

World and The Life-world

Nirankush Chakraborty

Asst. Prof. in Philosophy, Gazole Mahavidyalaya
Gazole, Malda, W.B., India

Abstract: *The Husserlian concept of the Life-world as developed in The Crisis is based on his concept of the world. Remarkably, the concept of world already appears at the beginning of Husserl's phenomenological career. Husserl's interest in the problem of what he calls 'world' developed in two ways. In concentrating on the problem given is a psychological foundation of logic. He defines 'world' as the most general presupposition of the sciences. Later, especially in the Ideas the problem of the world reached intensity. In the Crisis we saw a noticeable modification in Husserl's views of the world and record the emergence of the idea of the Life-world. In The Crisis Husserl understand the Life-world in the light of the cultural crisis which is a crisis of the natural sciences and in way of suggesting means of getting out of it.*

Keywords: Life-world, Presupposition, Transcendental, Crisis, Typology, Overlapping.

Introduction: The Husserlan concept of the life-world as developed in *The Crisis* is based on his concept of the world. We do not mean to say that the concept of the life-world can be exhaustively understood merely on the bias of the Husserlian ideas about the world. Nevertheless, to see the problem of the life-world in its fullness, we have to understand the Husserlian problem of the "world" and the importance Husserl attributed to it.

Remarkably, the concept of world already appears at the beginning of Husserl's phenomenological career. The formulation he uses in the *Prolegomena*, or first volume of the *Logical Investigations*¹, sec.5 encapsulate what he later, especially in the *Ideas*, tells us, are the main features of the concept of world. Husserl writes in the *Prolegomena* that one of the most important presuppositions of science is that there is a world outside.

Husserl's interest in the problem of what he calls 'world' developed in two ways. In concentrating on the problems given is a psychological foundation of logic. He defines 'world' as the most general presupposition of the sciences. Later, especially in the *Ideas*² the problem of the world reached an intensity. He realized that the world of everyday experience, the natural world, is one of the central problem of philosophy.³ The natural world, Husserl says, is the quintessential problem of philosophy in the sense that the task of philosophy is to understand and explain the nature of the relationship :

1. Between the natural sciences and the world, and
2. Between the, philosopher as the knowing subject, and the world in its totality as object known.⁴

In the *Prolegomena* Husserl raises the question of the natural world only indirectly. He says that the

worlds, i.e., the external world are the most general presupposition of the natural sciences. The external world is not the same for the common man as for the scientist. The common man believes in the existence of the external world as given to the sense. Yet this belief, he writes, is "blind", suggestion the native of everyday experiences. For, the scientist, on the other hand, the natural scientist and the mathematician consider the world on the basis of certain laws.

What does the expression "presupposition" mean in this context? The existence of the external world is not a logical presupposition. It is not a premise, but rather something without which the natural sciences would lose their ground of existence. The external world is not the same for the common man as for the scientist. The common man believes in the existence of the external world as given to the senses. Yet this belief, Husserl says, is 'blind', suggesting the native of everyday experience. The scientist, on the other hand, as also the mathematician considers the world on the basis of certain laws. The scientist exists as a certain formalization of the external world in terms of laws, system of laws, and theories if such systems common to the natural sciences. The natural world is an external reality, serves as the context of their field of validity. The conception of the world in the *Prolegomena*, at least, is used within the scope of natural sciences, thus falling outside the philosopher's interest.

The philosophers' task, as Husserl holds, consists in the theoretical clarification of an ultimate foundation of every possible science. This foundation or ground he locates in subjectively. Husserl draws the important distinction between what he calls psychological subjectivity and transcendental subjectivity. Psychological subjectivity is the sphere of our experiences oneself

as living, knowing, judging, perceiving, etc. Yet there is a higher sphere of subjectivity transcending the realm of worldly experience. This 'transcendental' subjectivity knows itself, not as living in a world, but rather as the origin of knowledge of 'living in a world'. Husserl claims that transcendental subjectivity is cleansed of the epistemic attitude of psychological subjectivity, which relates the experience of the external world to the concrete human self. For Husserl this purification is the method of suspending the validity of the experiences of the natural world. Thus the world is still there, only it is bracketed. The reductive method suspends the whole natural attitude which constructs the external world as object of our sense experience. If we pause to consider the content of our brackets we find that several notions of world are distinguished, e.g., 'the world as horizon', 'the surrounding world', 'the psychological world', 'the inter-subjective world', 'the world as correlate of consciousness', 'the world as unit of meaning' and 'the world as intentional beings.'

The notion of world is also found in the two volumes of his *First Philosophy*, the second volume of the *Ideas*, in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, in his *Cartesian Meditation* and in *Experience and Judgment*. The development of his idea of the world, in many respects, remained essentially unchanged, from that found in the first volume of *Ideas*. It is the world of which I am aware as spread out in space and existing through time. The things are simply present there whether or not anybody pay them any attention. It is the world of facts and affairs. It is a 'fact-world'.

The Crisis involves noticeable modification in Husserl's views of the world and records the emergence of the idea of the life-world. The problem of the life-world originates in a question about the relationship between objective-scientific thinking and every day practically bound intuition – in other words, sensory experience. Theoretical science is meaningful only insofar as it is connected to the everyday life of human beings, to their practical aims and purposes. This transformation is already noticeable in *Ideas I*. He holds that the world is not only a world of facts but it is also value laden. In his own words:

.....this world is not there for me as a mere world of facts and affairs, but with the same immediacy, as a world of values a world of goods, a practical world. Without further effort on my part, I find the things before me furnished not only with the qualities that befit their positive nature, but also with value characters such as beautiful or ugly, agreeable or disagreeable, pleasant or unpleasant, and so forth. Things in their immediacy

stand there as objects to be used, the 'table with its books', 'the glass to drink from', 'vase', the 'piano' and so forth. [5]

However, it is in the long introduction to *Experience and Judgment* that the Husserlian notion of world seems to start gathering the character of the life-world. We know from its editor Ludwig Landgrebe that Husserl wrote the introductory section of *Experience and Judgment* in 1935, the time when he was already at work on *The Crisis* would be discernible here. In this work, i.e., *Experience and Judgment*, Husserl still refers to the world as the 'existing world', as prior to any judgment of the subject, much in the manner of the *Prolegomena and Ideas I*. An element of novelty is the return to the lived from the passively given world. Yet what Husserl here calls life-world seems to be used in a sense equivalent to 'nature'. This life-world, in which 'life' is preeminently the life of sense perception in its most elementary form, is not yet identical with the wider concept of life-world in *The Crisis*, even though closely related to it.

In *The Crisis* Husserl understands the life-world in the light of the cultural crisis which is a crisis of the natural science and in way of suggestion means of getting out of it. The general human activity of sensory perception must precede theoretical activity is bound to the sensory data of experience. This basis is the life-world. All scientific evidence can be traced or reduced to the original experience of a person, his sensory life. We should not forget Husserl's emphasizing the fact that scientists are after all human beings. The activity of scientific thinking is grounded in the continuous flux of everyday intuition, of thoughts and opinions. As Husserl puts it, "the life-world is for us always there". The life-world is seen as a horizon of any sort of practice, real or possible. In this context, life is viewed as life always in this world around us. Being awake means precisely to be awake to this very world around us, to live its permanently certain character.

A pervading feature of *The Crisis* is Husserl's implicit acceptance of the modern dichotomy between history and nature which is expressed in the radical opposition between the historical life-world and the idealized nature of mathematical physics. Husserl never asks the question of the possibility of a non-objectivistic, non-mathematical conception of nature. Nature remains that which is radically other than the life-world; nature is the objective, the life-world is the subjective-relative. Hence nature is the sphere of that which is not mind, whereas the life-world is the sphere of immediate subjective experience.

Another significant feature of the life-world in *The Crisis* is that life-world is an actual world of human beings, of embodied consciousness in which the psychical and psychological aspects are

fully integrated. In a long section of *The Crisis*⁶ Husserl speak of the 'living body' functioning as an ego, primarily through seeing, hearing, lifting, carrying, pushing and the like. The data of sense experience are coordinated and structured on the basis of bodily movements. This may signify a different from Descartes. For Descartes the subject may be disembodied existence. Husserl of *The Crisis* will not speak of a disembodied subject.

In this context, that is, in the context of being an ego through the living body, Husserl emphasizes the German *Leib* on the one hand, and *Korper* on the other.⁷ The first is always said to signify the body of the subject, which has a radically different function in perception from that of other bodies (*Korper*). Through this analysis Husserl intends to show the subject's involvement in the life-world. This idea was developed further by Merleau-Ponty in his *Phenomenology of Perception*.⁸ he followed it up in his reflections on language. Language cannot be thought of independently of the bodily processes that give rise to speech does not emanate from 'pure ideas' or 'pure meaning'. To understand speech, we only have to lend ourselves to its life, to its movement of differentiation and articulation and to its eloquent gestures.^{9]}

For Husserl the general structure if the life-world is meant as a typology of things, which shows a fundamental permanence as opposed to all the various ways this typology is lived. The typology of the life-world can be summarized in the following categories:

- 1) *Perspectives of the thing (its sights, its closeness, its distance).*
- 2) *Elements of motion (I am doing X, I am standing still)*
- 3) *Changes in validity (from being to appearance, form appearing as so and so to appearing in another way)*

References

1. [Eng. Tr. By J.N. Findlay, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul (1973) Compare G. Santayana's concept of 'animal faith'.
2. Eng. Tr. With an introduction by David Carr, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, (1970)
3. *World and Life-World*, B.M. Mezei, Peter Sang, Frankfurt on Main, 1995, P. 15 o
4. *Ideas I*, Eng. Tr. By W.R.B. Gibson, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd. (1931), p.69.
5. *Ibid*, P. 130.
6. *The Crisis*, P. 106
7. *Ibid*, P. 107
8. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, (196), Preface P. XIV.
9. *Phenomenology of Perception*, London, Rputledge and Kegan Paul, (1962), Preface, P. XI.
10. *World and Life-World*, op. cit. P. 91-92
11. "What is New in Husserl's Crisis" in : *Analecta Husserliana*, vol II, 1972, P. 31.
12. *World and Life-World*, B.M. Mezei; Peter Lang, Frankfurt on Main, 1995, P. 91. 229. P.176.

- 4) *Horizons (first, the internal horizon of meaning, then the external horizon of beings)*^{10]}

This typology is brief and complex. It is also obscure. Husserl intended to work out a typology of the life-world in detail, but he could not, perhaps because of his Pre-occupation with other writings. The possibility of such a project was questioned by Roman Ingarden¹¹. However we may make an attempt to understand what Husserl wanted to say. What is a type, after all? A type is a major pattern used for groping together certain common characteristic. Things in the Life-world can be structured according to certain patterns valid for all subjects as for example, perspective, and motion etc., each reflecting a type. In our lived experiences these typical patterns may undergo diversification. A type comes close to what we call Universal yet a type receives a particular orientation in relation to the experience of the subject. For example, the perspective of a thing may assume a particular dimension according to the position of the observer as 'up', 'down', 'near', 'far', 'in-front', 'at-the-back' etc. This variableness does not impure the type character of 'perspective' it appears that a type is a theoretical notion, ordinary human experience of objects, on the other hand fully in touch with the flow of life, represent a view of the world which is not deduced from any systematic, a-prioristic, Ideal concept. Moreover, we feel that a type although a typological approach introduces order, it can't yield uniform classification for it is quite possible for types to be overlapping; they may be 'leaking' or 'seep ting' into one another. However, as we have observed, Husserl dose not elaborate his project. Phenomenologists after Husserl attempt at develop the life-world as a philosophy of concept a-priori^{12]} we have to wait for further elaboration of Husserl's thoughts on typology of the life-world.