution (*Futures Past*, cit., chap. 9). On the same issue, see also the lecture on “History, Science and Morality” by E.H. Carr, *What is History?*, Penguin, London 1990, chap. 3. Similarly, Husserl would criticise “the popular demand to exclude all ‘value judgements [*Wertungen*]’ of the historian, as contrary to the pure science of the historian” (Hua XXIX, p. 243). More on this in D. De Santis, *Il “mestiere” dello storico. Husserl e la fondazione fenomenologica della storiografia*, in E. Husserl, J. Klein, *Fenomenologia e metodo storico*, ETS, Pisa 2023, pp. 11-25.

¹⁰¹ Hua XXIX, p. 238.

¹⁰² Ivi, p. 241.

¹⁰³ Since I cannot address the ethical-political implications here, I will simply emphasise that it is by penetrating such social-historical responsibility that the phenomenologist’s transition from the “nonparticipating spectator” (C, 285) to the “functionar[ly] of mankind” (ivi, p. 17) – “as participating scientist, participating philosopher” (ivi, p. 492) – takes place.

Accordingly, the current crisis of rationality¹⁰⁴ represents the starting point of Husserl's regressive and progressive analysis, whose dual goal is, at once, to track down the historical roots of the present state of affairs and to trace a "teleological-historical path to [...] transcendental phenomenology" as a way out of the crisis¹⁰⁵. Husserl's aim is thus twofold: *diagnostic* and *therapeutic* at the same time. To fulfil this aim, he patrols and tackles the history of philosophy just like any other sense-formation, *deconstructing* its main stages of development and *explicating* the intentional accomplishments that have led to its actual critical configuration, while also hinting at the advent of phenomenology.

On the one hand, going back to the "first beginnings of science" is only possible "by dismantling [*Abbau*] the theoretical convictions we actually hold, [...] inherited from tradition"¹⁰⁶. On the other hand, the awakening of "the a priori structure contained in this historicity" implies the "historical disclosure [*Enthüllung*]" or "explication [*Explikation*]"¹⁰⁷ of its sedimentations, that is the "*Auslegung* of its hidden, innermost motivation"¹⁰⁸.

What results is Husserl's model for an "inner historiography [*innere Historie*]"¹⁰⁹ or "intentional history", as J. Klein has rephrased it in an attempt to highlight the relevance of this approach to the history of science¹¹⁰. This "internal historicity" is distinguished from the "external

¹⁰⁴ On the specific nature of this crisis see E. Trizio, *What is the Crisis of Western Sciences?*, in "Husserl Studies", 32, 2016, pp. 191-211. More broadly, on Husserl's last work cfr. J. Dodd, *Crisis and reflection: An essay on Edmund Husserl's Crisis of the European Sciences*, Kluwer, Dordrecht 2004; C. Majolino, F. De Gandt (a cura di), *Lectures de la Krisis de Husserl*, J. Vrin, Paris 2008; D. Moran, *Husserl's crisis of the European sciences and transcendental phenomenology*, CUP, Cambridge 2012.

¹⁰⁵ Hua VI, p. 435. In the summer of 1937, Husserl expresses the need to establish phenomenology as a "universal historical problem" and regards this "historical way" as "more principled and systematic" than the introduction provided in *Ideen I* (Hua XXIX, 426).

¹⁰⁶ Hua VI, p. 498.

¹⁰⁷ C, pp. 369 f.

¹⁰⁸ Ivi, p. 11. More on the necessity to explicate/explicitate (*explizieren*, *auslegen*) the main representatives of modern thought, such as Galilei and Descartes in Hua XXIX, p. 348; Hua VI, p. 425; C, pp. 49, 75, *passim*.

¹⁰⁹ Ivi, p. 378, transl. mod.

¹¹⁰ J. Klein, *Phenomenology and the History of Science*, in M. Farber (a cura di), *Philosophical Essays in Memory of Edmund Husserl*, HUP, Cambridge 1940, pp. 143-163. On Klein and Husserl on this point cfr. D. Manca, *Un'intenzionalità da vero storico? Jacob Klein e la storia come problema fondamentale della fenomenologia di Husserl*, in E. Husserl, J. Klein, *Fenomenologia e metodo storico*, cit., pp. 51-70. More broadly, on Klein's overall philosophical project cfr. B.C. Hopkins, *The Origin of the Logic of Symbolic Mathematics. Edmund Husserl and Jacob Klein*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington-Indianapolis 2011; I. Chiaravalli, *Nostalgia del concreto: il moderno di Jacob Klein*, in J. Klein, *Dalla forma al simbolo. La logistica greca e la nascita dell'algebra*, ETS, Pisa 2018, pp. 7-35.

historicity”¹¹¹ or the “factual history”¹¹² in the empirical sense. However, it should not be seen as an alternative but rather as complementary to the ordinary procedures employed by philologists and historians, insofar as this phenomenological or “transcendental history corresponds to natural human history”¹¹³.

Just like the natural sciences, historiography must also be complemented by phenomenology’s critical insight, since “only this disclosure enables [an] effectively comprehending historiography, insightful and genuinely scientific in the proper sense”¹¹⁴. According to Husserl, phenomenology could help historians to unravel the eidetic laws governing historical development, i.e. the *a priori* structure of historicity¹¹⁵, and more broadly to (self-)explicate the unthematized intentional performances at work in thematising and “describing” the historical past¹¹⁶.

Thus, in the *Crisis*, Husserl’s procedure is primarily that of a “*historical and critical retrospection* [*Rückbesinnung*]”, a method that, according to the epoché, proceeds with a “skeptical [...] spiritual attitude [...] through the crust of the externalized [*veräußerlicht*] ‘historical facts’ of philosophical history, interrogating, exhibiting, and testing their inner sense and hidden teleology”¹¹⁷. Only after

¹¹¹ Hua XXIX, p. 417.

¹¹² C, p. 371.

¹¹³ Hua Mat VIII, p. 170.

¹¹⁴ C, p. 372, transl. mod.

¹¹⁵ To do so, Husserl’s method of free-phantasy variation can be used for a counterfactual examination of a certain historical world (C, pp. 374 f.), to individuate “its essential form structure, as the apodictic invariant in all its change, in all its relativity” (Hua VI, p. 399).

¹¹⁶ The fruitfulness of phenomenology for such historical epistemology is stressed for example by P. Veyne, *Comment On écrit l’histoire: essai d’épistémologie*, Édition du Seuil, Paris 1971; transl. by M. Moore-Rinvoluti, *Writing History. Essay on Epistemology*, WUP, Middletown 1984; and more recently by T. Breyer, D. Creutz, *Historische Erfahrung: Ein phänomenologisches Schichtenmodell*, in Id. (a cura di), *Erfahrung und Geschichte. Historische Sinnbildung im Pränarrativen*, de Gruyter, Berlin-New York 2010, pp. 332-363.

¹¹⁷ C, pp. 17 f., transl. mod. In light of this retrospective deconstruction of factual history, we stress that *Krisis* as a whole should not be regarded as a paradigmatic example of intentional historiography. Rather, this standard applies strictly to the supplement *Von Ursprung der Geometrie*, where the reconstruction of the genesis of geometry is purely internal – that is, carried out independently of any empirical data or presuppositions. Accordingly, the narrative in the first parts of *Krisis* can be described as “an example of factual history informed by the *a priori* of history” (E. Trizio, *Philosophy’s Nature: Husserl’s Phenomenology, Natural Science, and Metaphysics*, Routledge, New York-London 2021, p. 255). I wish to thank Emiliano Trizio for helping me clarify this point. Finally, as we shall see, the analysis of modern philosophy in *Krisis* – and more broadly, Husserl’s late lectures on the history of philosophy – should be considered propaedeutic, at least to some extent, to an intentional (pre)history of that *philosophia perennis* which transcendental phenomenology is ultimately meant to realize. However, to trace its genesis,

this archaeological digging can the philosophical tradition be *internally* reconstructed¹¹⁸, according to the unveiled tendency underlying its development, i.e. the goal that philosophy is supposed to fulfil throughout its history.

At this point, I would like to emphasise that this inner teleology should not be taken as a given datum, present from the outset. Rather, the ultimate *telos* of philosophy results from an ongoing process of sense-formation, being the product of philosophers' apperceptive (re-)transposition and reactivation of what they have inherited from the tradition. It is the outcome of their active participation in the making of the history of philosophy itself. As Husserl specifies:

The “teleology” we have exhibited in modern philosophy can only become teleology in the proper [sense] if we ourselves intervene with our freedom in history – of which [we] are participants –, thereby making it an actual teleology, i.e. for such a historical movement in which an intersubjectively reaching-through goal idea [*durchreichende Zweckidee*] is effectively realised.¹¹⁹

Therefore, if “philosophy since Descartes reveals nothing less than the image of a teleology that accomplishes itself”, it is simply because – by means of our “critical questioning back” and “taking-over” Descartes, who, “as it were, we carry [...] within ourselves”¹²⁰ – we are “the bearers of this teleology, its co-executors [*Mitvollzieher*] in our personal deliberateness [*Willentlichkeit*]”¹²¹.

In the end, Husserl's scouting within the history of philosophy reveals an essentially *performative* trait, whose “task [is that] of raising up [philosophy] to transcendental phenomenology”¹²². In fact, such “‘teleological’ historical consideration” is nothing more than the “methodical function for the definitive construction of a transcendental phenomenology which satisfies its most proper meaning”¹²³. For this reason, teleology should not be seen as a metaphysical burden encumbering Husserl's reflection, but rather as the unifying principle underpinning any genealogical reflection that seeks to meaningfully investigate *a* given history.

it would first be necessary, as in the case of a well-established science such as geometry, to fulfill the foundational task of also establishing phenomenology as a rigorous science.

¹¹⁸ Cfr. Hua XXIX, pp. 381, 396.

¹¹⁹ Ivi, p. 397.

¹²⁰ Ivi, p. 398.

¹²¹ C, p. 70, transl. mod.

¹²² Hua VI, p. 364; cfr. ivi, p. 438.

¹²³ C, p. 98.

Even if history, taken as a “whole” and by means of a certain “sense-bestowing”, is nothing but a “unity of sense fulness [*Sinnhaftigkeit*]”, this “very sense [...] is not outlined in advance as [the] sense of the goal [*Zwecksinn*]”. In fact, although “human existence” is “always [an] already historical life”, humans “are not in function of an idea of the goal [*Zweckidee*]”, unless “the goal [...] has itself already become historical”¹²⁴. Ultimately, a degree of teleology is implicit in any historical reconstruction that does not fall prey to naive realism, namely, one that does not claim to be a mere mirroring of the past¹²⁵, but takes into account the standpoint from which the inquiry is undertaken¹²⁶, as well as the specific (theoretical or practical) interest that drives the research.

3.3 From history of philosophy to (methodological) infinity

As we have seen, it is precisely the *Sinnhaftigkeit* of the *telos* that “unifies the whole movement of philosophical history in the modern period”¹²⁷. This *telos* is nothing other than a methodological function of historiography, the means by which philosophers actively participate in the making and writing of history (*Geschichtsschreibung*).

By virtue of its “spiritual generativity”, inner historiography produces the “unity of the community of thinkers through and across the ages”. Accordingly, the history of philosophy is not a temporal succession or mere juxtaposition of past philosophers, but rather a “supratemporal process”, a “continuity of actual co-working” sustained by the “philosophers of the millennia” in their “supratemporal communalisation”¹²⁸.

In the *Crisis*, this teleological unification, which is at the same time a kind of “transhistorical” communication, roughly matches the following pattern. After the Cartesian *Urstiftung* and the Kantian *Nachstiftung* – after “the most general concept of the ‘transcendental’” has acted throughout modern philosophy as the “driving force of its development”¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Hua VI, pp. 502 f.

¹²⁵ Cfr. R. Koselleck, *Futures Past*, cit., p. 130.

¹²⁶ Cfr. Id., *Geschichte, Historie*, in O. Brunner, W. Conze, R. Koselleck (a cura di), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, E. Klett, Stuttgart 1975, 2, p. 662: “It is only through the subjective, perspective-bound performance of the historian that the unity of history reveals itself – a unity that was then increasingly sought within historical reality itself”.

¹²⁷ C, p. 70.

¹²⁸ Hua VI, p. 444.

¹²⁹ C, p. 98.

– the transcendental motif can now reach its “final establishment [*Endstiftung*]”¹³⁰ with Husserl’s phenomenology.

It would be misleading to read in this conclusion the end of (the history) of philosophy. Quite the opposite, this last institution

is accomplished when the task is brought to consummate clarity and thus to an apodictic method which, in every step of achievement, is a constant avenue [*Durchgang*] to new steps having [...] the character of apodictic steps. At this point philosophy, as an infinite task, would have arrived at its apodictic beginning, its horizon of apodictic forward movement.¹³¹

If the apodicticity or “the undoubtedness [*Zweifellosgkeit*] concerns the method”¹³², then we are led back from history to phenomenology itself. In the end, Husserl’s procedure allows for a historical examination whose result is the self-clarification and self-justification of his own method. As a matter of fact, “the clarifying justification of our historical method [...] is to employ the history of philosophy for the discovery of the true method of philosophy [...], for the discovery of ‘philosophy itself’”¹³³. We arrive here at a kind of virtuous circularity between theory and history, that is the mutual and recursive deepening of their heuristic potential – historical analysis strengthens theoretical initiative, and vice versa.

Given this constant interplay between theory and history, Husserl’s idea of a “*philosophia perennis*” is that of “a true and genuine universal science ultimately grounded”¹³⁴. Since this science emerges as a “revitalisation [*Wiederverlebendigung*]”¹³⁵ of a certain historical ambition, then we witness to the “infinite task [*Verunendlichung*]” of its grounding task – namely, of its method. That is why, historically understood, phenomenology reveals the historical nature of philosophy as a “systematics of going-further [*Systematik des Weitergehens*]”¹³⁶.

Because of its historicity, phenomenology is not so much a specific doctrine or a set of principles as it is the institution of a “system of discovery”, the “order of [a] systematic discovery of principles”¹³⁷. It thus represents a methodological framework designed to coordinate and

¹³⁰ Ivi, pp. 72 f.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Hua VI, p. 492.

¹³³ Ivi, p. 445. Elsewhere, Husserl regards transcendental reduction as “the original method [*Urmethode*] of all philosophical methods” (Hua Mat VIII, p. 16).

¹³⁴ C, p. 197.

¹³⁵ Hua VI, p. 489.

¹³⁶ Ivi, p. 500.

¹³⁷ Hua XXXV, p. 394.

promote collaborative and shared research work. Like the natural sciences, phenomenology “can master the infinity of its subject matter only through infinities of method”¹³⁸, that is, only through the intergenerational and socialised fulfilment of its scientificity: “*Philosophy as the practice of philosophers in the sociality of scientists*”¹³⁹. This is how Husserl describes this cooperative endeavour, emphasising its historical and systematic nature:

This is the possession of time [*Habe der Zeit*], the field of work that exists because of time, primarily the realm of what has been achieved because of time and has reached systematic intertwining [...]. Obviously, for each present, this [possession] generates a fundamental trait [*Hauptzug*] for the entire work, that of the communal work of the scientists; [...] This ready-made acquisition is the *communis opinio* of the science of a given ‘era’ or ‘present’. In this field, everyone works [...] on his own partial problems and sub-areas. Within this field, as far as it extends, there naturally prevails an inner context of sense [...] so that even those working on different tasks and areas must not overlook what those in the broader fields are pursuing.¹⁴⁰

All in all, “rigorous science is not objective being, but becoming an ideal objectivity; and if [it] is essentially only in becoming, then the idea of true humanity and its method of self-formation [*Selbstgestaltungsmethode*] are also only in becoming”¹⁴¹.

Conclusions: history as method

In some respects, the trajectory of Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology resembles that of the birth of the philosophy of history between the 18th and 19th centuries: “Once philosophy had systematised history, this history could retroact upon philosophy and understand it historically”¹⁴².

If transcendental phenomenology began with the discovery of the absolute stream of consciousness¹⁴³, it culminated in evoking “*history [a]s the grand fact of absolute being*”¹⁴⁴. As I have tried to show, the compat-

¹³⁸ C, p. 56.

¹³⁹ Hua VI, p. 494.

¹⁴⁰ Ivi, p. 493.

¹⁴¹ Hua XXVII, p. 55.

¹⁴² R. Koselleck, *Geschichte, Historie*, cit., p. 671.

¹⁴³ Cfr. CW XIII, p. 243.

¹⁴⁴ CW XIV, p. 633.

ibility of these two statements rests on the inner historicity that characterises intentional constitution in both its ontogenetic and phylogenetic dimensions.

The analogy between these two dimensions leads Husserl to expand his analysis to explore history as that domain in which phenomenology can be philosophically justified, i.e. historicised as the realisation of a certain *telos*. According to this *telos*, “history of philosophy, seen from within”, is the intentional accomplishment of “humanness [*Menschentums*] wrestling for its self-understanding”¹⁴⁵; or, put differently, the “movement of disclosure of universal reason, ‘inborn’ in humanness as such”¹⁴⁶.

Finally, we have seen how the historicity of reason reverberates in Husserl’s understanding of its own method, revealing the inescapable “interweaving of historical investigations and the systematic investigations”¹⁴⁷. For an utterly historicised phenomenology, “everywhere the problems, the clarifying investigations, the insights of principle are *historical*”. In the light of this historicity one cannot help but stigmatise “the ruling dogma of the separation in principle between epistemological elucidation [*Aufklärung*] and historical, even humanistic-psychological explanation [*Erklärung*], between epistemological and genetic origin, [as] fundamentally mistaken”¹⁴⁸.

Indeed, Husserl’s new paradigm for an intentional history ultimately equates the two dimensions by means of a hendiadys: “the inner-historical, the epistemological” twofold aspect of the same “genuine problem”¹⁴⁹ of justifying knowledge. It is now clear that, considering “the historical a priori as the universal source of all conceivable problems of understanding”, the “historical explanation comes together, in the case of the sciences, with ‘epistemological’ grounding or clarification”¹⁵⁰.

After all, transcendental phenomenology is aptly understood as “the theoretical function of a praxis” since, by criticising current sense-validities and uncovering their genesis, “it theoretically frees us from the absolutisation of this world”¹⁵¹. In striving for “our libera-

¹⁴⁵ C, pp. 13 f., transl. mod.

¹⁴⁶ Ivi, p. 16.

¹⁴⁷ Ivi, p. 351.

¹⁴⁸ Ivi, pp. 369 f.

¹⁴⁹ Ivi, p. 378.

¹⁵⁰ Ivi, p. 373.

¹⁵¹ E. Husserl, *Erste Philosophie* (1923/4). *Erste Teil: Kritische Ideengeschichte* [Hua VII], M. Nijhoff, Den Haag 1956, p. 283.

tion [*Befreiung*]” from “the spell [*Bann*] of these times”¹⁵², then Husserl might have also favourably endorsed F. Jameson’s motto: “Always historicize!”¹⁵³.

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¹⁵² C, pp. 58 f., transl. mod.

¹⁵³ F. Jameson, *The Political Unconscious. Narrative as a socially symbolic act*, Routledge Classics, London 2002, p. ix.

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