

Lotze, Husserl and the Crisis of European Science

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Abstract: The crisis of European science is a recurring theme in German philosophy following the failure of idealism. This crisis finds a pivotal expression in the philosophy of Hermann Lotze, an extremely influential author in the second half of the 19th century, who serves as a reference and source of inspiration for Husserl's reflections in the 1930s.

Keywords: Lotze; Husserl; crisis of objectivism; meaning; value

1. Introduction

Research on the background of Edmund Husserl's *The Crisis of European Sciences* has focused on highlighting three key elements:

A. A very concrete personal situation, namely, the imposed removal from academic activity, which, in turn, is closely linked to the social and political upheavals that erupted uncontrollably in Germany from 1933 onward.

B. Europe's new cultural setting in the aftermath of the First World War, marked by pessimism and irrationalist currents (Spengler, Klages, Simmel, etc.).

C. The deepening and acceleration of the process by which science became increasingly detached from intuition during the first three decades of the 20th century, making its reconnection with the *Lebenswelt* (lifeworld) an urgent matter.

There is no doubt that these three factors played a decisive role as immediate catalysts for Husserl's concentrated reflections on the theme of "Crisis." However, an exclusive emphasis on biographical, sociological, and historical aspects must not obscure the properly philosophical roots of this theme – roots that trace back to the situation of philosophy in the 19th century following the failure of German idealism. This brings us to the relationship between Lotze and Husserl.

2. General considerations on the Lotze–Husserl relationship

That Lotze exerted a significant influence on Husserl's thought is not only well-documented in Husserl's own writings but has also been the subject of scholarly study. A review of the critical literature shows that research on the Lotze–Husserl relationship has primarily focused on Lotze's *Logik*, particularly on themes such as anti-psychologism, Platonism, and the notion of validity (*Geltung*)¹.

Notably, in recent years, this perspective has been significantly enriched by the discovery of an unpublished manuscript² written by Husserl between 1895 and 1897, which has already been the subject of a detailed study³. However, one aspect of this manuscript seems to have gone unnoticed – its very title. Husserl did not entitle the manuscript *Lotzes Logik* or something similar, as one might expect given its primary content. Instead, he called it *Mikrokosmos*. This happens to be the title of a work by Lotze in which he presents a comprehensive, non-technical exposition of his anthropology and worldview. Although Husserl was likely familiar with this work – since it was immensely popular toward the end of the 19th century – I have been unable to verify whether he actually read it⁴. Nevertheless, whether or not Husserl read it is not a minor issue; rather, it could be decisive in rethinking Lotze's influence on Husserl. It introduces a new perspective that goes well beyond the narrowly established scope of previous research and even helps rethink Husserl's work within a broader horizon. As I will attempt to show, the fundamental theme of *Mikrokosmos* – and indeed of Lotze's philosophy as a whole – is none other than offering a response to the “crisis of European science.” Should we then consider the possibility of a decisive influence of Lotze on Husserl's theme of *Krise*? Against this suggestion, one undeniable fact stands out: throughout *Krise*, Husserl does not make a single reference to Lotze. Why, then, should we attempt to see anything of relevance here?

3. On the Lotze–Husserl relationship regarding the crisis of European science

The notion of a “crisis of European science” has become inextricably linked to the title of Husserl's decisive work on the subject, which he wrote between 1934 and 1937. However,

¹ Among many others, see, for example, the works of Hauser (2003), Vigo (2007), Iocco (2015), Dewalque (2015), and Gyemant (2015).

² K 1 59, *Husserl Archives Leuven*.

³ Fisette (2021).

⁴ None of the specialists consulted – whom I sincerely thank – were able to confirm this information.

although not entirely ignored by scholars studying the genesis of this work, it is little known that both the general concern and some of the fundamental ideas presented in such work were already explicitly formulated by Husserl in his 1911 publication *Philosophy as Rigorous Science*.

Recognizing this fact is crucial to establishing a connection between Lotze and Husserl's theme of *Krise*. Indeed, it should be noted that *Philosophy as Rigorous Science* contains an important reference to Lotze, namely: "Mit Lotze zu sprechen: Den Weltlauf berechnen heißt nicht, ihn verstehen" [As Lotze puts it, "To calculate the course of the world does not mean to understand it"] (Husserl, 1911: 56; 1965: 140).

Let us delve deeper into the meaning of this passage through a twofold analysis: first, by clarifying the context in which Lotze makes the statement referenced by Husserl, and second, by elucidating the context in which Husserl cites it.

The quotation from *Logik* that Husserl includes in *Philosophy as Rigorous Science* appears in the final paragraph of Lotze's book. There, after addressing various problems and partial truths, Lotze concludes with a reflection on the eventual aspiration to offer a systematic account of these truths. In this context, he observes that such an interest was already present in Plato and, more recently, in Hegel. Referring explicitly to Hegel and German Idealism, he states:

From these ambitions by which Germany was once inspired, our own age has passed with much sobriety to the order of the day, to that unremitting labour of empirical enquiry, the incompleteness of which paralyzed the audacious flight of the Hegelian idealism... But in view of the universal idolatry of experience which prevails at present, and which is all the cheaper and all the safer now that the importance and indispensableness of its object are visible to all mankind, I will at least close with the avowal that I hold that much reviled ideal of speculative intuition to be the supreme and not wholly unattainable goal of science, and with the expression of my hope that German philosophy will always arouse itself afresh, with more of moderation and reserve, yet with no less enthusiasm, to the endeavor, not merely to calculate the course of the world, but to understand it. (Lotze, 1884a: 530)¹

¹ "Über diese Versuche, welche Deutschland einst begeisterten, ist die Gegenwart sehr nüchtern zur Tagesordnung übergegangen, zu der unablässige empirischen Forschung, deren Unvollkommenheit den gewagten Flug dieses Idealismus lähmte... Aber im Angesicht der allgemeinen Vergötterung, die man jetzt der Erfahrung umso wohlfeiler und sicherer erweist, je weniger es noch Jemanden gibt, der ihre Wichtigkeit und Unentbehrlichkeit nicht Begriffe, im Angesicht dieser Tatsache will ich wenigstens mit dem Bekenntnis, dass ich eben jene

It is clear and explicit that the statement Husserl cites is made within a framework that contrasts the philosophical project of German Idealism with the actual development of science – two domains that, by around 1850, were widely acknowledged as incompatible. Lotze takes a critical stance toward the German Idealist program of positioning philosophy as superior to science. At the same time, however, and this is crucial, he acknowledges that, despite its failure, German Idealism foregrounds a fundamental issue concerning the relationship between philosophy and science. Whereas science limits itself to calculating the world, philosophy upholds a legitimate aspiration, which it recognizes as its specific task: namely, to understand it. Given this, it becomes evident that Husserl's citation is not incidental; rather, it underscores an aspect that is central to Lotze's own text and directly connects to the fundamental theme of *Krise*.

This impression is further reinforced when we expand our perspective beyond the context of Lotze's passage to the context in which Husserl makes his reference. The citation from *Philosophy as Rigorous Science* appears in the final part of the work, where Husserl insists on a strict separation between philosophy as mere *Weltanschauung* and philosophy as a rigorous science, arguing that the true vocation of the discipline can only be realized in the latter. However, even as Husserl radically emphasizes the scientific nature of philosophy, he does not fail to introduce a comparison that differentiates it from the idea of science in the natural sciences. If the primary thrust of Husserl's text is to oppose *Weltanschauung* to *Wissenschaft* – and, on that basis, to delineate two conceptions of philosophy – an essential part of his argument is also to contrast *Wissenschaft* in the sense of *Naturwissenschaft* with *Wissenschaft* in the sense of philosophy. This distinction is grounded in the idea that only the latter, and not the former, fulfills the ideal of an absolutely rigorous science. In sum, the true meaning of philosophy can only be found if, at the same time, it is distanced, on the one hand, from mere *Weltanschauung* and, on the other, from the notion of science as conceived in the natural sciences.

This dual aspect is unmistakably evident in certain passages that, if the dual meaning of “scientificity” is not considered, might appear paradoxical – since they point to science both as

vielgeschmähte Form der spekulativen Anschauung für das höchste und nicht schlechthin unerreichbare Ziel der Wissenschaft halte, und mit der Hoffnung schliessen, dass mit mehr Mass und Zurückhaltung, aber mit gleicher Begeisterung sich doch die deutsche Philosophie zu dem Versuche immer wiederheben werde, den Weltlauf zu verstehen, und nicht bloss zu berechnen“ (Lotze, 1876: 608).

the origin and as the solution to the crisis (Husserl, 1911: 57)¹. Understanding this idea, however, requires an examination of how Husserl conceives natural science and its specific form of scientificity. In this regard, it is crucial to consider passages in which Husserl notes that, despite all the undeniable advances of natural science, there is no doubt that, ultimately, it is incapable of deciphering any aspect of the reality in which we exist and live (Husserl, 1911: 56)². Furthermore,

The general belief that it is their function to accomplish this and that they are merely not yet far enough advanced, the opinion that they can accomplish this – in principle – has revealed itself to those with more profound insight as a superstition. (Husserl, 1965: 140)³

What is expected of philosophy is precisely what cannot be expected from *Naturwissenschaft* – namely, that it should decipher the world and the mysteries of existence (Husserl, 1911: 56)⁴.

This task becomes all the more urgent when one considers that “Die geistige Not unserer Zeit ist in der Tat unerträglich geworden” [The spiritual need of our time has, in fact, become unbearable] (Husserl, 1911: 56; 1965: 140). This, of course, is related to the fact that empiricism and historicism challenge and ultimately dismantle any claim to radical normativity. This, in turn, has deeper roots: naturalists and historicists alike, though in distinct ways,

[...] both are at work on different sides to misinterpret ideas as facts and to transform all reality, all life, into an incomprehensible, idealess confusion of “facts.” The superstition of the fact is common to them all. (Husserl, 1965: 141)⁵

With this “Aberglaube der Tatsachen” [superstition of the fact], all “... Lebenswirklichkeit, die für uns Bedeutung hat, in der wir Bedeutung haben sollen” [the reality of life, which

¹ “The need here has its source in science. But only science can definitively overcome the need that has its source in science” [Die Not stammt hier von der Wissenschaft. Aber nur Wissenschaft kann die Not, die von Wissenschaft stammt, endgültig überwinden] (Husserl, 1965: 141; 1911: 57).

² “...(decipher) at no single point” “the reality in which we live, move, and are” [...(enträseln) an keinem einzigen Punkt] “die Wirklichkeit, in der wir leben, weben und sind] (Husserl, 1965: 140; 1911: 56).

³ “...der allgemeine Glaube, dass dies zu leisten ihre Funktion und sie nur noch nicht genug weit seien, die Meinung, dass sie dies... prinzipiell leisten können, hat sich Tieferblickenden als ein Aberglaube enthüllt“ (Husserl, 1911: 56).

⁴ “... that is to reveal for us the riddles of the world and of life” [... das uns die Welt- und Lebensrätseln enthüllen soll] (Husserl, 1965: 140; 1911: 56)

⁵ “... sind beide von verschiedenen Seiten am Werk, Ideen in Tatsachen umzudeuten und alle Wirklichkeit, alles Leben in ein unverständliches ideenloses Gemenge von Tatsachen zu verwandeln. Der Aberglaube der Tatsache ist ihnen allen gemein“ (Husserl, 1911: 56).

has significance for us and in which we should have significance] is inevitably lost (Husserl, 1911: 56; 1965: 141).

With the introduction of these brief references, we have established a degree of plausibility, though we are still far from having demonstrated anything definitively. Two central questions require further investigation – questions that, while they may not exhaust the issue at hand, will significantly contribute to its formulation. Can we say that the theme of the crisis of European science is genuinely present in Lotze and, moreover, assert with justification that it is central to his thought? And, provided that the first question allows for an affirmative answer, can we then make the further claim that Lotze exerted some kind of influence on Husserl in this regard, beyond merely circumstantial or coincidental similarities?

4. Lotze and the crisis of European science

4.1. Positioning Lotze within the context of 19th-century German thought

To properly understand what follows, it may be useful to begin with a brief intellectual biography of Lotze – one that clarifies both the subordinate role his *Logik* plays within his overall thought, and, at the same time, the central role played in his intellectual development by the conflict between mechanicism and teleology.

Lotze's early education was in the humanities, focusing on the arts and literature, particularly poetry. Later on, his intellectual trajectory took a significant turn: setting aside his initial interests, he devoted many years to the study of medicine. These studies required him to engage with the latest developments in biology and physiology and to immerse himself in the controversies of his time. Two key issues would capture his attention: the phenomenon of life itself and the mind–body relationship. Regarding the first, the intellectual horizon within which Lotze began his studies was deeply influenced by Idealism and *Naturphilosophie*, particularly Schelling. One consequence of this strong influence was the prevailing vitalism – i.e., the idea that, ultimately, living phenomena cannot be explained in purely physico-chemical terms but require the invocation of a special principle or *Lebenskraft* (vital force). Lotze would go on to reject all forms of vitalism and biological teleology, advocating for the thesis that all natural

phenomena must be explained “mechanically,” without any appeal to extramechanical principles¹.

Lotze’s role in the critique and ultimate rejection of vitalism was so decisive that he became widely known in German intellectual circles primarily for this contribution. As a result, materialists began to regard him as an ally. This appropriation of his intellectual authority as a source of arguments in favor of materialism compelled Lotze to assume a leading role in the *Materialismsstreit* (the controversy around materialism), ultimately forcing him to develop the other side of his thought – one in which the concept of teleology, while no longer considered a tool of scientific explanation, would nevertheless play a central part.

These two aspects of his thought also define his relationship with German Idealism. Lotze did not seek to abandon Idealism but rather to reestablish it on new foundations, ensuring that it would no longer conflict with science. His position on the debate between teleology and mechanicism was merely one aspect of this much broader program, which ultimately aimed to reconcile science with Idealism. On the one hand, this meant recognizing the autonomy of science vis-à-vis philosophy – insisting that its results constitute an unavoidable point of departure and rejecting any pretension to speculative knowledge. On the other hand, it also entailed recognizing a legitimate motivation in German Idealism: the pursuit of a form of knowledge that transcends positive science. It is precisely this ambition that lies at the core of his seminal work, *Mikrokosmos*.

4.2. Lotze’s philosophy as a response to the crisis of European science

The opening sentence of *Mikrokosmos* reads: “Zwischen den Bedürfnissen des Gemüthes und den Ergebnissen menschlicher Wissenschaft ist ein alter nie geschlichteter Zwist” [Between spiritual needs and the results of human science, there is an unsettled dispute of long standing] (Lotze, 1884b: V; 1885a: vii). A little further on, Lotze states that science seems to destroy the *Weltbild* (image of the world) “... in welchem das menschliche Gemüth die Befriedigung seiner Sehnsucht fand” [...in which the human soul found its longings satisfied] (Lotze, 1884b: X; 1885a: xi).

¹ It is important to note that Lotze’s mechanicism does not strictly mean a reduction of all natural phenomena to the laws of Newtonian mechanics but rather to a system of strictly universal natural laws.

To clarify the meaning of this thesis, we must proceed in two directions: First, by elucidating the concept of *Gemüth* (heart)¹, and second, by examining Lotze's conception of science. Against Herbart – who, in the context of his critique of faculty psychology, reduces the psyche to representation (*Vorstellung*), deriving from it both feeling (*Gefühl*) and will (*Wille*) – Lotze maintains a decidedly anti-intellectualist stance. He insists on the original and mutually irreducible nature of these three psychic functions, assigning a particularly prominent role to feeling. For Lotze, feeling is the fundamental element of our psychic life because our primary relationship with the world is not purely contemplative and representational, but rather evaluative. At first glance, this emphasis on feeling might seem to incline us toward naturalism and promote absolute subjectivism. However, while the most basic feelings are those of pleasure and pain, and many emotional experiences merely serve adaptive purposes in animals, feeling is also the gateway to the apprehension of values and, ultimately, to everything that grounds meaning and significance in the world. The needs of *Gemüt* to which Lotze refers, then, are nothing other than those human needs that we might describe as properly existential. The key point is that there is a conflict between science and our existential demands.

What, then, can be said about science? From an initial inquiry, one might emphasize that the positive knowledge provided by science is neutral with respect to questions of meaning and value pertaining to human existence. The real problem, however, is not merely that science fails to answer or even address such questions but that it establishes a fundamental obstacle to doing so. Why? Because the essential condition of science, insofar as it is concerned with absolute reality, is to set aside all considerations of meaning and value in the data it studies. Science demands that reality be “objectified” – that is, approached in complete disregard of any subjective perspective. However, to de-subjectivize reality is, at the same time, to dehumanize it. The price of obtaining a world of objective knowledge is to render that world uninhabitable for human beings. In short, while science demands a world devoid of all meaning and value, it is only within such a world that our existential needs can be fulfilled.

If we accept that there is indeed an inevitable and necessary conflict between the demands of *Gemüt* (heart or disposition) and those of science, the question then arises: What should be done about it? At first glance, three logically possible alternatives present themselves: either we attempt to privilege one perspective at the expense of the other; we resign ourselves to living

¹ I choose to translate *Gemüth* as *heart* (although it could also be translated as mind, disposition, soul or even spirit), as it is a linguistically correct translation and adequate to the context.

with the contradiction; or we seek a genuine and harmonious synthesis of both (Lotze, 1884b: IX). Lotze rejects the first two options and pursues the third.

A. Science is a legitimate endeavor, and the program of objective knowledge has intrinsic value that cannot be denied. Consequently, one cannot simply ignore science in favor of satisfying the demands of the heart. Of course, one may accept the impossibility of scientific proof of immortality or freedom of the soul and yet find other kinds of foundations for believing in them. However, it makes no sense to openly oppose science and its results, for instance, by attempting to defend immortality and freedom even when such ideas openly contradict scientific findings (Lotze, 1852: 37)¹. This is the unavoidable legacy of the failure of German Idealism.

B. The conflict should not lead to merely keeping the two opposing demands disconnected, nor to engaging in what was metaphorically called “double bookkeeping” (*doppelte Buchführung*) – a possibility that some of Lotze’s contemporaries explicitly considered viable during the *Materialismusstreit*, but which Lotze expressly opposed (Lotze, 1846: 165).

C. If there is indeed a real opposition between the interests of knowledge and those of *Gemüt*, this contradiction, however, can be resolved if both demands are adequately accounted for (Lotze, 1884b: IX)². What, then, does this synthesis consist of? We may consider it at different levels of generality, considering its more concrete and more abstract expressions. At the most concrete level, Lotze’s synthesis takes the form of a reconciliation between mechanism and teleology; at the most abstract level, it is a reconciliation between facticity and meaning. Let us examine this situation at both levels, with particular attention to the second, as we have already addressed the first.

Mechanism and teleology are not incompatible. The old atomic theory has certainly been overcome by contemporary science, yet it contains an essential truth that remains valid – namely, that every emergence, preservation, and modification of natural entities (*Naturdinge*)

¹ “One may recognize the impossibility of a scientific proof of immortality and still believe in it, but to claim that one is scientifically convinced of the impossibility of immortality or freedom and yet demand that one believe in them is an absurd game. What help would all science be to us if its result for our entire spiritual life were that individual great intellectual orientations within us operate alongside one another without mediation or unity?” (My translation) [Man kann die Unmöglichkeit eines wissenschaftlichen Beweises für die Unsterblichkeit einsehen und dennoch an sie glauben, aber vorzugeben, man sei von der Unmöglichkeit der Unsterblichkeit oder der Freiheit wissenschaftlich überzeugt und dennoch zu verlangen, dass man an sie glaube, dies ist ein widersinniges Spiel. Was sollte uns alle Wissenschaft helfen, wenn sie für unsere ganzes geistiges Leben das Resultat hätte, dass einzelne grosse Gedankenrichtungen in uns ohne Vermittlung und Einheit nebeneinander arbeiten] (Lotze, 1852: 37).

² “On the contrary, we must be ever consciously endeavoring to maintain the rights of each, and to show how far from insoluble is the contradiction in which they appear to be inextricably involved” [Immer von neuem müssen wir vielmehr den ausdrücklichen Versuch wiederholen, beide ihre Rechte zu wahren und zu zeigen, wie wenig unauflöslich der Widerspruch ist, in welche sie unentwirrbar verwickelt erscheinen] (Lotze, 1885a: XI; 1884b: IX).

can only be explained through mechanical processes. A phenomenon is only fully explained when its existence is understood as the realization of general rules governing an efficient mechanism¹. Negatively considered, this implies that no natural phenomenon can ever be explained solely on the basis of pure “Ideas” (*Ideen*) that merely confer meaning and a function of significant relevance, thereby referring to a certain teleology. The unilateral privileging of either mechanism or “Idea” represents the dual correlated yet complementary error of materialism and German Idealism. The correct position is to integrate both perspectives and acknowledge that, even though every phenomenon is governed by a mechanism, this does not preclude the possibility that it also fulfills a teleology and, therefore, carries within itself meaning and value (Lotze, 1888: 224).

However, mechanism and teleology are not merely reconcilable; rather, there exists between them a clear relationship of subordination and priority. While the formulation of the problem might suggest that truth and the demands of the heart hold equal value and stand on an equal footing, a more careful analysis reveals that this is not the case. Instead, there is a complete subordination of one to the other (Lotze, 1884b: XV)².

The justification for the absolute priority of teleology over mechanism leads us back to the most abstract principles of Lotzean metaphysics – namely, that the only possible reason for and justification of existence can never be grounded merely in the fact of another existence. Instead, it must refer to an entirely different plane, beyond mere facts and all facticity. Every natural law can only have a conditional character – i.e., stating that if certain conditions are met, specific phenomena will occur. However, the nomological understanding of the universe proper to science presupposes something given, which itself cannot be accounted for by that legality. A causal relation may well explain a transformation within what already exists, but it cannot, in itself, account for the transition from nonexistence to existence. Science cannot answer the question of the right to existence – the radical question of why there is something rather than

¹ “The ancient doctrine of atoms and void is outdated today, but not its methodological principle, according to which the emergence, preservation, change, and destruction of natural things must not initially be explained by Ideas, as if a meaningful sense of an event were already sufficient to transform a postulate into reality.” “All occurrences become explicable only when it is recognized that their realization is bound to the general rules of a universally operative mechanism” [„Die antike Lehre von den Atomen und dem Lehren ist heute überholt, nicht jedoch ihr methodischer Grundgedanke, dem zufolge Entstehung, Erhaltung, Veränderung und Zerstörung der Naturdinge, zunächst nicht aus Ideen erklärt werden dürfen, als reichte ein bedeutungsvoller Sinn eines Ereignisses schon hin, um aus einem Postulat in Wirklichkeit zu verwandeln.“ “Erklärbar wird alles Geschehen nur dann, wenn anerkannt wird, dass es in seiner Verwirklichung an die allgemeinen Regeln einen überall gleichmässig wirkenden Mechanismus gebunden ist] (Lotze, 1885b: 224; 1888: 224).

² “...how absolutely universal is the extent and at the same time how completely subordinate the significance, of the mission which mechanism has to fulfil in the structure of the world” [...wie ausnahmslos universell die Ausdehnung, und zugleich wie völlig untergeordnet die Bedeutung der Sendung ist, welche der Mechanismus in dem Bau der Welt zu erfüllen hat] (Lotze, 1884b: XV; 1885a: XVI).

nothing. The mere facticity of existence demands a foundation that, if it is to avoid vicious circularity and categorical error, can never be found in another facticity. Instead, it must refer to meaning, significance, or value. The Ultimate Why can only reside on a plane different from that of mere facts and, ultimately, rests on the identification of *esse* and *bonum* – an identification sacrificed by the scientific worldview but necessarily reclaimed by a reflection that pursues the problem of science to its ultimate consequences.¹

Certainly, one might still object: Is this question concerning the Ultimate Why a genuinely “rational” question and, consequently, philosophically legitimate? The answer leads us back to our starting point. *Geist* (spirit) is not merely a theoretical capacity for representing the world. The question of the radical foundation of existence is a question that, while not strictly rational in a narrow sense, is nonetheless rational in a broader sense – emerging as a legitimate demand posed by the spirit (*Geist*) itself. The spirit (*Geist*) is not alien to all feeling and affectivity but instead contains them in an essential way. The restoration of the *esse–bonum* identity both implies and requires a reconciliation between affectivity and knowledge – one that transcends the unilaterally intellectualist vision of the spirit (*Geist*) as pure, neutral representation and the narrow notion of rationality that such a vision entails.

5. Lotze’s influence on Husserl regarding the theme of crisis

Having demonstrated that the theme of the crisis of science is central to Lotze’s thought, let us now, as promised, scrutinize his possible influence on Husserl. From what has already been presented, it is clear that systematic parallels can be established between Lotze and Husserl. But can we speak of actual influence? Certainly, a single piece of text – such as the one cited earlier – is not sufficient proof, so let us examine others.

5.1. Intellekt and Gemüth

In *Philosophy as Rigorous Science*, and in the context previously discussed, Husserl reaffirms that philosophy must assume its vocation as a rigorous science, consciously distancing itself from any *Weltanschauung*. In this sense, he denies the possibility of mediation between

¹ “That this contest between the two is an unnecessary torment which we inflict upon ourselves by terminating investigation prematurely, is the conclusion that I desire to establish” [Dass der Streit zwischen diesen beiden eine unnötige Qual ist, die wir durch zu frühes Abbrechen der Untersuchung selbst zufügen, dies ist die Überzeugung, die wir befestigen möchten] (Lotze, 1884b: X; 1885a: XI-XII).

the two. However, Husserl does not entirely rule out the possibility of a “*richtiger Weltanschauungsphilosoph*” (a genuine *Weltanschauung* philosopher) – one who would attend not only to the results of science but also to its method. The task of such a philosopher would be

... in contrast to the metaphysical timidity and skepticism of the preceding epoch, to pursue even the highest metaphysical problems with bold audacity, and to attain a worldview that harmoniously satisfies both intellect and heart (*Gemüt*). (Husserl, 1965: 58)¹

If we consider the elements we have outlined, no particularly refined analysis is needed to recognize here an implicit reference by Husserl to Lotze. Indeed, Husserl insists, on the one hand, that *Weltanschauung* issues cannot be addressed while ignoring scientific results – that is, by continuing along the path of speculative metaphysics in the style of German Idealism. On the other hand, he asserts that the most profound metaphysical problems cannot simply be ignored. The task, ultimately, is to seek a harmonious integration of intellect (*Intellekt*) and heart (*Gemüt*). Both the elements of this opposition and the proposal for their harmonious integration clearly point to Lotze.

5.2. Understanding (*Verstehen*) in Lotze and Husserl

In the excerpt cited at the outset, Husserl employs the notion of understanding (*verstehen*) to characterize philosophy’s specific and proper goal in contrast to natural science. However, it is equally true that, a little further on, he also denies that understanding (*verstehen*), in the sense of the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*), is something essentially different from the mere establishment of facts in the broader sense of positive science in general (Husserl, 1911: 56). This indicates that there are clearly two distinct uses of the term “understanding” (*verstehen*) in Husserl: one that refers to Dilthey and his dualistic conception of science – albeit perhaps with a somewhat unilateral interpretation of it – while still considering the *Geisteswissenschaften* as integral moments within positive science; and another that employs the term in a more general sense.

¹ “... im Gegensatz zur metaphysischen Zaghaflichkeit und Skepsis der vorgegangenen Epoche, mit kühnem Wagemut auch den höchsten metaphysischen Problemen nachgehen, um das Ziel einer nach Lage der Zeit Intellekt und Gemüt harmonisch befriedigende Weltanschauung“ (Husserl, 1911: 58).

This distinction, which is essential for understanding Husserl, is no less necessary for understanding Lotze and, ultimately, for grasping the meaning of Husserl's reference to him. Lotze explicitly distinguishes between two types of knowledge: *cognitio rei* and *cognitio circa rem*. The former is characterized by being an immediate intuition, which involves not only an intellectual but also an affective access to the object, allowing one to grasp its essential nature. The latter, by contrast, is a purely intellectual and discursive process, which apprehends the object solely in terms of the multiplicity of its external relations¹. The proper object of *cognitio rei* is the spirit (*Geist*), whereas that of *cognitio circa rem* is matter (Lotze, 1852: 55–67, 148)². If we adhere to what has been presented thus far, and taking into account the significant influence of Lotze's thought on Dilthey, there would be good reasons to consider Lotze's distinction as a clear precursor to Dilthey's. This, in turn, makes it almost inevitable to equate the two. However, important differences exist between them, and these differences are far from trivial – one, in particular, is decisive: Lotze is not, like Dilthey, opposing the methodological-epistemological monism of natural science in an attempt to distinguish two types of science within the realm of positive knowledge. Instead, through this distinction, he opens the space for establishing a radical differentiation between science and philosophy.

To confirm the validity of our claim, certain facts should not be overlooked. It is true that Lotze affirms that *cognitio rei* is the proper mode of access to the spirit (*Geist*). However, if we consider his theory of psychology, we find that Lotze assigns to this discipline a set of tasks that clearly belong to the sphere of *cognitio circa rem* (Lotze, 1846: 203–204). If there are tasks in psychology that extend beyond this sphere, that is because it possesses both a properly scientific aspect and a specifically philosophical one. A second relevant fact, which complements the first, is that Lotze explicitly considers art and religious faith as paradigmatic modes of *circa rei* knowledge. This means that – contrary to what one might initially assume – the distinction between the two types of *cognitio* is not a distinction between two types of science. This point is further connected to the fact that *cognitio rei* is not purely intellectual,

¹ “We absorb their peculiar nature into our feelings as well as into our representations, are able to immerse ourselves in them, and attempt to sympathize with them” (My translation) [Wir nehmen ihre eigentümliche Natur in unser Gefühl, wie in unsere Vorstellungen auf, vermögen uns in sie hineinzusetzen und nachzuempfinden versuchen] (Lotze, 1852: 58).

² “We have a positive and immediate intuition only of the living and active. This alone do we understand and can intimately sympathize with its essence...”; matter, by contrast, remains “...in all our intuitions a completely dark core, moving back and forth within a bright network of relations, according to laws that we, for the most part, indeed know” (My translation) [Eine positive und unmittelbare Anschauung besitzen wir nur von dem Lebendigen und Tätigen. Dies allein verstehen wir und können sein Wesen durchringend mitempfinden... Dagegen bleibt die Materie in allen unseren Anschauungen ein vollkommen dunkler Kern, der in einem hellen Netz von Relationen sich hin und her bewegt, nach Gesetzen, die wir allerdings grösstenteils kennen] (Lotze, 1852: 58).

cognitive, or theoretical. Instead, its essential nature allows this form of knowledge to provide access to a realm of meaning, significance, and value. In sum, while the sphere of *cognitio rei* is certainly not exclusive to philosophy, it is precisely what distinguishes philosophy from science. And this is the central point of interest for Husserl.

5.3. *The crisis of science, its stages, and the problem of psychology*

In the preceding sections, we considered, in a general sense, the difficulty that science poses to the consideration of *Gemüt*. We can gain a better understanding of this difficulty if we move to more concrete levels of analysis and examine the issue from a more unique historical perspective.

Lotze distinguishes three stages in the process of science's constitution and its increasing detachment from the needs of *Gemüt*. The emergence of science in Greece represented the triumph of *Logos* over myth and, with this victory, a desacralization of nature – a true “*Entgötterung des gesamten Weltbaues*” (de-deification of the entire structure of the world) (Lotze, 1884b: XIII). The modern era further radicalized this process by introducing the program of mathematizing the universe, which ultimately led to a mechanistic conception of the universe. This process, in turn, reached a significant new stage of development in the 19th century, as the mathematization and mechanization of the universe began to extend from the external world to the internal one – from matter to life and the psyche, from the cosmos to the microcosm (Lotze, 1884b: XIV)¹.

It is not difficult to establish a parallel between Lotze and Husserl regarding the distinction of three decisive stages in the process of the crisis of European science. Like Lotze, Husserl traces the emergence of science to the Greek overcoming of myth, and he similarly attributes a decisive role to the Galilean program (Husserl, 1937: 5ss., 20ss.). Without disregarding these commonalities, special attention must be given to the third stage.

¹ “But as the growing farsightedness of astronomy... so the further advance of mechanical science begins to threaten with similar disintegration the smaller world, the Microcosm of man...” “But even within the limits in which this has a better right to move, the disintegrating and destructive activity of such investigation is plain enough and begins to dispute that pervading unity of body and soul upon which seemed to depend all the beauty and living activity of animate creatures, and all the significance and worth of their intercourse with the external world” [“Aber wie die wachsende Fernsicht der Astronomie... so gewinnt das weitere Vordringen der mechanische Wissenschaft auch die kleinere Welt, den Mikrokosmos des menschlichen Wesens, mit gleicher Zersetzung zu bedrohen.” “Aber auch innerhalb der Grenzen, in denen die sich mit besserem Rechte bewegt, ist die zersetzende und zerstörende Tätigkeit dieser Forschung sich bar genug, und beginnt alle jene durchdringende Einheit des Körpers und der Seele zu bestreiten, auf der jede Schönheit und Lebendigkeit der Gestalten, jede Bedeutsamkeit und jeder Wert ihres Wechselverkehrs mit der äusseren Welt zu beruhen scheint“] (Lotze, 1885a: XV; 1884b: XIV).

An immediate precursor to *Krisis* is the lecture that Husserl delivered in Prague in 1934 (Husserl, 1934). In this crucial lecture, Husserl states clearly and explicitly that the crisis of European science finds one of its main expressions in psychology (cf. Husserl, 1937: 68ss; see Porta, 2013: 113ss). Why psychology? What is Husserl pointing to? Obviously, he is referring to the fact that the process of objectification carried out by science has irreversibly shifted from nature to the psyche, from the object to the subject's own subjectivity. It is precisely in this latter transformation that its most disastrous consequences become apparent. Now, is this not precisely the point that we have seen clearly expressed in Lotze when he denounces the extension of the mathematization of the universe from the macrocosm to the microcosm?

6. Different possible perspectives for a conclusion

What should we consider the essential outcome of our entire discussion? Should we merely add another data point to the already nearly infinite field of Husserlian philology, thereby contributing to the so-called “study of influences”? This would certainly not be without value, as it would not only complement the idea of a unilateral logical reception centered on the concept of *Geltung* but also reframe it within a broader context. However, while this may suffice from the perspective of an enthusiastic Husserl-*Forscher*, such a view would lose track of something that we consider more important.

There is indeed an explicit reflection in Lotze on the crisis of science. This reflection, however, is not an exception in the second half of the 19th century but rather an expression of a broader movement with numerous other manifestations. Many of the ideas we have examined in Lotze are not exclusive to him but were already circulating among other thinkers. To give just one example, the tension between the world presented by science and the one that responds to our existential needs – along with the anticipation of the contrast between *Lebenswelt* and the scientific worldview – finds an influential and paradigmatic expression in Fechner, with his opposition between the “daytime” and “nighttime” perspectives (Fechner, 1879). It is well known that Lotze had a close intellectual connection with Fechner during their time in Leipzig, where they engaged in extensive philosophical discussions.

Yet, in making this move, we might appear to return to the standpoint of the scholar and the history of influences. However, this is only an appearance. Avoiding a limitation of Husserl's theme of “Crisis” to the biographical, sociological, and political context of the 1930s and instead situating it within a broader historical-philosophical horizon is crucial for deepening

its properly philosophical significance. The fact that it decisively refers back to the failure of German Idealism and the subsequent quest for alternatives is not merely relevant from a historical-philosophical perspective but essential from a systematic standpoint. The theme of crisis is not a matter of historical contingency but rather an integral part of the historical construction of the very problem to which transcendental phenomenology seeks to offer a solution.

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