Bulletin of the *Transilvania* University of Braşov • Vol. 4 (53) No.2. - 2011 • Series IV
Series IV: Philology and Cultural Studies

HUSSERL'S CONCEPT OF EUROPE

Diana-Adela DINU[1]

Abstract: *The present article focuses on the ideological impact created by Husserl's interpretation of the European spiritual crisis. Husserl proves that the spiritual crisis can be comprehended as a whole process that has reached Europe due to the failure of rationalism. The failure of the rational culture to explain everything, the crisis of the European sciences as a whole opens a new path in redefining Europe as the product of reason, as the product of the philosophical spirit.*

Key words: *European spirit, crisis, reason, rationalism.*

1. Introduction

Edmund Gustav Albrecht Husserl, the founder of transcedental phenomenology, has been constantly preoccupied by Europe and the European crisis which affected the old continent where he lived. His vision was influenced by the crisis which had grabbed the European sciences during his lifetime.

The present article is going to reveal the main aspects of the European crisis, depicting the state of affairs in Europe and analyzing the solutions Husserl proposes. Husserl's approach is deeply influenced by the crisis of the European sciences. Having this in mind, Husserl finds answers to the crisis by creating a spiritual mapping of Europe. Husserl affirms that the creedle of European civilization can be tracked back to Greece. The reason which stands behind this statement is the simple fact that Ancient Greece was driven by idealism and attributed this idealism an infinite component. The Greek world led to the birth of philosophy and critical thinking the way we understand them nowadays. Husserl states that the human spirit is based on the human physis and that the psychic life of every individual needs a material base which is recognized as the body. In his discourse Hegel starts from the premise that rationality is something positive. But there is a misunderstood side of rationality opening the door to misinterpretation.

Husserl sees in the Greek world the mature form of our expression. He considers that the comeback of philosophy to the forefront of research is a key solution against the decay of the society in its entirety. The misunderstood rationalism as reasoning is seen as a main cause of concern to world philosophy, the latter being in an irreversible process of dissolution.

The overcoming of the crisis could be done in a very specific way: by clarifying the role of modern science. In trying to overcome the crises of deviation from the rational sense of life, Europe has to overcome all spirit-related issues and promote the redefinition of Europe by means of philosophical thinking, making the rational thinking defeat naturalism.

[1] Northern Borders University.

BDD-A20153 © 2011 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-13 23:55:07 UTC)

The present article is going to focus on a few writings which reflect Husserl's vision on Europe, continuing with the presentation of the main ideas promoted in the Vienna lecture in May 1935 also known as 'Philosophy and the Crisis of the European Humanity'. A quick glimpse will be taken into the 'Formal and Transcedental Logic. A critic of the Pure Logic', which will be followed by a parallel inspired by the the division into formal and transcedental logic as well as the division into formal and transcedental meaning in the linguistic field and the possibility of existence of a pure grammar and its reflection into real life.

2. A concise perspective on Husserl's life and work which ultimately led to the creation of his approach to Europe

Husserl was born in Moravia, a region situated in the previous Austrian Empire as part of a Jewish family in 1859. Being the founder of phenomenology in today's terms, Husserl states his clear adherence to experience as a means of reaching understanding by involving the reductional method in a way in which the subject is able to get to know the essence of things directly. His main method distances itself from empirism and positivism as tendencies. It's worth mentioning the fact that Husserl was overwhelmingly influenced by his mathematics teachers K.Weierstrass and L. Koenigsberger in his thoughts but the main influence is attributed to F. Brentano whose lectures on philosophy and psychology Husserl attended in Vienna. Brentano presented to Husserl the concept of intentionality but also introduced to him the writings of J. S. Mill, B. Bolzano, D. Hume. His vision was also influenced by C. Strumpf whom Husserl met in Halle. It was under Strumpf's supervision possible for Husserl to publish his first major philosophical work, namely 'Philosophy of Arithmetics' used as a habilitation paper. Husserl's academic career has led him to famous German universities; first to Halle from 1887 onwards, then at Goettingen in 1901 and Freiburg from 1916 to 1928 when he resigned. Husserl has held two famous lectures, one in Paris in 1929 and the other one in Prague in 1935. The biggest setback of his life was induced by the appearance on the political scene of the Nazzi party. Landing under threat, Husserl decided what's best for him and resigned from his position in the German Academy. The racial law of racism has cost him a lot, the immense threat he felt made him leave. The tremendous amount of writings he left to the his followers was original. A few of his writings picture in detail his vision on Europe. The first one is the Vienna lecture which was held in May 1935 with a text called 'The Crisis of the European Humanity and Philosophy'. Another work dealing with the European crisis is the Introduction to 'Formal and Transcedental Logic' from 1929 and the fourth of the 'Logical Investigations' from 1901.

3. The Vienna Lecture

"Philosophy and the Crisis of European Humanity", also known as the Vienna Lecture, sets a goal in making the object of this lecture the crisis of the European world. The lecture discusses the crisis which is rooted deep in the European world by building the discourse on the historical philosophical idea about humanity. "The European nations are sick; Europe itself, it is said, is in crisis. We are by no means lacking something like nature doctors. Indeed, we are practically inundated by a flood of naive and excessive suggestions for reform. But why do the so richly developed humanistic disciplines fail to perform the service here

BDD-A20153 © 2011 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-13 23:55:07 UTC)

that is so admirably performed by the natural sciences in their sphere?" (Husserl, 1970: 269).

Husserl states that the human spirit is based on the human body or physis and acknowledges the fact that, people, individuals or communities of creatures consist of both a physical and a psychic component. Whenever we reach the point when we have to explain events in arts or philology in a humanistic way, we have to consider both mind and body.

The humanistic approach doesn't promote the consideration of the spirit only as an abstract matter of investigation. The humanistic side considers facts related to nature. Husserl states that there is consistent proof of a pure nature's science as a parallel to the universal science of humanities, the same way as there is a science of scientific medicine and homeopathic treatment.

Husserl gives examples to support his statement by referring to the work of a historian who cannot deal with the history of Greece without taking into consideration the physiography of Greece or analyse the architecture in Ancient Greece without considering the physical existence of buildings. Matter cannot be left apart in the study made by a historian or any other researcher. Even if the research refers to the spirit or the culture of a certain people, the physical matter, be it nature or body. Husserl refers in his study to nature in a different way as we understand it in the sense of the natural sciences but covers the meaning attributed to the word nature by the Greeks. Greeks used to describe as nature the surrounding reality. Thus the Greeks have something else on their mind when referring to nature. It isn't the objective world as we understand it, but their representation of the world.

The concept has its own subjective validity, as, for instance, their representation of the world involved deities or demons. The concept of surrounding world has its own connotation in a spiritual sense. "Our surrounding world is a spiritual structure in us and in our historical life.

Thus there is no reason for him who makes spirit as spirit his subject matter to demand anything other than a purely spiritual explanation for it. And so generally:to look upon the nature of the surrounding world as something alien to the spirit, and consequently to want to buttress humanistic science with natural science so as to make it supposedly exact, is absurd."(see Husserl, 1970: 170)

In Husserl's view Europe has landed in a spiritual crisis. The author is in search for an answer and concludes that there is an answer to the crises. But first of all we have to go back to the characteristics described as defining the European spiritual shape. Husserl concludes that we are far from just defining Europe in terms of Geography, as belonging to the same space.

He says that there is more to it, we have to refer to the culture which Europeans have in common. In spiritual terms the United States belong to Europe whereas eskimos, Indians and gypsies don't. Europe is a term which describes best spiritual bonds insofar as activities, institutions are concerned.

These bonds created by the spirit transcend everything, even the differences alloted to nations. The inherent power of the spirit creates on the basis of cultural conversion something special we can call a home. The spiritual creedle isn't a spatial concept (although it might happen to be). Husserl refers to the spiritual world to which humans and nations belong. An example covers Ancient Greece during the 7^{th} and the 6^{th} centuries BC.

The European crisis is provoked by a misunderstood rationalism. The ideal and

BDD-A20153 © 2011 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-13 23:55:07 UTC)

mature form of our spiritual interpretation of the world has been achieved and can be found in the Greek interpretation of the world. The Ancient Greek civilization offers the perfect model for our most reliable interpretation of the world.

The German interpretation of the world according to Enlightenment which promoted a rationalism-like driven reason is considered to be a predictable and forgivable mistake. Referring to the crisis felt in our present time, Husserl acknowledges the fact that we have to complete a scanning of the Modern Era in order to reach a thorough analysis.

This analysis must consider the achievements of the past and admit that philosophy has fallen into a state of disgrace. Husserl reminds us that the European discontent is worrying even though incomprehensible. One of our major problems is caused by the objective sciences that sees the objective world as the only acceptable ultimate one.

The mistake is caused by the lack of understading of the fact that even the definition of science itself involves a subjective side in defining it. Subjective elements have the right to remain covered by different research methods. Supreme objectivity creates confusion to the spirit because we cannot find an objective truth for the psyche.

Running into this confusing state of circumstances, the supporters of extreme objectivity run short when confronted with such facts and immediately allot the subjective elements which are swept away by the physicist to psychologist. But the surrounding world has a subjective component, the subject is left out of the investigation, the prejudice is done by banishing the researcher from becoming the subject of his research. The present European crisis has many sides and symptoms and has a clear destiny. We can overcome the European crisis by taking into consideration the idea that Europe is the product of the reason, it is the product of the philosophical spirit.

Thus the nucleus of the crisis can be comprehended as a whole process that reached Europe due to the failure of the rationalism. The failure of the rational culture isn't the failure of the rationalism but the expression of its misinterpretation, its inlay into naturilism and and objectivism. There are many chances to escape the crisis and they refer to overcoming the barriers set against spirit and spirituality and to promote a new sense in life, the rational life so that a European awakening can take place.

"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 destructive blaze of lack of faith, 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". (Husserl, 1970: 299).

Introduction to "Formale und Transzendentale Logik.Versuch einer Kritik der logischen Vernunft."

The first critical analysis made against the science is done in the introductory part to the 'Formal and Transcendental Logic'. The work was published in1929 in Germany and is centered on basic concepts like true science and true culture. 'Nur noch in einem laxen Sinne nennen wir die Philosophien der vorplatonischen Epoche, nennen wir ähnliche Kulturgestaltungen anderer Völker und Zeiten Wissenschaften.' (Hussel, 1929: 5).

The logical discourse is said to be just a formal one. Different sciences make efforts to justify their own validity. The contemporary logic has evolved as a

BDD-A20153 © 2011 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-13 23:55:07 UTC)

reaction to sophism explaining everything. The logic of Husserl's contemporary people took a wrong turn because they were misled in their judgement on a dead end. This start had been given by Plato who took into account the pure Idea, getting rid of the empirical elements. His contribution was immense because he made possible the creation of the different departments in the field of sciences. But, something else happened in the meantime. The relationship between logic and science took a turn and the sciences became gradually independent.

This is a turning point when we witness a negative side of the classification of sciences by way of which they become so independent and numerous that they forget about any justification and they don't provide the spirit with a critical approach. Thus logic has lost its role as a creator of the method and as a science of pure principles of knowledge and science, losing the leadership. 'Mit anderen Worten: die Logik, die ursprünglich Fackelträgerin der Methode war und den Anspruch erhob, die reine Prinzipienlehre möglicher Erkenntnis und Wissenschaft zu sein, verlor diesen historischen Beruf und blieb in ihrer Entwicklung weit zurück.'(see Husserl, 1929:5)

The reorganization of the natural sciences in the 17th century didn't take into account the logical reflections on the possibility of existence of a real natural science and the methods that were supposed to be used. These reflections come between the relationship with the new tendences charactersitic to those times in order to form a new science of logic. To this tendency belong not only Galilei but Descartes as well.

The 'Discourse on the Method' and in his meditations we find the expression of a new radical and universal theory. In regard to the the next epoch in which the departments of science become independent there won't be any issues related to logic, the latter being pushed to the margin. But logic itself raises questions about its role which is nearly forgotton in modernity.

Instead of following the norms of pure existence in all its appearances, guiding the conception of methods and offering truthfulness, logic is led by the theoretical sciences, mainly by the natural sciences.

Europe's modern scientific culture undergoes a decline. The philosopher can only sadly notice that the situation is sad. The departments of science have multiplied with a rapid growth so that the continuingly rising number of sciences doesn't help any useful application. This perspective hits the birth of the sciences and their growth. Science gets a theoretical component which relies on practical experience or intuition and not on the rationality of the pursued activity. By losing self confidence they lack meaning. The modern man doesn't rely on science the way the Enlightenment man used to. Science had a well established role in the past; it had the function to contribute to the well being of the people based on the concept of the practical reason. The belief that practical reason can replace religious faith comes to the forefront nowadays. Life reaches a dead end, the world becomes uncomprehensive and we ask questions about the direction we are headed for. The practical reason, also known as vernunftpraxis recognizes the a priori theory only as a limit and the effect is the appearance of barriers and misunderstandings.

The book on 'Formal and Transcendental Logic' confers an explanation based on intentionality to the effective sense of formal logic. It takes into its analysis theoretical concepts which lead to our understanding of the historical experience, portraying the image of traditional objectives and throwing them back into the

BDD-A20153 © 2011 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-13 23:55:07 UTC)

logician's mind to render meaning based on intentionality. The major innovation consists of the fact that it lays stress on the intentionality of the researcher who created the objective elements based on the existing sciences.

The ultimate understanding characteristic to intentionality is the direction it takes. Husserl answers the questions by giving examples, and extending the research about the antithesis between the formal and the transcendental aspect of sciences. Only that science which is conceived in a transcedental way can be an ultimate science, only a world which is conceived and understood in a transcendental phenomenological way can be a world which makes sense, only the transcendental logic can be a profound logic: 'nur eine transzendentale Logik kann eine letzte Wissenschaftslehre, eine letzte, tiefste und universalste Prinzipien- und Normenlehre aller Wissenschaften sein'. (Husserl, 1929:5).

4. 'Logical Investigations'

Drawing a parallel to logic, Husserl examines modern grammar as an example of shortages on a European level. Husserl blames grammar due to its reliability on psychology and other empirical sciences. Hence he believes in the idea of a general grammar or even a a priori one:

'Die moderne Grammatik glaubt ausschliefslieh auf Psychologie und sonstigen empirischen Wissenschaften bauen zu müssen.' (Husserl, 1901: 284).

Inside pure logic there is a sphere of materialization of the rules which cannot be captured and which unlike the general rules of logic could be considered purely grammatical. The concept of expression i.e. the difference between the exclussively sonorized parts or the mental or the syntactical parts of the expression (prefixes, suffixes, compound words) can be delimited taking into account the difference in meaning. If we decompose the parts into simple and compound, then the correspondent expressions must become simple or complex and this composition would necessarily lead to ultimate fractions (small parts) of meaning, the syntactical ones and then again to expressions.

On the other hand if we decompose these expressions by means of sounds, without taking into account the meaning, then we obtain meaningless parts. 'Hingegen ergiebt die Zerlegung der Ausdrücke, als blas sinnlicher Erscheinungen, allzeit auch bloss sinnliche und nicht mehr bedeutsame Theile.'(Husserl, 1970: 293)

5. The application of apriori rules in the semantic field

If we compare the dependent and the independent meanings with the dependent and the independent contents, then we will discover the fact that meanings, namely bedeutungen, find themselves driven by rules which impose their correlation to new meanings.

Anyways a dependent part of an expression has a content which is dependent on a specific rule which imposes the necessity of its supplemetation with new meanings. This fact explains the form taken by the connections in which they have to be framed. Based on the differences of the expressions we will divide them into kategoremmatical and syncategoremmatical. 'Ebenso verhält es sich mit der darauf gebauten Unterscheidung der Ausdrücke in kategorematische und synkategorem-atische'. (Husserl, 1970: 293)

The apriori semantic rules whose existence give explanation to every logical form of an expression are those rules which appear in the 17th and 18th centuries on a universal grammar. Old grammarians had in

BDD-A20153 © 2011 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-13 23:55:07 UTC)

front of them the gramatical rules even if they didn't intend to clarify the meaning. Grammar too includes an apriori norm that cannot be overcome. In pure logic, the apriori logic differenciates itself from the empirical or practical logic; grammar follows the same pattern, apriori grammar differenciates itself from the empirical one.

"Die apriorischen Bedeutungsgesetze, deren Wesen jede „Form" im Sinne der Logik verdeutlicht, sind es, welche den vom Rationalismus des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts concipierten Gedanken einer universellen Grammatik einen sicheren Halt geben." (Husserl, 1970: 295).

The empirical side is determined by human nature, partially by the specificity of individuals and individually lived experience. The apriori appears as self-determined, even trivial. every race, being very close to nature and its history. '[...]und doch ist seine Nachweisung und theoretische Verfolgung wissen-schaftlich und philosophisch von allergrössten Interesse' . (Husserl: 1970: 295).

6. Conclusions

Husserl's vision of Europe reveals the fact that Husserl's main belief indicates the idea that the reason represents the main characteristic of European humanity. The logical kernel is seen in a teleological way starting from the European definition of logicity, having as an outgoing point the finite model of Greek reasoning and afterwards the infinite model of modern reasoning.

The study leads to the conclusion that all nations comprise of an unrevealed or a hidden primary European scheme which is inherently contained by its own self. The fourth of the logical investigations states that the universal features inherent to the human nature are found in a first shell. The second shell reveals the infinite fragmentations of individual singularities and that's the reason why the logical existence might be disturbed.

Languages unfold into an indefinite number of possibilities, the same way different cultures succede eachother. The husserlian texts forward the idea that human spiritual experiences are characterized in the beginning by a certain state of naturality but still lacks that which lacks any nature, history and the real historical perspective.

The direction indicated by Husserl is that a common European background provides the necessary resources needed for survival in case of any people that we consider. The lack of the European background leads to the extinction of its people. The break in the European mind is done for the first time by the Greeks.

The Greeks' main spiritual innovation was their universal interest which was guided by a purely theoretical approach. The Ancient world doesn't go further than that and doesn't ponder about the infinity of possibilities. Husserl considers nihilism a huge peril which could mean the distruction of European humanity. He addresses the audience with the expression good Europeans.

The good Europeans are the ones invided to fight for the awakening of a new philosophical thinking aimed mainly against naturalism and nihilism. The Europeans have to prove their patriotic love by making reason govern the sense in life.

The new philosophical trend is associated to a spiritual Phoenix which states that only the spirit can be immortal.

References

1. Butler, Judith: *Gender Trouble*. 1990. New York: Routledge, 1999 Copleston, Frederick. *Istoria Filosofiei*, Vol. VII, Cap. Filosofia Germana din Secolele XVIII si XIX, Bucuresti: Ed. All, 2008.

BDD-A20153 © 2011 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-13 23:55:07 UTC)

2. Derrida, Jacques: *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
3. Everdell, William R.: *The First Moderns.* Chicago: Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
4. Granel, Gerard : *Écrits logiques et politiques.* Paris: Galilée, 1990.
5. Husserl, Edmund: *Formale und transzendentale Logik. Versuch einer Kritik der logischen Vernunft*. Halle: Max Niemayer Verlag, 1929.
6. Husserl, Edmund: *Logische Untersuchun-gen. Zweiter Teil: Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis.* Halle: Max Niemayer Verlag, 1970.
7. Husserl, Edmund: *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Philosophy*. Carr, David, translation and introduction, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970.
8. Marga, Andrei: *Introducere in filosofia contemporana.* Cap. *"Fenomenologia Transcedentala" si "Fenomenologia Existentiala"*. Iasi: Ed. Polirom, 2002.
9. Keller, Pierre: *Husserl and Heidegger on human experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
10. Smith B.; Smith D. W.: *The Cambridge Companion to Husserl.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1993.

BDD-A20153 © 2011 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-13 23:55:07 UTC)