Then the cowherd made up his mind that he would tell his master. So, in the morning, when he met the farmer, just as he was leaving the mas, he said to him, “Patron, do you know that every day the white bull prays at the edge of the pond?” And the farmer laughed at him for being a little blagueur and coiner of histoires. But the cowherd persisted: “Every evening, beside the willow tree, the white bull kneels at the edge of the pond,” until, at last, the farmer thought that he would go and see for himself. So that evening he hid himself in the willow tree, and waited until the cattle came to drink. And when he saw them coming he kept his eyes fixed upon the white bull.

The white bull walked to the edge of the pond, directly beneath the willow tree where the farmer was, and there, instead of drinking like the other cattle, he went down upon his forelegs and put his muzzle very close to the edge of the water, though without touching it. Then, closing his large mild eyes, he remained motionless, seeming for all the world as though he were at prayer.

The farmer was much astonished, for never before had any of his bulls been wont to pray. And the next morning he called some of his men together and brought them to the edge of the water. Then he made them stand a little way into the pond, and there probe its bottom with long sticks. At first they probed nothing but mud, but after a while, one of the men cried out that he had struck upon something hard. And the farmer bade them dig round the spot; and, at last, with poles and ropes, they drew from the pond a long dark object that looked like a human figure; and when the mud had been washed from it, behold! there was a beautiful image of the Virgin Mary.

Thenceforth they venerated the white bull; and to this day, the village is called Le Taureau, or Le Thor.

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Husserl and the Continuing Crisis of Western Civilization


During feverish work upon what we now call *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*,¹ Edmund Husserl wrote to his son in 1936 that his present efforts were producing perhaps “the
most important and profound text of my life.” There can be little doubt that the Crisis remains Husserl’s most influential work. The major themes handled therein not only represent the fulfillment of his philosophical activity but continue to be relevant to present-day philosophical discourse. Whether one is occupied with various notions of rationality and the limits of science, the relation of the “life-world” to the world of science, the essence of history and historical understanding, questions of theory versus praxis, or the role of philosophy within culture, the Crisis continues to be a seminal work. Hence, it is with high hopes that the reader approaches this most recent volume of Husserliana, an “Ergänzungsband” to the Crisis containing a selection of previously unpublished texts from the period 1934–1937. The questions to be asked of this new volume are the following: what does it add to our understanding of the Crisis itself, and how do these supplementary texts clarify and expand upon the important themes of Husserl’s final work?

The Crisis-text itself had a complicated genesis and publication history. As is well known, Parts I and II of what we now take to be the text of the Crisis (i.e., the critical edition published by the Husserl-Archives in Louvain in 1954) were already published during Husserl’s life time in the Belgrade journal Philosophia (1936). What we now call Parts IIIA (dealing chiefly with the “life-world”) and IIIB (concerning the way to transcendental phenomenology through psychology) were withheld from publication by Husserl and appeared only posthumously in the critical edition. This is already an indication that Husserl himself was struggling in his last years to give clearer expression to his ideas and to unify them into a coherent whole. Clearly one main purpose of this new volume is to help us to understand what is at stake in this struggle and to elucidate the stages and horizon of the development in Husserl’s later thought.

The first section of this Ergänzungsband consists of texts written from 1934 up to the lectures given in Prague during November 1935. Hence, these texts enhance our knowledge of the “prehistory” of the Crisis. (Some of this prehistory has been published elsewhere in Husserliana, for example: Husserl’s written contribution and his letter to the Eighth International Congress of Philosophy held in Prague in September 1934, which were published recently in Husserliana XXVII, pp. 184–244, as well as the “Vienna lecture” of May 1935 and other supplementary texts originally published along with the Crisis-text in Husserliana VI). The second section of the volume under discussion begins with the “Prague lectures” themselves. Entitled “The Crisis of European Sciences and Psychology,” these lectures formed the basis of what were to become