

P A R T I  
The Crisis of the  
Sciences as Expression  
of the Radical Life-Crisis  
of European Humanity

§ 1. *Is there, in view of their constant successes, really a crisis of the sciences?*

I EXPECT THAT AT THIS PLACE, dedicated as it is to the sciences, the very title of these lectures, "The Crisis of European Sciences and Psychology,"<sup>1</sup> will incite controversy.<sup>2</sup> A crisis of our sciences as such: can we seriously speak of it? Is not this talk, heard so often these days, an exaggeration? After all, the crisis of a science indicates nothing less than that its genuine scientific character, the whole manner in which it has set its task and developed a methodology for it, has become questionable. This may be true of philosophy, which in our time threatens to succumb to skepticism, irrationalism, and mysticism. The same may hold for psychology, insofar as it still makes philosophical claims rather than merely wanting a place among the positive sciences. But how could we speak straightforwardly and quite seriously of a crisis of the sciences in general—that is, also of the positive sciences, including pure mathematics and the exact natural sciences, which we can never cease to admire as models

1. This was the original title of the lecture series before the "Cercle philosophique de Prague pour les recherches sur l'entendement humain." In *Philosophia*, Vol. I, where Parts I and II of the *Crisis* were published, Husserl prefaced the text with the following remarks:

"The work that I am beginning with the present essay, and shall complete in a series of further articles in *Philosophia*, makes the attempt, by way of a teleological-historical reflection upon the origins of our critical scientific and philosophical situation, to establish the unavoidable necessity of a transcendental-phenomenological reorientation of philosophy. Accordingly, it becomes, in its own right, an introduction to transcendental phenomenology.

"The work has grown from the development of ideas that made up the basic content of a series of lectures I gave in November, 1935, in Prague (half in the hospitable rooms of the German university, half in those of the Czech university), following a kind invitation by the 'Cercle philosophique de Prague pour les recherches sur l'entendement humain.'"

The German text of this preface is given in *Krisis*, p. XIV, note 3. (In these footnotes, references to *Krisis* are to the German edition edited by Walter Biemel. See Translator's Introduction, note 4.)

of rigorous and highly successful scientific discipline? To be sure, they have proved to be changeable in the total style of their systematic theory-building and methodology. Only recently they overcame, in this respect, a threatening paralysis, under the title of classical physics—threatening, that is, as the supposed classical consummation of the confirmed style of centuries. But does the victorious struggle against the ideal of classical physics, as well as the continuing conflict over the appropriate and genuine form of construction for pure mathematics, mean that previous physics and mathematics were not yet scientific or that they did not, even though affected with certain unclarities or blind spots, obtain convincing insights within their own field of endeavor? Are these insights not compelling even for us who are freed from such blind spots? Can we not thus, placing ourselves back into the attitude of the classical theorists, understand completely how it gave rise to all the great and forever valid discoveries, together with the array of technical inventions which so deserved the admiration of earlier generations? Physics, whether represented by a Newton or a Planck or an Einstein, or whom ever else in the future, was always and remains exact science. It remains such even if, as some think, an absolutely final form of total theory-construction is never to be expected or striven for.

The situation is clearly similar in regard to another large group of sciences customarily counted among the positive sciences,<sup>2</sup> namely, the concrete humanistic sciences, however it may stand with their controversial reference back to the ideal of exactness in the natural sciences—a difficulty, incidentally, which concerns even the relation of the biophysical (“concrete” natural-scientific) disciplines to those of the mathematically exact natural sciences. The scientific rigor of all these disciplines, the convincingness of their theoretical accomplishments, and their enduringly compelling successes are unquestionable. Only of psychology must we perhaps be less sure, in spite of its claim to be the abstract, ultimately explanatory, basic science of the concrete humanistic disciplines. But generally we let psychology stand, attributing its obvious retardation of method and accomplishment to a naturally slower development. At any rate, the contrast between the “scientific” character of this group of sciences and the “unscientific” character of philosophy is unmis-

2. As is usual in German, the term *Wissenschaften* is applied to the humanities as well as the natural and social sciences. The term “science” will be used in this inclusive sense, though I have sometimes translated *Geisteswissenschaften* as “humanistic disciplines.”

takable. Thus we concede in advance some justification to the first inner protest against the title of these lectures from scientists who are sure of their method.

## § 2. *The positivistic reduction of the idea of science to mere factual science. The “crisis” of science as the loss of its meaning for life.*

IT MAY BE, HOWEVER, that motives arise from another direction of inquiry—that of the general lament about the crisis of our culture and the role here ascribed to the sciences—for subjecting the scientific character of all sciences to a serious and quite necessary critique without sacrificing their primary sense of scientific discipline, so unimpeachable within the legitimacy of their methodic accomplishments.

The indicated change in the whole direction of inquiry is what we wish, in fact, to undertake. In doing this we shall soon become aware that the difficulty which has plagued psychology, not just in our time but for centuries—its own peculiar “crisis”—has a central significance both for the appearance of puzzling, insoluble obscurities in modern, even mathematical sciences and, in connection with that, for the emergence of a set of world-enigmas which were unknown to earlier times. They all lead back to the *enigma of subjectivity* and are thus inseparably bound to the *enigma of psychological subject matter and method*. This much, then, as a first indication of the deeper meaning of our project in these lectures.

We make our beginning with a change which set in at the turn of the past century in the general evaluation of the sciences. It concerns not the scientific character of the sciences but rather what they, or what science in general, had meant and could mean for human existence.<sup>1</sup> The exclusiveness with which

1. *menschliches Dasein*. Husserl makes rather extensive use in this work of the word *Dasein* as applied specifically to man’s existence. This is probably a conscious or unconscious concession to the popularity of Heidegger’s work. His use of the term *Existenz* will be noted below (§ 5, note 1).

the total world-view of modern man, in the second half of the nineteenth century, let itself be determined by the positive sciences and be blinded by the "prosperity" <sup>2</sup> they produced, meant an indifferent turning-away from the questions which are decisive for a genuine humanity. <sup>3</sup> Merely fact-minded sciences make merely fact-minded people. The change in public evaluation was unavoidable, especially after the war, and we know that it has gradually become a feeling of hostility among the younger generation. In our vital need—so we are told—this science has nothing to say to us. It excludes in principle precisely the questions which man, given over in our unhappy times to the most portentous upheavals, finds the most burning: questions of the meaning or meaninglessness of the whole of this human existence. Do not these questions, universal and necessary for all men, demand universal reflections and answers based on rational insight? In the final analysis they concern man as a free, self-determining being in his behavior toward the human and extrahuman surrounding world <sup>4</sup> and free in regard to his capacities for rationally shaping himself and his surrounding world. What does science have to say about reason and unreason or about us men as subjects of this freedom? The mere science of bodies clearly has nothing to say; it abstracts from everything subjective. As for the humanistic sciences, on the other hand, all the special and general disciplines of which treat of man's spiritual <sup>5</sup> existence, that is, within the horizon of his historicity: their rigorous scientific character requires, we are told, that the scholar carefully exclude all valuative positions, all questions of the reason or unreason of their human subject matter and its cultural configurations. Scientific, objective truth is exclusively a matter of establishing what the world, the physical as well as the spiritual world, is in fact. But can the world, and human existence in it, truthfully have a meaning if the sciences recognize as

2. Husserl uses the English word.

3. *Menschentum*. Husserl uses this term and *Menschheit* indistinguishably. The distinction made by Paul Ricoeur (*Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology* [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967], p. 159) seems to me to be unfounded, though I have generally translated the latter as "mankind." Difficulty arises when Husserl begins using *Menschheit* in the plural. See below, § 6, note 1.

4. *Umwelt*. "Surrounding world" will be used throughout.

5. *geistig*. The translating difficulties with *Geist* and its derivatives are too well known to require comment. I have usually opted for "spirit" as the least of several evils. Sometimes "mental" is used for the adjectival form.

true only what is objectively established in this fashion, and if history has nothing more to teach us than that all the shapes of the spiritual world, all the conditions of life, ideals, norms upon which man relies, form and dissolve themselves like fleeting waves, that it always was and ever will be so, that again and again reason must turn into nonsense, and well-being into misery? <sup>6</sup> Can we console ourselves with that? Can we live in this world, where historical occurrence is nothing but an unending concatenation of illusory progress and bitter disappointment?

### § 3. *The founding of the autonomy of European humanity through the new formulation of the idea of philosophy in the Renaissance.*

IT WAS NOT ALWAYS THE CASE that science understood its demand for rigorously grounded truth in the sense of that sort of objectivity which dominates our positive sciences in respect to method and which, having its effect far beyond the sciences themselves, is the basis for the support and widespread acceptance of a philosophical and ideological positivism. The specifically human questions were not always banned from the realm of science; their intrinsic relationship to all the sciences—even to those of which man is not the subject matter, such as the natural sciences—was not left unconsidered. As long as this had not yet happened, science could claim significance—indeed, as we know, the major role—in the completely new shaping of European humanity which began with the Renaissance. Why science lost this leadership, why there occurred an essential change, a positivistic restriction of the idea of science—to understand this, according to its *deeper motives*,<sup>1</sup> is of great importance for the purpose of these lectures.

6. A paraphrase from *Faust*, Part I, line 1976: "Vernunft wird Unsinn, Wohltat Plage."

1. Husserl's use of *Motif*, *motivieren*, and *Motivation* is so important in this work that I have simply used "motive," "motivate," "motivation," etc., to translate them, even though Husserl's use often exceeds the bounds of standard English usage of these terms. It is hoped that Husserl's sense will emerge from the context.

In the Renaissance, as is well known, European humanity brings about a revolutionary change. It turns against its previous way of existing—the medieval—and disowns it, seeking to shape itself anew in freedom. Its admired model is ancient humanity. This mode of existence is what it wishes to reproduce in itself.

What does it hold to be essential to ancient man? After some hesitation, nothing less than the “philosophical” form of existence: freely giving oneself, one’s whole life, its rule through pure reason or through philosophy. Theoretical philosophy is primary. A superior survey of the world must be launched, unfettered by myth and the whole tradition: universal knowledge, absolutely free from prejudice, of the world and man, ultimately recognizing in the world its inherent reason and teleology and its highest principle, God. Philosophy as theory frees not only the theorist but any philosophically educated person. And theoretical autonomy is followed by practical autonomy. According to the guiding ideal of the Renaissance, ancient man forms himself with insight through free reason. For this renewed “Platonism” this means not only that man should be changed ethically [but that] the whole human surrounding world, the political and social existence of mankind, must be fashioned anew through free reason, through the insights of a universal philosophy.

In accordance with this ancient model, recognized at first only by individuals and small groups, a theoretical philosophy should again be developed which was not to be taken over blindly from the tradition but must grow out of independent inquiry and criticism.

It must be emphasized here that the idea of philosophy handed down from the ancients is not the concept of present-day schoolbooks, merely comprising a group of disciplines; in the first centuries of the modern period—even though it changes not insignificantly as soon as it is taken up—it retains the formal meaning of the one all-encompassing science, the science of the totality of what is.<sup>2</sup> Sciences in the plural, all those sciences ever to be established or already under construction, are but dependent branches of the One Philosophy. In a bold, even extravagant, elevation of the meaning of universality, begun by Descartes, this new philosophy seeks nothing less than to encompass, in the

2. I have used “what is,” “that which is,” and sometimes “that which exists” to translate *Seiendes*, *das Seiende*, etc. This particular locution may be another result of Heidegger’s influence.

unity of a theoretical system, all meaningful questions in a rigorous scientific manner, with an apodictically intelligible methodology, in an unending but rationally ordered progress of inquiry. Growing from generation to generation and forever, this one edifice of definitive, theoretically interrelated truths was to solve all conceivable problems—problems of fact and of reason, problems of temporality and eternity.

Thus the positivistic concept of science in our time is, historically speaking, a *residual concept*. It has dropped all the questions which had been considered under the now narrower, now broader concepts of metaphysics, including all questions vaguely termed “ultimate and highest.” Examined closely, these and all the excluded questions have their inseparable unity in the fact that they contain, whether expressly or as implied in their meaning, the *problems of reason*—reason in all its particular forms. Reason is the explicit theme in the disciplines concerning knowledge (i.e., of true and genuine, rational knowledge), of true and genuine valuation (genuine values as values of reason), of ethical action (truly good acting, acting from practical reason); here reason is a title for “absolute,” “eternal,” “supertemporal,” “unconditionally” valid ideas and ideals. If man becomes a “metaphysical” or specifically philosophical problem, then he is in question as a rational being; if his history is in question, it is a matter of the “meaning” or reason in history. The problem of God clearly contains the problem of “absolute” reason as the teleological source of all reason in the world—of the “meaning” of the world. Obviously even the question of immortality is a question of reason, as is the question of freedom. All these “metaphysical” questions, taken broadly—commonly called specifically philosophical questions—surpass the world understood as the universe of mere facts. They surpass it precisely as being questions with the idea of reason in mind. And they all claim a higher dignity than questions of fact, which are subordinated to them even in the order of inquiry. Positivism, in a manner of speaking, decapitates philosophy. Even the ancient idea of philosophy, as unified in the indivisible unity of all being, implied a meaningful order of being and thus of problems of being. Accordingly, metaphysics, the science of the ultimate and highest questions, was honored as the queen of the sciences; its spirit decided on the ultimate meaning of all knowledge supplied by the other sciences. This, too, was taken over by the reviving philosophy [of the Renaissance]; indeed, it even believed it had discovered the true, universal method through which such a

systematic philosophy, culminating in metaphysics, could be constructed as a serious *philosophia perennis*.

In light of this we can understand the energy which animated all scientific undertakings, even the merely factual sciences of the lower level; in the eighteenth century (which called itself the philosophical century) it filled ever widening circles with enthusiasm for philosophy and for all the special sciences as its branches. Hence the ardent desire for learning, the zeal for a philosophical reform of education and of all of humanity's social and political forms of existence, which makes that much-abused Age of Enlightenment so admirable. We possess an undying testimony to this spirit in the glorious "Hymn to Joy" of Schiller and Beethoven. It is only with painful feelings that we can understand this hymn today. A greater contrast with our present situation is unthinkable.

§ 4. *The failure of the new science after its initial success; the unclarified motive for this failure.*

NOW IF THE NEW HUMANITY, animated and blessed with such an exalted spirit, did not hold its own, it must have been because it lost the inspiring belief in its ideal of a universal philosophy and in the scope of the new method. And such, indeed, was the case. It turned out that this method could bring unquestionable successes only in the positive sciences. But it was otherwise in metaphysics, i.e., in problems considered philosophical in the special sense—though hopeful, apparently successful beginnings were not lacking even here. Universal philosophy, in which these problems were related—unclearly—to the factual sciences, took the form of system-philosophies, which were impressive but unfortunately were not unified, indeed were mutually exclusive. If the eighteenth century still held the conviction of proceeding toward unity, of arriving at a critically unassailable edifice which grew theoretically from generation to generation, as was undisputedly the case in the universally admired positive sciences—this conviction could not survive for long. The belief in the ideal of philosophy and method, the guideline of all movements since the beginning of the modern

era, began to waver; this happened not merely for the external motive that the contrast became monstrous between the repeated failures of metaphysics and the uninterrupted and ever increasing wave of theoretical and practical successes in the positive sciences. This much had its effect on outsiders as well as scientists, who, in the specialized business of the positive sciences, were fast becoming unphilosophical experts. But even among those theorists who were filled with the philosophical spirit, and thus were interested precisely in the highest metaphysical questions, a growing feeling of failure set in—and in their case because the most profound, yet quite *unclarified*, motives protested ever more loudly against the deeply rooted assumptions of the reigning ideal. There begins a long period, extending from Hume and Kant to our own time, of passionate struggle for a clear, reflective understanding of the true reasons for this centuries-old failure; it was a struggle, of course, only on the part of the few called and chosen ones; the mass of others quickly found and still find formulas with which to console themselves and their readers.

§ 5. *The ideal of universal philosophy and the process of its inner dissolution.*

THE NECESSARY CONSEQUENCE was a peculiar change in the whole way of thinking. Philosophy became a problem for itself, at first, understandably, in the form of the [problem of the] possibility of a metaphysics; and, following what we said earlier, this concerned implicitly the meaning and possibility of the whole problematics of reason. As for the positive sciences, at first they were untouchable. Yet the problem of a possible metaphysics also encompassed *eo ipso* that of the possibility of the factual sciences, since these had their relational meaning—that of truths merely for areas of what is—in the indivisible unity of philosophy. *Can reason and that-which-is be separated, where reason, as knowing, determines what is?* This question suffices to make clear in advance that the whole historical process has a remarkable form, one which becomes visible only through an interpretation of its hidden, innermost motivation. Its form is not that of a smooth development, not that of a continual growth

of lasting spiritual acquisitions or of a transformation of spiritual configurations—concepts, theories, systems—which can be explained by means of the accidental historical situations. A definite ideal of a universal philosophy and its method forms the beginning; this is, so to speak, the primal establishment of the philosophical modern age and all its lines of development. But instead of being able to work itself out in fact, this ideal suffers an inner dissolution. As against attempts to carry out and newly fortify the ideal, this dissolution gives rise to revolutionary, more or less radical innovations. Thus the problem of the genuine ideal of universal philosophy and its genuine method now actually becomes the innermost driving force of all historical philosophical movements. But this is to say that, ultimately, all modern sciences drifted into a peculiar, increasingly puzzling crisis with regard to the meaning of their original founding as branches of philosophy, a meaning which they continued to bear within themselves. This is a crisis which does not encroach upon the theoretical and practical successes of the special sciences; yet it shakes to the foundations the whole meaning of their truth. This is not just a matter of a special form of culture—“science” or “philosophy”—as one among others belonging to European mankind. For the primal establishment of the new philosophy is, according to what was said earlier, the primal establishment of modern European humanity itself—humanity which seeks to renew itself radically, as against the foregoing medieval and ancient age, precisely and only through its new philosophy. Thus the crisis of philosophy implies the crisis of all modern sciences as members of the philosophical universe: at first a latent, then a more and more prominent crisis of European humanity itself in respect to the total meaningfulness of its cultural life, its total “*Existenz*.”<sup>1</sup>

Skepticism about the possibility of metaphysics, the collapse of the belief in a universal philosophy as the guide for the new man, actually represents a collapse of the belief in “reason,” understood as the ancients opposed *epistēmē* to *doxa*. It is reason which ultimately gives meaning to everything that is thought to be, all things, values, and ends—their meaning understood as their normative relatedness to what, since the beginnings of phi-

1. Husserl uses the term made popular by Jaspers and Heidegger. This and *existentiell* are used in a rather loose and popular sense throughout this work.

losophy, is meant by the word “truth”—truth in itself—and correlatively the term “what is”—*ὅτι ἔστι*. Along with this falls the faith in “absolute” reason, through which the world has its meaning, the faith in the meaning of history, of humanity, the faith in man’s freedom, that is, his capacity to secure rational meaning for his individual and common human existence.

If man loses this faith, it means nothing less than the loss of faith “in himself,” in his own true being. This true being is not something he always already has, with the self-evidence of the “I am,” but something he only has and can have in the form of the struggle for his truth, the struggle to make himself true. True being is *everywhere* an ideal goal, a task of *epistēmē* or “reason,” as opposed to being which through *doxa* is merely thought to be, unquestioned and “obvious.” Basically every person is acquainted with this difference—one related to his true and genuine humanity—just as truth as a goal or task is not unknown to him even in everyday life—though here it is merely isolated and relative. But this prefiguration is surpassed by philosophy: in its first, original establishment, ancient philosophy, it conceives of and takes as its task the exalted idea of universal knowledge concerning the totality of what is. Yet in the very attempt to fulfill it, the naïve obviousness of this task is increasingly transformed—as one feels already in the opposition of the ancient systems—into unintelligibility. More and more the history of philosophy, seen from within, takes on the character of a struggle for existence, i.e., a struggle between the philosophy which lives in the straightforward pursuit of its task—the philosophy of naïve faith in reason—and the skepticism which negates or repudiates it in empiricist fashion. Unremittingly, skepticism insists on the validity of the factually experienced [*erlebte*] world, that of actual experience [*Erfahrung*],<sup>2</sup> and finds in it nothing of reason or its ideas. Reason itself and its [object,] “that which is,” become more and more enigmatic—reason as giving, of itself, meaning to the existing world and, correlatively, the world as existing through reason—until finally the *consciously* recognized world-problem of the deepest essential interrelation between reason and what is in general, the *enigma of all enigmas*, has to become the actual theme of inquiry.

2. “Experience” will be used to translate *Erfahrung* unless otherwise indicated. *Erlebnis* and *erleben*, so important in Husserl’s earlier writings, are seldom used in this text.



Our interest is confined here to the philosophical modern age.<sup>3</sup> But this is not merely a fragment of the greater historical phenomenon we have just described, that is, humanity struggling to understand itself (for this phrase expresses the whole phenomenon). Rather—as the reestablishment of philosophy with a new universal task and at the same time with the sense of a renaissance of ancient philosophy—it is at once a repetition and a universal transformation of meaning. In this it feels called to initiate a new age, completely sure of its idea of philosophy and its true method, and also certain of having overcome all previous naïvetés, and thus all skepticism, through the radicalism of its new beginning. But it is the fate of the philosophical modern age, laden with its own unnoticed naïvetés, that it has first to seek out, in the course of a gradual self-disclosure motivated by new struggles, the definitive idea of philosophy, its true subject matter and its true method; it has first to discover the genuine world-enigmas and steer them in the direction of a solution.

As men of the present, having grown up in this development, we find ourselves in the greatest danger of drowning in the skeptical deluge and thereby losing our hold on our own truth. As we reflect in this plight, we gaze backward into the history of our present humanity. We can gain self-understanding, and thus inner support, only by elucidating the unitary meaning which is inborn in this history from its origin through the newly established task [of the Renaissance], the driving force of all [modern] philosophical attempts.

### § 6. *The history of modern philosophy as a struggle for the meaning of man.*

IF WE CONSIDER the effect of the development of philosophical ideas on (nonphilosophizing) mankind as a whole, we must conclude the following:

Only an understanding from within of the movement of

3. This is true of the whole historical part of the *Crisis*. Part II begins with a study of Galileo. An important supplement to this text is provided by the Vienna lecture (see Appendix I, pp. 269 ff.), which treats of the beginnings of philosophy in the Greek context.

modern philosophy from Descartes to the present, which is coherent despite all its contradictions, makes possible an understanding of the present itself. The true struggles of our time, the only ones which are significant, are struggles between humanity which has already collapsed and humanity which still has roots but is struggling to keep them or find new ones. The genuine spiritual struggles of European humanity as such take the form of struggles between the philosophies, that is, between the skeptical philosophies—or nonphilosophies, which retain the word but not the task—and the actual and still vital philosophies. But the vitality of the latter consists in the fact that they are struggling for their own true and genuine meaning and thus for the meaning of a genuine humanity. To bring latent reason to the understanding of its own possibilities and thus to bring to insight the possibility of metaphysics as a true possibility—this is the only way to put metaphysics or universal philosophy on the strenuous road to realization. It is the only way to decide whether the *telos* which was inborn in European humanity at the birth of Greek philosophy—that of humanity which seeks to exist, and is only possible, through philosophical reason, moving endlessly from latent to manifest reason and forever seeking its own norms through this, its truth and genuine human nature—whether this *telos*, then, is merely a factual, historical delusion, the accidental acquisition of merely one among many other civilizations<sup>1</sup> and histories,<sup>2</sup> or whether Greek humanity was not rather the first breakthrough to what is essential to humanity as such, its *entelechy*. To be human at all is essentially to be a human being in a socially and generatively united civilization; and if man is a rational being (*animal rationale*), it is only insofar as his whole civilization is a rational civilization, that is, one with a latent orientation toward reason or one openly oriented toward the *entelechy* which has come to itself, become manifest to itself, and which now of necessity consciously directs human becoming. Philosophy and science would ac-

1. *Menschheiten*. "Civilizations" comes closest to what Husserl means when he uses this term in the plural. Clearly something similar is implied when he qualifies it in the singular ("European humanity" as opposed to Chinese, for example, or "present-day humanity"), but here the use of "humanity" in English does not seem to violate its accepted meaning.

2. *Geschichtlichkeiten*. Husserl often uses *Geschichtlichkeit* in this text in a sense which is almost indistinguishable from *Geschichte*. Sometimes it denotes a particular line of historical development. Only occasionally is "historicity" appropriate.

cordingly be the historical movement through which universal reason, "inborn" in humanity as such, is revealed.

This *would* be the case if the as yet unconcluded movement [of modern philosophy] had *proved* to be the entelechy, properly started on the way to pure realization, or if reason had in fact become manifest, fully conscious of itself in its own essential form, i.e., the form of a universal philosophy which grows through consistent apodictic insight and supplies its own norms through an apodictic method. Only then could it be decided whether European humanity bears within itself an absolute idea, rather than being merely an empirical anthropological type like "China" or "India"; it could be decided whether the spectacle of the Europeanization of all other civilizations bears witness to the rule of an absolute meaning, one which is proper to the sense, rather than to a historical non-sense, of the world.

We are now certain that the rationalism of the eighteenth century, the manner in which it sought to secure the necessary roots of European humanity, was *naïve*. But in giving up this naïve and (if carefully thought through) even absurd rationalism, is it necessary to sacrifice the *genuine* sense of rationalism? And what of the serious clarification of that naïveté, of that absurdity? And what of the rationality of that irrationalism which is so much vaunted and expected of us? Does it not have to convince us, if we are expected to listen to it, with rational considerations and reasons? Is its irrationality not finally rather a narrow-minded and bad rationality, worse than that of the old rationalism? Is it not rather the rationality of "lazy reason," which *evades* the struggle to clarify the ultimate data [*die letzten Vorgegebenheiten*] and the goals and directions which they alone can rationally and truthfully prescribe?

But enough of this. I have advanced too quickly, in order to make felt the incomparable significance attaching to the clarification of the deepest motives of this crisis—a crisis which developed very early in modern philosophy and science and which extends with increasing intensity to our own day.

### § 7. *The project of the investigations of this work.*

BUT NOW *we ourselves*, we philosophers of the present—what can and must reflections of the sort we have just carried out mean *for us*? Did we just want to hear an academic oration?

Can we simply return again to the interrupted vocational work on our "philosophical problems," that is, each to the further construction of his own philosophy? Can we seriously do that when it seems certain that our philosophy, like that of all our fellow philosophers, past and present, will have its fleeting day of existence only among the flora of ever growing and ever dying philosophies?

Precisely herein lies our own plight—the plight of all of us who are not philosophical literati but who, educated by the genuine philosophers of the great past, live for truth, who only in this way are and seek to be in our own truth. But as philosophers of the present we have fallen into a painful existential contradiction. The faith in the possibility of philosophy as a task, that is, in the possibility of universal knowledge, is something we *cannot* let go. We *know* that we are *called* to this task as serious philosophers. And yet, how do we hold onto this belief, which has meaning only in relation to the single goal which is common to us all, that is, philosophy as such?

We have also become aware in the most general way [through the foregoing reflections] that human philosophizing and its results in the whole of man's existence mean anything but merely private or otherwise limited cultural goals. In our philosophizing, then—how can we avoid it?—we are *functionaries of mankind*. The quite personal responsibility of our own true being as philosophers, our inner personal vocation, bears within itself at the same time the responsibility for the true being of mankind; the latter is, necessarily, being toward a *telos* and can only come to realization, *if at all*, through philosophy—through *us*, if we are philosophers in all seriousness. Is there, in this existential "if," a way out? If not, what should we, who *believe*, do in order to *be able* to believe? We cannot seriously continue our previous philosophizing; it lets us hope only for philosophies, never for philosophy.

Our first historical reflection has not only made clear to us the actual situation of the present and its distress as a sober fact; it has also reminded us that we as philosophers are heirs of the past in respect to the goals which the word "philosophy" indicates, in terms of concepts, problems, and methods. What is clearly necessary (what else could be of help here?) is that we *reflect back*, in a thorough *historical* and *critical* fashion, in order to provide, *before all decisions*, for a radical self-understanding: we must inquire back into what was originally and always sought in philosophy, what was continually sought by all



the philosophers and philosophies that have communicated with one another historically; but this must include a *critical* consideration of what, in respect to the goals and methods [of philosophy], is ultimate, original, and genuine and which, once seen, apodictically conquers the will.

How this is really to be carried out, and what this apodicticity could ultimately be which would be decisive for our existential being as philosophers, is at first unclear. In the following I shall attempt to show the paths that I myself have taken, the practicability and soundness of which I have tested for decades. From now on we proceed together, then, armed with the most skeptical, though of course not prematurely negativistic, frame of mind. We shall attempt to strike through the crust of the externalized "historical facts" of philosophical history, interrogating, exhibiting, and testing their inner meaning and hidden teleology. Gradually, at first unnoticed but growing more and more pressing, possibilities for a complete reorientation of view will make themselves felt, pointing to new dimensions. Questions never before asked will arise; fields of endeavor never before entered, correlations never before grasped or radically understood, will show themselves. In the end they will require that the total sense of philosophy, accepted as "obvious" throughout all its historical forms, be basically and essentially transformed. Together with the new task and its universal apodictic ground,<sup>1</sup> the *practical* possibility of a new philosophy will prove itself: through its execution. But it will also become apparent that all the philosophy of the past, though unbeknown to itself, was inwardly oriented toward this new sense of philosophy. In this regard, the tragic failure of modern psychology in particular, its contradictory historical existence, will be clarified and made understandable: that is, the fact that it had to claim (through its historically accumulated meaning) to be the basic philosophical science, while this produced the obviously paradoxical consequences of the so-called "psychologism."

I seek not to instruct but only to lead, to point out and describe what I see. I claim no other right than that of speaking according to my best lights, principally before myself but in the same manner also before others, as one who has lived in all its seriousness the fate of a philosophical existence.

1. *Boden*. "Ground" is always used to translate this word, unless otherwise indicated (e.g., *Grund*, in one of its senses). *Boden* is much used in connection with the concept of the life-world; it suggests nourishing soil and support, rather than a logical ground or cause.