

Gérard Granel

PREFACE<sup>1</sup>

*The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*

A few indications, to start with, about the text and the formation of the text. We are translating here—in extenso—volume VI of the Husserliana: *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*, published in 1954 by Martinus Nijhoff. The volume is composed of two elements of equal importance: the “Haupttext,” the principle text, and the “Complementary Texts” (Ergänzende Texte), the latter being divided into three “Abhandlungen” (that we ourselves have named “complements”) and twenty-nine “Beilagen” (here, the “appendices”). The origin, the nature and the relationship between these different textual elements must rapidly be specified for the French reader.

*The principal text*

The manuscript goes back to the years 1935-36. Paragraphs 1-27 are based upon a writing published in 1936 by Husserl in Belgrade in Arthur Liebert’s review: *Philosophia*. Paragraphs 28-71 correspond to a dactylographic transcription (by E. Fink) of a Husserlian stenograph (a transcription which is presented in the Husserl Archives in Louvain by the numbers M III 5 III 1 and 2). Paragraph 72 comes from Ms. K III 6. Paragraph 73 was added by the editor (Walter Biemel) at the end of *Krisis*, and also comes from Ms. K III 6. The editor justifies this addition “not only,” he writes, “by the global character of this text, from which once again Husserl’s intention comes out with precision, but also by E. Fink’s ‘project of the continuation of *Krisis*,’” according to which two other sections were supposed to follow the three existing sections: the fourth, which would have for title: “The Idea of the Recovery of all the Sciences within the Unity of Transcendental Philosophy,” and the fifth: “The Imprescriptible Task of Philosophy: the Self-Responsibility of Humanity.” The text drawn from K III 6 which forms paragraph 73 corresponds precisely to the problematic of this fifth section.

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<sup>1</sup> [Trans. —*La Crise des sciences européennes et la phénoménologie transcendantale*, traduit de l’allemand et préfacé par G. Granel, Paris, Gallimard, 1976, pp. I-IX.]

*The complementary texts*

a) The three “complements.” These are texts which form a whole in themselves. Their common character is to enable the grasping of the birth of the problematic of *Krisis*.

—The first, from 1926-28 (Husserl Archives M III 3 XII), treats the idealization and the mathematization of nature, that is to say the same theme which, by Galileo’s invocation, takes up more and more place in the origination of the general problematic (a paragraph in the first version of the second part: the entire half, finally, of this second part in the definitive version: cf. paragraph 9).

—The second, probably written in 1928-29, is devoted to the distinction between the “sciences of nature” and the “sciences of spirit.”

—The third contains the conference of Vienna (1935).

b) The Appendixes represent a selection, chosen by W. Biemel, from the abundant material furnished by the category of Husserlian manuscripts qualified as “research manuscripts” (*Forschungsmanuskripte*), in contrast to those which Husserl himself had already destined for publication, or to those which take up courses material taught at the university. We may best reproduce here what W. Biemel himself wrote on this subject, which is: “that this choice remains a risky choice, which in no way claims to raise itself above criticism” and that “to ensure that the interests of the editorial director did not take too much place in this choice, the principle of selection was deliberately drawn from the principle text itself, and, for any text of a research manuscript published here in the form of an appendix, reference is made to the paragraph, or paragraphs, to which it is related.” These references are to be understood however in a flexible manner, many appendixes referring less to such and such a selected passage of the principle text than to the general Husserlian problematic that is dealt with there.

There can be no doubt that the text finally constituted in this manner under the general title of *Krisis* is *well-constituted*, and that there was no need in preparing the French edition to go back over the work accomplished at the Husserl Archives of Louvain: that being said here not by any means because of the “authority”—nonetheless very real—of these Archives, and in particular of Walter Biemel, but more firmly as witnessed by the *translator*. Indeed, there is probably no better way of experiencing the coherence of a choice of texts than by having translated them, each and all of them, separately and in relation to each other, in their ensemble

and sentence by sentence. One might, perhaps, add others: all those that are found here should indeed be here, and, in the main, they suffice.

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But if no important problem remains concerning the *corpus* of *Krisis*, the task of a “preface” on the other hand appears overwhelming, from the time it consists in leading towards a reading—towards readings—of a work all the more intimidating in that it constitutes the “last word” of a Husserl already sick, and soon dead, in a Europe even more sick and on the eve of the convulsions of the Second World War.

One of the ways of reading *Krisis* would be to follow its development, partly new and partly repetitive, of themes already sketched out in anterior works—principally in the *First Philosophy*—whether they concern details of the teleological reconstitution of the history of Western philosophy (one may take note for example of the increasing presence of Galileo in the modern part of this history, of which it forms all alone the porch, or note the consistency with which the English Empiricists are given importance by Husserl, etc.), whether they concern the ontology of *Lebenswelt* (and thus explore how, decidedly, Heidegger’s thought, which haunts Husserl painfully in the final years of his life, escaped him utterly), or else the return—here again as always—to the relation of phenomenology with psychology. All these ways are to be followed, but it is not necessary to do so here in the place of readers. It is also not necessary to repeat, concerning *Krisis*, a thesis<sup>2</sup> which situates in the phenomenology of perception the place where phenomenology lays itself bare and plays out its destiny (or rather, where its destiny plays upon it and against it).

All that is necessary, we think, is to give oneself up to wondering, as one says, about the project of *Krisis* and its dates, or more precisely about the relation between the project and the dates. 1935-1936: Nazism has been in power in Germany for more than two years, Anti-Semitism is raging, Mussolini has dominated Italy for ten years and invented a type of society and a mode of power of which no analysis (including “Marxist”) understands anything, Franco

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<sup>2</sup> Our thesis—in academic terms also—concerning « *Le Sens du Temps et de la Perception chez E. Husserl* » (Paris, Gallimard, 1969). What concerns *Krisis* may be found on pp. 196-218. [Trans. —This work reappeared with Éditions T.E.R in 2012, where the reader may now consult pp. 179-200 for what is related to *Krisis*. Two other texts by Granel dealing specifically with the German phenomenologist’s “testament” may also be signalled: “Husserl, Edmund (1859-1938),” in *Traditionis traditio*, Paris, Gallimard, 1972, pp. 71-93, and “L’Europe de Husserl,” in *Écrits logiques et politiques*, Paris, Galilée, 1990, pp. 37-58. English translations of these texts will be made available on the Gérard Granel website; a full translation of *Écrits logiques et politiques* is in preparation.]

is preparing to subdue Spain, and the liberal democracies are falling apart in procrastination while awaiting their cowardly collapse. For its part, socialism has become Stalinism, without our knowing (we still do not know today) how, in this slide, it but follows the strange, horrible ground movement which has been carrying away Europe, or, as Husserl will say, “European humanity.” For if the “Crisis” is anywhere, it is there: in the unspoken/unspeakable of a sort of tilting of a world, which then took itself for the World (and which, in a sense, it was in fact).

To understand what we are trying to indicate here, and which is all the more frightening in that today it is still largely unsuspected, one must consider that the reestablishment of this “same” world by the final victory precisely of the “liberal democracies” (allied with Stalinism), in 1945, is but a fragile appearance, a screen of paper. The reestablishment of bourgeois political ideology—that of the general will, of the law “above men,” of which Rousseau (nonetheless the founder) already despaired of as of a “squaring of the circle”<sup>3</sup>—in short, the second round of liberal-Freedom, may in appearance pass for the historic victory of these great Humanists, who, like Cassirer and like Husserl, attempted to oppose, in the thirties, diverse forms of “rejuvenated” modern rationalist philosophy to the rise of Fascist “barbarianism.” For such is the project, explicit in *Krisis*: reawaken (and accomplish once and for all) in the form of the absolute transcendental phenomenological philosophy the immanence of reason in man, which defines his humanity. But Hegel’s warning sounds here like a death-knell: “Only one word more concerning the desire to teach the world what it ought to be. For such a purpose philosophy at least always comes too late. Philosophy, as the thought of the world, does not appear until reality has completed its formative process [...]. When philosophy paints its grey in grey, one form of life has become old, and by means of grey it cannot be rejuvenated, but only known.”<sup>4</sup>

The “formative process of reality” was already in 1935, and is still today, apart from a few specific differences (which it would be worth, moreover, analyzing), Fascism. The form of life which, at the time of Fascism, had become old—and whose death was warded off precisely by the open war of State apparatuses waged against the people as a whole—is the mode of bourgeois production in its accomplished form (“big industry”), or Capital *properly speaking*. For not only had the latter long since entered upon the “highest stage” (which also means the final stage) that Lenin called imperialism, but it has today reached *very near to the end* of this ultimate stage itself. Strictly speaking, it inhabits the limit of it. *Its* limit, internal and external.

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<sup>3</sup> See on this subject V. Gerratana’s study: “Rousseau e Marx,” in *Ricerche di Storia de Marxismo* (Editori Riuniti, Roma, 1972), p. 57.

<sup>4</sup> *The Philosophy of Right*, Preface. [Trans.—The translation of Hegel is S.W. Dyde’s. <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/pr/preface.htm>]

Which is the world itself, the impossible totality. Already Marx had said that before world *history* begins, the pre-history (to be understood as the history of the ahistorical, the obstruction of history and the history of the obstruction) of the “world market” must end (which is to say extend and complete itself). The “market” is not that of the “world” in an identical manner throughout all historical periods, although it always includes in its very essence the potential of a universalization of its logic: precisely the universalization of the “logical” (this “wealth of the spirit”), the substitution of the general equivalent for every concrete determination, that of exchange value for every use value. But this potential does not achieve entelechy, is not at work throughout every other “occupation” of humanity, until the moment when the sectoral law of the “market” has become that, general and generic, of capital, and even then only once the subordination of work to and by capital, from being formal, has become real. From this moment—when it has caught up with its idea—may be dated at once the reign of capital *and its crisis*; for from this moment it is forced to confront, to subdue it, totality as such. On one hand, it is an impossible work, on the other it is a movement in which the essence of capital is constrained to unveil itself in piercing all its past historical disguises, and in leaving them behind itself to appear at last, as it is, in the nakedness of Fascism.

One of these disguises—and not the least significant of them—consists in the movement of modernity itself. It is precisely the “self-responsibility” of humanity in the discourse of the transcendental egology—first proposed in its general nudity in René Descartes’ *Regulae ad directionem Ingenii*, then developed by Leibniz in the actively operative form of a mathematics and a modern dynamics, laying hold, with Rousseau, of language and society, of pedagogy and women, of sentiment and writing, assured by Kant (at the expense of a circumcision) against the threat of an abyssal questioning concerning its foundation, and swelling at last like a Zeppelin in the parthenogenesis of the “grand German idealism” (self-conceiver and self-deliverer of all reality as “idea”)—, it is precisely, then, *this same discourse* that Husserl aims to revive, accomplish and commence at the same time, to put an end to the “Crisis of humanity” which is never effectively thought but as a crisis of discourse, of which the nascent horrors of European Fascism would merely be the consequences (as a “blindness to ideas”), whereas on the contrary this discourse will not have ceased to provide the logic of merchandise, and its union with the essence of modern technics, which is to say the *real* motor of European-World history, with the means of remaining invisible, unsuspected, under the false sky of imaginary stories [*histoires imaginaires*]. To the extent that when *Das Capital* interrupts the course and tears the fabric of this entire historical movement, it is like a silent thunderclap, a stillness, a delay. It is nonetheless this book, and it alone, which leaves “European humanity” *in crisis*. It

is this book—we are only beginning to learn to hear it sound and operate thus—which enables us to “know,” as Hegel wanted, what we are forbidden from ever hoping to “rejuvenate.” It is because of it alone, writing, in black on white, something red, that the last monument of philosophy—Husserlian philosophy—disappears further and further into the greyness, and more even than elsewhere in the final stiffening of its final will: the *Krisis*.

A totally obsolete book, therefore. An ancient scene from an ancient theatre. What must therefore be justified—or rather explained—is exactly the reverse of what one might expect, which is: why translate it? Why publish it?

It would suffice, of course, to say that the showcasing of such a pure example of Western “theoretical” paranoia is precisely a rather appropriate object for our epoch, which needs *constantly* to practice its discernment of metaphysics and its detachment from it. It would indeed be catastrophic should *we* leave the relation between world history to come (partly happening, partly future—always on the brink *too* of “not being able to take place”) and its metaphysical past in the same obscurity in which Marx left his relation to Hegel. From where then would we draw the strength to denounce, to prevent (by a sort of stylistic initiative which is our only weapon) from being reborn, by the invocation of socialism, various Marxist “*koinè*,” themselves scarcely rejuvenated, under the doctrinal apparel of which the historical impotence which currently reigns as “capitalism” would be perpetuated.

Such a necessary reason, in truth, would be a sufficient reason. It is not however the only one. For it remains yet to be said, *positively* this time, that a *certain use* of Husserl has not stopped being of service to us in continuing certain destructions, and in provoking at least certain constructions that are still scarcely imaginable. Such a use can only be multiple, depending on the pathways of everyone’s work, although many of these pathways, all of them perhaps, overlap on one or more occasions. Roughly speaking: the “recovery” [*reprise*] of certain rudiments of a work that Husserl called “eidetic,” and which was never *totally* repressed by the “contemplation of the idea,”<sup>5</sup> in other words by the “transcendental”: there is “matter” here which *may* (once again, under the condition of “recovery,” “revision,” “diversion,” etc.) be added to that found also in Aristotle to serve as the effective foundation of that “philosophy” (no longer a philosophy, in truth) which sought to be “materialist” and which the other has well-named “silent”; but also the path of the difference between phenomenology as cultural “reality” or “school” of philosophy and this same (but other) “phenomenology” in its *possibility*—and here it is a matter of an approach to a work which is nowadays unavoidable, but which in a

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<sup>5</sup> “Where is the work, when one contemplates the idea?” Aristotle.

sense, however, offers no way of access to itself from within: Heideggerian thought<sup>6</sup>; lastly the constraint that is exerted, despite its formal delirium, by the Husserlian imperative of radicality in its questioning: regarding geometry or the conceptuality of the sciences of nature, but also regarding the ultimate sense (or the nonsense) of psychology, for instance, there are sorts of questions thrown out like bridges over a void, which notwithstanding have the effect of causing us never to content ourselves with the level or the terrain of the history of sciences, nor even with what is qualified as epistemology, no more than with the human sciences. For if, in *Krisis*, we have above all read the philosophical elision of the real “Crisis,” if in the last project of metaphysics we have seen metaphysics itself disappear rather in the grey upon grey, is it necessary to add that this end hangs over us yet, and that it *demand*s that for itself—the end—we find an *effective* end that is worthy of it?

Translated by Richard Anker

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<sup>6</sup> [Trans.—On the “approach” to the work of Heidegger that is being alluded to here, see G. Granel, “Remarques sur le rapport de ‘Sein und Zeit’ et de la phénoménologie husserlienne” and “Remarques sur l’accès à la pensée de Martin Heidegger: ‘Sein und Zeit,’ in *Traditionis traditio*, op. cit. pp. 93-113 and 114-153 respectively.]