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# Islamic Theology and the Crisis of Contemporary Science: Naquib al-Attas' "Metaphysical Critique" and a Husserlian Alternative

Ramon Harvey 

## ABSTRACT

This article evaluates the "metaphysical critique" of contemporary science by the Islamic philosophical theologian Naquib al-Attas in his *Prolegomena to a Metaphysics of Islām*. I argue that al-Attas' critique is dialectically inappropriate because it relies on specific, and non-publicly verifiable, interpretations of revelation and spiritual intuition. I contrast this with the work of Edmund Husserl, especially in his *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, which I show can sustain a viable critique of science through the phenomenological grounding of public reason. I also assess the prospect for Islamic engagement with Husserl on this topic.

## KEYWORDS

Metaphysics; revelation; spiritual intuition; al-Attas; Husserl; lifeworld

## 1. Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that there is a malaise in our lives connected to the products of scientific knowledge that we have surrounded ourselves with. Like the monkey's paw in the story, the artefacts with which we streamline our lives exact a terrible price for the desires that they fulfil. Genuine human relationships become increasingly mediated, if not entirely replaced, by our technologies.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the natural environment is in a state of longstanding and ever-deepening crisis.<sup>2</sup> There is a presumption that, somehow, something has gone wrong with our scientific relationship to the world. What possible philosophical and theological response can human beings in general, and Muslims in particular, offer? One way to address this question is to develop a critique of modern science.

Religious assessments of science within the contemporary world commonly develop what I shall call a "metaphysical critique". Such a critique can be summarised in the following way. The world has a metaphysical dimension that transcends the visible phenomena that science can measure. Because of this inability to access it, modern science denies its existence. Only "traditional metaphysics" can make the world intelligible to us once more. Thus, modern humanity must go back to the teachings of tradition to solve the problems caused by runaway scientism. This position can be found in authors such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Wolfgang Smith who presume that all genuine traditions share certain fundamental metaphysical theses, an idea stemming especially from the perennialism of the early twentieth-century philosopher René Guénon.<sup>3</sup>

In this article, I critically evaluate a distinct version of the “metaphysical critique” as presented by the Malaysian Islamic philosophical theologian Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. I will show that, in his *Prolegomena to a Metaphysics of Islām* (1995), al-Attas grounds his analysis on two epistemic sources: (1) revelation and (2) spiritual intuition, which he argues establish a certain Islamic ontological system: a version of Akbarī metaphysics.<sup>4</sup> I will propose that such a critique is dialectically inappropriate. That is, it is unlikely to convince anyone who is not already committed to its specific metaphysical vision. To be clear, I will not assess whether al-Attas’ position is correct as an interpretation of revelation or whether it can be reached as the ultimate truth by practitioners of Sufism. What I question is whether this can be established in an adequate way within the disciplinary context of the philosophy of science in which it is attempting to intervene. I will argue that al-Attas’ Akbarī ontological system is underdetermined by the apparent meaning of the Qur’ānic revelation. Thus, he enlists spiritual intuition as a source of knowledge for scientific truth that can, in principle, be realised by anyone. After examining the related ideas of two further contemporary Islamic scholars, Nuh Ha Mim Keller and ‘Adi Setia, I will give reasons to think that this is not a convincing line of argument within Islamic theology, which has a prominent tradition of rejecting spiritual intuition as a source of public knowledge. I shall therefore suggest that, in the *global public square*, an effective critique of the philosophy of science must start from the shared phenomenal perception of the senses.

It is at this juncture that I will propose that it is possible to derive benefit from the work of the philosopher Edmund Husserl, specifically the last book published in his lifetime, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, and its related texts.<sup>5</sup> In it, he too provides a critical analysis of the development of modern science and its loss of intelligible connection to reality, yet he constructs rational arguments based on a phenomenological critique, which makes them dialectically appropriate. Finally, I will explore the prospects for an Islamic perspective to engage with the thought of Husserl on this topic.

## 2. Al-Attas’ “Metaphysical Critique”

Al-Attas is a prominent scholar who is associated with the Islamisation of knowledge movement, especially as founder of ISTAC (International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation), which is connected to the International Islamic University of Malaysia. He has written several works relevant to the philosophy of science. The most significant is *Prolegomena to a Metaphysics of Islām*, from which the following analysis is drawn.<sup>6</sup>

According to al-Attas, modern Western science depends on a deeply problematic world view. It is based on “secularism”, by which he means a philosophical foundation that is grounded in rational appreciation of phenomena without the deeper significance that he thinks can only be vouchsafed through revelation and spiritual intuition. He provides a genealogical account of this world view. He argues that Western culture is an amalgam of Greek philosophy, Roman Law and Latin, Germanic, Celtic and Nordic “national spirit and traditional values, and the development and advancement of the natural and physical sciences and technology ...”<sup>7</sup> Additionally, he comments that the secularity of science is grounded in the ancient Greek philosophical idea of one thing emerging out of another in an eternal universe without need for a creator.<sup>8</sup> This is

reminiscent of historical criticism launched by Islamic theologians against the Eternalists (*dahriyya*),<sup>9</sup> and is too simplistic as an account of the complex developments leading to the secularity of modern science.<sup>10</sup> He also comments that contemporary science is uninterested in the certainty that he thinks is furnished by the Islamic theological tradition.<sup>11</sup>

He does not reject the findings of science *in toto*,<sup>12</sup> but is concerned with the problematic effect that they have on traditional modes of Muslim thought. Here, it is necessary to point out that his intended audience in the *Prolegomena* seems to be primarily English-speaking Muslims within Muslim-majority countries, rather than the West.<sup>13</sup> He argues that knowledge has been corrupted due to influences from the philosophy, science and ideology of Western society changing the meaning of key terms of the world view derived from the Qur'ānic revelation.<sup>14</sup>

Al-Attas characterises Islam (in the sense of the religion revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad)<sup>15</sup> as arriving within history already mature and with fundamental elements that are defined by its revealed source. Though he accepts that the community of Muslims has provided further interpretation in the course of history, the revealed status of Islam is of crucial significance to him, particularly in the unique link between the Arabic language of the Qur'ān and the reality of things as they truly are.<sup>16</sup> In some respects, then, the *Prolegomena* acts as a semantic analysis of key Qur'ānic (and to a lesser extent Islamic) terms in order to derive a complete world view. This has a profound effect on the mode of philosophy of science that al-Attas thinks is possible within Islam on the one hand and the West on the other. Whereas the linguistic pattern of meaning within revelation reflects the true nature of the world, that within Western science cannot.<sup>17</sup> As only the Islamic picture does justice to reality in its full metaphysical dimension, it is the sole paradigm that can provide a secure foundation to interpret the data of scientific inquiry as truth.

### 3. Revelation and al-Attas' Ontological System

The Qur'ānic revelation, according to al-Attas, is the basis for what he calls an ontological system. As articulated by al-Attas, this is essentially a version of the Akbarī metaphysics often encapsulated in the term *waḥdat al-wujūd* (the oneness of existence).<sup>18</sup> Al-Attas' treatment of this system is complex, and its full details are not relevant for the argument pursued in this article. In summary, he holds reality to consist of descending degrees of divine self-manifestation. At the top is God (al-Attas uses the Arabic name Allāh), the Ultimate Reality. As Ultimate Reality, His essence is unconditioned existence and absolute oneness, so that He is unknowable except to Himself.<sup>19</sup> Subsequent degrees bring greater determination: at each stage of descent from the Ultimate Reality, the pure existence of the divine becomes increasingly conditioned.<sup>20</sup> A significant stage is that of the self-revelation and self-contemplation of the divine names and attributes.<sup>21</sup> This is followed by the ideal realities of the "permanent archetypes", which are the forms and aspects of the names and attributes considered in their difference from God.<sup>22</sup> The effects of these ideal realities become manifest in time, whether in the visible or invisible world.<sup>23</sup>

This system is for al-Attas the fundamental framework to interpret scientific knowledge. He writes:

Our affirmation of Revelation as *the* source of knowledge of ultimate reality and truth pertaining both to created things as well as to their Creator provides us with the foundation for

a metaphysical framework in which to elaborate our philosophy of science as an integrated system descriptive of that reality and truth in a way which is not open to the methods of the secular philosophic rationalism and philosophic empiricism of modern philosophy and science.<sup>24</sup>

An example of how al-Attas claims to move beyond secular approaches to science is his analysis of physical reality. He suggests that “modern philosophy and science have come to realize that the fundamental nature of phenomena is process ...”<sup>25</sup> He uses his ontological system to characterise that process. It is revealed as nothing other than the determination of existence, the ultimate stuff of reality, as an aspect of God arising from His names and attributes into concrete things, with their essences as individuated existence.<sup>26</sup> Here it is not clear, given al-Attas’ critical perspective on modern Western philosophy and science, why he accepts this claimed acknowledgement of the fundamentality of process in the first place. It appears that his approval stems from its perceived harmony with the metaphysical picture that he already supports.

A persistent feature of the *Prolegomena* is al-Attas’ jump from general Qur’ānic semantics to his specific ontological vision. Though many of his key interpretations of scriptural vocabulary fall within the established range of exegetic views, and his semantic analyses are sometimes brilliant, the metaphysics extracted from them is based on his pre-existing choice to elaborate the Akbarī system as revealed truth. In other words, the Qur’ānic concepts that al-Attas cites underdetermine the philosophical meaning required to support his chosen ontological system as a framework for an Islamic philosophy of science.

I will give an illustration of this point through his comments on the metaphysics of permanence and change:

We maintain that phenomenal things do not persist in existence, but perish upon coming into existence, being continually replaced by new similars in a perpetual process. The perishing of things is called, after the Quranic expression, *hālik* or *fanā*; and the perpetual process of renewal, again after the Quranic expression, is called *khalq jadid*—a new creation [...] This ever-regaining continuance in existence is called, to use another Quranic expression, *baqā*. The dual aspect of the realities—permanence and change—presupposes a third metaphysical category between existence and non-existence, and this is the realm of the permanent entities (*al-a’yān al-thābitah*) which are aspects of the names and attributes of God. As to the Ultimate Reality that is God, even though He describes Himself in terms explicit of absolute dynamism, He is far too exalted to be conceived as being immersed in process descriptive of becoming or transformation.<sup>27</sup>

What I want to draw from this quotation is not the specific argument being pursued about metaphysics, but how it reflects on al-Attas’ method. Qur’ānic terms function for him more as pegs on which to hang his preconceived ontological system, than as proof texts for it. Other theological schools could (and did) use the same revealed concepts for very different metaphysical doctrines.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Muslim scholars have long realised that building any specific metaphysics upon the Qur’ān is rarely convincing outside of a shared commitment to the authority of a sacred text or its proper hermeneutics. This is one of the factors motivating the development of rational argument within Islamic theology.<sup>29</sup> Is al-Attas, then, engaging in exactly the speculative philosophical activity for which he criticises Western thinkers? Not entirely. Al-Attas thinks that he has a decisive reason to prefer his position over potential rivals, one which neither

depends on the interpretation of revelation nor rational argument. In the final analysis, al-Attas' "metaphysical critique" of contemporary philosophy of science stands or falls on the proper scope of spiritual intuition. In particular, it relies on his contention that the insights gained by Sufism can operate as a source of scientific knowledge.

#### 4. Spiritual Intuition as the Basis for an Islamic Philosophy of Science

If revelation, assuming it is accepted as authoritative, cannot underpin the specific ontological system that al-Attas favours, then his "metaphysical critique" must rely on spiritual intuition. For al-Attas, intuition is a fundamental source of knowledge allowing one to gain an immediate understanding of religious truths, including the existence of God and the nature of reality.<sup>30</sup> But such intuition, insofar as it leads to establishing the true ontology of existence, is rarefied. He writes:

With reference to intuition at the higher levels of truth, intuition does not just come to anyone, but to one who has lived his life in the experience of religious truth by sincere, practical devotion to God, who has by means of intellectual attainment understood the nature of the oneness of God and what this oneness implies in an integrated metaphysical system, who has constantly meditated upon the nature of this reality, and who then, during deep contemplation and by God's will, is made to pass away from consciousness of his self and his subjective states and to enter into the state of higher selfhood, subsisting in God. When he returns to his human, subjective condition, he loses what he has found, but the knowledge of it remains with him. It is in the duration of subsistence in God, when he gains his higher selfhood, that the direct and immediate apprehension takes place. He has been given a glimpse of the nature of reality in that duration of coincidence with the Truth. In his case the cognitive content of his intuition of existence reveals to him the integrated system of reality as a whole.<sup>31</sup>

Al-Attas here proposes that the mystical experience needed to grasp the ontological system that is to underpin the philosophy of science results from arduous preparation and training, intellectual and spiritual. As already mentioned, I am not questioning the possibility, or actuality, of such experiences, but whether they are able to play the role of authoritative deliverances for an Islamic philosophy of science. Some concerns can be raised at this juncture: even if one meets these conditions, there seems no guarantee that God will grant insight into the nature of reality; and such spiritual intuition seems at first blush to be an irreducibly private experience. I will return to these points below, but to sharpen the questions at hand, I shall briefly introduce and discuss the views of two further contemporary Islamic scholars who are supportive of al-Attas on this point in letter or spirit: Nuh Keller and 'Adi Setia.

Keller makes his remarks in a small, yet influential, pamphlet titled *Evolution Theory & Islam* (1999). Writing about how the spirit (*rūḥ*) can know God, he comments:

If one demands that the existence of this faculty be demonstrated, the answer—however legitimate the request—cannot exceed, "Go to masters of the discipline, train, and you will be shown." Unsatisfying though this reply may be, it does not seem to me to differ in principle from answers that would be given, for example, to a nonspecialist regarding the proof for a particular proposition in theoretical physics or symbolic logic. Nor are such answers an objection to the in-principle "publicly observable" character of observation statements in these disciplines, but rather a limitation pertaining to the nature of the case and the questioner, one that he may accept, reject, or do something about.<sup>32</sup>

Setia wrote a lengthy article titled “Al-Attas’ Philosophy of Science: An Extended Outline” (2003). Two points deserve to be highlighted in the present context. First, in summarising al-Attas’ epistemology, Setia places intuition, for which al-Attas uses the Arabic terms *ḥads* (sagacity) and *wijdān* (illuminative experience),<sup>33</sup> under the heading of intellect, which he connects to the famous schema for sources of knowledge in *al-‘Aqīda al-Nasafīyya*, the creed of Abū Ḥafṣ al-Nasafī (d. 1142),<sup>34</sup> noting that al-Attas studied the text closely.<sup>35</sup> This may seem to support the authoritativeness of intuition as an epistemic source within theology, and by extension, the philosophy of science. Second, Setia quotes the above passage from al-Attas on intuition in full and adds the following commentary:

Normally, most informed but otherwise ordinary people are unwilling, unmotivated or unable for some reasons or others to undergo the discipline required of the Ṣūfī path, and thus they are cut off from the experiential appreciation of transcendental truths accessible through it. Consequently they either have to accept the authority of the Ṣūfīs (just as most informed people who are not directly conversant with the truth-claims of modern physics accept them anyway), or they may reject it outright. But such a rejection would clearly be arbitrary if they *fail* to show that the methods of the Ṣūfīs are incoherent, inadequate and inaccessible in principle or in practice to anyone having the aptitude to undergo them. However, this acceptance of the authority of the Ṣūfīs does not at all mean that scientists have themselves to be practicing Ṣūfīs, but rather that they need to recognize on the intellectual if not experiential level that the Ṣūfī vision of ultimate reality *does* have objective cognitive content and then to proceed to build a philosophy and methodology of science that are in accord with a critical and systematic articulation of that vision.<sup>36</sup>

Setia concludes, also citing Keller, that the force of al-Attas’ position is that spiritual intuition, specifically that grasped via the practice of Sufism, should be reconfigured as an authoritative source within the philosophy of science.<sup>37</sup> In commenting on the above, I shall initially focus on the point of epistemological clarification raised by Setia, as it will allow me to present an alternative perspective from a normative Islamic paradigm. I will then attend to the challenge to contemporary thought.

Setia’s account obscures al-Nasafī’s significant statement that “spiritual intuition (*ilhām*) is not from the means of knowledge (*ma’rifā*) for the soundness of something”.<sup>38</sup> The type of knowledge intended by the word *ilhām* corresponds to *wijdān* within al-Attas’ treatment, which he terms “the arrival of the soul at meaning, or the arrival in the soul of meaning”, which “comes by itself”.<sup>39</sup> Al-Attas is aware of this position within the creed of al-Nasafī,<sup>40</sup> though he does not raise it within the *Prolegomena*. Hence, Setia’s presentation of al-Attas’ system within al-Nasafī’s framework reveals an incongruity that is central to this article’s argument. Al-Nasafī’s creed, especially with its commentary by Sa’d al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 1390),<sup>41</sup> has long been held as an authoritative expression of Islamic belief (this is the purpose of Setia’s invocation of it in the first place). Yet it openly states that spiritual intuition is not a valid epistemic source. In al-Taftāzānī’s commentary this is softened with the following words: “the apparent meaning is that he intends that spiritual intuition (*ilhām*) is not a means by which knowledge is realised for most people nor suitable to enjoin upon another. Otherwise, there is no doubt that knowledge is realised by it.”<sup>42</sup> The rationale, as explained in more detail by theologians prior to al-Nasafī within his tradition, is that notwithstanding the possibility that God will grant this kind of knowledge to individuals, its details are inherently open



to disagreement with no way to settle such disputes.<sup>43</sup> Hence, unlike sense perception, revealed reports, and reason, it is not suitable as a source for publicly binding knowledge. My argument in the present context is that not only does al-Nasafi's rejection of the authority of spiritual intuition in the public domain enjoy a dominant status within the Islamic tradition in the field of theology, but that this rests on the obvious harms that would result in extending it beyond its proper remit in the spiritual life of the individual. Yet this is what is implicitly claimed for the case of science by al-Attas and Keller, and explicitly by Setia.

Keller's quoted comments deal with the faculty of spiritual intuition itself, suggesting that the person who seeks proof that such a thing exists should be told to go to study with masters, so that they will see for themselves. This, Keller proposes, is like the person who is told to learn how to understand a difficult proof in a specialist scientific domain. The fact that the neophyte of such a discipline will not be able to immediately realise its truth does not detract from its in-principle public observability. Keller's analogy implies that, contrary to al-Nasafi, spiritual intuition should be considered public knowledge, and by using it to discuss the question of evolution that it is applicable to scientific questions. Setia makes the case most directly, arguing that the burden of proof is on the person who holds that the spiritual truths realised through Sufi practice are not in principle available to anyone with a suitable aptitude, and hence can act as the metaphysical basis for an Islamic philosophy of science.

It seems from the published words of Keller and Setia that they understand spiritual intuition as an experience with a high degree of reproducibility. That is, even if the experience itself is private, the result is common to practitioners, such that it can be understood as publicly observable. This presumes both (1) that God will reliably grant the experience to anyone who sincerely seeks it, and (2) the ontological system can be translated into discursive philosophical language consistently enough to verify its truth. Problems can be raised with both presumptions. It is hard to imagine how any guarantee can be made about (1) – spiritual insights are usually held to be divine bestowals with God under no obligation to provide a specific kind of intuition even to the most diligent aspirant.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, in a world in which science is practised at a global level between institutions with different religious and philosophical commitments, such a requirement for religiously particular practices seems ethically and practically unfeasible. That is, scientific work – especially in today's world – inherently requires cooperation between people with different fundamental beliefs, whether between or within various nations. To imagine that diverse scientists would either embrace Islamic mysticism or hold it as philosophically authoritative seems a particularly forlorn hope. On (2), the historical diversity of metaphysical systems grounded in whole, or part, on spiritual intuition seems a strong argument against the idea that a single ontological system could be verified in this way.<sup>45</sup> Just as any given metaphysical position, here the Akbarī system, is left undetermined by revelation, in the final analysis, the same appears true for whatever is shared by disparate cases of spiritual intuition. Assuming that all mystical practitioners experience the same transcendent truth – a point that would not be granted by all interlocutors – it does not follow that its conversion into language communicable to the non-adept will be uniform. There seems to be an inevitable gap between the private experience of spiritual truth and its shared transmission in the rational language used by science.



This differs from the case of a mathematical theorem, for instance, in which its statement in a common language is the precondition for it to become mathematical knowledge.<sup>46</sup>

Given these concerns, it seems that a dialectically appropriate critique of contemporary philosophy of science cannot be sustained from within the paradigm adopted by al-Attas and those sharing his metaphysical perspective. That is, the critique is only telling from within a group that has agreed on a shared set of hermeneutics for the ongoing interpretation of revelation and spiritual intuition, or structures of authority that have crystallised a set of inherited doctrines.<sup>47</sup> In order to reach beyond the confines of such a group, whether to other Muslims or to adherents of other religious and philosophical positions, an alternative is needed. Such a critique would need to fulfil two criteria. On the one hand, it would need to rationally emerge in a compelling way from publicly observable phenomena, in other words, from the sources of experience and reason sidelined by al-Attas as insufficiently transcendent. On the other, it would need to be compatible with the Islamic tradition, broadly construed. In the following two sections, I will argue that the work of Husserl is promising in both respects.

## 5. Husserl and the Crisis of European Sciences

Edmund Husserl was an extremely influential philosopher of the late nineteenth/early twentieth century. Born within the Austrian empire in what is today part of the Czech Republic, he was of Jewish origin but converted to Lutheran Protestantism in his late twenties. His studies were first in mathematics but later expanded to philosophy, leading to a vast and original body of work that remained largely unpublished in his lifetime. In academic positions at the German universities of Halle, Göttingen and Freiburg and continuing in his retirement, Husserl worked on philosophical questions in a wide range of fields, especially logic, epistemology, metaphysics and, most notably, phenomenology, which he founded.

A full discussion of the phenomenology developed in the works of Husserl obviously falls outside of the scope of this article.<sup>48</sup> In brief, the discipline is named after the phenomena that are given to consciousness. For Husserl, the only intelligible way that things in the world can appear is as possible or actual objects of consciousness. This means that all cognitive achievements are inherently “about” something; that is, they have intentionality.<sup>49</sup> Husserl takes this insight and develops it in a fascinating direction: he considers objects of consciousness in their phenomenality, bracketing the nature of their existence, though not denying it as a sceptic would.<sup>50</sup> This process, known as the phenomenological *epoché*, opens a new vantage point on familiar philosophical problems. It allows a given achievement of knowledge, for instance, Pythagoras’ theorem, to be considered as an ideal truth without declaring it as either a function of individual human psychology or as a Platonic entity.<sup>51</sup>

Husserl could be said to solve one problem only to pose another. To be consistent, one should not just place the realities of specific objects out of bounds, but to apply the procedure universally. Husserl here develops what he calls a phenomenological reduction in which objects become epistemic achievements of the reflecting philosopher’s consciousness.<sup>52</sup> Yet from this “transcendental turn”, solipsism beckons. Other people cannot remain as genuine autonomous consciousnesses if they have been reduced to intentional objects. Hence, Husserl introduces the notion of *intersubjectivity*: just as, from the

phenomenological perspective, another consciousness is an object of my ego, by analogy, I know that my consciousness is also an object of theirs. Thus, there is a shared community of minds who intersubjectively constitute the world as it appears in knowledge.<sup>53</sup>

What exactly does it mean metaphysically to constitute the world in this way? A full answer to this question, which requires a working out of the implications of Husserl's ideas at times beyond what he makes explicit in his texts, is not something that can be attempted here. What is certain, however, is that Husserl thinks that the only sense in which the world can be understood as meaningful for human beings has to take account of the intentionality, possible or actual, of intersubjective experience.<sup>54</sup> This is important because, on Husserl's view, any adequate account of science, whether mathematics derived by formal abstract methods, or the empirical investigation of the world in the physical sciences, must be grounded at the level of transcendental phenomenology.

Husserl's contribution to the present question of the critique of modern science is most apparent in his unfinished late work *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, usually just known as the *Crisis*. Published in part in 1936 just two years before Husserl's death, and later republished with additional sections from his manuscripts along with other relevant texts,<sup>55</sup> it represents a further extension of his ideas about intersubjectivity through the theme of the *lifeworld*. Husserl's concept of the lifeworld builds on the insight that, as human beings, we are "always already" in the world within a horizon of meaning.<sup>56</sup> In other words, the active and intentional achievements of the reflective philosopher are only possible due to the passive intersubjective constitution of the world. Yet the natural world is only revealed to us as the lifeworld when we adopt the phenomenological attitude.<sup>57</sup> Both the prospect and the ongoing challenge of Husserl's idea of the lifeworld is that it introduces history into his phenomenology. This allows Husserl to present his own genealogical analysis of what has gone wrong with modern philosophy and science.

Writing at the time of the rise of Nazism in Germany, from which he was subject to discrimination for his Jewish heritage, Husserl attacked the corruption of scientific knowledge in the West, seeing it as a shared European problem of which the Nazis were only the most egregious example. What had been lost was human life as an ongoing quest for intelligibility as expressed in the philosophical tradition inherited from Greek philosophy.<sup>58</sup> Instead, philosophy had been replaced with a series of intractable dualisms, especially that between mind and matter.<sup>59</sup> Husserl's diagnosis is in this respect like that of al-Attas who also speaks of dualisms within contemporary Western philosophy.<sup>60</sup> Yet Husserl, rather than taking this problem in contemporary European thought to derive from significant aspects of the Greek philosophical heritage, argues that it comes from failing to advance the latter's spirit. Additionally, Husserl identifies a teleology within history, the growing perfection of the rational expression of truth. This philosophical teleology can be contrasted with al-Attas' proposed revelation-based world view, which at least rhetorically is static in its perfection.<sup>61</sup>

Husserl eschews al-Attas' top-down metaphysical vision.<sup>62</sup> Instead, he derives his analysis bottom-up from the intellectual achievements of humanity. Husserl argues that originally, scientific knowledge (such as geometry, in a celebrated essay that is collected as a key part of the *Crisis* materials) starts as the achievements of human subjects who intersubjectively constitute certain idealisations about the lifeworld.<sup>63</sup> Over time, it becomes

possible for these to be transmitted, most importantly via writing, and they become sedimented, meaning that the idealisations become untethered from the initial lifeworld experiences.<sup>64</sup> To an extent, this is not necessarily problematic – it is merely how human society develops. But Husserl points out that from Galileo onwards in science and Descartes in philosophy, there is a more defined break, a move to abstract entirely away from the qualitative natures of things as they are experienced by human beings in the lifeworld, and a replacement of this by the quantitative sciences.<sup>65</sup> By the twentieth century, there is a near total separation, such that the ideal of science becomes an entirely abstract description of the world. For Husserl, this is incoherent and has resulted in the crisis in the philosophical foundations of mathematics, science, and even culture. Only by reclaiming the lifeworld and the phenomenological grounding of science is it possible to rescue the true purpose of philosophy as self-responsibility in the service of truth.<sup>66</sup>

## 6. Husserl's *Crisis* and Islam

In the context of the present article, the question of the Islamic compatibility of Husserl's argument is crucial. The first thing to be said is that adopting some measure of Husserl's critique in the philosophy of science hardly commits one to the full package of Husserlian philosophy. One may merely posit that Husserl cogently describes a way that the process of abstraction has taken science away from its grounding in the reality of human life. This could even be compatible with some of the metaphysical positions adopted by al-Attas. But I think the more interesting move here is to understand that Husserl's position is not just a critical argument but flows out of his own wider constructive philosophical project, one which, in key aspects, is at odds with al-Attas' conception of an Islamic philosophy of science and its underlying metaphysics.

Husserl, despite his personal deep religious convictions, placed his greatest emphasis on philosophy, rather than any kind of theology, within his work.<sup>67</sup> This partly reflects his own specialisation and the habits of his era in which theological speculations were no longer deemed within the proper remit of philosophy. Al-Attas would no doubt see this as a symptom of the rise of secularism, and there is some truth in that judgement. Nevertheless, Husserl did not see his philosophy as inimical to theistic religion and prominently invokes God in places, though he did not hold mainstream Christian theological views.<sup>68</sup> Most significantly, he did not take phenomenology (and more generally philosophy), and its rational teleology to conflict with revealed monotheistic tradition. In the "Vienna Essay", which is associated with the *Crisis*, he writes the following:

One more important thing must be mentioned concerning the comportment of philosophy toward the traditions. For there are two possibilities to be considered here. What is traditionally valid is either completely discarded, or its content is taken over philosophically and thereby formed anew in the spirit of philosophical ideality. An outstanding case of this is religion. From this I would exclude the "polytheistic religions." Gods in the plural, mythical powers of every sort, are objects of the surrounding world having the same reality as animals and men. In the concept of God the singular is essential. Proper to it, from the human standpoint, is the fact that God's ontic validity and his value-validity are experienced as an absolute internal bond. The next step here is the coalescence of this absoluteness with that of philosophical ideality. In the general process of idealization, which proceeds from philosophy, God is logicized, so to speak; indeed he becomes the bearer of the absolute *logos*.<sup>69</sup>

The compatibility between Husserlian phenomenology and theology is an ongoing subject of debate, especially in the literature of the “theological turn” within French scholarship.<sup>70</sup> It remains a significant area for future research, including in its extension to Islam, raising interesting questions that cannot be pursued here. For the present argument, the above quotation also highlights that Husserl thinks of humanity as undergoing a continuous development of thought and understanding, with one nation flowing into another. Yet he also singles out European civilisation as unique. Not because of any racial element – in opposition to the Nazis, he finds this idea absurd<sup>71</sup> – but solely due to what he sees as the epochal emergence of Western philosophy within Greece.<sup>72</sup> He sees this as initiating a new way of thinking, the development of philosophical questioning and abstract ideas opening up what he calls “infinite tasks”, which is the unlimited expansion of systematic science in its broadest philosophical sense.<sup>73</sup> Though some of his comments are at best misguided and at worst utterly unacceptable,<sup>74</sup> when one considers the *philosophical criteria* that he puts forward for membership in this scientific community, rather than who he thinks happens to qualify, it becomes possible to include the rational traditions of Islam, as well as that of other civilisations.<sup>75</sup> In so doing, I think it is possible to abandon the Eurocentrism of Husserl’s project, which reflect his own cultural biases, while retaining its more universalistic aspects.

I argue that such an expanded Husserlian phenomenology can present a shared philosophical vision that, insofar as it does not seek to answer questions that lie in the invisible world, such as about the divine nature and eschatology, is open to rational humanity at large. This, I contend, is exactly the common platform that a philosophy of science aiming to solve the malaise in contemporary globalised society needs to build. The scientific life of humanity transcends the particularities of the specific traditions, religious or otherwise, that it comprises. This is witnessed by the realities of shared modes of scientific inquiry and technology. The philosophical method that can reveal its true nature, the transcendental phenomenology of the intersubjective lifeworld, must, by the logic of Husserl’s own position transcend any particular nation, and be open to anyone who uses their intellect in the ongoing responsible discovery of truth. As such, I argue that it is a Husserlian analysis that provides a better platform for the critique of the damaging crisis of scientific knowledge in the contemporary age than an Attasian one.

## 7. Conclusion

I have raised one of the widest-ranging problems of our time. From one perspective, many of the moral and environmental crises in which we feel engulfed can be connected to the disconnect between ourselves and the technical solutions that have been made possible by the supercharging of our ability to abstract and idealise. This has been recognised by Islamic thinkers, such as al-Attas, who have proposed that the solution is to relocate our rational activity within a larger ontological system. I have not in this paper argued that such a metaphysical vision is invalid in and of itself, though I have made some critical observations about al-Attas’ project. Rather, I have argued that it is dialectically inappropriate for the task at hand. Interlocutors, whether within or without Islam, are unlikely to be convinced by appeals to the specific, and non-publicly verifiable, interpretations of revelation and spiritual intuition that such a “metaphysical critique” relies upon, even if they have sympathy for aspects of the diagnosis. I have, therefore,

introduced some of the philosophical ideas of the late-period Husserl, as presented in his *Crisis* and related texts, and suggested that they provide the starting point for a promising alternative account. Husserl's analysis appeals to observation and reason to uncover the philosophical root of the problems that undergird the contemporary world and may be possible to accept even if one does not adopt all of the phenomenological ideas from which they arise. Additionally, I have suggested that there are prospects for adapting Husserlian thought within an Islamic theological framework, but the very real questions that will inevitably be asked of that suggestion remain desiderata of future research.

## Notes

1. See Douglas Kellner, "New Technologies and Alienation: Some Critical Reflections," in *The Evolution of Alienation: Trauma, Promise, and the Millennium*, eds. Lauren Langman and Devorah Kalekin-Fishman (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 50
2. See Roger S. Gottlieb, *Morality and the Environmental Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 3–6.
3. See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man* (London: Unwin, 1968), 21–4; Wolfgang Smith, *Science and Myth: What We are Never Told* (San Rafael, CA: Sophia Perennis, 2010), 41–2.
4. Akbarī metaphysics is a philosophical elaboration of core ideas of the Andalusian Sufi Muḥyi al-Dīn b. al-ʿArabī (d. 1240), often called Ibn ʿArabī, particularly as articulated by his disciple Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 1274). It became extremely influential in later centuries, especially as synthesised within the Islamic theological tradition. See Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 237. Key elements of the system are summarised in the relevant section below.
5. See note 55.
6. Note that the *Prolegomena* contains as its third chapter a previous work on the philosophy of science: *Islām and the Philosophy of Science* (1989), itself an elaboration of *The Positive Aspects of Taṣawwuf: Preliminary Thoughts on an Islamic Philosophy of Science* (1981). See Setia, "Al-Attas' Philosophy of Science: An Extended Outline," *Islam and Science* 1, no. 2 (2003): 169, n. 1–3.
7. Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām: An Exposition of the Fundamental Elements of the Worldview of Islām* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation, 1995), 85.
8. Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*, 115.
9. This was an atheist and materialist tendency of thought, which became the target of the early Muslim theological tradition. See Patricia Crone, "Excursus II: Ungodly Cosmologies," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 119–21.
10. See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 95–9.
11. Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*, 86. Thomas Bauer remarks that the ambiguities that characterised the premodern Islamic intellectual world were the natural habitat of the jurists not the theologians, which contributed to the former's leading social role. On the other hand, he suggests that theologians upheld a limited number of certain beliefs. Thomas Bauer, *A Culture of Ambiguity: An Alternative History of Islam*, trans. Hinrich Bieserfeldt and Tricia Tunstall (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), 265. In the present article, I suggest that al-Attas struggles to establish the degree of certainty (within the sphere of public knowledge) that he claims for his chosen ontological system. For an analysis of the philosophical dynamics within the Western tradition in the shift from the ideal of certainty to a probabilistic conception of knowledge, see Robert Pasnau, *After*

- Certainty: A History of Our Epistemic Ideals and Illusions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 21–45.
12. Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*, 38.
  13. This is an inference from certain comments, including those relating to language: “In the languages of Muslim peoples, including Arabic, there is a basic vocabulary consisting of key terms which govern the interpretation of the Islamic vision of reality and truth, and which project the worldview of Islām in correct perspective. Because the words that comprise this basic vocabulary have their origins in the Holy Qur’ān these words are naturally in Arabic, and are deployed uniformly in all Muslim languages, reflecting the intellectual and spiritual unity of the Muslims throughout the world.” Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*, 29–30. Again: “Many key terms in the Islamic base vocabulary of the languages of Muslim peoples have now been displaced and made to serve absurdly in alien fields of meaning in a kind of regression towards non-Islamic worldviews; a phenomenon which I call the *deislamization* of language. Ignorance and confusion, making possible the infusion of alien concepts, have also let loose the forces of narrow national sentiment and ideologization of ethnic and cultural traditions.” Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*, 31.
  14. Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*, 15.
  15. He also acknowledges the additional sense in which Islam is understood as the primordial religion of all prior prophets. See al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*, 9–11.
  16. Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*, 4.
  17. Setia, “Al-Attas’ Philosophy of Science,” 193–4.
  18. For clarification of the history of this term, which was not used by Ibn ‘Arabī, see William Chittick, “Waḥdat al-Shuhūd,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, [http://doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_SIM\\_7819](http://doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_7819).
  19. Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*, 268–9.
  20. Al-Attas essentially takes up the idea of the gradation of existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*), the idea developed by Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037) that the existence of all things has fundamentally the same meaning but differs in its degrees of determination. See Laura Hassan, *Ash‘arism Encounters Avicennism: Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī on Creation* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2020), 62. Also, seeking to bridge the gap between eternal God and changing world, al-Attas adopts a characteristic of the *kalām* theory of *aḥwāl* (modes): a state or manner of being outside the common binary between existence (*wujūd*) and non-existence (*‘adam*). The idea of *aḥwāl* was introduced by the Mu‘tazilī Abū Hāshim (d. 933) with the intention of speaking about divine attributes within the ontology of divine simplicity. It was later adapted for different theological purposes by some Ash‘arīs, such as Abū Ma‘ālī al-Juwaynī (d. 1085). See Jan Thiele, “Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā’ī’s Theory of ‘States’ (*aḥwāl*) and its Adaption by Ash‘arite Theologians,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke, 371–2, 380–81.
  21. Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*, 274–5.
  22. Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*, 277–8.
  23. Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*, 13–14, 140.
  24. Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*, 118.
  25. Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*, 127.
  26. Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*, 127–8. An interesting feature of al-Attas’ account when compared to Husserl is his reduction of essence to existence, whereas Husserl does exactly the opposite, seeing the existence of anything – in one sense – as the particularisation of its essence. See Edmund Husserl, *Ideas I*, trans. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2014), 11.
  27. Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*, 118.
  28. For example, the Mu‘tazilī Abū al-Hudhayl (d. c. 841), uses the same Qur’ānic vocabulary mentioned by al-Attas but builds a distinct ontological picture in which certain types of accidents can persist in existence, and in which there is no intermediate state between existence



- and non-existence. See Richard M. Frank, *The Metaphysics of Created Being according to Abū l-Hudhayl al-'Allāf: A Philosophical Study of the Earliest Kalām* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1966), 42–6.
29. For an assessment of the claim that the doctrines espoused in *kalām* are ultimately justified on rational grounds, see Richard M. Frank, “The Science of *Kalām*,” in *Islamic Theological Discourses and the Legacy of Kalām: Gestation, Movements and Controversies, Volume 1*, ed. Mustafa Shah (Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2020), 228–9, 232, 234–5.
  30. Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*, 119.
  31. Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*, 119–20.
  32. Nuh Ha Mim Keller, *Evolution Theory & Islam (Letter to Suleman Ali)* (Cambridge: Muslim Academic Trust, 1999), 11. Keller reprinted his essay on evolution theory in his *Sea Without Shore* (2011) but removed this passage and a prior one recording the remarks of “one of the ulama of *taṣawwuf* in Damascus” on which he comments. Nuh Ha Mim Keller, *Sea Without Shore: A Manual of the Sufi Path* (Amman: Sunna Books, 2011), 361. It is not clear why it was deleted and may reflect the editorial intention to avoid digression into quoted material rather than a retraction of his position. Hence, I will assume Keller retains the quoted view while acknowledging the opposite possibility. In any case, the passage has already proven influential, including on the ideas of Setia.
  33. Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*, 124.
  34. Abū Ḥafṣ al-Nasafī was a scholar based in Samarqand from the Transoxianan Sunnī tradition of Ḥanafī Māturīdīs. Among his extant books is a work of Qur’ānic exegesis and a biographical dictionary of scholars from his city, though he is most famous for his creed.
  35. Setia, “Al-Attas’ Philosophy of Science,” 188–9.
  36. Setia, “Al-Attas’ Philosophy of Science,” 203.
  37. Setia, “Al-Attas’ Philosophy of Science,” 203–4.
  38. Al-Nasafī, Abū Ḥafṣ, “Matn al-‘aqīda al-Nasafīyya”, in *Thamāniya mutūn fī al-‘aqīda wa-l-tawḥīd* (Amman: RISSC, 2013), 52.
  39. Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*, 124. He also uses *wijdān* to refer specifically to the higher intuition of existence that conforms to his ontological system: “So when we refer above to an aspect of that by which a thing is what it is as its ‘being-existent’, the ‘being-existent’ of a thing should not be interpreted as denoting something existing merely actually or currently in the external world; but as denoting also that category of existence in the interior condition of the reality of existence that is continually unfolding itself in gradations becoming the things that we see and behold.” Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*, 132.
  40. He studied a Malay version of the text and translated it into English, see Attas, *The Oldest Known Malay Manuscript: A 16th Century Malay Translation of the ‘Aqā'id of al-Nasafī* (Kuala Lumpur: Department of Publications, University of Malaya, 1988), 66–7.
  41. Sa’d al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī was a highly respected postclassical scholar from Transoxiana who was recognised for his mastery of the various Islamic rational disciplines. He is acknowledged as a significant “verifier” (*muḥaqqiq*) of the prior tradition, and in theology is known for his openness to the views of both the Māturīdī and Ash‘arī schools. His most famous work is his commentary on al-Nasafī’s creed.
  42. Sa’d al-Dīn Al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-‘aqīda al-Nasafīyya*, ed. Muṣṭafā Marzūqī (Ain M’lila: Dār al-Hudā, 1998), 25. That the creed of al-Nasafī, with commentary by al-Taftāzānī, is famously taken as an authoritative expression of Sunnī belief can be shown by the large number of glosses upon the commentary in the postclassical period, going all the way up to the beginning of the twentieth century. Such commentarial activity is not typically designed to conflict with the base creed, but rather provides additional clarification and nuance, as shown by al-Taftāzānī’s quoted words. Authors writing in this commentary tradition continued to reject the role of spiritual intuition as a source of public knowledge as can be seen from the gloss of Ḥasan b. al-Sayyid al-Ḷūrī (d. 1904). He makes two comments that are relevant for the present discussion: first, he provides a caveat to al-Taftāzānī’s statement that “there is no doubt that knowledge is realised by it” with the words, “for the person specifically receiving spiritual intuition”; second, he mentions that “knowledge is realised for



- most people” through the spiritual intuition of the Prophet. Neither point supports the general case for spiritual intuition as public knowledge. See Ḥasan b. al-Sayyid al-Çūrī, *Hāshiyat al-Çūrī ‘ālā sharḥ al-‘aqā’id* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2017), 35, n. 5–6. For illustration of the centrality of al-Taftāzānī’s commentary on al-Nasafī’s creed in madrasa curricula till the end of the nineteenth century, see Asad Q. Ahmed and Reza Pourjavady, “Theology in the Indian Subcontinent,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke, 614; Danielle Ross, “Islamic Education for All: Technological Change, Popular Literacy and the Transformation of the Volga-Ural Madrasa, 1650s–1910s,” in *Sharī’a in the Russian Empire: The Reach and Limits of Islamic Law in Central Eurasia, 1550–1917*, eds. Paolo Sartori and Danielle Ross (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 43, 53–4.
43. Abū al-Yusr al-Bazdawī (d. 1099) puts the point especially clearly: “As for gaining knowledge by spiritual intuition, it is possible. But one who claims to have this knowledge lacks decisive proof. If someone says: God Most High has inspired in my heart that this thing is permissible, it is said to them: you are lying in what you say – and there is no evidence to show the truth of their claim. The same is the case for the person who says that God Most High inspired them that it is impermissible. So, neither of them has evidence to prefer their position over that of the other, which leads to dispute between them and ultimately corruption.” See Abū al-Yusr al-Bazdawī, “Uṣūl al-dīn,” in Hans Peter Linss, *Probleme der islamischen Dogmatik: Das Kitāb uṣūl ad-dīn des Abū ‘l-Yusr Muḥammad al-Bazdawī* (Essen: Thales Verlag, 1991), 8. Note that the translation accords with the present author’s forthcoming critical edition of this text, which differs from Linss’ edition in minor ways that do not affect the meaning here. The same position is found in the theological summa of Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 944) and in that of the school’s most influential classical exponent, Abū al-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī (d. 1114). See Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, eds. Bekir Topaloğlu and Muḥammad Aruçi, 2nd edn (Istanbul: Maktabat al-Irshād, 2010), 69; Abū al-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī, *Tabṣīrat al-adilla*, ed. Claude Salamé (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1990), vol. 1, 22–3. Both al-Bazdawī and Abū al-Mu‘īn were teachers of Abū Ḥafṣ al-Nasafī.
  44. See, for instance, Lloyd Ridgeon, *Persian Metaphysics and Mysticism: Selected Treatises of ‘Azīz Nasafī* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 21.
  45. See Christopher Dawson, *Enquiries into Religion and Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 159–61.
  46. See the discussion of the role of language, and specifically writing, in Husserl’s treatment of the origin and development of the science of geometry, mentioned in the next section. For similar reasons, Islamic theologians assert the truth of the Prophet Muḥammad’s message based on his publicly observable miracles, such as the inimitability of the Qur’an, or his splitting the moon, rather than his personal claim to revelation or his asserted spiritual intuition that he is truly God’s messenger. See Abū al-Yusr al-Bazdawī, “Uṣūl al-dīn,” 97–9.
  47. Though a proper assessment is not possible within the confines of this article, a related tendency can be seen in the Tabah Foundation’s Classification of the Sciences Project. In the two texts that have been published at the time of writing, focusing on epistemic first principles and the correspondence theory of truth respectively, an Akbarī ontological system ultimately known by spiritual intuition seems to have considerable primacy. See Karim Lahham, *The Anatomy of Knowledge and the Ontological Necessity of First Principles* (Abu Dhabi: Tabah Foundation, 2021), 6–7, 74–6; Hasan Spiker, *Things as They Are: Nafs al-Amr and the Metaphysical Foundations of Objective Truth* (Abu Dhabi: Tabah Foundation, 2022), xv, 12–13, 129, 135. Insofar as these treatments rely on spiritual intuition to ground reason, which seems at least partly to be the case, they are liable to the concerns raised in this article.
  48. For an accessible summary, see Dan Zahavi, *Husserl’s Phenomenology* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002). An excellent philosophical introduction to Husserl’s underlying ideas can be found in Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

49. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas I*, 62–3.
50. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas I*, 52–6; Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993), 19–20.
51. Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations, Volume 1*, trans. J. N. Findlay (London: Routledge, 2001), 248–50; Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*, trans. James S. Churchill and Karl Ameriks (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 327–30. For a good explanation of Husserl’s position in contemporary philosophical language, see Nicola Spinelli, “Husserlian Intentionality and Contingent Universals,” *Argumenta* 2, no. 2 (2017): 313–7.
52. Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 67–9.
53. He calls this a community of monads, repurposing a term from Leibniz. See Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 108–111, 120–31.
54. See Paul Ricoeur, *Husserl: An Analysis of his Phenomenology*, trans. Edward G. Ballard and Lester E. Embree (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1967), 120.
55. Several important treatises, most notably “The Vienna lecture” and “The Origin of Geometry”, as well as manuscript pages, were published together with the *Crisis* in Walter Biemel’s German edition of the *Husserliana* (Band VI). The translator of the *Crisis*, David Carr, made some slight adjustments to the presentation of the supplementary texts and was selective in which of the less important materials to include in his edition. See Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), xx–xxi.
56. Edmund Husserl, *Crisis*, 144–6. See James Dodd, *Crisis and Reflection: An Essay on Husserl’s Crisis of the European Sciences* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004), 152.
57. Edmund Husserl, *Crisis*, 156.
58. Edmund Husserl, *Crisis*, 15–6.
59. See Edmund Husserl, *Crisis*, 60–3.
60. Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*, 86.
61. In some respects, the reality of al-Attas’ philosophical position seems less starkly opposed to historical development, given his preference for interpreting key Qur’anic terms through postclassical philosophical Sufism.
62. Husserl ultimately removes metaphysics, in the sense of the clarification of the nature of being, from the level of the *a priori*, which is occupied by transcendental phenomenology. Instead, it is the disciplines of empirical *a posteriori* science, once properly understood from the phenomenological vantage point, that provide metaphysical results by dealing with the world of facts. The reason for this is that Husserl’s idea of transcendental constitution rejects as incoherent the idea of a noumenal metaphysics lying behind possible phenomena. See Emiliano Trizio, *Philosophy’s Nature: Husserl’s Phenomenology, Natural Science, and Metaphysics* (Abingdon, Routledge: 2021), 83–5. Also see Edmund Husserl, *First Philosophy: Lectures 1923/24 and Related Texts from the Manuscripts (1920-1925)*, trans. Sebastian Luft and Thane M. Naberhaus (Dordrecht: Springer, 2019), 189–90.
63. Edmund Husserl, *Crisis*, 355–7.
64. Edmund Husserl, *Crisis*, 360–3.
65. Edmund Husserl, *Crisis*, 48–50, 61–2. See Dodd, *Crisis and Reflection*, 102–4.
66. Edmund Husserl, *Crisis*, 294–9.
67. See Edmund Husserl, *Crisis*, 16–8.
68. See Emiliano Trizio, “Phenomenology, Teleology, and Theology,” in *The Husserlian Mind*, ed. Hanne Jacobs (London: Routledge, 2022), 528–9.
69. Edmund Husserl, *Crisis*, 288.
70. See Janicaud, Dominique, Jean-François Courtine, Jean-Louis Chrétien, Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Henry, Paul Ricoeur. *Phenomenology and the “Theological Turn”: The French Debate* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000).
71. He writes, in obvious rejection of the race science of the 1930s that “there is, for essential reasons, no zoology of peoples”. Husserl, *Crisis*, 275. See Dermot Moran, *Husserl’s Crisis*

of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: *An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 135–7.

72. Edmund Husserl, *Crisis*, 273.
73. Edmund Husserl, *Crisis*, 273–4.
74. Particularly egregious are his words in the “Vienna Lecture” excluding from “spiritual Europe” the following groups: “Eskimos or Indians presented as curiosities at fairs, or the Gypsies, who constantly wander about Europe.” Edmund Husserl, *Crisis*, 273. It must be clarified that these comments relate to his contention that such itinerant people are not properly part of the “spiritual”, i.e. cultural and intellectual, life of Europe, though remaining on its soil. He contrasts this with, for instance, citizens of the United States who are to be included in “spiritual Europe”, again for cultural reasons.
75. Husserl writes: “only in the Greeks do we have a universal (“cosmological”) life-interest in the essentially new form of a purely “theoretical” attitude, and this as a communal form in which this interest works itself out for internal reasons, being the corresponding, essentially new [community] of philosophers, of scientists (mathematicians, astronomers, etc.).” Husserl, *Crisis*, 280. He contrasts this with, as he sees it, the “vocational” (rather than purely theoretical) attitude of “Indian, Chinese, and similar ‘philosophies’”, ignoring the question of Islamic thought entirely. I suggest that this judgement is a mistake based on Husserl’s unfamiliarity with diverse civilisations, and that such a theoretical attitude is overwhelmingly present in the Islamic tradition.

## Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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