What follows is a meditation on the crisis of philosophy as it manifests itself in the work of Edmund Husserl. If this meditation is to hold us onto the appropriate path to this crisis it has to be itself a philosophical meditation. Moreover, if philosophy is indeed in a state of crisis the meditation itself, in so far as it is philosophical, is in a state of crisis. It also means that since philosophical meditation is itself in a state of crisis, the way it holds onto the appropriate path to the crisis of philosophy is itself in a state of crisis. In so saying, we do not intend to burden Husserl’s work if only because it is already burdened. His work, in so far as it is attentive to the crisis of philosophy, is itself symptomatic of this crisis. As a philosopher, he cannot but be affected by this crisis, and neither can we to the extent that we are philosophers. It is a crisis in the community of philosophers. Thus, we are a part of the crisis that is the subject of our meditation. The crisis of philosophy is the crisis of our existence.

The inquiry into the crisis of philosophy, for Husserl, was an essential, if not, the essential theme of philosophy. This theme occupied him up to the time of his death and, to my knowledge, at the time of his death, he had not succeeded in fully articulating let alone rescuing philosophy from this crisis. He died the same way that Socrates died: leaving the task of philosophy unfinished. Perhaps, this is the manner in which all philosophers are destined to die. Our forerunners in philosophy have left this task unfinished not because, as individuals, they were incapable of bringing philosophy to a completion, but because it is in the very nature of philosophy to be unfinished. Just as Socrates left the task of philosophy unfinished, so did Husserl. We, too, should not have any illusion about the task ahead of us. We, too, will die with our philosophical task unfinished, and if there are others after us, they, too, will inherit the task and die in the same condition. To philosophize is to be a part of this relay race. We are called forth to play our part. Every generation must play its part, for no generation can play the part of any other generation. The fact that every generation must play its part does, not, however, mean that each generation stands in isolation from other generations. Each generation is anticipated by the previous ones, and anticipates future generations. That is, each generation remains extended into the past and into the future. The crisis of philosophy is what it is in the
context of the past and the future horizons. An understanding of the crisis of philosophy, therefore, necessitates a meditation on the history of philosophy. Moreover, if we are to understand this crisis in its uniqueness, that is, as a philosophical crisis, the history of philosophy must be understood philosophically. That is, the history of philosophy must at the same time be the philosophy of history. In part this means that history remains unfinished. To this extent, history is not entirely synonymous with the past. The past extends itself into the present, and into the future. It is in this context that we are to meditate on the crisis of philosophy as it manifests itself in the work of Husserl. There is no imposition in placing his work in this context. His work necessitates this placing. It is he who tells us:

Every philosopher “takes something from the history” of past philosophers, from past philosophical writings – just as he has at his disposal, from the present philosophical environment, the works that have most recently been added and put into circulation, takes up those that have just appeared, and, what is possible only in the case (of the present), makes more or less use of the possibility of entering into a personal exchange of ideas with still living fellow philosophers.¹

The intelligibility of the crisis of philosophy presupposes intelligibility of philosophy. Such intelligibility, as we have seen, is possible only in the context of the history of philosophy and in the context of the philosophy of history. For Husserl, the history that is at stake is none other than the Greco-European history. It is Husserl’s view that philosophy exhibits and exemplifies the distinguishing feature of the Greco-European humanity, thereby, setting this segment of humanity apart from other segments of humanity. We must also bear in mind that, for Husserl, Greece and Europe, in this context, do not refer to geographical phenomena. In regard to Europe he tells us

... we refer to Europe not as it is understood geographically as on a map, as if thereby the group of people who live together in this territory would define humanity. In the spiritual sense the English Dominions, the United States, etc., clearly belong to Europe, whereas Eskimos, or Indians presented as curiosity at fairs, or Gypsies who constantly wander about Europe, do not. Here the title “Europe” clearly refers to the Unity of spiritual life, activity and creation, with all its ends, interests and cares, endeavors, with its products of purposive activity, institutions and organizations.²

Accordingly, the multiplicity of nations in Europe and of the nations consisting of the descendants of Europeans in other geographical regions of the world should not obscure the spiritual unity of Europe and of Europeans. Husserl asserts that: