

*A conference was held in Prague, Czech Republic, in November 2002 that was entitled “Issues Confronting the Post-European World” and that was dedicated to Jan Patočka (1907-1977). The **Organization of Phenomenological Organizations** was founded on that occasion. The following essay is published in celebration of that event.*

Essay 25

Phenomenology, Psychology, and the World: Towards a Manifesto

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Abstract

In his 1935 Vienna Lecture, Husserl wrote: “The European nations are sick; Europe itself...is in crisis,” and he asked why there is no medicine for sick nations. Today, the crisis, defined as a loss of the meaning of a genuine humanity, encompasses all nations. All persons are under the threat of loss of the *socius*, the lived intersubjective communion of human beings with one another. Husserl’s antidote was the reconstitution of the lifeworld through transcendental phenomenology or, equivalently, transcendental psychology. What is needed is a synthesis of transcendental psychology, including psychoanalysis, with the theory of sociogenesis found in the writings of Frantz Fanon. As Fanon saw, oppression in all its forms both generates and is generated by dread of loss of the *socius*. This paper calls for the issuance of a manifesto that challenges phenomenologists to dedicate ourselves to the phenomenological investigation of the interrelatedness of psychogenesis and sociogenesis in the production of oppression. This may lead to the discovery of means of eliminating oppression from human life.

¹ Dr. Maria Lucrecia Rovaletti conferred on me the great honor of asking me to represent, at the first OPO meetings, the Argentinean group *Psicología y Psiquiatría Fenomenológica*, of which she is the esteemed director. Nevertheless, the views expressed in this presentation should not be attributed to Dr. Rovaletti or any other member of her group. Since I have participated in two of the group’s conferences in Buenos Aires, I believe that the members will find my presentation to be within the scope of their interests and concerns.

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Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language, third edition, defines "manifesto" as, "a public declaration of intentions, motives or views; a public statement of policy." Although Webster's does not explicitly rule out a manifesto issued by an individual on her own behalf, the examples provided to illustrate usage show that manifestos are generally to be regarded as representing the views of a group. Thus, I wish to clarify that I do not intend here to be considered to be discussing the possibility of a manifesto regarding the interrelation of psychology and phenomenology on my own behalf. This is one reason why I have titled this presentation "Phenomenology, Psychology, and the World: Towards a Manifesto." Another reason why I have used the phrase "Towards a Manifesto" is that I intend to leave open the question as to whether or not a manifesto is the most meaningful response to the problematic that I will discuss below. Needless to say, in using the term, I have suggested that the issuance of a manifesto, or its equivalent, deserves consideration.

Historically, manifestos are issued by groups who seek to promote aesthetic or political programs, for example the "Surrealist Manifesto" or the Manifesto of the Communist Party. Sometimes, they are issued by scientific groups; for example, the view of DNA replication referred to by Watson and Crick in their book, *The Double Helix*, as the "central dogma" of molecular genetics, much of which, however, has since been shown to be scientifically untenable. For example, the notion that the genome is absolutely insulated from environmental forces within the cell has now been decisively refuted.

Doubtless, in the histories of both philosophy and psychology, texts can be found that are equivalents of manifestos. In this presentation, Husserl's ideas regarding the interrelation of philosophy and psychology will be viewed as the source of a potential manifesto. Moreover, Husserl's ideas suggest a characteristic of manifestos that Webster's does not engage: those who issue manifestos hope to gain adherents who will more or less follow the guidelines asserted in the manifesto.

Husserl presented his Vienna Lecture, originally titled "Philosophy in the crisis of European Mankind," in May 1935, six months before his Prague Lecture on which *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* is based. In *The Vienna Lecture*, Husserl forcefully challenged the practitioners of the humanistic disciplines when he asked, "How does it happen that no scientific medicine has ever developed in this sphere, a medicine for nations and supranational communities?" He went on to say that, "The European nations are sick; Europe itself, it is said, is in crisis" (Husserl, p.270). Today, judging by the number and magnitude of the catastrophes that have occurred just beginning with WW II, the crisis which Husserl, writing on the eve of the holocaust against the

Jews of Europe, addressed prior to WWII has deepened and is now so extensive in its consequences as to encompass all nations.

Husserl understood the crisis of his time to be loss of the meaning of a genuine humanity, and he saw this loss of meaning as a consequence of the way in which positivism came to infiltrate the lifeworld. His antidote was the reconstitution of the lifeworld through transcendental phenomenology, and he explicated two “ways” into transcendental phenomenology. The first way discussed by Husserl is the one through the lifeworld. However, after discussing the possibility of an ontology of the lifeworld, new enigmas emerged. He discovered, as he said, that he had jumped too quickly to transcendental intersubjectivity; it is necessary first to perform another epochē, one that will accomplish reduction to the primal ego in whom transcendental intersubjectivity is constituted.

In his explication in *The Crisis of the way into phenomenology through psychology*, Husserl developed the notion of subjectivity as a self-continuous sphere and as such an object of scientific investigation. He also determined that transcendental phenomenology and transcendental psychology have the same identical domain. Moreover, he discussed the depth dimension of egological life. He was indeed aware of the emerging field of depth psychology, or psychoanalysis, and he expressed this in *The Crisis* (188). While he rejected the naturalistic elements in psychoanalysis, he stated explicitly that the psychoanalytic notion of the unconscious is encompassed by phenomenological psychology or, equivalently, transcendental phenomenology. And, relevant to psychiatry, Husserl maintained that children and the insane can be transcendently explicated as analogues of “normal” adults (187).

What is the specifically contemporary relevance of these aspects of *The Vienna Lecture* and *The Crisis* and of Husserl’s views on psychology? That relevance is as follows: The time is now ripe for another deepening of transcendental psychology. This insight comes from a consideration of the contemporary crisis. Let us simplify for the sake of discussion. There is in the world today a horrifying escalation of violence in every sphere of human existence: individual, familial, national, and global. How to account for this violence? How to act to mitigate the frequency and magnitude of this violence? The human person will resort to violent enactments of rage when he or she experiences a threat to his or her subjective existence, i.e., when faced with the danger of psychic death through severance from and loss of the socius of humanity. From whence comes such a threat?

This threat comes from oppression and modes of alienation associated with it. It was in view of these phenomena that Frantz Fanon, the Martinician-French

psychiatrist and phenomenological philosopher, constituted the idea of the sociogenesis of mental disorders (see Gordon). It is oppression, whether familial, cultural, or statist, that threatens the humanity of the person, that dehumanizes by generating in the oppressed the self-understanding that he or she is not within the scope of the analogy of humanity. Phenomenologically understood, this self-perception is incorrect; i.e., it is what Husserl referred to as an empty or blind intention incapable of intuitive or eidetic fulfillment. Nevertheless, it will induce either relinquishment of personal autonomy and adoption of the view of the self-enacted upon the self by the oppressor, or it will induce violence in response to dread of the loss of the socius, loss of the sense of interconnectedness with others, of being a person among other persons.

The manifesto, if it is issued, would call upon all those working in the central discipline of phenomenology, that is transcendental psychology, to concentrate our efforts on explicating the psychogenesis and sociogenesis of human psychic suffering, and, crucially, on the interrelation of psycho and sociogenesis. Furthermore, the community of phenomenologists will, in accordance with the manifesto, and through communication with world bodies, for example, the World Health Organization of the United Nations, bring this understanding of the role of both psycho and sociogenesis to the attention of the world in an effort to constitute that medicine for sick nations of which Husserl spoke. The manifesto will state that this and this alone is, and must be recognized as, the very center of all phenomenological work, including the exploration of the role of oppression of women, for example, in the movement in and through which the lifeworld was naturalized.

These then would be the first principles of the manifesto: We phenomenologists, dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of human life, will dedicate ourselves to the phenomenological investigation of the nature of oppression and its role in the sociogenesis of mental disorders and of human misery in general. We will promulgate our findings and advocate that the peoples of the world come to see the value of these findings and alter their behavior and structure of their societies along the lines indicated by the findings.

References

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