PHENOMENOLOGY, HISTORICAL A PRIORI AND THE QUASI-TRANSCENDENTAL: MAPPING THE COMPLEXITY OF WHAT IS UNFOLDING

FENOMENOLOGIJA, ISTORIJSKI A PRIORI I KVAZITRANSCENDENTALNO: MAPIRANJE SLOŽENOSTI ONOGA ŠTO SE ODVIJA

UDK: 165.62
165.171
DOI https://doi.org/10.2298/FID2603407C
Original Scientific Article
Received: 04.09.2026. Accepted: 18.09.2026.

PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIETY
VOL. 37, NO. 3, 405–700

To cite text:
Caminada, Emanuele, and Olga Nikolić Marić. 2026. "Historical A Priori and the Quasi-Transcendental: Mapping the Complexity of What Is Unfolding." *Philosophy and Society* 37 (3): 407–420.

Emanuele Caminada, Olga Nikolić Marić

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

Historical A Priori and the Quasi-Transcendental: Mapping the Complexity of What Is Unfolding

ABSTRACT
The introduction situates the special issue within contemporary debates on the transformation of transcendental philosophy, by examining the historical a priori and the quasi-transcendental as two related attempts to rethink the transcendental question under conditions of historicity. It begins by outlining the problem of how transcendental conditions of possibility can be understood once they are recognized as historically constituted, socially mediated, and open to transformation. It then examines the notion of the historical a priori through the relation between Husserl and Foucault, focusing on their different accounts of historicity, subjectivity, validity, and critique. The following section turns to the quasi-transcendental, particularly in Derrida and its contemporary phenomenological reception, presenting it as a related attempt to rethink constitutive conditions without setting them as timeless foundations. The authors subsequently consider the implications of both notions for questions of history, normativity, critique, and freedom, arguing that they illuminate the tension between constitutive force and historical contingency. In this context, critique is understood as an interrogation of historically sedimented conditions that shape experience without ever fully determining it, while freedom is conceived as the possibility of reflecting upon and transforming these very structures. Finally, the editors introduce the contributions to the special issue, highlighting the different ways in which they address the relation between transcendental inquiry and historicity.

KEYWORDS
historical a priori; quasi-transcendental; phenomenology; transcendental philosophy; critique

From the Transcendental to Its Historicization

The transcendental tradition has long been concerned with the conditions that make experience, knowledge, and meaning possible. From Kant onwards, transcendental philosophy sought to identify structures that could account for the possibility of objective validity and shared experience. Yet during the nineteenth

Emanuele Caminada: Husserl Archives, KU Leuven, email: emanuele.caminada@kuleuven.be
Olga Nikolić Marić: Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, University of Belgrade, email: olga.nikolic@ifdt.bg.ac.rs

CC BY NC ND

and twentieth centuries, the apparent stability of these conditions became increasingly difficult to maintain. Hegel emphasized the historical development of reason itself; Husserl investigated the sedimentation of meaning within traditions and lifeworlds; Foucault exposed the historical contingency of orders of knowledge; and Derrida questioned the possibility of any pure distinction between transcendental conditions and empirical reality.

The present special issue originates from a simple but far-reaching question. If contemporary phenomenology has largely accepted the historicity and sociality of subjectivity, what becomes of the transcendental project itself? Can phenomenology still speak of conditions of possibility once these conditions are recognized as historically generated, culturally sedimented, and socially mediated? Or must transcendental inquiry yield to analyses focused on discourse, practices, institutions, and relations of power? The call for papers invited contributors to address these questions through two notions that have acquired increasing prominence in recent debates: the historical a priori and the quasi-transcendental. Although emerging from different albeit related philosophical contexts, both concepts seek to articulate a common insight: that the structures through which experience, knowledge, and social life become intelligible are neither timeless foundations nor merely empirical facts. Rather, they are historically instituted formations that shape our experience while remaining open to transformation. The contributions collected in this issue explore the conceptual and critical consequences of this insight from a variety of perspectives.

The concepts of the historical a priori and the quasi-transcendental can therefore be understood as responses to a shared problem. Both seek to preserve the constitutive dimension of transcendental inquiry while acknowledging the irreducible historicity of human existence. Both attempt, in different ways, to rethink the relation between necessity and contingency, between structure and event, between critique and history.

The subtitle "Mapping the complexity of what is unfolding" introduces a theme that is broader than the historical a priori and the quasi-transcendental themselves. It concerns our historical self-situation. The issue is not merely that historical formations structure experience, but that we may ourselves inhabit a period of transformation whose contours are not yet fully intelligible. That gives the whole volume its contemporary relevance.

The subtitle also reflects a characteristic phenomenological insight. Historical transformations are rarely experienced as completed wholes. We encounter them from within, as participants rather than external observers. The patterns that later appear as coherent historical formations often first emerge as fragmented experiences, conflicts of interpretation, shifts in practices, and changing horizons of possibility. To reflect on the historical a priori or the quasi-transcendental is therefore not only to investigate the constituted structures of past worlds, but also to seek concepts capable of illuminating the incomplete and often ambiguous processes through which new forms of life are currently taking shape. The task of critical reflection is therefore not only to

reconstruct established historical formations but also to accompany their ongoing reconfiguration, describing the tensions, possibilities, and emerging orders that shape the present before they have fully crystallized into recognizable historical realities.

For sure, the aim of the present special issue is not to settle these questions once and for all. Rather, it seeks to open a space of dialogue around a set of concepts and problems whose significance has become increasingly apparent across phenomenology, critical theory, and the human sciences. By bringing into conversation debates surrounding the historical a priori and the quasi-transcendental, we hope less to provide definitive answers than to establish a framework within which their philosophical stakes can be more clearly articulated and further explored.

The Historical A Priori: Between Husserl and Foucault

One of the most striking results of recent scholarship is the recognition that Husserl and Foucault may have more in common than traditional narratives suggest. The notion of the historical a priori offers a privileged point from which to reassess their relation.

As Wouter Goris has argued, the decisive distinction in Husserl's later work is not between the historical and the transcendental, but between the objective a priori of the sciences and the historical a priori of the lifeworld. What Husserl seeks to uncover is not a set of timeless logical forms detached from history, but the historically sedimented framework within which meaning, evidence, and validity become possible. The historical a priori is therefore neither a mere empirical fact nor an eternal structure.

The notion of a historical a priori emerges precisely from the attempt to overcome the opposition between historical contingency and transcendental necessity. In his reconstruction of Husserl's late thought, Wouter Goris argues that the historical a priori should not be understood as a mere accumulation of historical facts, but rather as the outcome of a "systematic production of differentiated evidences" (Goris 2012: 305). Historical formations become sedimented through processes of meaning-constitution and come to function as relatively stable frameworks within which further experiences, practices, and forms of knowledge become possible. The historical a priori thus designates neither an eternal structure nor a factual event, but a historically instituted field of evidence that acquires the normative force for a given lifeworld. According to Goris, Husserl's concept of the historical a priori is intended to overcome the opposition between an ahistorical epistemology and a historicism devoid of invariant structures. The historical a priori thus refers to historically constituted invariants: formations of meaning that arise through historical processes yet continue to function as conditions of intelligibility and as structuring forces within a tradition. Both tendencies, ahistoric epistemology and historicist relativism are, in Goris's interpretation of Husserl, the result of unresolved tensions in the understanding of positivistic history.

This perspective resonates with interpretations offered by Andreea Smaranda Aldea and Amy Allen (2016), who emphasize that both Husserlian genealogy and Foucauldian archaeology reveal the contingency of structures that nevertheless shape our experience. Historical formations are constitutive of our world while remaining contingent in their genesis. They are necessary for us, but not necessary in themselves. We become aware of them when, in times of change or crisis, new orders unfold and thus we can make the experience that there is something like an 'order', a structuring pattern of our experience and thought. What comes to experience is that there is an order according to which a culture lives, judges, and understands itself. This order appears neither natural nor necessary but as historically constituted and contingent, thus prompting a critical interrogation of its claim to validity. At the same time, such an order is not a homogeneous totality. It is differentiated and positional: actors occupy distinct locations within it, and these locations condition what they can experience, perceive, say, and do. Consequently, the historical order reveals itself not merely as a shared framework of meaning, but also as a field structured by asymmetries of access, agency, and possibility.

Foucault radicalizes this insight by relocating the analysis of conditions of possibility from consciousness to discourse. Historical a prioris no longer denote structures recoverable through transcendental reflection, but rather the historically variable rules governing what can appear as sayable, visible, and thinkable within a given epoch. Foucault therefore shifts analysis from the axis consciousness-knowledge-science to the axis discursive practice-knowledge-science. Foucault's historical a priori is conceived as the set of the conditions for what can be said, rather than the conditions of validity of judgments.

Despite this decisive displacement, both Husserl and Foucault share a critical ambition. In both cases, the task is to render visible what functions as self-evident, to expose the historical constitution of what appears natural, and thereby to open a space for reflection. Their disagreement concerns the status of subjectivity, truth and normativity. Whereas Husserl ultimately appeals to transcendental subjectivity as the site where evidence and validity can be renewed, Foucault insists on the anonymity and dispersion of discursive practices. For him, the crisis of modernity derives precisely from the persistent attempt to ground critique in the figure of a constituting subject.

As Goris emphasizes, Foucault's archaeology is "far from seeking to reactivate the historical a prioris of past discourses." Rather, the description of such historical a prioris serves an investigation of our own archive, one directed not toward the determination of our identity through the play of differences, but toward a definitive renunciation of all anthropological constants (Goris 2012: 328). On this reading, Foucault preserves the critical thrust of genealogy but abandons its therapeutic dimension, if by "therapy" we understand with Goris the Husserlian project of reactivating sedimented meanings. To borrow Hans Joas's distinction, Foucault's genealogy is primarily negative rather than *affirmative*: its aim is not to recover forgotten sources of validity but to expose the contingency of what appears necessary. Husserl and Foucault thus share a

commitment to revealing the historicity of the orders within which experience unfolds. Yet they diverge significantly regarding the question of validity. Husserl seeks a renewed grounding of validity through transcendental subjectivity and lived evidence. Foucault, by contrast, deliberately remains within what he calls an "anonymous transcendental field," refusing to appeal to either a constituting transcendental subject or a collective subject as the ultimate source of meaning (Foucault 1969: 83-84).

This methodological move, due in part to the influence of Hyppolite, allows Foucault to avoid subjectivist assumptions and opens the way for genuinely structural analyses. At the same time, it raises the question of whether the possibility of an opening or renewal of meaning has thereby been curtailed. Indeed, as Foucault famously puts it, the various modalities of enunciation, rather than referring back to the synthesis or unifying function of a subject, reveal the subject's very dispersion: "Dans l'analyse proposée, les diverses modalités d'énonciation, au lieu de renvoyer à la synthèse ou à la fonction unifiante d'un sujet, manifestent sa dispersion." (Foucault 1969: 74, quoted in Goris 2012: 330). In place of a constituting consciousness, archaeology uncovers a field of practices, positions, and relations within which subjects themselves are historically formed and transformed. Foucault's position can be situated in the wake of Hyppolite's notion of the transcendental field and Merleau-Ponty's account of the subject as a "field of fields." Prior to functioning as a constituting subject, the subject is itself constituted and instituted by the historical and social field in which it is embedded.

Foucault's notion of the historical a priori marks a decisive shift away from both transcendental subjectivism and essentialism. Rather than following the axis of consciousness, knowledge, and science, archaeology investigates the relation between discursive practices, forms of knowledge, and the sciences. In this framework, the subject no longer appears as the origin of constitution, whether as transcendental ego or empirical consciousness, but as situated within historically specific practices. While Foucault does not deny the possibility of transforming discourse, he rejects the idea that such transformation falls under the sovereign agency of a constituting subject. Discursive orders are constituted through practices rather than mental acts. For this reason, the crisis diagnosed by contemporary thought is not rooted in a neglect of subjectivity, as Husserl maintained, but rather in the enduring primacy accorded to the subject, origin, and transcendental reflection at the expense of analysing concrete practices. As Goris observes, the Husserlian project of reactivating sedimented meaning appears to Foucault not as a remedy for the crisis but as one of its symptoms; accordingly, their respective concepts of the historical a priori diverge.

This divergence also illuminates an important difference between classical and contemporary phenomenology. Whereas Husserl's critical project remains tied to questions of evidence, rational self-responsibility, and the justification of norms, many contemporary phenomenologists have drawn on Foucault's analyses of power and normativity to investigate how social orders shape lived

experience. Critical phenomenology focuses less on grounding norms than on exposing the mechanisms through which forms of normality are produced, maintained, and contested. Social norms are understood as historically situated frameworks that both enable and constrain action, perception, and self-understanding. Yet this development should not be construed as a simple abandonment of classical phenomenology: rather, it reinterprets phenomenological analyses of embodiment, habituation, and lifeworld constitution in order to describe how structures of exclusion and marginalisation are lived from the first-person perspective. The resulting tension between Husserl's concern with validity and optimality and Foucault's emphasis on power, contingency, and normalization remains one of the defining fault lines of contemporary phenomenological debates.

The Quasi-Transcendental and the Transformation of Transcendental Philosophy

A parallel development can be observed in the emergence of the notion of the quasi-transcendental. If the historical a priori became a central concept in historical epistemology, the quasi-transcendental has increasingly acquired a similar function in contemporary phenomenology and post-phenomenological thought. The term is most closely associated with Derrida. As Andrea Hurst notes, quasi-transcendental structures function as conditions of possibility while simultaneously resisting the status of absolute foundations (Hurst 2025). The phenomena we constitute could always be constituted otherwise; consequently, the boundaries and distinctions that make meaning possible also prevent the constituted phenomenon from attaining a fully stable or essential identity. The quasi-transcendental therefore occupies an unstable position between the empirical and the transcendental. It neither abandons transcendental inquiry nor accepts the classical model of immutable conditions. Rather, it shows that constitutive conditions are themselves exposed to historical transformation, reinterpretation, and displacement.

This point is captured by Geoffrey Bennington's characterization, discussed by Richard Rorty, according to which quasi-transcendentality acknowledges both the necessity and the impossibility of a strictly transcendental standpoint (Rorty 1995). Philosophical reflection cannot simply dispense with questions concerning the conditions of possibility, yet it can no longer appeal to foundations untouched by history, language, and difference. On Rorty's reading, Derrida continues to speak as if transcendental inquiry remains unavoidable, while refusing to derive from it any positive or definitive foundation. The resulting argument remains powerful against scepticism, but abstains from grounding an alternative metaphysical standpoint.

In a particularly suggestive remark, Rorty proposes that future historians of philosophy may well view the twentieth-century disputes among phenomenology, historical epistemology, pragmatism, Habermasian critical theory, and deconstruction not as conflicts between fundamentally opposed paradigms, but

as internal debates within a broader intellectual movement. From this perspective, the notions of the historical a priori and the quasi-transcendental can be understood as parallel attempts to reformulate the transcendental question after the collapse of the opposition between universal form and historical contingency. Both Foucault's archaeology and Derrida's deconstruction seek, in different ways, to transform transcendental philosophy rather than simply abandon it.

Contemporary phenomenology has increasingly mobilized the notion of the quasi-transcendental in precisely this spirit. As Lisa Guenther's critical phenomenology illustrates, the constitutive conditions of experience are understood as historically sedimented and socially mediated structures that shape possibilities for action, recognition, and critique (2021). Such conditions are neither merely empirical facts nor universal transcendental structures; they are constitutive while remaining contingent and transformable. The growing success of the term "quasi-transcendental" may therefore be compared to the earlier role played by the "historical a priori" within historical epistemology. In both cases, concepts whose meanings remain contested have acquired remarkable explanatory power because they enable philosophers to articulate the historical and social determination of experience without entirely relinquishing the transcendental question.

The present special issue starts from this observation. Rather than treating the historical a priori and the quasi-transcendental as isolated concepts belonging respectively to Foucault and Derrida, it proposes to read them as two related ways of thematizing the historical and social constitution of experience, language, and knowledge. Their conceptual proximity should not obscure their differences, but it invites a renewed examination of the transformations that the transcendental problematic has undergone in contemporary phenomenology and critical theory.

History, Critique, and Freedom

What is ultimately at stake in both notions is not only a theoretical problem but also a practical and political one. The question concerns the possibility of critique and, moreover, of the sources of its validity.

If our experience is structured by historically instituted frameworks, can these frameworks be transformed? If social norms, institutions, discourses, and symbolic orders condition our perception of the world, how can they become objects of criticism?

The appeal of both the historical a priori and the quasi-transcendental lies precisely in their ability to hold together two insights that are often treated as incompatible. On the one hand, human experience is never immediate but always structured by inherited forms of meaning (what in contemporary phenomenology is emphasized as generative phenomena). On the other hand, these structures are contingent and therefore open to revision.

This tension is particularly visible in contemporary critical phenomenology. Analyses such as those advanced by Lisa Guenther explore how historically

constituted norms shape lived experience while remaining susceptible to contestation and transformation. The task of critique is therefore neither to uncover timeless foundations nor merely to describe empirical realities. Rather, it is to interrogate those historically sedimented conditions that govern what can be experienced, recognized, and enacted. In this sense, both the historical a priori and the quasi-transcendental point toward a conception of freedom that is neither absolute spontaneity nor mere adaptation to given circumstances. Freedom becomes possible precisely through reflection upon those historically instituted structures that constitute our world while never exhausting its possibilities.

The leading hypothesis of this special issue is that the notions of the historical a priori and the quasi-transcendental are best understood not in isolation but as two interconnected attempts to rethink the transcendental question under historical conditions. By tracing contemporary debates on the quasi-transcendental back to the controversies surrounding the historical a priori and their common phenomenological background, it becomes possible to gain a more comprehensive view of the problems at stake and to better appreciate the divergent solutions proposed by different authors. The relevance of this perspective is particularly evident in the domain of normativity, where these approaches offer markedly different accounts of how critique, validity, and social transformation are to be understood.

Moreover, bringing into dialogue debates from different periods concerning concepts that perform analogous theoretical functions makes it possible to enrich contemporary discussions with valuable insights into their philosophical significance. Such a comparative perspective helps to clarify what is truly at stake in these notions and to assess the different tasks they are called upon to perform. At the same time, it remains essential to understand each concept within the specific conceptual field in which it emerges, since its position within that field largely determines its purpose, scope, and meaning.

The success of philosophical concepts is not necessarily proportional to their clarity. On the contrary, some terms gain currency precisely because they condense a complex set of problems into a striking and suggestive formula. Detached from the systematic contexts in which they originally emerged, they often undergo significant shifts in meaning, becoming available for new theoretical tasks and intellectual constellations. Such developments can be philosophically productive, but they also require careful scrutiny. This is particularly true of the notions of the historical a priori and the quasi-transcendental. Both owe part of their appeal to the fact that, when viewed through a static understanding of post-Kantian philosophy, they appear as oxymoronic expressions. If the transcendental is identified with the universal, ahistorical and necessary, and the empirical with the contingent, material and historical, then the very idea of a "historical a priori" or a "quasi-transcendental" seems paradoxical. Their apparent contradiction is also what has made them particularly attractive within contemporary debates.

Yet such a reading presupposes a rigid opposition between the transcendental and the empirical that phenomenology has already begun to call into

question. The apparent paradox becomes even more striking when measured against a Kantian conception according to which the transcendental, the formal, and the a priori largely coincide. Within such a framework, the empirical is the domain of contingency and history, whereas transcendental philosophy is tasked with identifying universal and necessary conditions of possibility. Phenomenology unsettles this strict division. Husserl's distinction between formal and material a priori structures, together with his analyses of the lifeworld and of sedimented traditions, points toward a transcendental field that cannot simply be opposed to empiricity.

From Husserl onwards, what is at stake is not the simple abandonment of transcendental inquiry but its transformation. Read without the ideological biases that have often shaped his reception, Husserl's own project already contains the resources for such a transformation. In his *Ideas II*, the phenomenological analysis seeks to bring into view precisely those dimensions of experience that ordinarily remain unnoticed (Husserl 1989). The categories that structure the natural attitude, and even more so those inherited from naturalistic worldviews, are not taken as self-evident descriptions of reality but as possible indices of experience among others. The emancipatory and critical potential of phenomenology lies in its effort to loosen the grip of an unquestioned standpoint, to reflect upon the position from which one experiences and judges the world, and to integrate this positionality into philosophical reflection without appealing to a view from nowhere.

In this way, Husserl opens the possibility of analysing constitutive structures that are themselves historically generated or historically transformed. Naturalism, for example, is not merely one doctrine among others; it functions as a historically instituted framework that conditions how reality is understood and investigated. Similarly, the lifeworld is not a fixed foundation but a horizon continually shaped by processes of sedimentation, transmission, and renewal. The transcendental field therefore reveals a peculiar form of empiricity and contingency of its own. At the same time, Husserl's recourse to eidetic analysis seeks to distinguish within these historically changing formations what is relatively invariant from what is merely contingent, thereby avoiding both ahistorical essentialism and historical relativism.

Derrida's introduction of the prefix quasi- before the transcendental can be understood within this broader trajectory. Far from simply negating the transcendental, it invites a renewed interrogation of its meaning. In this respect, Derrida's gesture is reminiscent of a characteristic operation of Husserlian eidetic analysis. As Adorno observed, phenomenological concepts are often developed through constellations of contrast: a paradigmatic case is initially selected, and progressively differentiated through a series of variations that reveal its essential contours. Thus, imagination may first be defined in opposition to perception, only later to be reintegrated into a broader account as a kind of quasi-positional act. The introduction of a borderline or intermediate case does not dissolve the concept but compels a reconsideration of what is genuinely essential to it. Something similar occurs with the quasi-transcendental.

The addition of the qualifier quasi does not merely serve to mark a distance from classical transcendental philosophy; rather, it raises the question of how the very meaning of the transcendental must be transformed once its historical, social, linguistic, and practical dimensions are taken seriously.

To undertake this conceptual work is more than an exercise in academic positioning. Like every intellectual field, contemporary philosophy is not immune to the dynamics of branding and differentiation. Yet the enduring significance of notions such as the historical a priori and the quasi-transcendental cannot be explained by such factors alone. Their philosophical importance depends on whether they genuinely allow us to rethink the relation between constitution and contingency, normativity and history, critique and situatedness. For this reason, it remains necessary not only to assess what these terms have come to mean in contemporary debates, but also to evaluate the extent to which these newer appropriations continue, transform, or depart from the intentions that originally informed their development.

The Contributions to This Issue

The contributions gathered in this special issue take up the tensions presented above in different ways, exploring how the *a priori* can be historicized without losing its constitutive force and how the quasi-transcendental reconfigures both the conditions of experience and the possibilities of critique. In choosing the order of the papers, we have opted for a broadly chronological approach, moving from Kant through Husserl and Merleau-Ponty to Derrida, in the hope of making the historical dimension of the problem more visible in this way as well.

Philipp Quell's contribution opens the issue with a phenomenological rereading of Kant that brings the problem of the a priori into dialogue with contemporary debates on queer futurity, highlighting queer elements of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Intervening between antisocial approaches that refuse futurity and utopian approaches oriented toward the "not yet," Quell proposes "critical possibilization" as a way of conceiving futures that are neither foreclosed nor predetermined. The paper highlights how the mediating role of imagination between sensibility and understanding reveals experience itself as a productive and plastic process. Thus, on Quell's reading, the *a priori* is not simply given in advance as a fixed and timeless structure: it takes shape through acts of synthesis, schematization, and reflective engagement that are themselves historically mediated. According to this reinterpretation of Kant, concepts can function as conditions that orient experience, opening it towards the future, without prescribing the concrete forms that it must assume. Quell thus reconceives them as quasi-*a priori* invitations to engagement, capable of becoming operative in the formation of futures while remaining open to transformation.

Riccardo Valenti's contribution turns to Husserl's late phenomenology in order to rethink the relation between transcendental constitution and historicity through the notion of the maternal. Drawing on Husserl's analyses of

teleology, intersubjectivity, and generativity, as well as on the reception of these concepts in the Milan School, Valenti reconstructs the maternal as a generative field in which sense is instituted, transmitted, and renewed across generations. The particular strength of his contribution lies in showing how the maternal can be understood both as a historical a priori and as quasi-transcendental, thereby illuminating both concepts by putting them to work within a concrete transcendental-phenomenological analysis. As a historical a priori, the maternal names historically mediated conditions of embodiment, inheritance, transmission, and reactivation through which meanings acquire continuity. As quasi-transcendental, it designates a field that is genuinely constitutive of meaning and historical continuity, while itself existing only through the historical processes it conditions. In this way, Valenti offers a particularly productive account of how phenomenology can accommodate historicity without abandoning its critical and constitutive ambitions.

Vanessa Ossino and Damian Nussbaumer pursue this problem through Merleau-Ponty, whose implicit conception of the historical a priori they present as an alternative to tensions they identify in Husserl and Foucault. Their argument begins with Merleau-Ponty's redefinition of the a priori. Once phenomenology takes facticity, embodiment, and situated existence as its point of departure, the hierarchy between a priori necessity and a posteriori contingency can no longer be maintained. The a priori is instead grounded in facticity, temporalized within lived time, and inseparable from historical and linguistic conditions of sense-formation. This also transforms the phenomenological methods: reflection cannot claim complete transcendental detachment because the reflecting subject remains radically situated within the world it investigates. Against this background, the authors reconstruct Husserl's tension between universal structures of historicity and contingent processes of linguistic and intersubjective transmission, before showing how Merleau-Ponty radicalizes phenomenology's historical dimension. This ultimately leads them to offer a distinctly Merleau-Pontian interpretation of the historical a priori as a "logic within contingency", in which necessity remains bound to the sedimented yet transformable horizons of existence.

Rebeca Pérez León's article seeks to clarify Derrida's distinctive use of history, différance, and the quasi-transcendental by reconstructing the methodological trajectory through which these concepts emerged from his engagement with Husserl. Arguing against readings of Derrida's philosophy either as a form of radical historicism or as a disguised transcendentalism, she reconstructs Derrida's thought as a non-empirical and non-transcendental *historicism* (italicized to distinguish it from historicism in the usual sense of the term) that emerges through an internal repetition, reduction, and transformation of Husserlian phenomenology. On this basis, she offers an original interpretation of Derrida's enigmatic characterization of the quasi-transcendental as "a condition of possibility that is simultaneously a condition of impossibility".

Daniel Brennan's concluding contribution takes up the Derridean determination of the quasi-transcendental and puts it to work in a literary analysis of

Lucy Ellmann's *Ducks, Newburyport*. Following Lisa Guenther, Brennan understands quasi-transcendental structures as historically contingent formations – such as late capitalism, white supremacy, and heteropatriarchy – that constitute experience while themselves being historically produced. Methodologically, he models his reading of Ellmann on Derrida's reading of Joyce: just as Derrida points out how Joyce's literary equivocity discloses what Husserl's pursuit of univocity suppresses, Brennan aims to show how Ellmann's novel figures a consciousness saturated by its historical conditions, enacting this quasi-transcendental constitution through its formal literary devices. Its pervasive commas continually defer closure, while the recurring phrase "the fact that" gathers factical determinations into an ongoing, unstable flow. Ellmann's refusal of the full stop can thus be read as a refusal of classical phenomenological *epoché*, revealing consciousness as inseparable from its historical, material, and embodied situatedness. Brennan's contribution thereby broadens the question of critique beyond its classical form in philosophical and theoretical discourse, showing how literary form itself can enact a critical phenomenology.

Across the volume, the conditions that make experience, meaning, and orientation possible are repeatedly shown to be neither timeless structures standing outside history nor merely empirical products of particular contexts. Instead, they emerge as historically instituted, embodied, transmitted, and transformable formations that nevertheless exercise a constitutive force. Whether through Quell's account of possibilizing concepts, Valenti's interpretation of the maternal as the generative field of transmission, Ossino's and Nussbaumer's take on Merleau-Ponty's "logic within contingency," or Pérez León's reconstruction of *différance*, the papers converge on the need to think conditions of possibility as themselves implicated in the processes they condition.

This also has important consequences for the question of critique. If there is no fully external or ahistorical standpoint from which historically constituted conditions can be assessed, critique cannot simply consist in stepping outside them. It must instead proceed immanently, by exposing their contingency, tracing their formation, and opening possibilities for their transformation from within. Brennan's contribution extends this insight beyond philosophical and theoretical discourse by showing how literary form itself can participate in such a critical task. In this sense, the historical *a priori* and the quasi-transcendental emerge throughout the issue as concepts for thinking not only how meaning is historically constituted, but also how historically sedimented structures can remain open to reconfiguration, renewal, and critique.

Taken together, these contributions suggest that the opposition between transcendental inquiry and historical critique is increasingly difficult to sustain. Rather than choosing between constitutive structures and historical contingency, they explore the productive field of tension in which both dimensions intersect. The historical a priori and the quasi-transcendental emerge, in this context, not as settled doctrines but as ongoing attempts to think the complex processes through which meaning, normativity, and freedom take shape within history.

The editors do not intend this volume as a conclusive statement on the relation between the historical a priori, the quasi-transcendental, and the transformation of transcendental philosophy. On the contrary, many of the questions raised here remain unresolved: the status of normativity, the relation between historical contingency and validity, the role of subjectivity, and the possibilities of critique all continue to be matters of ongoing dispute. The present collection has a more modest ambition. It is to provide a first orientation within this complex terrain and to create the conditions for a broader discussion. We hope that the dialogue initiated in these pages will be pursued in future work and will contribute to a renewed examination of the ways in which phenomenology and its interlocutors continue to rethink the relation between history, constitution, and freedom.

References

Goris, Wouter. 2012. "Das historische Apriori bei Husserl und Foucault: Zur philosophischen Relevanz eines Leitbegriffs der historischen Epistemologie." *Quaestio* 12: 291–342. https://doi.org/10.1484/J.QUAESTIO.1.103619.

Aldea, Andreea Smaranda, and Amy Allen. 2016. "History, Critique, and Freedom: The Historical A Priori in Husserl and Foucault." *Continental Philosophy Review* 49 (1): 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11007-015-9359-8.

Foucault, Michel. 1969. *L'archéologie du savoir*. Paris: Gallimard.

Hurst, Andrea. 2025. "Quasi-Transcendental, as a Concept in Phenomenology." In: De Warren, Nicolas and Ted Toadvine, eds. *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology*. Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-47253-5_204-1. (Published online 2024; encyclopedia edition 2025.)

Guenther, Lisa. 2021. "Six Senses of Critique for Critical Phenomenology." *Puncta: Journal of Critical Phenomenology* 4 (2): 5–23. https://doi.org/10.5399/PJCP.V4I2.2.

Husserl, Edmund. 1989. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*. Translated by Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer. Collected Works III. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Rorty, Richard. 1995. "Is Derrida a 'Quasi'-Transcendental Philosopher?" *Contemporary Literature* 36 (2): 173–200.

Emanuele Kaminada, Olga Nikolić Marić

Istorijski *a priori* i kvazitranscendentalno: Mapiranje složenosti onoga što se odvija

Apstrakt

Tekst situira temat u kontekstu savremenih rasprava o transformaciji transcendentalne filozofije, razmatrajući istorijski a priori i kvazi-transcendentalno kao dva povezana pokušaja da se transcendentalno pitanje ponovo promisli pod uslovima istoričnosti. Tekst najpre izlaže problem načina na koji se transcendentalni uslovi mogućnosti mogu razumeti onda kada se prepoznaju kao istorijski konstituisani, društveno posredovani i otvoreni za transformaciju. Zatim razmatra pojam istorijskog a priori-ja kroz odnos između Huserla i Fukoa, usredsređujući

se na njihova različita shvatanja istoričnosti, subjektivnosti, važenja i kritike. Naredni odeljak posvećen je kvazi-transcendentalnom, naročito kod Deride i u savremenoj fenomenološkoj recepciji njegove filozofije, pri čemu se ovaj pojam predstavlja kao još jedan pokušaj da se konstitutivni uslovi promisle bez da se postave kao bezvremeni temelji. Tekst potom razmatra implikacije oba pojma za pitanja istorije, normativnosti, kritike i slobode, pokazujući da oni osvetljavaju napetost između konstitutivnosti i istorijske kontingencije. U tom kontekstu, kritika se razume kao preispitivanje istorijski sedimentiranih uslova koji oblikuju iskustvo bez mogućnosti da ga ikada u potpunosti odrede, dok se sloboda shvata upravo kao mogućnost refleksije o tim strukturama i mogućnost njihove transformacije. Na kraju, tekst predstavlja priloge u tematu, ističući različite načine na koje oni razmatraju odnos između transcendentalnog istraživanja i istoričnosti.

Ključne reči: istorijski *a priori*, kvazitranscendentalno, fenomenologija, transcendentalna filozofija, kritika