

Husserl's Europe

There is something unique here [in Europe] that is recognized in us by all other human groups, too, something that, quite apart from all considerations of utility, becomes a motive for them to Europeanize themselves even in their unbroken will to spiritual self-preservation; whereas we, if we understand ourselves properly, would never Indianize ourselves, for example.¹

... the original relationship between logic and science has undergone a remarkable reversal in modern times.²

Husserl's Europe is our question, and the angle by which I wish to tackle it may be characterized broadly speaking as a *moral and political* angle. However, we shall see in a moment that the *direct* moral and political appreciation of egological transcendental rationalism engenders two divergent lines of “judgement” (one bringing to light its strength and its grandeur, the other on the contrary its ambiguity, indeed its banefulness), without enabling us to identify in this double or contradictory observation the *reasons* for phenomenology being at such odds with itself. Now, if we do not find the reasons for this, we shall be able neither to clarify nor to overcome the unease in which the Husserlian determination of Europe as a “spiritual figure” leaves us; nor, consequently, shall we be able to provide ourselves with a sufficient idea of the moral duty and of the political task which is incumbent *upon us*, “Europeans” of today.

But what is the good of traversing half the planet³ if it is only to speak equivocally of a thought which died out a half-century ago, without being able to draw any light from it regarding the current situation, a situation which the intellectuals (and more particularly the philosophers) of this nation certainly know much more about than we do—if only because it can be counted as one

¹ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology. An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, Northwestern UP, 1970), p. 275. Since G. Granel is himself the French translator of *Crisis*, Carr's translation has on occasion been modified slightly to better conform to Granel's rendering of Husserl's text. —*Trans.*

² Edmund Husserl, introduction to *Formal and Transcendental Logic* (1929), trans. Dorian Cairns (The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), p. 2.

³ This text was pronounced in Lima, at the occasion of the first Franco-Peruvian congress of philosophy, May 13-19, 1989.

of the countries which bears the principle brunt of it? Wherever political reality is being made, and more particularly wherever its cruelty is most felt, wherever it is simultaneously its most opaque and its most oppressive, it is necessary for political philosophy to understand itself as a political obligation, or else be silent.

Philosophy, however, is what it is—and one of its particularities is to be *slow*. Unless it is to apply empty generalities to misunderstood realities, it must consent, and all the more so to the extent that its object is concrete, to tackling it only from within a kind of detour or supplementary turning back upon itself; not, certainly, in order to try once again, and once again vainly, to interiorize the object of its representation, but because philosophy never really thinks anything if the mode by which it thinks does not place philosophy itself in question to the point of its own possibility. That is why, to understand and judge Husserl's Europe from a moral and political angle, one must make the effort of identifying the *logical situation* of the discourse which delineates such a “spiritual figure.” We shall gather from it, I believe, abundant fruits.

Let us begin, modestly, by first recalling the principle traits which form this figure, such as they are delineated in the texts in which Husserl treats Europe. These texts, going backward in time, are essentially the Vienna conference (May 7-10, 1935) entitled *The Crisis of European Humanity and Philosophy*, the introduction to *Formal Logic and Transcendental Logic* (1929) and the fourth *Logical Investigation* (1901). What they say is this:

a) The humanity of any humanity consists in *reason*. There is “reason,” in the largest sense, as soon as life occurs “in the world” as a “universal horizon” and when this existence in the world's horizon “is always in a certain sense consciously present,” which does not imply that it is “thematic.”⁴ Let us note from the outset that there is no other determination of this lowest degree of natural life, as concerns its logicity and the corresponding type of being. No more than there was any determination of the logicity proper to each of the natural languages in the fourth *Logical Investigation*. Whether it be a matter of non-European humanities or of vernacular languages, it is understood in advance that the logic which inhabits them (for it is necessary all the same that a logic inhabit them, lacking which there would be neither humanity nor language) is composed of a kernel and a pulp, more or less like a cocoa pod [*cabosse de cocoa*]. But what is remarkable is that European *reason* should have gotten hold of that head (if at least, as I conjecture, pod [*cabosse*] is the same term as “caboche” [*head*] and as “cabessa”) well before the imperialism of the Euro-American *production* got its hands on the fruit of the cacao tree. For the logical kernel, where all the value of the natural humanities and the natural languages resides, owes nothing to the diversity of forms of

⁴ *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

life (rites, myths, social organization) or manners of speaking (parataxis, syntax, empty words, inflexions, modalities) which belong to them. The logical kernel is understood in a teleological manner in accordance with the *European* definition of logicity—first according to the model, still finite, of Greek rationality, and then and above all according to the infinitist model proper to modern reason emanating from Descartes. And not only is this logical kernel always the same, but it is capable, once it has appeared to itself (and provided it no longer loses consciousness of its own meaning), of encountering itself within the humanities where it has remained “latent” and which Husserl names, for this reason, “simple anthropological types.”⁵ To put it more simply: there is in all humanity, more or less enveloped, sedimented or buried, an *embryonic European schema*. The rest is pulp, a kind of nourishing and enveloping element, but contingent in itself. It is either what the Vienna conference mentions hastily as a mythico-religious effervescence, a development of natural “wisdom” (generally called “Oriental”), or else what the fourth investigation considers as universal yet contingent features of “human nature”—first envelop. And it is also—second envelop—the infinite fragmentation of individual singularities, against which what might still be “regular” in nature cannot defend itself and where it loses all identifiable configuration (thus all possibility of logical existence). Languages thereby dissolve into an indefinite idiomaticity, just as civilizations succeed each other like “currents which flowingly interpenetrate one another” or else “like a sea, in which men and peoples are the fleetingly formed, changing, and then disappearing waves, some with richer, more complicated ripples, others with more primitive.”⁶

b) If thus the human spirit itself experiences, at its beginning, a kind of state of nature, it still lacks, to lead a life in conformity with its essence, what is lacking in all nature: a *genuine* history—or historicity rather, a capacity to make history. Certainly, any humanity, in essence, is a “spiritual figure” and any spiritual figure possesses the minimum amount of reflexivity and repetitiveness necessary for the *forms* of its *world* to appear to it in a certain manner and for it consequently to be able to maintain them, diversify them, modify them, etc., in other words for it to give itself the form of a “history.” But (and we are presenting Husserl here, we are not for the moment critiquing him) these “cultural products” of the natural humanities only enable the latter to live a kind of natural history of the spirit. The expression (“natural history”) is not in Husserl—probably not by accident, but because it would constitute for him the same kind of *Widersinn* as “wooden iron,” or something even worse (since at bottom here it is a question of *Sinn des Sinnes selbst*)—but the two terms of the expression are nonetheless indeed those which delineate the field of Husserlian

⁵ *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology, op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 274.

reasoning. Humanities other than Greek are “natural” *and* they have histories, which, for want of also being named natural, are characterized as “practical.”

Simply practical. That is to say not yet *theoretical*, or not yet *scientific*, or not yet *philosophical*, these terms being equivalent in Husserlian language. In short, humanity’s orientation towards the *true as such* has not appeared yet. And since there is no history but that of truth, the “cultural forms already present in prescientific humanity” can only have “an ephemeral existence”⁷: a statement which, however, in a page which gives Babylon and Egypt as examples (not to mention the Chinese civilization that goes back three or four millennia), cannot fail to astonish. We are probably meant to understand that, even if they *last* a long time, the very duration of these cultural forms is *essentially* ephemeral. The permanence of a natural civilization, when it is encountered (and it is certainly encountered much less frequently than the opposite case, that of a rapid disappearance), is therefore but a *de facto* permanence, an empirical or contingent historicity, and not the destination *intrinsic* to transmission that only an articulated system of a “scientific” culture possesses. “Naïve” cultural products can certainly be accumulated, but they do not for all that possess the cumulative character which pertains by essence to theoretical sequences. Only to these latter—because of their self-reflexive and self-normative nature—is genuine history promised, History with a capital “H,” the eternity (at least the eternity by rights) of the History of the True. And the latter itself emerged in history with Europe. A terrible emergence, in truth, since, as Husserl writes without trembling, this “revolutionization of [its] historicity [...] *is now the history of the cutting-off of finite mankind’s development* as it becomes mankind with infinite tasks.”⁸

Thus we are no longer permitted to forget that Athena is indeed, under the helmet and the spear, a warrior goddess. In other words that the history of any people, at least if it does not want to disappear in the “cutting-off of development” that affects its finitude, consists henceforth in its Europeanization.

c) The rupture, in the most classic manner in the world, is attributed to Greece: “only in the Greeks do we have a universal (‘cosmological’) life-interest in the essentially new form of a purely ‘theoretical’ attitude.”⁹ This new attitude of a humanity which is itself relatively ephemeral (since it all begins in the 7th and 6th centuries B.C. and has already ended by the middle of the 3rd) does not signify simply—which would be a triviality—the irruption of science and philosophy. It does not even signify simply the irruption of the unity of science *within* philosophy, which is to say,

⁷ Ibid., p. 277, modified slightly.

⁸ Ibid., p. 279, emphasis Granel. (*Trans. —die Geschichte des Entwerdens des endlichen Menschentums*, rendered by Granel as *l’histoire de la perte de devenir pour l’humanité finie*.)

⁹ Ibid., p. 280.

in Husserlian terms, the precedence of logic over all *the* sciences, of which it assures the unity and the foundation. It signifies (we are particularly emphasizing this aspect of things in view of our questions to come) the irruption of idealities which bear the mark of infinity, without Husserl ever having treated however, either in the Vienna conference or in paragraph 8 of the Haupttext of *Krisis*, this “infinite” character of the “properly scientific” idealities as anything other than obvious. The same is true for the infinite character of the task which consists in exhibiting and in sequencing these scientific idealities in their most originary meaning, or in *their* own “scientific” principle, a task which Husserlian phenomenology, as inheritor of “the Platonist foundation of logic,” according to the liminal declarations of *Formal Logic and Transcendental Logic*, expressly assigns itself. Husserl’s insistence on this motif of infinity is such that one will pardon us for citing a bit lengthily a passage, among innumerable equivalents. Here it is:

In a word, what is acquired through scientific activity is not something real but something ideal.

But what is more, that which is so acquired as valid, as truth, is serviceable as material for the possible production of idealities on a higher level, and so on again and again. [...] Science, then, signifies the idea of an infinity of tasks, of which at any time a finite number have been disposed of and are retained as persisting validities. These make up at the same time the fund of premises for an infinite horizon of tasks as the unity of one all-encompassing task.¹⁰

For the moment, we shall observe merely that this characterization of science in the strongest sense, of the science of the principles of scientificity itself, in short of philosophy as logic, expressly appears in the Vienna conference *with respect to the Greeks*. We find, however, in paragraph 8 of *Krisis*, regarding Euclidian geometry, to which Husserl has just offered the highest praise as a “systematically coherent deductive theory, aimed at a most broadly and highly conceived ideal goal,” the following statement:

But Euclidean geometry, and ancient mathematics in general, knows only finite tasks, *a finitely closed a priori*. Aristotelian syllogistics belongs here also, as an *a priori* which takes precedence over all others. Antiquity goes this far, but never far enough to grasp the possibility of the infinite task which, for us, is linked as a matter of course with the concept of geometrical space and with the concept of geometry as the science belonging to it.¹¹

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 278.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 21-22, emphasis Granel.

And our question is obviously the following: how, if the scientific attitude in itself corresponds with the infinite tasks dealing with the infinite idealities of which the true system is itself constructible to infinity, and if this attitude arose *with the Greeks* to break with the natural history of humanities in inaugurating the spiritual history of Europe—how, then, is it possible that the first of the Greek sciences (Euclidian geometry), the one which, with Plato precisely, itself served as the model for “the Platonist foundation of logic,” can have been detained within the chalk circle of the *finite*? The question is all the more serious in that it concerns not only geometry, but the ensemble of Greek mathematics, opposed precisely to that of the moderns as finitude is to infinity:

But this is true not only in respect to ideal space. Even less could the ancients conceive of a similar but more general idea (arising from formalizing abstraction), that of a *formal mathematics*. Not until the dawn of the modern period does the actual discovery and conquest of the infinite mathematical horizons begin. Then the beginnings of algebra, of the mathematics of continua, of analytic geometry arise.¹²

And finally, as we have known since Descartes what the very title of paragraph 8 that we are reading repeats¹³—that is that “the reshaping of mathematics,” generalizing the logical signification of procedures by which Descartes had resolved the problem of Pappus, inspires in its turn the *method* in its absolute generality, and that it is there that is found “the origin of the new idea of the universality of science”—, it is clearly from modernity that Husserl borrows the ideal that he projects, or retro-jects afterwards rather, upon the Greeks, even if that means not knowing for certain finally whether the *theoretical attitude* of the latter is finite or infinite. Whatever the case may be, however, with respect to this wavering,¹⁴ it is clear that for him the “great ideal” is that “of

¹² Ibid., p. 22, emphasis Granel, slightly modified.

¹³ Paragraph eight of *Crisis* is entitled: “The origin of the new idea of the universality of science in the reshaping of mathematics.” —*Trans.*

¹⁴ Let us not permit this “wavering” to disappear too quickly, however, from the field of our attention. For it could be generalized to the totality of both historical and conceptual distinctions that are essential to the Husserlian project. Not only, indeed, is the distinction between the finite and the infinite used *twice*: once to separate Greek humanity from the natural humanities, and a second time to separate *modern* European humanity from Greek humanity itself, but the references made to the history of mathematics (which assures Husserl’s prestige for many within a philosophical community literally subjugated by the type of idealities that are inherent to modern sciences) reveal that something also remains “wavering” between *formal abstraction*—that precisely whose products are “infinite”—and the *intuition of the essences*, which, as we know, is Husserl’s only means of ordering these products of modern rationality in the field of an ultimate “theory ...closed upon itself”: transcendental phenomenology in person as the realization, in conformity at last with its idea, of the “great ideal” of a *mathesis vere universalis*.

I borrow the latter formulation deliberately from Leibniz, with whom it carries the weight of a *critique* of Descartes. What it implies is that the “formalizing abstraction” of the latter, which had enabled

a science which, in this new sense, is rational and all-inclusive, or rather the idea that the infinite totality (*Allheit*) of what is in general is intrinsically a rational all-encompassing unity (*Alleinheit*) that can be mastered, without remainder, by a corresponding universal science.”¹⁵

This is a definition of science as a *clean* activity (“without remainder”), in the sense that one speaks of a clean job (carried out to the end, and which leaves no trace of itself, having effectively come to the end “of everything”), or of a clean industrial production, or of a clean automobile combustion. But this very cleanliness, for our generation practiced in suspicion and which does not believe in the political innocuousness of metaphysics (whatever might be the innocence of the metaphysicians), has something frightening about it. Not only because one asks oneself where the “waste” [*les restes*] has gone (is it thus possible that there “quite simply is not any”? Or else is it that we “treat” it, that we “recycle” it, until the final solution of its “disappearance”?), but also because the apparatus of scientificity as Husserl conceives of it possesses all the features of a military apparatus of domination and enclosure. If, indeed, the field of objects is “infinite,” it is none the less mastered throughout, being firstly produced at the level of existence (or deprived of the latter) by an ensemble “of axiomatic concepts and propositions, in other words by a theory [...] *closed upon itself*.”¹⁶

But here we are already entering onto the moral and political terrain. Moral and/or political. And we are probably penetrating it in the least suitable manner, by transferring to the logical sense of Husserlian expressions connotations that these same expressions receive in a completely

through analytical geometry the elaboration of an infinite *a priori* thanks to which geometry “changes form” and escapes from the Aristotelian opposition between the genus of numbers and the genus of figures, had not been correctly understood by Descartes, a consequence of which was the *obstruction* of Cartesian mathematics. Indeed, as one knows, Descartes’s *Geometry* stops at curves of the second degree, considering those whose power is superior as “transcendent” curves which, according to Descartes’s own expression, “are not received in geometry.” In such a way that infinite conceptuality strikes a finite limit.

To take the “analysis” further and effectively master the infinite through calculation, it was thus necessary to push the formalizing abstraction to the point where it no longer rests upon any kind of “evidence,” the *cogitatio* issuing from the *cogito* ceasing thereby to name the activity of an intuitive understanding and becoming what Leibniz will name *cogitatio caeca*. It is Jean Toussaint Desanti, in *La Philosophie silencieuse* (Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1975) who sets things straight here in the clearest manner possible:

“Leibniz—he writes—liberated the general concept of ‘calculation’ and the general concept of operation with respect to all elements. In doing so, he not only liberated the demonstrative sciences from the imperialism of intuition, he also liberated their own field. Any domain of knowledge in which it is possible to define in a univocal manner the systems of objects and, upon these systems of objects, explicit laws of operation, is accessible to demonstration, and is thereby by rights an object of mathematics.”

The regulated usage of symbolical thought, supported solely by the principle of non-contradiction, henceforth replaces the first evidences and the simple essences which are supposed by Husserl as well as by Descartes as giving us knowledge “without remainder.” The Husserlian conception of logic is thus cut off from its mathematical basis by the very development of modern mathematics, from which it nonetheless continues to borrow the schema of an infinity of idealities and the ideal of their mastered enclosure.

¹⁵ *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, *op. cit.*, p. 22, modified slightly.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22, modified slightly.

different field, precisely the politico-moral field. Without knowing anything about what could authorize such a metaphor. We must avoid thickening the ranks of those upstart moralists who compensate angrily for their impotence in thought by blaming thinkers on every possible occasion for the horrors of history. Not that from politics to logic, or from logic to politics, there is no link to be found. But it is in a completely different manner that one must look for it.

Let us consider rather *for themselves* therefore the motifs of a moral judgment and of a political reading of Husserlian phenomenology. And firstly, since certain of our reflections concerning “waste” alluded to the Nazi barbarity, let us try to appreciate the bearing of this philosophy in a context as terrible as that. One must recognize that in a sense Husserl, with Cassirer and so many other of those philosophers and writers that the Nazi ideology treated as “cosmopolitan,” was one of those who saved the honor of Europe. It was not even necessary for the auditors of the Vienna conference (of which let me recall the date: May 1935) to have particularly fine ears to discern *who* was being targeted in the denunciation of “hate” and “barbarity,” or *against whom*—against what “nihilist inferno”—Husserl wrests from Nietzsche (in those times, and regardless of the texts, one of the intellectual “backers” of Hitler’s movement) the expression “good Europeans,” to apply it, as in defiance, to his enterprise of an infinite construction of rationality. This is the very conclusion of the conference, the courage and the tone of which make it worth our reciting here *in extenso*:

There are only two escapes from the crisis of European existence: the downfall of Europe in its estrangement from its own rational sense of life, its fall into hostility toward spirit and into barbarity; or the rebirth of Europe from the spirit of philosophy through a heroism of reason that overcomes naturalism once and for all. Europe’s greatest danger is weariness. If we struggle against this greatest of all dangers as “good Europeans” with the sort of courage that does not fear even an infinite struggle, then out of the nihilist inferno, the smoldering fire of despair over the West’s mission for humanity, the ashes of great weariness, will rise up the phoenix of a new life-inwardness and spiritualization as the pledge of a great and distant future for man: for the spirit alone is immortal.¹⁷

Having thus paid homage to the admirable moral bearing of the author of *Krisis*, it remains that *for us*, who have known what follows, and not only what follows in history but what follows in philosophy in its being put to the question it imposes upon itself, either from Marx or from Heidegger, or else from the Wittgensteinian recasting of logicity, many questions arise which, if

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 299, modified slightly.

they do not completely ruin it, tarnish at least seriously and deeply the beautiful “spiritual figure” sculpted by Husserl to represent Europe.

Concerning the “moral” way of confronting history, it should indeed have become manifest that it has no effective reach, nor pertinence for analysis in the first place, except within limits drawn in advance of its clairvoyance and its foresight by the ontological presuppositions of the discourse it practices. I have had the occasion to sketch out, in the Preface to the French translation of *Krisis* (which provoked a bit of scandal in orthodox Husserlian circles), what the limits of absolute transcendental philosophy are, in fact, when one refers the discourse of modern reason and the history of Europe to “the logic of merchandise, and its union with the essence of modern technics, which is to say the *real* motor of European-World history.”¹⁸ I will therefore not take up that theme again here. It is far better, no doubt, to ask from this premise a few questions aimed at something *unexplored* in the concept and in the historical role of Europe, something which was *already decided*, however, before the “decisions” which, as we know, are being made now and are going to be made about Europe, both as a “geographical” place and as a “spiritual figure,” and which these decisions in truth will only *ratify*.

I shall regroup these questions under three rubrics:

—What, for Husserl and for us, are the relations between the “geographical” concept and the “spiritual” concept of Europe?

—What, for Husserl and for us, is the logico-philosophical status of the “natural humanities,” and to what fate are they destined by this status?

—What can philosophy do amidst a globalized “European” history where man has become “the living being [*vivant*] who works,” where being is conceived as “production” and where all the articulations of *Mit-sein* (from the family to the “concert of nations” by way of the socio-professional categories and the organs of social life of all kinds—including, of course, educative and cultural life, and, within them, philosophy itself—, finally of nations and supranational regroupings) are the articulations of a productive body, it being understood that the *meaning* of production itself is to be the production of “wealth”?

On the first point

¹⁸ See *La Crise des sciences européennes et la phénoménologie transcendantale*, translated with a preface by G. Granel, Paris, Gallimard, 1976, p. VII. An English translation of this preface may be consulted on the G. Granel website: <http://www.gerardgranel.com/index.html>. —Trans.

My purpose is not to ironize upon the particularities of the geographical division that are illustrated by the Husserlian distinction between natural humanities and European humanity. There would, however, be sufficient matter for amusement in the colonial kitsch that, as it turns out, cruelly underscores the publication date of *Krisis* (1935). For example, in reading this sentence:

In the spiritual sense the English Dominions, the United States, etc., clearly belong to Europe, whereas the Eskimos or Indians presented as curiosities at fairs, or the Gypsies, who constantly wander about Europe, do not.¹⁹

And not only would there be sufficient matter for amusement, but also, of course, matter to inflect our irony little by little towards a moral judgement where the European professor's "ethnocentrism," with the political implications it carries, would easily—and rightly—be stigmatized.

There is for example this question of the "Indians": I employ quotation marks because the context scarcely enables one to decide whether they belong to the West Indies or the Oriental Indies. Since at the time Husserl was writing the latter were still part of the "English Dominions" (which must mean that, in the imagination of the phenomenologist at least, they were completely penetrated by the mode of life and the values of European England) they were at the same time "clearly" part of Europe. One must therefore conclude that *these* Indians, the ones that are seen at "fairs" (like the bearded woman, the Lilliputians and the animals themselves), are in all likelihood the American Indians (or, as one said in those days, the "Redskins"). But in this case another passage becomes incomprehensible, the very one I quoted in my epigraph and which, speaking of people "from India," declares that if they are irresistibly drawn towards Europe they on the other hand would never inspire us to "Indianize" ourselves. Why not, if they are part of Europe "in the spiritual sense"? And, in the opposite direction, by what strange division *interior* to the European peoples themselves would Spain and Portugal not have managed with *their* possessions the European assimilation that the English would have achieved in the Commonwealth?

These geographical oddities have no interest but that of directing us to the following question: what is it that, subjacent to what is proclaimed to be "obvious," is dissimulated by the Husserlian text, but which governs it all the more surely? In other words, what is the *geography of the spiritual* according to Husserl?

The mention of the United States just after the English dominions, suggests that for him the United States, despite the avatars of surface history, according to which the country has been

¹⁹ *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

independent of England for two hundred years, is still “spiritually” part of Europe. Just as the countries that one divines behind the neglectful “etc.” by which the author dispenses with further enumeration, and which fall under Anglo-Saxon influence: Australia, Canada..., and here we shall cease our own enumeration, no doubt “clearly” belong to it. For either we ourselves add a vague “etc.,” or else we must explicitly mention Japan, for example, and (why not?) the Four Dragons of the Asiatic South-East, South Africa, and gradually everything which Westernizes itself, that is everything which is “developing” *all over the World*.²⁰ However, it is a real question (or rather a whole nest of questions) as to knowing *what the relations are between “development” and the spiritual figure which originates with the Greeks*. Even if we admitted (which would need on the contrary to be established, and not without essential restrictions, with the greatest historico-logical precision) that the thread of Greek philosophy was not completely severed in the passage from Antiquity to Modernity at the age of the Renaissance, itself marked by the Roman tradition and by that of Christianity, neither of which have anything Greek or anything philosophical about them, it would still remain for us to ask ourselves what the West as the propelling force of “development” (of which the United States may indeed furnish the emblem) still owes to the “spiritual figure of Europe.”

It is not merely that to the proud claim of paternity put forth one day by de Gaulle (“Europe, and its American daughter...”) *we* would have some reasons today to counter with the reverse formulation: “America, and Europe its daughter [*fille*],” not to say its affiliate [*filiale*]; it is that what comes back to us from the other side of the water is no longer even of our own stock, or rather is of a sort of mutant variety of the European spirit whose destiny is henceforth autonomous and which cannot be brought back into the womb it came out of. It is a matter of a certain historical situation, which I think has not yet been described, in accordance with which an alliance has been achieved, in the United States precisely, between the three components of modernity.

By these “three components,” I mean firstly the interpretation (one should say here the *Umdenkung*) of Christian subjectivity in terms of the egological subjectivity of the human person, which was the work (if not the intention) of the Protestant spirit. This first component is acquired at the expense of what I would call the ablation of all mystical reserve (which is not to be confused with the pseudo-religious commotion of sects of all kinds, which on the contrary proliferate in the element of American positivism like fish in water). The result is that, despite certain appearances perhaps (the one kept up by the fearsome American “good will,” in particular, and that of the intractable Catholic “Ecumenism”), there is in truth no longer any point of juncture possible between the modern subject and any of the “natural humanities” descended from Abraham.

²⁰ In English in text.

Now if something were to define the particularly of the “spiritual figure of Europe,” it would be precisely that in it, for want of being any longer borne by the genius proper to the *Greek* natural humanity, long vanished, philosophy was driven by the exigencies of faith in the Christian God. I *do not* mean—as one might imagine at this turning point—the “God of philosophers and savants,” which never served but to enable metaphysics to flee its own problematicity in sealing itself off within an onto-theological apparatus, sufficiently well described by Heidegger—, but precisely the jealous God to whom positive religious faith addresses itself, the “God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob” (to continue speaking like Pascal). For it is the constraints of dogma, which it was a matter of respecting through and through even while Christianity tried to appropriate Greek thought and to express itself philosophically, that have been the motor of an extraordinary logical inventiveness (as one sees, for example, in the role played by divine omnipotence throughout William of Ockham’s *Logic*), thanks to which, beneath the crust of theses, something like a philosophical *activity* and *questioning* was kept alive. Whoever claims that such affirmations may well appear true for the obscure and bygone period known as the “Middle Ages,” while being without pertinence for our modernity, particularly the “accomplished” modernity of which we are speaking, ought to reflect on the role played by the relation between speech and action in the ethical or religious attitude of the young Wittgenstein. For it is precisely this relation which—in unlocking the “cage” in which language had been enclosed by the most contemporary theory of logistics, in the eyes of the author of the *Tractatus*—enabled him to give up his silence and to recast the entire problematic of logicity.

The second component of the “spiritual figure” to which we have given the name of development is the accomplishment and the autonomization of the determination of the social body as a productive body. Certainly, here too it is a matter of a destiny of which the first moments were European. There is no need to develop here what will later be discussed on this subject when we turn to David Hume.²¹ One must insist, however, on the fact that *nothing any longer resists Capital* from the time that the production of which it is the *terminus a quo* and the *terminus ad quem* comes at the expense of the ablation of politics, and consequently of ethics.

Numerous, even innumerable, appearances may seem to contradict what has just been stated. Is it not true that the country of free enterprise is at the same time, and not by chance, the country of accomplished democracy? And are not the democratic debates, in the United States more ostensibly even than elsewhere, sewn with moral considerations? That is true, no doubt, and can be observed all the time. But nothing in the obviousness of the ubiquity of democratic

²¹ See further on in this volume “D. Hume: the Cynicism of Production,” which was the second conference pronounced in Lima.

procedures invalidates the fact that the public space they organize is merely the universal form of particular volitions. The public space, and the order that is sought there, are here simply those of the most general conditions for the fulfillment of the “human person” without any other determination of its being than the value which is taken for granted of its naked individuality. No common and public search for the forms of the true, of the good and of the useful emerges here *to precede* and *to define* the existence of the individual, which is why, despite any superficial resemblances, there is no political existence in the Greek sense. What American ear—and that will soon mean: what ear in all the vast world—can still open itself to the famous Greek sentence: “If it is not a citizen, it must be a God or a beast”? “On the contrary,” retorts the ideologue of development who is aroused in each of us, “if it is not a citizen, then it must be a man, whose individual self harbors (by rights, that is to say, it being a matter here of the theoretical discourse of the Ego and not of a psychological egotism) all possible riches of all possible gods. And it is precisely the justification of democratic action to be prescribed by what comes before it and by what counts after it: the human person.”

However, even (or above all rather) there where man settles upon himself the determination of the metaphysical sense of being, he is *already preceded*, played and undone [*joué et déjoué*] in all his certitudes and in his very language by an *other* sense of being, the reign of which does not depend upon his decision—no more than the essential features of knowledge that a representative subjectivity can give itself depend upon a producible and manageable *a priori* objectivity. Indeed, no more than man “constitutes” the language in which he learns to speak is he able to “decide” on the God to which the fundamental form of *Mitsein* sacrifices, and in which all his professional, social, and cultural “practices” are inscribed, including his practices that are consciously and deliberately “political” (“democratic,” in our example). So far as we are concerned, this god has been known for a long time, for it is to the Golden Calf that half-consciously, half-unconsciously all the festivities of modern liberty are offered. That being said just in case it has not yet been observed that our very profession of faith, “*In God we trust*,” is written on the dollar.

There remains finally the third component of ex-European modernity, in accordance with which science itself obeys the logic of “development.” Let me specify, at the risk perhaps of stating the obvious, that what I am calling “logic of development” is a logic regulating a movement of production defined as the expanding and self-regulated production of “wealth.” It is not only *money* which, as the money of Capital, incarnates such a logic of “automatic substance,” as Marx says; for the logic of wealth also applies to what the same Marx (who found in this homology the means of organizing at last in writing the accumulated materials for his book) calls the “wealth of the spirit.” By which he is directly targeting Hegel’s *Logic*. What is involved here, as we know, is the absolutizing

of modern ideality, of which Hegel well understood, as did Husserl, that it is in essence “infinite,” and that, in order for this infinite to be true, it must be able, on one hand, to master all the objects liable of being produced in its field, and, on the other, to propose “without remainder” such objectivities as the “equivalents” of all phenomena of ordinary consciousness, of which they have so to speak “harnessed” the truth.

However, we are concerned here neither with the “dialectical” method nor with the “intuitive” method of capture which were those respectively of Hegel and of Husserl in the attempt to accomplish such an ideal. For it is no philosophy which acquits itself of such an accomplishment, but rather the development of contemporary sciences, to the precise extent that they have made themselves capable of *autonomizing* (and firstly in mathematics) the “formalizing abstraction” which was discovered by Descartes and made “genuinely universal” (at least in embryonic form) in Leibnizian analysis. Let us recall here the already cited formulation of this operative closure of science upon itself, given by J.T. Desanti:

Any domain of knowledge in which it is possible to define in a univocal manner the systems of objects and, upon these systems of objects, explicit laws of operation, is accessible to demonstration, and is thereby by rights an object of mathematics.²²

It is *by this method* that modern science enters the age of development and functions like “Capital” in the order of idealities. For it increases of itself in the circulation of regulated writings which define in always more “powerful” ways an always greater number of objects as *its* objects, which it returns through its operations, by way of the sole principle of non-contradiction, to the univocal relations of formalizing abstraction as at their source.

This third aspect of the absolutizing of the modern ideal is acquired, like the two others, at the expense of a trade-off. To the ablation of mystical reserve and to that of the transcendence of the political we must now add, indeed, the ablation of conceptual questioning, or, to say the same thing differently, the renunciation of fundamental justification. Which means nothing more nor less than that, as a world of science, the modern world in the age of its accomplishment no longer needs philosophy.

Husserl, whose entire existence is contemporary with diverse episodes of the crisis of foundations, certainly could not have foreseen that this crisis would resolve itself not by the production of a “logic” in some kind of philosophical sense, capable of delivering mathematical practice from the paradoxes it had engendered, but precisely by the forces proper to mathematical

²² See note 14. —*Trans.*

formalization itself, or rather, as J.T. Desanti puts it, in a manner that emphasizes well the autonomization of which we are speaking, by “the indefinite applicability of mathematics to itself and the regulated productivity, however unforeseeable by rights, that this applicability engenders”²³: these are the last words of the article “Fondement des mathématiques”). Frege’s enterprise, like that of Russel and Whitehead, will have been for naught.

On the other hand, from these logical efforts which science would later reveal itself to have no need of, an inverse effect has emerged: the one tending to force philosophy itself to conform to the ideal of science, in other words the effort to reduce logos to “logizesthai,” thought to calculation. For some decades, by way of logical empiricism (if not always of logical positivism), and sometimes invoking the “first Wittgenstein,” abusively reduced to the “truth tables” and to the “general form of the proposition,” this attempt has affected the very heart of philosophy’s comprehension of itself. Anglo-Saxon rationalism (for, however composite its origins may be, it is in fact in the United States precisely that this ideology has its seat) is henceforth conquering, with the same vigor as Coca-Cola (“mas y mas!”²⁴), the European universities, including those which until now have been of the “continental” tradition.

An American end of “Europe.” A metaphysico-scientistic end of logicity. A total extinction, upon the horizon of our future, of the gleam in which the clarity of the Greek day had still reverberated.

What are the consequences—and what can we do? This is what it remains for us “indefatigably” to say, as Husserl would have wanted, although very differently from him.

Doing so, we shall treat together (I should say rather we shall sketch together) the two last points raised above. Trying to determine what must be done, however, I shall restrict myself to the philosophical. Not because the philosophical would be decisive: what is decisive is the political; nor because, our subject being “Husserl’s Europe,” we would attempt to ascertain as he did, albeit in a different manner (by another philosophy), under what form the “West” might and should exercise “its responsibility” with respect to peoples by preparing a life for them in the form of philosophy. I am not at all convinced that philosophical activity must, and can, be transformed into a form of life; I am quite willing to believe, on the contrary, that it is always a form of life which decides for a humanity the use (and before that, the very form) of its thoughts. And that it was not otherwise, already, for the Greeks, for whom philosophy was the ultimate fruit of a behavior concerning being which, for us, remains an enigma. For it is impossible to illuminate, by retrospectively projecting the sole light of Platonico-Aristotelian philosophy, the ensemble of what

²³ Jean Toussaint Desanti, *op. cit.* p. 291.

²⁴ Allusion to the Coca-Cola advertising campaign which was then invading the streets of Lima.

is called “Greek religion,” and the joint invention of music, mathematics and grammar in the ancient Pythagoreanism (wherein *none* of these terms had the sense they have for us today), not to mention the spirit of tragedy. But since Greece died in bequeathing to us precisely this fruit: philosophy, it is not the form of Greek life that must be examined as though it were a question of imitating it, but our own of which we must ask ourselves under what conditions it might render itself capable of continuing to bear a fruit of the same kind, although of a rather different variety, as the modern variety of which we have just accomplished the destiny was already different.

I shall restrict this questioning to the philosophical, then, simply because it is our own area of responsibility, we who dare to call ourselves “philosophers” and to assemble under this title. And the first thing, perhaps the only thing that matters here, is our persuading ourselves that we must, as philosophers, *cease living under the shadow of science*. More precisely, it is a matter of disconnecting the link that attaches the very conception of logicity, with Husserl as strongly as in any other form of contemporary rationalism, to science. It is true that in the passage from *Formal and Transcendental Logic* which is chosen as an epigraph to this work, one reads that “the original relationship between logic and science has undergone a remarkable reversal in modern times”; and it is no less true that when phenomenology proposes to rediscover, for modern reason, the meaning of what the same text calls the “Platonist foundation of Logic,” it is indeed a matter of preventing the degeneration of logical work into a formalizing and operational activity. But, whereas we have recognized in this activity (in following Desanti’s lesson) the very spirit of modern sciences in the autonomization of their development, Husserl, on the contrary, always believed that the foundation of scientificity was an apodicticity of an intuitive-categorical type. That is why neither the “principle of principles” (the reception and the gathering of all sense data in the “how” of their very donation), nor the discovery of material *a priori*, nor the “descriptive” regime of phenomenological discourse, appeared incompatible to him with the upholding of an ideal of *mathesis universalis* unifying within itself all the idealities in the form of a logic *as science*. This is a completely bastard concept of science, to tell the truth, in the sense that if it is a matter of producing and linking together “object systems,” and if these must be provided with a “univocal” quality, neither these objects nor their univocal character are engendered in a regulated writing or liable to calculation. Neither the eidetic reduction nor the method of variations leads to a “formalizing abstraction,” but simply to a distinguishing of essence from fact. That too, if one likes, is indeed an “abstraction,” which also liberates what one is hard put to qualify otherwise than as a “form,” but it is a matter of philosophical (not scientific) abstraction and of logical (not “logistical”) formality.

What has just been said implies that one must choose, out of the ambiguous heritage that Husserl has left us, between two conceptions of logicity: one which consists in gathering the *a*

priori articulation of phenomena, that is of being as it “shows” itself (and precisely “in the natural attitude,” which must not be for us as for Husserl a “point of departure” which the phenomenologist, despite the name he bears, hastens to abandon while substituting for it a kind of theoretical artifact in which the phenomenon would have been entirely reconstructed as an ensemble of simple natures—for now if ever is the moment to speak Cartesian), and the other which, on the contrary, does all this in a non-operative (and hence inoperative) mime of the methods of science. We shall thus leave aside the “infinite task” (better qualified as indefinite rather, or better yet as contradictorily definite) which satisfies neither the savant nor philosopher, by which Husserl attempts to fashion a sort of Golem of the world. And let us resolutely dismiss the logic of the ideal of science.

What do we do in this gesture if not confide the writing of logical formality to the possibilities of the natural languages, those spoken by the natural humanities in the unbroken horizon of what Husserl calls “the natural attitude,” and which, in truth, is no attitude, and contains no “*thesis* of the world,” but consists simply in the essential finitude of “being in the world” in the sense of Heidegger. Perhaps it has not been sufficiently noticed that what Heidegger calls *Dasein* belongs to no humanity rather than any other and that his primary concern is to separate this “being-human in the human” from any anthropological consideration. What prevents us from noticing this (and from noting at the same time its moral and political superiority in comparison to the Husserlian division between “anthropological types” and “European” humanity) is what we know (what we know too soon and too quickly) about Heideggerian faithfulness to the Greek spiritual figure, above all if we add to this the conscientiously and deliberately *German* form it took with him, who went so far as to lose himself for a brief moment in the beginnings of National-Socialism. Nevertheless, in a late (and moreover admirable) text, entitled “Dialogue with a Japanese Friend,” Heidegger confirms the possibility of the question of Being speaking itself and conceiving itself from the possibilities proper to Japanese language and civilization. He even goes so far at one point as to reverse the Husserlian commonplace about the difference between “evolved” languages (as we read in *Investigations IV*, which adds without apparent scruple: “ours, for instance”) and those which would still be rudimentary concerning their proximity with respect to the logical kernel buried in all of them. Heidegger wonders if there is indeed not a link between the limitation of the Western metaphysical form of the questioning concerning Being and, precisely, a kind of structural limitation in “our” (Indo-European) languages. Whatever the pertinence of this remark, which incurs the risk of simply reversing an error (which is to say, repeating it in reverse), what is important to notice is that the essential finitude of *Being itself*, which is to have no “existence” other than the element of language, confides the gathering of logical formality, definitively, and with

equal rights, to the homonymy of languages. Thus perish, along with the Husserlian logical kernel, all attempts at ever founding upon “pure logical grammar” a Europeanization (or, to call it what it is, a cultural colonization) of the “other humanities.”