



The Riddle of Reason: In Search of Husserl's Concept of Rationality

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Abstract Husserl's phenomenology was shaped by his understanding of human reason. From the *Logical Investigations* to the *Crisis*, the problem of reason seems to be one of the main themes in Husserl's considerations. He approaches the issue from different angles, talking about the concepts of the world, time, and responsibility. Husserl's findings have led him to identify a crisis of culture. Scholars today should question Husserl's concept of reason in order to fully comprehend this thesis. This article argues that Husserl's concept of reason is constructed in correlation to unreason, leading phenomenologists to adopt a binary division between rationality and irrationality. In contrast to scholars who stress the rational character of Husserl's phenomenology, this article asserts that the introduction of the concept of irrationality into phenomenological investigations significantly broadens the original understanding of phenomenology as defined in the *Investigations*. His own research confronted Husserl with this question. Therefore, it is claimed here that phenomenology underwent a process of immanent development from the thesis of objective reason to the thesis about the correlation of reason and unreason.

The "riddle of reason" was an expression used by Husserl in a note from 1910¹. He wrote about a "solitude full of mysteries," the condition of a

¹ I would like to thank Zbigniew Wojnowski from University College London for help with grammar and style.

thinker facing the task of solving “the riddle of the cognition Sphinx.”¹ In 1937, after almost thirty years of phenomenological studies, Husserl still spoke of the riddle as the “*enigma of all enigmas*.”² Continuously, the riddle of reason resounds today in Husserl’s *Nachlass* as part of his investigations into the mind and the possibility of cognition. In order to solve the question, Husserl tried to build a phenomenology, a method which he hoped will lighten the field of rationality so “full of mysteries.” Husserl wrote about the necessity to investigate the phenomenology of reason.³ This is why phenomenology, according to Ernst Wolfgang Orth, is “simply a name for the problem of reason — for human rationality itself.”⁴ Therefore, it should not be surprising that „[w]e must constantly return ... [t]o Husserl’s notion of Reason.”⁵

In his work entitled *The Operative Concepts in Husserl’s Phenomenology*, Eugen Fink, Husserl’s assistant and collaborator, introduced a helpful distinction between “thematic” and “operative” concepts. He defined the former in the following way: “[c]onceptualization in philosophy aims intentionally at those concepts in which thought fixes and preserves what is being thought.”⁶ The latter, by contrast, indicates that thinkers always “... use other concepts and patterns of thought, they *operate* with intellectual schemata which they do not fix objectively.”⁷ For Fink, the central and

¹ E. Husserl, *Logik und allgemeine Wissenschaftstheorie. Vorlesungen 1917/18 mit ergänzenden Texten aus der ersten Fassung von 1910/11*, ed. by U. Panzer, Dordrecht, Nijhoff, 1996, p. 335; hereafter Hua XXX.

² E. Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie*, ed. by W. Biemel, Den Haag, Kluwer Academic Publ., 1976, p. 12; hereafter Hua VI; English transl. E. Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology. An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, transl. and introduction by D. Carr, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1970, p. 13; hereafter *Crisis*.

³ E. Husserl, “Persönliche Aufzeichnungen,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 16 (3), (1956), p. 298.

⁴ E. W. Orth, “Phänomenologie der Vernunft zwischen Szientismus, Lebenswelt und Intersubjektivität,” *Phänomenologische Forschungen*, 22, (1989), p. 64.

⁵ J. Derrida, *Edmund Husserl’s Origin of Geometry. An Introduction*, transl., preface and afterword by J. P. Leavey, Jr., Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press, 1989, p. 144.

⁶ E. Fink, “Operative Concepts in Husserl’s Phenomenology,” in *Apriori and World. European Contribution to Husserlian Phenomenology*, ed. and transl. by W. McKenna, R. M. Harlan and L. E. Winters, introduction by J. N. Mohanty, The Hague, Nijhoff, 1981, p. 59.

⁷ *Ibid.*

thematic concept of Husserl's thought is the concept of phenomenological reduction.¹ However, inasmuch as we present reduction as a kind of performance (*Leistung*) of reason, the main theme of phenomenology can be understood to be reason.

In this article, I view reason as a phenomenological "*Sache*"; to put it precisely, I seek to go back to the "*Sache*." In the *Preface* to his book about Husserl and Fink, Ronald Bruzina writes that "[i]n inquiring into the phenomenological sense of '*die Sachen selbst*,' no topic and no finding can stand alone. Every '*Sache*' is a knot of the cross-weaving of many '*Sachen*,' and the tug along any thread on connection will lead to endlessly many more."² Therefore, our search for Husserl's concept of rationality will necessarily involve the study of many topics. First of all, we will consider the concept of objective reason and its critique. Secondly, we will proceed to reconstruct the question of reason, seeking to discover unreason as a correlative element of the theory of rationality. Finally, the article will outline connections between reason and unreason.

1. Objective reason and the crisis of philosophy

Surprisingly, secondary literature has from the start driven to evaluate Husserl's theory of reason, rather than reconstructing it. Consequently, a reconstruction of the arguments involved in the evaluation of his work can provide interesting insights into Husserl's concept of reason. Above all, scholars who study Husserl have associated phenomenology with the *Logical Investigations* and the thesis about "the *unbounded range of objective reason*."³ Of course, in the *Investigations*, Husserl introduced the concept of reason as a norm: the "rational" can designate the "normal."⁴ Conversely, "normality" is also accepted by any rational individual. Hence, following

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

² R. Bruzina, *Edmund Husserl & Eugen Fink. Beginnings and Ends in Phenomenology, 1928 – 1938*, New Haven, London, Yale University Press 2004, p. xvii.

³ E. Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, Vol. 1, transl. by J. N. Findlay, London and New York, Routledge, 2001, p. 223; hereafter *LI*.

⁴ Cf. *LI*, p. 17. Husserl in the *Investigations* presents following proposition: "We call a man 'reasonable', if we credit him with a habitual tendency to judge rightly, in his own sphere, of course, and in a normal frame of mind. A man regularly capable, when normal, of hitting off 'the obvious', what 'lies to hand', is a 'responsible thinker'" (*LI*, p. 62).

Husserl, we must accept the concept of reason as an ideal and/or unchangeable system of laws which justifies “truths in themselves.”

In an article written in 1939, Theodor W. Adorno argued that this theory was shaped by the mathematical character of phenomenology. In this respect, phenomenology seems to be similar to classical rationalism.¹ In a series of lectures entitled *Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie* (which Adorno gave in Oxford between 1934 and 1937), phenomenology is recognized as an absolute science.² The science, according to Adorno, justifies its own classifications by dualism of the essence and its fulfilment. The essence seems to be “in itself”; to reach the essence means to use mechanisms inscribed in the phenomenological method. For the author of *Metakritik*, phenomenology introduces an ideal sphere of investigations; moreover, the introduction of the primacy of organization and classification captures thinking in the framework of supra-temporal laws. These laws make it possible to understand thinking as “... a kind of counting apparatus which functions like a calculator.”³ Therefore, Adorno asserts that from the phenomenological perspective reason is like a “machine” which transforms a given “material” according to ideal principles. Adorno’s reconstruction of the theory suggests that phenomenology should be considered dogmatic and uncritical.⁴

At the same time, during the 1930s, Husserl criticized the theory of mathematical reason as well. Husserl’s critique of mathematical reason pointed to a similarity between Adorno’s critique and phenomenological philosophy. In a note from 1934, Husserl posed what he described as an “uneasy question”: “[w]hat does the premise about the rationality of man who cognizes in a real and possible way mean?”⁵ In particular, the question sets out to challenge scientists, casting doubt on the latent premises of

¹ “From his mathematical beginnings to the very end he was concerned only with the justification of *vérités éternelles*, and for the passing phenomena he held all the contempt of the classical rationalist” (T. W. Adorno, “Husserl and the Problem of Idealism“, *The Journal of Philosophy*, 37, 1 (1940), p. 6-7).

² T. W. Adorno, *Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie. Drei Studien zu Hegel*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp 2003, p. 13.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 143.

⁵ E. Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie. Ergänzungsband: Texte aus dem Nachlass 1934-1937*, ed. by R. N. Smid, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publ. 1993, p. 30; hereafter Hua XXIX.

positive sciences.¹ It is alleged that the sciences are naïve to the extent that they rely on a “normal” concept of rationality. According to Husserl, a kind of “normality” is an “uncovered presupposition of the scientist.”² Furthermore, Husserl enquires what the implications of adopting a certain view of the world are, and he asks how the premise of rationality is translated outside the scientist’s life. He concludes: “I do not know anyone who can answer such uneasy questions.”³ Therefore, as a practitioner, the scientist does not question the foundations of his practice. He just knows what he can do, and this is the reason why he does not care about the premise of rationality. He focuses on his actions or actual operations, and he does not address the theme of reason in his investigations.⁴

In this sense, Husserl suggested that we assume that certain activities are rational. Hence, when we want to describe the concept of scientific

¹ For Husserl, the sciences are an expression of the process of rationalisation in general. Rationalisation is “... a mental operation ... which leads all factual descriptions through upgrading of the factuality to a pure possibility in appropriate essential establishment” (E. Husserl, *Natur und Geist. Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1927*, ed. by M. Weiler, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publ., 2001, p. 48; hereafter Hua XXXII). Positive sciences are grounded on an uncritical relation to the world (E. Husserl, *Einleitung in die Philosophie. Vorlesungen 1922/23*, ed. by B. Goossens, Dordrecht, Nijhoff, 2003, p. 3; hereafter Hua XXXV). Above all, the sciences discuss the world as nature; nature is reduced to a set of single objects which seem to be split between certain fields. The sciences postulate the process of specialisation with reference to the fields. After all, positive sciences discuss the world as if it were objective; a description of the world as objective is equivalent to a description of the world by mathematical method (E. Husserl, *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis. Aus Vorlesungs- und Forschungsmanuskripten 1918-1926*, ed. by M. Fleischer, Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1966, p. 435, hereafter Hua XI; English translation E. Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis. Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, transl. by A. J. Steinbock, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publ., 2001, p. 544; hereafter *PS*). The method introduces the sphere of objectivity in such a way that it allows to treat each question as settled for everyone who practices the method (Hua XI, p. 435; *PS*, p. 544). This “ratio of natural sciences,” as Husserl writes, is “... the ability ... of calculating future as well as past relations of possible fields of the givenness of an experience” (E. Husserl, *Die Lebenswelt. Auslegungen der vorgegebenen Welt und ihrer Konstitution. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1916-1937)*, ed. by R. Sowa, Dordrecht, Springer, 2008, p. 733; hereafter Hua XXXIX). It is in this sense that we write about positive sciences.

² Hua XXIX, p. 30.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

rationality, we should examine how it is practiced, rather than investigating scientific theories themselves. At the very beginning of the 1922-1923 *Einleitung in die Philosophie* lecture series, Husserl emphasized that such an investigation would allow us to formulate a theory of rationality which is immanent to theories constructed by scientists.¹ He proceeded to investigate scientific methods in his note from 1934. For the founder of phenomenology, when science aims at actual operations only, it relies on “technicization of the method.” Husserl stated that “[t]echnical method involves the use of the unreasonable, and namely ... empty words and signs.”² Therefore, human rationality is determined by the primacy of methodical practice. Husserl did not provide a precise definition of “technicization”; he only emphasized that it operates with “substitutes,” which are determined by methodical aims. In addition, he claimed that the model of “technical” practice is mathematical practice. “Mathematics,” according to Husserl, “is the biggest technical wonder.”³ For this reason, the proposition that scientific rationality is determined by technical method is justified. Therefore, it is possible to speak of the crisis of rationality. Husserl elaborated on this theory three years later in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*.

In this work, Husserl considered the legitimacy of the “crisis of sciences” thesis in confrontation with the unquestionable success of the sciences.⁴ He stated that scientific crisis and progress are not incompatible, while specifying that we should understand the crisis in a special sense. Hence, as James Dodd argues, “[t]hat [science’s] very success does not preclude the possibility of crisis is a key insight of Husserl’s; but it means that to talk of the crisis of science is, paradoxically, to talk of the crisis of a success.”⁵ The success of sciences is accompanied by the naïveté of human attitudes. As we have established above, the sciences have latent pre-suppositions. Moreover, they exclude “ultimate and highest questions”⁶ from the field of investigation and from the field of practice at the same time. The ultimate and highest questions indicate the problems of reason. The sciences lead the scientist to the facts, and not to the investigation of the power of

¹ Hua XXXV, p. 6.

² Hua XXIX, p. 35.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ In the first paragraph of the *Crisis*, Husserl emphasized: “The scientific rigor of all these disciplines, the convincingness of their theoretical accomplishments, and their enduringly compelling successes are unquestionable” (Hua VI, p. 6; *Crisis*, p. 4).

⁵ J. Dodd, *Crisis and Reflection. An Essay on Husserl’s “Crisis of the European Sciences,”* Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publ., 2004, p. 29.

⁶ Hua VI, p. 6; *Crisis*, p. 9.

reason. Additionally, the practice of sciences shapes the technical view of reason.

For Husserl, the success of positive sciences results in the possibility of predication. He stated that the sciences have a “kind of predication” which “infinitely surpasses the accomplishment of everyday predication.”¹ Scientific predication and “an a priori all-encompassing method” make it possible to grasp “an infinity of objects that are subjectively relative” as “an infinity which is determined, decided in advance, in itself, in respect to all its objects and all their properties and relations.”² Therefore, an infinity of relative objects can be rationalized; the methods of positive sciences make the subjective field determinable. The practice of scientific method introduces ideal constructions, thus leading us to conceive of this rationalized sphere as a constituted objectivity. This objectivity allows for the “calculation”³ of unknown fields that are relative. It is exactly at this point that Husserl suggested that positive sciences employ mathematical methods. They form a crucial element of the process of predication. The subjective world is, as it were, translated into objective categories; this leads to the introduction of the horizon of the “being-in-itself” which could be grasped as “truths in themselves.”⁴ Just as mathematical laws govern operations performed on variables, the truths in themselves are determined by objective laws which “calculate” future facts on the basis of given “truths in themselves.” Therefore, what remains unknown is determinable in the light of scientific “calculations.”

The interpretation of the world in such categories as “truths in themselves,” ideal constructions, “calculation” and predication is interwoven with the process of idealization. In consequence, the process leads to the formalization and technicization of rationality. Let us describe these mechanisms at more length. The first process encapsulates the achievements and goals of reason in a net of formulas. The nets present algebraic signs and modes of thinking. The application of formulas to the cognition of concrete surroundings reduces the world to the formulas employed. In the process of formalization, as Husserl puts it, “... one calculates, remembering only at the

¹ Hua VI, p. 51; *Crisis*, p. 51.

² Hua VI, p. 30; *Crisis*, p. 32.

³ Hua VI, p. 31; *Crisis*, p. 33.

⁴ “A new method of real cognition of nature and the world, so to speak, worships mathematical evidence and claims that thanks [to the latter — WP] it could reach the cognition of being-in-itself in ‘truths in themselves’” (Hua VI, p. 466).

end that the numbers signify magnitudes.”¹ “Only at the end” does the scientist see that abstract formulas indicate not concrete things but rather an ideal field. The formal view of the world culminates in the process of constructing hypotheses. Therefore, hypotheses are formulas grounded on other constructions, which indicates that hypotheses are not connected with the surrounding world at all. They can be considered to be of value only within a definite system. At the end, the whole world is replaced by abstract formulas.

The second mechanism, the technicization of rationality, consists of operations with substitutes. To put it differently, technicization makes reason equal to thinking in “symbolic” concepts.² By “symbolic concepts” Husserl means the concepts separated from their primordial meaning and determined by functions of the appropriate system. In the process of technicization “... methods are later ‘mechanized’. To the essence of all method belongs the tendency to superficialize itself in accord with technicization.”³ Hence, while rationality is constituted by positive sciences, it is limited by technicization. Moreover, reason seems to be a “mechanism” which “calculates” and predicates the future in a system of ideal constructions. In consequence, reason can be construed as an instrument and the ultimate and highest phenomenological critique of reason can be labeled as a critique of instrumental reason.

This analysis is based on the published part of the *Crisis*. Undoubtedly, it complements the sketchy critique which Husserl advanced in his note from 1934. We must clearly emphasize that the phenomenological critique of the mechanization of method arose in answer to problems identified during the *Natur und Geist* lectures in 1919 and 1927.

The philosophical problem concerning the relation between spirit and nature which Husserl addressed in *Natur und Geist* was a point of departure for the discussion of the status of human sciences. More importantly, it was in this discussion that Husserl diagnosed the “mechanization” of method. In a striking parallel to his later discussion in the *Crisis*, Husserl stressed the unquestionable status of scientific success. As he famously stated, “... knowledge is power.”⁴ Husserl attributed the power of sciences to their grounding in method, which allowed to reduce the scientist’s workload.

¹ Hua VI, p. 44; *Crisis*, p. 44.

² Hua VI, p. 48; *Crisis*, p. 48.

³ Hua VI, p. 48; *Crisis*, p. 48.

⁴ E. Husserl, *Natur und Geist. Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1919*, ed. by M. Weiler, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publ., 2002, p. 5; hereafter Mat IV.

Nevertheless, Husserl spoke of the scientist's reliance on method as a double edged sword. The method, of course, "...is progress, but it is a danger as well: it saves the scientist much intellectual effort, but due to the mechanisation of method, many branches of knowledge become incomprehensible; outer rationality, which is understood as justification based on changing conclusions, does not correspond to inner rationality, to the understanding of inner senses and aims of thoughts and to basic elements of method."¹ This indicates that the critique of the mechanization of method is closely linked to the critique of reason in phenomenology. Husserl spoke of an "inner" and "outer" rationality. While "inner" rationality seems to be equivalent to the essence of reason and thinking, forming its aim and meaning, "outer" rationality of method reduces reason to its own ideal constructs of justification and the "outer" mechanisms of practice. Therefore, the rationality of mechanized method transforms reason into a mechanism that belongs to a dogmatic or at least a technical science.²

According to Husserl, the rationality of positive sciences as shaped by the mechanization of method contains in itself a fundamental contradiction. More precisely, positive sciences claim that "[s]cience should make us independent ... in all our practice and aspirations. However, as science is subordinated to the mechanisation of method, it does not make us free even theoretically."³ In other words, positive sciences enslave human rationality. This contradiction accompanies all attempts at the mechanization of method.

During the 1927 *Natur und Geist* lecture series, Husserl returned to the analysis of this paradox, which he saw as "the tragedy of scientific culture."⁴ He remarked that not only do sciences tend towards specialization, but they also aspire to universality. This paradoxical situation is observable in the struggle between individual sciences (meaning physics, chemistry, and biology) over the primacy in the description of nature as a closed universe.⁵ In the course of his lectures, Husserl asserted that "[t]he scientist of a particular science is convinced ... that in the progress from one field to another he achieves at last the cosmos of cognition (*Kosmos der Erkenntnis*), and that he thereby thinks in the manner of an authentic scientific method."⁶ Therefore, specialized sciences are characterized as universal, seeking to

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

² *Ibid.*, p. 12.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12-13.

⁵ Hua XXXII, p. 10-11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

grasp the world as a whole. For Husserl, the claim of scientific rationality is naïve. According to his observations, rationality becomes a mechanism. From the perspective of “outer” rationality we “[a]ctually do not know what we want.”¹

To sum up, in the light of our reconstruction of Husserl’s critique of mathematical reason, Adorno’s analysis of Husserl’s phenomenology should be qualified. It applies to the *Investigations* where the concept of objective reason is presented. However, inasmuch as Husserl’s later philosophy can be seen as a critique of objective reason, phenomenology becomes a part of Adorno’s examination. Therefore, we should modify Adorno’s thesis that “mathematism” pervades the whole of phenomenology. As we have demonstrated, Husserl actually emphasizes the impossibility of a mathematical description of the world.² Therefore, the phenomenological critique of mathematical reason is equivalent to Adorno’s examination of objective reason.

This comparison demonstrates that Husserl’s concept of rationality is based on a fundamental ability of reflection. It is reflection which makes it possible to evaluate the mechanization of method. Husserl built this concept of reason through applying the idea of objective reason. Moreover, the concept of objective, mathematical reason justifies the thesis about the crisis of reason, because reason is reduced to an ideal system of laws. Husserl’s thesis about the crisis of reason has further implications: as we have already discussed, reason manifests itself in practice. This implies that the crisis could concern the fields of culture, science and philosophy itself.³ The crisis of objective reason remains unresolved, but at the same time Husserl points out that we are able to evaluate, which effectively uncovers a non-naïve aspect of reason. Therefore, when we speak of the crisis of objective reason “... we must not take this to mean that rationality as such is evil or that it is of only subordinate significance for mankind’s existence as a whole.”⁴ Hence, the crisis of objective reason does not have to mean the crisis of reason in general. Rather, as Philip R. Buckley argues, “[t]he breakdown of rationality is, for Husserl, not a sign that rationality (in its true sense, that is, philosophy) is no longer possible.” Therefore “... it is a sign that the ‘old’ rationality is in fact no true rationality, it is a sham, and its bankruptcy has

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

² Cf. Hua XI, p. 436; *PS*, p. 543.

³ Cf. P. R. Buckley, *Husserl, Heidegger and the Crisis of Philosophical Responsibility*, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publ., 1992, p. 9.

⁴ Hua VI, p. 337; *Crisis*, p. 290.

finally been exposed. The crisis makes evident for Husserl the need for the true form of rationality, for true philosophy, for transcendental phenomenology.”¹ Of course, the “old” rationality indicates the concept of objective reason. We will now proceed to explore the meaning of “the true form of rationality.”

2. The question about reason and unreason

From its very beginnings in the *Logical Investigations*, phenomenology has been described by Husserl as a science which points towards the essence.² Although Husserl changed the concept of essence, he did not modify the concept of phenomenology itself. While in the *Investigations* he saw essence as an ideal, non-temporal object, the founder of phenomenology abandoned such a proposition in his later works. Originally, Husserl asserted that the uttering person can repeat an expression *in infinitum* without altering its meaning. Consequently, the meaning should be strictly ideal in the sense of *species*.³ In his letter to Roman Ingarden from the 5th of April 1918, Husserl underlined that the repetitiveness of utterances should not be combined with an ideal, non-temporal concept of meaning.⁴ Hence, we can speak of the immanent development of phenomenology. No doubt, after Husserl’s departure from “static” Platonism,⁵ essence received a temporal dimension.⁶ In other words, essence can be determined by activities which change the

¹ P. R. Buckley, *Husserl, Heidegger and the Crisis of Philosophical Responsibility*, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

² *LI*, p. 178.

³ As Husserl wrote in *First Investigation*: “Meaning is related to varied acts of meaning ... just as Redness *in specie* is to the slips of paper which lie here, and which all ‘have’ the same redness” (*LI*, p. 230).

⁴ “First of all there was a mistake, when a ‘meaning’ and a ‘sentence’, in the case of judging experiences, predicative sentences, as propositions and senses, was grasped as an essence, or an ‘idea’ in the sense of the essence (*species*). The independence of a sentence meaning of accidental propositions and a judging person still does not mean that the uniqueness is ideality-identity” (E. Husserl, *Briefe an Roman Ingarden. Mit Erläuterungen und Erinnerungen an Husserl*, ed. by R. Ingarden, The Hague, Nijhoff, 1968, p. 10).

⁵ Husserl wrote about overcoming the stage of “static” Platonism in a letter to Natorp from the 29th of June 1918. Cf. I. Kern, *Husserl und Kant. Eine Untersuchung über Husserls Verhältnis zu Kant und zum Neukantianismus*, Den Haag, Nijhoff, p. 346.

⁶ Cf. D. Welton, *The Origins of Meaning. A Critical Study of the Thresholds of Husserlian Phenomenology*, The Hague, Nijhoff, 1983, p. 304.

primordial, temporal field of essence. This is precisely the point where the problem of determining essence arises.

As we have established above, phenomenological philosophy concerns itself with the essential relation between the method and the object of investigation. Husserl suggested that the choice of a method can determine the object. From a phenomenological perspective, the object is the essence. In this context, the phenomenological claim to the effect that "... we must go back to the 'things themselves'"¹ points towards the need to grasp the possible undetermined essence. "The true method follows the nature of the things to be investigated and not our prejudices and preconceptions,"² as Husserl wrote in *Philosophy as Rigorous Science*. The consideration of method seems to be the most important element of phenomenological investigations. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that Husserl defined first philosophy as "the science about method in general."³ Only due to the unique method are we able to grasp the essence.

Already in *Investigations* Husserl identified "the well-nigh ineradicable tendency to slip out of a phenomenological thought-stance into one that is straightforwardly objective."⁴ Consequently, the tendency leads us to dismiss the essence of the investigation's object as an objective construct. This is reflected in the investigation of the essence of reason. As we have established above, an objective method constitutes an objective reason which is presented as a conglomeration of objective rules. Therefore, we can infer that the method of investigating the essence of reason should reach a *new* reason as distinct from the objective reason of the mathematical method.⁵ A starting point for the description of the new reason is the reconstruction of the phenomenological method.

¹ *LI*, p. 168.

² E. Husserl, *Aufsätze und Vorträge (1911-1921)*, ed. by T. Nenon, H. R. Sepp, Dordrecht, Nijhoff, 1987, p. 26; hereafter *Hua XXV*; English translation E. Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, transl. with notes and an introduction by Q. Lauer, New York: Harper Torchbooks 1965, p. 102.

³ E. Husserl, *Erste Philosophie (1923/24). Zweiter Teil. Theorie der phänomenologischen Reduktion*, ed. by R. Boehm, Den Haag, Nijhoff, 1958 p. 249; hereafter *Hua VIII*.

⁴ *LI*, p. 170.

⁵ Cf. J. M. Tito, *Logic in the Husserlian context*, Evanston, Northwestern Univ. Press, 1990, p. xlv. It should be emphasized, following Ram Adhar Mall, that "Phenomenological reason does not copy the mathematical reason. Unlike the latter it does not consist in construction. It does not formalize; it does not create either. It is a reason which shows itself as a task and is clearly seen as 'lived' as such" (R. A.

While phenomenology was originally defined by “the *principle of freedom from presuppositions*”¹ as articulated in *Investigations*, the principle has paradoxically led to “a state where prejudices are universal” (*Universalität von Vorurteilen*).² The principle of freedom from presuppositions indicates that it is possible to grasp the object of a given investigation immediately. Conversely, the idea that prejudices are universal excludes such a possibility. Therefore, the phenomenologist understands that “... all the things he takes for granted *are* prejudices, that all prejudices are obscurities arising out of a sedimentation of tradition.”³ By “prejudice” Husserl did not mean a mental state. Rather, he saw prejudice as an “unjustified proposition.”⁴ Hence, an “unjustified proposition” is a technical element of the process of arguing; in such a process, prejudices which do not have justification at all lead to the appearance of understanding.

Assuming that any argumentation which is based on prejudice is by its nature naïve, the idea that prejudices are universal is naïve, too. In the “Epilogue” to the English translation of his first book entitled *Ideas*, Husserl emphasized that “... the necessary point of departure ... is the natural-naïve attitude.”⁵ Therefore, the naïve character of any investigation is its necessary element. Moreover, the naïveté is only a point of departure. Nevertheless, “[t]here are different ways towards phenomenology.”⁶ Hence, there inevitably arises an essential dualism between naïveté and non-naïve investigations inside the method itself, too. Given this, we should also accept

Mall, *Experience and reason. The phenomenology of Husserl and its relation to Hume's philosophy*, The Hague, Nijhoff, 1973, p. 115).

¹ “An epistemological investigation that can seriously claim to be scientific must ... satisfy the *principle of freedom from presuppositions*. This principle ... only seeks to express the strict exclusion of all statements not permitting of a comprehensive *phenomenological realization*” (LI, p. 177).

² E. Husserl, *Zur phänomenologischen Reduktion. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1926-1935)*, ed. by S. Luft, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publ., 2002, p. 303; hereafter Hua XXXIV.

³ Hua VI, p. 73. *Crisis*, p. 72.

⁴ Hua XXXIV, p. 441.

⁵ E. Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Drittes Buch. Die Phänomenologie und die Fundamente der Wissenschaften*, ed. by M. Biemel, Den Haag, Nijhoff, p. 148; English translation E. Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. Second Book. Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, transl. by R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publ., p. 416.

⁶ Hua XXXV, p. 313.

that such a dualism characterizes first philosophy understood as science about method in general. Husserl himself spoke of dualism as a feature of first philosophy.

During the 1923 *Erste Philosophie* lecture series, Husserl wrote a manuscript in which he considered the problem of beginning in phenomenology. The founder of phenomenology wanted to establish how to begin investigations without adopting a naïve attitude. He concluded that every definitive justification is based on an assumption of “objectivity.” Husserl suggested that we should accept this as inevitable, but he also pointed out that it is possible to achieve a “higher reflective level” in investigations. Therefore, for the author of *Erste Philosophie*, “[e]very time the ‘phenomenology’ of pure *ego* split 1) into a naïve-straight phenomenology; 2) [into] reflective higher level: as *the theory and critique of phenomenological reason* (critique of a *phenomenologizing I*) or of phenomenological method.”¹ First of all, this suggests that the position of method in first philosophy could be understood as both naïve and critical at the same time. Secondly, if naïveté is necessary and even essential for the phenomenological method, it is not possible to deny that the method can be characterized as naïve.

Consequently, we can agree with Fink’s conclusion that it is too hasty to see in reduction (which is the main way to phenomenology)² “... the moment of non-acceptance in the method of epoché above all else, i.e., that suspension of the previous world-theme and throwing off the initial ‘naïveté’.”³ Fink suggested that reduction should be seen as the first level or the first step towards phenomenology; reduction allows us to see the naïveté. Therefore, reduction expresses the paradoxical⁴ and unnatural⁵ character of

¹ Hua VIII, p. 478.

² Hua XXXV, p. 313.

³ E. Fink, “Operative Concepts in Husserl’s Phenomenology,” *op. cit.*, p. 62.

⁴ As Husserl emphasized in the *Crisis*, “[f]rom the beginning the phenomenologist lives in the paradox of having to look upon the obvious as questionable, as enigmatic, and of henceforth being unable to have any other scientific theme than that of transforming the universal obviousness of the being of the world — for him the greatest of all enigmas — into something intelligible” (Hua VI, p. 183-184; *Crisis*, p. 180).

⁵ Already in *Investigations* Husserl emphasized difficulties of the phenomenological attitude in the following words: “We must deal with them [acts of apprehension — WP] in new acts of intuition and thinking, we must analyse and describe them in their essence, we must make them objects of empirical or ideational thought. Here

phenomenology. As such, reduction is an attitude, rather than a single act. It restores the world in the “universality of riddles.”¹ Apart from restituting the question, reduction makes it possible to construct the method on a higher level and in a non-naïve manner. This is the context in which we should understand Husserl’s assertion that “[s]cience is not naïve cognition coming to light from theoretical interest. Rather critique belongs to its essence.”² Critique represents a reflective direction of the investigation. In being critical, we should ask about the grounds of each proposition, rather than taking it for granted. Only with such an attitude do we accept that prejudices are universal.

The entire phenomenology could be perceived as an attempt to express the critical character of investigations. After all, critique is equivalent to reflection which is the “wonder of all wonders.”³ It is conceivable that Husserl modeled the concept of critique on the idea of a zigzag method of investigations. The latter was already articulated in the *Logical Investigations*,⁴ but it could also be found in research manuscripts⁵ and it was finally expressed in the *Crisis*.⁶ Moreover, in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*,⁷ Husserl explicitly equated the zigzag method with critique. The term

we have a direction of thought running counter to deeply ingrained habits which have been steadily strengthened since the dawn of mental development” (*LI*, p. 170).

¹ Hua XXXIV, p. 485.

² Hua VIII, p. 333.

³ Hua XXXV, p. 318. See also Hua XXX, p. 335, 530.

⁴ “We search, as it were, in zig-zag fashion, a metaphor all the more apt since the close interdependence of our various epistemological concepts leads us back again and again to our original analyses, where the new confirms the old, and the old the new” (*LI*, p. 175).

⁵ Hua XXXV p. 391; Mat IV, p. 221, see footnote, 222; E. Husserl, *Späte Texte über Zeitkonstitution (1929-1934). Die C-Manuskripte*, ed. by D. Lohmar, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006, p. 357; hereafter Mat VIII.

⁶ Hua VI, p. 59; *Crisis*, p. 58.

⁷ “His [the scientist’s — WP] judgments must be verified by genuine, by maximally perfect, evidence; and only as so verified shall they be admitted among the results of science as theory. This brings about a *peculiar judging procedure on the scientist’s part*, a *zigzag judging*, so to speak: first making straight for the givenness of something itself, but then going back *critically* to the provisional results already obtained — whereupon his criticism must also be subjected to criticism, and for like reasons” (E. Husserl, *Formale und transzendente Logik. Versuch einer Kritik der logischen Vernunft*, ed. by P. Janssen, Den Haag, Nijhoff, 1974, p. 130; English translation E. Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, transl. by D. Cairns, The Hague, Nijhoff, 1969, p. 125).

“zigzag” seems to express a never ending phenomenological enquiry, as well as a process of questioning the grounds of prejudices.

As we have established above, Husserl frequently returned to the theme of the zigzag method, because the zigzag method concerns one of the basic themes of phenomenology: the theme of the beginning. As late as 1935, after thirty years of phenomenological studies, Husserl still tried to express what he understood as reduction. He wrote about the beginning of phenomenological reduction in the following words: “Now I stand ... *eo ipso* in universal skepticism, not in the negation of the world and all my practical beliefs, but in the state ‘I do not understand anything’, or also, even if I understand [something — WP], it has the ground of incomprehension which is called self-comprehension in this state, but it is incomprehensible fundamentally and in principle.”¹ There is no doubt that the method of reduction is critical. Husserl described it in one sentence: “I do not understand anything.” Now, we must pose a fundamental question: if we accept such a statement and thus assert that the scientist cannot claim anything, how is it possible to continue investigating? How can we present the “reflective higher level” of the phenomenological method? How can we investigate the problem of reason?

Paradoxically, we receive answers as soon as we ask the questions. In August 1934, Husserl made an observation about the human being which may appear trivial at first sight. He stated that the human being as the subject of many activities is an *animal rationale*.² He immediately concluded that this means that people live in a rational way. Husserl then proceeded to argue that “the power of reason” makes “self-critique and communal-critique” possible and, consequently, allows for “critical corrections” as well. The critique is made possible by reason understood in a “higher sense”: precisely as the process of questioning, “the questions of reason.”³ Therefore, the radicalism of the phenomenological method lies in questioning the grounds.⁴

Ullrich Melle, who investigated Husserl’s ethical views, analyzed the phenomenon of taking a decision by “I.” He asserted that the moment of taking a decision contains the justification of the decision made. The decision can be determined by a latent motivation. Nevertheless, in justifying a decision we should question the reasons behind it, and no decision can be

¹ Hua XXXIV, p. 481.

² Hua XXIX, p. 7.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 7-8.

⁴ „To be radical means to reach ultimate roots, namely to see those roots themselves” (Hua XXXV, p. 288).

justified unless the reasons are formulated. Because of this, Melle emphasized that “[i]f I speak of giving a reason, the question arises regarding the right and validity of giving a reason and the insight into the reason. Husserl therefore names the active motivation also *motivation of reason*. All active taking a position by the I stands under the question of reason.”¹ Melle recognized that in Husserl’s phenomenology “giving a reason” (and thus the justification) contains the reason. The process of justification has its own point of departure in questioning.

While naïve science “excludes in principle precisely the question which man, given over in our unhappy times to the most portentous upheavals, finds the most burning,”² namely the “ultimate and highest” “*problems of reason*,”³ “[p]hilosophy ... in general is a science about highest and ultimate questions. They are questions which do not pass all other questions, but they codetermine all other questions, they, so to speak, ask in all.”⁴ Undoubtedly, for Husserl, the question of reason is the main problem of philosophy and also the main theme of first philosophy. In preparation for the *Erste Philosophie* lecture series, Husserl formulated a simple question: “What is rationality?”⁵ However, it only appears to be trivial. It shows that we are really unable to immediately grasp the essence of reason. The question indicates that our knowledge is mediated by incomprehension. Just as “giving a reason” and justification leads one from “blind”⁶ motivations to reason, the above question expresses a fundamental tension between reason and irrationality and, as such, it encourages us to consider how we define the subject of our enquiries; a question always asks about the unknown, which suggests that in formulating a question about reason we seek to discover that which is still unidentified.

Finally, we can conclude that the question about reason lies at the very heart of first philosophy. It can be argued that solving the riddle of the correlation between reason and irrationality is the main task of contemporary philosophy. In *Of Contemporary Tasks of Philosophy*, Husserl presented a

¹ U. Melle, “Husserl’s Personalist Ethics,” *Husserl Studies*, 23, (2007), p. 6.

² Hua VI, p. 4; *Crisis*, p. 6.

³ Hua VI, p. 6-7; *Crisis*, p. 9.

⁴ Hua XXXV, p. 5.

⁵ E. Husserl, *Erste Philosophie (1923/24). Erster Teil. Kritische Ideengeschichte*, ed. by R. Boehm, Den Haag, Nijhoff, 1956, p. 394; hereafter Hua VII.

⁶ Cf. E. Husserl, *Phänomenologische Psychologie. Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1925*, ed. by W. Biemel, Den Haag, Nijhoff, 1968, 213; hereafter Hua IX. See also E. Husserl, *Aufsätze und Vorträge (1922-1937)*, ed. by T. Nenon, H. R. Sepp, Dordrecht, Nijhoff, 1989, p. 8; hereafter Hua XXVII.

metaphorical view of reason which is surrounded by “the spheres of irrationality.” “The whole of reason could be presented as surrounded by the spheres of irrationality,” Husserl emphasized, “but this means that the supposed irrationality is a rational theme and has its part in rationality.”¹ The irrationality which is the theme of rationality consists of the power of reason to question the foundations. Thus, irrationality is a part of reason. Nevertheless, we must emphasize that irrationality and unreason (*Unvernunft*)² are objects of phenomenological investigations. Therefore, the question about reason requires us to establish the essential correlation between rationality and irrationality. This article suggests that we should understand irrationality in a broader sense in this context, regarding it as the presupposition of the activity of reason.

3. The unbounded range of unreason

Husserl’s thesis about the correlation between reason and unreason does not lead him to reify or treat reason as a dualistic object. On the contrary, his thesis does not have an ontological character. Rather, we should capture “unreason” in a broader sense. It should be understood as a *terminus technicus* which signifies the condition of human cognition. The crisis of reason and the “state where prejudices are universal” on the one hand, and the critique and true science on the other, indicate that the breakdown of human cognition and the solving of mysteries are both possible. However, human cognition is more complicated and it cannot be seen as simply a product of the tension between these two possibilities. The correlation of reason and unreason expresses this complicated condition of thinking where “[e]ach act sinks in the ‘unconscious’.”³ Hence, “correlation” means that both correlated elements are present at the same time. In the *Crisis*, Husserl presented the thought of Galileo as the model of the condition of human cognition. Galileo is “at once a discovering and a concealing genius.”⁴ Therefore, the reason is surrounded by “the spheres of irrationality.” The activity of reason always occurs within the field of passivity.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

² Cf. Hua XXXV, p. 38.

³ Mat VIII, p. 310.

⁴ Hua VI, p. 53; *Crisis*, p. 52.

This constituted Husserl's departure from "static" Platonism.¹ Moreover, it demonstrates that the founder of phenomenology set out to examine the so-called genetic analyses. After the 1st of April 1916, when Husserl was awarded the professorial title at the University of Freiburg,² the development of phenomenology can be grasped as the development of new sciences which express the above mentioned "true form of rationality."³ Science is based on the thesis of "a fundamental stratification" of "the life of *logos*"; "the life of *logos*" breaks into "[p]assivity and receptivity" on the one hand, and "[t]hat spontaneous activity of the ego"⁴ on the other. In *Cartesian Meditations*, the former concept is related to "irrationality,"⁵ while the latter (as the activity of scientific theories) is called "rational."⁶ In other words, the object of genetic analyses is the field of passivity, and as such they investigate irrationality.

The development of the genetic method did not spell out a breakdown of phenomenology. Already in 1910 and 1911, in the lectures entitled *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Husserl mentioned that "... *phenomenology does not want to disconnect transcendence in every sense*. After all, from the outset it was defined through the disengagement of nature, of transcendence in a particular sense, of transcendence in the sense of what appears."⁷ Inasmuch as we grasp the passivity and unreason as transcendence, genetic analysis seems to comply with Husserl's restriction. Therefore, the investigation of unreason means that it is possible to indirectly

¹ Cf. I. Kern, *Husserl und Kant*, *op. cit.*, p. 346.

² K. Schuhmann, *Husserl-Chronik. Denk- und Lebensweg Edmund Husserls*, Den Haag, Nijhoff, 1977, p. 199.

³ Cf. R. P. Buckley, *Husserl, Heidegger and the Crisis of Philosophical Responsibility*, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

⁴ Hua XI, p. 64; *PS*, p. 105.

⁵ E. Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*, ed. and introduction by S. Strasser, Haag, Nijhoff, 1950, p. 114; hereafter Hua I; English translation E. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations. An Introduction to Phenomenology*, transl. by D. Cairns, The Hague, Nijhoff, 1960, p. 81; hereafter *CM*.

⁶ Hua I, p. 108; *CM*, p. 74.

⁷ E. Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass. Erster Teil: 1905-1920*, ed. by I. Kern, Den Haag, Nijhoff, 1973, p. 171; English translation E. Husserl, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology. From the Lectures, Winter Semester, 1910-1911*, transl. by I. Farin and J. G. Hart, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006, p. 65.

reconstruct unreason in phenomenology.¹ We will now briefly analyse three fields of unreason in this manner: the world, time, and practice.

The field of unreason is available for phenomenologist due to the reduction. The reduction uncovers the “state where prejudices are universal” as the presence of unjustified propositions in one’s thought. Husserl believed that these propositions rely on an unquestionable status of the world. Therefore “... for me, the world is an ever living prejudice and in a certain way [it is a prejudice for — WP] the whole universe of all my prejudices in natural life.”² Moreover, one could not get any knowledge except for accepting the status of the world as a prejudice. Husserl strictly emphasized that it is nonsensical to analyse the ego beyond questioning its essential connection with the world. We are the “children of the world”³ in such a way that each proposition presupposes the world as the horizon of understanding. This is precisely the point where we should introduce the concept of horizon.

The concept of horizon is structurally connected with the notion of intentionality which is one of the most widely discussed concepts in the study of Husserl’s phenomenology.⁴ It is important to note that the concept of intentionality expresses the ability of consciousness to be directed towards *something*. Husserl’s notion of reason seems to be defined by intentionality.⁵ If one is directed towards something due to reason, this something is always surrounded by other things, and each proposition about something implies many other prejudices. Hence, in phenomenology, “... no single, isolated cognition could have the character of absolute justification.”⁶ Human

¹ Husserl uses the notion of indirect reconstruction in the context of inquiring into the phenomenon of man’s birth. See Hua XXXIX, p. 480.

² Mat VIII, p. 41.

³ Cf. Hua VIII, p. 169; Hua XXXIV, p. 262.

⁴ See for example J. N. Mohanty, “Husserl’s Concept of Intentionality,” *Analecta Husserliana*, 1, (1971), p. 100-132; R. Sokolowski, “Husserl and Frege,” *The Journal of Philosophy*, 84, (10), (1987), p. 521-528; *Husserl, Intentionality and Cognitive Science*, ed. by H. L. Dreyfus in collaboration with H. Hall, Cambridge (Mass.), London, MIT Press, 1984; D. Welton, *The Origins of Meaning. A Critical Study of the Thresholds of Husserlian Phenomenology*, *op. cit.*; S. Gallagher, D. Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind. An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science*, London, New York, Routledge, 2008, p. 116-126.

⁵ Cf. Hua XXXIX, p. 171. Also L. Landgrebe, “Ist Husserls Phänomenologie eine Transzendentalphilosophie?,” in *Husserl*, ed. by H. Noack, Darmstadt, 1973, p. 321.

⁶ L. Landgrebe, *Der Weg der Phänomenologie. Das Problem einer ursprünglichen Erfahrung*, Gütersloh, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1978, p. 169.

cognition is continuously surrounded by its horizons. Because of this, any particular intention points to other intentions, and so on. On the other hand, "... horizons are not open possibilities [which] could be fulfilled by fantasy, but horizons are forms for apodictic determination."¹ Husserl strictly emphasized that horizons as possibilities cannot be fulfilled by fantasy. Hence, the concept of horizon leads to the formulation of the thesis that not every intention can refer to any other. Only due to such a determination the world is not perceived as chaos. At the same time, the concept of horizon indicates that each intention presupposes another, known or unknown, intention.

According to Husserl, human cognition is accompanied by an "empty horizon"² which co-determines the activity of reason. At this point, the phenomenological concept of horizon reaches the correlation between reason and unreason. Each thing known in a rational way necessarily presupposes an unknown horizon. The latter is equal to unreason. Husserl concluded: "[t]hus the structure of the known and the unknown is a fundamental structure of world-consciousness."³ In a text written in December 1935, Husserl articulated these ideas with the use of two Greek words: πέρας and ἄπειρον. He succinctly explained the terms in the following way: "[o]n the one hand, things in a proper sense, each thoroughly seen, possible to grasp, in a thorough shape and the universe of thorough things as the first notion of the world. In the opposite that which is shapeless: the Earth as the ground which in principle is not able to be experienced as a 'thing'."⁴ Therefore, the concept of horizon expresses the correlation between the determinable and thus reasonable element of one's cognition, and the undeterminable element which seems to exceed the power of reason. However, one can expand the realm of reason (not ever in its entirety, of course), to the unbounded range of unreason. This is possible because the world remains the "undeterminable possibility of determination."⁵

Summing up, the question of unreason in the field of the world points to the unbounded range of prejudices. These prejudices are presupposed in

¹ Hua XXIX, p. 88.

² See Hua IX, p. 181.

³ E. Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil. Untersuchungen zur Genealogie der Logik*, ed. by L. Landgrebe, Hamburg, Meiner Verl., 1999, p. 33; English translation E. Husserl, *Experience and Judgment. Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*, ed. by L. Landgrebe, transl. by J. S. Churchill and K. Ameriks, introduction by J. S. Churchill, afterward by L. Eley, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1973, p. 37.

⁴ Hua XXIX, p. 141.

⁵ Hua XXXIX, p. 27.

scientific knowledge. From this perspective, we can speak of what Bernhard Waldenfels defined as “the despised doxa.”¹ At the same time, we must remember that the description of the doxa will always be incomplete due to the concept of horizon. Therefore, in this context, the correlation between reason and unreason indicates that reason as a whole is a never ending process² in which we constitute reason in light of the necessary presence of unreason.

Moving on to the problem of time, we should emphasise that Husserl considered it to be “the most difficult phenomenological problem.”³ As discussed above, the introduction of the problem of time into phenomenological investigations leads phenomenologists to formulate the thesis about the ideal character of reason. As early as 1905, the problem of time encouraged a revision of some ideas presented in the *Investigations*. In his lectures on the consciousness of internal time, Husserl argued that it is necessary to include the temporal level in the discussion of logical categories.⁴ As it was described in the *Investigations*, objective reason aims at the being “in itself.” After the level of time is introduced, being “in itself” becomes a problem. The ideal being should be a field of primordial experience for us; only in such an experience can the being be grasped as ideal. On the other hand, time introduces the horizons of being. Therefore, we can conclude that the consideration of time points to the presence of

¹ B. Waldenfels, “The Despised Doxa: Husserl and the Continuing Crisis of Western Reason,” in *Husserl and Contemporary Thought*, ed. by J. Sallis, Atlantic Highlands, Humanities Press, 1983, p. 21-38.

² Reason is “... then the process of the intentional constitution of a real being, the possibility of constituting a being on the grounds of evidence” (A. Aguirre, “Transzendentalphänomenologischer Rationalismus,” in *Perspektiven transzendentalphänomenologischer Forschung. Für Ludwig Landgrebe zum 70. Geburtstag von seinen Kölner Schülern*, ed. by U. Claesges, K. Held, Den Haag, Nijhoff, 1972, p. 125).

³ K. Schuhmann, *Husserl-Chronik. Denk- und Lebensweg Edmund Husserls*, op. cit., p. 215.

⁴ “The judging always has the character of the flow. Consequently, what we called ‘act’ or ‘intentional experience’ in the *Logical Investigations* is in every instance a flow in which a unity becomes constituted in immanent time (the judgment, the wish, etc.) a unity that has its immanent duration and that may progress more or less rapidly” (E. Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893 - 1917)*, transl. by J. B. Brough, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publ., 1991, p. 80).

unreason. Husserl's analysis of time is *de facto* the genetic analysis of the correlation between reason and unreason.

Inasmuch as ideal being seems to be non-temporal and rational to the core, time is something that is not really present.¹ In this sense, the consideration of time seems to confront us with unreason as an unknown horizon. What is rational is known and present for a man. In the analysis of time, the present is ambiguous. As Husserl indicated in the so-called C-manuscript, "[t]he future, which is available for me in each now-point thanks to my ability of pre-memory, is not the field of original experience."² Therefore, from a phenomenological perspective, what is "now" is constituted by what in fact is not, namely past and future. Husserl's analysis of time aims to deal with these fields.

Moreover, following Lanei Rodemeyer, in the manuscript from Bernau, "Husserl begins his discussions of temporality by focusing on the retentions of protention and retention, without mentioning the 'now-point' or even the *Urimpression*."³ To the extent that the "now-point" is the residuum of the living present of the ideal being, it appears as the basis for rational activity at the same time. From the point of view of time, the "now-point" is in universal flow. To put it differently, the concept of the flow of time introduces the dimensions of the retentions of protention and the retention of the "now-point" to phenomenological investigations. Thus, it introduces the horizon of the point. However, the horizon defines what is given to us, while it is not given in itself. In this way, the analysis uncovers the field of unreason.

Unreason indicates the undetermined; while Husserl investigated the problem of time, he did emphasize terminological problems. In the C-manuscript he briefly mentioned that "terminology is very hard here."⁴ Therefore, it must be stressed that the question of the above mentioned correlation leads to the introduction of a historical dimension into the theme

¹ In the manuscript from Bernau, Husserl emphasized this idea in the following way: "Time itself is not and it was not and it will not be present" (E. Husserl, *Die Bernauer Manuskripte über das Zeitbewusstsein (1917/18)*, ed. by R. Bernet and D. Lohmar, Dordrecht, Nijhoff, 2001, p. 181).

² Mat VIII, p. 92.

³ L. Rodemeyer, "Developments in the Theory of Time-Consciousness," in *The New Husserl. A Critical Reader*, ed. by D. Welton, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2003, p. 128.

⁴ Mat VIII, p. 71.

of reason.¹ This introduction is associated with the problems of expression. Nevertheless, in the field of time, the correlation between reason and unreason is evident. The analysis indicates that there is tension between the two elements, rather than a dualistic structure.

Because the issues of the unbounded range of unreason can be understood to be merely theoretical, they do not create any real danger. By contrast, the practical dimension presents more significant problems.. When one steers towards irrational, and thus unjustified aims, one acts in a naïve way; in consequence, one's actions affect the practice. Of course, the field of practice is the field of everyday life. Hence, irrational decisions can have an intersubjective and practical value as well. Husserl thought of this manifestation of unreason as particularly painful. He put forward the thesis about the ruin and bankruptcy of the West.² Husserl seemed to believe that reason is enslaved by unreason. This idea appeared in Husserl's observations which he made during the last decades of his life, between 1914 and 1938. Two particular phases during this time period deserve a closer analysis.³

Firstly, the lack of culture and reason manifested itself in the First World War.⁴ In 1916, when lecturing on *Fichte's Ideal of Humanity*, Husserl indicated that "[m]isery and death are the rule today."⁵ Evidently, the lectures constituted Husserl's reaction to the irrationality of the war.⁶ The war showed itself as an absurd phenomenon which came from nowhere and leads nowhere. In the lectures, Husserl tried to find any rational explanation of the war, but he failed to do so. We can claim that the war simply defied all reason.⁷ More importantly, however, the founder of phenomenology pointed out that it is possible to come out of the crisis. He indicated that everyone

¹ Cf. P. Ricoeur, *Husserl. An Analysis of his Phenomenology*, transl. by E. G. Ballard and L. E. Embree, Evanston, Northwestern Univ., 1967, p. 157-159.

² Hua XXVII, p. 243.

³ For broader investigations, see P. R. Buckley, *Husserl, Heidegger and the Crisis of Philosophical Responsibility*, *op. cit.*

⁴ J. G. Hart, "The Entelechy and Authenticity of Objective Spirit: Reflections on *Husserliana* XXVII," *Husserl Studies*, 9, (1992), p. 93.

⁵ Hua XXV, p. 269.

⁶ Cf. J. G. Hart, "Husserl and Fichte: With Special Regard to Husserl's Lectures on 'Fichte's Ideal of Humanity'," *Husserl Studies*, 12, (1995), p. 135-163. See also A. Pažanin, *Wissenschaft und Geschichte in der Phänomenologie Edmund Husserls*, Den Haag, Nijhoff, 1972, p. 84.

⁷ Hua XXV, p. 268.

should oppose the irrationality individually; it is an “unending task”¹ which could gain an intersubjective dimension.

Secondly, a “new Germany”² was established after the war, but irrationality manifested itself once more with the rise of National Socialism during the 1930s. Bruzina gave a good account of Husserl’s position at the time.³ We shall only underline that Husserl wrote of “irrationality conquering Europe” in his letters to Ingarden.⁴ From the perspective of irrationality, even the idea of “[p]hilosophy as science, as a serious, rigorous, indeed apodictically rigorous, science” was “over” like a dream.⁵ Husserl’s proposed solution to this crisis resembled his earlier ideas; unreason is correlatively present with reason, so the latter can enlarge its own borderlines. We find the following ironic question in a note from 1935: “You still tell the same old story about Your radical rationalism, do You still believe in philosophy as a rigorous science? Have You slept through the end of the new time?” In light of our findings so far, Husserl’s answer should not be surprising: “Oh no. I do not ‘believe’ or ‘tell stories’: I work, I build, I answer.”⁶ Therefore, one should aim at reason in one’s activities; there is no other answer than rational practice itself.

Hence, in the field of practice, irrationality creates a real danger for the intersubjective community. Inasmuch as irrationality, following Donn Welton, is “...itself reinscribed into rationality,”⁷ one can cope with irrationality with the use of reason itself. In this context, we should accept the principle of responsibility as the main principle of rational practice. Only in the light of such a principle can reason win the struggle with unreason. Of

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 293. “Reason, for phenomenology, is no longer a fixed faculty with a priori principles constituting human experience for all time to come; it becomes rather itself a process aiming at the realization of a goal set by itself” (R. A. Mall, “Phenomenology of Reason,” in *Perspektiven transzendentalphänomenologischer Forschung. Für Ludwig Landgrebe zum 70. Geburtstag von seinen Kölner Schülern*, ed. by U. Claesges, K. Held, Den Haag, Nijhoff, 1972, p. 130).

² E. Husserl, *Briefe an Roman Ingarden. Mit Erläuterungen und Erinnerungen an Husserl*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

³ R. Bruzina, *Edmund Husserl & Eugen Fink. Beginnings and Ends in Phenomenology, 1928 – 1938*, *op. cit.*, p. 35-68.

⁴ See the letter from the 10th of July 1935. Husserl, *Briefe an Roman Ingarden. Mit Erläuterungen und Erinnerungen an Husserl*, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

⁵ Hua VI, p. 508. *Crisis*, p. 389.

⁶ Hua XXVII, p. 238.

⁷ D. Welton, *The Other Husserl. The Horizons of Transcendental Phenomenology*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2000, p. 308.

course, metaphorically speaking, the struggle is an “unending task,” which implies that victory is in fact impossible.

In conclusion, Husserl’s examination of the problem of the correlation between reason and unreason shows that one element cannot exist without the other. Therefore, we can identify a notion which signifies reason in its rational-irrational character. For Husserl, this notion seems to be the notion of *logos* “in the most universal and at the same time deepest sense.”¹ Husserl wrote about the “*logos* of the world,”² as well as about the “*logos* of tradition.”³ Hence, Husserl used the notion of *logos* in the fields of the world and time simultaneously. Each of these fields is characterized by the correlation between reason and unreason. Therefore, the notion of *logos* can be seen to grasp the very sense of this correlation.

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As James G. Hart wrote, “[w]e hear from many quarters and over and over again that it is the *hybris* of reason, *logos*, rationality, science, intellect, and theoretical understanding that is one of the profound symptoms if not causes of our cultural decay.”⁴ Husserl’s phenomenology reminds us that reason can break down the spell of irrationality. In times when irrationality governed human life, and the negation of reason was almost a fashion, Husserl saw a true sense of rationality. This is a key insight offered by Husserl’s inquiry into the riddle of reason. He built phenomenology as *philosophia perennis*.⁵ Fink proposes that we should understand this as „a never-ending inquiry into the eternal essence ... of reason.”⁶

Husserl’s analysis of the concept of reason makes it clear that the power of reason lies in the tension between rationality and irrationality. Both elements are mutually reinforcing: irrationality is a rational theme, while the rational activity sinks in irrationality, as it were. Although we can speak of the unbounded range of unreason, islands of rationality should not be forgotten. The ability to forget is a sign of the crisis. The echo of Husserl’s struggle with the riddle of reason which comes from the side of his *Nachlass*

¹ Hua XI, p. 319, see footnote; *PS*, p. 607, see footnote.

² Hua VIII, p. 213.

³ Hua XXIX, p. 151.

⁴ J. G. Hart, “The Entelechy and Authenticity of Objective Spirit: Reflections on *Husserliana* XXVII,” *op. cit.*, p. 93.

⁵ Cf. Hua VII, p. 6; see also Hua VI, p. 7; *Crisis*, p. 10.

⁶ E. Fink, “The Problem of the Phenomenology of Edmund Husserl,” in *Apriori and World. European Contribution to Husserlian Phenomenology*, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

wakes us up from our “dogmatic snooze.” In this sense, *Nachlass* emerges as evidence of Husserl’s struggle with irrationality.