

The Origin of the World and the Absolute Fact: Landgrebe and the Limitations of Husserl's Concept of World

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Preview

Ludwig Landgrebe's philosophical inquiries are undoubtedly situated in the wake of Husserlian phenomenology. However, this conceptual framework is not simply taken for granted: Landgrebe reenacts Husserl's fundamental analysis, pursues his thrust, extends his bearings, and widens his aims. Furthermore, the straightforward assumption of the phenomenological method does not induce him to adopt a narrow form of orthodoxy. As early as 1940, while he takes up the task of elaborating a phenomenological concept of world, Landgrebe offers a critical account of Husserl's position, thus rejecting any identification between the theoretical program inaugurated by Husserl and the letter of his writings: "In the future, anyone who proposes to clarify the concept 'world' should first become acquainted with Husserl's results, see their presuppositions and their limits, and come to terms with them."² In what follows, I aim to reconstruct the main tenets of Landgrebe's attempt at "coming to terms" with the limitations he detects in Husserl's concept of world and to make clear its enduring relevance for contemporary discussions. As it will appear, this criticism moves in a double direction and involves a commitment to two seemingly competing requirements: that of radicalizing the transcendental-constitutive perspective beyond what Husserl has accomplished in his writings; and that of providing a theoretical space for what resists a transcendental-constitutive account, i.e., for a dimension of archi-facticity upon which any constitutive inquiry ultimately rests.

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Ludwig Landgrebe's philosophical inquiries are undoubtedly situated in the wake of Husserlian phenomenology.¹ However, this conceptual framework is not simply taken for granted: Landgrebe reenacts Husserl's fundamental analysis, pursues his thrust, extends his bearings, and widens his aims. Furthermore, the straightforward assumption of the phenomenological method does not induce him to adopt a narrow form of orthodoxy. As early as 1940, while he takes up the task of elaborating a phenomenological concept of world, Landgrebe offers a critical account of Husserl's position, thus rejecting any identification between the theoretical program inaugurated by Husserl and the letter of his writings: "In the future, anyone who proposes to clarify the concept 'world' should first become acquainted with Husserl's results, see their presuppositions and their limits, and come to terms with them."² In what follows, I aim to reconstruct the main tenets of Landgrebe's attempt at "coming to terms" with the limitations he detects in Husserl's concept of world and to make clear its enduring relevance for contemporary discussions. As it will appear, this criticism moves in a double direction and involves a commitment to two seemingly competing requirements: that of radicalizing the transcendental-constitutive perspective beyond what Husserl has accomplished in his writings; and that of providing a theoretical space for what resists a transcendental-constitutive account, i.e., for a dimension of archi-facticity upon which any constitutive inquiry ultimately rests.

In the very first paragraphs of his article published in 1940 "The world as a phenomenological problem," Landgrebe contends that although Husserl has the indisputable merit of having restored the prestige of the question of the world as a genuinely philosophical theme—a question which has fallen into disrepute with

¹ The research for this paper was funded by CONICYT/FONDECYT Postdoctoral project No. 3180721 developed at the Universidad Diego Portales, Santiago de Chile.

² Ludwig Landgrebe, "World as a Phenomenological Problem", transl. Dorion Cairns, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, no. 1, 38. The text was edited in German for the first time in 1949 in *Phänomenologie und Metaphysik* (Hamburg: M. von Schröder) and then, once again, in 1963 in *Der Weg der Phänomenologie* (Gütersloh: Mohn).

the rise of 19th century positivism—the way in which he broached this problem is marked by some significant limitations. On Landgrebe’s account, these shortcomings are due not so much to the theoretical setting designed by Husserl, but rather to his insufficient radicality in following the path he has himself carved out. A criticism of Husserl’s position can thus be crafted only when one is capable of getting a firm grasp of the depth and complexity of his concept of world. This, in turn, implies unraveling the various theoretical contexts in which this notion is entangled and to show how they shape the meaning Husserl ascribes to this concept. Thus, Landgrebe engages in the project of mapping out the fundamental ways in which the question of the world emerges in Husserl’s thought. Three main lines of investigation come to the fore. The first approach, which takes its departure in an analysis of the perceptual object and of its non-thematic background, results in the determination of the world as the “horizon of all horizons.” Secondly, the problem of the world emerges within the context of a reflection on the phenomenological reduction; the world appears here as the correlate of the “natural attitude” and names the universal doxic basis upon which every particular act of positing rests. Thirdly, and most prominently, the problem of the world comes to the forefront in the writings from Husserl’s last years under the title of the *Lebenswelt*. This concept constitutes a theoretical hub where several threads of Husserl’s inquiry meet. Schematically we can distinguish two main orientations: in the first place, the lifeworld is correlated with the *Rückfrage*, i.e., with the project of questioning back from the high-level accomplishments of sciences to their constant presupposition. In this sense, the world designates what is taken for granted in any theoretical activity, the pre-theoretical soil upon which any scientific sense-formation is built. Secondly, the world denotes a common field, already fashioned by symbolic institutions and infused by practices and thus belonging, or rather being correlated, to a historical humanity.³ Landgrebe’s implicit claim is that, in moving from an exploration of the “horizon of perceptual acts” to a thematization of the *Lebenswelt*, Husserl works out a richer and more nuanced concept of world. In what follows, I shall present a more detailed account of this pathway and show how Husserl’s understanding of the world underwent various shifts that represent stations in a process of continual reworking and deepening of this notion.

The first meaning of the world which emerges in Husserl’s thought is that of the horizon of perceptual acts. Thus, the entryway into the problematic of the world is provided by the acknowledgement of the fact that the perceptual thing cannot be intended in isolation, detached from its specific “halo” (*Hof*) and of its surroundings. As Landgrebe puts it: “The perceptual thing is always a thing in front of its objective background, a background of objects consciously and more

³ In an article from 1977, Landgrebe explicitly distinguishes an understanding of the lifeworld as an “*a priori* of history” from its apprehension as “the *result* of historical development”: “It seems that there is a difficulty in Husserl’s characterization of the life-world. On the one hand, it is understood as the plurality of individually different socio-cultural environments and thus the result of an historical development; on the other hand, it is interpreted as a single structural basis common to all environments and thus an *a priori* for that history through which they become different².” Ludwig Landgrebe, “The Life-world and the Historicity of Human Existence,” *Research in Phenomenology* 11-1 (1981), 111.

or less explicitly meant along with it. (...) Every particular datum involves references to perceptions that might take place from there on—references to them as potentialities of experience.”⁴ It belongs to the sense of any objectivity to carry with it references to other objects that are not explicitly intended, and, moreover, to the a-thematic horizon within which this apprehension unfolds. Thus, every act of perception involves a non-thematic apprehension of this background, for to be a thing is to stand out from a background. However, acknowledging the horizon as a constant and irreducible dimension of the perceptual experience is more than saying that every objectivity is given in the midst of other objectivities. The horizon entails also a subjective dimension, for it consists of an open field of potentialities of experience: to each intending belongs not just an “intending along with,” but also an “intending differently”, an “intending from a different angle.” The cup of coffee I see in front of me would not have the sense “cup of coffee” if the possibility of attending to it from a different angle, for example seeing it from the other side of the table, would not have been given along in its perception. For it is only because these potential modes of appearance are prefigured in my perception that I can intend objectivities and not just profiles—a cup of coffee and not just its side immediately present to my gaze.

With this double figure of the horizon—the non-thematic background of perception and the range of potentialities of experience—Husserl has thus unveiled “structures pertaining to the world.”⁵ In as much as the horizon of every perceptual act can be indefinitely broadened, by being embedded into ever larger horizons, we become aware of the world as the universal horizon, as the horizon of all horizons. Apprehended in this way, the world forms the universal context of reference, the background constantly presupposed by any encounter with a certain entity: things can be experienced only as worldly things, as segments of the world.

It is indisputable that the horizon is a structure of anticipation which renders possible the continuability of the experience. However, we might wonder, following a line of criticism developed by Rudolf Bernet—which is convergent with the implicit objections formulated by Landgrebe—whether this concept is robust enough to capture the whole breadth of the phenomenon of the world: “The horizon is more a dynamic principle of constituting life than an order of constituted objects. Rather than being an indefinitely open framework within which things are inserted to receive sense and come to meet us, the horizon is the shape of the present, future and past data of my actual experience. (...) Besides lacking the objectivity and permanence proper to the world, the horizon also lacks the possibility of being truly shared. (...) A horizon cannot be shared since it is nothing other than what leads a particular constituting subject from one experiencing process to the next.”⁶ Thus, precisely because this concept is

⁴ Ludwig Landgrebe, “World as a Phenomenological Problem,” 39.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁶ Rudolf Bernet, “Husserl’s Concept of World,” in *Edmund Husserl. Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers*, volume V. *Horizons: Life-world, Ethics, History, and Metaphysics*, ed. by Rudolf Bernet, Donn Welton and Gina Zavota (London & New York: Routledge, 2005), 24.

extracted from an analysis of perception, through expanding and thematizing the references contained in the perceptual experience, the “horizon of all horizons” fails to capture the world in its fullest sense. The understanding of the world as the broader context in which the perceptual thing is embedded cannot account for some central ingredients that make up the world: possibility of being shared, objectivity, and permanence. While it is indubitable that the world announces itself in the phenomenon of the horizon, it can by no means be exhausted by such a description.

The second line of inquiry into the world problematic developed by Husserl comes about in the context of a discussion over the implications of the phenomenological reduction: “while developing the doctrine of the phenomenological reduction, Husserl acquired an initial definition of the concept of the world, a clarification owing to his insight into the horizon-structure of every experience. The world is the all-embracing doxic basis, the total horizon that includes every particular positing.”⁷ The insight that motivates this new approach of the world stems from a reflection on the conflicts or disappointments experience might bring about. Indeed, each and every one of our experiential certainties can waver and we can be drawn to admit that what we first took as firmly established is nothing but an illusion. However, the fact that certain experiences could culminate in frustration allows us to unveil the structure underlying any experience as such: namely that it carries with it an anticipatory horizon in virtue of that which has not yet appeared is already invested with a certain sense. It is true that the anticipated sense can prove to be inappropriate for grasping the new appearance and that certain new experiences might break apart the foregoing framework of expectations: the house I walk by proves to be, when I turn around it, not a “real” house at all, but rather a “fake” one, what I will soon presume to be a setting for a western movie. What becomes salient with this reconfiguration of meaning is that the cancelling of the initial sense does not leave me floating in a no-man’s land, but proves to be a powerful incentive for a new sense-bestowal. Furthermore, it is important to stress that this disappointment does leave something unscathed, precisely that in virtue of which the correction can be made, the basis which supports this reconfiguration of meaning. Thus, whatever conflict might emerge in our experience of the world, it could not affect—and thus it could not nullify—the very ground upon which it rests.

The nerve of Husserl’s argument relies on the regional character of negation. Every negation, every deceived expectation is only partial: “every ‘not’ is ‘not so but otherwise’. (...) No matter how large the segments that prove erroneous, there always remains a basis: ultimately and underlying everything else, the basis which is our world. On that basis not only every confirmed experience but also every negation, every considering of anything as probable or possible takes place.”⁸ Indeed, while every particular positing can be cancelled, the basis upon which every positing rests cannot be cancelled. While a reflection

⁷ Ludwig Landgrebe, “World as a Phenomenological Problem,” 41.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

on the non-atomistic character of the perceptual experience has allowed Husserl to explicate the world as the broader horizon of reference, the open field of experience, a reflection on the conflicts or the deceptions experience is the source for a recasting of the world as the basis upon which any conflict takes place and through which any conflict can be resolved, the unmodalizable ground for all modalities of experience. If in the first sense world is the horizon that embraces every experience, this new insight allows Husserl to characterize the world as the constant ground of validity that undergirds every experience.

This double determination of the world as horizon and ground, as that which embraces and that which sustains any experience of a thing, as accurate as it may be, proves to be insufficient for accounting for the world in its full concretion, i.e., as a field that is also historically and symbolically articulated. Thus, in order to grasp the world with its manifold structures Husserl is led to broaden his problematic and to supplement his initial forays into this topic by an analysis of the world as we experience it, as “it is there for *us*.”⁹ In the reconstruction he provides of Husserl’s undertaking, Landgrebe stresses the attention paid by Husserl to this “for *us*”, i.e., to the specific context in which his inquiry unfolds and, thus, to the peculiar problems to which it needs to provide an answer. For it is necessary not only to unravel the way in which the world intervenes in our experience, but also to show how the concept of world extracted from this analysis can be delimited from the dominant ways of apprehending the world, from the “worldviews” or “world-pictures” that have acquired wide currency in our days. Hence, the project of uncovering the “world as it is there for *us*” cannot be detached from a diagnosis of the particular historical situation in which we find ourselves and of the prevalent “worldview.” Two traits stand out as decisive for this contemporary “worldview”: on the one hand, the paramount significance acquired by the mathematized science of nature, with its pretension to uncover an “objective, exactly determined and determinable world”¹⁰ and, on the other hand, the “broadening of our historical, ethnological, and sociological knowledge” which instills the “belief in the plurality and historical relativity of world-pictures and a conviction that none of them may claim for itself a greater truth—to say nothing of the whole truth—about the world.”¹¹ On Husserl’s account, the core of the “modern world-view” lies not only in the hegemonic status acquired by objective science and of its attempt to conceive the world as a set of given entities and relations, and thus to unveil a kernel of reality that is independent of any symbolic superstructure, but also in the encounter with humanities (and their respective life-worlds) which are not determined by the ideals and achievements of sciences. Thus, through the widening of our anthropological knowledge we become acquainted with world different from ours, which in turn can give bearings to a counter position, that of historicism. The project of retrieving the lifeworld must move on a line equally far from these two obstacles and thus reject “the tendency to absolutize the world-picture

⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 44.

determined by exact science” while at the same time avoid falling prey to the lure of historical relativism.¹²

In order to meet these requirements and develop a concept of world capable of superseding the ruinous alternative between a “scientist” and a “culturalist” approach, two theoretical movements need to be enacted: in the first place, it is necessary to trace back the high-level accomplishments of sciences to their pre-theoretical ground, i.e., to display the “prescientific world” and its independence from the conceptual garb (*Ideenkleid*) in which it is usually “dressed up”; secondly, it is important to acknowledge, beyond the diversity of the life-worlds, the uniqueness (*Einzigkeit*) of the world—a uniqueness with regard to which both plurality and singularity “make no sense.”¹³

The attempt to clarify the relation between sciences and their experiential basis represents the dominant theme of Husserl’s *Crisis*. As Landgrebe recalls it, in this work, Husserl sets out to explore the path leading from the multifarious world of pre-scientific experience to the ideal productions of objective sciences and to show that in order to grasp the full truth of the latter, one must acknowledge their embeddedness into the former. However, in disclosing the life-world, Husserl does not move within the narrow confines of an epistemological inquiry. For the life-world designates not only the ground in which the scientific sense-accomplishments are rooted, and from which they receive their validity, but also the field in which these sense-accomplishments “stream in,” are sedimented and, thus, leave a more or less durable imprint. Therefore, the question concerning the life-world cannot be equated with a “special” problem concerning the validity of the truth claims issued by the objective science but, in as much the lifeworld encompasses all levels of meaning, it amounts to the question of the world as such.¹⁴

However, drawing on Husserl’s research manuscripts of the *Konvolut A*, Landgrebe grants privilege in his 1940 article to a second line of inquiry developed by Husserl, one that takes its departure from an analysis of the plurality of “cultural” life-worlds. Here, the life-world appears as correlated to a

¹² *Ibid.*, 47.

¹³ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, transl. D. Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), §37, 143: “The world, on the other hand, does not exist as an entity, as an object, but exists with such such a uniqueness that the *plural makes no sense* when applied to it. Every plural, and every singular drawn from it, presupposes the world-horizon.”

¹⁴ Some of Husserl’s closest followers contested that the analysis he provides of the *Lebenswelt* manages to overcome the initial “epistemological” (in the widest sense of the term) orientation. Cf. Jan Patočka, “Réflexions sur l’Europe,” in *Liberté et sacrifice* (Grenoble: Millon, 1990), 212: “The *Lebenswelt* in Husserl’s sense remains an abstraction determined by a special function of science, thus the *Lebenswelt* is not a world in a proper sense; the Husserlian conception conceals, forgets the world as a purely phenomenal field. In short, the *Lebenswelt* calls for the same critique Husserl addresses to the ‘real world’ of the natural sciences, to which he reproaches to have forgotten its ground”; Paul Ricœur, “L’originnaire et la question-en-retour dans la *Krisis* de Husserl,” in *A l’école de la phénoménologie* (Paris: Vrin, 1986), 292: “the *Lebenswelt* is only a moment in the process to which reason comes to itself, beyond the limitations of objectivism.”

specific community or “humanity,” and denotes a particular way of “having a world.” In order to grasp the structures that articulate any form of “having a world,” it is helpful to recall that, in our immediate experience, the world manifests itself as being gathered around a zero-point (*nullpunkt*), namely the “absolute here” of our body or, better, of our flesh.¹⁵ The fact that our dwelling always happens in a field of proximity around which the life-world is centered allows us to unveil one of the deep-reaching structures of every life-world, namely the distinction between the near-world and the far-world which, in its turn, yields the distinction between the home-world and the foreign-world. As Landgrebe stresses it, this distinction is rooted in “a difference relative to the absolute ‘here’ of our bodily existence, which functions as the basis for a difference between near and far in a transferred sense, namely as a difference relative to our community and its particular surrounding world, which is marked off from the world surrounding any other community. This difference is the ground for a differentiation of the concept ‘world’ according to the essential distinction between home-world and alien or foreign world.”¹⁶ However, it is important to underline that although it represents an expansion of the absolute here of our bodily existence, of the unique locus of our life, “a home-world is never the home-world of only a single person; it always belongs to a community—a tribe, a people, or the like—dwelling in their ‘territory,’ where they have their history, their past that, in the form of *tradition*, has its influence in the present. Within the home-world, everything has its *structure of acquaintedness*.”¹⁷ Thus, the home-world does not designate a portion of the world, cut off from the rest, where we happen to find ourselves, but rather a medium opened up by our involvement, with which we have an intimate acquaintance, where our expectations are constantly fulfilled, where whatever we encounter already possesses a recognizable shape and a familiar meaning. In contrast, a foreign-world appears under the traits of unfamiliarity, as a field where our expectations are constantly—or rather more often than not—deceived. Conceived phenomenologically, a home-world designates a particular “style of experience,” a normative framework determining all actual and possible experiences, and which is further specified into a network of beliefs and practices that govern our dealings with things and fellow human beings.

However, this way of framing the question of the *Lebenswelt* whereby it is equated with a specific “style of experience” may leave the space open for an obvious criticism, for such a perspective entails the risk of an indefinite pluralisation of self-enclosed and reciprocally untranslatable local worlds. In

¹⁵ Cf. also Landgrebe’s latter formulation of this thesis: “The invariant in all conceivable worlds must, therefore, be present as something shared before all differences of worlds. This invariant must be that to which the beginning of communication is related. But what can this be? I would suggest that the basic structure of the world is disclosed in sensuous-bodily-kinaesthetic self-movement as the condition for having perceptions at all” (Ludwig Landgrebe, “The Life-world and the Historicity of Human Existence,” 124).

¹⁶ Ludwig Landgrebe, “World as a Phenomenological Problem,” 48.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 49.

order to deprive such objections of any ground, Landgrebe is quick to stress that the idea of a closed home-world, “completely shut off from every foreign world”¹⁸ is a limiting concept, even an abstraction. For “there is always at least a vague awareness of the presence of alien worlds, no matter how little they may be understood in their details.”¹⁹ But this means that “we are always aware that our home-world is not the ‘whole’ world but only one among various ‘segments’ of the world.”²⁰ Stated differently, in the unfolding of our experience we are always confronted, to a larger or lesser degree, with the irruption of the unfamiliar—and this not just in the narrow sense of what does not fit into our established patterns of sense, but in the radical sense of that which makes a different sense for others, that which others understand differently, by embedding it into a distinct framework of meaning. A home-world is always permeated by a stretch of strangeness. Therefore, the reflection on the home-world and the acknowledgement of its necessary intertwining with a foreign world prove to be a powerful incentive for broadening the very concept of world so as to reach the *Allwelt*, the “all-world,” which undergirds any home-world. While the concept of horizon may still prove to be useful for grasping this new theoretical situation, it will no longer point to the background necessarily co-intended in any act of perception, but will rather designate the broader field to which every specific style of experience, every definite structure of acquaintance is opened to. In this regard, the world can be equated with the “total horizon of possible experiences.”²¹ The most important achievement of this analysis is the idea that the “all-embracing world” includes a plurality of styles of experiences, a diversity of “home-worlds,” and so it embraces not just all the possible objects that can be experienced, but also the whole diversity of the modes of experiencing, of the styles of experience.²² The world is not just the *horizon* against which all things stand out and without which they could not appear to us, but rather the correlate of the open totality of possible experiences. To form an idea of the world requires, therefore, a “systematic construction of the infinity of

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

²² Ludwig Landgrebe, “World as a Phenomenological Problem,” 50: “Alien worlds must be conceived as standing in a nexus of possible continuous (direct or indirect) experience with our own, in such a manner that all such ‘worlds’ combine to make up the unity of the all-embracing world.” For a further elaboration of this point, see Klaus Held, “Heimwelt, Fremdwelt, die eine Welt,” *Phänomenologische Forschungen*, 24/25, *Perspektiven und Probleme der Husserlschen Phänomenologie: Beiträge zur neueren Husserl-Forschung* (1991), 305–337.

possible experiences.”²³ Thus, pursuing the thrust of this analysis, we reach a determination of the world as infinite, in the sense of infinitely opened, opened on all sides, corresponding to what Merleau-Ponty calls a “system with multiple entries”.²⁴

Landgrebe has thus provided a broad overview of the development of the concept of world in Husserl’s thought which allowed him to bring out four different, although not mutually exclusive, meanings. The world was uncovered as a) the horizon of perceptual acts determining and embracing any form of perceptual appearance; b) the doxic basis undergirding any positing act; c) the ground of all idealization and the field in which any ideal production will “stream in”; d) the all-inclusive horizon, the “all-world” to which any “style of experience” is opened to. However, the novelty and the far-reaching importance of these analyses should not preclude us from acknowledging their peculiar theoretical status, namely that they pertain to “mundane phenomenology.” Or while “mundane phenomenological” analyses are of paramount importance—for they enact a form of reduction by suspending the objectivist interpretation of world which pervades the naïve accomplishment of life and which equates it with a totality of occurring entities—they remain fundamentally preliminary and incomplete. The preliminary character of such an approach stems from the fact that it moves within the realm of “what-is-already-there” or, more precisely, it presupposes the pre-givenness of the world, it takes the world for granted. But the pre-givenness of the world cannot be the last word of a phenomenological elucidation: in order to be true to its transcendental commitments, a phenomenological unfolding of the question of the world must trace it back to the sense-accomplishments of transcendental subjectivity. As Landgrebe puts it, “For Husserl, a real understanding of the world can mean only an understanding of it in its origination as a product of conscious processes, and such an understanding can be attained only after the reduction has been performed, only as the result of detailed constitutional analyses.”²⁵ It is thus only when the hidden achievements of transcendental subjectivity have been unveiled, and the being of the world has been recognized as a “being-constituted,” that the phenomenological elucidation has advanced up the ultimate level of explanation.

However, while the requirement of going beyond the mere “mundane phenomenological” analyses is clearly stated by Husserl, Landgrebe doubts that this regressive inquiry has been performed in a satisfactory way. On his account,

²³ Ludwig Landgrebe, “World as a Phenomenological Problem,” 51. Landgrebe quotes here the Nachlassmanuskript A VII 1 which bears the title “HorizontBewusstsein von der Welt und thematische Weltvorstellung, Welterfahrung, Weltgewißheit. Welt als Worin alles Seiende (für mich seinsgewiss) existiert. In diesem Sinn ist Welt kein Seiendes, kein Reales; und Welterfahrung hat einen neuen Sinn. Konstruktion von der Welt als offen unendlicher Vielheit, Allheit von Realem; Welt als Totalität Thema der Weltwissenschaft (Kosmologie)”. The manuscript, dating from 1933-34, was transcribed by Landgrebe himself during his years in Prague. It was edited in 2008 as Beilage V of the volume 39 of the *Husserliana*.

²⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l’invisible* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 121.

²⁵ Ludwig Landgrebe, “World as a Phenomenological Problem,” 43.

two profound limitations impeded Husserl in bringing the analysis of the world to its transcendental completion. In the first place, Landgrebe stresses that most of Husserl's constitutional analysis of the world are premature, for "he had already completed most of the constitutive analyses during a period when he did not yet possess the clues eventually unraveled by his mundane-phenomenological analysis of the world. Thus, his initial constitutional analysis was guided by a yet *unclarified* awareness of world-structures, and this circumstance imposed limitations that were only gradually, and perhaps never completely, overcome."²⁶ However, although "mundane phenomenological" analysis do not advance up to the ultimate level of elucidation of the world, they cannot be undervalued, for in this way the *explanandum* of a constitutional analysis is unfolded. We may infer that the richer and more fine-grained the mundane phenomenological account is, the fuller the constitutional analysis can become. Stated differently, the kind of constitutional analysis one can accomplish depends on how one elaborates, in a theoretical move prior to the constitutional analysis and which properly belongs to the domain of "mundane phenomenology," "clues" for a transcendental inquiry. Or, "in the constitutional analysis that lie closest at hand, the world is encountered chiefly in the guise of the immediate horizon of perception, the perceptual situation, and Husserl did not go on immediately to raise the problem of the world as a whole."²⁷ By taking as a guiding thread for his constitutional analysis the "mundane phenomenological" analysis of the world as the wider frame of perception, Husserl severely restricted the scope of his transcendental account. More precisely, the constitutional analysis capable of accounting for the world as the horizon of perceptual acts cannot be applied to the world understood as the "open totality of possible experiences," the all-comprehensive world. Or, in as much as the "mundane phenomenological" analysis that has displayed the world under this latter figure pertains to Husserl's research manuscripts from his last period, the constitutional analysis corresponding to this latter understanding have not been performed.

The second limitation Landgrebe detects has to do with the absence of a constitutional elucidation of the horizon as such, for "Husserl was tracing the constitutive origin of the 'worldly', i.e., of what exists 'in' the world, rather than the origin of the world itself."²⁸ This objection rests on two different, yet complementary, claims. On the one hand, Landgrebe underscores the disparity, even the gulf that separates the world from anything that might appear on its basis, that might be comprised within it. Or, the acknowledgement of such a distinction should prevent us from accounting for the manifestation of the world by using the same constitutive structures that underlie the manifestation of

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 54–55.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 56. A similar criticism can be found in Patočka, when he contends that Husserl's analysis focuses primarily on the ways in which innerworldly things are constituted, without paying sufficient attention to the way in which "the world, as distinct from ... objects within the world" is constituted – Jan Patočka, "The Natural World and Phenomenology," in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, ed. E. Kohák (Chicago: Chicago University Press), 249.

intraworldly entities. As long as these new conceptual instruments are not established, the “innerworldly entity” appears to be the model for everything that is, and we thus lose sight of the “uniqueness” of the world. On the other hand, as long as the constitutional analysis accounts only for “structures *within* the field” and not for the “formation of the horizon itself,” the elucidation is not carried through to its end, for something is still taken to be pre-given—namely, the horizon itself.²⁹ Stated differently, if to understand the world means to render manifest the process of its constitution, this cannot amount simply to elaborating the constitution of what appears in the world, but needs also to include an analysis of the constitution of the horizon. Or, Husserl does not undertake this kind of analysis.³⁰

However, apart from these challenges, which by no means amount to a downright rejection of Husserl’s transcendental-constitutive program, but are rather inspired by the ambition of realizing it more fully, a different and seemingly opposed objection lurks in the background. Landgrebe has fleshed it out more clearly in a latter text, when he writes that “the earth (a transcendental determination) is the absolute limit of our world horizon. This earth sets an absolute limit to everything we are capable of—even what we are capable of through technology. It is an absolute postulate beyond all relativism.”³¹ But references to the earth, understood in a non-trivial, i.e., a transcendental sense, are already to be found in the 1940 article, for instance when Landgrebe notes that “the earth is *the primary basis* of our experience. It is not merely one among the other objects of our experience; rather it is that, relative to which all other objects are determined with respect to their *loci* and, more particularly, are determined as at rest or in motion.” Furthermore, as the basis of our experience, the earth appears as “an actual exemplification of an essential necessity.”³²

²⁹Ludwig Landgrebe, “World as a Phenomenological Problem,” 57.

³⁰Ludwig Landgrebe admits however that Husserl embarked on such investigations when he explored the inner constitution of time: “Only in one direction did Husserl overstep this limit and investigate what subjectivity accomplishes not only by way of constitution inside the predelineated horizon, but also by way of constitutively forming the horizon itself. In this one direction, however, he did so very early, namely in his analyses of the consciousness of time” – Landgrebe, “World as a Phenomenological Problem,” 57. It is thus Landgrebe’s contention that the kind of analysis Husserl unraveled with respect to the *Zeitbewusstsein* should be also enacted with regard to the other dimensions of the world. A solid defense of Husserl’s position against this kind of criticism is provided by Saulus Geniasas in *The Origins of the Horizon in Husserl’s Phenomenology* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012), 236: “The manner in which Husserl’s notion of the horizon shows itself as intentionally unified reveals that there is no necessity to choose between the pregivenness of the world-horizon and the question of the origins of the horizons. One is not only in perfect right to inquire into the genesis of the horizons while conceding the pregivenness of the *Welt-horizont*; in fact, only within such an intentional framework, as the last section has shown, can the question of origins be posed”.

³¹Ludwig Landgrebe, “The Life-world and the Historicity of Human Existence,” 138–139.

³²Ludwig Landgrebe, “World as a Phenomenological Problem,” 46.

These references are marked by a profound ambiguity, which can be brought up if we ask the following question: what is the theoretical status of these assertions? Do they belong to the ambit of “mundane phenomenology” or do they rather have a transcendental character? In the first hypothesis, the earth will appear as the limit of any particular life-world and its apprehension will provide a transition to the “all-world.” However, on such a reading, the constitutional analysis will have to take up a prodigious task, for it will have to account for the constitution of the earth itself (understood in a non-naturalistic way). Otherwise, it is difficult to see how such an analysis could be performed.

If we follow the second path, we will have to admit that the world is established on the earth and that the earth represents a “transcendental determination” *sui generis*, which is tantamount to acknowledging a dimension of the world that cannot be traced back to the sphere of formative activity of transcendental subjectivity. Saying that there is no world without the earth should not be understood as a metaphorical statement, but rather as an attempt of mapping out the twofold structure of the transcendental field. Indeed, if we consider the passage quoted earlier according to which the earth epitomizes a specific necessity (an “essential necessity”), we can surmise that Landgrebe refers to a necessity which is not of an eidetic kind, but rather a factual (or, even better, a proto-factual) necessity.³³ This last clarification allows us to bring out the insight that motivates the enquiry which has the “earth” as its theme. Ascribing a transcendental function to the earth amounts to casting light on the very limits of the transcendental-*constitutive* approach, by displaying a dimension of proto-facticity that resists a constitutional account. However, this attempt may succeed only in as much as the earth represents a *transcendental* dimension (and not a merely naturalistic one) and the facticity it brings about possess a specific necessity. On this second reading, Landgrebe’s account of the earth appears as a complex strategy aiming to unveil the twofold articulation of the transcendental field and at uncovering the double theme of the phenomenological enquiry: the (transcendental) origin of the world and the (transcendentally) absolute facticity.

³³This theme is undoubtedly a Husserlian one, and if it can be used as an instrument to criticize some of Husserl’s early statements, this kind of criticism should be understood in the first place as Husserl’s self-criticism. It is precisely this stance that Landgrebe adopts—one that places him within the multifaceted and plastic field of transcendental phenomenology and not outside it. This topic has been further developed by Landgrebe in his post-war writings. Cf. “Meditation über Husserls Wort ‘Die Geschichte ist das große Faktum des absoluten Seins’” and “Faktizität und Individuation”, both texts published in Ludwig Landgrebe, *Faktizität und Individuation* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1982). Recently, the idea of a specific “necessity of the fact” has gained new attention especially in the works of László Tengelyi. See “Necessity of a Fact in Aristotle and in Phenomenology”, *Philosophy Today* 55 (2011), 124–132 and *Welt und Unendlichkeit: Zum Problem phänomenologischer Metaphysik* (Freiburg: Alber, 2014).