THE CONCEPT OF PASSIVITY IN HUSSERL'S PHENOMENOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

THE CONCEPT OF PASSIVITY IN HUSSERL'S PHENOMENOLOGY

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Taking my cue from Husserl's account of time consciousness, which 'sublates' pairs of opposites such as form/content and constituting/constituted, I show that activity and passivity mutually determine one another. I explain in what way and to what extent passivity contributes to the constitution of phenomena as diverse as temporal syntheses, perceptual associations, memory fulfillment and cultural crises. Guided by the examples of affection, forgetting, habitus and translation, I identify three meanings of passivity: receptivity, inactuality and alienation. I conclude by discussing the relevance of passivity, in the sense of alienation, for cross-cultural communication.

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Introduction

1. Historical background: the subordinate role of passivity

The notion of passivity comes from the Latin words *passio* and *patior* which translate the Greek words *pathos* and *paskein*. In Greek, the verb *paskein* was ordinarily employed in the sense of being in evil plight or being ill treated by somebody.¹ It was not until Aristotle included it in his list of categories that the term ‘passivity’ acquired a proper philosophical meaning. Aristotle opposes passivity (*paskein*) to action (*poiein*) and understands the former as the condition of being affected from without.² A subject is said to be passive in so far as it receives a determination as a result of being acted upon by an external agent. Aristotle produced the first technical conceptualization of passivity but he also bequeathed us the dismissive axiological verdict: “Always the active is superior to the passive factor.”³

In order to better understand why the hierarchical structure of the dichotomy activity/passivity has been traditionally taken for granted it might be helpful to identify the two major axes which divide the semantic field of the term ‘passivity’.

First, from an **epistemological** or **theoretical** point of view, one can interpret passivity as *reception of sense impressions* and set it off against intellectual activity. Already in Plato’s threefold distinction of the parts of the soul, passivity holds the inferior position as seat of both desires and affections (*epithumein*).⁴ The soul is a site of conflict where sensuous receptivity as well as affectivity clash with rational activity. In

¹ Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1856, p. 1131.

² Aristotle, *Categories* I, Ch. 4, 2a.

³ Aristotle, *De Anima* III, Ch. 5, 430a.

⁴ Plato, *Republic*, 475b.

itself reason proceeds through logical operations and displays in perfect clarity the relations that essences entertain among themselves. By contrast, sensuous receptivity can hardly organize the obscure muddle of the sensible world. If not straightforwardly slanting and obstructing reason, passivity can at best provide the raw material for more elevated intellectual activities. Taken up by medieval philosophy, incorporated into the rationalist tradition and then continued by German idealism, the separation between sensibility and intellect became one of the *topoi* of classical philosophy.

Second, from an **anthropological** or **practical** point of view, passivity springs from the essential finitude of the human condition and means *suffering* as opposed to free action. Human beings are precariously situated in a world whose hostile course drastically limits their poietic capacity to fashion their own life paths. Not only do they confront inflexible external obstacles such as illness, death or divine caprice, but they also succumb to internal paralyzing states of mind, be they sloth, apathy, melancholy or intoxication. Greek tragedies and Stoicism best illustrate these views. In the confrontation with adversities, the tragic hero's choices aim at negating the invincibility of destiny, but wind up confirming it in a more tortuous manner. Correspondingly, the Stoic sage can succeed in diminishing the disaccord between personal choices and the course of the universe only by acknowledging that humans are passive insofar as many things escape their power and control.⁵ With rare exceptions, philosophers mistake these views for expressions of either defeatism or self-demeaning resignation and therefore recommend a resolute effort to rise above the debilitating practical effects of passivity.

⁵ For the famous Stoic distinction between things that are in one's power, such as thought, impulse and will and things which are not in one's power, such as, body, possessions and reputation see Epictetus, *The Discourses and Manual*, tr. P.E. Matheson, Oxford University Press, 1938, vol. II, p. 213.

However, there are reasons to suspect weaknesses in the traditionally hierarchical conception of the relation between passivity and activity. If the rational knowledge of the universal is a form of striving, then theoretical activity cannot be separated from affection and desire. Moreover, the realization that many things elude one's control cannot be equated with the acquiescent seclusion in the sphere of inner life to the detriment of active engagements. To become aware of one's own limits is a precondition for enhancing one's potentialities. By turning down projects which surpass one's resources one avoids the despair of wanting something impossible to acquire. In a way, Stoicism is for the theory of action what moderate skepticism is for the theory of knowledge. The point is neither the futility of all practical efforts nor the uncertainty of all human knowledge. What counts is rather the ability to avoid actions with slim prospects of success and to put to the test knowledge whose foundations cannot be apodictically established.

2. Husserl's subversion of the ascendancy of activity over passivity

In what way did Husserl talk about passivity? Did he privilege one sense over the other? How did he situate himself with respect to these traditional views? Husserl regarded passivity as a prominent explanatory factor in the phenomenological 'constitution' of meaning. On the one hand, he endowed passivity with constitutive powers and thus distinguished himself from a plethora of philosophers who attributed passivity only a minor status within the economy of knowledge acquisition. On the other hand, he remained indebted to this very tradition as demonstrated, among other things, by

his account of crisis as a result of passive tendencies. It would be wrong to claim that Husserl's texts endorse a reversal of the opposition activity/passivity. After all, to do justice to the passive element does not mean to enthrone it in the position previously held by activity. The issue is not to replace one hierarchy with another but to reach the point from which a hierarchical distribution of functions becomes meaningful. In contrast with traditional views on the opposition activity/passivity, Husserl affords a pivotal role for passivity and subverts the ascendancy of the former over the latter. It is the meditation on the meaning of passive synthesis that supplements the 'formal ontology' prevalent at the time of *Logical Investigations* with a material phenomenology providing a possible defense against the most common accusation Husserl faced, namely, that of 'intellectualism' (C, 289).⁶

Doubtlessly, Husserl's interest in the idea of passivity is predominantly **epistemological**. The driving forces behind Husserlian phenomenology are the obstinate search for a definite foundation of science and the desire to revitalize the ideal of philosophy's scientific rigor. This is also evident in the major texts addressing at length the issue of passivity - the "Lectures on Transcendental Logic" dating from the early 20's and published posthumously under the title *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis*.⁷ The

⁶ The second section of the famous *Vienna Lecture* aims at defending the 'transcendental motive' whose corollary is the purportedly outdated and 'compromised' enlightenment. Transcendental reflection is also blamed for lapsing into estrangement and losing its grip on the world. In Adorno's view, Husserl reified pure thought by following Kant in his mistaken separation of the spheres of cognition, praxis and feeling. "Leveling praxis down to a mere special case of intentionality is the crassest consequence of his [Husserl's] beginning by reification. But if the relation of cognition to praxis were ever cut off by the scientific postulate of cognitive purity, then 'pure' thought itself, alienated from all doing, would also congeal into something static, as it were, a thing" *Against Epistemology: A Metacritique*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), p. 170.

⁷ Throughout this study I will refer to Anthony Steinbock's translation of Husserlian XI *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Syntheses*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001, hereafter quoted as APS. These lectures cover a variety of topics such as perceptual self-givenness, modalization of

purpose of these lectures is to put forward a 'genealogy' of logic. In part, this project aims at securing a priori laws for the composition of meanings and techniques for the valid derivation of complex propositions from self-evident truths. But the formal apodictic principles of logic are themselves the result of more primitive meaning formations. To provide a complete account of the process of meaning constitution, the phenomenologist must target "the *emergence* of genuine thinking at all its levels" (APS, p. 32). This concise pronouncement indicates the phenomenological task of capturing *sur le vif* the most elementary processes of sense-unity formations without which the synthesis of identification expressed in acts of judgment would not be possible.

To accomplish this task, Husserl proceeds in accordance with the demands of a regressive, explicative and genetic method which finds "the primordial sources of all knowledge" (APS, 5) in the accomplishing life of knowing consciousness. Under the level of judgmental validities, phenomenological research discovers the passive level of pre-theoretical, pre-predicative, pre-linguistic experience indispensable for a full account of the higher theoretical accomplishments such as scientific theories. Husserl's predilection for a geological vocabulary suggests a descent from objective surface to subjective depth. The frequency of terms such as 'strata', 'sediments', 'terrain', 'subsoil' implies that the phenomenological method could be considered a kind of "deep mining" (APS, 119). Yet the descent into the interstices of the subterranean world is carried out, much as in Plato, only to regain the splendor of solar evidence. In other words, the

perceptual apprehensions into doubt, possibility or negation as a result of partial fulfilments and disappointments, the apodicticity of recollection and the distinction between memory and imagination, the formation of synthesis of identity in acts of judgement and so on. Some of these topics are also treated extensively most notably in *Experience and Judgement* and *Formal and Transcendental Logic* as well as in other texts. The most important contribution of *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Syntheses* is by far the complex account of the phenomena of association and affection.

discussion and critique of passive syntheses is supposed to provide an original transcendental foundation for logic.

Although largely motivated by epistemological goals, Husserl's work also pursues an investigation of passivity from a **practical** point of view. With an acute sense of urgency, the major texts from the 30's reiterate the alarming diagnosis of cultural crisis: the 'European' sciences had lost their self-reflective abilities and had become incapable of reconfiguring their meaning for human life. The crisis could not have held such a firm grip on modern sciences were it not for a pathology of collective memory. All apodictic evidence, as they are intuitively experienced in the living present, necessarily sink back into a horizon of empty retentions. The process of sedimentation, which is characteristic for the sphere of passivity, ossifies living traditions and gradually transforms scientific achievements from vital sources of validity into museumized dead exhibits. As a consequence, the upsurge of infectious irrational tendencies shuts off rational responsibility. Husserl is here wandering within a well-trod philosophical landscape. He deplores the effects of uncritically taking up inherited meanings without 'reactivating' the original meaning formations (*Sinnbildungen*) that produced them. What is imperative, in Husserl's view, is a carefully synchronized collective *anamnesis* that would invigorate the ability of science to reflect upon itself. Apparently, this boils down to another version of the typical diatribe against passivity as the source of human despondency. The underlying assumption of this line of reasoning is that activity stands for freedom, spontaneity and self-government, whereas passivity correlates with inertia, containment, servitude and impotence. If this were the only way of unpacking the contrast

activity/passivity, then one would hardly have any choice as to which of the opposites is to be given preference.

My claim is that under a closer scrutiny Husserl's texts can be shown to reject a clear-cut divide between passivity and activity and to endorse a broader view of passivity than most scholars tend to acknowledge. This is obvious in the case of genetic phenomenological investigations which trace predicative activity back to its source in receptive sensuous experience while identifying the latter not with pure passivity but with a kind of *active passivity* (Ideas II, 349; EJ, 110). More controversially, the divide between passivity and activity could be questioned even in the context of the discussion of cultural crises, especially with regard to the alleged disastrous consequences passivity seems to have for any ethical and political renewal. Husserl may have wanted to portray subjectivity as a purely spontaneous production of meaning. However, his accounts of habitus, sedimentation and language, although not expressly formulated for this purpose, challenge the assumption of a neat separation between activity and passivity and suggest a relation of *mutual* determination between them. An active turning toward (*Zuwendung*) operates at the very core of passive receptivity. Symmetrically, all judicative acts arise from among sedimented dispositions, capacities and habitualities of the ego. Yet to conceive of passive receptivity as the lower level of activity and to conceive of sedimentation as passivity always ready to be re-activated does not sufficiently challenge this opposition. To surpass genuinely the opposition would mean to extricate passivity from its relation to activity. Husserl intimates this path although he does not pursue it.

3. Static and genetic phenomenology

Many commentators take the relatively late emphasis on the concept of passive synthesis as a sign of a more or less radical thematic and methodological turn in Husserl's phenomenology. Others note that inquiries into the function of passive synthesis leave unchallenged the systematic findings of *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I*. My purpose in this study is not to compare the different periods of Husserl's work. Instead of beginning with an assumption regarding the evolution or rigidity of Husserlian phenomenology, I intend to let myself be guided by the relevant texts and find out whether and if so to what extent the theme of passive synthesis carries with it a new inflection of the phenomenological standpoint.

Whether taken as receptivity or as inactuality, passivity necessarily manifests itself as an aspect of genetic phenomena. The full disclosure of the role of passive synthesis in the formation of higher synthetic activities requires a transition from the static or descriptive (*beschreibende*) phenomenological method toward a genetic or explanatory (*erklärende*) method.⁸ The import of this distinction cannot be underestimated. To simplify, static phenomenology relies on the eidetic method to attain essential types, formal essences and stable structural correlations such as

⁸ Husserl's most thorough discussion of this distinction appears in a text entitled *Static and Genetic Phenomenological Method* (APS, 624-626). Numerous recent studies attempt to assess the impact the transition from the static to the genetic method had on Husserl's overall phenomenological project. Among the scholars who address this issue Janet Donohoe, Donn Welton and Anthony Steinbock deserve a special notice. In the opening chapter of her *Husserl on Ethics and Intersubjectivity* (19-39), Janet Donohoe reads the methodological transition from static to genetic as broadening the phenomenological field toward the question of ethical responsibility. Interested in establishing the systematic character of Husserl's work, Donn Welton, in his remarkable *The Other Husserl* (Ch.9, 221-259), correlates the distinction static vs. genetic with the axis horizontal/vertical which opposes the *surface* dimension of intentional acts and their fulfillments to the *depth* dimension of implied or sedimented meanings. Finally, in his ambitious book *Home and Beyond* (Ch2, 37-42), Anthony Steinbock relies on his analysis of Husserl's *Nachlass* to add a third *generative* dimension to the dyad of static and genetic. According to Steinbock, it is only the generative method that allows phenomenology to investigate issues such as birth and death, abnormality or the relation between home-worlds and alien-worlds.

intention/fulfillment or noesis/noema. In contrast with static phenomenology, which starts with “ready made phenomena of external nature” (APS, 271) and studies the multitude of immanent experiences in which these objects become manifest, genetic phenomenology attempts to provide a historical explanation of the ego-world relation. Not to be confounded with genetic psychology, which studies the empirical genesis of apperceptions as facts, genetic phenomenology studies the essential laws that unify and regulate the streaming life of consciousness.

This “history” of consciousness (the history of all possible apperceptions) does not concern bringing to light a factual genesis for factual apperceptions or factual types in a factual stream of consciousness, or even in all factual human beings. [...] Rather, every shape of apperception is an essential shape and has its genesis in accordance with essential laws; accordingly, included in such an idea of apperception is that it must undergo a “genetic analysis.” And what is given is not the necessary becoming of the particular, single apperception (when it is understood as a fact); rather the mode of genesis is only given with the genesis of essence (APS, 627).

Giving an account of the “history of constituting consciousness” (APS, 271) comes down to explaining not only the history of ego but also the history of the objects of knowledge.

On the one hand, genetic phenomenology talks about the historicity of the subject. Here, the emphasis lays not so much on absolute subjectivity as on the monadic becoming inseparable from the complexities of the intersubjective cultural world. Instead of arising *ex nihilo*, a lived experience is always motivated by a pre-given context of lived-experiences. And once accomplished, a lived-experience does not vanish without a trace. On the contrary, it becomes sedimented into more and more complex layers of acquired meanings. Crystallized into subjective habitualities, dispositions and beliefs,

these sedimented meanings determine the way we interpret every present lived experience in the light of past ones.

On the other hand, genetic phenomenology follows “the history of the object itself as the object of a possible knowledge” (APS, 634). It relies on the temporal character of intentionality to show how it is possible for new lived-experiences to alter the “unfinished” noematic contents, thus conferring upon them a kind of historical development. Ultimately, the history of the object can be traced back to the genesis of hyletic syntheses in original time consciousness. As an important ingredient of Husserl’s argument, the analyses of kinaesthesia further clarify the role of the body in the formation of complex sense-unities. The upshot of these analyses is a new conception of constitution in which ‘data’ are no longer conceived as completely interpreted bits of information or as finished objects.

Genetic phenomenology distinguishes between two different types of genesis. First, there is an active genesis through which consciousness originally produces objects whether real, such as works of art and tools, or ideal, such as states of affairs and mathematical sets. Acts of inferring, judging and collecting count as typical examples of active genesis (APS, 630; CM, 77). An inference relates an act of judgment to another act of judgment in such a way that the first act generates or motivates the second one. As soon as assent is given to the premise of a valid argument, one is led to perform a second act of judgment that corresponds to the conclusion. Second, there is a passive genesis which refers to those accomplishments of consciousness that are independent of egoic acts.

In any case, anything built by activity necessarily presupposes, as the lowest level, a passivity that gives beforehand; and, when we trace anything built actively we run into constitution by passive generation (CM, 78).

Associations and habits are the most important components of the passive sphere.

I am able to interpret my present perceptual perception despite its actual incompleteness because I have at my disposal an interpretative grid comprising 'inactive' meanings that can come either from sedimentations of my previous acts or from the background of my present perceptual experience. Complex theoretical achievements such as geometrical axioms have their source in regularities governing the external perception of spatial shapes. Even simple perceptual experiences obtain their sense-unities only through the coalescing of actual affective unities with hyletic data that manifest a tendency toward affection without yet making an impression on the ego.

4. The composition of the passive sphere

The concept of synthesis lies at the core of any explanation of intentional consciousness. Husserl's entire work can be read as an attempt to unravel the intricate functioning of synthetic consciousness. Does the combination of contents of consciousness depend on the perceptive, imaginative, logical or evaluative nature of the acts considered? Does synthesis mean the mental process that binds together different contents of consciousness, the result thereof or both? What laws govern the combination of contents? To say that consciousness is intentional is to claim that every experience has a meaning content that points toward an object considered under some or other of its aspects. Therefore, not only does synthesis unify a series of apprehensions but the

objective unity of what is apprehended obtains as well. But are there such things as completely determined meanings?

These questions become even more compounded when the concept of *passive synthesis* is brought on the scene. Husserl believes that only by gaining a thorough grasp of what is happening at the most elementary level of the streaming life of consciousness (*urpassive Strömen*) could phenomenology pursue its foundational project. Hence the retrogression from the level of judicative evidence to the level of pre-predicative, pre-reflective intentional consciousness operating prior to any performance of egoic acts. The suggestion is that passive synthesis is neither a free spontaneous act nor the result of such an act. In other words, a synthetic operation or accomplishment (*Leistung*) might be conceived that would not require the participation of the active ego and would therefore come about independently of categorial operations.

Famously abstruse, the notion of 'passive synthesis' might seem a contradiction in terms or a theoretical impossibility. Supposing passive syntheses were indeed operative in consciousness it would still be difficult to define them and to spell out their underlying mechanisms. Why is the role of passivity so difficult to explain?

Sometimes Husserl says that passivity "supplies all material" (CM. 78-79) out of which consciousness builds complex meaning unities. But consciousness is receptive not in the sense that it takes in formless matter. If the 'material' to be synthesized were a mucous stuff, then consciousness could hardly turn it into articulated configurations. To avoid the pitfalls, already noted by Aristotle, of an alleged "prime matter" out of which all form has been expunged, Husserl attributes to hyletic data an *original productivity* that always already organizes them in meaningful patterns. In other words, no longer reduced

to a negative or privative concept, passivity is being granted epistemologically dignifying constitutive powers.

Consciousness does not carry out synthetic activity by imposing formal structures on or by applying a priori rules to a collection of isolated, simple and passively registered sense data. Hyletic data are not indivisible simples existing prior to and independently of synthetic activity. The search for ultimate constituents ready to be integrated into synthetic wholes is vain simply because consciousness is synthetic through and through. Besides, supposing isolated sensory givens were identified, they could not ground *necessary* syntheses and consciousness could only rely on the force of habit to compensate for the arbitrariness of associations. Husserl opposes the atomistic versions of empiricism at every step and searches for transcendental laws of passive associations instead. He takes the retrogression toward the passive sphere to disclose different modes of performing syntheses rather than their ultimate constituents. As a consequence, he envisages a more complicated relation between passive receptivity and logical eidetics. The syntheses belonging to the 'higher' levels of conscious activity are said to originate in, be motivated by or presuppose the accomplishments of the 'lower' hyletic level. Pre-predicative, pre-thematic, pre-linguistic experience takes place *prior* to egoic position-takings, *in advance* of thematic interest, *before* activity while being synthetic all along. But if passive syntheses precede egoic activity, would phenomenological reflection ever be able grasp them? Would not the *priority* of passive synthesis obstruct the active reflection's access to its complexities?⁹ Interpreted as *instinctive basis of*

⁹ Ludwig Landgrebe "The Problem of Passive Constitution" in Donn Welton (ed.) *The Phenomenology of Edmund Husserl*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981.

temporalization,¹⁰ as non-objectifying drive-intentionality,¹¹ as hyletic pre-affective formation of unities¹² or as anonymous pre-egoic intersubjectivity,¹³ originary passivity may seem impossible to account for in phenomenological terms. From a phenomenological point of view, consciousness is the only place that any kind of experience, including passive syntheses, can reside in. The analyses of the conditions of similarity and contrast under which affective unities in the perceptual field are lifted off or become prominent bear witness to Husserl's efforts to explain the existence of "unconscious" acts of consciousness. But phenomenology is not in the position to acknowledge that some acts or contents are *in* consciousness while defying any form of awareness.¹⁴ Some interpreters claim that by resorting to a *reconstructive* method Husserl was able to disclose the *Vor-Ich* as origin of instincts and blind center of the passive primal stream of consciousness.¹⁵ But as soon as it starts to account for instincts in terms

¹⁰ James Mensch, "Instincts: A Husserlian Account", *Husserl Studies*, 14: 1998, p. 226.

¹¹ Anne Montavont *De la passivité dans la phénoménologie de Husserl*. Paris: PUF, 1999, p.256. See also Nam-In Lee, *Edmund Husserls Phänomenologie der Instinkte*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993.

¹² Rolf Kuhn and Michael Staudigl, "Passivity as Prepredicative Constitution" in *Analecta Husserliana* vol. LXXX, 2002. See also Bruce Bégout, *La Généalogie de la Logique. Husserl, l'antéprédictif et le catégorial*, Paris: Vrin, 2000.

¹³ Ichiro Yamaguchi, *Passive Synthesis Und Intersubjektivität Bei Edmund Husserl*, The Hague: Nijhoff, 1982.

¹⁴ In Jay Lampert's view, Husserl explains consciousness as a "self-propelling dynamic of interpretative activity" (p. 38) which gives rise to both concrete intuitions and abstract meanings as the synthetic activity advances. Passivity is granted the status of origin not because it exists prior to experience and meaning but because consciousness "refers back" to it in the ongoing process of explication of objects. The process of referring back requires that form and matter, essence and fact, activity and passivity are equally primordial and "mutually grounding" (p. 28) elements of consciousness. On this reading, the distinction between primordial and secondary passivity would be a distinction between two types of backward referents, hyletic data, on the one hand, and deactivated but potentially available contents, irrespective of their provenance, on the other hand.

¹⁵ This is Nam-In Lee's interpretation of the transcendental theory of drive-intentionality (*Triebintentionalität*). For a critique of this position see James Hart, "Genesis, Instinct, and Reconstruction: Nam-In Lee's *Edmund Husserls Phänomenologie der Instinkte*", *Husserl Studies*, vol.15, 1998.

of non-reflexive self-presence, phenomenology forfeits its own fundamental principle of descriptive evidence and leaps into speculation.

Rather than taking passivity as a region beneath the threshold of conscious awareness, phenomenology develops the problem of passive synthesis in two major directions. Taking as criterion the temporal position with respect to current egoic acts, there can be distinguished two sorts of passive phenomena. Accordingly, Husserl refers to passive phenomena that take place *before* the ego initiates any act as **original** (*Ursprünglich*) or **primordial passivity**. In the case of perceptual experience for example, the ego is pre-reflexively aware of, while having no control over, the execution of such accomplishments as the “affective allure” or the retentional “holding in grasp.” Under the title of originary passivity, Husserl includes at least four phenomena:

- (1) self-temporalization;
- (2) associative articulation of perceptual field;
- (3) affective awakening and affective propagation;
- (4) pre-predicative embodied constitution.

In contrast, completed synthetic acts along with their results undergo modifications referred to as **secondary passivity**. The sphere of secondary passivity includes phenomena that occur after egoic acts have been carried out. Among these phenomena the most prominent are ¹⁶

- (1) reproductive associations (recollection);
- (2) habitus;

¹⁶ Elmar Holenstein points out that passivity has two major senses in Husserl's work: receptivity and inactuality. It could be said that this distinction roughly corresponds to that between primordial and secondary passivity.

(3) sedimentation and cultural tradition.

Husserl seems to follow the common understanding in construing passivity, whether primordial or secondary, as contrary to activity. But the opposition between passivity as the ego's *undergoing of something* and activity as the ego's *doing something* in response to its being passively determined (Ideas II, 229) is no more than a didactic oversimplification. To be active, the ego must engage in a *special way* in such acts as inferring, evaluating, desiring and so on. To put it briefly, the ego is eminently active when it performs a position-taking (*Stellungnahme*) (Ideas II, 225). One takes a position when one picks a thing or an idea out of a context and makes it a *substrate* of actual determinations, a *theme* of theoretical or practical interest. However, "the ego is always passive at the same time whenever it is active, in the sense of being affected as well as being receptive" (Ideas II, 225). Although the possibility of the ego's being "sheer passivity" remains open, not even the most passive flow of *lived* experiences can dispense with ego participation (*Ich Beteiligung*) as such. Instead of equating passivity with absolute non-activity, Husserl's arguments *relativize* the opposition passivity/activity.

Primordial passivity is *not yet* active but motivates activity by means of original associations. Unlike motivations of reason (e.g., motivations involved in acts of logical grounding and of evaluation), associative motivations connect pregiven items (*Vorgegebenheiten*) and proceed independently of categorial acts that are accomplishments of the *ego cogito*. As the lowest stratum of conscious life, the *passive pregivenness* is the domain of affective allures that have an impact on the ego despite passing unnoticed. The next stratum of hyletic passivity is the *passive givenness* of the

allures towards which the ego has already turned and with which it has already complied. This distinction appeals to the idea of the *relativity* of affection and implies that even nil affective forces shape the affective relief of the living present and contribute to the formation of hyletic unities. Not only does passivity give rise to higher forms of activity, but it also “includes the lowest level of activity” (*Ideas* II, 225; also APS, 510).

Secondary passivity also requires ego participation but in this case the ego is *no longer* active in the strict sense. The consciousness of the *I can* is an essential ingredient in both memory and habitus. This qualifies them as *faculties* of the ego. They arise out of and increase the potential for active contact between the ego and its environment. They build up a space for **inactual**, latent or dormant contents that consciousness can draw on in its synthetic activity. Memory and habitus produce strata of sedimented synthetic results thereby expanding the context within which reflective activity is performed. First, while it makes available for consciousness inactual contents, sedimentation is also prone to associating items belonging to different strata thereby causing misrecognition or recall-failures. Moreover, sedimentation is just as much a form of conservation as it is a kind of forgetfulness. Second, while successfully acquired habitualities increase the ego’s potential for action, they also conceal the original activity from which they sprang. Submerged in the vast domain of “unreflected consciousness” (*Ideas* II 259), routines, automatisms, skills, but also dispositions, and attitudes mislead the ego into taking for granted contents of experience. In Husserl’s view, secondary passivity is the main impediment philosophy should struggle to surmount in order to effect the hoped for scientific and ethical *renewal*.

So far we have seen Husserl challenging the binary opposition passivity/activity by saying (i) that passive receptivity is in fact a lower energy form of activity; (ii) that the ego cannot act without being at the same time passive; (iii) that passive habitus means performing an activity in a special way, that is, with a special type of ego participation. This shows that the description of passivity and activity in terms of 'lower' and 'higher' separate levels of conscious life can be confusing. Husserl's analysis strives to disclose a system of crisscrossing references that connects hyletic passivity and eidetic evidence. There is an embryonic eidetic operation at the core of passive associations and judicative acts have their necessary trains of passive sedimentations. Thus it becomes apparent that intentionalities are already at work on the passive level and that intentional acts are immersed in or surrounded by passive elements.

Nevertheless, Husserl's texts hint at yet another possibility of construing passivity by extricating it from the contrast with activity. In this sense, passivity can be thought of as a form of alienation or as exposure to and openness toward the alien.¹⁷ This third meaning can be reconstructed from Husserl's account of time-consciousness, but its full import becomes more explicit in the context of the discussion of intersubjective as well as intercultural *Fremderfahrung*.¹⁸

¹⁷ An interpretation of the Husserlian notion of passivity as essentially related to the experience of otherness and heterogeneity can be found in Natalie Depraz "Imagination and Passivity. Husserl and Kant: A Cross-relationship" in D. Zahavi and N. Depraz (eds.) *Alterity and Facitivity*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998.

¹⁸ It might be noted that many a French phenomenologist developed their original positions vastly inspired by Husserl's reflections on the issue of passivity. Merleau-Ponty considered that, unless it is taken in an existential sense, the expression "passive synthesis" remains self-contradictory. Passive synthesis should be understood as non-objectifying relation between the ego and the world as horizon of egoic possibilities. Humans' situatedness gathers together a multiplicity of determinations that precede any act of egological decision. One's birth is not the result of one's decision, and neither is one's language, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation. However, these determinations do not belong to an external world that would exert a causal effect on one's inner self. Rather they are the premises of every possible individual action. Being

5. Synopsis

In Chapter 1, I explain why time consciousness, although distinguished from associative syntheses, counts among the most fundamental phenomena of the passive sphere. I draw on Husserl's account of absolute consciousness, which 'sublates' pairs of opposites such as form/content and constituting/constituted, to show that activity and passivity mutually determine one another.

In Chapter 2, I further expand on pre-egoic components of sense-giving acts encompassed by original passivity. I explain the function of primordial association (*Urassoziation*) in passive genesis with special reference to the problem of syntheses of similarity and contrast. Then, I turn to the difficult issue of the relation between affection and prominence (*Abgehobenheit*) in the perceptual field.

In Chapter 3, I explore the sphere of secondary passivity – a generic name for the modifications undergone by constituted meanings once the process of constitution is

weaved into one's projects from the very beginning, they offer one the possibility of becoming who one is. "Ce qu'on appelle la passivité n'est pas la réception par nous d'une réalité étrangère ou l'action causale du dehors sur nous: c'est un investissement, un être en situation, avant lequel nous n'existons pas, que nous recommandons perpétuellement et qui est constitutive de nous-mêmes" (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *La phénoménologie de la perception*, Paris: Edition Gallimard, 1945, p. 488). By evoking "une passivité plus passive que toute la passivité", Emmanuel Levinas moved away from a reductive conception of passivity as inertial persistence in the same state toward an ethical conception of it as wounded or vulnerable sensibility implicit in the fact of being exposed to the other - "avoir-été-offert-sans-retenue" (*Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence*, Martinus Nijhoff, 1974, p.30). Jacques Garelli appropriated the notion of passivity for the purpose of developing a "transcendental aesthetics", that is, a theory of the formation of perceptual 'proto-individual' and 'proto-ontological' meanings which would better explain the phenomenon of the production of the work of art (*Rythmes et mondes*, Grenoble: Jerome Millon, 1991). Finally, for Marc Richir, the idea of passivity is the condition of piercing through the layer of "the symbolic institution" - the totality of thing-phenomena as codified in human practices and representations – in order to gain access to the genuinely phenomenological dimension of world-phenomena. World-phenomena are radically plural, indeterminate, contingent and refractory to conceptual unification because they are not blocks of space-time but rather ongoing processes of spatialization and temporalization. *La crise du sens et la phénoménologie* Grenoble: Jerome Millon, 1990 and *Phénoménologie et institution symbolique* Grenoble: Jerome Millon, 1988.

accomplished. I give particular consideration to the passive components involved in the phenomena of memory fulfillment and forgetfulness.

Chapter 4 continues the previous chapter by expanding the discussion of secondary passivity from the subjective to the intersubjective level of sedimentation. I focus on Husserl's account of habitus and language as passive factors responsible for cultural crises. I use the example of translation to show, against Husserl, that passivity, understood as alienation, can also provide the palliative for cultural crises.

In the last chapter, I question the relation between the three meanings of passivity: receptivity, inactuality and alienation. I present the distinction between the lived body and the physical body as a form of self-alienation. Then I discuss the intersubjective significance of the concept of pairing association. Finally, I turn to the problem of *Fremderfahrung* in the broad sense, that is, the problem of the interaction between home worlds and alien worlds and I show that just as the embodied subject is already alienated from itself by virtue of its embodiment so the home world is already inhabited by otherness by virtue of its territorialization.

Chapter I. Passivity and self-temporalization

For a number of reasons, phenomenological research into the binomial relation passivity-activity must begin by taking into account the analysis of internal time-consciousness which, in Husserl's view, ranks among "the most difficult of all phenomenological problems".¹⁹ First, temporal syntheses fall within the compass of the passive sphere. Second, by virtue of their grounding character, they provide the framework for understanding all synthetic accomplishments whether active or passive. Third, Husserl's account of time-constituting consciousness 'sublates' pairs of opposites such as form/content and constituting/constituted, and invites a similar reconsideration of the relation between activity and passivity. On the one hand, the connection between *transverse* and *horizontal* intentionalities indicates that activity and passivity mutually determine one another rather than being opposite and separate poles. On the other hand, one can extract from the discussion of the absolute flow of consciousness intimations of a new concept of passivity. Inasmuch as temporality and alterity are intertwined, passivity could be divorced from the opposition to activity and regarded as a condition for the alienation of the ego.

¹⁹ Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, tr. John Brough (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991) p.286; hereafter referred to as PCIT.

1. Time-consciousness and association

As “a principle of passive genesis” (CM §39), association features prominently among the themes of investigation of genetic phenomenology. Although the laws of original time-consciousness along with the laws of association count as primordial laws of passive genesis (APS 633), temporal syntheses must not be conflated with associative syntheses. As a preparatory step toward a thorough understanding of the distinction between temporal and associative syntheses it would be helpful to explain Husserl’s argument against Brentano’s version of the associationist theory of time.

The starting point of Brentano’s theory is the problem of the incompatibility between the logic of parts and wholes and the experience of time.²⁰ Let us consider the perception of something temporally extended, a melody for example. Every “now” of the perceptual experience is filled with a tonal content. The content of the actual “now” differs both from the content of the just past “now” and from the content of the next “now.” However, the just past tonal content cannot disappear or else I would not be able to perceive a melody in its duration. If I had no present awareness of the past tones the melody would escape me. In this case, I would lose sight of the whole and be aware only of disconnected parts. If I had somehow retained the just past tone unchanged, then the melody would again elude me. In this case, I would perceive a tangle of simultaneous tones and not an ordered succession. The perception of the melody is possible only if the just past tone is retained while being modified. According to Husserl’s interpretation,

²⁰ We owe to Aristotle the first formulation of this puzzle. A theory according to which time is a whole with past, present and future as its parts withers under criticism. For how can time be a whole if one of its parts, the future, has yet to be, whereas the other part, the past, is no longer? And if the present is the non-extended limit separating the past from the future, can it still be regarded as part of a whole? Aristotle *Physics*, Book IV Ch. 10.

Brentano's psychologist theory of time-consciousness presupposes a one-to-one correspondence between a present stimulus and the present sensation. On this account, what makes possible the representation of time is the faculty of imagination. Imagination offsets the self-enclosed character of the present by producing a new temporal moment 'past', which is then associated to the actual sensorial content. By virtue of its adhesive force, association glues together the temporal moments of all actual 'now's thus creating the impression of continuity. However, tying the experience of time to the faculty of imagination has a major drawback: it de-realizes time-consciousness. If we falsely believe to hear a melody instead of a singular tone it is only because phantasy relentlessly feeds our illusion. In fact all we do is associate the actual sonorous content with its phantasmatic double and with the phantasmatic doubles of past 'now's. While acknowledging the "phenomenological core" (PCIT 16) of this associationist view of time-consciousness, Husserl parts ways with it. If the temporal moment 'past' were created by imagination, and subsequently associated with the temporal moment 'present', then, Husserl believes, the past would be a part of the present moment, which is absurd. Brentano's view fails to explain the *perception* of temporally enduring things.²¹

Against the idea that associations have the power to "create" the temporal moment of representation, Husserl maintains that temporal syntheses are passive, that is, non-spontaneous. Spontaneous acts *produce* new objects out of already given ones. For

²¹ Already in 1930, Oskar Kraus argued that Husserl's critique fails to do justice to Brentano's theory of time-consciousness because it does not take into account Brentano's rejection of his own early position. However interesting in their own right, the historical details of Husserl's dispute with Brentano go beyond the scope of this chapter. For a discussion of this issue see Oskar Kraus, "Toward a Phenomenology of Time Consciousness" in *The Philosophy of Brentano*, ed. Linda L. McAlister (London: Duckworth, 1976), pp. 224-39; for a more recent position, David Wood, *The Deconstruction of Time* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, Inc., 1989), pp. 62-7.

example, classifying acts produce classifications, judging acts produce states of affairs, counting acts produce numbers and so on. Temporal syntheses do not produce something that was not already there. Consciousness is enduring rather than producing time.

Husserl insists that temporal moments be marked off from contents such as quality or intensity. If distinctions between acts, contents of apprehension and apprehended objects were clearly drawn, talk of association would be less confusing. Moreover, the phenomenological difference between retention and recollection is of crucial importance in explaining the perception of temporally extended things. To anticipate, Husserl says that all acts of consciousness, as immanent temporal objects, have the fixed temporal structure of impression flanked by retention and protention. The famous metaphor of the comet's tail is meant to indicate the *continuous* character of retentional modification: impression turns into retention, retention turns into retention of retention and so on. Retention modifies impression in the sense that it gradually levels out the affective relief of the present. Impoverished with respect to content, originary impression passes over into **fresh retention** (APS, 218) then turns into **empty retention**. Finally, when it reaches complete affective non-differentiation, empty retention becomes **empty presentation** (APS, 219). It is characteristic of empty presentations that they can only enter in a "synthetic nexus of a special kind, namely, in a synthetic nexus that lies entirely outside the genre of identifying syntheses" (APS, 117). Retentions exist as members of retentional series. That empty retentions connect up with every present impression is a "fundamental law of passive genesis" (APS, 114). But insofar as they are empty, retentions cannot constitute objects. They are not complete and separate acts but

non-self-sufficient phases thereof. Therefore, retentions lack intentional character (APS, 120).²²

...original time-consciousness is not a synthesis of association; retentions do not arise through an associative awakening directed backward from the impression, and thus, **they do not have in themselves a directedness radiating out from there toward the emptily presented past**. Therefore, it was not phenomenologically correct when Brentano characterized the regulated connection of retentions to impressions as an original association. One could only speak like this if one employed the word association in a completely superficial and frivolous manner for just any connection of presentations to presentations (APS, 119).

What fundamentally distinguishes temporal from associative syntheses is the fact that retentions lack **objective** intentionality while associations are always intentionally directed towards objects. However, to emphasize that associative syntheses involve a directedness toward objects different from that of egoic acts, Husserl says that empty presentations intend passively (APS, 118). This is not supposed to imply that retentions and associations have no connection whatsoever. Rather, through subsequent associations, retentions can gain oriented structure or intentional directedness (APS, 120). Thus, the ego can turn its regard back toward the past by following the directions pointed out by an associative awakening. Associations lend directedness to a retentional trail which is not in itself intentional.

In conclusion, associative syntheses *presuppose* and are *founded in* temporal syntheses. Conversely, an account of temporal syntheses would remain *incomplete* if it did not explicate the associative connections arising in the “concretely full living present” (APS, 170).

²² Husserl takes it as a matter of phenomenological evidence that protentions are different in this respect from retentions. Through protentions, the present meets the future “with open arms” (APS, 116). This expression obviously refers to intentional directedness.

2. The three levels of time-consciousness

In order to reveal the depth-dimension of primordial constitution Husserl proposes a carefully-tuned analysis of a multi-stratified time-consciousness. This comes down to disclosing what the conscious life must necessarily be like if the ego is to relate to objects. In section 34 of his lectures on time Husserl discriminates three levels of time-consciousness. Here the investigations stick to methodological prescriptions according to which a strict separation is to be maintained between the levels of the constituting (condition) and of the constituted (conditioned). As poles of identity arising from the unification of a flowing multitude of profiles, objects always fall on the side of the constituted. On the side of the constituting there is the absolute flow which cannot be turned into an object.

The first level is that of *transcendent* or *objective* time. Objective time or world time is measurable and it is a source of temporal determinations for transcendent temporal objects (*Zeitobjekte*). Corresponding to different ontological regions there are different time scales. Cosmology, geology and quantum mechanics obviously employ different time units to measure the duration of processes belonging to their domain of study. Whatever the scale, transcendent time provides an exact ordering of things and events in the world. This time is a universal system of dates in which every event finds its individual temporal location. Songs, lectures or chess games are transcendent temporal objects one encounters in the natural attitude. Yet the phenomenological method regards such objects as correlates of intentional acts. Through reduction, the phenomenologist brackets or suspends her participation in the belief in the existence of enduring transcendent objects. This gesture discloses the level of lived or experienced time.

The second level is that of *internal* or *subjective* time. The phenomenological reduction brings into view the modes of appearing of enduring objects, “the appearing duration as appearing” (PCIT, 5). In the phenomenological attitude the regard turns from songs, lectures or chess games towards immanent temporal objects such as the act of singing (or listening to) a song, the act of delivering (or hearing) a lecture or the act of playing (or studying) a chess game. Only on this second level do the modes of appearance of temporal objects arouse the theoretical interest. As manners of givenness, past, now and future are not parts of transcendent temporal objects but ways in which they appear to us. The manner in which a tone appears is a primary content of consciousness rather than an objective feature of a lasting tone.

The third and last level is that of “the absolute time-constituting flow of consciousness” (PCIT, 77). Phenomenological reflection proceeds in three steps. What is first taken into consideration is a thing that endures, a transcendent resounding tone. Then a shift of attitude intervenes and the phenomenological interest turns from the temporal objects unfolding in transcendent time towards the sensed tone which unfolds in immanent time. Here the emphasis lies on the immanent temporal duration of the tone as primary content of consciousness. The third step involves a shift from the perception of immanent temporal objects to the “perception of this perception” (PCIT, 290). At this level, “the wonder of time-consciousness” (PCIT, 290) manifests its perplexing character.

The first and the second level of time-consciousness encompass constituted temporal unities, be they objective processes or mental acts. Like objective processes, mental acts have their temporal extension; they endure or unfold in time. Yet, the absolute flow is a condition of possibility of enduring objectivities without being itself

something objective. Husserl notes that time-constituting consciousness is a “*quasi-temporal arrangement of phases*” (PCIT, 393) and for this reason it cannot be said to be *in* time. To distinguish the deeper level of subjective time on the basis of which the flowing immanent objectivities or mental acts are constituted, Husserl calls the absolute flow *pre-phenomenal* and *pre-immanent* (PCIT, 393). Such terminology carries its own difficulties.

Lining up the distinction between absolute consciousness and subjective time with the demarcation between constituting and constituted involves the danger of a *regressus ad infinitum*. To avoid this risk, Husserl declares that the absolute flow constitutes itself. The constitution of the objective tone requires a synthetic unity of its “temporal profiles”. The objective tone arises out of the unification of the now-tone, the just-past-tone and the not-yet-now-tone as the tone’s modes of appearance. By the same token, the constitution of an immanent temporal object requires the unification of another flow of multiplicities. However, the absolute consciousness cannot be regarded as resulting from the synthesis of a multiplicity yet more primitive than the retentional and protentional trail of the present impression (PCIT, 295, 301). While acknowledging the problematic character of self-constitution, Husserl declares that the absolute flow of consciousness is at the same time constituted and constituting.

There is one, unique flow of consciousness in which both the unity of the tone in immanent time and the unity of the flow of consciousness itself become constituted at once. As shocking (when not initially even absurd) as it may seem to say that the flow of consciousness constitutes its own unity, it is nonetheless the case that it does (PCIT, 84).

Inasmuch as it challenges the distinction between constituted and constituting elements, the discussion of “absolute consciousness” also provides the guiding lines for rethinking

the relation between activity and passivity. Envisaging a process of constitution which would not follow the schema apprehension-content/apprehension,²³ Husserl bends the binary logic that opposes form and content, *eidos* and *hyle*, essence and fact. Concerning the opposition between passivity and activity, this could mean that, phenomenologically, all activity arises from, is contemporaneous with and subsequently declines into passivity and, conversely, that all forms of passivity contain a core of activity. To put it differently, passivity and activity are correlative moments in all the achievements of consciousness rather than distinct levels of egoic life. However, this proposal comes too close to collapsing the contrast passivity/activity. One could avoid this danger by stressing the autonomy of hyletic configurations with regard to unifying categorial forms imposed from without. Better still, one could attempt to extricate passivity from its opposition to activity.

3. Double intentionality

Bringing forth the third level of absolute time-constituting consciousness raises another difficulty. The *prephenomenal* and *quasi-temporal* character of the flow squares badly with the irrefragable requirement of the flow's self-appearance or self-manifestation.²⁴

²³ The challenge to this schema is announced in a note on page 7 and further developed in an appendix to the main text.

²⁴ On occasion, Husserl regards the out-of-time-ness of the flow as evidence for the *immortality* of the transcendental ego (APS, 467). In other place he notes that "the subjective time becomes constituted in the absolute *timeless* consciousness" (PCIT, 117). Such remarks led commentators to consider the positing of

The flow of the consciousness that constitutes immanent time not only *exists* but is so remarkably and yet intelligibly fashioned that a self-appearance of the flow necessarily exists in it, and therefore the flow itself must be apprehensible in the flowing (PCIT, 88).

The flow's self-manifestation is so 'remarkable' because it does not resemble the normal perception either of external or of inner intentional objects. In this case, phenomenology cannot avail itself of normal descriptive procedures. The right names designating the absolute flow seem to be lacking (PCIT, 79). Terms bearing temporal connotations - such as present, past, future, succession and simultaneity - are inadequate because of their objective reference. Under the reflective regard mental acts such as perceptions, recollections, volitions, and desires become objects. Suggesting that the flow's self-manifestation circumvents reflection, Husserl qualifies the absolute flow as *pre-phenomenal*. As no objects are to be found on the level of the absolute flow, phenomenological reflection cannot lay claim to an adequate description of it. Nevertheless, Husserl hopes to pull himself out of this cul-de-sac by using an ace he has up his sleeve: the concept of horizontal or longitudinal intentionality.

The distinction between transverse intentionality (*Querintentionalität*) and horizontal or longitudinal intentionality (*Längsintentionalität*) clarifies the transition from the subjective time of demarcated individual acts to the absolute flow of internal time-consciousness. The transverse intentionality cuts across the flow of consciousness and centers on the two aspects of every actual now, the act of apprehending and the

the absolute flow as a vestige of metaphysical thinking. For instance, in *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge University Press, 2000) Robert Sokolowski argues that the "philosophically excessive" postulation of an absolute flow is the result of artificial construction. It resembles Plotinus' *One* or Aristotle's *Unmoved Mover* without having the systematic justification these entities had in the original doctrines.

apprehended object. The transverse intentionality is objectifying. Instead of aiming at the content of apprehension corresponding to an actual now, the longitudinal intentionality synthesizes the flow itself. Such a synthesis does not require a second flow. Rather, the flow is intending itself and produces its synthetic unity out of itself. The absolute flow is not itself a temporal object, that is, the self-appearance of the flow does not comprise sequentially organized acts. The absolute flow does not refer to a succession of conscious reflective acts but rather to the consciousness of succession. The actual now and its retentive and protentive horizons form the a priori temporal structure of the flow. The transverse intentionality synthesizes what is intended in the actual now with what is retained in retention and what is protended in protention. The longitudinal intentionality synthesizes the actual intending with its corresponding retainings and protendings. The occurrence of a new now sets off two types of modification. The present tone-impression couples with the just past tone-impression as well as with the immediately anticipated tone-impression and thereby the perception of a melody arises. Accompanying this process, there is a second synthetic accomplishment. The primordial impression (my intending the actual now-tone) retains not only the just past tone. The retention of the tone is retained as well and the retention of this retention and so on. Husserl's time diagrams reflect this bi-dimensionality of subjective time by complementing the axis of now moments with the depth dimension of the retention of retention.

The crucial difference between internal time-consciousness and absolute consciousness corresponds to the distinction between objectifying and non-objectifying intentional acts. While listening to a melody, I am engaged in an objectifying act. But since I live through the melody I do not give heed to my listening to the melody. Thanks

to a reflective turn of regard, I become aware of my act of listening. Thus, I transform my perception into an object for reflection. But even before my attitude turned into a reflective one I was in an implicit way aware of the fact that it was I who listened to the melody. I can objectify my perception through reflection only because I “perceive” my perception pre-reflectively.

The absolute consciousness lies, so to speak, before all positing of a unity, that is, before all objectivation. Unity is unity of objectivation, and objectivation is precisely objectivating but not objectivated. All non-objectivated objectivation belongs to the sphere of absolute consciousness (PCIT, 297).

The non-objectivated objectivation designates the self-manifestation of the stream of lived experiences. Unlike objectivated perceptions, the self-manifestation of the flow is not an act or a sequence of acts carried out by the ego. Rather, the self-manifestation of the absolute flow is an inherent dimension of subjectivity as such that makes possible all “inner perception.” Egoic acts of reflection have their basis in a pre-thematic and pre-reflective awareness of lived experiences.²⁵

The comparison between passive temporal self-awareness and active external perception reveals two *radically different* synthetic processes. In general, a phenomenological description of perception relies on the fundamental distinction between appearing things and modes of appearance. The perception of a thing requires the synthesis of the thing’s profiles. When I look at a house I see it from a certain angle and I am able to recognize it as a house despite the fact that many of its sides remain

²⁵ For a detailed discussion of the concept of pre-reflective self-awareness see Dan Zahavi *Husserl’s Phenomenology* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003) pp. 86-93 and *Self-awareness and Alterity. A phenomenological Investigation* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1999) pp. 67-82 and “Self-awareness and Affection” in N. Depraz and D. Zahavi (eds.) *Alterity and Facitivity*, (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998).

invisible for me. This is possible because every perception consists of a process of intuitive fulfillment of empty intentions. External perception depends on the movement of the lived-body in space. Even when my body remains generally motionless my external perception requires the micro-movements of my eyes. Consequently, in external perception the ego has, through the intermediate agency of bodily movement, the power to “orchestrate” the flux of profiles. Therefore perception is essentially, although sometimes minimally, active.

The orchestration of profiles in the perception of a house has no equivalent in a parallel power to orchestrate temporal modes of appearance. As modes of givenness of temporal objects, retentions, impressions and protentions come to form a unified multiplicity that owes nothing to the mastery or initiative of the ego. The passivity of temporal syntheses consists in their independence of any performance of the *Ego cogito*: “the streaming of a perceptual process cannot actually be inhibited” (APS, 603). Obviously, this does not mean that the ego has no control over *what* gets temporalized. I can stop paying attention to a dull lecture and consider a fascinating mathematical puzzle instead; or I can interrupt the perceptual process by closing my eyes and immersing myself in daydream. If the streaming of lived-experiences cannot be inhibited this can only mean that the sinking back into the past of the original now is inescapable.

Necessarily linking up to each lived-experience that has flowed-off is a concrete retention of that very lived-experience. This takes place incidentally in *pure passivity* in the same manner that original time-consciousness in general (to which this retention belongs), runs its course in steady passivity (APS 368) (my emphasis).

Moreover, in external as well as inner perception (or reflection), the ego attends to prominent objects which stand out in relation to other objects. Ultimately, this comes down to saying that perception and reflection depend on conditions of homogeneity and heterogeneity. No such dependence influences the longitudinal intentionality of the absolute flow. The self-appearance of the flow does not require conditions of similarity and contrast precisely because at this level there is no difference between that which appears and what appears in the appearance. The self-awareness of the flow is the product of longitudinal intentionality through which the self affects itself. In order for self-affection to obtain, the self does not have to stand out in relation to something else. In Zahavi's words, "this basic self-affection is not the result of an intentional activity, is not something initiated, controlled or chosen by me but a given state of *pure passivity*" (my emphasis).²⁶

Temporal syntheses can be called passive in yet another sense. It is not only the arrangement of temporal modes of appearance that eludes the ego's control but also the absolute beginning and the absolute end of time synthesis are radically unpredictable therefore attesting humans' vulnerability. Genetic engineering and pharmaceutical research assail us with the seductive prospects of reproductive control and 'successful' aging. However, as resilient reminders of our finitude, the phenomena of birth and death will always exceed the technical attempts to control them.

²⁶ "Self-awareness and Affection" in N. Depraz and D. Zahavi (eds.) *Alterity and Facitivity*, (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998) p. 210.

4. Temporality and alterity

The self-manifestation of the absolute flow can be understood as an implicit and pre-reflective relation of the ego to itself. This non-thematic awareness of what is immanent to consciousness is one of the major meanings of originary passivity. However, Husserl's account of time-constituting flow of consciousness points to yet another sense of passivity as "openness to alterity"²⁷ taken both as that which is not-now and as alter-ego. Passive temporal syntheses bring into view the "drive toward otherness"²⁸ that operates at the very center of the primordial sphere.

Transverse and longitudinal intentionalities - the sequence of acts of perception and the absolute flow of consciousness - cannot exist separately. Although it is possible to distinguish them abstractly, they are essentially intertwined. In other words, they name the same process from different perspectives. To be self-aware is part of what it means to be a subject. However, a subject cannot be aware *only* of itself. Non-thematic self-awareness appears conjointly with various thematic acts of the ego. Every time it perceives surrounding things, ponders logical inferences, yields to desires and makes ethical decisions, the ego is also pre-reflectively aware of itself. Without some kind of preoccupation with or affections from objects other than itself, the ego could not become self-aware.²⁹

²⁷ Dan Zahavi makes the point that "prereflective self-awareness must be conceived not as a simple static, and self-sufficient self-presence but as dynamic and differentiated openness to alterity" (*Self-awareness and Affection*, p. 221).

²⁸ Daniel Birnbaum *The Hospitality of Presence*, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wicksell International, 1998 p. 83.

²⁹ The following passage from *Ideas II* makes it clear that passivity and activity are but different facets of the same experience: "We find as *the originally and specifically subjective, the Ego in the proper sense*,

The temporal double intentionality has a striking correspondent on the level of embodiment where the system of kinaesthetic sensations constituted by the lived body (*Leib*) produces a pre-objective bodily awareness underlying the perception of all physical bodies including one's own (*Leibkörper*). In chapter 5 I will return to the issue of the co-givenness or co-experience of the lived body and I will argue that the prefix co- does not stand for an accessory givenness but rather for that without which nothing would come to be given.

The interplay of longitudinal and transverse intentionalities generates an *a priori* temporal structure that is not itself subjected to flowing. While retaining its predecessor and anticipating its successor, every actual now recedes into the past. A new primal impression is not an addition to a series of discrete points. The arising of a new now alters the entire chain of retentions. On the one hand, the retentions are passive in the sense that the sinking back into the past and the retaining of primary impressions cannot be inhibited by an egoic initiative. On the other hand, being interweaved with impressions, retentions are receptive and thus allow the ego to be affected by what is "alien to consciousness" (PCIT 93, 106), that is, the hyle.

[...] in the conscious life of the concrete ego there is an abiding hyletic core of non-ego yet belonging essentially to the ego. Without a realm of givenness, a realm of unities constituted as non-ego, no ego is possible.³⁰

the Ego of "freedom," the attending, considering, comparing, distinguishing, judging, valuing, attracted, repulsed, inclined, disinclined, desiring and willing Ego: the Ego that in any sense is "*active*" and *takes a position*. This, however, is only one side. Opposed to the active Ego stands the passive, and **the Ego is always passive at the same time whenever it is active**, in the sense of being affected as well as being receptive, which of course does not exclude possibility of its being sheer passivity "(Ideas II, 225).

³⁰ [...] das konkrete Ich hat in seinem Leben als Bewusstseinsleben beständig einen Kern von Hyle, von Nicht-Ich, aber wesentlich ich zugehörig. Ohne ein Reich der Vorgegebenheiten, ein Reich konstituiertes Einheiten, konstituiert als Nicht-Ich, ist kein Ich möglich (Int II, 379).

What is non-ego or alien to consciousness is first and foremost the hyletic core of every living present (APS, 184). Passive time-constitution is necessarily intertwined with alterity because there is no temporalization without temporalized contents.³¹ To anticipate, it is the ambiguous status of retention - at the same time presentation and presentification - which will later explain the inclusion of otherness in the primordial sphere. Although not a-subjective, the hyle remains nevertheless foreign to the ego in the sense that the hyletic field does not require the ego's participation (*Ichbeteiligung*) (APS, 478). Husserl sometimes calls the hyletic field a "subpersonal" dimension (APS, 478) where ownness and otherness are in the process of delimiting one another rather than being clearly established opposites.³² Intrinsically tied to temporality, hyletic alterity challenges the borders of the primordial sphere by making the 'now' moment a site where presence and absence cut into each other's margins.

I will reserve for a later discussion the problem of whether constitutional priority is to be assigned to the pre-egological hyletic alterity or to the more commonly Husserlian sense of alterity as alter-ego.³³ Husserl often declares, and commentators have not failed to notice this point, that it is the affinity between recollection and empathy, as non-mediated positing acts of presentification (*Vergegenwärtigung*), that gives the ego

³¹ "Ichliche Aktivität setzt Passivität voraus – Ichliche Passivität – und beides setzt voraus Assoziation und Vorbewusstsein in Form des letztlich hyletischen Untergrundes" (Ms. C3 41b-42a quoted in Zahavi 216).

³² Commenting on Husserl's C manuscripts, Janet Donohoe interprets the subpersonal field as an anonymous and pre-egological level which attests to the self-alienation of the ego: "the ego is always alienated from itself, distanced from itself in the sense that it can never take up its streaming present as streaming present but can only take it up as past. The dark [i.e., hyletic] core provides a possibility of an openness to another ego that is copresent, simultaneous to the ego pole" (*Husserl on Ethics and Intersubjectivity*, Amherst, New York: Humanity Books, 2004 p. 64). Donohoe rightly notes that on the pre-egological level there is only a "limited separation" between I and Other. But her argument for a "radically immediate" being-with-the-Other of the I would have been better had she distinguished between the alterity of the hyle and the alterity of the alter ego.

³³ In the fifth *Cartesian Meditation*, Husserl says that the alter-ego is "the intrinsically first other (the first 'non Ego')" (CM, 107) thus calling into question the original character of hyletic alterity.

access to the transcendent otherness of the alter-ego. When recollecting its past, the ego relates to oneself as if it were another. Recollection inserts chunks of past experience into the present thus having a dislocating effect on the ego. Empathy has a similar dislocating effect whereby it inserts chunks of alien experience into the ego's flow of consciousness. To decide the question of priority mentioned above, I will have to look at the relation between retention and recollection (Ch. 3) and I will have to study the relation between the passive association of pairing and empathy (Ch. 5). For now let me just add the following remark. As shown above, the absolute flow of time-constituting consciousness appears to itself intuitively but only in a not-thematic, pre-reflective way. Were the ego to turn its reflective regard toward it, it would have to acknowledge that the absolute flow is presentable only as reflectively unpresentable. Similarly the alter-ego is accessible for the ego but only in the mode of inaccessibility. Although similar, these two kinds of inaccessibility or otherness are obviously not identical. The inaccessibility of the alter-ego is more severe because the alter-ego never appears to me as a different source of self-temporalization.³⁴ My claim is that there is a reciprocal relation between these two types of alterity. On the one hand, internal temporal alterity opens the way for a more radical experience of the alien whether as alter-ego or as alien-world. On the other hand, this latter alien experience reverberates back and sharpens the ego's inner alterity which could otherwise remain latent.

³⁴ For this reason, Daniel Birnbaum claims that Husserl defends an idea of "radical otherness of the Other" (Birnbaum, p. 168).

5. Rhythm

Time-consciousness conditions the constitution of objective identity as such. However, the impressional now and its retentional and protentional dimensions make up up a formal structure arising as the product of “conceptual idealization” (APS 479). A phenomenological account of time-consciousness must return to “the realm of *concrete* and *discrete* phenomena” (APS 479) and consider the laws and configurations of the syntheses of contents. By shifting the focus of the investigation from “the fixed form of the living present” to that which “flows through this form” (APS 486), Husserl amends his ‘pointillist’ theory of time-consciousness as a continuous, irreversible, infinite and homogeneous series of now points. The present now is not as much a *Jetztpunkt* as a *Gegenwartssphäre*. One of the functions of the passive synthesis is to distend the now *point* into a *sphere* thereby giving it volumetric density.³⁵ This distention is passive not in the sense that it relies on blind receptivity but in the sense that it generates a sensible cohesiveness (*Zusammenhang*) of separate unities that owes nothing to logico-eidetical formations. On occasion, Husserl appeals to ‘musical’ notions, such as resonance, rhythm and harmony (APS 229, 406, 407, 506, 507 and 518), to explain temporal syntheses.

Resonance and rhythm refer to complex temporal phenomena. For reasons of simplicity, the *Lectures on Time* focus on the perception of a single homogeneous tone

³⁵ Marc Richir ties rhythm to passive synthesis in two of his many works on Husserl – “Synthèse passive et temporalisation/spatialization” in *Husserl* eds. Eliane Escoubas and Marc Richir, (Grenoble: Jérôme Million, 1989) and “Discontinuités et rythmes des durées: abstraction et concretion de la conscience du temps” in *Rythmes et philosophie*, eds. Pierre Sauvanet and Jean Jacques Wunenburger, (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 1996). Marc Richir reads Husserl’s reference to rhythm as a sign of his acknowledging the necessity of enlarging the primordial sphere in response to the many inconveniences hidden by the sensualist abstraction of an originary impression trapped in an isolated *Jetzt*.

which is no more than a limit-case. Normal perceptual experience synchronizes an impressional multiplicity springing from “many sensible points” (APS 479). If what flows through the fixed form of the living present is a “unitary flux” this is not because each present is filled out homogeneously but rather because many retentional and protentional time-lines of heterogeneous objects have already been unified.³⁶

Every momentary present with its primordially impressional Now and with its tail is “connected” to a **parallel present**, to the other series of retentional modifications. This connection is that of association of simultaneity. It is association that produces within passivity a unity of a higher order between **separated** consciousnesses of unity (APS 482-3).

Resonance is a condition of possibility for world experience in that it establishes a field of presence as a nexus of separately posited elements. The retentional and protentional sequences corresponding to separate sensible points lapse into the past at different tempos. Yet multiple heterogeneous elements resonate in the sense that any given sensible point reverberates and propagates its affection thereby establishing nodes relating parallel retentional chains.

³⁶ Jay Lampert points out that Husserl frames the problem of simultaneity as consisting not in “the identity of what is present in a moment” but in “the experience of a differential between two or more time sequences” (*Husserl on Simultaneity*, p. 16). The flow of consciousness is composed of many sub-flows because, at any given moment, consciousness engages in a multitude of acts whose different intentional objects unfold together. That the sub-flows form a nexus (*Zusammenhang*) of some kind is obvious. The difficulty consists in correlating the individual stages of the sub-flows. On the one hand, the experiences of objects must elapse at multiple tempos for consciousness to be aware that objects occur simultaneously. On the other hand, even though concrete objects undergo change at different rates of acceleration it can be posited a priori that “all world processes overlap in spite of not lining up” (21). This allows consciousness to “abstractly create an intention that simultaneizes across tempo-lines” (23). Yet, each definite phase in the experience of a given object coincides with *necessarily indeterminate* stages in the experience of *some* other object. If judgments of simultaneity are inherently indeterminate (p. 16) it is because consciousness always goes back and forth between two types of flow: to pinpoint definite phases in measured flows whose beats fall into regulated cadences means to detach them from a background of non-metrical vague flows progressing toward stopping-points not yet determined.

The unity of the field of consciousness is always produced through **sensible interconnections**, in a sensible connection of similarity and contrast. Without this there could be no “world.” We could say that it is **resonance** as sensible similarity and sensible contrast (that for its part always presupposes contrast) that grounds everything that is once constituted. It is a universal law of consciousness that a resonance proceeds from every special consciousness or from every special object and similarity is the unity of the resonating element (APS 505-6).

The notion of rhythm is often employed with reference either to the periodicity of natural processes, such as heart beats and moon phases, or to the formal structure of acoustic sequences, such as the series of syllables in verses and the series of tones in melodies.³⁷ But from a phenomenological point of view, rhythm means not as much periodicity or meter as a characteristic of the experience of objects in so far as this experience is temporal. We perceive a process of objective change as having a direction not because rhythm is inherent in objective processes but rather because the experience of time is a rhythmizing experience.

Nicolas Abraham contrasts the cognitive consciousness, which relies on observations of objective regularities, with the spontaneously creative rhythmizing consciousness.³⁸ What makes rhythm possible is the capacity of consciousness not only to transform noise into articulated configurations but also to unsettle or disrupt

³⁷ The attempt would be vain to rival Pierre Sauvanet's acumen in his exploration of the philosophies of rhythm. From ancient cosmology to contemporary cardiology, from anthropology to numerology, from Paul Klee's paintings to John Cage's music, Sauvanet draws on a variety of sources to suggest that rhythm is a phenomenon combining at least two of the following elements: structure, periodicity and movement. In its strong sense, rhythm merges all three components: rhythm is “le cycle d'une forme en devenir” or “une structure périodique en mouvement”. Sauvanet gives Husserl credit for laying out the conceptual tools for a phenomenological investigation of rhythm but deems the Husserlian and the post-Husserlian phenomenology as well (Henri Maldiney, Jacques Garelli and Marc Richir) remain dominated by too analytical a conception of time. See Pierre Sauvanet *Le Rythme et la raison*, (Paris: Kimé, 2000, vol. 1, p. 110).

³⁸ Nicolas Abraham “La conscience rythmante. Essai sur la temporalité du rythme” in *Rythmes de l'œuvre de la traduction et de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Flammarion, 1985) pp.75-86.

mechanical repetitions. For example, the sequence of gestures required in assembly line work is periodic not rhythmic. Yet, by accompanying their labor with songs and thus rhythmizing their experience, assembly line workers guard themselves against the numbing effects of mechanical periodicity. In support of his claim that rhythms are not impressed upon consciousness from without, Abraham also points out that consciousness can rhythmize differently one and the same perceptual experience.

In light of these remarks, it may seem that rhythm could hardly have any ties to passivity. Consciousness may be rhythmized just as much as rhythmizing, but this would still not mean that rhythm is *passively received* rather than *actively* created by consciousness. However, as function of sensibility, rhythms bring about patterns of *affections* thereby contracting affection's ambiguous status – somehow situated in between passivity and activity. Moreover, rhythm has a *dispositional* nature in the sense that the subject *becomes* or *has* a rhythm.³⁹ If it were made clear that passivity means a special type of ego participation rather than pure non-activity, the tie between rhythm and passivity would appear more credible.

First, at the core of Abraham's and other phenomenological theories of rhythm there is the Husserlian scheme of retention and protention according to which every present retains what has just passed and anticipates what is about to come. If this is not just a formal structure, it is because anticipations and fulfillments are always directed at concrete objects. The retention of the presently perceived profile of a particular object

³⁹ Commenting on this point, Sauvanet writes “ ce qui se joue ici n'est autre que la dépossession de soi par le rythme, le moment où l'activité cède la place à la passivité, le passage du 'je suis rythmant' au 'je suis rythmé'. Ce qui se joue dans le rythme. c'est a la fois la position du sujet et son déplacement, son décentrement” (Suavanet, 2000, p. 134).

sets forth an expectation that can be fulfilled by a *range* of determinate profiles. The object of lived perceptions has a non-saturated identity that accommodates internal differentiation. Rhythm manifests itself as a balance between, on the one hand, repetitions, returns, recurrences and, on the other hand, differentiations, disappointments, and disconfirmations. If anticipations were never disconfirmed, the experience of time would be monotonous rather than rhythmic. If anticipations were always disappointed, the necessary result of as simple a gesture as turning one's head would be a perceptual shock. We do regard many objects as familiar, because common experience witnesses the emergence of rhythms rather than plunging us in complete cacophony.⁴⁰

Second, rhythm bears directly on what Husserl calls the "propagation of affection" in that rhythmizations integrate discordances into coherent wholes. Rhythm filters from the manifold of future impressions those that resonate in such a way as to contribute to the emergence of hyletic patterns. Most importantly, it is rhythm that allows associations of similarity to cut across distances. *Distant syntheses* integrate discontinuities. Two consecutive hammer blows come to form a synthetic unity despite the temporal interval separating them. Mere succession is not enough to explain why the blows are synthesized in a sequence. The first hammer blow does not enter a synthetic

⁴⁰ Marc Richir considers the form of the living present far too rigid for explaining the emergence of phenomenological unities (1989, p. 34) and suggests that passive syntheses should be thought of as strictly autonomous with respect to inner-time consciousness. Had Husserl pursued a radical phenomenological epoché, he would have bracketed the centration on the ego. This would have allowed him to disclose an originally spaced *phase of presence* as location of proto-temporalized and proto-spatialized world-phenomena or "phenomena as nothing but phenomena" (1989, p. 11). Whereas *thing-phenomena* fluctuate in accordance with precise rules, *world-phenomena* are originally plural and radically indeterminate, escaping all forms of symbolical codification. World-phenomena are passively synthesized by the "phenomenological unconscious" (1989, p.12, 22 and 28) whose 'activity' establishes a non-conceptual cohesion between heterogeneous elements, in other words, a rhythm.

unity with the immediately succeeding humming of an engine. Along with the uniformity of content, the fact that the hammer blows are part of rhythmic sequences explains why they are perceived as a synthetic whole. A backward radiating affection can traverse the temporal gaps and present separated tones as a unified pair because breaks and intervals are just as important for the genesis of rhythms as are the tones themselves. Rhythm requires differentiation and dispersion.

Third, rhythm harmonizes retention-protection chains attached to multiple sensible points. This is evident for example in the fact that perception engages all five sense modalities at any given moment. But single sense modalities taken separately also activate multiple impressional source points inasmuch as the foreground/background structure informs all perception. Accordingly, it could be said that specific types of rhythmic arrangements correspond to each sense-field. Acoustic rhythms are easily recognizable. But one could also point to optic and haptic rhythms insofar as visual and tactile perceptions involve sequences of bodily movements. The latter's absence is the reason why olfactory and gustative sense fields show only modest rhythmic qualities. Husserl takes a further step and suggests that rhythm transgresses the heterogeneity of the sense-fields.⁴¹ Invoke

⁴¹ It is in this direction that some phenomenologists pursued their more or less systematic reflections on rhythm. When Merleau-Ponty addresses the issue of the communication of the senses he invokes the notion of rhythm: "Sensation is intentional because I find that in the sensible a certain rhythm of existence is put forward – abduction and adduction – and that, following up this hint, and stealing into the form of existence which is thus suggested to me, I am brought into relation with an external being, whether it be in order to open my self to it or to shut myself off from it" (PP, 262). In a similar vein Erwin Straus, argues that rhythm brings about an original unity of the senses because sensation is immediately connected to movement. To say that rhythm is passively received would be to surreptitiously insert a distance between subject and world. More appropriate would be to say that rhythm is the source of a "motric induction" which expresses the pathic communication of the subject with the world (Straus, *Phenomenological Psychology*, p. 10-11). For more recent comments on this topic see Bernard Waldenfels, "Vom Rhythmus der Sinne" in *Sinnesschwellen*, Frankfurt: Shurkamp, 1999).

Thus [we have] the appearances of rhythm that are begun by the simple repetition of unarticulated contents; [we have] commonalities in the form of time, which commonalities can occur in different spheres of sense as uniform and can ground the affective nexus. A rhythm of light signals can “recall” a rhythm of tone signals – the uniformity can be the bridge leading over to affective salience. Precisely for this reason the usual association of sense-regions can also spread from sense region to sense region (APS 518).

Establishing schemes of communication among sense modalities, rhythm appears as an organizing principle of sensing experience as such. Insofar as rhythmic connections are *sensible*, they cannot be the product of eidetical operations. Rhythm is a process of pattern emergence in which hyletic data in-form themselves without requiring a unifying form imposed from without. Rhythm belongs to the sphere of passivity in the sense that consciousness finds rhythmic unities already effected on the pre-predicative or pre-logical level.

Conclusion

Husserl's analysis of time consciousness will guide the following study of passive syntheses. As shown above, Husserl regards both temporal and associative syntheses as key elements of the process of passive genesis. Temporal syntheses provide the ground for associations of similarity and contrast. The inspection of the idea of longitudinal intentionality disclosed a first sense of passivity as **inactive** pre-reflective self-awareness of the temporal flow of consciousness. Since they cannot be inhibited, temporal syntheses are passive or non-spontaneous. They are not the result of egoic acts and neither does the ego control them. But temporal self-awareness is inseparable from hetero-affection and therefore temporality and alterity are intrinsically intertwined. By ranging retentions along with impressions in the class of presentations, Husserl clearly saw retentions as contributing to the **reception** of hyletic data. Anticipating on the relation between hyletic alterity and the otherness of the alter-ego, I proposed to disengage passivity from the opposition to activity and to think of it as **openness to alterity**. Thus self-temporalization prefigures all the three meanings of passivity: **receptivity, inactivity and openness to alterity**. To begin the in depth analysis of passivity I will expand on the idea of passive receptivity and I will pay special attention to associations of similarity and contrast and to the problem of propagation of affection.

Chapter II. Originary Passivity

1. Association as a topic of phenomenological inquiry

The formal doctrine of time consciousness finds its indispensable complement in considerations regarding the syntheses of contents. In order to establish the laws and regularities of passive syntheses and to show how they provide a basis for categorical activity, Husserl appropriates the concept of association from 19th century German sensualistic psychology and grants it transcendental dignity much in the same way Kant attributed a transcendental role to the British empiricists' notion of association.

Although established as theme of sustained phenomenological investigation relatively late, association was already brought out in section 4 of the first *Logical Investigation* as origin of indication. The starting point of this short but very dense section is the view according to which association means that a content of consciousness *reminds* or *calls up* another content of consciousness. Seemingly straightforward, this statement does, in fact, raise many problems. Consciousness associates A with B because A *points to* B and somehow *belongs* to it. As Husserl says, "we feel their connection forcing itself upon us" (LI. I. 274). The relations of "pointing" and "belonging" are at the core of Husserl's theory of parts and wholes, which informs his account of perceptual experience. It is not because A and B succeed one another or coexist that consciousness associates them; rather it is because association has already established their mutual *pertinence* that contents are experienced as successive or simultaneous. Associative

syntheses confer “a new phenomenological character” upon distinct or discrete contents. Associations bring into being new intentional unities inasmuch as discrete contents appear as sides or profiles of the same intentional object. Jay Lampert notes that, in Husserl’s conception, association is a “*double* constitution of unit and unity.”⁴² The association of A with B presupposes that consciousness *extricates* a part from the whole to which it belongs while passing over the borders of that part toward other parts belonging to the same whole. From the perspective of the whole, independent objects of consciousness *exceed* themselves in the sense that they carry along implicit differentiations that pass unnoticed in the actual perceptual now. From the perspective of the part, non-saturated contents of consciousness “pass over” into their perceptual contexts in relation to which their position within a whole is determined.

Associative syntheses produce sensible configurations. But if association can ‘creatively’ connect a given object with objects never before experienced what makes association different from unruly plasticity and arbitrary flexibility? The free play of associations always *exposes* objective meanings whose meaning-intentions restrain the possibilities of associations. If concrete intuitions are to fulfill abstract meanings then there must be rules limiting the range of sense data any given datum can associate with.⁴³

⁴²Jay Lampert, *Synthesis and Backward Reference in Husserl’s Logical Investigations*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995, p. 41.

⁴³ Jay Lampert calls attention to the double meaning of the notion of *Wechsel* which explains the relation between intention and fulfilment. *Wechsel* means both bank draft and fluctuation. On the one hand, meaning-intention takes account ahead of time of its intuitive fulfilment the same way the drawing of a bank draft precedes its being cashed. On the other hand, intuitions must first fluctuate before abstract meanings can be exposed through them (Lampert 1995, p. 39-40).

As Husserl himself noted later, the reference to association in the explanation of indication provided the “nucleus of genetic phenomenology” (EJ, 75). However, what will later be called *Urassoziation* remains neglected at this stage because the structure of the sense-fields is not taken to rely on associative syntheses.

It is in his lectures on transcendental logic, published under the title of *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Syntheses*, that Husserl seriously takes up the theme of association. Division 3 of this work starts off by pointing out that, phenomenologically, association is “a form and a lawful regularity of immanent genesis that constantly belongs to consciousness in general” (APS, 162; also EJ, 74). Remarkably concise, this definition underscores several important points.

- (i) As genesis can be either active as is the case with ideal objects, such as numbers sets or states of affairs, or passive as is the case with sensible configurations (APS, 630-32), it is only natural to expect that some associations be pursued actively and others be formed passively. For example, the constitution of universals requires acts of comparison based on active association while judgments about individuals require associative awakenings based on transference of affection between objective moments.
- (ii) Even the passive associations between sense unities do not produce just any kind of connection. Rather than arbitrarily connecting whatever contents happen to coexist or succeed one another in the streaming life of consciousness, associations unfold according to transcendental laws.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Husserl follows Kant’s point about ‘affinity’ as “the objective ground of all association of appearances” (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A 122). Husserl holds in high regard the Kantian transcendental deduction as presented in the first edition of the *Critique* and he likens his concept of passive synthesis with the Kantian synthesis of productive imagination (APS 410). Though he admires Kant for his account of the apodictic

(iii) What associations associate are no longer things, bits of physical reality, but rather *immanent* phenomena. One of the implications of this point is methodological. Associations can be discovered only in the sphere opened up by the epoché. As Husserl observes, association is not to be taken as a form of “psychophysical causality” (APS, 162). In its proper sense, association is a unifying principle of immanent phenomena.

All these characteristics are meant to mark off association in the phenomenological sense from association as conceived in the empiricist tradition. On the one hand, Husserl cannot accept Hume’s take on the arbitrariness and contingency of associations. On the other hand, the general tendency of empirical psychology to apply to the mind laws similar to the laws of nature meets with equally severe criticism. Like all 18th century thinkers, David Hartley gave unlimited scientific credit to Newtonian mechanics and accounted for associative phenomena by hypothesizing “vibratory” motions of infinitesimal “medullary particles” roaming through the pores of the brain.⁴⁵ Extending the analogy between mind and nature, J. S. Mill observed that ideas and impressions associate with one another according to a kind of “mental chemistry.”⁴⁶

Husserl does not question the validity of the empirical laws of association but stresses that phenomenology and empirical psychology belong to altogether different domains. While empiricism equates them with a kind of ‘intrapsychic gravitation’ (CM, 81), phenomenology includes associations in the class of intentional phenomena and

lawfulness of subjective life, Husserl complains about the insufficient development of the transcendental motif (165, 410). In particular, Kant’s interest in the condition of possibility of external physical objects, led him to overlook the constitution of the immanent stream of lived experiences where associations reveal their true import (APS, 171).

⁴⁵ David Hartley, *Observation of Man, his Frame, his Duty, and his Expectations* Hildesheim: Georg Olm Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967, p. 11.

⁴⁶ John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic* Book VI Ch. 4 §3.

regards them as motivational forces. Husserl contrasts egoic motivations or motivations of reason with associative motivations (Ideas II, sec56b). The former require the accomplishments of an *ego cogito*. Belonging to this category are motivations involved in logical grounding (the premises motivate the conclusion), and also valuing motivations (a value judgment motivates a practical decision). The latter do not connect position-takings but current acts with sedimented similar acts or with sense contents belonging to the sphere of passive pre-givenness. Passive motivations, that is, reproductive associations and habits, often remain hidden in the “unconscious” and their exploration requires a special regressive method.

Association is so highly important a theme for phenomenological research because the phenomena of association lie at the basis of the “universal theory of the genesis of pure subjectivity” (APS, 163). Husserl’s approach revolves around several prominent questions. What is it that gets associated in associations? How can associations count as accomplishments if, under certain circumstances, they dispense with the participation of the *ego cogito*? On what levels of conscious life are associations effective? Are there different types of associations and if so how are they interrelated?

The clearest overview of the scope of the phenomenology of association can be found in section 26 of the lectures on transcendental logic. First and foremost, associations concern the experience, common in everyday life, of a past perception being called up or brought to life by a present perception. Experiences that establish a link between present and past consciousnesses are referred to as **reproductive associations**. More or less loosely enchained recollections eventually link up with and fulfill the empty retentions hanging off from the now phase of intuition. Closely related to reproductive

associations but oriented toward the future are **inductive associations** or **expectations**. A characteristic of both reproductive and inductive associations is their participation in the constitution of the objective identity as correlate of the intentional consciousness. In contrast with associations in common sense, Husserl distinguishes **original** (*Ursprungliche*) or **primordial associations** (*Urassoziation*) which cover the combinations established within the living present among simultaneously apprehended hyletic data.

All objects being constituted from original passivity (**without any participation by the active ego**) arise “associatively” (that is, according to the rules of this sub-personal, purely immanent causality); arising “associatively” are all objects pregiven to the personal ego (possibly already on its lowest level of personality), above all, objects **foreign to the ego**, thus first and foremost all those objects that do not refer back to an “**intervention**” on the part of the ego in structuring their intentional constitution (APS, 478).

It is through *abstraction* that the formations of sense-unities within the living present can be disclosed (APS, 198, EJ, 177). In Husserl’s account, the hyletic data are not the ultimate composite elements out of which the ego builds mental representations but rather nodal points in a dynamic relational system underlying the formation of perceptual sense. Original associations belong to the sphere of passivity because they are carried out independently of categorical acts of the ego cogito. Drives, instincts, and feelings also belong to the hyletic sphere (APS, 198).

More generally, associations are supposed to explain how it is that consciousness can undertake the transition from particulars to multiplicities, from parts to wholes, from singularities to their internal and external horizons. In its broadest sense, association

accounts for “the unity of the whole of the ego's life” (APS, 508) in that it offers “the conditions of possibility of subjectivity itself” (APS, 169). Whether they refer to emerging configurations of hyletic data or to rememberings and expectations, associations reverberate through one's entire life conferring a historical cohesion on the subject's life.

2. Primordial Associations

Because phenomenology greatly contributed to the rebirth of the transcendental motif, Husserl often qualified it as “a science of a new beginning” (Ideas II, 407). Numerous methodological revisions and repeated attempts to find freshly cut pathways into transcendental phenomenology attest to the fact that, for Husserl, the problem of beginning had always been a theme of reflection in its own right. Claiming to begin philosophy anew, phenomenology must also decide what its own starting point is. In particular, it is not at all evident where the discussion of the principles of association should begin. As noted above, recollections and anticipations appear to be the most common example of association. Does this mean that an exposition is more coherent that starts off by explaining the workings of reproductive association and continues with the discussion of original associations? Should the exposition not follow the order of the matters themselves? When openly facing the demand for “forging a beginning” (175), Husserl conjures up the Aristotelian distinction between what is first for us and what is first in itself. We first become acquainted with phenomena of reproductive and inductive association which are easily graspable as part of everyone's everyday experience.

Nevertheless, it is primordial associations which count as what is first in itself. As primordial associations do not directly manifest themselves in common experience, phenomenology must have recourse to a special method if it is to gain access to the domain of primordial associations. "Forging a beginning" for the phenomenology of associations comes down to disclosing the dynamic formation of sensorial complexes within the living present.

Let us remain in the continual synthetic unity of a streaming present; let us initially not draw upon any of the functions of remembering that we should only take into account later regarding their genesis and new accomplishment, and let us make just as little use of the functions of bringing the future to intuition, the expectations that spring ahead beyond continual protention. We even leave out of play all types of phantasy, all types of conceptual acts, valuing and willing activities without prejudicing the case concerning their indispensability or dispensability for subjectivity (APS, 174).⁴⁷

The method of reduction reveals the original field of passivity by peeling off successive layers of complex sense-giving operations, be they rememberings, habitual expectations, imaginings, judgments, valuings and so on. Through this abstractive procedure, original associations come into view as phenomenological residua, as what remains after familiar conscious accomplishments have been set aside. However, it is important to note that original associations manifest themselves as having been operative in consciousness *all along*. The ego catches sight of original associations only *after* the shift from natural to transcendental attitude has been operated. Yet the ego becomes aware of associations as having been already effective *before* the theoretical regard turned toward them.

Husserl defines primordial associations as referring to the level of "systematic or

⁴⁷ See also section 16 of *Experience and Judgment* which begins with a perfectly similar methodological set up.

systematizing affective awakening that makes possible the objectlike structure of the living present, all kinds of original syntheses proper to the formation of unity of manifolds” (APS, 230). The role of original associations (*Urassoziation*) is to organize the affective tendencies pertaining to the hyletic core of the living present into unities. It is because associative syntheses are already at work here that the living present expands into a “small circle” (APS, 230) whose circumference coincides with the still living retention. The overall project of providing a phenomenological account of judicative evidence must necessarily take into account the most elementary formations of identity. Primordial associations do not yet constitute objective identities, but they essentially contribute to their formation.

Most importantly, the associative syntheses operating within the domain of the living present challenge the distinction between activity and passivity. The fact that objects are pre-given to the ego does not simply mean that the ego is being acted upon. The phenomenological reduction makes it evident that the formation of sensorial complexes in passive receptivity is an achievement (*Leistung*) of consciousness which joins passive and active components. Phenomenological reflection

...finds in acceptance of the pre-given, in contemplative apprehension of it, an element of activity and, as a result, must obtain a *more radical conception of passivity* than that entertained by naïve consciousness. This conception is that of *pure affective pre-giveness*, of *passive belief in being*, in which there is nothing yet of cognitive achievement (EJ, 60).

Nevertheless, as belonging to the realm of affective pre-giveness, original associations are independent of valuing and theoretical acts.⁴⁸ The syntheses operative on

⁴⁸ In a different sense, theoretical acts can also be considered pre-given. For example, if asked, I could state Pythagoras’ theorem without necessarily knowing its proof. I remember the theorem but I cannot justify it

the pre-predicative stratum of consciousness owe nothing to acquired habitualities, judicative evidences or cultural sediments. On the contrary, the latter are founded on the former. "Passivity is the soil upon which the activity of the ego moves and without the knowledge of which the higher accomplishments of this activity must remain for us completely unintelligible" (APS, 386).

3. Similarity and contrast as conditions of possibility for hyletic unities

When the questions of criteria and modes of operation of associative syntheses come to the fore Husserl does not strike particularly original points. Sense unities having already been set off in relief associate on the basis of **similarity** (*Ähnlichkeit*), **contrast** and **contiguity**. However, owing to the specific methodological constraints mentioned above, similarity does not concern, as common sense would advise, objects having some kind of *real* physical commonality. Phenomenological reflection suspends the participation in the positing belief in the existence of real commonalities between physically connected things. Instead of relating physical substances, associations connect experiences of objects. On the one hand, association links "intimately inherent" (*reell*) components of experiences, such as the manifold of hyletic data. On the other hand, association unifies different present perceptions with various presentifications of the same thing thus contributing to the constitution of intentional objects as ideal (*irreell*) noematic unities. Therefore, association cannot be considered a *real* relation (APS, 54,

by inferentially relating it to other mathematical truths familiar to me. Sinking into the past, the theorem becomes a sediment which partially remains at my disposal. Thus, theoretical accomplishments are pre-given for me. I will return to this sense of the concept of *pregivenness* in chapters 3 and 4.

488-9). This is why Husserl repeatedly cautions the reader not to take literally terms such as “motivation” or “causality” in the context of an account of associative connections. The latter misleads one into thinking that associations belong exclusively to the psychophysical domain. The former is not entirely appropriate because motivation often refers to higher egoic acts, such as rational decisions, judgments and valuations. To understand how original associations work, forays into the “sub-personal” psychical interiority are required (APS, 478).

The important distinction between **non-integrally cohesive** and **integrally cohesive** intuitions can clarify the role of primordial associations (APS, 482). Intuitions belonging to the same sense-field are integrally cohesive. Intuitions belonging to heterogeneous sense spheres are non-integrally cohesive. Both come to form unitary wholes out of more or less prominent parts but they do so in different ways. What is it that differentiates them? It all comes down to the kind of overarching unity holding together the parts. In the case of integrally cohesive intuitions there is a *continuous* unity running through the parts. In the case of non-integrally cohesive intuitions there is a unity “*of a higher order*” (APS, 483) which unifies separated consciousnesses of unity. To put it differently, what brings about unity or wholeness is distinct in each case. Associations of homogeneity unify integrally cohesive intuitions. Non-integrally cohesive intuitions are unified as distinct phases of the same object through syntheses of identification. These syntheses occur on a higher level because they bring about the perceptual meaning as identical object pole (APS, 484).

Original associations of *integrally cohesive* data necessarily presuppose similarity. Color-data in the visual field, haptic data in the tactile field and so on are homogeneous

by virtue of their belongingness to a given sense field. The kind of resemblance or kinship established between concrete data belonging to the same living present has little in common with the similarity unifying different instantiations of the same concept. Concrete hyletic data form a unity of kinship. Unlike Kant, for whom the sensible manifold is unified by being subsumed under concepts, Husserl stresses that sensuous data are unified as points of sense-fields.⁴⁹ Naturally, the associative articulation of sense-fields can only be established abstractly by suspending not only the sediments of previous experiences but also all active (categorical) sense-giving operations. For example, even though in the natural attitude colors appear as qualities of physical objects, phenomenologically, they have to be taken as primary contents. That is why a 'colorless' perceptual experience makes little sense. The fact that perceptual experience can function in the dark does not show that colors are just secondary qualities for black and gray are themselves colors. Whatever physical objects come into view are apprehended as colored. Yet an abstractive regard directed toward colors as *manners of appearing* can bring to light the kind of synthetic operations unifying visual data as primary contents.

Is similarity the cause of association or is it rather the reverse that is the case? On a close look, it becomes evident that similarity has to be at least relatively independent from association. Manifestly, it is possible for there to be similar sensible unities that are not consciously associated. Conversely, there could be cases of non-similar sense unities consciously associated. Mediate associations involve more or less complicated chains of

⁴⁹ The question of the nature of synthetic activity in Kant is important in its own right. Whether the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* differs from the first on this issue is a matter of debate. However, it can be safely asserted that Husserl takes aesthetic synthesis as being largely autonomous, whereas Kant believes that sensuous syntheses result from applying the schematized categorical syntheses

bridging terms. The more complex the chain of intermediate members, the more easily a subject can skip them over (EJ, 75). As a result, the end terms of an associative relation often appear dissimilar. However, cases where similarity either goes unheeded or diminishes as bridging terms are passed over concern only reproductive associations. For primordial association to occur, conditions of similarity must be fulfilled.

Obviously, not all hyletic configurations manifest the same degree of homogeneity. It is such a difference in degree that distinguishes similarity (*Ähnlichkeit*) from uniformity (*Gleichheit*). In both cases there occurs an overlapping (*Überschiebung*) between the consciousnesses of the first and the second terms of the associative relation. *Congruence* or complete coincidence is the kind of overlapping specific for uniformity whereas *partial coincidence* is the kind of overlapping characteristic of similarity. The apprehension of similar features crosses over a distance (*Abstand*) and establishes coincidence in some respects and conflict or contrast in other respects. In the apprehension of congruent features, the transition from A to the uniformly related B, discloses a repetition of the same content. Husserl also refers to this complete coincidence with the term 'fusion' (*Verschmelzung*). In the case of similar objects, a new content does not replicate a previous one. Rather, "the kinetic regard" (APS, 176) passes from one term of the associative relation to another and in so doing it establishes a partial sameness in which agreement and conflict combine. Similarity is always an admixture of two ingredients: commonality and repression (*Verdrängung*). Despite its Freudian overtones, repression just means that from among qualitatively conflicting contents some become concealed whereas others are raised into prominence. The examples illustrating this point appeal to geometrical figures.

- (i) A red square given together with a blue one coincide with respect to shape but clash with respect to color (APS, 176) and therefore are in a relation of similarity.
- (ii) A red triangle inserted in a series of differently colored geometrical figures (APS, 177) can enter into different relations of similarity depending on the selected bridging term (*Brückenglied*). The red triangle enters into a relation of uniformity with respect to the color moment with all the other red geometrical figures and into a relation of uniformity with respect to form with all the other triangles. The fact that syntheses of homogeneity involve both moments of uniformity and moments of contrast determines Husserl to assert that in all syntheses of homogeneity there is a “fusion in distance”, a “coinciding *par distance*” (APS, 177) or a “distant affinity” (APS, 178).

Syntheses of similarity can be accounted for as either compositions or divisions. This fundamental distinction is suggested in an important note where the aesthetic synthesis of *separate* elements is opposed to *continuous* synthesis or fusion (*Ideen II*, 21). As compositions, the syntheses of similarity explain why primary contents given either simultaneously or sequentially come to be perceived as unified configurations. As divisions, they reveal that every unarticulated singularity is the product of a unified plurality even if it is not given to consciousness as such. This is a consequence of Husserl’s conception of sense-fields as continua.⁵⁰ As a result of the accomplishment of

⁵⁰ Perhaps the prominence of the concept of continuum derives from Husserl’s early study of mathematics. If there is an analogy between the set of real numbers and the sense fields, then the defining characteristic of the former - the possibility of the whole set to be mapped on one of its proper subsets – also applies to the latter. The set of real numbers is equipotent with - it has the same ‘density’ as - any of its subsets. Likewise, a ‘slice’ of the visual field is as dense as the visual field itself and as such is infinitely divisible. “Every prominent datum...has in itself an inner synthetic structure and in particular is in itself a continuity of sequence” (APS, 187).

syntheses of similarity, every consciousness is consciousness of unified pluralities or of multiplied unities.

Although they apply universally to all levels of consciousness, similarity and uniformity are originally “operative in sensibility prior to any apprehending of particulars and bringing them into relation” (EJ, 189). Passive syntheses of similarity lay the ground for higher intentional acts which explicate wholes into independent parts and extract commonalities by actively comparing those parts.

4. Order versus confusion: the problem of the lawfulness of associations

In Husserl’s apt formula, “external perception is a constant pretension to accomplish something that by its very nature it is not in a position to accomplish” (APS, 39). As the gap between appearance and that which appears can never be closed, perception always demands *more* perception. A profile apprehended in the ‘now’ phase of perception would have no meaning were it not integrated into a “system of referential implication” (*System von Verweisen*) (APS, 42). Co-given with every perceptual object there is a horizon of “determinable indeterminacy” and any perceptual apprehension running through this horizon can only reach temporary stopping points. The driving force of this process is the empty intentions’ demand for fulfillment.

The accomplishment of this original sense-giving is never finished as one expanse of perception progresses to another and so forth in whatever manner the process of perception may advance. This accomplishment, does not simply consist in bringing to intuition something new in a *fixed pregiven sense*, as if the sense would already be prefigured in a *finished* manner from the very beginning; rather in the process of perceiving, the sense itself is continually cultivated and is genuinely so in *steady transformation*, constantly leaving open the possibility of new transformations (APS,

57).

But if perceptual meanings are in steady transformation rather than fixed and finished what guarantees that appearances would pass over into one another (*ineinander übergehen*) concordantly? This concordance is all the more problematic on the level of affective pre-givenness. In the natural attitude, perceptual experience consists in acts of recognition that match present percepts with sedimented perceptions of the same or similar things. By filtering out the familiarity and trustworthiness of normal perception, phenomenological reduction claims to reach the most primitive level of sense experience which precedes all egoic sense-giving operations. Pure affective pre-givenness does not yet concern *objects* in the proper sense, for objects can only come into being through objectifying acts here bracketed. Along with the continuously varying distribution of affective forces among sense unities comes the great risk that hyletic articulations could simply be too fluid. In view of their alleged independence from higher categorical acts, can primordial associations establish something even remotely close to stable and regular sensuous configurations? Is similarity enough to ensure the formation of this kind of configurations?

Primordial associations eschew the ego's control but this cannot be taken to ground the claim that associations are arbitrary. Phenomenology searches after the lawful regularities overseeing all associative connections. However, it would be a mistake to expect such laws to pick out the particular contents of consciousness that would fit into associative connections with a presently given content. Why a given consciousness

associates with no other than this consciousness is a matter of empirical observation. The phenomenological argument for the lawful character of association is indirect.

On several occasions, Husserl entertains the hypothesis of complete sensible heterogeneity (EJ, 192; APS, 509, 515). What would it be like to have a disorderly sense experience? Would a sensible experience be possible which would consist of qualitatively heterogeneous primary contents ‘shapelessly’ distributed? The best candidate for such an experience is the case of a blind person regaining her vision as a result of medical intervention. Husserl only mentions this example in passing and tentatively suggests that the blind person’s first visual experience would be nothing but a chaos of visual impressions (APS, 515). In the absence of established dispositions and without enough time to distinguish similarities, visual experience would be dominated to such an extent by contrast that no binding unity could balance out the opposing affective tendencies and their correlative apprehensions. In such conditions, stable configurations of visual data could hardly emerge.⁵¹

Nevertheless, Husserl quickly rebuts this conclusion. To perform the phenomenological reduction means to remove successive layers of sense-giving accomplishments. This gesture could be interpreted as an attempt to put oneself in the situation of the blind man gaining vision. After all, taking the phenomenological attitude is like experimenting with one’s perceptual capabilities by looking at the world as if it were the first time it appeared to consciousness. Yet, at no point is the phenomenologist compelled to recognize that purely intuitive experience is a “swarm of data” or a “pure

⁵¹ Discussed for the first time in the correspondence between Molyneux and Locke, this example was the subject of heated philosophical debate throughout the 18th century. However, Husserl does not seem to acknowledge his predecessors’ contribution regarding this issue.

chaos” (EJ72). The findings of phenomenological investigations prove this proposal to be untenable.

First, as soon as one thinks the living present as “devoid of system” (APS, 517) one surrenders the possibility of understanding temporal syntheses. Every present now would be just as different from its predecessor as a tactile datum is from a visual datum. If all conditions of fusion remain unfulfilled, no enduring object could be constituted. Associations of simultaneity build wholes by connecting parallel series of retentional modifications belonging to separate impressional moments into one single “now.” This does not mean that A associates with B just because they are simultaneous or in succession. Rather, temporal syntheses allow contents to fall into patterns through resonance and rhythm.

Second, spatial contiguity offers another formal ground for the lawful regularity of associative sensorial complexes. The thesis is that the structure of sense-fields can be studied independently of the constituted perceptual objects belonging to them. Restricting the discussion to one paradigmatic case, the visual field is a field in which external objects appear to us as having different shapes, sizes, volumes, and colors. In the natural attitude, we do not see colors as such but colored things. However, a change of attitude is always possible that would allow us to make colors themselves thematic. When this happens, color ‘data’ reveal a sort of connectedness that has nothing to do with a gathering together of separate elements. Colors are unified not as thing-qualities but as primary contents of the visual field.

The local order of coexistence characteristic of the visual field does not depend on the particular color contents filling particular locations. Husserl turns to the example of “a

bunch of spots in a visual field that is otherwise uniform” (APS, 180) in order to prove that primary contents are always *relatively* organized. The visual field is a field of ordered loci distributed along multiple lines: left-right, above-below and so on. The system of local positions is of course flexible in the sense that the same local position can be apprehended as part of multiple lines. All this has nothing to do with the content presently filling local positions. No matter how randomly they are distributed, specks of color automatically fall on *some* lines of location independently constituted. Whatever their location is, the spots, as spots of the visual field, come to form *some* spatial shapes.

So far it looks like Husserl’s explanation of the orderliness of primordial associations merely updates the Kantian theory of time and space as a priori forms of intuition. In fact, Husserl subscribes to the alternative view according to which orderliness, instead of being a formal framework, implies interaction both between the body and its environment and between contents belonging to different sense-fields.

The series of sensation must actually arrive in a certain way in order for the apprehension of a thing to be experienced according to the kinaesthetically aroused predemands, and in order for the consciousness of an existing thing to be maintained. If the sense-data were suddenly to begin appearing in a muddle, if our visual field were suddenly to be filled with a **confused muddle of colors**, the kinaesthetic motivations would lose their force (APS, 152).

The argument is not that discordances do not occur. Rather the bodily capacity to “orchestrate” the course of the appearances of things ensures that, when they do in fact occur, discordances can be corrected. Without awareness of bodily movements, such as the movement of the eyes, head and limbs, objects could not be constituted in external perception. The flow of movement sensations does not “run parallel” to the flow of appearances although it is “totally different” from it (APS, 51). Husserl calls these two

flows “dependent systems.” For appearances to pass over into one another similarity of content is not enough. Neither can the formal order of loci in the visual field ensure concordance. What is needed on top of these conditions is the sense of continuity provided by the consciousness of the lived body’s potentiality for movement.⁵²

Had Husserl expanded his account of the blind person gaining vision, he would have discounted it as example of impressional chaos. The blind person’s perceptual experience of the world is already structured according to the regularities of tactile similarity and contrast. It is quite possible to imagine a kind of transference of structural connections from one sense field to another. For example, the lines of orientation such as right-left or above-below are indeed conditions of spatial perception but, ultimately, they are tied to possibilities of bodily movement and therefore they also inform tactile perception. We gain our sense of above-below direction from the upright bodily posture which impacts visual and tactual perception alike. Equally important for the structure of the tactile field is the mobility of the hand as instrument of perceptual exploration. To prove that primordial associations are lawfully organized, Husserl relies on intermodal forms of perception. His argument is based on the idea that the series of a thing’s profiles *depends* on the series of movement sensations. It would be consistent with this account to reject the thesis, which Husserl sometimes defends, according to which sense-fields are self-enclosed systems of heterogeneous data only formally unified through temporal and spatial syntheses. Through the mediacy of bodily posture and bodily movement, a communication between sight and touch is established. The organizing schemes of tactile

⁵² Dan Zahavi argues for this position in his *Husserl’s Phenomenology*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 98-100.

perception may be too poor to accommodate the richness of the visual perception of a blind person at the moment of gaining vision. However, a minimum transfer can at least provide rough common coordinates.⁵³

The rejection of the hypothesis of absolute heterogeneity indirectly validates the thesis of lawful regularity overseeing associative connections. There is no reason to suspect that perception is merely a chaotic assemblage of atomic data. But why cannot perception be an experience of absolute homogeneity interrupted by no discontinuities?

What rules out this assumption is the fact that contrast is just as primordial a phenomenon as similarity and uniformity. An example as simple as that of colored spots on white background shows that in all forms of perception, including the most elementary, there takes place an association among *already prominent* discrete contents. Subjects are directly aware that one sense unity recalls or points to another. A subject becomes conscious of an associative link by *raising particular objects to prominence, setting them in relief or lifting them off (abheben)*.

Phenomenological analysis takes as its starting point prominences that are already given. A thematic conversion allows the phenomenological regard to move from *what* is prominent to the manners of givenness of the respective prominence. Obviously, these

⁵³ In Chapter 7 of *How the Body shapes the Mind* (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 2005), Shaun Gallagher reassesses the Molyneux problem in the light of recent experimental research on intermodality. Taken as an *empirical* question, the Molyneux problem can be definitely answered in the negative on the grounds that congenital blindness entails irreversible deterioration of the visual cortex and therefore makes full vision recovery impossible. However, the Molyneux problem, taken as an *in-principle* question, can be answered positively. Gallagher cites Melzoff's experimental findings on neonate imitation and intermodality. Melzoff showed that newborns can transfer visual information (adult facial expressions) into somatic proprioception (reproduction of the same facial expressions). Other experiments also confirmed tactile-visual cross-modal perception. Newborns that tactually explored differently shaped pacifiers with their tongue were able to recognize them visually. Research on newborn perception, taken as an imperfect simile of a Molyneux patient's first vision, shows that first perception is relatively structured and that sense modalities communicate and educate one another naturally. I believe Husserl's account of perception is consistent with the positive answer to the Molyneux problem.

manners of givenness are always multiple. Thus, a prominence appears as *one* only because it is the result of a synthesis of fusion. All particular objective unity is a melding together of pre-objective phases.

If two similar elements occur in a present, it is not the case that they first exist [separately] and then their synthesis follows; rather, we call “similar” what occurs in such a synthesis as coexistent. Being in a togetherness, the founding and the founded are inseparable, they are necessarily one (APS, 494).

The inseparability of the founding and the founded means that one and the same apprehension of a particular can be described either as (i) the fusion of multiplicity into unity or (ii) as the diffusion of unity into multiplicity.

(i) Through the synthetic unifying of the manifold of manner of givenness there arises the consciousness of a particular unity. The fusion of different simultaneous or successive elements exercising a unitary affection produces a homogeneously unitary datum. Thus, homogeneity results from the homogenization of heterogeneity

(ii) A particular becomes prominent not as an indecomposable unity but as potentially divisible into a manifold of constituents. What catches the attention as uniformly homogeneous is subsequently apprehended as implicitly differentiated.

Let us examine Husserl’s example.

A white square, which is in itself completely and homogeneously white without any specks and so forth, becomes prominent as a single square, and many like squares as a multiplicity of particular ones. But however much every square is given as a unity, and given as a unity that is undifferentiated in itself, it is indeed our view that each one can be divided in a number of ways; to our mind each one is indeed a continuum of white whose phases are just not prominent for themselves. Naturally, this is not an arbitrary interpretation but one that has a phenomenological basis (166).

The case of the series of white squares illustrates the fusion of multiplicity into unity. All the members of the series exhibit commonalities with respect to shape as well as

color and in this sense they form a unity of a higher order. In general, through associations consciousness arrives at groupings and wholes that are formed by the fusion of particular elements. But this process runs both ways from part to wholes as well as from wholes to parts. The example of the single white square becoming prominent reflects the diffusion of unity into multiplicity. The consciousness of singulars passes as consciousness of unity only because associations already performed are not heeded by the ego. What makes this example particularly relevant is that it goes against the vocabulary of 'data' which have traditionally been conceived as the elementary particles of sensation. Sense unities are not supposed to be built up starting from indivisible or non-diffusional elements. Instead of taking an atomistic position Husserl prefers to talk about a continuum of folded phases of objects. Not being objects themselves, these phases are not prominent in the sense that they are not noticed by the ego. The ego has not yet turned its attention toward them.

The phenomenological analysis of the white square example invites comparison with the case of monochromatic painting. From Malevich's *White Square on White: A Suprematist Composition* to Robert Ryman's *Surface Veil* series, the question of monochromatism never ceased to stimulate artistic exploration. Malevich's work often inspired attitudes ranging from utter embarrassment to open dismissal. The most frequently heard of complaints proclaimed that there was *nothing* to be seen in such paintings. Under the Suprematist *coup de grace* pictorial representation reached its end.

It is easy to see that this is a crass misinterpretation for it fails to note that such compositions propose a painterly reflection about the emergence of the space of representation rather than spelling the end of painting. *White Square on White* documents the way shapes and forms are born. It is through a subtle concretion that the white of the background already pregnant with potential forms recedes so as to liberate another square of a slightly different hue. What Malevich's painting demands from the viewer is almost the same thing Husserl demands from a phenomenologist: the transformation of the natural attitude into a phenomenological one. Before this change is operated the viewer is unable to see anything on the canvas. And this is so because in the natural attitude one is accustomed to seeing objects. Once the change of attitude is performed and the viewer starts looking for non-objective configurations the apparent nothingness reveals underlying rudimentary configurations. Malevich's non-objective vision mirrors Husserl pre-predicative experience. Non-objective vision allows one to realize that even the apparently completely homogeneous unity is only a temporary resolve of an uninterrupted tension of objective phases. The unstable relation of phases accommodates bifurcations and multiple concatenations. The continuum of phases can coagulate in different apprehensions which are not necessarily compatible with one another. One of the tasks of phenomenology is to remain attentive to the way pre-objective hyle continuously enters into variable sensible constellations.

Ryman's paintings come even closer to Husserl's example for they self-consciously meditate on the borders separating/uniting the pictorial space from the non-pictorial surrounding. Malevich's reflections on the heterogeneity of white are

confined to a limited pictorial surface clearly framed and therefore distinguished from non-pictorial reality. By deciding to replace traditional frames with fasteners attaching the paintings directly to the (often white) gallery walls, Ryman makes a clear statement that his paintings only count as paintings as long as they are fastened to a wall. The work establishes itself as a dialog between the white of the wall and the white of the painting. This assemblage functions in such a way that the work of art blurs its own borders by including non-art into its own territory. The artist elicits the viewers' astounded reaction by calculatedly playing with their perceptual experience. The work is displayed in such a way that viewers cannot resist extending the associations operating within the pictorial 'reality' to elements normally extraneous to the painting. Also the use of diverse materials ranging from metal plates and fiberglass to plastic panels and linen canvas interacts with the paint creating new valences for the same color. All these procedures show that the 'undifferentiated unity' of white is in fact the result of bringing together shifting and displaced sensible meanings.

5. Passivity and affection

After having discussed the types of regularities that govern the associations of already prominent contents, Husserl prepares for “another direction of research” (APS, 196). Now the investigation focuses on the question of how sense unities achieve prominence in the first place. In order to answer this question, Husserl appeals to the notion of ‘affection’ and its cognates: affective *tendency*, affective *awakening*, affective *force* and affective *relief*.

We can secure decisive insights into the essence of *association* when we comprehend the *lawful structure* pertaining to the function of *affection*, its peculiarity, and its dependence on essential conditions (APS 211 my emphasis).

Husserl’s use of the notion of ‘affection’ is idiosyncratic. Unlike the traditional ‘*affectus*’,⁵⁴ Husserl’s affection does not refer to strivings, desires and emotions. When talking about feelings such as joy or sadness or about states of mind such as fear or anxiety, Husserl prefers the term *Gemüt* to *Affection*. To be sure, drives, strivings and instinctive preferences belong together with affections to the “lowest genetic level” of the life of consciousness. Considering that pleasure and pain often accompany impressions (APS, 198) one could say that feelings and affections are co-original. However, as settings off in relief of particular data, affections are essentially

⁵⁴ If one disregarded for a moment the differences between their ethical and respectively epistemological systems of references, one could find that both Spinoza and Husserl contribute in their own way to contesting the established opposition between passivity and activity. Making ‘active joy’ the central piece of his theory of passions, Spinoza shows alternative ways of thinking about passivity which do not restrict it to the fact of being acted upon. On his part, Husserl thinks of passive affection as a prelude for activity.

independent from feelings.

There are two structural components to affection: (i) that which exercises the affection, the affectant (ii) the actual affection, the fact of being affected by something.

a) The Affectant

That which affects the ego is a prominence (*Abgehobenheit*). Husserl characterizes prominence in a variety of ways. Prominence is something presently available and intentionally constituted (APS, 527). A datum cannot be prominent in isolation. As the German term suggests, an impression is prominent when it is being lifted off, opposed to or separated from other co-given prominences (APS, 498). Fusion with respect to content inhibits or levels out prominence. In other words, prominence directly depends on hyletic contrast and conflict (APS, 196-197). Moreover, under certain conditions a prominence can withdraw into non-prominence. It is not only physical things that exercise affection; as objective phases, immanent data do so well. Along with prominence, Husserl employs a host of other terms to refer to that which affects the ego. Among them there are sense-data, impression, and most importantly stimulus (*Reiz*). Although borrowed from empirical psychology, *Reiz* is here taken not as physiological event but rather as motivational factor. The suggestive translation of *Reiz* by 'allure' has the merit of pointing out what distinguishes Husserl's theory of affection from data sensualism.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ In the introduction to his translation of *Analyses of Passive and Active Syntheses*, Anthony J. Steinbock comments on the origin of the term *Reiz* in the German medical, psychological and physiological literature (APS, xlv). From the naturalistic position adopted by authors such as Herbart, Lipps, Fechner and Wundt, the concept of *Reiz* meant either muscle contractions or stimulation of

Hyletic passivity blurs the distinction between transcendence and immanence, between exteriority and interiority. Affection is at the same time hetero- and auto-affection. Within the living present, hyletic data represent what is foreign to the ego.⁵⁶ Inasmuch as the ego has no control over the hyle, affection is hetero-affection. But inasmuch as hyle is an immanent datum, affection is also auto-affection. Data of sensation are not constituted in ego-activity. They are the ego's *subjective possessions* rather than egoic states or acts (*Ideen* II 226). In presenting the sphere of passivity as labored by intentionalities, Husserl wants to show that hyle is not dead stuff waiting for an animating apprehension that would confer meaning upon it.

The stimulus or the allure exercises an "affective pull" of a variable force over the ego. Depending on its strength, the "affective ray" (196, 512) sent by a given *Reiz* gets more or less close to the ego. The affectants are like solicitors waiting to be received by an always busy high ranking bureaucrat. Those whose urgent petitions allow for no postponement are immediately received and taken care of. Others only make it to the "antechamber". Still others are completely ignored. Likewise, in the present now, only the allure whose affective force is the strongest is given full attention to the detriment of those which are just received in the "antechamber of the

nerve endings. To avert any confusion between the mechanistic and the motivational or intentional views of *Reiz*, Steinbock translates this term by the more suggestive 'allure'.

⁵⁶ "Die Urhyle in ihrer eigenen Zeitigungen ist der sozusagen ichfremde Kern der konkreten Gegenwart" MsC6/4b quoted in Montavont (1996, p. 219). Commentators such as Didier Frank, Dan Zahavi, Bruce Bégout and Anne Montavont called attention to the foreignness to the ego as one of the main features of the hyle. Hyle introduces a non-egoic dimension in the phenomenon of affection and imposes a dependency of the ego on alterity. The ego is passive with respect to hyletic contents in the sense that it has no control over the hyletic field. Not having control over something can be the mark of vulnerability. But that over which one has no control is also the dimension of sur-prise. Not being capable of fastening one's grips on something means opening the horizon of the present toward that which exceeds anticipation. This dimension of sur-prise is suggested by the repeated use of qualifiers such as fluctuating or flowing. The hyletic flux has the particularity of eluding the stabilization into an *eidos*.

ego” (APS, 215). Other allures do no more than knock at the door of the ego (APS, 512) without receiving any consideration.

Prior to an actual affection taking place there is manifest “a tendency toward affection” (APS, 196). The affective tendency manifests itself as attraction (*Zug*) exercised by the given on the ego. Husserl often compares intentionality with light rays and this comparison is highly problematic. Light rays traveling away from the source are reflected back by the surfaces of objects. Do intentional rays get reflected in the same way? As “orchestrating” instance, the ego pole directs different intentional rays at variable object poles. Husserl pushes the analogy further and suggests that the ego is not only a radiating point (*Aussstrahlungspunkt*) but also a point of convergence (*Einstrahlungspunkt*) for the affective rays sent by the given to summon the ego’s attention. This idea of bi-polarized egoic life can be found in some paragraphs from *Ideas II*, where Husserl says that the ego is “the center whence all consciousness **emits** rays and **receives** them.” The same paragraph continues: intentionality is a “**two-fold radiation**, running ahead and running back: from the center outward, through the acts toward their objects, and again returning rays coming from objects back toward the center in manifold changing phenomenological characters” (*Ideas II*, 112). However, to qualify as intentional the affective rays sent by the given would be an obvious abuse of the phenomenological conceptual framework. Of course, the affective allure is not intentionally directed toward the ego but rather awakens the ego’s explicative perceptual process.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ See Bruce Bégout’s reservations concerning the idea of “reversed intentionality” (Bégout, 2000, 175)

b) The state of being affected

When the affectant triggers a response from the ego, when a counter-pull balances out the initial pull exercised by the given, then there occurs an actual affection. The defining feature of an actual affection is the ego's turning toward (*Zuwendung*) the object. To maintain the symmetry with the above description of that which affects, one can say that before being affected the ego tends to let prominences make an impression upon it. From the side of the ego, the tendency toward affection refers to the "antechamber of the ego" which comprises all the allures that are very close below the perceptive threshold. Since these allures are only on the verge of making an impression on the ego they can be suitably called *pre-affective* lived experiences. They occur prior to any active intervention of the ego. In contrast, the state of being affected involves a minimal active turning toward prominences arising from syntheses of homogeneity and heterogeneity. Accordingly, being affected is an example of "passivity in activity" (EJ, 108) or a preliminary phase in becoming active of the cogito. By turning toward something, the ego makes a transition from slumber to wakefulness. Affection awakens either impressions belonging to the horizon of the living present or recollections submerged into the sphere of the distant past.

But what is the decisive factor in selecting which affective tendencies generate an actual affection? It is in response to this question that Husserl emphasizes the importance of the contrasts of intensity and quality. The distribution of contrasts regulates the conflict of affective tendencies and picks out those which win out. If things were left at this stage, then it would be hard to tell what distinguished Husserl's position from that of empirical psychologists. However, Husserl notes that it is

inadmissible to explain the transformation of affective tendency into actual affection exclusively in terms of contrast because the same contrast sometimes awakens the ego and sometimes it does not. Naturally, if the intensity of a stimulus is extremely high then there occurs an abrupt coming to prominence that obscures all the other affective tendencies. Plenty of examples illustrate this point. A philosopher working at his desk is pre-affectively submerged in a rich hyletic landscape: the sound of a passing car, the colored surfaces of the objects laying on the desk, the song resonating from a neighboring room are all accompanying the philosopher's thematic intellectual effort. But all of a sudden, there comes the violent blast of an explosion (APS, 197). When this happens all the other less obtrusive stimuli are drowned out or suppressed. Nonetheless, such examples of extreme contrasts are not particularly instructive when it comes to common perceptual situations. It is not the intensity of the stimulus in itself that determines the impact of its affective force on the ego but rather the relative height of contrast of all the hyletic data that make up a living present.⁵⁸ Accordingly, the investigation should focus on the ensemble of the favorable or unfavorable conditions on the basis of which the affective force gets transferred from one hyletic datum to another. Thus, affective transference offsets the diminution of affective force: in a melody, even a very soft tone can be maintained into prominence if it is qualitatively similar with louder prominent tones (APS, 200).

Let us rehearse Husserl's argument. The phenomenological descent to the lowest

⁵⁸ In his insightful and very informative study *Husserl and Freud: Time, Memory and the Unconscious* (Husserl Studies 7: 29-58, 1990) Aaron Mishara insists upon those aspects that set apart Husserl's phenomenology of association from late 19th and early 20th century empirical psychology. The allure (Reiz) does not generate automatic egoic responses as if it were a conditioned Pavlovian reflex. Rather, the allure gets its strength from within the context of a given perceptual situation. That being said, it is worth noting that phenomenology and empirical psychology may address the same problems, e.g., perceptual thresholds, with different methods.

genetic level is based on abstraction. The removal of successive layers of sense accomplishments brings into view the pure impressional present. What is left after the bracketing of cognitive, practical or evaluative accomplishments is the impressional sphere which includes drives related preferences and rudimentary feelings such as pleasure or pain (APS, 198). The most distinctive characteristic of this impressional sphere is its affective relief structure or “the relativism of affective tendencies” (APS, 197). Husserl shares with Gestalt psychology an emphasis on multiplicity over unity in the sense that the interdependence between hyletic data takes priority over singular hyletic data singled out by attention. Within the impressional sphere, a multitude of affective tendencies strive to gain dominance, compete to awaken the ego. The same allure can awaken a range of similar and contiguous affections or suppress a range of rival ones. Out of this bundle of conflicting affective tendencies, the living present emerges as a unified multiplicity or as a multiplied unity. Seen abstractly as a ‘moment’, the living present is but a singular cut in the continuous stream of lived experiences. But since it cannot be separated either from its train of living retentions or from its protentions the living present acquires a complex affective relief.

Prior to the production of an actual affection the ego opens its field of receptivity, tends toward affection or lets the affection arrive. These phrases challenge the distinction between passivity and activity by suggesting that even the most passive life of the ego, while antecedent to cognitive activity, is still a form of *doing*. On the one hand, there is the radical passivity of the *pure affective pre-giveness* (EJ 60) and of the *preconstitutive* (EJ, 108) temporal flow. On the other hand, there is the active-passive *simple apprehension* identified as the initial stage of the dynamics of

perception.⁵⁹ The simple apprehension is passive insofar as it takes up a pregiven object that allures the ego. This accomplishment presupposes that the ego complies with or yields to the allure. But simple apprehension is also active. Without a “turning toward” the affective unity simple apprehension would not be possible. Moreover, simple apprehensions constitute enduring objects by “retaining in grasp” the impressional content of the now. While retention is a passive sinking into the past of objective contents, the retaining in grasp actively interrupts the submersion into the background consciousness. Accordingly, unlike the passively unfolding retentions, simple apprehension is an activity of a lower level (EJ, 76, 108). Contemplative explication and relational contemplation further extend the thematic interest or the “turning toward” an object by laying out the horizons of internal and external determinations. But the thematic interest is already aroused in simple apprehension.

c) The propagation of awakening affections.

To every living present belongs a characteristic rivalry of affective tendencies. However, conditions of contrast and similarity rule out a draw-game between competing affective tendencies. *Some* sense unity must win out the affective conflict. Awakening means raising a particular into prominence. As soon as it is awakened, a prominent datum will tend to propagate its affection provided favorable conditions of contrast are being met. When they lose their affective force, prominences vanish out of the sphere of attention. Of course, other data associatively awakened immediately replace the previous prominence. Propagation is a process of *transference of affective*

⁵⁹ Section 22 of *Experience and Judgment* mentions the *contemplative explication* and the apprehension of *relative determinations* as the other two stages.

force from one datum to similar ones. Without laboring this point very much, Husserl notes that affective propagation is bi-directional. The present impression propagates its affective force forward in the immediate future as well as backward in the immediate past.

The question is what role affection plays in the coming to prominence of hyletic groups and configurations *as wholes*? Do *all* the members have to exercise affection in order for the group to become unitarily prominent? Is it possible for hyletic unities to be formed *prior to* or *independently of any* affection? Does prominence depend on affections of which the ego is *not aware*?

Despite attempts to present the hyletic sphere as a realm where they disappear, the distinctions between form and content or apprehension and impression obstinately return. The syntheses of homogeneity and contrast are mere conditions of possibility for the formation of unities.

In the final analysis, do not the essential, lawful regularities of the immanent formation of unity that we have described - those of the formation of particular, self-contained objects, wholes, groups, configurations - do they not express the mere conditions of the possibility of such unities, while **the actual emergence** of these unities itself is dependent upon affection and association? (APS, 201)

The temporal form of the living present, the structure the sense-fields and the laws of similarities and contrast still do not explain how unities effectively emerge in consciousness. Two possibilities present themselves here. Either unitary wholes are apprehended in one swoop, in which case synthetic operations must have been carried out in the hyletic sphere without a conscious egoic intervention, or wholes are apprehended by way of affective propagation from one sensible point to another. In

this case, the regard would go from the member presently affective to similar and contiguous members. At any point, the members thus far apprehended would be held together retrospectively in some specific configuration. The accumulation and transfer of affective force among the members would explain the becoming prominent of the hyletic group as a whole.

These unities could only be there for us either as **given directly** in the scope of attentiveness, or through the fact that we grabbed hold of unities **subsequently** by reaching back into the past horizons of a sphere of attentiveness; these unities were given to us **without and prior to our becoming attentive**, and yet, they had at least affected us **to some degree** (APS, 201 my emphasis).

Both alternatives involve reference to unnoticed affections and this would lead Husserl to extend his analysis of association into “a phenomenology of the so-called unconscious” (APS, 201). Indeed, the distinction drawn between affection and affective tendency is reminiscent of the distinction between perception and subliminal perception. Employing quantifiable methods, Fechner established absolute perceptual thresholds below which stimuli could not be perceived.⁶⁰ For his part, Husserl advocates the idea of mobile and context-dependent thresholds separating affection from affective tendencies. As the distribution of contrasts, intensities and concrescences varies incessantly with each and every new now, it is the momentary configuration of affective forces rather than the intensity of the stimulus that decides where the threshold should be traced in a given perceptual situation.

Although the propagation of affection seems to be the best explanation of the

⁶⁰ To be fair, Fechner studied not only absolute but also differential thresholds. Unlike differential thresholds determined by the measurable increment of stimuli, the affective relief includes a system of drives, preferences and interests which contribute to the selection of significant allures. For a discussion of perceptual thresholds see Gustav Theodor Fechner, *Elements of Psychophysics*, tr. Helmut E. Adler, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.: New York, 1966, pp. 199-209.

formation of unity, there are obvious cases, such as extreme contrast or intense pain (APS, 514), in which the awakening of sense unities does not require affective propagation or transference. Yet Husserl has more interesting illustrations of affection arising independently of affective transference or propagation.

For instance, take a row of lights. Wandering about in Freiburg's hilly surroundings, an evening stroller suddenly notices a string of lights somewhere in the distant Rhine valley (APS, 202). How does the perceptual experience unfold in this case? The series of lights manifests itself as "an articulated unity in an unarticulated affection." The affection is unarticulated because the string of lights becomes affective "in one stroke." Even though it exerts a unitary affection, the string of lights is an *articulated* configuration, a Gestalt structure whose members (*Gliedern*) can be more or less salient qualitatively. However, the string as a whole has a stronger affective allure which gives it priority over the individual lights. As unitary objectlike formation, the string of lights detaches itself from its perceptual surrounding. In general, prominences (*Abgehobenheiten*) come into relief by having their ties with the hyletic 'neighborhood' severed. One could say that *affective tendencies* propagate or circulate from the whole string to the individual lights as well as among the members of the string. However, the ego is by no means aware of this circulation which plays no role in the lifting off of the whole and can only be explicated after the string has been raised to prominence.

The example of the melody makes a similar point about syntheses of successive hyletic data. Let us think about a person so engrossed in reflection that she does not notice at all the piano music reverberating from a neighboring room. All of a sudden,

a particularly gracious sound or a particular musical phrase brings the entire melody to attention (APS, 203). As in the previous example, the sonorous configuration becomes prominent as a melody in one stroke. The melody must have been organized pre-affectively in order for it to be aroused as whole. If the tones had not been pre-affectively organized into a melody the backward radiating affection would awaken only its neighboring tone and not the entire melody. Despite the difference in emphasis on coexistence or succession of hyletic data respectively, both examples support the same conclusion: objects must be given as wholes beforehand in order for their parts to be given (APS, 204).

Husserl concedes that one could modify the example of the string of lights so as to illustrate the opposite view according to which the givenness of the parts precedes the givenness of the whole. Were the lights turned on sequentially, there would be no perception of a *string* at least until the third light is switched on. However, this does not invalidate the principle that the perception of a whole is the perception of a certain *relation* among the parts rather than the perception of all individual members actually forming a configuration.

d) Prominence and affection

The concepts of propagation and awakening have an important bearing on the difficult problem of the relation between prominence and affection. An explicit formulation of this problem occurs in section 34 of the lectures on transcendental logic. Husserl lays out two alternatives for the fulfillment of the conditions of affections.

1. Every formation of unity (*Einheitsbildung*) owes its existence to affection.

The distribution of similarities and contrasts within the living present regulates the coming into relief of some objectlike formations and the inhibition or repression of others. On this account, similarity, affinity and contrast produce actual prominent affections. Objects have to be already given in order for perception to start off; otherwise there would be nothing one could set one's eyes upon.

2. Some formations of unity occur prior to and independently of affections.

According to this hypothesis, beside fusions resulting from affections, there are “unconditionally necessary fusions” (APS, 207) independent of affective prominences. This hypothesis is only “tentatively” advanced here. Such “pre-affective” fusions would have to be operative even in the absence of actual affection. Like the Kantian ‘figurative syntheses’, the pre-affective syntheses would provide formal conditions of homogeneity and the general structure of the living present. The temporal syntheses, the syntheses of local field and the synthetic unity of sense-fields in general could be included in the sphere of pre-affective fusions. Only if these conditions were fulfilled could affection propagate and awaken other retained affections. “Hyletic fusion must be carried out in the fixed necessity of temporal constitution, a hyletic fusion arising from original continuity as successive fusion, and again **without any accomplishment from affection**” (APS, 208).

Initially, the first alternative seems “untenable” (209) but after much debating of pros and cons, Husserl actually acknowledges it as a more accurate description of phenomena. His decision relies on careful analyses regarding the variation of affective forces and the limit case of affections whose force diminished to nil. To

recall an important distinction already mentioned above, the sphere of hyletic passivity encompasses two domains: the *passive pre-givenness* of affective allures and the *passive givenness* of the allures with which the ego has already complied by turning toward them (APS, 210). This distinction evokes the idea of the *relativity* of affections thereby discarding the hypothesis of pre-affective syntheses. Affections are relative in the sense that the affective force is always a matter of degree. Nothing requires that all affections be noticed. As a matter of fact, depending on the shape of the present affective relief, many affections would pass unnoticed without being less 'affective' at that. According to the laws of association through similarity and contrast a weak affection can become strong just as easily as a strong affection can become weak. All that is needed for this to happen is a redistribution of qualities and intensities in the affective topology of the living present. As the affective relief of the living present varies uninterruptedly, unnoticed affections surge into the foreground whereas prominent affective unities become submerged into the background of consciousness. What seems incomprehensible for Husserl is "that something should gain an affective force at all where nothing of the sort was available; that something which was not there at all for the ego, a pure affective nothing, should become an active something for the first time" (APS, 211). In response to this puzzle, Husserl maintains that even sensible unities whose affective force wanes to the zero level do not become completely null. Accordingly, prominence does depend on affection, however weak the latter may be. Although aware of the "risk" of over generalization, Husserl argues that "affective unities must be constituted in order for a world of objects to be constituted in subjectivity at all" (APS, 210).

Commentators have charged Husserl's account of the constitution of perceptual sense with circularity. The lifting off of affective unities is what gets perception off the ground. But if sense-constitution presupposes affective prominence and if all prominence must be charged with sense in order to become affective then constitution is trapped in a circle.⁶¹

Husserl's defense could rely on the distinction between an active constitution which is exclusively the work of the ego cogito and a passive pre-constitution which engages the ego as subject of self-temporalization and of affective tendencies prior to the triggering of attentive attitude and cognitive interest. It is certainly misleading to say the ego already performs "pre-affective" syntheses *before* being affected. Prior to affection, there is nothing the ego can attend to and therefore nothing to synthesize. It would be more appropriate to equate pre-affective syntheses with the formal conditions of possibility of affection like the temporal form and the local field. But only an attentive study of the syntheses of contents can disclose these formal conditions of affection. First and foremost we are affected by objects. Yet objective singularities only exist as syntheses of objective phases which without being objects are not nothing. In every living present, a multitude of affective forces traverse the sense-fields and compete to awaken the ego's interest. What happens when the vivacity of affective allures falls below the level of perceptibility? Husserl says that in such cases affective tendencies become "unconscious." The frequent use of the term

⁶¹ This is how Anthony J. Steinbok (1995, p.155) frames the problem. Anne Montavont (p. 222-29) and Bruce Bégout (pp. 189-98) have also discussed this important issue at length. In agreement with Montavont, Steinbok stresses that no constitution of sense can dispense with affection. Steinbok argues that the graduality of affection spares Husserl the trouble of becoming entangled in a vicious circle. Bégout acknowledges that Husserl's last word on this issue is to posit affection as condition of prominence but insists on the distinctive nature of zero-degree affections. He commends Husserl for bringing forward the idea of 'affective instinct' which would better explain the pre-affective sphere containing sense unities independent of the ego.

unconscious should not be taken as a sign of Husserl's debt to or approval of psychoanalytical terminology.⁶² For Husserl, the unconscious is not a reservoir of urges, feelings and ideas repressed because of their ties to anxiety, conflict and pain. Contents 'repressed' into the unconscious do not have to go through complicated symbolic metamorphoses. The "affective nil" or "the zero degree of affection" does not mean the cessation of affective tendencies but rather a "background or sub-soil of non-vivacity, of affective ineffectiveness that belongs to every present" (APS, 217). In other words, repression shapes the affective relief of the living present by blurring and clouding over impressions without altering their content. Thus, affective allures maintain a certain degree of effectiveness even if they are not yet noticed by the ego.⁶³ The difference in the vivacity of affective allures should not be confounded with the intensity of a stimulus. The latter is indeed built into the affective force of an allure. Yet more important from a phenomenological point of view is the hyletic setting to which the allure belongs. The "relief of salience" (APS, 215) which constitutes the living present is the set of *potentially* noticeable object phases. The living present is an "affective unity" in which more or less salient moments are synthetically unified. Phenomenological analysis constructs an image of the living present which resembles the sonar image of sea floors obtained by oceanographers. Affective tendencies form a variable pattern which is the result of the passive combination of contrasts and similarities distributed along a continuum. The peak of

⁶²Forcing a comparison with Freud, one could say that Husserl's "unconscious" corresponds to Freud's "pre-conscious."

⁶³Anthony J. Steinbock discusses "dispositional orientation" and "passive discernment" as two forms of passive attentiveness. These terms refer to cases where affective unities emerge in accordance with "a system of preferential structures" which selects and arranges affective formations without turning thematically toward objects. See "Affection and attention: On the phenomenology of becoming aware", *Continental Philosophy Review*, 37: 2004, pp. 28-31.

vivacity corresponds to momentary primordial impression. Through a process of affective transference or propagation the primordial impression awakens other data and this determines the constant variation of the affective strength of the ensemble. Husserl concludes the important section 34 with a remark concerning the dual character of constitutive syntheses. The pre-affective formations of unities and affection itself go together in every constitutive synthesis. Only by descending from the level of ready-made evidences to the hyletic core of the living present can one disclose this dual character as “enigma of association” (APS, 214).

Conclusion

Original associations distribute affective tendencies according to the prevailing intensities and contrasts. As a result, they establish the “affective relief” of the living present. The passivity of original associations can be interpreted in two ways. First, original associations do not require the ego’s participation (*Ichbeteiligung*). They operate independently not only from categorial activity but also from reproductive associations. Second, original associations regulate the propagation of affective awakenings. As such, they determine the way the ego passively re-acts or responds to the affective pull of what is foreign to it. This reaction or response is not purely passive. Rather, the ego continuously labors at opening its horizon of receptivity.

Husserl’s account of original associations implies that passive phenomena such as affective propagation and affections with zero-vivacity are part of the life of consciousness while not being orchestrated or controlled by the ego. If

phenomenology interpreted the “sheer nightfall” (221) of the unconscious as site of burgeoning instincts it would abandon description in favor of speculation. Cases where intuitability drops off to zero while affections still make an impact on the ego are difficult to account for on the level of original associations. To explain why affective forces diminish and how they can be reactivated Husserl needs a theory of memory. Allures lose their affective force by receding into the past and by being “clouded over.” Primordial impression turns into fresh retention which becomes empty retention. All these modifications are required by the “structural typicality” (223) or the “rigid form” of the living present. But even the empty retention is given affectively although without intentional differentiation. If complete non-differentiation is reached, then affection becomes powerless. Yet the emptying process concerns the modes of givenness of the datum rather than the datum itself. Special affections merge into a general undifferentiated affection which is the unarticulated horizon of the past. To the zero degree of affection there corresponds the completely emptied retention, the lack of differentiation. In the next chapter we will see that the affective force of objective moments can be recovered because memory guarantees the identity of objective sense.

Chapter III Secondary Passivity

Belonging to the sphere of originary passivity, temporal syntheses and primordial associations underlie the performance of all egoic acts while not requiring the active engagement of the ego. If a full understanding of objective self-givenness is to be obtained, then the focus of the analyses must shift from *pre-active* or originary passivity to *post-active* or secondary passivity.⁶⁴ Neither the temporal schema of impressions, retentions and protentions, which is an abstract form, nor the primordial associations, which are not full blown acts, can explain how consciousness achieves objective evidence. To account for objective self-givenness, one must consider not only the production of hyletic configurations by way of qualitative similarities and contrasts but also the agreement in sense. That is, one must explain the working of the “synthesis of coinciding that forms identity” (APS 111, 257) that unifies distinct profiles as aspects of the same object. This is perhaps the central problem in Husserl’s phenomenology. In the following, I will show that secondary passivity necessarily contributes to the accomplishment of the synthesis of coincidence. Husserl says that consciousness achieves objective evidence through syntheses of identity which require *empty presentations* to enter in conjunction with *fulfilling intuitions*. Various types of acts of consciousness are involved in this process. The perception of given singulars or of aspects thereof fulfills their proper names; the intuition of states of

⁶⁴ Bruce Bégout calls primary passivity *pre-active* or *pre-constitutive* and secondary passivity *post-active* or *post-constitutive* (*La généalogie de la logique*, p 33).

affairs fulfills the judgments that describe them; the conclusion of an inference fulfills its premises; keeping a promise fulfills a moral obligation and so on.

Reproductive and inductive associations are among the acts without which syntheses of coincidence could not occur. The former ensure that the already constituted objective sense is preserved in memory; the latter warrant a more complete development of the constituted sense through expectations oriented toward the future.

Reproductive associations are part of everyday experience. Their role is to establish a link between present and past: all present perceptions have awakening effects by virtue of which they reach into more or less distant pasts. Insofar as reproductive awakening is repeatable, the bringing to intuition of the past constitutes an active accomplishment of the ego cogito. However, active rememberings have their ground in **secondary passivity**. All egoic achievements undergo specific transformations once the acts which produced them have been completed. Active remembering is possible precisely because of these transformations. It is a matter of transcendental lawfulness that present intuitions flow away and pass over into more and more distant retentional pasts. In the living present, percepts and ideal objects are given with evidence, in the flesh (*leibhaftig*). But what is evidently given in the present lapses into a background of ineffective potentiality. Husserl calls this process *passive sedimentation*. I will take up the intersubjective dimension of passive sedimentation in the next chapter and I will now limit the discussion to the intra-subjective transformation of objective evidence into stale and lifeless background acquisitions. A simplistic interpretation would have it that the submersion

(*Versunkenheit*) of present contents of consciousness into memory is passive, whereas the retrieval of stored contents is active. In my view, Husserl's account of memory involves a more subtle interplay of passive and active components on all stages of memory operations.

Husserl proposed two different accounts of memory: the image consciousness account and the reproductive presentification account. The former relies on traditional ideas of non-transformative conservation and is vulnerable to the accusation of *passivism*. The latter appeals to the idea of passive sedimentation while eschewing the shortcoming of passivism. On this view, memory ensures that the current activity of consciousness can draw on already acquired but *latent* and *inactual* contents.

I will begin by explaining Husserl's early theory of memory as image consciousness and the problems that go along with it. In connection with the subjective aspects of secondary passivity, I should like to emphasize three points:

(a) Memory as reproductive presentification requires a "dual stratification" (*Zweischichtigkeit*) of consciousness. If it is correct to say that one's past is the most primitive form of alterity then, the "double track" structure of recollection brings in the sense of passivity as openness to otherness. (b) Memory contributes to the constitution of objectivity by ensuring in advance the possibility of iteration of sense. That is, secondary passivity makes available for consciousness latent meanings already constituted. (c) But to prove the reliability of memory is not to prove the impossibility of forgetting. Memory and forgetting are not irreconcilable opposites but facets of one and the same process.

1. Memory as image consciousness

Before getting at the core of Husserl's account of memory let me say a word on the concept of presentification. Presentification (*Vergegenwärtigung*) stands with respect to presentation (*Gegenwärtigung*) as non-originality stands with respect to intuitive originality. Perception "seizes a present with both hands by its shock of hair" (APS 591), therefore being the typical example of original "making present" (*Gegenwärtigung*). The unfolding of perceptual acts abides by the formal structure of impression protending its immediate future and retaining its proximal past. In a strict sense, only impressions could be said to present what is actually given. Retentions and protentions, for their part, form a "halo of emptiness" comprising the co-meant aspects of a given thing.

Neither presentation nor reproduction, retention mediates between the two thus having a double function. On the one hand, the passing over of impression into retention erodes the self-evidence of the living present. As a result, retentions sanction the infiltration of absence into presence. On the other hand, retentions spill presence over into absence. In other words, the temporal unfolding of perception involves at the same time a deterioration of the original self-evidence of the present and an extension of this evidence toward that which is absent whether absence is taken as the ego's past or as alter ego.

Husserl differentiates three main types of intuitive presentifications (*anschauliche Vergegenwärtigungen*): memory, phantasy and empathy. All these intuitive presentifications contribute in their own way to the opening of the present towards a more or less distant otherness. Presentifications have the capacity to bring

to present appearance something other than and foreign to the ego.

Husserl holds that acts of remembering presentify past perceptions.⁶⁵ In acts of remembering, the ego intends not only one of its previous perceptions but also the objects intended in it. Therefore, remembering has a more complicated structure than perception; remembering gives something *as if* it were present again (APS 591). Like remembering, phantasy is a reproductive act insofar as it presentifies something in the mode of 'as if'. Yet, unlike remembering, phantasy *does not repeat* a previous perception. Finally, empathy (*Einfühlung*) presentifies other selves. Neither repetition of a past perception nor mediate representation through similes, empathy presentifies alter egos as that which, in principle, remains unrepresentable for me.

Husserl always treated these three types of presentification - remembering, phantasy and empathy - as intrinsically related but he wavered with respect to how close their kinship really is. This is particularly true in the case of the relation between remembering and phantasy.

In *Main Issues in the Phenomenology and Theory of Knowledge*,⁶⁶ Husserl regarded pictorial consciousness (*Bildbewusstsein*) as an explanatory model for both memory and phantasy. I will briefly explain the image theory, whose weakness Husserl himself later acknowledged, not because it is a solid theoretical contender but

⁶⁵ Sometimes, Husserl discriminates between three types of memory: memory of the past (*Rück Erinnerung*), memory of the present (*Mit Erinnerung*) and memory of the future (*Vor Erinnerung*) (APS, 110-111) the sense of beliefs in the actual existence of something past, present or future respectively. Such terminology can be confusing because it makes expectation a species of remembering. Even though it can be said that expectations as well as rememberings are empty, emptiness does not have the same sense in both cases. In his *Remembering: a phenomenological study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987, pp. 58-60), Edward Casey construes the memory of the future more convincingly as 'remembering to'. I remember the future when I recall my dental appointment set for the next week.

⁶⁶ Lectures from 1904-1905 published in *Husserliana XXIII Phantasie, Bildbewusstsein, Erinnerung* hereafter quoted as PBE.

rather because it illustrates a common misinterpretation of passivity. Representation through picturing (*Verbildlichung*) brings an original to present appearance by means of surrogates or substitutes. This mediacy is a feature pictorial consciousness shares with signitive acts. However, for pictorial consciousness to be possible the image substitute must *resemble* the original. Obviously, similarity plays no correspondent role in signitive acts. Linguistic signs do not resemble the things which they signify.

Perceiving a painting, a photograph or a statue are all instances of pictorial consciousness. In such cases, one witnesses a doubling of perception (PBE 18-19). First, one sees an image as a physical thing (*Bildding*). Second, an inner perceptual image (*Bildobjekt*) somehow replaces the physical picture. The painting or photograph looked at awakens a pictorial image which hovers in one's mind. This internal picture is the product of phantasy and depicts or represents the pictorial subject (*Bildsujet*), say, the real person whose portrait one actually perceives. Husserl says that pictorial consciousness engages two distinct but intertwined apprehensions, each of which 'animates' different contents. The apprehension of the picture thing (*Bildding*) animates sensorial contents. The apprehension of the inner perceptual image (*Bildobjekt*) animates phantasms (contents of phantasy acts). I look at a black and white photograph of a child and, while I focus on the cheek, I have the sensation "grey". Somehow, this sensation awakens the phantasm "red", which hovers (*Vorschweben*) before me as the color of the child's cheek. Husserl believes that the perceptual and phantasy apprehensions are inextricably connected, the former founding the latter.

Perceptual pictorial consciousness operates with three objects: the physical

image, the representing or picturing object, and the represented object. The representing image, which is the product of imagination, comes into conflict with both the picture-thing and the represented object. While the pigments impressed on the photosensitive paper cause the sensed grey, the phantasm red is not causally determined by real components of a physical image. Accordingly, Husserl calls the *Bildobjekt* an illusory image (*Scheindung*). The difference between *Bildobjekt* and *Bildsujet* resides plainly in the fact that the latter is given perceptually in the flesh whereas the former is given as representing another object that resembles it (PBE 20).

Unlike picturing, phantasy makes no use of a picture thing. The inner pictorial image does not come to appearance as corresponding to a given physical image. Phantasy constitutes two objects by way of two different apprehensions of the same phantasms. Through the phantasy-image of a castle, which hovers in my mind, I intend the castle itself. The image presentifies the castle for me. Unlike perception, phantasy gives an object in a mediate way: the phantasy image is a substitute, a semblance, a simulacrum of another object similar to it. In other words, phantasy has an 'indicative' character. In normal experience, whoever phantasizes doesn't take the experiencing of an image for the *Selbsterscheinung* of an object.

In Husserl's first theory, memory shares the same mediated structure of picturing (*Verbildlichung*) as representation based on similarity. According to this position, memory is a form of pictorial consciousness founded on phantasy (PBE, 224, 294).

As far as recollection is concerned, it is not an imaginative but an impressional act founded on mere phantasy. In opposition to the simple external perception of a thing there is the simple pure phantasm of the same [thing], that is, a phantasm of the same thing-content (a phantasm of the same

appearance). This cannot be placed on the same footing with the recollection of the thing insofar as the recollection brings in a new apprehension, which relates to the actual present the thing **first** phantasized as past and then presentified again.⁶⁷ (PBE 215)

On this account, to remember means to have a picture of a past event. Phantasy first produces an image, which then becomes a memory image by having the temporal coordinate “past” attached to it (PBE 294). The belief in the actuality of the remembered event is what distinguishes a memorial image from a phantasy image. There are two major problems with this view.

First, it cannot establish an essential difference between reproduction and perception.⁶⁸ If the difference between reproductive and perceptual consciousnesses is a matter of degree of clarity then the risk is great of collapsing the two. The risk is even greater when it comes to the difference between memory and phantasy. Memory would presuppose a stronger isomorphism image/original than phantasy. Whereas phantasy images are flickering, weak and unstable, memory images are clearer and last longer. This account is unsatisfactory for obvious reasons.

Second, the conception according to which memory is a copy approximating

⁶⁷ Was die Erinnerung anlagt, so ist sie ein in “bloßer Phantasie” fundierter, nicht imaginativer, sondern impressionaler Akt. Der schlichten äusseren Wahrnehmung, etwa eines Dinges, steht gegenüber die schlichte pure Phantasie dieses “selben”, d.h. eines inhaltsgleichen Dinges (eine Phantasie von demselben Erscheinungswesen). Ihr ist nichts als gleichberechtigt an die Seite zu stellen eine Erinnerung an dieses Ding, sofern die Erinnerung eine neue Auffassung bringt, welche das Ding, das **zunächst** phantasierte, als vergangenes, und zwar als “wieder gegeben” vergegenwärtigt setzt in Beziehung zur aktuellen Gegenwart

⁶⁸ Rudolf Bernet notes that Husserl finds himself in an impasse when he attempts to explain reproductive consciousness by means of the schema apprehension/contents of apprehension. A present apprehension of present contents could bring about the consciousness of the past only by way of a “miracle.” Bernet correctly points out that Husserl got the phenomenon of reproductive consciousness right only after he abandoned the model of picturing, which doubles the object of apprehension, in favour of the model of memory which doubles or splits the consciousness itself. See “*Unconscious consciousness in Husserl and Freud*” in *Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*, 1: 2002, p. 334-336.

an original occludes the transformational processes coextensive with remembering. This concept of memory can be traced as far back as Plato's *Theaetetus* and Aristotle's *On Memory and Reminiscence*. According to the famous Platonic metaphor, the soul is like a wax tablet receiving the stamp of impressions.⁶⁹ The efficiency of memory rests on the quality of the wax and the precision of imprinting mechanics. Aristotle carries forward Plato's metaphor when he says that "remembering means the having of an image regarded as a copy of that of which it is an image."⁷⁰ In time, more sophisticated technological devices have replaced the wax tablet as metaphors for the operations of memory.⁷¹ But technological metaphors have one thing in common: they disconnect memory from subjective agency. Hence the remarkable pervasiveness of interpretations according to which memory passively registers and stores information. Edward Casey criticized such conceptions as 'passivist.'⁷² Although it does not appeal to technological metaphors, Husserl's first theory of memory is nevertheless just as passivist as those which do. Theories that apply the model of 'copy' approximating an 'original' to memory are inherently 'passivist' because they fail to acknowledge that storage is inseparable from restructuring. Opposing memory to perception as a copy opposes the original misleads one into thinking in static terms about memory processes which are in fact dynamic. The comparison between original and copy requires the simultaneous

⁶⁹ Plato *Theaetetus* 191c

⁷⁰ Aristotle *On Memory and Reminiscence* 451a 15-16

⁷¹ In his informative study, *Metaphors of Memory. A History of Ideas about Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Douwe Draaisma emphasizes the correlation between the metaphors of memory and the technological advancement of the time. From among over 40 metaphors surveyed, some draw on organic structures or biological functions - honeycomb, forest and stomach. However, the vast majority invoke some technological device or other such as wax tablet, book, *camera obscura*, photography, phonograph, writing pad, computer, or hologram.

⁷² Casey, Edward. *Remembering: a phenomenological study*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) p. 269.

display of the two items side by side. This comes down to a flattening of the dimension of temporal depth so characteristic of memory. For such a comparison to make sense, memory and perception should be taken as different temporal modes of givenness rather than homogeneous images appearing simultaneously.

The vocabulary of imprints, images and copies is inadequate because it cannot account for how consciousness becomes presently aware of the past. Terms such as imprint, indentation and engraving are among the close semantic relatives of the concept of “impression”. Husserl never relinquished the latter and this might indicate that remnants of the image consciousness theory of memory survived throughout his work.⁷³ Nevertheless, one can note an increasing dissatisfaction with the model of image consciousness. This dissatisfaction determines Husserl to conceive of mnemonic traces as affective marks left by salient events on the ego. In the previous chapter, I explained the role of categories such as prominence, affective force and affective relief in structuring the living present. For Husserl, the same categories of prominence, affective force and affective propagation organize the sphere of the distant past as well. But the salience of an event is not quantifiable. Fresh memories are not necessarily clearer than distant memories. Events far removed from the present can appear to us with a vividness that surpasses our memory of very recent events.⁷⁴ I remember the first philosophy book I read because it was a turning point in my personal history. Incorporated in my life, that experience informed my career choice and still informs my interests and my judgments of taste. On the contrary, I

⁷³ See John Brough “Husserl on Memory” *The Monist*, 59 (1), 1975.

⁷⁴ Erwin Straus’ phenomenological critique of neurophysiologic concepts of memory traces is based on the idea of the “historiological structure” of memory. Memory holds on to events that are prominent in the sense that they occupy significant nodes in one’s personal history. See *Phenomenological Psychology* tr. Erling Eng, (New York: Basic Books, 1966, p. 91).

easily forget how many doors I just passed by on the way to my office. I have certainly seen the office doors every time I passed by. That I walk on this corridor many times every day is of no avail. Temporal 'distance' should not be confounded with spatial distance. In spatial perception, distance means less resolution. We compensate for this deficiency by devising optical prostheses which allow us to zoom in. Remembering is not like zooming in because temporal depth is not coextensive with diminished resolution in the first place. A change in temporal position certainly involves a change in mode of givenness but this change cannot be equated with a decrease in clarity.

As we will see in the next sections, two features distinguish the phenomenological concept of affective mark. First, a present affective mark preserves the past *as* past. In their very survival, present affective marks are marks of absence. Second, affective marks reveal their meaning only through the reconstruction of the process that generated them and therefore exist only as interpreted. The phenomenological equivalents of terms such as encoding, consolidation, storage, and retrieval refer to experiential qualities of acts of interpretation performed by the ego. Although interpretative in nature, memory is not purely spontaneous egoic activity. To substitute an activist for a passivist conception of memory would be equally objectionable for it would make the discontinuous and involuntary working of reproductive associations incomprehensible. Husserl's inclusion of memory in the domain of secondary passivity avoids the pitfalls of passivism by situating active interpretations in a horizon of latency and inactuality.

2. Memory as reproductive presentification

Husserl established primordial givenness - givenness in the mode 'in person', 'in the flesh', 'it itself' - as the standard of epistemic certainty. The famous "principle of principles" states:

That every primordially given intuition (*originar gebende Anschauung*) is a source of authority (*Rechtsquelle*) for knowledge, that whatever presents itself in intuition in primordial form (as it were in bodily reality) is simply to be accepted as it gives itself out to be, though only within the limits in which it then presents itself (*Ideas I*, section 24).

Perception is primordial because it makes the objects in front of one's eyes appear vividly in full clarity. In contrast, reproductive acts *modify* original intuitive givenness. Reproductive consciousness re-presents or presentifies objects instead of giving them immediately. Nevertheless, reproductive acts do not involve the same type of mediation as picturing acts. Starting with the lectures on time-consciousness, Husserl rejected his earlier interpretation of memory as pictorial consciousness (PCIT 36, 323; APS, 592) in favour of a broader concept of presentification. If remembering meant the entertaining of a mental image, then the possibility of becoming aware of the past would be forfeited. Images contain no reference to temporal attributes. Yet remembering does give us a sense of temporal depth.

Memory - and this is equally true of retention - is not image-consciousness; it is something totally different. What is remembered, of course, does not now exist - otherwise it would not be something that has been but something present; and in memory (retention) it is not given as now, otherwise memory, or retention, would precisely not be memory but perception. [...] Just as I see being-now in perception and enduring being in the extended perception as it

becomes constituted, so I see the past in memory, insofar as the memory is primary memory. The past is given in primary memory, and givenness of the past is memory (PCIT 36).

No longer defining the class of presentifications, picturing is downgraded to one type of presentification among others. Busts, paintings, photographs and the like presentify absent and fictional objects through images that resemble them. In contrast, reproductive consciousnesses such as memory, phantasy and empathy are presentifications of objects themselves. "Memory is the presentification of something itself in the mode of the past" (PCIT 61). The difference between remembering and phantasy is the difference between *positing* and *non-positing* acts. Remembering presupposes a belief in the actual existence of the remembered object whereas phantasy does not.

Unencumbered by the difficulties of the pictorial consciousness paradigm, the second theory of memory comes closer to explaining the enigmatic presence of something absent which lies at the core of many discussions of memory. Husserl now says that remembering is *quasi-perceiving* in the sense that it constitutes an unmediated awareness of an object in the mode of the past. What I intend in recollection is not something present, which resembles an object experienced in the past, but rather the past object or event itself.⁷⁵

Husserl's major concern is to show how reproductive acts reap the epistemic benefits of originary givenness. Of outmost importance here is the distinction

⁷⁵ Part of Thomas Reid's attack on Locke's and Hume's "way of ideas" was directed against their *representationalist* conception of memory. In *An inquiry into the Human Mind*, Reid denies that memory works by substituting a representation for an object that has previously been perceived. Like Husserl, Reid says that we remember the past itself.

between retention and remembering which should not be conflated with that between short-term and long-term memory. To discriminate between retention and recollection, one must take into account the type of intentional accomplishment involved rather than the length of the storage period.

Every present now retains the just elapsed objective phase. The famous metaphor of the comet's tail is meant to indicate the *continuous* character of retentional modifications: the actual impression retains its immediate predecessor which in turn retains its own predecessor and so on. Thus, retentions can only exist as members of retentional chains or series clinging to certain impressions. This means that retentions are not complete and separate acts but *non-self-sufficient phases* thereof.

The upshot of this discussion is that retention constitutes the past presentatively. Because retention is always a moment within a retentional series, a necessary oscillation is bound to occur in the line separating givenness from non-givenness, presence from non-presence. In other words, the living present should be understood as mixture of perception and non-perception rather than as unbroken originary givenness.

Even the "principle of principles" includes the caveat that the *limits* of presence be carefully examined. Upon examination, it becomes clear that the transit over the border between presence and absence is in fact a two-way transit. Husserl wants to enlarge the scope of the primordial sphere in order to secure the evidence of reproductive acts. However, if self-transcendence is constitutive of the primordial sphere, then the privilege of the present wavers. The double function of retention

makes the boundary between presence and absence porous. On the one hand, retention is supposed to transfer the evidence of impressional now to reproductive consciousness. On the other hand, retention implies a weakening of affective force and obscuring of objective sense therefore facilitating an inverse movement of absence into presence. The sphere of presence is not closed off onto itself but *hospitable* toward that which is absent.⁷⁶ I should like to interpret this hospitality by virtue of which pastness, absence and otherness find a home at the very core of presence as one of the fundamental senses of passivity. More pregnant in the context of intersubjective and intercultural experiences, this sense of passivity is already anticipated by the idea of the double track consciousness.

As mentioned above, a unique type of mediation, to be confounded neither with picturing nor with symbolic or linguistic mediations, sets apart reproductive acts from retentions. Every remembering unfolds in the present now. Rememberings are themselves present lived experiences and as such they require a flow of presentations. The ego carries out an act of remembering whose phases are given presentatively. Yet, within this flow there is “nested” another flow of presentifications, or recollected experiences.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ This is David Brinbaum’s argument according to which Husserlian phenomenology is too rashly labelled as just another variation of the metaphysics of presence. The privilege of presence concerns not only the contagious transmission of evidence from original impressions through retentions to reproduction but also the inclusion of absence in the primordial sphere. *The Hospitality of Presence: Problems of Otherness in Husserl’s Phenomenology*, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1998.

⁷⁷ The idea of the ‘two tracks’ structure of reproductive consciousness is elegantly discussed in Sokolovski’s *Husserlian Meditations. How Words Present Things* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974 pp 147-148). For a more recent development of the same topic see David Birnbaum (1998) pp. 71-75 and pp. 113-115.

Memory is not merely a reproduction of a previous intending and a previous intended meaning, but related to this is a second layer, [remembering is] also a present intending or meaning of the current ego (APS, 598).

This dual stratification (*Zweischichtlichkeit*) (APS, 596) is the distinctive mark of reproductive consciousness. Acts of reproduction require two tracks of consciousness. The outside track is the track of presentations, that is, the flow of impressions in living experience. The inside track is the track of presentifications, that is, the flow of reproduced experiences. When I remember an object perceived earlier, I re-enact or I revivify the entire past perceptual experience. Similar double stratifications at work in acts of imagination and empathy.

Husserl formalizes the idea that I experience (E) my reproduction (R) of a past act (A) with the expression $E[R(A)]$. Sokolowski proposes the following improvement: $E''\{R[E'(A)]\}$.⁷⁸ I experience my current remembering which reproduces one of my previous acts of perception along with my experiencing of that act. This account may seem unconvincing. It may be true that one cannot remember what one had not experienced. But this does not mean I can remember X only on the condition that I remember my experience of X. Would the double stratification of remembering crumble if X were replaced with 'bike riding', 'Planck's constant' or 'the battle of Salamis'? Remembering how to ride a bike does not seem to require an extra layer of experiences: the bike-riding skill is all there is to remembering how to ride a bike. In the following chapter, I will argue that Husserl's view on the nested flows experiences does accommodate an account of habitus. As for semantic memory, it clearly exhibits the nested structure. Remembering *that* the Greeks fought

⁷⁸ Sokolowski (1974), p. 147.

the Persians at Salamis in 480 BC is not conditioned upon *witnessing* the famous battle. However, one's current recollection that X is the case requires that one be aware of one's past experience of *judging* that X is the case. All this will become clearer in the next section where I will address the issue of the fulfillment of memory.

The nesting of the flow of presentifications in the flow of presentations is Husserl's original response to the difficult problem of the presence of something past. Not consisting in the mental entertaining of an image, remembering is an act that transcends the present. This is attested by the "double layered" structure of rememberings. Memory could not give the sense of temporal depth if it were not marked by this doubling of the flow of experience.

I am the ego of an actual stream of lived-experiences that are actual lived-experiences in every Now, and of which I am conscious in perceptions, even if they are latent. But presentifying memories, among other lived-experiences, arise in this stream of lived experiences, and however much they are themselves my present original lived-experiences precisely a non-present present, with a non-present ego and stream of lived experiences is presentified through these memories. [...] I not only am, and I not only live, but a second, entire egoic life is given to consciousness, is mirrored in my life, as it were, namely, is presentified in my present memories (APS 596-7).

Depending on how great a 'distance' separates the inside from the outside flow, Husserl distinguishes two types of memorial experiences: *reflective* remembering and *self-forgetful* remembering (*selbstvergessenes Erinnern*) (APS, 593). Reflective remembering is a matter of active performance (*Betätigkeit*) of the ego. Fully awake, the ego carries out the act of remembering from the standpoint of the present now by directing the rays of apprehension at past modes of appearances of objects. Without a more or less laborious voluntary effort, the retrieval and display of

sedimented epistemic acquisitions would not be possible. Insofar as I can repeat it again and again as often as I want, reflective remembering enjoys a certain freedom.

In contrast, self-forgetful remembering is not properly speaking carried out by the ego but unfolds passively in the domain of the *Ichlösigkeit*. In episodes of reverie, for example, the focal orientation towards the past numbs “the central ego.” This passive immersion (*Versunkenheit*) in memory short-circuits the ego’s control over what comes on the scene. The ego is neither reflectively involved nor completely absent in self-forgetful remembering. While working at my desk, my thought drifts away and, in a nostalgic mood, I daydream about things long gone. Daydreaming diminishes my state of wakefulness. Yet I still have a grasp, albeit an absentminded one, of my perceptual surroundings. Self-forgetfulness is further intensified in dreams and reaches the lower threshold in the case of dreamless sleep:

A mute and empty life, so to speak, a dreamless empty sleep, is conceivable as a life that also had this necessary structure and appeared in perception in a passive and interior manner but without prominence, and therefore without any apprehension [of it] by the ego, without any play of simple affections and acts such that the ego did not come on the scene, so to speak, and the slumbering ego was the mere potentiality for the ego cogito. (APS 469)

In dreamless sleep passivity is intermixed with the smallest degree of activity. One does nothing when one sleeps. Better still, while one is sleeping, one does nothing else *but* sleeps. Sleep is an altered form of consciousness, not an annulment of subjectivity. The fact that every morning I can take things up from where I left them off the day before proves that sleep is compatible with a type of passive non-vigilant self-givenness.

If the distinction reflective/self-forgetting were but a fancy translation of the distinction voluntary/involuntary then one could say that Husserl wants to separate the class of active rememberings from that of passive rememberings. The former would explain memory's contribution to the constitution of synthesis of identity while the latter would take the blame for memory's failures. On my reading, this is not exactly what Husserl has in mind. The fact that the double track consciousness is the structure of remembering as such means that all types of recollection involve the reciprocal determination of activity and passivity. In all reflective remembering there is some self-forgetfulness and in all self-forgetful remembering there is some reflection. When I remember something reflectively, my current act of remembering is directed toward an object in the mode of the past while also revivifying my past perceptual experience of that object. But instead of being the focus of my remembering, the re-enacted experience is *laterally, indirectly or passively* given to me as a kind of "anonymously functioning awareness."⁷⁹ In reflective remembering, the track of presentations obfuscates the track of presentifications which remains latent. Nevertheless, the distance between the two tracks must be acknowledged: failure to do so would amount to having a hallucination. In self-forgetful remembering, a re-enactment of past experience also occurs although in a different mode. In this case, the present self is overly dominated by the presentified self; past experiences invade the present of their own accord and obfuscate the track of presentations.

⁷⁹ Robert Sokolovski, "Displacement and Identity in Husserl's Phenomenology" in (ed.) Samuel Ijsseling, *Husserl-Ausgabe und Husserl-Forschung* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990), p. 178.

3. Memory and Objectivity

Insofar as it engages an effort to preserve the heritage of the past, culture is in a sense a battle against forgetfulness. From Antiquity to the Renaissance, the “art of memory” was extolled as a valuable tool capable of countering the weaknesses of human memory. In the era of digital technology, which promises unlimited informational storage space, the question of the apodicticity of remembering seems to have lost the sense of urgency it had for Husserl in the early 20s when he wrote: “Indeed, a spectre of scepticism appears and grows ever more threatening, namely, the spectre of the dubiousness of memory” (APS 451).

Arguing in favour of the apodictic character of memory, Husserl’s goal is to chase off scepticism and to prove that reproductive self-givenness is as trustworthy as reflective self-givenness. What counts is not so much the adequacy of every particular remembering as the way in which the interplay between rememberings and expectations underpins the acquisition of all possible experiential truths.

Should some kind of inherent dubiousness plague memory as such, the possibility of objective knowledge would be severely threatened. Momentary knowledge is a contradiction in terms. The “primordial institution” (*Urstiftung*) of meaning - starting point of any epistemic operation – establishes “lasting possessions” (APS 47) on the basis of which the subject builds the edifice of knowledge. Obviously, memory’s reliability preconditions the abiding availability (*Verfügbarkeit*) of epistemic acquisitions. Husserl resorts to a typical transcendental argument which recalls the role of the synthesis of recognition in Kant’s transcendental deduction. The problem is not only that *after* some knowledge has

been obtained one must secure a storage space for it in memory. Rather, the apodicticity of memory is a necessary condition for the very existence of objects. A true judgment about a state of affairs is the result of a presently performed judicative act. Yet, part of what makes a judgment true is the fact that it can be iterated again and again; through this reiteration, the truth of the judgment obtains ever new confirmations. It is not only that bits of knowledge, once acquired, are safely stockpiled in “the wonderful palaces” of memory. Before the analysis of the forms of judgement can even get off the ground, transcendental logic has to explain memory’s contribution to ‘making evident’. To know that X is the case means, among other things, to be able to recognize all future occurrences of X as occurrences of the *same* object. Husserl never tired of describing objective existence as a synthetic accomplishment unifying multiple graspings of different profiles of the same thing. Without holding in grasp a profile that has just past, it would be impossible to recognize it as an aspect of the same experienced object. Similarly, memory makes it possible for an argument to have a “flow”.

If I conduct a proof and carry out the first premise step by step: positing the subject, the predicate, etc., then the further premises, then the mode of conclusion demands that I *return to* these premises. Then I say: it follows from it. But not as if we had to carry them out once again in the steps through which they were constructed (APS 476).

To carry out a proof requires that every step of the argument implicitly retains all of its predecessors. Framing the question of the relation between inferential reasoning and memory in terms of temporal precedence would be misleading.⁸⁰ What is

⁸⁰ The connection between conclusion and premises *does not stem* from the fact of their being held together in one act of recollection. The premises *lead to* a conclusion and the conclusion *derives from* the premises. In other words, I hold the conclusion together with the premises in one act of recollection

significant is that memory is indispensable for proof construction.

Most importantly, on the passive level of doxic life, reproductive associations establish “the unity of world certainty” (APS 152). The apodicticity of memory simply means that despite inevitable breaks in associative synthesis, the streaming experiences do not vanish but come to form the unity of a world. In other words, a consciousness deprived of all organization would not be a consciousness; incoherent experience would be no experience at all.

3.1. Reproductive Associations

Husserl encounters the problem of reproductive associations within the context of the constitution of “the in-itself of the stream of consciousness.” Also belonging here, though not as extensively examined as remembering, are inductive associations or expectations. A discussion of reproductive association is indispensable for understanding how remembering works and why it occasionally fails. Husserl illustrates his analysis of reproductive association with many examples of which I will select three:

1. If winding down a path we catch sight of a cirque we are reminded of another cirque, one that emerges reproductively (APS 166).
2. The thought of a magnificent seascape occurs during a talk. If we reflect upon how it came to us, we will find for instance that a turn of phrase immediately reminded us of something similar that was uttered during a

because they complete each other or because they refer forward and backward to one another. Memory provides storage space for non-actual backward referents which must be located *in* consciousness without being present *to* consciousness. Without memory consciousness would have nothing to refer back to. (Jay Lampert *Synthesis and Backward Reference in Husserl's Logical Investigations*, 43-44, and 173).

conversation last summer at the sea. The beautiful image of the seascape, however, completely monopolized our interest (APS 167).

3. The memory of a painting by Titian transports me into the Uffizzi Gallery; but only special traces from that present become especially awakened and appear: certain other paintings hanging there, or more prosaically, the image of the yawning museum attendant, etc (APS 168).

Reproductive associations fall into two categories: immediate and mediate. The first example illustrates the case of a dyadic association: an impression immediately awakens another past impression. The second example illustrates the simplest case of mediate association: a triadic associative chain. Impression A (a particular turn of a phrase) awakens impression C (the image of beautiful seascape) via the intermediary term B (past conversation at the seashore). Obviously, there can be various associative routes with different degrees of complexity connecting A to C. As a rule, the longer and more complex the chain, the more dissimilar the end terms would appear to be. Each impression can potentially be associated with a number of intermediary terms (*Bruckenglieder*) B', B'', B'''. The seascape example suggests that intermediary terms have a special status. As soon as an impression pops into someone's mind it drags along a host of impressions which float unheeded in the stream of consciousness because of their weak affective force. The conversation at the seashore effaces itself as intermediary term and relinquishes the forestage to the seascape image which is the most prominent from among a myriad of contents such as, the interlocutor's appearance, the topic of the conversation, the music playing in the background and so forth. The turn of the phrase could have awakened each of these terms. Had any of them taken the intermediary position, the associative chain would have been differently shaped. Together, the potential intermediary terms form

something like a memorial *aura*. This idea is also implied in the example of the Uffizzi Gallery. In addition, this example reflects the *limited elasticity* of the memory aura. I associate the Titian painting with other paintings hanging on the walls of the same gallery rather than with other visitors' faces because looking at paintings is an essential component of the experience of going to art galleries whereas observing human faces is only a fortuitous part of such experience.

In a certain sense, passivity is what makes associations work. The examples given above illustrate situations of recall but they can be easily recast so as to illustrate phenomena of the acquisition of memory. To be able to hold a conversation I must apprehend and retain my and my interlocutor's trains of thoughts. Moreover, while being the central focus of my experience, the conversation is immersed in a perceptual background that is also retained. Significantly, I retain all these contents without setting it as my goal and without making any effort to do so. Layers of meanings ineluctably get sedimented upon layers of meaning with the necessity of a tectonic process. Thus, associations seem to subtend a field of consciousness where freedom and spontaneity are totally brushed off.⁸¹ Whether acquisition or recall is concerned, associations are passive in the sense that they run their course unnoticed independently of the ego's control. Here *Ichlösigkeit* means that associative chains are fastened and unfastened so as to respond to the demands of the current experience without the ego being explicitly aware of its own associative work. Also, no matter

⁸¹ In James Mensch's interpretation, reproductive associations are connected with strivings and instincts and thus are relegated to the status of energy providers for higher accomplishments of consciousness. Reproductive associations ultimately come down to striving to possess (*Habe*). Unlike language and abstraction, which are disengaged from contents and therefore equipped for freedom and spontaneity, associations are like strivings in that they never lose grip of contents and therefore lack freedom.

how suddenly they irrupt into the present, past lived experiences are always inserted in associative chains. As associative chains are often incomplete, the ego has to engage in active interpretation and make an effort to supply more adequate bridging terms if associative sequences were to be fully restored. But the ego can retrieve the experiences assigned to each location on an associative chain only because temporarily unavailable bridging terms were already passively preserved. In another sense, associations work in spite of passivity. If the *Ichlösigkeit* is indeed an attribute of associations, then it seems that ego does not have much control over what gets associated with what. Passivity at best interrupts or at worst disorganizes and makes arbitrary the associative chains. On the hypothesis of free-floating bridging terms, associations run the risk of turning into chaotic, undisciplined connections that confusingly group together impressions having little in common with one another. Regarded as passive, associations breed discordance (*Unstimmigkeit*), overlapping (*Überschiebung*) and distortions of meanings. From this to equivocity, forgetting and error is but a small step.⁸²

Husserl's reflections on reproductive association wind up in an embarrassing difficulty. How can the conflicting attributes of passivity be reconciled? The synthetic associations belonging to primary passivity play a constitutive role in the production of hyletic sense-unities and even of higher cognitive accomplishments such as logical principles. However, the reproductive associations belonging to secondary passivity

⁸² It must be noted that this is a problem for all theories of association whether transcendental or empirical. In his very informative historical account of associationism, John Sutton points out that XVIIIth century neurophysiologists could easily explain the misfiring of the principles of similarity and contiguity. External physical circumstances such as disease, fever, oddities of diet, religious rapture could easily disturb the movements of animal spirits. See John Sutton, *Philosophy and memory traces. Descartes to connectionism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Husserl's transcendental theory of associations has to rely on the same elements to explain both how associations work and why they fail.

seem to be responsible for as much objective constitution as discordance (*Unstimmigkeit*), overlapping (*Überschiebung*) and interpenetration of meanings. Secondary passivity brings about distortions of meaning along with loss of intuitiveness thus giving rise to errors, equivocity and confusion.

Husserl dismisses the hypothesis of arbitrariness and claims that transcendental laws oversee reproductive associations despite irregularities in associative patterns. This is not a deterministic theory of associations. Transcendental regularities prescribe only *typical* forms of connection. Given a singular datum, it is not transcendently determined which data are associatively tied with it. However, a single datum triggers an associative tendency that reaches fulfillment in intuitive reproduction (APS 166).

Memory has an organization analogous to that of the perceptual field. The lines of force of the perceptual field are displayed in such a way that original associations are perpetually fastened and unfastened for the purpose of obtaining a perceptual optimum. Likewise, a striving after “the true being of the past” occurs within the memory field. Corresponding to the intuitive self-givenness of a perceived object, there is a “memorial certainty” (APS 459). Stretches of my past life can fall into oblivion. Some of the things previously learned can obstinately elude the most strenuous retrieval efforts. What is a priori certain is that it is inconceivable that all my rememberings be annulled. Memory is apodictic not in the sense that it is always adequate but in the sense that memorial experience as such has a teleological nature which prescribes a constant striving to eliminate discordances whenever they arise. True, remembering gives the *having been* of an object “in the flesh”. However, a

remembered object necessarily has its horizontality. Accordingly, even an apodictic remembering implies progression, adjustments, and alterations of sense.

Husserl's discussion of reproductive associations offsets his earlier distinction between original presentation and non-original presentification. This is done in two ways. First, non-originality intrudes in the original perceptual present because perception is intertwined with memory and phantasy. Second, the primordial sphere is extended so that the evidence and clarity of presentation is transmitted to remembering. This double movement is based on the intermediary role of retention, which transforms originality into non-originality and vice versa. Retention and remembering establish a mutual exchange as a result of which both gain something they could not have achieved independently. Retention lends to remembering the kind of evidence specific to the living present. Reciprocally, remembering intuitively fulfills the empty retention by constituting an objective sense.

3.2. Gradations of fulfillment and clarity

The sinking down into the past of the present impression is passive insofar as it requires no energy investment from the ego. Whether it wants it or not, the ego retains whatever fills the present now. Sedimentation means both an ongoing process and the conservation of the results of this process. Taken in the first sense, sedimentation is clearly passive. Husserl also implies that secondary passivity preserves the contents which have ceased to affect the ego and entered a latent, dormant state of inactuality. However, this potential availability can only be inferred from acts of remembering successfully performed in the present. Acts of remembering reproduce the past by entering into a "synthesis of coinciding that forms

identity” (APS 459) with and fulfilling empty retentions.

The explanation of syntheses of identity in terms of empty presentations and intuitive fulfilment is the defining mark of Husserl’s phenomenology. Empty and full presentations are lived experiences that present the same things in different modes. Empty presentations that admit no fulfilments cannot participate in the constitution of objective sense. For example, the expression “plasmatic diphthongs” has no objective sense: it is impossible to imagine something that would count as an intuitive fulfilment of it. However, nonsensical empty presentations are the exception rather than the rule. Empty presentations have different functions depending on the acts of consciousness to which they correspond. Perceptual anticipations emptily present the backsides of the objects situated in front of someone’s eyes. Linguistic signs such as the word ‘lion’, the proper name ‘Hans’ or the proposition ‘the train arrives in five minutes’ emptily present a class of objects, a singular individual and a state of affairs respectively. Sometimes linguistic signs can be fulfilled by the perception of the designated objects. Sometimes fulfilment involves more complex acts. For example, the proposition “there are infinitely many prime numbers” is fulfilled by mathematical intuitions, that is, by carrying out a valid mathematical proof that such is the case.

Widely construed, empty presentation means indeterminacy, non-intuitiveness, implicitness, non-genuine givenness, latency, non-developed potentiality. To fulfill an empty presentation means to make intuitive, to determine more precisely, to explicate, to genuinely bring something to present appearance. Intuitive fulfilment is a progressive disclosure of more and more particular

determinations of the same objective substrate. When Husserl says that “every momentary phase of perception is in itself a network of partially full and partially empty intentions” (APS, 44, also 223 and 376) he refers not only to perception *per se* but to all acts of consciousness.

But every ongoing fulfilment of empty intentions can be regarded “from the other side” (APS, 44) as emptying of already fulfilled intentions. In perceptual experience, the role of empty expectations is to maintain open a horizon of “determinable indeterminacy.” In contrast, the retentional horizon, at first fully determinate, becomes more and more empty, more and more undifferentiated and vague as determinations already achieved sink into the past. Therefore, all acts of memory involve two stages: on the one hand, the emptying of fulfilled intentions and the formation of the horizon of sedimented meanings; on the other hand, the fulfilment of empty retentions through their reactivation in rememberings.

The process of passive sedimentation ensures that intuitions do not simply vanish. As the living present runs off, it leaves behind empty presentations as residues. The genesis of empty presentation brings about a decrease of determinacy down to the final level of total non-differentiation. First, consequent upon the fact that every hyletic datum is temporally extended, the originary impression passes over into **fresh retention** (218). With this new mode of givenness, comes a loss of determinacy or a clouding over (*Vernebelung*). Second, as a result of being further impoverished with respect to content, fresh retention turns into **empty retention**. Third, when all prominent features are levelled out to the point of complete affective non-differentiation, empty retention becomes **empty presentation**. Husserl’s descriptions

bring forward a rich and suggestive vocabulary which conveys well the kind of position assigned to empty presentations within the storied structure of consciousness. Empty presentations are to be found in “the subsoil of non-vivacity” (*Untergrund von Unlebendigkeit*) (217); they sink into “the night of forgetfulness” (*Nacht der Vergessenheiten*) (464); they are relegated to a “zero stage” (*Null-Stadium*) (220); they coalesce in a “dormant horizontal sphere” (*schlafende Horizontsphäre*) (227); they descend into the “sheer nightfall” of the unconscious (221). Although devoid of affective force, empty presentations count as *epistemic acquisitions* and as such, they provide a framework of sense, a horizon of familiarity, a network of dormant but articulated and determinate meanings.

Husserl argues for an unbroken tie between retentions and rememberings. The self-givenness of the living present pertains to retentions as well. As inseparable parts of the living present, retentions are untouched by ‘modalizations’: their self-evidence cannot degenerate into doubt, negation, possibility or probability. As a result, the “incapability of being crossed out” (*Undurchstreichbarkeit*) belongs to impressions as well as retentions (APS, 155). Moreover, “*idealiter* a consciousness is even possible in which everything remains preserved retentionally” (PCIT 32). In Husserl’s view, this warrants the trustworthiness or apodicticity of rememberings. But why cannot retentions generate syntheses of identity by themselves? Why is it necessary that retentions be reactivated in rememberings for objective sense to be possible? The problem is that primordial associations in the living present are non-self-sufficient momentary phases of acts. Retentions can be separated from impressions and protentions only through abstraction. The incompleteness and non-saturation

generating the *continuous* transition from protention through impression to retention attests to the fact that a process of explication of sense is in progress. Without holding in grasp the preceding moments, explication could not advance. In contrast, recollection is a full-fledged act which presentifies altogether absent but *determinate* objects. Recollection is the capacity of consciousness to repeat a lived experience that has completely lapsed into the past. The prefix *Wieder* in the German word '*Wiedererinnerung*' indicates that remembering gives a past experience once again. Rememberings add free iterability and reproducibility to "the incapability of being crossed out" of retentions and lay the ground for an account of the possibility of knowledge. Apodictic rememberings ensure the availability (*Verfügbarkeit*) of intentional unities transformed into "abiding possessions." Sedimentation empties the past experience of its individual moments of determination reducing them to affective undifferentiation. By virtue of associations of similarity, remembering reproduces a past experience as experience of the same object. Husserl illustrates the difference between close (*Nah-*) and distant rememberings (*Fernerinnerung*) with the following example.

If a musical motif dominates the further musical movement, and in this case continues to be held on to, if it exercises an affection on the ego again and again, with the ego possibly coming back to it with its own rays of attentiveness without it actually reproducing it, then this can serve to make the contrast clear. In actual reproduction, the motif is steadily played out from the beginning to end, or at least in sections (APS 476).

This example offers a description of immanent temporal objects in terms of part-whole relationships. It describes temporal objects subjectively emphasizing that

parts are united into wholes by virtue of affection. A musical 'motif' which is being held on to but not reproduced is a 'dependent moment' or an objective phase non-separated from its predecessors and successors. The ego retains but cannot remember sound phases. By the same token, the ego remembers but cannot retain melodies. To remember a melody means to go through it in such a way that its 'sections' or independent parts are clearly separated. Passive retention compresses and flattens the affective prominences in the living present therefore effecting a gradual loss of intuitiveness. This reflects a law of passive genesis. A primordial impression that did not lose its affective force and turn into empty presentation would be unimaginable. Remembering is the inverse of passive sedimentation: it vivifies empty presentations submerged in the past and recovers their original intuitiveness.

Remembering may restore only partially the intuitability of distant sedimented pasts. At first, only strongly affective unities belonging to distant pasts come into prominence. Bringing along remnants from the corresponding layers of sedimentation, they appear "like rough contours in dimly illuminated fog" (APS, 232) or like "tattered rags" (APS, 234). In accordance with their degree of intuitive fulfilment, rememberings display different *gradations of clarity* (APS 257). Complete intuitive fullness and complete emptiness operate only as ideal attractors. Memory provides another arena for a more or less balanced tension between, on the one hand, the striving for self-givenness, determinacy and intuitive fullness, and, on the other hand, emptiness, qualitative poverty, and indeterminacy.

It belongs essentially to every memory that it admits of being brought to progressive clarity, to the clarity of the process of the presentified present running off again, and to the clarity of unravelling the interlacings [that have occurred] through overlappings with other memories, and to the clarity of the elimination of apperceptive superimpositions. And however much that belongs together with the accomplishment of the ego that is active and purposively occupied here, the ground of the evidence of a true past being will consist in the evidence that every memorial deception can be elucidated only by means of memory [...] (APS 409).

Rememberings have various degrees of clarity because they either add to or take away from the reproduced past experiences extraneous determinations. But what exactly counts as adequate reproduction? On occasion, Husserl seems to suggest that to every now point of a presently unfolding act of remembering there corresponds a now point of the past lived experience (PCIT 37, 48 EJ, 160). This sounds as if the temporal extension of the act of remembering would coincide with the temporal extension of the recollected experience. Yet, one can hardly say that this is what recollection means. Every remembering necessarily involves not only condensation and contraction but also dilation and expansion.

Through repeated rememberings, more and more differentiations of sense come to the fore. An increase in clarity is thereby obtained. Learning by rote illustrates, rather prosaically, the contribution of repetition to the production of saturated recollections. In some situations remembering takes up again an already accomplished process of perceptual objective explication. Of course, in returning to an explicated past experience the ego's goal of optimal givenness licences diverse rearrangements of determinative moments. It is also possible that the process of explication starts off in recollection after an object has been perceptually apprehended. In this case, tracking down the associative connections between the

impressional present and a more or less distant past can also result in a clearer remembering.

I just remembered a conversation I had in my office. I let it play out; remembering it, I follow the tendency in the direction of rememberings that connect up and that are continually fulfilling. Then I recall the stroke of the clock, the awareness "it is time to go to my lecture," then walking over there, and finally, I am here and now, in this current perceptual present in which I am now actually holding my lecture (APS 463).

The retrieval of misplaced objects is the most common practical advantage of this kind of memory exercises. Husserl calls this restoration of the associative link between the past and the present a "continuous running through" (EJ 161) in memory. Any given stretch of recollected time (such as the office conversation) *tends* to flow into other stretches. By following those associative tendencies which lead up to the present now, the ego discloses concealed differentiations, fills potential gaps, eliminates deceptive superimpositions and therefore establishes the *unity* of a uniform memory. The self-evidence of the living present trickles down the associative chain of which it is the end point.

Submerged below the threshold of awareness, empty presentations form a passive retentional deposit of *stale* and *dormant* acquisitions. However, as soon as an awakening association points back to them, empty presentations can assume intentional directedness. The transition from empty presentation to remembering depends on the concerted work of primordial associations, backward radiating awakenings and reproductive intuitions. An "active reawakening is possible only on the basis of associative awakening which has already taken place in passivity; the awakening itself is an event which always occurs passively" (EJ 179).

Although independent of the participation of the ego, passive sedimentation is not inert. The intuitions whose affective force fell off to nil do maintain and even transform their associative connections. Having achieved what Husserl calls a “living institution” (*lebendige Stiftung*) affectively undifferentiated intuitions remain held in consciousness. This having at one’s disposal is not something established once and for all but rather an ongoing process. Although freely iterable, remembering is not like the replay function of a stereo system.⁸³

Corresponding to the ambiguous function of retentions within the living present, there is the ambiguous function of involuntary memory with respect to the distant past.⁸⁴ Fleeting rememberings (*fluchtig aufblitzende Erinnerungen*) work by sudden flashes back into the past. Not being encumbered by constraints of continuity, involuntary memory *spontaneously* connects different strata of sedimentation and employs passive mechanisms of self-organization. But distant awakenings can leap from one sedimented layer of sense to another, sometimes, deplorably, “without any determinate order” (APS 233). Looming behind the concept of distant awakenings there is the danger of forgetting.

⁸³ When an awakening affection radiates back and ‘vivifies’ a sedimented sense-unity, this very process modifies both terms: “[...] the awakening [...] is only the vivifying of something which previously was there. To be sure, this vivifying does bring something new, in that now a new intention, radiating from the awakening situation, goes to what is awakened, an intention which, after this radiance, changes its state to neutrality and thus to phenomenal persistence” (EJ 179).

⁸⁴ David Farrell Krell objected that Husserl’s prejudiced conception of time compromised his account of memory. The prevalence of metaphors such as ‘river’, ‘comet’s tail’ and ‘linked chain’ in the *Lectures on Time Consciousness* indicates a **serial** or **linear** view of time as continuum of now points the source of which is to be found in the mathematical idea of continuum. I believe that the analyses of discontinuous awakening at a distance clearly show Husserl’s openness for alternative possibilities of non-serial inner temporalization. See “Phenomenology of Memory from Husserl to Merleau-Ponty” in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (42:492-505, 1982). As I mentioned in the first chapter, Jay Lampert laid out Husserl’s transcendental argument for the co-presence of multiple tempo-lines as necessary condition for the synthesis of simultaneity. See *Husserl on Simultaneity*.

4. Forgetting

As shown above, the contribution of memory to the constitution of objective meaning is based on the fact that remembering and retention form a synthesis of identity (*identifizierenden Deckung*). “Insofar as we conceived remembering as being in fulfilling coincidence with a retention, belonging to remembering is the inviolable certainty of the latter”(APS, 462). Nevertheless, everyday experience offers overabundant evidence for the pervasive nature of forgetting. If the idea of “complete memory” (*vollkommene Erinnerung*) were more than just “a constructed fairytale” (APS 460), then Husserl would have to explain (i) how is forgetting possible and (ii) why is this possibility not ruled out by apodictic remembering.

Some passages in Husserl construe forgetting as *miscarried recall* caused by the *splintering* and *commingling* of memories and blame the malfunctions of passive sedimentation for all this: “[...] necessary for our further understanding is the elucidation of **the origin of error in passivity**, and in particular of error in its most original shape of commingling” (APS, 161).

The stretch of fresh past experience hanging onto the actual now is uniformly held in grasp. In contrast, reproductive associations must cross the distance that separates the past from the present and this discontinuity raises some difficulties. Affective awakenings aiming at specific items experienced in distant pasts often miss their target and hit upon the wrong sediments. Limited by typical methodological constraints, Husserl starts with *descriptions* of acquisition and recall acts and *infers* that in the interval between these acts associations must have broken up chunks of

experience into separate components and recombined them somewhat arbitrarily. There could be two reasons for this epistemic calamity. Either some parts of objective experience released from the ego's grasp circulate among sedimented strata as free radicals capable of entering various associative combinations. Or affective awakenings dislodge some parts of past objective experiences from their location on specific sedimented strata and combine them into wholes with no objective correspondent. In both cases, the result is the same: a passive commingling of "discrete matters" or a "confused muddle of rememberings" (APS 160). The unreserved evidence which often accompanies acts of recognition and recollection makes it difficult to discriminate phenomenologically between false and adequate memories. Not only does the splintering of recollections alter the meaning of past lived experiences but it also covers the tracks of this alteration. One could be fully persuaded that inadvertently associated discordant contents originally formed an objectively unified nexus.

Husserl finds his way out of this predicament by claiming that all mixture involves unclarity (APS 251). Even if rememberings belonging to separate sedimented strata interpenetrate, there persists a certain level of discordance and conflict which demands to be "crossed out."

...the content of every memory that is characterized as false is only false with respect to the unity of the combined whole, but it remains correct with respect to its parts. What is crossed out is always the whole that has arisen through commingling, but the elements that issued in the commingling remain self-given, only they belong to different nexuses (APS, 160).

A single failed retrieval attempt is no proof of irrevocable loss. For that matter, even repeated retrieval failures could indicate just that suitable cues have not yet been found or that not enough effort went into the recall act. It could be that everything that once affected the ego has been preserved in memory in spite of being temporarily unavailable. Occasionally, the awakening affection would miss the target and reach into the wrong sedimented strata producing confusion by combining rememberings that have not originally belonged to the same nexus. But even in the case of fragmented recollections individual pieces are self-given. With the right cues, individual items could be re-located in the suitable contexts and the original wholes to which they belonged could be reconstituted. Thus, recollection is not prone to indelible errors. If the ego rises up from its passive slumber to search for more appropriate bridging terms, to cross out discordances and to increase the intuitiveness of memory apprehensions then confusion can be corrected. Experience runs its course toward fulfillment and self-givenness rather than toward disorder and confusion. "A continual striving after intuition that realizes the meant self" (APS 146) operates not only in the perceptual field but also in memory. Once it fulfills an empty presentation, an intuitive self-givenness demands more confirmation. The *telos* of complete clarity draws memory forward. Eventually, discordances will be uncovered and consciousness will attempt to suppress them.

The disadvantage of this argument is that, having already acknowledged the lawful character of reproductive associations, Husserl cannot give a solid reason why passivity inevitably muddles associations and obstructs future attempts at reactivation. Simply pointing out that passive sedimentations eschew the ego's

control would not do. Clearly, the ego can actively and wilfully register facts and conserve the judgements that describe them. In this case, sedimentation takes the form of “impressing upon oneself” (*Sich-einprägen*). Can forgetfulness destroy what the ego has thus impressed upon itself?

Husserl says that “original forgetfulness” (APS, 525) consists in the deterioration of the self-evidence of impressional givenness as a result of the necessary transition of all presentations into presentifications. Original impressions fade away, gradually lose clarity and turn into empty presentations: this process is completely passive insofar as it cannot be inhibited. But instead of being a definite erasure of the past, forgetfulness maintains the living present open for the performance of perceptual syntheses. Perceptual experience would be impossible if all individual profiles were to maintain unaltered their mode of givenness. One and the same necessity increases the affective force of present profiles and diminishes that of retained profiles. A present profile can be currently affective only by inhibiting the affective force of retained profiles. As impressions recede into a more and more distant past, affective prominences are flattened into undifferentiated emptiness. Original forgetfulness means the “letting loose” (*Fahrenlassen*) (APS 528) and the becoming “unconscious” of the just past profile which allows the ego to turn toward new given prominences. Hence, the double function of retention: on the one hand, retention holds in grasp and preserves past contents; on the other hand, it empties the consciousness of past contents which are thus forgotten. On this view, memory and forgetfulness are not irreconcilable opposites but collaborators in reducing consciousness to a “mute and empty life” in which prominences no longer

affecting the ego are still kept in reserve.⁸⁵

The double function of retention has a direct impact on Husserl's concept of sedimentation which cannot be equated with the permanent storage of individual items in clearly designated compartments of "the wonderful palaces" of memory. Had Husserl appealed to this Augustinian metaphor, he would have said that the architecture of memory is always in the making. The palace of memory is perpetually under construction and its blueprints are corrected as the construction advances. Husserl's dynamic model of memory emphasizes the intertwinement of storage and processing operations.⁸⁶ Sedimentation means as much preservation as volatilization. Likewise, reproduction means as much repetition as reorganization. To reorganize is not only to display individual contents in rearranged contexts but also to discard redundant ones as multi-branched associative chains get constituted. Thus, forgetting is a complementary function of memory.

To sum up, at first Husserl says that forgetting, if not plainly impossible, is just the temporary withholding of access to safely stored meanings. The failed retrieval is not a sign of the irrevocable loss of past experiences. Consciousness does not really forget; it is just unaware of all that it has managed to preserve. The effect of passivity in all this would be to postpone the eventually successful recall. But on the

⁸⁵ This concept is developed by Paul Ricouer in *Memory, History, Forgetting* and by Jean Louis Chretien in *The Unforgettable and the un hoped for* tr. Jeffrey Bloechl Fordham University Press, 2002.

⁸⁶ This is of course a feature Husserl's model shares with many others. Recent connectionist theories of memory make use of the idea of mnemonic traces conceived more like dynamic states of the nervous system as a whole than like neatly individuated and localized modifications of brain cells. Distributed over the whole cortex, mnemonic traces are patterns in the neuronal response of large cell assemblies identifiable through functional neuroimaging. As the brain constantly reorganizes its cell assemblies for the purpose of storage optimization some mnemonic traces are bound to be erased, deactivated or forgotten. See John Sutton's *Philosophy and memory traces. Descartes to connectionism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

assumption that the past is integrally conserved, forgetting can only be accounted for in negative terms as partial privation of memory. In response, Husserl points out that sedimentations are plastic and mobile rather than inert and rigid thereby conferring forgetfulness a more positive role of selection, filtration and elimination of redundancies. According to the first hypothesis forgetting does not seem possible; according to the second forgetting seems to be no more than a by-product of memory. The former hypothesis is overoptimistic. It implies not only that all passive sediments can regain their original affective prominence but also that reactivation is unproblematic and that awakening affections have a limitless restorative force. These claims are at odds with abundant empirical evidence. The latter hypothesis rightly challenges the opposition between memory and forgetting but it does so at the cost of blurring their differences.

I submit that a more positive connection between forgetting and passivity can be extracted from Husserl's account of "self-forgetful remembering." This notion functions in a context in which the main concern is to bring out the contribution of memory not to the constitution of objective knowledge but to that of selfhood. Memory grounds the idea of the 'stream' of lived experiences and of past transcendental life thereby affording the transcendental ego a special kind of self-givenness which is not limited to the fleeting presence of the now. But the filigree-work of forgetting necessarily complements the constitution of self-identity in memory. Forgetting is rightly lamented when it shatters Alzheimer patients' sense of self or when it engages entire societies in soporific celebrations of historical events. Yet, the capacity to forget allows for a certain suppleness in the way the ego builds its

own history and assigns meanings to its own past experiences.⁸⁷

In section 2 of this chapter I explained the bitemporality or the double track structure of remembering and I suggested that self-forgetfulness and reflection are moments in all acts of remembering rather than distinct species of recollection. Remembering reproduces not only the past event but also the experience of the past event. One reproduction is not possible without the other. I can focus on the remembered object or event only by displacing myself.

When I displace myself into the past and ‘again’ live through past experiences, then the experience possesses a distinctive double I: the I of the present, the actual I, bearer of the flowing now, and the past I, the one that is represented again, bearer of the past flowing now (Int III, p. 350).⁸⁸

Self-splitting or displacement is a feature common to all memory experiences, although not all recollections exhibit the same degree of displacement. Displacement involves passivity insofar as it places otherness in the core of presence thereby ‘alienating’ the ego. In reflective remembering, I presentify an object while being

⁸⁷ If an “art of forgetting” is indeed required to complement the art of memory, then the painful as well as the pleasant would equally deserve to be forgotten. In Kierkegaard’s view, the art of forgetting is capable of forging an *artistic identity* that courageously embraces the *absolute arbitrariness* of life. See “The Rotation of Crops” in *Either/Or*, trs. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987). Nietzsche also put forward the idea of an “art of forgetting” as antidote to “the stifling of life” and “the malady of history.” He understood the “plastic power” of forgetting as “the capacity to develop out of oneself in one’s own way, to transform and incorporate into oneself what is past and foreign, to heal wounds, to replace what has been lost, to recreate broken moulds.” See “On the uses and disadvantages of history for life” in *Untimely meditations*, tr. R. J. Hollingdale, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 62-63 and pp.120-21. More recently, Paul Ricoeur has discussed the cathartic as well as manipulative effects of forgetting and the relation between forgetting and forgiving in his *Memory, History, Forgetting*, tr. Kathleen Blamey, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992). Husserl’s texts do not put such a strong emphasis on forgetting but the status of the philosopher as an *absolute beginner* who must strive for *presuppositionlessness* suggest that to better remember the phenomenologist has to start by forgetting.

⁸⁸ Robert Sokolovski (1990, p. 179) comments on this passage and explains the concept of displacement (*Versetzung*) by contrasting recognition with remembering. When I recognize a present object I do not displace myself; I am just aware that what is in front of me fulfils my anticipations. When I remember an object I play off the presence the object had for me when I perceived it against its actual absence. Remembering is recognition “at a distance”.

laterally aware of my past perceptual experience of that object. In self-forgetful remembering, the reproduced past experience overwhelms the ego as “the bearer of the flowing now.” Self-forgetful remembering irrupts of its own accord in the present and makes use of interrupted, syncopated, discontinuous associative chains. The advantage of this position is that instead of distinguishing between involuntary and reflective rememberings it posits that acts of remembering are at the same time passive and active.

Conclusion

Husserl’s first theory of memory as *image consciousness* cannot account for the dynamic and transformative aspects of memory and therefore lends itself to the objection of *passivism*. Aware of this shortcoming, Husserl revised his position and conceived of memory as *reproductive modification of perception*. This new theory eschews the limitation of passivism while giving a more reasonable account of the intertwining between passivity and activity in all the operations of memory.

The major function of secondary passivity is to open the primordial sphere of impressional self-givenness toward non-original reproductive givenness. The evidence of original impression gets transferred to retentions and then further to rememberings. This transfer of evidence has a two-fold meaning: the broadening of the concept of presentification and the insertion of non-givenness, absence and non-originality in the primordial sphere. As a result, the frontier separating the original givenness or presence from non-original givenness or absence becomes more

permeable. The capacity to transcend itself makes the primordial sphere hospitable toward absence and otherness.

Husserl tends to oscillate between blaming passivity for the onset of forgetfulness as muddling of associative chains and arguing that passive sedimentation preserves objective contents intact and only modifies their mode of givenness. However, the dual role of retention - holding in grasp and letting loose - suggests that remembering and forgetting work together to keep prominences in reserve.

Chapter IV Passivity and Crisis

1. The intersubjective aspects of secondary passivity: habitus and language

Considerations regarding the constitution of ideal objectivities belonging to the cultural world⁸⁹ led Husserl to employ the contrast activity/passivity in connection not only with egoic life but also with intersubjectivity. The investigations of habitus and language are at the root of this enlargement of the domain of passivity.

Habitus is not just a more complex form of - although it is strongly akin with - memory. Nothing compels the phenomenologist who wants to account for memory to leave the sphere of individual consciousness. In contrast, community membership and interaction with other egos are necessary conditions for the establishment of habitualities.

People must develop quite a significant number of habits if they want to avoid wasting unreasonable amounts of energy on even the simplest of tasks. The acquisition of habits could be described as struggling against and at least partially overcoming various internal as well as external *resistance forces* and *obstructions*. As the ego acquires more habits, it liberates the energy invested in reducing *some* resistances so as to be able to engage in more sophisticated undertakings. On the one hand, the ego is most passive *ab initio*, before it had time to develop any habits. Early childhood is a time when resistances and obstructions can only be overcome with lots of assistance from parents or care givers. On the other hand, the more habitualities it

⁸⁹ Throughout this chapter I refer mainly to the second book of *Ideas, Experience and Judgment*, and *The Crisis of European Sciences*

acquires, the more passive the ego becomes. True, habits flatten obstructions and diminish the energy necessary to handle them. Therefore, by developing more habits the ego expands its potentialities for action. The drawback is that habits deeply entrenched in one's behaviour often become second order resistances and obstructions. In this case, de-habitation or de-sedimentation is imperative. Yet overcoming second order resistances depends on the acquisition of second order habits. Should a situation arise in which an automatism manifested itself as an obstruction, this obstruction would be all the more insidious for not being noticed as such. In any case, the study of habitualities shows that passivity, as encounter with resistance forces, is inescapably intertwined with human activity.⁹⁰

Insofar as some forms of sedimentation rely on linguistic support, similar arguments could be made with respect to language. In Husserl's view, the linguistic function of "documentation" is crucial for the conservation and transmission of spiritual objectivities. Linguistic features such as vagueness, equivocation and ambiguity seem to seriously threaten the success of documentation. Husserl regards these features as *resistances* and *obstructions* holding back the transmission of meaning. It is a matter of transcendental necessity that all original products of reason should be converted into passive sediments. In order to counter the undesirable side effects of sedimentation, equivocation, ambiguity and vagueness must be minimized. In light of Husserl's ambition to bolster the rigour of the science of philosophy this

⁹⁰Matthew Barney's *Drawing Restraint* art project (1988-93) offers a vivid illustration of the mutual determination between passivity and activity. Barney's studio included the most perversely inventive equipment that could interrupt or encumber his drawing. His body tethered in a complicated system of rings, ropes and shackles, Barney manipulated tools whose unwieldiness put a tremendous strain on the creative process. The final work of art was made up of graphic marks which resulted just as much from the activity of drawing as from the resistances and obstacles hampering that activity.

injunction comes as no surprise. The price Husserl must pay for his highly abstract view of pure logical grammar is the inability to account for the practice of translation. But why should Husserl care about translation at all? In my view, Husserl could have supplied a better palliative for the crisis he so forcefully condemned had he paid more attention to the problem of translation.

It should have become clear from the previous chapters that Husserl takes the life of consciousness to be active insofar as it involves freedom, spontaneity, wakefulness, vividness and explicit self-evidence. On the contrary, consciousness is passive insofar as it cannot avoid inertia, slumber, opaqueness, latency, and concealment. Anchored in the context of the life of a community of monads, the phenomena of habitus and language bring out the *ethical* significance of passivity: passivity blocks the fulfillment of the imperative of individual as well as communal **renewal** (*Erneuerung*). Passive tendencies determine the individual to waver in her vocational choice of rational life goals. Moreover, communities in the life of which passive tendencies take the upper hand remain oblivious as to the sources of their own traditions. By interrupting “the historical teleology of the infinite goals of reason”(C, 299), passive tendencies generate cultural crises.

In the next two sections of this chapter I focus on the impact habitus and language respectively have on theoretical activity. In the last section I challenge Husserl’s scenario for bringing crises to a close. I claim that reconfiguring the correlation passivity/activity is a more appealing way of battling crises than the impracticable total reactivation of passive sediments. In view of the phenomenological efforts to describe subjectivity as spontaneous production of

meaning, passivity's role could hardly extend beyond that of material supplier for categorial operations. Although Husserl does not acknowledge it explicitly, his account of habitus and language suggests a relation of *mutual* determination between activity and passivity. I will use the example of translation as *reception of foreignness* to make the case for the ethical merits of passivity and to show that passivity harbours potential solutions for reconciling the very tensions which ignited the crisis. Although this may seem a point Husserl was unlikely to make, it is consistent with his larger account of otherness, as I will show in my last chapter.

2. The concept of habitus

The theme of habitus features prominently in sections of *Ideas II* dedicated to the investigation of the “animal nature” as a specific stratum of sense containing psychic items. For the personalistic attitude interested in the study of developmental psychology, habitus is a residue of past life that informs the current perceptions, thought and actions of the ego. “It belongs to what is universally typical that people in general are determined in their comportment by their previous experience” (*Ideas II* 185). But due to differences in personal history no two people have the exact same set of habitualities. It is a matter of empirical research to establish why certain people develop the habit of listening to opera while other people's personalities feature obedience as dominant trait. If this is the case, would not psychology or sociology or a combination of the two be in a better position to study the acquisition of habits? Why are habits relevant for phenomenology at all?

Habitualities must be developed in connection with all levels of the life of consciousness, from drives and instincts through perception and imagination to abstract thought. Some habits which strongly depend on bodily movements and organic processes seem to belong to the domain of pure passivity as “nature side” or “obscure underlying basis” (*Ideas II*, 289) of the spiritual ego. Instincts, drives and sensations generate habitualities simply because they are determined by stable hardwired causal mechanisms. As Husserl says, “to yield to a drive establishes the drive to yield: habitually” (*Ideas II*, 267). If I daily indulge in my favourite chocolate, then certain chemical modifications in my body will probably make me crave for chewing more of it in the future. Habituated to process large daily intakes of sugar, my body will act on its own, as it were: while reading a magazine I could be unaware that I have already finished an entire chocolate bar. Nevertheless, habits cannot be reduced to mechanical responses triggered by physical stimuli. Though natural causality may play a significant part in their establishment, habits must be regarded as subjective productions springing from ‘free motivations.’

The consciousness of the *I can* is the essential component of habits as *faculties* of the ego. Habits are variable responses meant to counter the resistance forces manifest in given situations. They arise out of and increase the potential for active contact between the ego and its environment. But egoic activity does not simply mean doing something as opposed to having something done to oneself. It means being engaged in a *special way* in what one is doing. The ego is eminently active when it performs a position taking (*Stellungnahme*). To take a position one has to pick a thing or an idea out of a context and make it a *theme* of theoretical interest.

In all activity there is a *patent* intentionality which makes objects the substrates of actual determinations. The more complex a habit is the more activity is required for it to take root into one's behaviour.

But all successfully acquired habitualities wind up concealing the original activity from which they sprang. The ego's relinquishing of the status of "source point" is an indication that a skill has been fully acquired. Phenomenologically, a flow of *lived* experiences from which the ego is altogether absent is pure absurdity. Habitual activities require ego participation (*Ich Beteiligung*). But usually, this participation is minimal and removed from introspective reach. Routines, automatisms, skills, but also dispositions, attitudes and competences belong to the vast domain of "unreflected consciousness" (Ideas II 256). For example, speaking requires a great deal of movement coordination and semantic decisions but in most cases it comes effortlessly to us. When learning foreign languages, one confronts new resistance forces thereby realizing how complex linguistic competences taken for granted in one's mother tongue, really are.

Thus, habits have a hybrid nature. The "primal institution" (*Urstiftung*) of a habit is based on intense active effort to master the resistances and obstructions which hold back the current projects of the ego. But as soon as the resistance forces subside, there is no longer any need for an authentic "insertion" of the ego in the flow of lived experiences. The characteristic vividness (*Lebendigkeit*) which marks the active engagement of the ego with its environment disappears. Instead, the ego continues its engagements in a *pre-reflective* mode. Inasmuch as the *I can* never withdraws from habitual experiences, the ego can at any moment actively reinsert itself in the position

of the “source point.” But as a matter of fact, habitus designates a *passive pre-reflective experience* in which the ego is only latently involved. As Husserl says: “Everything habitual belongs to passivity. Even the activity that has become habitual” (APS, 631).

However, the main reason habitus is an important topic in Husserlian phenomenology is that it contributes to the achievement of objective evidence. This is chiefly apparent in the project of “the phenomenological genealogy of logic” (EJ, 18). The logician can only establish truth conditions if she separates the forms of judgments from their ultimate substrates which are individual pre-given objects. Propositional and predicate calculus provide a reliable ‘technology’ for assembling sound proofs into logical inferential systems. But without the retrogression (*Rückgang*) to the original self-evidence of the ultimate substrates of judgments, Husserl claims, there can be no complete account of evidence. Evidence is obtained by supplementing the movement away from *doxa* toward *episteme* with the return from *episteme* toward *doxa*. But what exactly is this *passive doxa* the phenomenologist must at once leave behind and return to? Here is Husserl’s description.

We can also say that an actual *world* always precedes cognitive activity as its universal ground, and this means first of all a ground of **universal passive belief in being** which is presupposed by every particular cognitive operation. Everything which as an existing object, is a goal of cognition is an existent on the ground of the world, which is taken as existing as a matter of course. (EJ, 30)

Two features stand out in this account of the passive belief in being: (i) the taken-for-granted-ness and (ii) the pre-cognitive character.

(i) In general, taken-for-granted-ness is one of the marks of habitualities. Insofar as the passive belief in being takes the world for granted, as it were, it can be said that it is a habitus or at least an ingredient in a habitual complex.⁹¹ But the case of the passive *doxa* is somewhat peculiar. In everyday life, people take for granted myriads of things. The vast majority of passively received opinions are acquired through habituation and open to revisions in further experience. Yet the passive belief in being is not a residue of past experience nor can it be shaken by experiential disconfirmations or cancellations. It is a necessary background for all particular perceptual syntheses. A footnote to *Ideas II* makes the notion of a habitus preceded by no habituation seem less of a contradiction. Husserl distinguishes between ordinary habits and the “habitual style” of experience (*Ideas II*, 260; also C, 344). On the one hand, acquired habits concern acts that we have already performed or things that we have previously experienced. On the other hand, habitus as the overall style of prepredicative experience operates independently of actual repetitions of past experiences

(ii) This habitual style of the experience of the world is a kind of *typical pre-cognition* (*Vorbekanntheit*)(EJ, 31) whose role is to maintain a balance between determinacy and indeterminacy in perceptual experience. This pre-cognition prescribes the steps which can be taken in order to reduce the “flowing variability” of appearances. I look at a thing that is now in front of me. Should I turn around it to explore the sides that are momentarily out of sight, my expectations as to how those sides would look like would be relatively determined. Every particular thing

⁹¹ When it comes to phenomenologically inspired accounts of habitus, Alfred Schutz is an author to reckon with. In Schutz’s terms, the passive belief in being is the fundamental element of the “stock of knowledge” (*Wissenverrat*). See Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckman *The Structure of the Life World*

determination is arbitrary, but the *Spielraum* to which it belongs is fixed in advance. This means that things come to perception as belonging to *types* or as having a range of possible determinations fixed in advance. As *totality of typifications* (EJ 36), the world horizon cannot be called into question: although it is locally vague and fluid, it is essentially trustworthy.

Typification differentiates habitus from memory. To remember means to reproduce specific objects or events experienced in the past. The wedding I recollect now is the *same* wedding I attended last week. As the name suggests, typification is not concerned with the sameness of individual objects but with schematic and uniform determinations of classes of objects.⁹² This explains the interdependence between habitus and anticipations. It is not enough to say that the recognition of an individual as instantiation of a type is grounded in habitualities which result from previously repeated experience. Habitualities are necessary ingredients in all experiences, including first encounters. It can be said both that past anticipations establish provisional habitual types and that habitualities give rise to anticipatory schemas which simplify complex perceptual experience. Typifications are perfectly adequate for most of the everyday purposes. Nevertheless, it often happens that habitual expectations unwarrantedly impute misleading determinations to things. Previous encounters with some aggressive dogs may encourage one to extend the determinations “dangerous” or “thing that bites” even to specimens of more gentle breeds. Such cases draw attention to unwarranted assumptions underlying perceptual

⁹² It is in these terms that Alfred Schutz distinguishes between two types of familiarity: the familiarity of memory based on the recognition of the same individual and the familiarity of habitus based on sedimented meaning contexts in which individuals are located. See Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckman *The Structure of the Life World* pp.142-47.

experience. But as perceptual experience advances, it cancels or disconfirms the determinations unjustifiably supplied by passive associative transfer between similar objects.

All experiences involve habitual expectations that prescribe supplementary determinations to be obtained. In other words, the aiming beyond (*Hinausmeinen*) belongs to objective experience as such: all objects are given as explicable.

Every act of experience, whatever it may be that is experienced in the proper sense as it comes into view, has *eo ipso*, necessarily, a knowledge and a potential knowledge having reference to precisely this thing, namely, to something of it which has not yet come into view. This preknowledge (*Vorwissen*) is indeterminate as to content, or not completely determinate, but it is never completely empty; and were it not already manifest, the experience would not at all be experience of this one, this particular, thing. (EJ, 32).

The experience of particular things is inserted in what Husserl calls internal and external horizons. The internal horizon includes the multiple profiles or viewings of the same thing, whereas external horizon relates an individual thing to its spatial proximity. The internal and external horizons ground the habitual expectation that there is always more to be seen than what presently appears. Every apprehension of a thing determination comes as a fulfillment of a previous anticipation and every new determination sets out new expectations for future determinations.

If habitual expectations make possible the *advance* of the explicative process, habitualities also refer to the conservation of the *results* of explications. In this sense, habituation consists in the passive formation of sediments or precipitates (*Niederschläge*) of experience.

At every stage of the explication there is constituted for the object of the apprehension, the object being at first indeterminate, i.e., already vaguely familiar in its horizon and determined solely by anticipation, a precipitate of cognition *in habitus*. After the process of explication in the mode of originality has run its course, the object, even though it has sunk into passivity, remains constituted as the one having been constituted with the determination in question. The object has incorporated into itself the forms of sense originally constituted in the acts of explications by virtue of a *knowledge in the form of a habitus*. Thus all contemplation which enters into an object has a *lasting result* with regard to the object (EJ 122)

In contemplative explication, the exploring regard passes over from the currently apprehended profile to the next ones. The transition from the obtruding to the less distinguishable determinations does not alter the underlying unity of the perceived object. It is the object itself which is perceived from all the different angles and through all the different aspects. Having been so and so determined, the object becomes a habitual *possession*. *Habitus* maintains on hand the partial as well as the final results of the explicative process. Husserl says that the formation of precipitates of explication takes place passively “without our participation” (EJ, 123). This means that habitual “possessions” are always on hand even if they do not constitute the theme of current activities of the ego.

Analogous descriptions apply in the case of habitualities specific for the predicative level. The passing over from substrate to explicate in explication corresponds to the passing over from subject to predicate in the act of judging. A phenomenological account of the genealogy of logic must address the questions of how a perceptual substrate becomes a judicative subject and how an explicate becomes a judicative predicate. In Husserl’s view, the judgment *repeats* the explicative passing over *in a different attitude* (EJ 207-208). The original act of

judgement consists in taking a position, making a decision, or forming a conviction on the basis of continual verification and weighing of evidence coming from unobstructed receptive experience. In the predicative realm, habituation integrates convictions into a coherent system so that the ego remains consistent with itself. *Habitus* preserves convictions only as long as they are motivated. To have a conviction means to assume it as one's own possession as long as contrary motivations do not disconfirm it. Habitual convictions endure only because the ego constantly renews its initial judgements and decides to verify their validity.

Yet like all acts of consciousness, an original judgment necessarily gets modified, meaning that a judgment

[...] sinks ever further into the background and at the same time becomes ever more indistinct [...]. It is henceforth incorporated into the passive background, into the "unconscious", which is not a dead nothingness but a limiting mode of consciousness and accordingly can affect us anew like another passivity in the form of whims, free-floating ideas and so on [...]. In this passive modification it therefore represents, like any other passivity which has arisen through the modification of what is originally constituted as a source, a *habituality of the ego*, a permanent possession (EJ 279).

To sum up, in relation to cognitive evidence, habitualities have an ambiguous status. On the one hand, through their anticipatory dimension, they propel the synthetic activity of consciousness. Habitual expectations prescribe future steps for reducing the indeterminacy of the actual precepts or judgments. By stockpiling more habitual meanings, a person navigates with more ease within her everyday environment. The more a habit is reinforced by experience, the less resistance comes from the world. Economically, *habitus* has the advantage of minimizing the expenditure of psychic energy.

On the other hand, as more and more meanings are taken for granted, the necessity of constantly renewed active verifications and confirmations gets blurred. On the predicative level, habituation can result in dubious persistent opinions, such as prejudices, which endure only because they preclude future disconfirmations and forestall the reaccomplishment of the judgments which generated them. In a word, *habitus* obscures the urgency of the task of scientific renewal.

This is why the impact of *habitus* on the constitution of scientific evidence is so wearisome for Husserl. When *habitus* intervenes in scientific research, it loosens the control over the steps of verification. Scientific exactness is compatible neither with assumptions taken for granted nor with presuppositions of questionable soundness. Yet taken-for-granted-ness is the unavoidable product of sedimentation and traditionalization. Traditionalization drains “the unity of intentional inwardness”(C, 73) out of the historical carrying out of *theoria* as ideal of Reason. Husserl sees history not as an accumulation of empirical facts but as common pursuit of the ideal of complete, determinate and veridical knowledge of the world. Consequently, he offers a rather meagre sample of epochal events in “European” history.⁹³ He grants Greek civilization the merit of commencing the historical phase of human becoming. The birth of philosophy in Greece is the first historical stage in the infinite search of absolute knowledge. The Renaissance constitutes the second crucial moment of this intellectual history, especially because of Galileo’s *Nachstiftung* of Greek scientific ideals. Already in Galileo, the disconnection of the judgments of science from the judgments of experience signals a disruption of the

⁹³ In the last section of this chapter, I will come back to the thorny issue of the geographical inscriptions of spiritual history.

interplay between *episteme* and *doxa* or a substitution of the latter by the former. Accomplishing the first steps in “the geometrization of nature”, Galileo opened the way for the process of covering the world of experience with “a garb of ideas” (EJ 45). The great potential for scientific renewal of Descartes’ and Kant’s meditations on transcendental motive was, in Husserl’s views, obscured by the “misguided rationalism” of nineteenth century positive science, which yielded to objectivism and naturalism. Thus, by superimposing a stratum of idealized objectivities over the prepredicative experience of the lifeworld, traditional or sedimented science remains oblivious of the source of its own evidence. The phenomenological retrogression to the prepredicative experience is not a rejection of idealization as such but an attempt to trace the historicity of meaning back to intuitive experience. Retrogression implies de-sedimentation or de-habitation. The passive conservation of what has been handed down by tradition takes over the ideal of objective truth and side-tracks the “the universal teleology of reason”(C, 378). Among the determinant conditions of such disruptions or crises, Husserl singles out the disunity between the highly specialized branches of science. The more results scientists obtain, the less realistic the ambition of a total synthesis becomes. Surrendering this ambition translates into the forgetfulness of the inner *telos* of reason. Instead of permanently calling into question the validity of the handed down results, scientists content themselves with taking for granted the spiritual accomplishments passed on from generation to generation. What was once vividly and self-evidently given in intuition passes over into the passivity of collective sedimentation.

3. Passivity and language: the problem of translation

Language is obviously a vast philosophical theme and Husserl's treatment of it is indeed complex. In this section, I draw on some of my remarks about sedimentation and habitus to spell out the reasons which determined Husserl to tie language with passivity. First, I focus on the linguistic function of "documentation" and I explain the alarming effects of "the seduction of language" (C, 362). Next, I say a few words about the idea, never relinquished by Husserl, of "pure logical grammar" and then I reconstruct the theory of translation which could be derived from this formal conception of language. I challenge Husserl's view that passive usages of language result *only* in obstructing the logic's thrust toward pure forms. I conclude by illustrating the ethical merits of passivity with the notion of translation as *reception of foreignness*.

Starting with *Logical Investigation*, Husserl parenthetically acknowledged the contribution of linguistic documentation to the edifice of science.

All theoretical research, though by no means solely conducted in acts of verbal expression or complete statement, none the less terminates in such statement. Only in this form can truth, and in particular the truth of theory, become an **abiding possession** of science, a **documented**, ever available treasure for knowledge and advancing research (LI, 250).

The issue of documentation resurfaces with an acute sense of urgency in *The Origin of Geometry*. This time, Husserl includes documentation in the category of *passive usages of language* and establishes a direct link between the latter and the phenomenon of cultural crisis.

Along with tools, artefacts, architectural styles or political constitutions,

language is an ideal objectivity belonging to the cultural world (APS, 11; FTL, 20). As system of signs, language has a special function: it ensures the conservation and transmission of all theoretical objectivities. Without linguistic documentation, theoretical objectivities could not acquire “persisting existence” (*vorharrende Dasein*) (C, 360). Yet the persistence of validities (*Geltungen*) must be secured in advance if a scientific *tradition* is to be constituted. Validities persist in the sense of being integrated in a “mobile forward process” (*beweglicher Fortgang*) which establishes new theoretical results by drawing on already acquired evidences.

Husserl takes geometry as an especially relevant “case study” of cultural traditions. Geometry can be regarded as having effectively cut off its objects of study from any particular cultural contexts. Although it had its *first* historical inscription in the *empirical* moment of early Greek civilization, Euclidian geometry established the universal ideal of definitiveness (*Endgültigkeit*) and of absolute objectivity as *invariant* a priori structure of history. Geometry’s exemplary status comes from its success in accomplishing what culture *as such* strives for: objective, universal and supratemporal truth.⁹⁴

In *The Origin of Geometry*, Husserl’s reasons for introducing the issue of language seem at first misleading.

Our problem concerns precisely the ideal objects which are thematic in geometry: how does geometrical ideality (just like that of all sciences) proceed from its primary intrapersonal origin, where it is a structure within the conscious space of the first inventor’s soul, to its ideal objectivity (C, 357-58)?

⁹⁴ “Every spiritual accomplishment proceeding from its first project (*Vorhabe*) to its execution (*Ausführung*) is present for the first time in the self-evidence of actual success” (C, 356).

Self-evidence means grasping an object, whether real or ideal, in its being-itself-there (*selbst-da*). As this grasping is supposed to be the work of individual geometers, there arises the difficulty of communalizing an intrasubjectively constituted sense. Husserl seems to call upon language to solve precisely this difficulty. However, he also emphasizes repeatedly that factual details concerning the mental life of “mythical” first mathematicians are entirely immaterial when the object of investigation is the *origin* of geometry. Of interest here are only the “original spiritual motives” (*ursprünglichen geistigen Motiven*) (C 347) overseeing the accumulation of geometrical results. Origins are not datable beginnings but perpetually originating motives embraced by all individuals working within a tradition and driving that tradition, in all its particular stages, forward.

Geometrical objectivities are given to consciousness as being valid and accessible for everyone, everywhere and at all times. Therefore, the function of language is not that of rescuing the production of sense from the closure of individual minds but rather that of ensuring the conservation and transmission of meanings communalized from the outset.⁹⁵ Language is not a garb of thought and neither is the ego a self-contained and perfectly transparent source of meaning. The problem is not to show how linguistic ex-pression can display in the objective *outside* meanings completely constituted in a subjective *inside* but to explain the “inseparable intertwinement” (C 359) between language and world.

⁹⁵ Two people engaged in dialogue do not fully articulate their opinions conceptually and subsequently search for words which would make their opinions accessible to each other. As soon as a thought occurs to someone, it does so by taking a linguistic form. The private reflection is no exception. “In solitary thought in which one expresses to oneself, it is surely not the case that we would first have the formation of thought and then seek the suitable words. Thinking is carried out from the outset as linguistic” (APS 12).

The objective world is from the start the world for all, the world which everyone has as world-horizon. Its objective being presupposes men, understood as men with a common language. Language, for its part, as function and exercised capacity, is related correlatively to the world, the universe of objects which is linguistically expressible in its being and in its being-such (C, 359).

By setting down in writing the results of scientific research, documentation opens the “horizon of civilization” (C 358) and makes ideal objectivities potentially available across human generations. But this availability will remain, by necessity, “potential” that is, precarious, uncertain and exposed to indelible risks. Perhaps future generations would be unwilling to reactivate what has been set down in writing. Moreover, assuming the will to re-activate would not wither away, the imperfections in the language of written documents could compromise the attempts at restoring their meaning.

Documentation makes communally available, conserves and transmits across generations meanings that have been already established. Documentation qualifies as a *passive usage of language* insofar as writing receives or records constituted idealities while disconnecting them from the sense giving acts in which they have their origin. This explains why documentation is a potential means for the formation of habitualities.

The writing-down effects a transformation of the original mode of being of the meaning structure, [e.g.] within the geometrical sphere of self-evidence, of the geometrical structure which is put into words. It becomes sedimented, so to speak (C, 361).

By converting original products of reason into passive sediments, documentation winds up inhibiting the relentless questioning of “ready made” scientific validities with regard to their fundamental presuppositions. As I have

mentioned in the previous section, this alone is a strong enough symptom for Husserl to diagnose a crisis.⁹⁶ If traditions cover up original formations of meaning (*Sinnbildungen*) and if sciences deactivate their sources of evidence and ‘forget’ their overall meaning for human life, then part of the blame for all this must be laid on “the seduction of language.”

It is easy to see that even in [ordinary] human life, and first of all in every individual life from childhood up to maturity, the originally intuitive life which creates its originally self-evident structures through activities on the basis of sense-experience very quickly and in increasing measure falls victim to *the seduction of language*. Greater and greater segments of this life lapse into a kind of talking and reading that is dominated purely by association; and often in respect to the validities arrived at in this way, it is disappointed by subsequent experience (C, 362).

Husserl deplores the seduction of language even when it is kept within the sphere of the everyday life where it has three types of mildly detrimental effects:

(i) Insofar as it belongs to the “horizon of civilization” language “encircles”⁹⁷ us and makes available for use worn out formulas, prefabricated meanings and clichéd ways of speaking. Political propaganda is a rather extreme example of pompous talk that says nothing. But to a greater or lesser extent every person makes their own contribution to empty talk.

(ii) In some common linguistic performances, judgments are passively accepted or taken up in the sense that there is no spontaneous production of synthetic

⁹⁶ In his introduction to *The Origin of Geometry*, Derrida states: “we could interpret the phenomenon of crisis (which, for Husserl, always refers to a disorder or illness of language) as a degradation of the sign expression into a sign indication, of a ‘clear’ (*Klar*) intention into an empty signal” (92).

⁹⁷ Donn Welton, *The origins of meaning*, (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers: 1983), pp.280-281. Welton claims that the later Husserl provided a genetic account of language. In Welton’s view, “encircling” is the most common sense in which language is passively used. But Welton also argues for an idea of “originary speech”, both passive and active, which does not only *uses* meanings but also *generates* them.

unity between a posited subject and a posited predicate. Sometimes Husserl refers to this type of intellectual grasping as *vague* or *confused* judging (FTL, 56); other times he uses the expression “passive understanding” (C, 361, 364). Explication (*Verdeutlichung*) can turn a vague judgement into a *distinct* one by unfolding its sense moments and seizing their articulation. Husserl’s favourite illustration of linguistic performances which involves vague judgments is reading.

Consider, for example, the way in which we understand, when superficially reading the newspaper, and simply receive the “news”; here there is a passive taking over of ontic validity such that what is read straightaway becomes our opinion (C, 364; see also FTL, 56 and *Ideas I*, p. 318).

Reading would be *entirely* passive if it were restricted to the unification of written marks into separate sensible configuration. For example, this is what happens when people “read” notes in indecipherable hand writing or books in languages of which they have no knowledge or when the reading of a book is just about to ease someone’s way into sleep. But usually, reading involves various degrees of vague as well as distinct judgements. Reading is a passive usage of language not only because it relies on sense perception but also because readers perform judgements in a vague way, that is, they take up meanings as valid while falling short of re-activating the original sense-giving acts which generated them. Of course, vague judgments are not necessarily present in all acts of reading. Most academics read texts with great interpretative care closely following trains of arguments, bringing out tacit presuppositions and noting inferential sloppiness or points insufficiently defended. But often in everyday life, readers fall prey to passive tendencies and give up their attempts at carrying out the sense-giving acts required to grasp the intellectual content

of the text. In this context, vagueness is not a linguistic characteristic of terms whose reference is indefinite or of sentences whose meaning is imprecise. Rather, vagueness refers to a mode of givenness of judgements. Distinct judgement processes can deliberately result in linguistically ambiguous propositions. Likewise, judgements vaguely performed can have a very precise content.

(iii) The special types of judicative performances involved in reading suggest a more general description of passive understanding. Husserl says that succumbing to the seduction of language means to let “the free play of associative constructions” (C, 362) hold sway over the everyday linguistic performances. “Passivity in general is the realm of things that are bound together and melt into one another associatively, where all meaning that arises is put together passively” (C 361). To be seduced by language is to trade the inquisitiveness of rigorous explication (*Verdeutlichung*), characteristic of original *Sinnbildungen*, for the complacent acceptance of poorly differentiated if not commingled meanings.

Such remarks give rise to several questions. Are these passive tendencies deplorable under all circumstances? Must consciousness struggle to eradicate them at all costs? What types of interests do they thwart? Would it make any sense to cultivate rather than inhibit passive usages of language?

Husserl acknowledges that the imprecision and vagueness of everyday language correspond, to some extent, to the fluctuations and vagueness of pre-scientific experience. As I showed in the last section, the habitual world of pre-scientific experience is a world that holds “in suspension” (*in der Schwebe*) (C, 344) the process of determination. The experiential flux is only partially stabilized by

ranging things into rough *types* according to relative and inexact determinations. Being directed toward practical goals, pre-scientific experience has no special need for exactness and can easily operate with determinations that admit of degrees, such as evenness, smoothness or roundness. To take Husserl's example, measuring and land surveying are practical goals of chief importance for private as well as public affairs but rough estimates serve well all interests involved. Likewise, acts of communication are all the time being accomplished with relative success despite the imprecision, vagueness and equivocity of everyday language.

However, when it comes to the scientific pursuit of theoretical interests, exact determinations must necessarily replace vague types. This transition is not incremental but takes the form of a leap from the pre-scientific experiential flux (*doxa*) to absolute fixed determinations (*episteme*). Husserl acknowledges that not even the purest logical science can avoid the transformation of its results into a precipitate of "persisting linguistic acquisitions" (C, 362). Passive sedimentations are unavoidable and they bring in their wake the "constant danger" of the "free play of associative constructions" (C, 362). In order to establish an authentic tradition, scientists must diminish as much as they can the negative effects of the passive tendencies at work in the everyday use of language. These passive tendencies operate as *resistance forces* and *obstructions* which hold back the transmission of meaning and seriously threaten the success of documentation. The logician can respond to such a redoubtable threat by securing in advance the possibility of future reactivation of original judicative acts, for example, by purging the natural language of equivocity and vagueness.

This danger is avoided if one not merely convinces oneself ex post facto that the particular construction can be reactivated but assures oneself from the start, after the self-evident primal establishment, of its capacity to be reactivated and enduringly maintained. This occurs when one has a view to the univocity of linguistic expression and to securing, by means of the most painstaking formation of relevant words, propositions, and complexes of propositions, the results which are to be univocally expressed (C, 362).

This preparatory work designed to eliminate the undesirable effects of sedimentation depends in large measure on the conception of language formulated in *Logical Investigations*. I do not want to take issue with the all too obvious necessity of preliminary linguistic disambiguation for scientific research. I will argue instead that Husserl missed out on one important positive type of passive language usage. First, I will discuss briefly the concept of “pure logical grammar” and then I will show that the theory of translation that could be derived from Husserl’s formal theory of language is unsatisfactory. My intention is to prove that some passive tendencies at work in linguistic acts should be intensely cultivated rather than rashly banned. I propose to think of translation in terms of *passive reception of or openness toward foreignness*. On the one hand, language is a *necessary preamble* for phenomenological research.

Linguistic discussion are certainly among the philosophically **indispensable preparations** for the building of pure logic: only by their **aid** can the true objects of logical research – and, following thereon, the essential species and differentiae of such objects – be refined to a clarity that excludes all misunderstanding (LI, 249).

Logical research is neither about language nor about individual mental acts. Rather, logic studies meanings as ideal intentional objectivities. But insofar as logical insight “*depends* on the verbal meanings which come alive in the actual passing of judgment” (LI 251), the study of language may offer valuable clues as to how consciousness *constructs* pure forms out of variable linguistic matter.

On the other hand, language is a *formidable obstacle* for the study of ideal objectivities. The logician must shift the focus from the linguistic incarnation of meanings (*Sprachleib*) toward the meaning intention that ‘animates’ or ‘ensouls’ the spoken or written words. What is essential in speech is not the emission of sounds; likewise, what is essential in writing is not shape of the ink marks on paper. Language users can of course pay heed to the phonetic and graphical aspects of words. But this is an exceptional situation which violates the “practical imperative” of focusing on what the words point toward or on what is meant *through* the words rather than on the words themselves. It is not easy to disentangle the invariant ideal components of meanings from their accidental “grammatical clothing” (LI 250) which varies in accordance with the natural language employed. Moreover, logical results, like the results of any other science, must be *stated* and *communicated* to others. And here the logician must resort to natural languages whose equivocities, polysemy and vagueness are hard to avoid.

Completely self-evident truths of essence, established by the most exact analysis, must be expounded by way of expressions whose rich variety does not compensate for the fact that they only fit familiar natural objects (LI, 255).

Husserl always emphasised that equivocations and ambiguities would have to be rooted out if essences which “directly make themselves known in intuition” (LI 249) are to receive linguistic expression.⁹⁸ Science must pursue methodologically the task of “the fixation of unambiguous sharply distinct verbal meanings” (LI, 238) in order to secure the communication of essential insights. Prior to everything else, there is the “fixing” of primitive concepts which can be divided in, on the one hand, *semantic categories*, such as concept, proposition, truth, connective forms, subject-form and predicate-form and, on the other hand, *objective categories*, such as, object, state of affairs, unity, plurality, number and relation. These primitive concepts explain the fundamental idea of unified theory as deductive combination of propositions.

The methodological fixing of meanings must fight against three different sources of linguistic fluctuations. First, everyday speech often employs words which denote perceptual types. Such words have relatively indefinite referents. Many people range spiders along with beetles in the class of bugs defined imprecisely as “crawling little creatures.” Although rightfully ridiculed by entomologists, such a definition serves well its purpose in everyday conversations. Second, polysemy suffuses natural languages. True, Husserl acknowledges that polysemy can hardly hamper theoretical interests. Contexts always provide clues as to which meaning of a word is actually intended. No one would find it hard to decide whether in a given context the word ‘square’ means plaza, rectangular figure with four equal sides or the product of a number multiplied by itself. Third, there is the class of “essentially fluctuating” (LI 1

⁹⁸ “In no field of knowledge is equivocation more fatal, in none have confused concepts so hindered the progress of knowledge, or so impeded the insight into its true aims, as in the field of pure logic” (LI, 238).

§28) or occasional expressions which includes personal and demonstrative pronouns as well as time and place adverbs. Words such as 'I', 'this', 'now' and 'here' serve the purpose of demarcating the spatio-temporal circumstances of utterances and therefore their meaning varies corresponding to the variation of these circumstances. At first, Husserl claims that all fluctuating expressions can "in principle" be replaced by objective descriptions. But the elimination of occasionality is a project buried as soon as announced.

We shall have to concede that such replacement is not only impracticable, for reasons of complexity, but, that it cannot in the vast majority of cases, be carried out at all, will, in fact, never be so capable... Strike out the essentially occasional expressions from one's language, try to describe any subjective experience in unambiguous, objectively fixed fashion: such an attempt is always plainly vain (LI 1 vol 1 pp. 321-322).

Husserl's solution is to say that what fluctuates is not the meaning of the indexicals but the correspondent meaning *acts*. In Jay Lampert's interpretation, occasionality poses no real difficulty for Husserl. If all meanings refer back to their origins and forward toward their ideal completions, then meanings must be at once fluid and fixed. On the one hand, all meanings must fluctuate in the sense of "passing over" into one other. On the other hand, all meanings must be fixable in the sense of having prescribed in advance possibilities of fulfillment. Conversing speakers can make sense of expressions such 'I', and 'This' because " "I"-points and "This"-points pivot on one another in the continuous shifting of standpoint necessary for the comprehension of any demonstrative term."⁹⁹

Setting limits to linguistic fluctuations is but one step toward the pure logic of meanings. In order to work his way toward pure logic, Husserl sets aside everything

⁹⁹ Jay Lampert *Synthesis and Backward Reference in Husserl's Logical Investigations*, p. 46

that is accidental or arbitrary about the linguistic ‘wrapping’ of meanings, for example, the fact that the same thing can be said differently in different languages.¹⁰⁰

The morphological and syntactical rules of natural languages are historically contingent. But over and above these contingencies, there is an “absolutely fixed ideal framework” (LI, 526) which includes a priori grammatical structures. Husserl proposes a formal theory of the possible combinations of independent and non-independent meanings into higher units. He calls the science of the a priori laws of the combinations of meanings “pure logical grammar” (LI, 526). The laws of pure grammar exclude the possibility of *nonsensical* combinations. A combination such as ‘A tree is and’ is just a “heap of meanings” (LI, 510) which cannot possibly form a unified whole. On a higher logical level, there are laws, such as the law of contradiction, which exclude formally *counter-sensical* combinations and laws which exclude materially counter-sensical combinations such as “All squares have five angles.”

Similar to the seventeenth century idea of *universal grammar*, Husserl’s pure logical grammar provides rules for the constructions of all possible meaning combinations out of a small number of fixed primitive categorial structures. These rules do not govern the combinations of parts of speech into sentences but the combinations of semantic categories into higher unified meanings. In general, any

¹⁰⁰ By annulling the differences between natural languages, Husserl’s logical grammar seems to look like a diaphanous medium for the transmission of ideal objectivities. Would the pure expression of ideal meaning require no *Sprachleib*? In his essay, *L’inexprimé de la recherche*, Gerard Granel interprets the idea of logical grammar as self-manifestation without remainder of ideal objectivities. Logical grammar would be for intellection what a non-perspectival view of all the sides of an object would be for perception. Pure language is *Verbum Dei*.

meaningful form of combination remains meaningful as long as its variables are replaced or substituted by instances of the same semantic category.

Husserl says that the construction of complex meanings out of primitive meaning units has nothing to do with the material content of thought. This led some commentators to compare Husserl's account of *ars combinatoria* with theories of axiomatic formal systems.¹⁰¹ Others have claimed that purely logical combinations of meanings are similar with the "deep structures" of Chomsky's generative grammar.¹⁰² Instead of discussing the merits or flaws of these comparisons, I argue that Husserl's abstract view of logical grammar can only ground an unsatisfactory theory of translation.

Husserl may have objected to drawing a theory of translation from his conception of pure logical grammar on the grounds that the practice of translation is too entangled in questions regarding contingent lexical and syntactical features of natural languages.¹⁰³ However, some passages suggest that pure logical grammar entails universal translatability, that linguistic differences pose no obstacle to the

¹⁰¹Yohoshua Bar-Hillel, "Husserl's Conception of Purely Logical Grammar", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 17: 1957, pp 363-369. Bar-Hillel interprets Husserl's idea of pure grammar as weaker version of Carnap's rules for obtaining well-formed formulae in axiomatic systems. However, Husserl warns against the confusion between pure logic as science of synthetic consciousness and formal axiomatics: "I assume accordingly that no one will think it enough to develop pure logic in the manner of our mathematical disciplines, as a growing system propositions having naively factual validity, without also striving to be philosophically clear in regard to the same propositions, without, that is, gaining insight into the essence of the modes of cognition which come into play in their utterance and in the ideal possibility of applying such propositions, together with all such conferments of sense and objective validities as are essentially constituted therein" (LI, 248).

¹⁰²James M. Edie *Speaking and Meaning: The Phenomenology of Language* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976, p. 63.

¹⁰³ Husserl strongly believed the interest of logical grammar to be purely theoretical. However, Wolfe Mays pointed out that mechanical translation could be regarded as one of the practical applications of logical grammar. See Wolfe Mays, "Edmund Husserl's Grammar: 100 Years On", *Journal of British Society for Phenomenology*, 33(3): 2002, p. 329.

circulation of meanings, that translation is easy and that any loss that might come along with it is insignificant.

Husserl describes logico-mathematical entities, e.g., sets, numbers, triangles and so on as “free idealities” (EJ, 267) or omni-spatial and omni-temporal objectivities. Not individuated in space and time, free idealities surpass all forms of cultural variability. As *objectivities of understanding*, logico-mathematical entities can be expressed in any language without the least alteration of sense.

[...] for them the difference between the original language of the work and its translation into other languages does not remove its identical accessibility or change it into an inauthentic, indirect accessibility [...]. The Pythagorean theorem, [indeed] all geometry, exists only once, no matter how often or even in what language it may be expressed. It is identically the same in the “original language” of Euclid and in all “translations” (C, 357).

To understand the relation between the areas of the squares built upon the sides of a right triangle one must carry out a definite number of operations. It is certainly correct to say that the language I speak has no effect on how I draw triangles, calculate areas, perform additions and so on. But Husserl also says, with less justification, that cultural objectivities *as such* are not only *bound*, that is, tainted by connections with real substances in the world but also *irreal*, that is, unconstrained by spatio-temporal individuation (EJ, 265-67). Illustrating this point with a brief remark about literary works, Husserl says that Goethe’s *Faust* is bound to real objects in the world, i.e., “exemplars” of the same book. It is not that different exemplars of the same book have *similar* meanings; rather all exemplars embody a perfectly *identical* ideal meaning. This passage clearly implies that, translated from the eighteenth century German into contemporary English or any other language for that

matter, 'Goethe's *Faust*' conserves its selfsameness of ideal objectivity. Translations do not just *approximate* the meaning of the original texts; rather they *repeat* it. Husserl also notes, somewhat hesitantly, that this repetition is always possible "in principle" (EJ, 266). However, the overall tendency of the paragraph is to *overlook* the obstacles and resistances that disrupt the transmission of meaning.¹⁰⁴

This tendency is characteristic of all theories which propose *equivalence* as the fundamental norm of translation. This norm requires an *adequate* or *accurate* rendition by means of the words available in the target language of that which is meant by the original text with the words of the source language. Translation consists in replacing one set of signifiers with another so that, throughout this transfer operation, the signified meaning of the original text undergoes no alteration. What is altered in translation is only the linguistic incarnation (*Sprachleib*) of meaning. That which, in Husserl's words, "ensouls" or "animates" an original text passes into translation with no loss.

First, words that refer to the same class of objects are perfect synonyms. To take an example from the *Logical Investigations*, as objective expressions, the words 'Löwe' and 'lion' immediately arouse the same intended objects in the minds of German and English speakers respectively (LI 316). Therefore, they constitute equivalent and substitutable units of meanings.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, in case an equivalent of

¹⁰⁴ Derrida has often pondered the blockages or stopping points (*arrêts*) of the transference of meaning. He criticized classical theories of translation, to which Husserl subscribed, of "transposable univocity" (LOB, 93) and proposed dissemination as alternative model of translation. This model is already alluded to in *The Origin of Geometry* but is better articulated in "Living On/Borderlines" (*Deconstruction and Criticism* New York: The Seabury Press, 1979).

¹⁰⁵ It could be objected that this example makes the praxis of translation look simpler than it really is. Could Husserl maintain that German equivalents for crucial philosophical concepts such as *logos*, *physis*, or *ousia* can be found just as easily as the English equivalent for the word 'Löwe'? In Heidegger's view, by passing from Greek into Latin and further into modern Western languages,

a foreign word cannot be found right away, any language has enough resources to produce it. All languages can invent new words or borrow words from other languages or use circumlocutions to name things or ideas for which no name was previously available.

Second, sentence-equivalence is just as unproblematic as word-equivalence. Two sentences one of which is the translation of the other can very well carry the same meaning even though their morphological structures are dissimilar. A given language may have some grammatical patterns that other languages lack or may lack some grammatical categories present in others.¹⁰⁶ This only shows that morphological equivalence is irrelevant for meaning equivalence. Every natural language is capable of expressing everything. For any formal combination of meanings whose possibility is sanctioned by pure logical grammar there exist linguistic incarnations in any given natural language regardless of their morphological and syntactical particularities. The questions a logician must ask, then, are the following:

philosophical concepts lost an essential part of their semantic load. According to Walter Benjamin, it is not only Greek philosophical concepts that resist translation. Even the most ordinary words do so. 'Brot' and 'pain' are not interchangeable, as Husserl's account of objective expressions would have it; they rather "strive to exclude each other." That two words refer to the same class of entities is not enough to make them synonymous. Although their "intended objects" (*der Intention vom Gemeinten*) coincide, 'Brot' and 'pain' differ with respect to their "mode of intention" (*die Art des Meines*). For Husserl, intention is a matter of egoic acts. Whether it is the French or the German language that mediates between egoic acts and objective meanings is secondary. The license of saying that words 'intend' is justified by the fact the egos intend objects through them. For his part, Benjamin claims that words get their modes of intention not from intentional acts of individual egos but from the meaning intention of languages taken as wholes. Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*", in *Illuminations*, tr. Harry Zohn, New York: Harcourt, Brace & world, Inc., 1968 p. 74, hereafter quoted as TT.

¹⁰⁶ When translating an isolated sentence from English into Russian, the translator must make an arbitrary choice with respect to the gender of nouns. Although this can be a real impediment for the translation of isolated sentences, the difficulty vanishes if sentences appear, as they usually do, in clarifying contexts. See Roman Jakobson. "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation", in L. Venuti ed. *Translation Studies Reader* New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 141.

How does German, Latin Chinese etc, express 'the' existential proposition, 'the' categorical proposition, 'the' antecedent of a hypothetical, 'the' plural, 'the' modalities of possibility and probability, 'the' negative etc. (LI, 526)?

However, having established which formal combination of meanings a given sentence is an instance of is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the translation of that sentence. Lexical, grammatical and stylistic equivalences must also be established. On the model of Husserl's formal *ars combinatoria*, translators would have to establish a different set of combination rules according to which semantic components would come to form larger lexical units. Translators would have to worry about plugging equivalent lexical units into given formal combinations of meanings.

An unqualified rejection of the norm of equivalence would certainly be preposterous. What must be contested is the extension of this norm from the region of *objectivities of understanding* to the entire realm of *cultural objectivities*. The norm of equivalence induces an *ethnocentric bias* in the practice of translation.¹⁰⁷ The claim that translation operates in virtue of linguistic universals and cultural invariants dissimulates the fact that the alleged appropriation of meaning is rarely neutral with respect to the relation domestic/foreign. If translation extricates the meaning of a text from its foreign *Sprachleib* it can only do so by simultaneously covering up the privilege secretly accorded to the domestic *Sprachleib*. The transfer of meaning across linguistic gaps would not appear as perfect if the barriers and resistances

¹⁰⁷ This thesis is the backbone of Antoine Berman's *ethics* of translation as presented in his essays *La traduction et la lettre ou l'auberge du lointain* (Paris: Seuil, 1995) and *L'épreuve de l'étranger* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984). Berman renews a tradition that started with Wilhelm von Humboldt continued with Schleiermacher and reached the point of its highest expression with Walter Benjamin.

inherent in those gaps had not been concealed.¹⁰⁸ But why should the ease with which a translation passes for a text written directly in the target language be the measure of its quality?

Against this old song, Antoine Berman presents translations as autonomous texts which openly expose their status of mediators.¹⁰⁹ The strength of translations comes from their vulnerability toward and capacity to make manifest the obstacles which block the perfect transmissibility of meaning. Giving away its failure is part of what makes a translation successful. Contesting the norm of equivalence, this view proposes that what distinguishes translation from other linguistic practices is the ability to take advantage of the space domestic languages harbour for foreignness.

Be that as it may, would it not be counterintuitive to link translation to passivity? After all, translators do not just wait for translations to write themselves but actively and creatively engage in the production of texts. Translators carefully weigh innumerable alternatives, experiment with syntactic and lexical torsions, adapt terminology, invent new words, try out new usages of archaisms and so on and so forth. Obviously, the example of translation could not be more unlike the example of reading - Husserl's standard case of passive usage of language. Reading tends to be a passive behaviour in so far as it takes opinions for granted rather than holding the content of a text as theme of reflection. While readers get by with vague judgments, translators must have a distinct grasp of a textual content to be able to reconstruct it by means of completely different syntactical and lexical materials.

¹⁰⁸ "J'appelle mauvaise traduction la traduction qui, généralement sous couvert de transmissibilité, opère une négation systématique de l'étrangeté de l'oeuvre étrangère" (Berman, 1984, p.17).

¹⁰⁹ See Berman (1984) p. 249.

Unlike habitus which is a passive pre-reflexive form of awareness and unlike reading which often fails to grasp judgments thematically, translation is passive in the sense that it relies on the capacity of language to receive the mark of foreignness. Translation is indeed an original activity but it is motivated by the openness toward and the desire to be faithful to the foreignness of a foreign text. By inscribing the mark foreignness into their *Sprachleib*, translations at once enrich and impoverish domestic languages. Foreignized through translation, a domestic language grows and actualizes means of expression which would have otherwise remained dormant. But at the same time, having received the mark foreignness, the domestic language reveals its constitutive lack, non-self-sufficiency and need for supplementary meaning intentions. Although Husserl never framed the issue of translation in these terms, I believe the idea of translation as motivated by the passivity of language is consistent with his overall conception of otherness.

An interesting picture of translation as space of mutual interaction between domestic and foreign emerges in Gadamer's discussion of cross-cultural interpretation. On the assumption that people really wish to attain a certain level of reciprocal understanding, this wish can only be fulfilled by entering a dialogical space in which genuine attempts are possible to negotiate between opposite views and seek agreement over contentious issues. However, to start off a conversation people must speak the same language or have some knowledge of the language their dialogue partner speaks or ask a translator for help. Compared to the first, the last two situations impose a supplementary strain on the already difficult activity of interpretation. Conversations do not always break down completely in the face of

language barriers.¹¹⁰ Yet linguistic differences are among the most serious disruptions of understanding. Those who seek genuine cross-cultural understanding submerge themselves in foreign cultures and endeavour to achieve proficiency in foreign languages so as to become capable not only to read original texts but also to operate with the conceptual schemes of those languages in conversation with native speakers. As for translations, they are relegated to the status of mere surrogates for those who are either lazy or intellectually ill-equipped for the tremendous effort that must go into any genuine interpretation.

Gadamer analyzes with a great deal of care the impediments which hold back the transfer of meaning from one language into another. Consequently, he is suspicious of the idea that translations are perfect replicas of originals.

Where a translation is necessary, the gap between the spirit of the original words and that of their reproduction must be accepted. It is a gap that can never be completely closed (TM, 346).¹¹¹

Every attempt to carry “the spirit of the original words” over the gulf (*Abstand*) between languages does some damage to the original text. “Everyone knows how the translation makes what is said in the foreign language sound flat.”¹¹² This flattening occurs as a result of the fact that translators are inescapably forced to “renounce” some textual features and to “highlight” others (TM, 348). However,

¹¹⁰ Alfonso Lingis has aptly described the way native bodies and faces summon travelers wondering in alien countries to respond to their silent calls and mute demands. Rather than initiating an exchange of information these calls and demands expose the self to caresses as well humiliations, to contestation as well as concord. See Alfonso Lingis *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.

¹¹¹ Gadamer *Truth and Method*, New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1975, p.346 hereafter quoted as TM.

¹¹² Gadamer “Man and Language” in *Philosophical Hermeneutics* tr. David E. Linge, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976, p. 67.

translators should not aim at producing identical replicas of original texts; “the meaning must be preserved, but since it must be understood within a new linguistic world, it must be expressed within it *in a new way*” (TM, 346). Thus, translation involves not only loss of meaning but also “gain” in expressivity. “[The translator] must gain for himself the infinite space of the saying that corresponds to what was said in the foreign language.”¹¹³ If translation appears to be an “agony” (TM, 363), it is because it demands a splintered loyalty to both the domestic and foreign language.

The translator must respect the character of his own language, into which he is translating, while still recognizing the value of the alien, even antagonistic character of the text and its expression (TM, 349).

Although he emphasizes this double faithfulness, Gadamer tends to think of translation in terms of *appropriation* or even *conquest* (*Überwindung*) of the alienness of texts (TM 349). The power of translation is that of domesticating the foreign. In a way, translation aims at self-annihilation. Interpreters must endeavour to reach the point where translation is no longer needed. In Gadamer’s view, the ideal hermeneutical situation is that which has surpassed the barriers of language. Interpreters would be better off if they did not have to put up with the difficulty of translation.

Against Gadamer it could be argued that it would be better to think of interpretation as an easy case of translation rather than make translation a difficult case of interpretation. Translation is *the* prototype of the encounter with the foreign. The adoption of a *characteristica universalis* would not make the reciprocal

¹¹³ Ibid.

understanding across cultures any easier. The “dream of non-translation”¹¹⁴ is nothing but a vain attempt to dissolve the foreignness of the foreign into a phantasmagorical global domesticity. Of course, translation can itself participate in the erasure of foreignness. This is what makes Antoine Berman’s description of translation as “experience/trial of the foreign” (*épreuve de l’étranger*) particularly fitting. Translation can betray its purpose by putting the foreign on trial and by conquering or domesticating it. However, the practice of translation opens a privileged space where the ethical imperative of a genuine *experience* of the foreign plainly manifests itself. Even though sometimes it does not rise up to this demand, translation embodies the responsibility of hosting the foreign within the domestic space. If this reception is not passive enough it runs the risk of exotifying the foreign but if it is too passive, that is, if it takes up too much foreignness, then it runs the risk of losing its intelligibility.¹¹⁵ Yet, the work of translation could not even start off if languages were not passively opening themselves to one another.

This is one of the points touched upon by Walter Benjamin in his widely commented essay *The Task of the Translator*. On a first level, translation facilitates

¹¹⁴ This is an expression used by John Sallis in his essay *On Translation*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002, p. 2.

¹¹⁵ In the introduction to his translation of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, Wilhelm von Humboldt notes that translations must display *the foreign* while censoring any excess of *foreignness*. “Every good translation both proceeds from and results in a simple and unassuming love for the original and the study that springs from such love. This view entails, to be sure, that the translation will carry a certain color of strangeness, of peculiarity, but the border line after which this becomes an undeniable mistake is easily drawn. **As long as the strangeness (*die Fremdheit*) itself is not felt, but only that we are in the presence of something strange (*das Fremde*), the translation has fulfilled its highest purpose.** But where the strangeness itself is felt, possibly even to the point of obscuring the knowledge that this is after all something unfamiliar to us, there the translator reveals that he is no match for the original” (*Humanist Without Portfolio. An Anthology of the Writings of Wilhelm von Humboldt* tr. Marianne Cowan, Detroit: Wayne State University 1963, p. 241).

communication. On a second level, translation makes possible “the afterlife” of literary works of art. Last but not least, translation reveals a space where languages taken as total systems can interact.

Translation thus ultimately serves the purpose of expressing the central reciprocal relationship between languages. It cannot possibly reveal or establish this hidden relationship itself; but it can represent it in embryonic or intensive form (TT, 72).

Linguists group languages which have common historical origins into various families. Benjamin’s strategic move is to say that there is an a priori bond between all languages regardless of the contingent historical differences among them. The work of translation discloses the *essential* kinship of languages.

All suprahistorical kinship of languages rests in the intention underlying each language as a whole – an intention, however, which no single language can attain by itself but which is realized only by the totality of their intentions supplementing each other: pure language (TT, 74).

Translators temporarily ‘reconcile’ the insuperable diffraction of languages, paradoxically, by accentuating their differences. Benjamin’s pure language neither overcomes nor suppresses the conflict between different linguistic intentions. Translations succeed insofar as they offer a glimpse into pure language as “the tensionless and even silent depositary of the ultimate truth” (TT, 77). Translators begin to move towards that truth by ‘foreignizing’ the language into which they translate. Lack, non-self-sufficiency, need for supplementary meaning intentions and necessary reception of foreignness are some of the reasons why it could be said that languages are fundamentally passive. Instead of converting the foreign into the familiar, translations disrupt domestic languages by affording a space for the foreign.

It is by holding the domestic and foreign in tension that translations reveal the interval between languages. Benjamin quotes approvingly Rudolf Pannwitz's observation:

Our translations, even the best ones, proceed from a wrong premise. They want to turn Hindi, Greek, and English into German instead of turning German into Hindi, Greek, English.[...] The basic error of the translator is that he preserves the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue. Particularly when translating from a language very remote from his own he must go back to the primeval elements of language itself and penetrate to the point where work, image, and tone converge. He must expand and deepen his language by means of the foreign language.¹¹⁶

It is significant that Pannwitz - a contemporary of Husserl - made these remarks about translation in the context of a discussion of cultural crisis thus bringing out the relevance of translation on a more general ethical and political level. As privileged site where the ethical responsibility toward the foreign makes itself manifest, the praxis of translation can serve as model for handling cultural crises. The pursuit of universal languages in the seventeenth and eighteenth century aimed at annulling the conflict between natural languages thereby missing the reconciliatory character of translation. In contrast, Benjamin's translator does not *realize* or *actualize* the pure language but rather promises its arrival. Such a promise can only be heard because languages are essentially passive, that is, they are capable of receiving the mark of foreignness.

Husserl seems to have remained oblivious to this sense of passivity. He certainly never attributed meaning intentions to languages taken as wholes; much less did he appreciate the capacity of languages to be inflected by the mark of the foreign.

¹¹⁶ Benjamin (1968, p.76) quotes this passage from Rudolf Pannwitz's book *Die Krisis der europäischen Kultur*, Verlag Hans Carl Nuernberg, 1947 (first edition 1917) p. 191.

Yet, the opposition between home and alien does provide one of the conceptual axes of his discussion of cultural crises. In the *Vienna Lecture* one finds the following declaration.

There is something unique here that is recognized in us [good old Europeans] by all other human groups, too, something that, quite apart from all consideration of utility, becomes a motive for men to Europeanize themselves even in their unbroken will to spiritual self-preservation; whereas we, if we understand ourselves properly, would never Indianize ourselves (C, 275).

This passage clearly expresses Husserl's reticence vis-à-vis the idea of foreignization. To be more precise, foreignization, if at all possible, would have to be unidirectional. For European humanity to receive an infusion of foreignness would mean to forego the pursuit of its proper spiritual ideal: the absolute theoretical knowledge. In contrast, non-European humanity's claims to self-preservation depend on or motivate their joining the European spiritual endeavour. What first jumps in the face of Husserl's reader is the privilege of the familiar over the alien, of the self over the other, of intuition over reproduction. However, it is with one and the same gesture that Husserl emphasizes and subverts this privilege. As we will see in the next chapter, without self-alienation there is no relation between self and other.

4. Reason versus Passivity

Husserl does indeed bring to the fore the ethical implications of passivity. But instead of saying that passivity means hospitality toward the foreign he suggests that passivity correlates with containment, impotence and servitude whereas activity falls on the side of autonomy, self-government and freedom. In the early 20s, Husserl wrote a series of articles for the Japanese journal *Kaizo* in which he attempted to take full measure of the moral and political morass of the First World War. In these articles Husserl claims that, at root, what instigated the war was the upsurge of passive tendencies - on both the subjective and the intersubjective level - and the consequent shadow cast upon the ideals of reason.

Passivity obstructs reflection and self-evaluation and therefore conflicts with the ethical ideal of *renewal*. On the level of individual life, passive *inclinations* get in the way of rational practical decisions

Moreover, a naive living along deprived of reflection leads to sin. The human being as human being is afflicted with the original sin that belongs to the essential shape of humanity. The human being is subject of self-reflection and of practical and evaluative position takings, subject of conscience and as such he stands under an absolute norm: he must each time decide practically to the best of his knowledge and conscience; he must not let himself be passively driven by inclinations; he must will freely and freely choose the good or that which he, as a knower, even if perhaps mistakenly, knows to be good (*Aufsätze und Vorträge* p. 44).¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Ferner, ein naiv reflexionsloses Dahinleben führt zur Sünde. Der Mensch ist als Mensch mit der Erbsünde behaftet, sie gehört zur Wesensform des Menschen. Als Mensch ist er Subjekt der Selbstreflexion, und zwar Stellungnahme zu sich selbst, wertender und praktischer, Subjekt eines "Gewissens", und als das steht er unter einer absoluten Wertnorm: Er soll in jedem Fall nach bestem Wissen und Gewissen sich praktisch entscheiden, er soll nicht nach Neigung passiv sich treiben lassen, soll frei wollen und sich dann frei für das Gute entscheiden, für das, was er erkennend (wann auch vielleicht irrend) für das Gute erkennt.

On the one hand, individuals live passively when they make practical decisions about particular aspects of their life without aspiring to self-regulation (*Selbstregelung*) and without envisaging the idea of general life goal (*allgemeine Zweck*). On the other hand, commitments to life goals are not enough if one wants to live actively. Practical life is still passive if it embraces life goals because they are imposed by 'society' or 'tradition' (AV, 96). However, through a voluntary renewal (*Erneuerung*), the individual can convert the passive tendencies into a thoroughly active life. Such a conversion can take the form of an authentic choice of a "true profession" (*wahren Beruf*) whereby one holds one's life in view so as to ensure that future particular decisions will fall within a unifying project.

On the historical level, European culture lapsed into meaninglessness (*Sinnlosigkeit*) and untruthfulness (*Unwahrheit*) because the pursuit of rational goals was led astray either by irrationalism or by naïve naturalism. As "functionaries of modern humanity" (C, 71), philosophers come to play an "archontic" (C, 289) role in the attempt to revitalize or reawaken the scientific achievements transmitted by tradition. Concerned with the re-establishment (*Nachstiftung*) of the Greek science, philosophers also point toward the final establishment (*Endstiftung*) of complete objective science which must remain an "infinite task" (C, 72). Embracing as life-goal (*Lebensziel*) the ideal of definite knowledge, philosophers bear the responsibility to permanently critique the precursors. All this seems to suggest that Husserl's

stratagem for prevailing over the devastating effects of crisis consists in a resolute transformation of passivity into the corresponding activity.¹¹⁸

It is undoubtedly true that Husserl casts a severe blame upon passive tendencies for obstructing the establishment of rational ideals. But it is also true that Husserl is reluctant to accept a clear-cut divide between passivity and activity. Would it make any sense, from Husserl's point of view, to say that passivity not only blocks the personal and historical renewals but also contributes to their accomplishment? Could it be the case that in some sense we need more rather than less passivity? Husserl concedes that without passive sedimentations pure logic could not move forward. Yet, this formula points to a rather trivial contribution of passivity; that is, the conservation of actively thought through scientific results. There are three senses in which it could be said that passivity not only causes cultural crises but also gestures toward the possibility of overcoming them. (i) It is true that *habitus*, insofar as it takes for granted ready made meanings, must be fought against. But the only way to fight against *habitus* is to invent new types of habitualities. (ii) As formation of sediments, tradition establishes fixed and rigid combinations of meanings reiterable by future generations of researchers. But passive sedimentation also has a 'magmatic' aspect of infinite 'mobility' which stimulates the 'construction' rather than 'repetition' of new ideal objectivities. (iii) As I showed in the previous section, the practice of translation brings out a new ethical significance of passivity as openness toward and responsibility for the foreign. Husserl tended to think of responsibility in Kantian terms as the autonomous submission to self-imposed

¹¹⁸According to this standard interpretation, "passivity finds no valuable place in Husserl's philosophy." See Philip R. Buckley *Husserl, Heidegger and the Crisis of Philosophical Responsibility* p. 141.

rational laws. However, some of his remarks about human ethical vocation could be developed so as to include a broader version of passivity.

(i) Let us remember the conflict between habitus and self-evidence. If scientists are to pursue unabatedly the ideal of veridical and determinate knowledge, they have to relinquish all ready made or taken for granted results. More precisely, they have to re-execute them. Scientific tradition is a paradoxical combination of sedimentation and de-sedimentation, habituation and de-habituation, learning and unlearning. Unlike other sciences, Husserl claims, philosophy has a very low tolerance for sedimented acquisitions. Presuppositionlessness (*Voraussetzungslosigkeit*) is the philosopher's dearest ambition. As a vocation (*Berufung*), philosophy constantly rejects unquestioned prejudices. The task of the philosopher is to take a resolute critical stance toward and to shake off the intellectual habitualities holding back genuine scientific research. Philosophers endeavour to awaken this critical attitude in larger and larger communities. Both an intra- and an inter-generational component belong to this pedagogical extension of philosophical attitude. But as soon as it assumes pedagogical responsibilities, philosophy itself acquires the status of habitus, albeit a special one, that is, the habitus of challenging all habitualities. Consequently, it is inconsistent to blame passive sedimentations for the desolate state of European science: passive sedimentations are built into the every existence of philosophy, which is supposed to put science back on its tracks.

(ii) In Husserl's apt definition, history in general is "the vital movement of the coexistence and interweaving of original formations (*Sinnbildung*) and sedimentations of meaning (*Sinnsedimentierung*)" (C, 371). *Sinn* is indeed the result

of subjective production. However, *Bildung* is not always a spontaneous activity under the total control of the ego. The determinate, univocal, fixed and infinitely iterable logico-mathematical idealities do not hold a monopoly over meaning formations. That is why Husserl distinguishes between *logic* and *geometry*. The former warrants the transmission of evidence from premises to conclusion in deductions or valid inferences¹¹⁹. The latter exceeds and complements the formal evidence provided by rules of inference. Deduction serves the purpose of *propagating* self-evidence. In contrast, geometry *constructs* primal idealities.

Original self-evidence must not be confused with the self-evidence of “axioms”; for axioms are in principle already the results of original meaning-construction and always have this behind them (C, 365).

Husserl maintains that sciences develop vitally and genuinely as long as they preserve the capacity to *reactivate* their sources of meaning. The same observation holds for all cultural traditions. Yet, the reactivation of passive sediments will never be complete.

If the goal of reactivatability can be only **relatively** fulfilled, then the claim which stems from the consciousness of being able to acquire something also has its relativity; and this relativity also makes itself noticeable and is driven out. Ultimately, objective, absolutely firm knowledge of truth is an **infinite** idea (C, 363).

The sheer quantity of scientific results in any given field of research makes it such that no individual scientist could ever re-execute or reactivate the whole chain of

¹¹⁹The advent of information technology radically changed what counts as mathematical proof. In particular, computer based proofs would have certainly worried Husserl. Mathematical theorems such as the four-color theorem, whose demonstrations require massive amounts of calculations, have been proven by computers. Being very long and complex, such demonstrations cannot be verified by hand. Moreover, they involve *empirical* hypotheses about the reliability of the hardware. Thus, some mathematical proofs include margins of error. For more about computer proofs see James Robert Brown, *Philosophy of Mathematics*, New York: Routledge, 1999 pp. 154-158.

propositions forming the systematic unity of a theory. On the one hand Husserl acknowledges that all tradition comprises not only *inheritance* but also *forgetfulness*. On the other hand, he claims that through the *infinetization* of the method of idealization traditions can be reactivated so as to rescue all self-evidences from forgetfulness. Given the blame they bear, it is quite surprising that sedimentations turn out to have a vital 'mobility' (*Beweglichkeit*) (C, 368) that stirs up new meaning formations. It is the inscription of every tradition, whether scientific or not, in the temporal horizon of human civilization which explains this 'mobility'. After all, sedimentations do not form a stock of completely rigidified cultural achievements. One should regard sedimentation and traditionalization not as results of activities long accomplished and waiting to be disclosed again. It is not only that past sediments continue or persist up to the present; rather the present itself should be regarded "as traditionalizing itself in *flowing-static* generality" (C, 371).

One could claim that the modern alliance between science, technology and commerce is not just an empirical accident but the *driving force* of infinitization. If that were so, infinitization would exclusively concern the uniform propagation and repetitive expansion and of rational instrumentality. But Husserl considers the interest for practical utility among the factors responsible for the "uprooting" of the genuine scientific tradition. The *immer wieder* inherent in the transmission of scientific validities does not rule out the **creation** of novel spiritual products. To take Husserl's example, Galileo's mathematization of nature, is not a mere repetition of Greek mathematics but rather the opening of novel field of research inaccessible to the ancients. Moreover, reason approaches the ideal of veridictity only if the possibility

remains open for amendments, rectifications and even annulments of reason's own protocols. Instrumental rationality of means must be complemented by a rationality of ends. Like science itself, this rationality germinates from a horizon of 'determinate indeterminacies' (*bestimmbare Unbestimmtheiten*): "rigorous science is essentially in a process of becoming, and likewise the authentic humanity with its method of self-shaping only exists in a process of becoming" (AV, 55). As some commentators have shown, the idea of infinite tasks of reason might seem to be an anachronistic attempt to disguise a particular under the mask of the universal and to apply the obsolete ideology of the civilizing mission of Europe to a social and cultural situation unprecedented in history.¹²⁰ But if the ideal tasks of reason are infinite then Europe is just as far from realizing them as any other form of humanity.

(iii) Husserl says that ethical life must establish a *habitual intention* (AV, 30) to critique the human goals and the means leading to them. The vocational aspect of ethical life shows that passivity, instead of opposing or annulling ethical responsibility, is one of its constituents. The root of the word *Berufung* (vocation) is *Ruf* (call). Vocation is a calling one cannot but respond to. For Husserl, this is always an inner call. Yet, by taking into account the call coming from the other, one can reveal another facet of human responsibility. Responsibility is not only the will to obey self-imposed rational norms but also the capacity to hear and to respond to a call that is coming from without.

Husserl's "rationalist eudaimonism"¹²¹ is his final response to the problem of crisis. However catastrophic they may be, crises can never become "the obscure fate"

¹²⁰ Jocelyn Benoist *Autour de Husserl: L'Ego et la Raison* Paris: Vrin, 1994.

¹²¹ Ibid. p. 236.

or the “impenetrable destiny” (C, 299) of humanity. Passive tendencies determine scientific traditions to slip into sterile disputes and political conflicts to eclipse the pursuit of ethical ideals. Nevertheless, passivity is not just a stumbling block in humanity’s triumphant march toward “the infinite goals of reason” (C, 299). Crises are not brought to a close by replacing passivity with activity but by having more of both.

Chapter V. Passivity and Alterity

In the preceding chapters I discussed the sense in which phenomena as diverse as self-temporalization, association, memory and language can be regarded as passive. Time-consciousness is the product of an affection of the self by the self and its passive character comes from the reliance on the pre-reflective non-thematic awareness of this self-affection. Original associations organize passively pre-given affective allures into hyletic configurations on the basis of laws of similarity and contrast. Memory provides a space where non-effective or inactual egoic achievements remain at the ego's disposal while still facing the risk of irrevocable alterations. Habitus and language bring out the intersubjective aspects of passive sedimentations. As attribute of original associations, passivity means receptivity. As attribute of memory and habitus, passivity means latency or inactuality. But the phenomena of self-temporalization, association, memory, habitus and language can also be qualified as passive insofar as they put to work mechanisms allowing alterity to infiltrate ownness. For time-consciousnesses to be possible, hetero-affection is just as indispensable as self-affection. Through original associations the ego responds or reacts to the affective pull of what is non-egoic or foreign to the ego. By inserting chunks of past experience into the present life of the ego, memory fractures the ego's ownness and forces upon it a confrontation with an immanent otherness. In the following, I develop the claim that the systematic role of passivity is to negotiate the relation between ownness and alterity.¹²² I consider three Husserlian accounts of

¹²² Paul Ricoeur has indicated the broad lines of such a project. "The *phenomenological* respondent to the metacategory of otherness is the variety of experiences of passivity, intertwined in multiple ways in

alterity. First, I take up the issue of bodily self-alterity. Then I look at the concept of empathy and explain the grounding of Husserl's social ontology in the analysis of *Leiblichkeit*. Finally, I dwell on the broadest sense of *Fremderfahrung* as interaction between one's own and alien cultures.

1. Passivity and Embodiment

In this section, I focus on several passages from the fifth *Cartesian Meditation* and *Ideas II*, which are representative for Husserl's reflections on embodiment. Having an ambiguous status, the body encompasses active as well as passive tendencies. On the one hand, inasmuch as it opens the possibility of perceptual exploration and practical activity, the body is that which is closest to the ego. On the other hand, its insertion into natural causal chains determines the body as something distant from or foreign to the ego. The body comes into play as a mediator between self and world or between *Ichlichkeit* and *Fremdheit*. Having already disclosed the field of transcendental experience through the suspension of the ego's participation in the positive belief in the existence of the world, in §44 of the *Cartesian Meditations* Husserl proposes a new epoché intended to bring into view the ego's 'sphere of ownness' (*Eigenheitssphäre*). To reach what is peculiarly my own (*das Mir-Eigene*) means to screen out that which is alien (*das Ich-Fremdes*). Ownness and alienness are

human action. The term 'otherness' is reserved for speculative discourse, while passivity becomes *the* attestation of otherness" (*Oneself as Another*, tr. Kathleen Blamey, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992 p. 318). An ontological explanation of the category of selfhood must necessarily unfold within the larger context of the dialectical relation between sameness and otherness. Corresponding to different ontological modalities of otherness there are different experience of passivity: bodily passivity, passivity in relation to other selves, and passivity of consciousness. Ricouer gives Husserl credit for his reflections on the first type of passivity and derives the second from the idea of narrative form of self-identity. If "emplotment" is a condition without which subjects do not attain selfhood then subjects necessarily hold the roles of both agents and patients. Not only must subjects take the role of patients or sufferers in various emplotments but the experience of suffering and powerlessness may hold in suspension the subjective capacity of emplotting.

correlative in the sense that they come to be what they are through their reciprocal delimitation. As Husserl delves deeper into his analysis he finds himself compelled to acknowledge the shifting nature of the boundaries separating ownness from alienness. Appearing at first as mutually exclusive, ownness and alienness prove to intersect in nodal points.

Among the bodies belonging to this “Nature” and included in my peculiar ownness, I then find my animate organism (*Leib*) as uniquely singled out – namely as the only one of them that is not just a body but precisely an animate organism: the sole object within my abstract world-stratum to which, in accordance with experience, I ascribe fields of sensation (belonging to it, however, in different manners – a field of tactual sensations, a field of warmth and coldness, and so forth), the only Object “in” which I “rule and govern” immediately, governing particularly in each of its “organs” (CM 97).

As a result of this peculiar epoché the body reveals its specific mode of belonging to mere nature. Unlike other spatio-temporally located entities, my body is endowed with sensing powers and self-movement capacities. My lived body is the only thing originary given to me as having the quality of intimate mineness. No other thing is closer to the ego than its lived body. It is not by accident that Husserl comes to consider the givenness in the flesh (*Leibhaftige Gegebenheit*) as criterion for epistemic evidence.

I have indeed numerous experiences of my own body. Yet, what matters is not the fact that my intentional acts often take my own body as their correlate. Rather, embodiment is the condition on the basis of which intentional acts unfold. “The body is, in the first place, the *medium of all perception*; it is the *organ of perception* and is necessarily involved in all perception” (*Ideas II*, 61).

As I showed in the second chapter, Husserl regards passive receptivity - the most basic level of perceptual experience - as a primitive form of active egoic engagement. This active engagement is played out in terms of bodily movements. A host of dynamic terms, such as 'affective awakening', 'turning toward' and 'holding in grasp', describe well those subjective accomplishments (*Leistungen*) which belong to the category of *passive activities*. All these "doings" of the ego refer to operations based on bodily motility. As the classic phenomenological description of the synthesis of profiles shows, the lived body (*Leib*) participates in perceptual experience as integrator or coordinator of free movements. The ego apprehends different profiles as aspects of the *same* thing not only because of their similar contents but also because they form a continuum generated by the movements of my body which underlie my perceptual exploration.¹²³ As the passage quoted above says, I immediately rule and hold sway over my body so that I can perform a *mise en scène* of profiles. By organizing a "system of kinaesthetic sensations" (C, 107), the lived body maintains, in principle, the power of totalizing the unseen viewings. Thus the ego's relation with its surroundings is mediated by the intimate ruling over the body's potentialities for movement. The point is not so much that I can distinguish a distant silhouette by narrowing my eyes or that I can apprehend the roughness of a surface by moving my fingers over it. Rather, without the bodily awareness of such movements, perception as such could not operate. As organ of the will and source of spontaneous movement, the lived body (*Leib*) makes possible the ego's sense of agency. Would it not, therefore, be incongruous to relate embodiment to passivity? After all, to call

¹²³ Zahavi, Dan, *Self-awareness and Alterity*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999, p. 94.

attention to the reliance of perception on free bodily motility is but another way of saying that ego has a total control over the unfolding of perceptual explorations.

In order to elucidate the question of bodily passivity, one can turn to the distinction between lived body (*Leib*) and physical body (*Körper*). One could say, as Husserl suggests in some passages from *Ideas II*, that taken as *Leib*, my body is fully active while, taken as *Körper*, it is entirely passive. What makes the body passive is its insertion in a real causal nexus. If passivity means undergoing or suffering, then my body is passive insofar as it suffers modifications under the influence of external circumstances (*Ideas II*, 167-8). My lived body actively orchestrates the visual profiles through series of conditionals: if I move my head in such and such a way, then such and such viewings will ensue. Correspondingly, my physical body is subjected to the causal actions of other physical bodies. A parallel series of conditionals comes into play here: if a loud bang interrupted my typing, then my blood pressure would suddenly increase. Moreover, in some circumstances, the sequence of kinaesthetic sensations eludes my voluntary control. In the case of reflex movements, e.g., a knee jerk, the kinaesthetic sensations unfold purely passively, that is, in a mechanical involuntary fashion. “Die Kinästhesie kann zwangsmässig, sozusagen *ichfremd verlaufen*, wie wenn mein Arm passiv geschoben wird oder durch elektrische Entladung zum Zucken kommt“ (XIV 447). The bodily movements contributing to the arrangements of profiles into synthetic wholes are “consequences of perceptive tendencies”. Therefore, these movements are in one sense passive in another sense active.

The relation to the object is on the one hand receptive and on the other hand definitely productive. The coming into view of images is 'in my power'; I can also cause the series to break off, e.g., I can close my eyes. But what is not in my power, if I allow the kinaestheses to run their course, is having another image come into view (EJ, 84).

There is an obvious correlation between the changes in the position of my body and the *Abschattungen* which come into prominence for me. Yet, I am, in a way, subject to the power of hyletic affective forces because I can determine only *how* appearances unfold and not *what* appears in them.

Passivity does indeed mean that my physical body suffers the effects of external causes. But it would be mistaken to reduce passivity to mere receptivity. There is another sense, phenomenologically more significant, of passive embodiment. In order to grasp this sense of passivity, one must take into consideration not only the relation between body and environment but also the fissure or self-alterity of the body as such. Turning toward, pushing, lifting and grasping are indeed activities implicated in the ego's perceptual experience. However, the very act of doing something, the very interaction between the lived body and the surrounding world occasions at the same time a bodily self-affectation. The lived body is "reflexively related to itself" (*auf sich selbst zurückbezogen*) (CM, 97). Of course, embodied reflection is not reflection proper but rather a kind of contortion which splits the body in two different poles: the affectant and the affected. This bodily self-differentiation accompanies every intuitive experience intentionally directed at external physical objects. *Leib* and *Leibkörper* are the technical terms employed by Husserl to designate the double nature of the body: at once subject and object, affectant and affected, sensing organism and physical entity. Insofar as it is extended in space, my *Leibkörper*, like any other spatial object,

is bearer of objective properties such as weight, color, warmth. Insofar as it has sensing powers my *Leib* is an animate organism.

Moving my fingers, I have motion sensations, whereby a sensation in an ever changing way extends itself over and traverses the surface of my fingers, but within this sensation-complex there is at the same time a content having its localization in the interior of the digital space” (Ideas II, 153).

The splitting of the body into sensing powers (*Empfindnisse*) and sensations (*Empfindungen*) already makes itself manifest at the micro-level of the fingertips. While engaged in tactile exploration, the fingers change their location as they move through objective space. At the same time, the fingers form an inner ‘digital space’ (*Fingerraum*) which spatializes tactile sense contents. Sensations are not properties of physical things but events which correlate appearances of things with the apprehensions of those appearances. The analyses of time consciousness showed that the perception of duration is inseparable from the duration of perception. Correspondingly, the discussion of embodiment shows that the perception of movement is inseparable from the movement of perception.¹²⁴

The polarity that organizes the tactile experience at the level of the fingertips works its way up to higher levels. When I move my hand over the bark of a tree the roughness of the bark is the content of my experience. At the same time, I have a bodily awareness of my experiencing: I sense the movements of my hand. Roughness is apprehended as a property of the bark and as pressure sensation in the hand.

And thus, my body’s entering into physical relations (by stretching, pressing, pushing, etc.) with other natural things provides in general not only

¹²⁴ Bernhard Waldenfels, “Bodily experience between selfhood and otherness” in *Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*, 3:2004, p. 236.

the experience of physical occurrences, related to the body and to things, but also the experience of specifically bodily occurrences of the type we call sensings. Such occurrences are missing in “merely” natural things (Ideas II, 153).

This passage draws attention to the more or less prominent presence of the body in the perceptual field. A disembodied ego would have no perceptual experience although not all perceptual experiences require the same degree of awareness of bodily participation. The fact that embodiment shapes perception means that bodily awareness does not just accompany external perception occasionally but rather conditions it. The movements of the head and eyes are as important for visual perception as the movements of the hands are for tactile perception. Moreover, one’s body ‘knows’ exactly how hard to flex and stretch in response to new environmental demands. The body does not need to calculate the adjustments necessary for interrupting a normal walk to make a leap over a creek: it just leaps. One’s body also feels the pull of gravity and is able to maintain balance and orientation. Psychologists use the term proprioception to refer to the process through which muscular, articular and cutaneous as well as vestibular receptors send information to the brain thus allowing the body to keep track of its own movements and posture. Although Husserl showed little interest in the underlying physiology, his emphasis on the role of kinaestheses in perception is very much in tune with the psychology of proprioception. Kinaestheses and proprioception do not objectify the body but rather constitute a non-conceptual, non-perspectival and prereflective, bodily awareness which makes perception possible.¹²⁵ Such bodily awareness could be called passive for two reasons. On the one hand, the awareness of bodily movements is often only

¹²⁵ Shaun Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes the Mind*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005, pp. 137-8.

marginally involved in perception; because it forms a background of perception and remains inactual, bodily awareness is passive. On the other hand, proprio-ception means caption of the *proprium*, that is, of that which is one's own. Yet, this caption of the *proprium* relies on the contact with what is alien. The body could gain this internal awareness of its ownness only as a record of its interactions with the external surroundings. Embodiment is passive not so much because it is receptive toward what is alien but rather because it offers a site where ownness and alterity can confront one another: passivity means opening the space of the encounter with the alien.

To shed more light on the important Husserlian idea according to which the body is always present, however marginally, in the perceptual field, it may be worthwhile to recall Erwin Straus's distinction between the *pathic* and the *gnostic* dimensions of perception. The gnostic dimension refers to the cognitive information carried by perception, or to put it differently, to the *what* of the given object. The pathic dimension refers to the manner of givenness of the thing or to "the immediate communication we have with things on the basis of their changing mode of sensory givenness."¹²⁶ Sensation is "eventing" in the sense of a continuous alteration of the relation between body and environment. Straus says that all perceptual experience is bi-dimensional although the preponderance of one dimension over the other depends among other things on the sense modality considered. The passive bodily response to musical rhythms seems to indicate the preponderance of the pathic dimension in acoustical sensations. The body is drawn to, it goes along with, or submits to the

¹²⁶ Erwin Straus, *Phenomenological Psychology*, tr. Erling Eng, New York: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, 1966, p. 12 and also *Man, Time and World. Two Contributions to Anthropological Psychology*, tr. Donald Moss, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1982, p.58.

rhythm of music.¹²⁷ On the contrary, sight is the most ‘intellectual’ of the senses precisely because *what* is given takes precedence over or even conceals the *how* of the manner of givenness. Yet non-figurative painting brings to the surface the pathic dimension of color experience by demanding that viewers focus not on what the canvass represents but rather on how color landscapes summon them to respond or react.

Before I return to the problem of tactual experience let me illustrate the idea of pathicity not by giving an example based on one specific sense modality but by evoking sexual experience. Sexual arousal integrates inputs belonging in various proportions to all sensorial fields but cannot be reduced to automatic bodily reactions triggered by pleasurable stimuli. Sexual behavior also involves gnostic moments which enable the subject to compare potential gestures and events and choose those which seem most likely to generate the calculated satisfaction. But it is not by cognitively assessing the sexual attributes of their partners that subjects initiate sexual arousal. Sexual arousal is neither a matter of sovereign initiative or deliberation nor a strictly physiological process of hormone secretion. In Merleau-Ponty’s terms, sexuality “expresses” existence (PP, 190). Sexuality is a non-fortuitous way in which the *being in a situation* gets played out in human life. If humans display highly individualized patterns of sexual behavior it is because sexuality is a type of intentionality which allows one’s body to invent its responses to situations not of one’s making. We find ourselves aroused when erotic impulses enter in conjunction with erotic circumstances. Sexual encounters fail either when the arousal meets with

¹²⁷ Straus draws on the kinship between the German words *hören* (to hear) and *gehörchen* (to obey). The French verb *écouter* and the English verb *to listen* maintain a similar ambivalence.

inappropriate circumstances or when encouraging circumstances fall short of eliciting arousal. This conjunction between impulses and circumstance defies preparative efforts. Once realized, it is lived as *surprise* and this shows the fundamental pathicity of sexual experience. What makes such experiences intensely gratifying is not the fact that we finally reach what we have calculatingly pursued. Rather we become aware that what happens to us exceeds our expectations and surpasses everything we could have desired. Of course, sexuality presupposes that subjects engage in active efforts to actualize and develop the latent powers of their bodies. But there are two ways in which the sexual body necessarily remains passive. First, various dysfunctions can in principle curtail the sexual potential of the body. Second, despite the great deal of effort that goes into the developing sexual possibilities, the body fulfills its erotic impulses only if it at once enacts and surrenders its initiative. The intentionality of the sexual body is “an intentionality which *follows* the general flow of existence and *yields* to its movements” (PP, 181). In the rare occasions Husserl talks about sex he does not seem particularly sensitive to this pathic dimension. In his view, sexuality is normatively restricted to heterosexual relationships rationally pursuing the goal of copulation.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ See ‘Universal Teleology’ in Peter McCormick and Frederick A. Elliston *Husserl’s Shorter Works* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981 pp. 335-7. By integrating instincts and drives into a universal teleology Husserl attempts to soften the impact of sexuality on the serene exercise of reason. Interestingly, ideas similar to the Husserlian concepts of *egoic holding sway* and *ruling over* the body come up, with unexpected results, in Saint Augustine’s account of sexual experiences. Saint Augustine surmised that in the prelapsarian period, Adam and Eve led a sinless sexual life because no pathic moment was admixed with the gnostic one. Shame had no place in a paradisiacal life because God gave Adam no reason to resent his nudity. As a consequence, Adam could walk around naked without fearing the embarrassment of a sudden erection, his penis being as obedient to his will as his foot and hand. In Paradise, Adam’s sexual arousal was not a lustful tumult but rather a rational and pious obedience to the divine command “be fruitful and multiply.” On the contrary, the earthly sexual life is so sinful and miserable because concupiscence disobeys the supervision of reason. Rebelling against God, Adam was punished with the constant rebellion of his penis against his own rational will (“On the Grace of Christ and on Original Sin” in *The Basic Writings of Saint Augustine* ed. Whitney J.

As site of proprioception and kinaestheses, the lived body (*Leib*) is distinguished from the thing-body (*Körper*). While the latter is situated in space, the former offers a frame of reference for spatial perception. The lived body is an absolute Here with respect to which all thing-bodies acquire their spatial location. Rather than having affixed one spatial location among others, the lived body is the zero-point “center of orientation”. Through the body, the ego gains a potentially limitless multiplicity of perspectives over the environing things; on the contrary, over its own lived body the ego can only have one perspective: Here. “These real properties of a thing are constituted through a sensuous schema and manifolds of adumbrations. To speak in a similar way of sensings would be quite absurd.” (*Ideas II*, 157).

The idea that the lived body constitutes the objective space intersubjectively accessible can only gain currency on the condition that one explains the self-objectification of the lived body. Husserl does this by turning to the phenomenon of “double sensations” (*Doppelempfindungen*) (*Ideas II*, 153, 155 and XV 297). This phenomenon is supposed to make explicit the subjective-objective nature of the body as “physical-aesthesiological unity” (*Ideas II*, 163). The tactile realm provides the most obvious example of double sensations.

Touching my left hand, I have touch-appearances, that is to say, I do not just sense, but I perceive and have appearances of a soft, smooth hand with such a form. [...] But when I touch the left hand I also find in it, too, series of touch-sensations, which are “localized” in it, though these are not

Oates vol.1 New York: Random House, 1948 pp.646-649). Obviously, Augustine’s vision of Adam and Eves’ union in paradise portrays a sexual life absolutely other than the ones most of us actually have. Yet, this scenario is inescapably ambiguous: it can be read as praising the sober and stern rule of reason over the lower impulses but it can also be read as a pornographic male projection of wild priapic phantasms. In either case, one can hope for no more than a caricatural representation of sexuality precisely because the absence of the pathic moment forecloses the possibility of surprise.

constitutive of properties (such as roughness or smoothness of the hand, of this physical thing). If I speak of the physical thing, “left hand”, then I am abstracting from these sensations (a ball of lead has nothing like them and likewise for every merely physical thing, every thing that is not my body). If I do include them, then it is not that the physical is now richer, but instead *it becomes body, it senses* (Ideas II, 152).

What the analysis of the haptic field makes explicit is the reflexive relation of the body to itself. Tactile double-sensations allow me to experience my hands as being at one and the same time sensing powers and physical entities. While tactually exploring, my right hand apprehends the warmth of my left hand as objective property of a material thing. While being touched, my left hand does not lose its mineness and does not remain inert but rather it touches in its turn. There is a haptic reversibility at work which makes it such that both my hands are simultaneously touching and touched; they appear at the same time as *Aussenleib* and as *Innenleib* (XIV, 338). Double sensations engage a continual “transfer of sense” (*Sinnes Übertragung*) from my *Innenleib* to my *Aussenleib* and vice versa. Through tactile exploration, my lived body takes hold of itself as physical thing. Such a process involves internalizing and externalizing apprehensions. The latter apprehends a lived body as physical thing (*Verkörperung*). The former apprehends a physical thing as lived body (*Verleiblichung*). I will return to the issue of externalizing apprehensions and I will discuss their self-objectifying and self-alienating character as one of the key element in Husserl’s account of intersubjectivity.

Can double sensations occur in sense fields other than the tactual? What would it take for double sensations to be possible in the visual field? Husserl briefly considers the hypothesis of “extended ocularity” (*Ideas II*, 155). Had one been able to protrude one’s eyes so that the left eye could touch the right eye, one would have, or

so it seems, experienced double sensations. Supposing tactile receptors were located in the eyes, the extended ocularity would provide an example of tactile double sensations. However, if my left eye were to gaze into my right eye, it would be no different than looking at my eyes reflected in a mirror. An eye can see its mirror reflection but it cannot see its own gaze. I can identify the shape and color of my eyes as I look at myself in the mirror but this does not mean that I see my self seeing in the same way I touch myself touching. Although he acknowledges it as a task worth pursuing, Husserl does not explore the possibility of double sensation in other sense fields. Hearing provides an interesting example of bodily reflection. In a normal locutionary situation, I immediately recognize the sound of my voice as something I am extremely familiar with. When one hears one's voice caught on tape one experiences the shock of hearing another speak with one's own voice or hearing one's voice as if it were another's. When I speak, my voice feels so intimately mine because I control my vocal production. And yet, paradoxically, my voice is not purely internal, it is not completely mine. The sound waves that I generate traverse my body and at the same time travel through external space before they reach my ears. My skull behaves a resonance box and this gives me the feeling that my voice comes from inside. But my voice comes from outside as well since the sound wave released by my vocal cords are externalized before I receive them again. It is this combination between self-affection and hetero-affection which makes my voice unmistakably mine. The shock of hearing a recording of one's voice comes from the erasure of this self-affective dimension of vocal production.

If double sensations do not occur *within* all sense fields it is certainly possible to talk about *intermodal* double-sensations. Thus, I can alter the sequence of visual profiles by pressing my eyeball with a finger. Also, I can become aware of the movements of my eyes while I follow the words on the page I am reading because my eyes are loci of kinaesthetic sensations.

Bodily reflection conjures up self-affection as well as hetero-affection. It splits the body in two co-present poles: the lived body and the thing body. Bodily reflection establishes a coincidence across distance between the two poles. Ownness constitutes alterity and alterity constitutes ownness. And yet the body remains “a remarkably imperfectly constituted thing” (*Ideas II*, 167). The bodily constitution is bound to remain incomplete because there are parts of my body such as my back or my nape which I can only experience indirectly. On the one hand, my body is that from I which I cannot distance my self. On the other hand, my body is that to which I cannot get close enough because my grasp of it is always obstructed. Rather than being perfectly transparent self-presence, my body is always traversed by alienness. As the work of passivity, this self-alienation of the body should be taken not as a deficit but rather as a mark of the openness of the constitutive process.

I get out of myself, not by chance, illness or weakness, but by being who I am. This alterity consists in a broken self-reference, i.e., in a sort of self-reference which includes a special form of self withdrawal. Connected with myself and at the same time cut off from myself, I am neither simply one nor simply two, but two in one and one in two.¹²⁹

The body is the turning point (*Umschlagstelle*) connecting nature and spirit, world and self. It's not that I have an inner body in addition to my outer body. The

¹²⁹ Bernhard Waldenfels, “Bodily experience between selfhood and otherness” in *Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*, 3:2004, 241-2.

body mediates between the self and the world by allowing the inner and outer, the same and the other to pass over into one another. Embodiment actualizes the two way traffic across the frontier between inner and outer.

2. Passivity and Intersubjectivity

The concept of bodily self-alterity serves as a ground for Husserl's famous account of the constitution of the other ego as "the intrinsically first other (the first 'non Ego')" (CM, 107). The notions of ownness (*Eigenheit*) and alienness or otherness (*Fremdheit*) are correlative. They acquire their meaning by being contrasted to one another. Alienness stands for that which demarcates itself from ownness. Husserl presents this demarcation in a problematic way when he turns to the concept of intersubjectivity. Most commentators are dissatisfied with this account because it allegedly derives alienness from or models it after ownness. There would be nothing wrong with it had not this derivation undermined or flattened the difference so sternly asserted initially. In the primordial sphere (*Selbsteigenheit*)

...there becomes constituted for me the new existence-sense that goes beyond my monadic very-ownness; there becomes constituted an ego, not as "I myself", but as mirrored in my own Ego, in my monad. The second ego, however, is not simply there and strictly presented; rather is he constituted as "alter ego" – the ego indicated as one moment by this expression being I myself in my ownness. The "Other", according to his own constituted sense, **points to me myself** (CM, 94).

Many commentators share similar concerns with respect to the approach proposed in this passage. The introducing of the alter ego as a 'modification' of a primordial ego leads Husserl into a blind alley which forecloses the possibility of a genuine understanding of alterity. One misses the encounter between ego and alter

ego by deriving the latter from the former. Proceeding in this way means that one cushions “the shock of the alien and of the heterogeneous.”¹³⁰ Moreover, to say that the alter ego is a *second* ego brings in an unwarranted hierarchical relation. Anthony Steinbock faults the fifth *Cartesian Meditation* for not being able to go beyond an account of the other (*andere*) to an account of the alien (*fremd*). Starting with the assumption of the apodicticity of the ego, the fifth meditation relegates the alter ego to the dimension of secondarity and therefore assigns it to a position of inferiority.¹³¹ This hierarchical relation is implicit in the description of the constitution of the alter ego as mirroring (*Spiegelung*). Insofar as they are surrogates or reflections of an original, mirror images belong to the realm of secondarity.

Although some formulations prop these objections up, there are passages in the fifth meditation which also challenge them. Immediately after introducing the notion of mirroring, Husserl makes the following remark: “The other is a mirroring of my own self and yet **not** a mirroring proper, an analogue of my own self and yet again **not** an analogue in the usual sense” (CM, 94). By means of ‘mirroring’ and ‘analogy’ the ego approximates the contours of a sphere of ownness belonging to another ego. What makes such an analogy “unusual” is that it calls for a peculiar mode of givenness. I find the physical body of the alter ego in my own primordial sphere as “immanent transcendence” (CM, 110). But this physical body *points to* an alien intentional life that eludes any originary presentation and remains irrevocably

¹³⁰ Bernhard Waldenfels, “Experience of the Alien in Husserl’s Phenomenology” in *Research in Phenomenology*, vol. XX, Humanities Press, Inc. 1990, p. 27.

¹³¹ Anthony Steinbock *Home and Beyond*, (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1995) p. 59 and also pp. 65-66. In Steinbock’s view, part of the problem with the fifth Cartesian meditation regards its methodological constraints. The static restriction to the I-Thou relation inevitably presents the alien as too close and too familiar. Only by adopting a new generative methodology was Husserl able to broach issues such as history, language and tradition and thus offer a more solid account or *Fremderfahrung*.

distant and unfamiliar. The other is given as “verifiable accessibility of what is not originally accessible” (CM, 114). Husserl’s technical term for the mode of givenness of the other is analogical apperception or appresentation.¹³² Apperception usually refers to the co-present but unseen viewings of objects entering one’s visual field. In the course of perceptual experience, the empty anticipations of the unseen sides can be either confirmed or disconfirmed by looking at objects from different angles. But analogical apperception means not just that I could perceive sides hidden from my view if my body were to take up the place the other’s body occupies now. The ‘here’ and ‘there’ of my and the other’s physical bodies may be interchangeable positions in a system of points of view. I can indeed perceive the “there” of the other body as a potential location of my own body but I can only apperceive analogically the other body as incarnate absolute “here” or null point of orientation. Analogical apperception is an authentic givenness that cannot be turned into an originary presentation.¹³³ Therefore, empty anticipations of the other are bound to remain incompletely fulfilled. As we will see in the next section, Husserl treats similarly the issues of the alter ego and of alien culture as variants of an intentional experience of the alien which forestalls the possibility of fulfillment.¹³⁴ “Fremdheit besagt Zugänglichkeit in der eigentlichen Unzugänglichkeit, im Modus der

¹³² For a history of the concept of apperception see Elmar Holenstein *Phänomenologie der Assoziation* Martinus Nijhoff, 1972, pp. 133-7.

¹³³ Klaus Held “Le monde natal, le monde étranger, le monde un” in Samuel IJsseling (ed.) *Husserl Ausgabe und Husserl Forschung*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990, p. 9.

¹³⁴ Mohanty points out that the constitution of the alter ego and the constitution of alien culture are somewhat analogous in that both are transcendental questions about the *sense* of otherness. But he soon stresses that there are more reasons to think about these questions as “disanalogous.” In the case of the ego it would be meaningful to delimit a sphere of “sovereignty” stripped of contents conceptually dependent on the other. Yet, at the cultural level, ownness and otherness home and foreign are always intertwined. (*The Other Culture in Phenomenology of the Cultural Disciplines* eds. Mano Daniel and Lester Embree, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994, pp. 135-146). I would maintain that the analogy operates in the reverse direction not by extending the sovereignty of the subject to cultural sovereignty but by contesting the former.

Unverständlichkeit”(Int III, 631). In view of the partiality and incompleteness of intuitive fulfillment, the ‘derivation’ of alienness from ownness seems less likely to dissolve the foreign into the familiarity of the *proprium*.

Insofar as embodiment is essential to it, the constitution of the alter ego can be qualified as passive. My ego arrives at the analogical appresentation of the alter ego because my body and the alter ego’s body point to one another. As shown in chapter two, ‘pointing’ is a type of passive association based on similarity.

Let us assume that another man enters our perceptual sphere. [...] Since, in this Nature and this world, my animate organism is the only body that is or can be constituted originally as an animate organism (a functioning organ), the body over there, must have derived this sense by an apperceptive transfer from my animate organism, and done so in a manner that excludes an actually direct, and hence primordial, showing of the predicates belonging to an animate organism specifically, a showing of them in perception proper. It is clear from the very beginning that only a **similarity** (*Ähnlichkeit*) connecting within my primordial sphere, that body (*Körper*) over there with my body (*Körper*) can serve as the motivational basis for the analogizing apprehension of that body as another animate organism (*anderer Leib*).

Without being embodied the ego and alter ego could not get the analogizing apprehension off the ground. In Husserl’s view, the analogizing apperception is not to be mistaken for inferential activity based on analogy.¹³⁵ I do not project over an external thing predicates that I extracted through explicit reflection. “I cannot create others that shall exist for me” (CM 141). I encounter others. The experience of the alien presupposes a passive transfer (*Übertragung*) of sense which cannot be equated with a logical inference through which I attribute beliefs to other minds on the basis of observed behavior. To understand why this transfer is passive one must turn to the concept of associative pairing.

¹³⁵ CM, 111. See Shaun Gallagher on primary intersubjectivity.

Association is the central phenomena studied by genetic phenomenology. To review an explanation presented earlier, Husserl distinguishes association in the psychological sense from association in phenomenological sense (EJ, 25; APS, 162-3). Instead of regarding association as “intrapsychic gravitation” (CM, 81), that is, natural causal relations between mental representations, Husserl points out the intentional character of associations. Thus, he replaces causality with motivation. From the perspective of transcendental phenomenology, association retains only the rarefied sense of configuration formed out of similar elements. Pairing is the simplest example of association.

Pairing is a *primal form of that passive synthesis* which we designate as “*association*”, in contrast to passive syntheses of “*identification*”. In a *pairing association* the characteristic feature is that, in the most primitive case, two data are given intuitionally, and with prominence, in the unity of a consciousness and that, on this basis - essentially, already in pure passivity (regardless therefore of whether they are noticed or unnoticed) -, as data appearing with **mutual distinctness**, they *found phenomenologically a unity of similarity* and thus are always constituted precisely as a pair (CM, 112)

Pairing is the nucleus of all associative chains. By entering in more complex associations, pairs provide a basis for the formation of pluralities which include intermediary terms. Associative phenomena illustrate, at the most elementary level, the interweaving of sameness and difference. By linking coexisting or successive data, pairing organizes prepredicative sense experience. A pair comes into being through the propagation of affective force from one sense unity to a similar one. Associations establish similarities across differences. Similarity and contrast are co-originary. Husserl invests association with the capacity to operate a fusion of similar elements without effacing their difference. In associative relations, one datum recalls

or points to another and at the most general level the relation is mutual or reciprocal.

The starting point can be either one of the associates. The following passage gives a decisive description according to which association entails

...an intentional overreaching, coming about genetically (and by essential necessity) as soon as the data that undergo pairing have become prominent and simultaneously intended; we find, more particularly, a living mutual awakening and an overlaying of each with the objective sense of the other. [...]As the result of this overlaying, there takes place in the paired data a mutual transfer of sense (*Sinnesübertragung*) – that is to say: an apperception of each according to the sense of the other, so far as moments of sense actualized in what is experienced do not annul this transfer, with the consciousness of “different” (CM 112-3).

Husserl presents the bodily encounter between ego and alter ego as a particular case of associative pairing. However, in view of the dissymmetry between the experiences I have of my own and of the other’s lived-body, it seems difficult to project the model of pairing similar perceptual data over the bodily encounter of the ego with the alter ego. Husserl seems to believe that the pairing model works despite the fact that my direct bodily self-perception and the appearances of the other lived body could not be more *dissimilar*. My body is always present in my perceptual field not as an object but as orchestrating or coordinating the sequence of appearances of things. How can the ego cut across the gap separating it from the alter ego and accomplish the required transfer of sense (*Sinnesüberschiebung*)? Is it not the case that the appropriation (*übernehmen*) through which the alien body takes on the sense of lived-body annuls or at least softens their difference? How can my body enter a pairing relation with something that cannot “become actualized originally in my primordial sphere” (CM, 143)?

Husserl extricates himself from this difficulty by proposing a more complex version of sense transferal based on a quadripartite scheme including my lived body my physical body the other's lived body and the other's physical body. The embodied perceptual encounter between ego and alter ego is the fundamental component of what Husserl calls empathy (*Einfühlung*). The more subtle forms of empathy such as those manifest in various communicative activities and communal endeavors, are outshoots of the basic phenomena of transferal which characterize an embodied encounter.

Analogical apperception or empathy requires not just one but two pairings. The ego can only empathize with the alter ego if it can perceive its lived body as a physical body.¹³⁶ This perception is made possible by the similarity between my body and the other's body as physical entities. My body appropriates the sense of physical body from the other. Reciprocally, the other's body appropriates the sense lived-body from my own lived-body. There is a transferal of sense from ego to alter ego on the level of lived bodies and a transferal of sense from the alter ego to the ego on the level of physical bodies. The pairing of physical bodies requires the incorporation (*Verkörperung*) of my lived body whereas the pairing of the lived bodies requires the embodiment (*Verleiblichung*) of the other's physical body. Through *Verkörperung*, "my lived body acquires the ontic validity of one physical body among others" (C, 107). Through *Verleiblichung*, physical bodies come to count as lived bodies of alien egos.

One could concede that analogical apperception does not rely on inferential activity and still reject that passivity has something to do with empathy. Husserl does

¹³⁶ Int III, 660.

seem to embrace this line of thought when he explains the way in which imagination contributes to the exercise of empathy. If the introjection of sensings into the other's body is the work of imagination, then the above mentioned transfer of sense is just as much based on interpretative effort as on passive embodiment. Imagination intervenes in the conversion of my absolute Here into a virtual There. I can potentially see the same course of appearances *as if* I had the spatial location now occupied by the other's physical body (CM 118). The faculty of imagination allows me to apprehend another body as subjective center of a world. Moreover, the presence of the other invites me to imagine how my own body looks like seen from a different stand point. Thus, I perceive my body as a natural object because I identify it with a thing seen from the perspective of external intuition. But imagination alone cannot completely sustain an empathic encounter. If empathy were just an exercise of imagination, then the ego could not acquire a radical sense of self-alterity through the encounter with an alter ego. The empathic insight into the way other egos perceive it, allows the ego to accomplish the constitution of its body as thing inserted in a spatial environment.

There is no perfect symmetry in the encounter between the ego and the alter ego. My lived body is always present for me whereas the other's body is only present as an object. Through their encounter, both the ego and the alter ego become *physical-aesthesiological unities*. The physical and aesthesiological are 'moments' which are alternately prominent in the experience of the encounter. In the case of the ego the aesthesiological moment is first prominent whereas the physical moment remains latent. In the case of the alter ego, the reverse happens. The alter ego

appropriates the sense of *Leib* and the ego appropriates the sense of *Körper*. By pairing with one another, the ego and the alter ego bring to prominence moments that would otherwise remain latent.¹³⁷ As soon as the ego enters the space of the encounter, it becomes clear that the sphere of ownness includes alienness; likewise, the alienness of the alter ego proves to be intermixed with ownness. Unquestionably, transference engages the ego as well the alter ego. Both actively carry out and passively undergo transformation.

In Theunissen's interpretation, the constitution of the objective I presupposes two types of alteration (*Veränderung*): the reification or physicalization of my lived body through which I *become-something-other* and the personalization through which I *become-an-other*.¹³⁸ The former alteration transforms my lived body into an object and the latter transforms this object into an ego among other egos. The notion of alteration implies on the one hand an imaginary replacement of the absolute here with a there and on the other hand a displacement or de-centering which determines the ego's passive yielding to centripetal tendencies.

Alienation involves the interplay of activity and passivity. Alienation is the result of an encounter. The ego finds itself involved in an encounter which happens to it rather than being actively instituted by it. It is the other that alienates me. Of course, alienation is an act that I carry out. But I can only carry out this act because I respond to an appeal coming from the other. It is the appearance of the other which brings about the act of empathy in me.

¹³⁷ Natalie Depraz, *Transcendence et Incarnation*, Paris: Vrin, 1995, p. 143.

¹³⁸ Michael Theunissen, *The Other*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984, p. 89.

As noted above, critics complain about a major difficulty plaguing the treatment of intersubjectivity in the fifth *Cartesian Meditation*. Husserl overstates the similarity which lies at the basis of bodily pairing. Conceiving of the relation with the alter ego in terms of pairing has the potential of violent re-appropriation of alterity which can dissolve the alienness by annexing it to the sphere of ownness. While the alter ego alienates me I dis-alienate the alter ego.¹³⁹ Alienation entails a double danger. I can dis-alienate the other to the point of occluding its alienness (*Fremdheit*). Assimilating the alien to the own can take the form of negation of the other's identity. Reciprocally, the other can alienate me to the extent of threatening my very ownness (*Eigenheit*). In the next section we will see that alienation can dissolve agency into prolonged docility while dis-alienation can erase the alienness of the alien not only in intersubjective but also in cross-cultural relations.

Notwithstanding these real dangers, alienation has the benefit of keeping the process of constitution open. Because self-alienation is constantly at work, the incorporation of the *Leib* remains an incomplete process. The lived body appears as pure dispersal of sensible points and therefore as system of unstable syntheses. The payback of Husserl's approach to intersubjectivity is not that it makes the alter ego just as accessible as the ego. Rather, the texts show, perhaps inadvertently, that the ego's self-coincidence is just as unsuccessful as its coincidence with the alter ego. Alienation unsettles the primordial sphere of the ego. These unsettling effects partially result from the active work of the ego. However, the alienation is a work done *upon* the self. Had not the self been endowed with a certain plasticity, the

¹³⁹ Theunissen (p.150) aptly interprets the Husserlian notion of *Ent-fremdung* as inherently ambiguous. It means at the same time estrangement and suspension of alienness.

transfer of sense implied in pairing would have been unidirectional. To acknowledge the passivity of the ego does not mean to transform the self either into an amorphous material ready to take up any form or into an inert and friable substance which would repel any metamorphosis. Passivity as the inchoate, nascent, generative stage of morphogenesis is that which makes alienation possible.

3. Passivity and Alien Cultures

Many commentators who take issue with Husserl's account of intersubjectivity do not give much credit to his phenomenological ventures into the area of social ontology. According to these views, phenomenology is fettered by too many methodological constraints to rival the accounts of sociality produced by existentialism, structuralism, hermeneutics or social sciences in general. The major complaints regard, on the one hand, the decision to take the ego as the starting point of investigations and, on the other hand, the restriction of social interactions to the dual schema of ego/alter-ego.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ For example, Vincent Descombes makes a case against Husserl's reduction of sociality to intersubjectivity. Descombes argues that tracing the social phenomena back to the nuclear relation self/other obstructs any serious attempt to understand sociality. In Descombes' view, sociality is a third dimension irreducible to duality. Although related to subjects, sociality is a-subjective. By simply starting to talk about a multiplicity of subjects, phenomenology does no fare very well. To disentangle the social relations from the mere intersubjective ones, Descombes proposes the test of internalizability. If a relation can be internalized, then it is not intrinsically social. For instance, I can internalize a dialogical relation and talk to my self and therefore the dialogue is not an intrinsically social relation. However, I cannot internalize the relation of selling or inheriting, which can be conceived only if there exists a multitude of social agents holding different roles. Sociality is a relational topology based on the complementarity of social roles. 'Relation intersubjective et relation sociale' in Jocelyn Benoist and Bruno Karsenti (eds.) *Phénoménologie et sociologie* Paris:PUF, 2001 p. 154.

The standard reply consists in pointing out different 'ways' into transcendental phenomenology. Husserl's defenders like to emphasize that by incorporating some methodological amendments phenomenology became more apt to investigate social phenomena. Some commentators focus on the advantages of genetic phenomenology and on the famous way of the *Lebenswelt*. Others, like Anthony Steinbock, advocate the view according to which the home (*Heim*)/alien (*Fremd*) structure breaks with the constraints of static and genetic methods and opens the possibility of explaining phenomena such as birth and death, the role of the succession of generations in the sedimentation of traditions. *Generative* phenomenology is capable of giving a *non-foundational* account of alienness which avoids portraying it as intentional modification of or derivation from an original ownness.¹⁴¹ I find Steinbock's descriptions of the co-constitution of homeworld and alienworld as double movement of "appropriation" (*Übernehmen*) and "transgression" (*Überschreitung*) illuminating but I disagree with his dismissal of the analogy between homeworld/alienworld and ego/alter ego relations. In my view, maintaining this analogy has less damaging effects than Steinbock seems to believe. I think it is legitimate to say that the homeworld corresponds to the ego's primordial sphere whereas the alienworld corresponds to the alter ego. I take these correspondences to prove not that the homeworld is just as self-certain as the ego but rather that the ego is just as self-alienated as the homeworld. I do not want to minimize the real dangers that go along with the misuse of this analogy. If intended to expand the epistemic privilege of the ego into the cultural privilege of the homeworld, then such an analogy would have to be discarded. I think this analogy could also

¹⁴¹ Steinbock (1995), pp. 183 and 221.

indicate that embodied constitution is congruent with the constitution of cultural world in the sense that ego/alter ego and homeworld/alienworld structures are both variants of the relation between sameness and otherness as equiprimordial terms.

In the following, I focus on Husserl's account of *Fremderfahrung* in the broadest sense which refers to the relation between *Heimwelt* and *Fremdwelt*. First, I show that Husserl takes passivity to contribute to the constitution of the homeworld by coagulating sediments, habitualities and cultural achievements into a common cultural horizon. Second, I suggest that it would be a mistake to reduce passivity to the blind collective acceptance of a cultural heritage. If homeworlds cannot shut themselves off indefinitely, it is because their inherent passivity makes it such that homeworlds are necessarily modulated by the contact with alienworlds. This point will serve as grounds for my interpretation of the metaphor of the body-politic which will lead me to emphasize the political sense of passivity as porosity of borders. My ultimate goal is not to demonstrate that Husserl reverses the traditionally hierarchical representation of the couple activity/passivity. Part of the solution for cultural crises and political conflicts will always consist in the multiplication and refinement of active interpretations. But interpretations which claim to activate *without remainder* passive sediments can do more harm than good.

I now turn to the issue of community. Authentic intermonadic communities are the product of communalizing acts of individual subjects. Autonomous and responsible subjects who deliberately engage in the common pursuit of the same goals form what Husserl calls a "personality of higher order" (AV, 22; CM, 132).

The community is a personal, so to speak, manyheaded and yet united subjectivity. Its individual persons are its “members”; they are functionally bound up with one another through multifarious person to person spiritually uniting “social acts” (I-Thou acts; commands, appointments, acts of love and so on).¹⁴² (AV, 22)

Academic associations, professional organizations, religious congregations, and states are Husserl’s examples of *manyheaded subjectivities* founded on individual egos. But pursuing the same goal is not a sufficient condition for a group of individuals to form a community. For example, the shoppers in a mall or the patrons of a restaurant form collections of individuals not communities and the same goes for innumerable other groups. It is not by accidentally doing the same thing in the same place that individuals establish communal ties. If shoppers in the same mall are in any way members of a community, they cannot get that membership *as* shoppers. A collection of individuals becomes a community when individuals acknowledge their responsibility for one another and for their being-together. Communities are not natural or accidental givens but collective achievements depending on the establishment of a unity of individual wills. In other words, entering a community of wills (*Willensgemeinschaft*) is first and foremost an ethical imperative and secondarily a matter of common pursuit of the same goal. In Husserl’s view, being the citizen of a state, choosing one’s professional vocation or pursuing one’s religious faith grant community membership precisely insofar as they fulfill an ethical imperative.

¹⁴² “Die Gemeinschaft ist eine personale, sozusagen vielköpfige und doch verbundene Subjektivität. Ihre Einzelpersonen sind ihre “Glieder“ funktionell miteinander verflochten durch vielgestaltige, Person mit Person geistig einigende “soziale Akte“ (Ich-Du Akte; Befehle, Verabredungen, Liebestätigkeiten usw).“ This passage shows, against Descombes, that Husserl was perfectly aware that sociality requires not only intersubjective but also non-internalizable social acts: orders and appointments are just such acts.

We do not only live next to one another but in one another. We determine one another personally...from one I to another I. And our wills do not merely work on Others as the components of our surroundings but in the Others: Our wills extend themselves unto the will of the Other, unto the Other's willing which at the same time is our willing, so that the deed of the Other can become our deed, even if in a modified manner (F I 24, 128).¹⁴³

There are several problems with this account of community. First, persons are likely to be members in more than one community. This puts them in the situation of having to reconcile the often conflicting demands that go along with multiple community memberships. This problem can be handled by establishing a hierarchy of goals. If one wants to raise a family, follow one's professional vocation and campaign for a political cause one will have to set up priorities so as to better cope with inevitable demands for exclusive choices. The overarching ethical principle of universal rational love is supposed to be at the top of the hierarchy. Nevertheless, individuals often find themselves constrained to sacrifice some goals in favor of others, equally commending.¹⁴⁴ Second, if harmony, interpenetration of wills and pursuit of the same goal define community, then community membership could threaten individual independence. To this Husserl would respond that some communities come closer than others to the ideal of rational association of free individuals. Religious congregations do achieve a unity of wills but this unity is not worth much if it is obtained at the cost of stifling rational debate. Given that the unity of wills must be established through rational debate, sharing of insights and mutual

¹⁴³ Quoted in Hart, *The Person and the Common Life*, p. 248.

¹⁴⁴ Janet Donohoe notes the correlation between the concepts of 'vocation' and 'community.' She points out that women are more likely to confront the problem of multiple vocations than men. Women who often must respond to the equally important exigencies of both motherhood and professional life there is no escape from sacrifice. Donohoe takes this to be a sign of the "tragic burden" of human existence. See Donohoe (2004), p. 135.

critique, scientific researchers provide, in Husserl's view, the paradigm of authentic community.¹⁴⁵ But this gives rise to other problems. Husserl seems to assume that all rational debates must result in agreement and harmony. This does not mean that all agreement is rational but it does mean that when there is disagreement either the debate is not fully carried out or at least one party is wrong. Moreover, supposing that philosophers do indeed form authentic communities, despite obvious contentions over fundamental issues, it's highly improbable that entire societies could follow their model. In part, this is a pedagogical problem: it is unlikely that philosophers or mathematicians could propagate the ideal of rationality outside of their professional sphere. In part, this is a problem of size. Husserl's view of communal bond as unity of wills seems to be so strict that it would be difficult even for two friends, whether mathematicians or not, to form a community. How universities, cities or nations could fulfill such conditions is not at all clear. Although Husserl's account of community seems to collapse under too many objections, I will argue that the description of the contact between home and alien worlds brings to the fore the idea of passivity as openness toward the foreign thereby saving Husserl's theory of community from drifting into a totalizing project.

Before I come back to this point let me say a few words about Husserl's strong rejection of passivity in the sense of uncritical acceptance of tradition. As a matter of fact, individuals do not start their lives by signing up for the communities

¹⁴⁵ Philip Buckley speculates that what inspired Husserl's thoughts about community was his acquaintance with the group of famous Gottingen mathematicians such as Klein, Hilbert, Minkowski and Weyl actively engaged in the debates over the fundamentals of mathematics. "Husserl's Gottingen Years and the Genesis of a Theory of Community" in L. Lanasdorf and S. H. Watson, eds., *Reinterpreting the Political*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1998.

they want to belong to. Rather, individuals are *born into*¹⁴⁶ (*hineingeboren*) home communities and this indicates a passive aspect of intermonadic life. Gender, clan affiliation, ethnicity, and nationality are matters of external ascription: individuals do not elect but receive or inherit these determinations.

Acting in the sense of custom, resulting from the training to which we have been continuously submitted from childhood through social intercourse, has on whomever acts in this way the phenomenological character of *being imposed from without*.¹⁴⁷ (F I 24, p. 93)

This passive insertion into home communities provides individuals with ready made cultural contexts consisting of language, concepts, beliefs, values, norms and narratives. Exposure to sedimented cultural achievements gives individuals access to tools without which they could neither make sense of their environment nor acquire personal identity. Homeworlds hand down to the new generation traditions established by older generations. It is in the nature of this process of handing down to “normalize” or “typify” what is being passed on. On this view, the homeworld (*Heimwelt*) is a site where unifying and homogenizing forces have enough of an edge over eccentricities and oddities to create an overall impression of *familiarity* for homeworld members.¹⁴⁸ Unless designed as experiments in systematic collective indoctrination, relatively uniform curricula in educational systems do not ensure that all homeworld members come to share given sets of beliefs, values or cultural goods. But educational systems among other factors certainly give homeworld members a

¹⁴⁶ Int. III, 139.

¹⁴⁷ “Das Handeln im Sinne der Sitte, zu dem wir von Kindheit her und dann weiter im Gesellschaftsverkehr immer wieder *dressiert* worden sind, hat für jeden so Handelnden an sich den phänomenologischen Charakter des *von auszen her Auferlegten*.” Quoted in Toulemont (1962) p. 204.

¹⁴⁸ For an interesting account of the various psychological, cultural and political connotations of the German *Heim* and its derivatives see Klaus Held “Le monde natal, le monde étranger, le monde un” in Samuel IJsseling (ed.) *Husserl Ausgabe und Husserl Forschung*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990, p. 21. Also, Steinbock (1995) p. 187.

fairly solid idea of their location in a social and cultural field with discernible lines of divisions as well as informal indications with regard to how resistant to transgression those lines may be and what risks or benefits transgressors can expect. In general, sedimentation and habitus perpetuate the cultural horizons in relation with which homeworld members acquire their own personal and cultural identity. To belong to a tradition means to develop one's identity on the background of and in confrontation with a cultural horizon made available by the previous generations.

It may be that some measure of passive reception of the past always goes into homeworld constitution.¹⁴⁹ But cultural traditions are not imposed *nolens volens* on individuals like their hereditary genetic makeup. Nevertheless, traditions trigger the tremendous pressure of the impersonal *one* and set off homeostatic mechanisms which reproduce patterns of behavior and force home members into predetermined molds. Therefore, to belong to a tradition may seem more like enduring external impositions than like freely choosing to emulate models of excellence. In Husserl's view, the uncritical acceptance of what is being handed down from generation to generation is what prevents 'primitive' communities from making a contribution to the universal teleology of reason. The problem with 'primitive' communities is not their poor cultural heritage. Rather, the rigid *conservation* of however rich a cultural heritage forecloses the possibility of self-transgression into the future.

A primitive people separated through some catastrophe from its Urstamm, within which it effected the beginnings of a teleology, slips

¹⁴⁹ Many scholars call attention to the catastrophic effects of inauthentic passive tradition. Among the most interesting commentaries see René Toulemonde *L'essence de la société selon Husserl* (Paris: PUF, 1962), Philip Buckley, *Husserl, Heidegger and the Crisis of Philosophical Responsibility* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992), Jocelyn Benoist *Autour de Husserl: l'ego et la raison* (Paris: Vrin, 1994), John J. Drummond "Political Community" in Kevin Thomson and Lester Embree (eds.) *Phenomenology of the Political* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000)

into a state of stagnation, of finite existence which, despite changes makes no meaningful futurity possible. Thus, the individual and the tribe lack the motivation to turn their regard toward infinitely self-developing future goals.¹⁵⁰ (K III 3 pp. 78-79)

Authentic communities respond to the fairly high dose of inertia in passively sedimentated cultural horizons by *building* cultural traditions out of what is being received from past generations. Homeworld members do not simply *find* themselves at home in their culture but *make* a cultural horizon their own by selectively taking up (*aufnehmen*) and appropriating (*übernehmen*) the heritage that is being passed on to them. Sediments persist insofar as they are continuously being apprehended and reactivated. Old strata of cultural sediments are being transformed and new ones added. Therefore, homeworlds are always in the making. Many passages in Husserl imply that authentic individual and communal life must offset the effects of passivity by resolutely assuming the responsibility of reactivation.

Life is a striving and, as human life, an ascent from passivity to activity, from a life guided by inclination to a life guided by reflective choosing, to a critical life of a higher value.¹⁵¹ (F I 24, p. 706)

Can this possibly mean that passivity is just a phase to be left behind as individuals mature and communities evolve? Is not passivity more than just a mark of individual infantilism or cultural 'primitivism'? Do all forms of passivity deserve the blame for interfering with the free rational pursuit of truth? I believe that passivity

¹⁵⁰ "Ein primitives Völkchen, wer weiss durch welche Landkatastrophe von dem Urstamm abgeschnitten, an dem es etwaige Anfänge einer Teleologie auswirken konnte, gerät in einen Stand der Stagnation, in eine Verendlichkeit des Daseins, die bei allem Wandel doch keine sinnvolle Zukünftigkeit ermöglicht. So fehlt jede Motivation für den Einzelnen und für den Stamm, ins Endlose sich auswirkende Zukunftsziele zu erschauen", quoted in Toulemont (1962) p. 198.

¹⁵¹ "Leben ist in sich Streben und ist als menschliches ein Aufsteigen von Passivität in Aktivität, von einem Sich-gehen-und-tragen-lassen, von einem Leben nach Neigung, zu einem überlegten Wählen, zu einem kritischen, höher bewerteten bevorzugenden Leben." Quoted in Buckley (1992) p. 146.

must be both superseded and preserved. Passivity taken as blind acceptance of the past must be superseded so that new meanings may be instituted through more and more interpretations. Yet passivity taken as non-self-sufficiency and incompleteness of constitution cannot be overcome. In this sense, passivity prevents the homeworld from closing off within itself and exposes it to the alienworld.

However, Husserl often writes as if the passive acceptance of cultural horizons as well as the unity of wills obtained through rational debate among self-responsible agents end up producing the same result: homeworlds as homogeneous wholes. The drawback of this (and perhaps any) conception of community is that it downplays the importance of conflicts, discordances, and differences in the constitution of home worlds.¹⁵² Wherever explication runs into obstacles, there seems to be no shortage of strategies capable of disclosing underlying unities which soften oppositions and contrasts.

The misleading metaphor of concentric circles or spheres (Int. III, 429) seems to play an important role in the description of the explication of homeworld horizons. This image suggests a steady increase of unfamiliarity and strangeness as one reaches out into circles further removed from the center. Moving from one's house and street into one's neighborhood and city and further into one's home country one experiences less and less familiarity. On this account, unfamiliarity peaks in travels

¹⁵² One could explain this shortcoming by referring to the rationalist universalism which determined Husserl to accuse hermeneutics of not being able to ward off the risk of relativism. However, the tendency to think that cultural contacts are based more on agreement, shared presuppositions and trust than on conflicts, resistance and obstacles operates in hermeneutics as well. Lampert argues that the problem with both universalism and relativism is the assumption that cultures are stable self-identical wholes. If theories of interpretation specific for one culture must be inflected by the influence of alternative theories of interpretation available in other cultures then "interpretation has the structure of multiculturalism" (361). This comes down to reversing Gadamer's position: it is cross-cultural interpretation that makes possible cross-historical interpretations rather than the other way round. Jay Lampert "Gadamer and Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics" in *The Philosophical Forum*, 28(4), 1997.

through foreign lands. But this image of a home nucleus, where all anticipations are confirmed and verified, surrounded by larger and larger spheres where discordances (*Unstimmigkeiten*) prevail seems contrived. More appropriate would be the image of intersecting circles with varying degrees of familiarity. Obviously, discordances interrupt the normal course of experience in all the regions of a home world from the family nucleus to the remotest peripheries. Families are often dysfunctional; gender, class and age markers break up the community into distinct groups; labor constraints divide the communal life in separate professional spheres. To move from one sphere to another, a homeworld member must overcome discordances, interpret differences and learn new 'dialects'. The vaster the tradition of a homeworld, the more difficult would be for the homeworld members to grasp all the interconnections and ramifications of current cultural phenomena and historical events. This is a fortiori true about the past.

Husserl could defend himself by disconnecting the fundamental notion of explication of horizons from the deceptive metaphor of concentric circles. Homeworld interpreters can choose various starting points for explications. Multiple "cores" of familiarity wrapped in their own non-explicated horizons of unfamiliarity would correspond to these starting points and explications would reveal that homeworlds contain pockets of a-typicality, intrusions of abnormality, grafts of alienness encrusted into ownness. This would accommodate the division of homeworlds into regions with different degrees of familiarity. By attributing a *fluctuating typicality* (*fliessende Typik*) (Int. III, 431) to homeworld horizons, Husserl implicitly denies their homogeneity. In the context of the phenomenology of

perception, terms such as propagation (*Fortpflanzung*) and fusion (*Verschmelzung*)¹⁵³ account for the formation of unitary sensible configurations on the basis of laws of similarity *and* contrast. Husserl also uses these terms when he discusses the problem of cultural sedimentation. Here these notions explain why heterogeneous zones interrupt the relatively homogenous horizon of the homeworld.

Steinbock points out that the constitution of the homeworld takes the shape of “the generative density of tradition.”¹⁵⁴ Homeworld members experience their traditions as *generatively dense* because they generate the home culture *from within*. The assimilation of a home culture is a process equivalent to learning one’s mother tongue. The intimate participation to the fashioning of the homeworld horizon allows home members to feel at ease in their culture. This does not mean that all homeworld members are socialized into accepting some given set of values and norms. Rather, home members engaged in explications of homeworld horizons spend less effort to overcome resistances because the tools necessary for such explications can be located and accessed with relative ease.

Each man understands first of all, in respect of a core as having its unrevealed horizon, his concrete surrounding world or his culture; and he does so precisely as a man who belongs to the community fashioning it historically. A deeper understanding, one that opens up the horizon of the past (which is co-determinant for an understanding of the present itself), is essentially possible to all members of that community, with a certain originality possible to them alone and barred to anyone from another community who enters into relation with theirs (CM, 133).

¹⁵³ Steinbock., p.

¹⁵⁴ Steinbock (1995), 184, 190, 237, and 239.

For similar generative reasons, homeworld members experience alien traditions *from without* as distant, atypical and unfamiliar. From the perspective of the home, an alien cultural world is given as *accessible inaccessibility*: “Fremdheit besagt Zugänglichkeit in der eigentlichen Unzugänglichkeit, im Modus der Unverständlichkeit” (Int. III, 631). It would seem that the best way to understand the generative source of an alien way of life would be to live that kind of life. A German person could lay claim to understanding the generative source of Chinese culture only after having lived a Chinese life among Chinese people.

As I was brought up into my generative human world, so I must, if I want to understand the Chinese and their world, be brought up into theirs...¹⁵⁵ (A VII 9, p. 15)

If any given culture looks at the world from a unique perspective then to understand a culture would come down to taking up that perspective.¹⁵⁶ Yet, such a proposal conflates validation with the adoption of the other’s point of view and is inescapably relativistic.

Travelers in foreign lands immediately recognize social practices analogue to those belonging to the familiar cultural horizon of their homeworld: markets, farms, workshops, transportation systems and places of worship, all require comportments that can be analogically apprehended on the basis of social skills already acquired in one’s homeworld. A model of cultural understanding could be developed to show that

¹⁵⁵ “Wie ich als Kind hineinerzogen wurde in meine generative Menschenwelt, so musz ich, wenn ich den Chinesen und die chinesische Welt verstehen will, hineinerzogen werden...” Quoted in Toulemont (1962), p. 190.

¹⁵⁶ It is possible to interpret in this way Husserl notion of *historical empathy* “... To me and to those who share in my culture, an alien culture is accessible only by a kind of experience of someone else (*Fremderfahrung*), a kind of empathy, by which we project ourselves into the alien cultural community (*Fremde Kulturmenschheit*) and its culture” (CM, 134-5).

alien cultures could be mapped unto home cultures through the mediacy of cultural invariants underlying the differences between cultural worlds. Obviously, this model, for which Husserl shows some sympathy, would appeal to the objective language of science and would expand to cultural phenomena the same explicative strategy employed in the investigations of the physical world. After all, cultural worlds belong to the same nature, physical entities in space-time abide by the same laws of physics and so does the human perception of those entities be they animals, rivers, mountains, shelters, shrines and so forth. Curious travelers who want to understand the life of isolated tribes would face the challenge to refine their scientific theories so as to account for unfamiliar cultural phenomena.

However, Husserl is aware that the idea of mere *expansion* of one homeworld horizon misrepresents intercultural contacts. Cultural border crossing puts a special strain on the explication of horizons. The fact that discordances prevail over confirmations severely obstructs the attempts to typify or normalize the experience of the alien. But this is not only a matter of how frequently empty intentions and anticipations get disconfirmed in explications of alien versus home cultural horizons.

I have a first world (in my childhood genesis) as concordantly experienced familiarity. If I now understand the alien as subject of his home community and of his alien homeworld, this world is for me first his intended world, and the question is whether and to what extent I can appropriate the (alien's) experiential validities and proceed toward a synthesis of the alien's homeworld with mine. How can I, and must I, arrive at an overlapping concordance?¹⁵⁷ (Int. III, 233-34)

¹⁵⁷ "Eine erste seiende Welt habe ich (in meiner kindlichen Genesis) als einstimmig erfahrene Heimwelt meiner Einheimischen. Verstehe ich nun Fremde als Subjekte ihrer Heimgenossenschaft und ihrer anderen Heimwelt, so ist diese für mich zunächst ihre vermeinte Welt, und es ist die Frage, inwiefern ich und wie weit ich ihre (der Fremden) Erfahrungsgeltungen im Nachverstehen übernehmen, also zu einer Synthesis ihrer Heimwelt mit der meinen fortschreiten kann. Wie komme ich, und muss ich kommen, zu einer übergreifenden Einstimmigkeit?"

Interpreters do not have to replace their system of anticipation with the alien one in order to understand that what seems atypical and anomalous from the homeworld perspective is typical and normal from the alienworld perspective. Rather, interpreters must establish *concordances* between homeworld and alienworld systems of anticipations. Where alien normality and validity (*Erfahrungsgeltung*) are concerned, homeworld members cannot simply pass judgments in accordance with their own standards of normality and validity. Part of what the encounter between home and alien is supposed to accomplish is precisely a renegotiation of the standards of validity. In incipient cultural contacts where no such renegotiations had occasion to occur the alien is bound to be represented as inaccessible and incomprehensible.¹⁵⁸

Unlike the constitution of space-time, the constitution of the cultural world is “oriented.” Attributes such as closeness intimacy, typicality and normality mark one’s special mode of access to one’s own culture. All this seems to confirm the suspicion that the analogy between the sphere of ownness and the homeworld is meant to justify the cultural privilege of the latter by assimilating it to the self-certainty of the former. But if the analogy also works in the reverse direction then features of the homeworld could be transferred to the sphere of ownness. This would subvert the equation of subjectivity with self-certainty. There are two intertwined features of homeworlds

¹⁵⁸ Further developing Husserl’s notion of explication of horizons, Gadamer’s “fusion of horizons” or Charles Taylor’s “language of perspicuous contrast” demonstrate that the synthesis between homeworlds and alienworlds does not necessarily threaten the generative structure home/alien. Charles Taylor argues that neither the allegedly neutral scientific theories (which dismiss the way human agents describe their own practices) nor the adoption of the perspective of the other culture (which makes any culture incorrigible) provide sound accounts of social practices. Taylor’s *interpretive* view proposes the construction of a *language of perspicuous contrast* from the point of view of which incommensurable human practices, such as magic and contemporary physics, are shown to be alternatives in a *continuous* field of human possibilities. Charles Taylor, “Understanding and Ethnocentricity” in *Philosophy and the Human Science: Philosophical Papers 2*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) p. 125.

that I want to emphasize. First, homeworlds are non-self-sufficient or incapable of being completely constituted. Second, contacts with alien worlds necessarily modulate the homeworld. It could be said both that non-self-sufficiency require contact with alien and that alien interpretations reveal the non-self-sufficiency of the home. Thus, home and alien codetermine one another as correlative modes of givenness of cultural phenomena. The constitution of the homeworld implicitly posits an alienworld. Reciprocally, the encounter with the alien contests, refutes, corrects and enriches the self-interpretations of the home. Instead of grounding the cultural privilege of home culture in the self-certainty of the sphere of ownness, the comparison between ego and homeworld could be intended to make more prominent the passive aspects of egoic life such as the necessary engagement into pairing associations and the incompleteness of constitution.

Husserl sometimes gives the example of 'Europe' to show that an integration of home (*Heim*) and alien (*Fremd*) into a higher order rational homeworld structure has been long underway.¹⁵⁹ By bracketing geographical details Husserl wants to turn his readers' attention from 'Europe' as empirical contingent entity toward the "spiritual shape of Europe." What individuates 'Europe' is not its cartographic inscription but its status as bearer of "the historical teleology of the infinite goals of reason" (C, 299). Yet geography enters Husserl's reflections through the back door, as it were, because all homeworlds have ties to some territory. The territorial spread of European 'spirit' turns out to be a very thorny issue. Units geographically distinct from the old continent, such as the United States and the British Dominions, spiritually belong to Europe. Moreover, people living on European territory, such as

¹⁵⁹ This is the case most notably in *The Vienna Lecture*.

Gypsies, Eskimos or “Indians presented as curiosities at fares” do not deserve the citizenship of the ideal Europe (C, p. 273). Husserl condescendingly admits that “in a *broad* sense *even* the Papuan is a man and not a beast” (C, 290) thus implying that Europe’s interest for the Papuan is very close to zoology. For their part, China and India, despite their centuries-old philosophical traditions, are downgraded to the status of “empirical anthropological types” (C, 16). Not being guided by an “absolute idea”, Chinese and Indian philosophies are morphologically similar to but intentionally different from Greek philosophy. From among non-European cultures, only Japan commends Husserl’s admiration, ironically, not for its own tradition but for the fact that she has “recently joined the European cultural endeavor” (AV, 3). One can easily see how the Husserlian map of the ideal Europe registers inclusions and exclusions, which, with the notable exception of Japan, correspond to the commercial and military successes of European colonial powers. Husserl sadly faults his own principle of *Voraussetzungslosigkeit* when he interprets the Europeanization of India as rationally justified while regarding a potential Indianization of Europe as a priori impossible (C, 275). It is naïve, if not cynical, to reduce Europeanization to the export and assimilation of spiritual ideals and to hide under the carpet the violent impositions and subordinations that go along with it. Such remarks call into question Husserl’s rational optimism and give rise to grave accusations. For instance, Adorno notes that in some Husserlian texts devotion to pure ideals coexists with a kind of “transcendental xenophobia.”¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ Th. W. Adorno, *Against Epistemology: A Metacritique*. tr. Willis Domingo. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982, p. 222. Adorno is the first among many other scholars to question Husserl’s Eurocentric statements. Commenting on the “Europocentric humanism” of Husserl and Heidegger, Derrida notes that “the reference to *spirit*, to the *freedom* of spirit, and to spirit as *European* spirit

As ideal supra-national¹⁶¹ entity (*Übervolkung*), the example of 'Europe' seems to confirm the possibility of integration of home and alien into a higher structure. But Husserl turns Europe into a homeworld at the cost of denying home membership to various groups living on Europe's territory. What makes Husserl's version of cosmopolitanism even more problematic is the fact that it seems to legitimate the goal of transforming the entire world into one homeworld. Such a transformation could only take the shape of violent extensions of particular homeworlds over alienworlds. But Husserl's universalism does not necessarily lead either to the unilateral domination of an alienworld by the homeworld or to the dissolution of the homeworld/ alienworld structure.

I would like to go back to the issue of the constitution of homeworld community. I will mention some difficulties inherent in any conception of

could and still can ally itself with the politics one would want to oppose to it." See *Of Spirit. Heidegger and the Question*, tr. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987, p. 121. In Gérard Granel's view, Husserl mistakenly separated Europe's rational *telos* from the technological expansion made possible by modern science. Techno-scientific development provided the conditions for economical globalization. In view of the fact that globalization levels out cultural differences incompatible with the logic of the market, the infinite *eidos* of Europe turns out to be another name for the cultural uniformization subservient to the unique and indeed infinite goal of wealth production. See "Les années trente sont devant nous" in *Les temps modernes*, February, 1993. Rémi Brague takes issue with Husserl's hyphenating the expression 'Greco-European.' Here hyphenation mistakenly presents a tortuous process of disappropriation and reappropriation with its Renaissances and its downfalls as historical continuity. Nevertheless, Brague's account of European cultural history is very much in tune with Husserl's in that both view Europe as a task rather than an essence. Europe had not inherited but appropriated Greek culture just as it had appropriated Judaic and Islamic cultural achievements. Brague argues for an "eccentric" European identity just as distant and removed from its origins as from the ideal which it struggles to accomplish. *Eccentric Culture. A theory of Western Civilization*, tr. Samuel Lester, South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2002, p. 134.

¹⁶¹ To be sure, Husserl's take on the relation between nation and philosophy leaves room for different interpretations. In his wartime texts, Husserl praised the Germans' sacrifice for their fatherland and their defence of "the sublime national Idea" ("Lectures on Fichte" in *Husserl Studies* 12:1995, p. 131). Such statements seem to recommend Husserl as "a conservative German nationalist" (James Dodd, *Crisis and Reflection*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004, p. 57). But in the *Kaizo* articles he went so far as to claim that an internationalism which lives up to the ideal of "universal ethical humanity" may require the "destruction of state power-organization" (*Abbau der staatlichen Machtorganisation*) (AV, p. 58). For more about this issue see Philippe Ducat "Rationalism, Idealism, Nationalism" in Natalie Depraz and Dan Zahavi (eds.) *Alterity and Facticity*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998.

community. I will propose to think of passivity as necessary openness of homeworlds toward alienworlds and I will claim that this idea of passivity saves Husserl's theory of community from totalizing temptations.

'Community' (*Gemeinschaft*) is a nice word in that it suggests concord among individuals, harmonious being-together and shared responsibility for a common good that transcends egotistic self-interest. Could anyone who is not a seditionist, a warmonger or a die-hard supporter of free-trade turn his back on 'community'? Theories of community are seductive for those who desire an easy recipe for achieving three political objectives in one go: untrammelled unity, legitimate hierarchy and harmonious relation between parts and wholes. These theories often invoke the metaphor of the body-politic and propose one form or another of political organicism.¹⁶² The successive crises, of which Husserl was a direct witness, undergone by parliamentary democracy between the world wars greatly contributed to resuscitate under different forms the figure of the body as redemptive political stratagem capable of countering social atomization. The schema of the body-politic, construed as hierarchical structure, as priority of the whole over

¹⁶² Jacob Rogozinski traces the history of political organicism back to Plato and Aristotle who assigned individuals determinate social roles corresponding to the physiological functions of bodily organs. In the Middle Ages, the image of the mystic body surfaced as the accepted self-representation of the Church. The Anglo Saxon contractarian theories of the seventeenth century posed the protection of individual freedoms as the sole responsibility of the state thus shattering the premises of political organicism. However, the French version of contractualism, as represented by Rousseau, resuscitated the image of the collective body under the form of a "general will" pre-existing and presiding over the wills of the contractees. The German Romanticism followed a similar line of thought and emphasized the historical efficacy of the *Volksgeist*. According to Jacob Rogozinski, the emblematic feature of modernity consists of a "double, contradictory movement of disincorporation and reincorporation" which attests to the persisting appeal of the image of collective body. See "Chiasmus and the Polis. The Reversible Flesh of the Community in Political Philosophy" in Laura Doyle (Ed.) *Bodies of Resistance. New Phenomenology of Politics, Agency and Culture*. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001)

the parts or as unity of state and society within the Party operates with various representations of social unity such as Nation, People or Universal Class.

James Hart champions a “communitarian” or even “anarcho-communist” ideal which, he claims, “suffuses” Husserl’s thought.¹⁶³ Hart extracts from Husserl’s social ethics the idea of community as *Ineinander* of personal wills. From this organic standpoint, individuals are more like the non-independent “*quasi-moments*” than like the independent *parts* of a whole (439). Hart acknowledges that ‘community’ is “vulnerable to distortions” but finds it necessary to hold fast to “the proper referent” (442) of the concept. But if this “proper referent” is to be located within the particular framework of Christian religion, as Hart assumes, it is not clear how community could encompass “all of humanity” (285). Contractarianists would be quick to object that organic political paradigms are incompatible with the fundamental liberal principles of individual freedom and value neutrality. Hart rebuts on Husserl’s behalf by limiting the class of genuine communities to those which are constituted “from below” (384) by free rational individuals. But his communitarian challenge to value neutrality does not seem convincing. He claims that “the community of life necessarily has goods which are cherished by all in the sense that they are commonly willed, realized and enjoyed; and that foremost among these is the common life itself” (247). Yet, saying that community is the foremost common good is vacuous. For some liberal theorists, such claims are not only useless in that they cannot ground concrete policies but also dangerous in that they tend to promote majoritarianism.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ James G. Hart, *The Person and the Common Life*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992, p. 385.

¹⁶⁴ Joseph Heath argues along these lines against the “myth” of shared values. On the one hand, in its *concrete* form, the claim that a society shares values can easily be refuted empirically by poll taking.

Adamantly critical of theories of community, Jean Luc Nancy warns against the danger of falling prey to the double delusion according to which community is the blissful state humanity either slipped out of in the past or will enter into in a future which is yet 'to come'. 'Community' names an impossibility and therefore it is just as misguided to lament its loss as it is to proclaim its advent. Insofar as it is an attempt to turn the *being-together* into a *substance*, community is a still-born project. What is usually demanded from the major figures of community – family, polis, fraternity, Republic – is the production of an *essence* which would bring a plurality of individuals into an organic communion and ensure "the autarchy of absolute immanence."¹⁶⁵ But this absolute immanence, represented as fusion of members into a body, spells out "the closure of the political" (IC, xxxviii). To make the *in-common* a theme of reflection one would have to avoid objectifying it. The *in-common* is not the product of a *work* but an event which *undoes* the immanence of the intimately fused communal body. While it makes little sense to talk about *what* individuals have in-common, as if the in-common would have to be a *something*, it is possible to say that community is the sharing of nothingness, finitude, withdrawal or death. "Death is indissociable from the community for it is through death that community reveals itself - and reciprocally" (IC, 14). Briefly alluding to Husserl, Nancy notes that phenomenology, inescapably trapped within the confines of the philosophy of the subject, cannot give an account of the kind of community established around death

On the other hand, if the claim is formulated *abstractly* then it is irrefutable but unhelpful. If policy makers appealed to value based arguments when devising policies concerning all citizens, the result would most likely be an unjust infringement upon the rights of individuals to reject communal values whatever these may be. *The Myth of Shared Values in Canada*, John L. Manion Lecture, Canadian Center for Management Development, 2003.

¹⁶⁵ Jean Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* p. 4, hereafter quoted as IC

and dying.¹⁶⁶ To be able to articulate the founding of community in death, one would have to talk not about subjects but about singular beings to which nothing is *proper* but their *expropriation*. The exposure of finitude is what allows singular beings to *compear* to one another. More original than intersubjective reciprocal recognition, community is the *exposure* of singular beings to an outside.

What brings about homeworld communities is the coalescence and fusion of individual actions into more encompassing wholes. Although it is tempting to say that this fusion inevitably hides an ominous “dissolution of difference”¹⁶⁷ I believe the parallel between the constitution of the lived body and the constitution of the homeworld dispels this temptation.¹⁶⁸ As I showed in the first section of this chapter, the constitution of the body proper involves two symmetrical movements of incorporation (*Verkörperung*) and incarnation (*Verleiblichung*). Because these movements appear in conjunction, the lived body can never be completely incorporated. The phenomenon of double sensation involves a bodily fissure or dehiscence that cannot be resolved in a perfect fusion. The lived body (*Leib*) is not self-presence transparent to itself but is always traversed by absence. Bodily passivity makes it such that there is always a residuum in the process of constitution which

¹⁶⁶ Nancy concedes that the phenomenology of intersubjectivity also “resisted” (IC, 14) the idea of fusional immanence. In my view, Nancy greatly underestimated this resistance. “If the inoperative community is to be found in the vicinity of the “sacred,” it is only inasmuch as the “unleashing of passions” is not a free doing of a subjectivity and freedom is not self-sufficiency.[...] But the “unleashing of passions” is of the order of what Bataille himself often designated as “contagion” another name for “communication.” What is communicated, what is contagious, and what, in this manner – and only in this manner – is “unleashed” is the passion of singularity as such. The singular being, because it is singular, is in the passion – the passivity, the suffering, and the excess – of sharing its singularity” (IC, 32). Nancy develops a “politics of nonself-sufficiency” on the basis of ideas such as death, exposure and passivity (*The sense of the world* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, p.111). I believe that Husserl’s theory of homeworld constitution is much closer to this type of politics than Nancy is willing to admit.

¹⁶⁷ Donohoe (2004) p.141.

¹⁶⁸ Jacob Rogozinski points out this parallelism in his essay referred to above.

prevents the lived body from reaching complete fusion and self-coincidence. Compared to the body-object, the lived body is not an entity but an ek-stasis, a power that takes me outside myself toward something that exceeds my body. Although it has no spatial location, my lived body lends spatial determinations to all the objects it encounters thus being a source of uninterrupted spatialization. The lived body is constituted as limit or turning point (*Umschlagstelle*) between the self and the world.

Likewise, the constitution of the community presupposes a double movement of incorporation and incarnation. As movement of totalizing incorporation, communalization tends to absorb the actions of individuals in calcifying versions of social unity. Countering incorporation, the movement of incarnation prevents the immanent social codifications to stabilize into finished forms. Homeworld communities depend on contacts with alienworlds and therefore their constitution is bound to remain incomplete.

Husserl's descriptions of cross-cultural contacts put forth the very apt formula according to which, from the perspective of the homeworld, alienworlds appear in the mode of *accessible inaccessibility*. Asserted together, the members of this couple balance each other out and temper the risks that would befall their unilateral affirmation. On the one hand, if alienworlds were attributed an *unqualified accessibility*, then they would be reduced to a perspective equivalent and reversible with the perspective of the home. But the representation of homeworlds and alienworlds as interchangeable perspectives usually seeks surreptitiously to impose unwarranted hierarchical subordinations. To identify the perspective of the alien with the perspective of the home boils down to erasing the autonomy of the alien by

claiming to speak in its name.¹⁶⁹ Although interpretation reduces the initial incomprehensibility, the alienworld's resistance to explication cannot be eliminated.

On the other hand, an *unqualified inaccessibility* of the alienworld would distort the logic of difference by forcing the alien into a perilous game of cultural 'otherness' tailored to satisfy an insatiable appetite for the exotic.¹⁷⁰ Transformed into an inassimilable difference, the alien becomes intolerable, or even worse, disposable, as soon as it ceases to amuse. This time the danger is not as much the identification of alienworlds with abnormality or with inferior normativity as the tendency to *impute* a different and incomprehensible *origin* to the alienworld thereby overlooking the fact that fashioning a culture means at the same time to *appropriate* and to *flee* or *forget* origins.¹⁷¹ In my view, the contact of the home with the alien makes one learn not so much that cultures are reciprocally inaccessible because of their separate 'generative densities of traditions'. Rather, homeworlds understand, through their being affected by alienworlds, the *impurity* and *fractional accessibility* of origins in general, including their own. Perhaps, Husserl's mistake was to stop short of seeing that

¹⁶⁹ Steinbock (1995) argues along these lines for the *irreducibility* and *asymmetry* of the home/alien structure.

¹⁷⁰ The artist and critic Olu Oguibe argues that "reverse appropriation" of western canons by African artists can be read not only as proof of docility and acquiescent inferiority but also, depending on the historical particulars, as a form of resistance. Justified in 'philanthropic' terms, the replacement of arts with crafts in the curriculum of colonial education system institutionalized the denial of native aesthetic sensibility. In the early stages of the colonial period, African artists who excelled in western artistic forms of expression could invalidate the prejudice of the natives' lack of artistic genius. In the 50's and 60's, European critics and artists such as Franck McEwen and Ulli Beier, set off art 'workshops' and claimed to have tapped into the unspoiled and authentic African collective genius. Many African artists recognized the erasure of individual authorship as the ideological underpinning of this gesture. To reject the straightjacket of 'authentic' otherness and lay claims to an African modernity, many artists, especially those in the Diaspora, displaced and transformed African traditions by quoting, alluding to, borrowing and at the same time subverting the aesthetic norms of western models. Olu Oguibe, "Nationalism, Modernity, Modernism" in *Culture Game*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004, p. 49.

¹⁷¹ Julia Kristeva turns Camus' motherless hero, Mersault, into a paradigm of foreignness precisely because of his orphanhood, that is, loss of origins. *Strangers to Ourselves*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.

accessible inaccessibility is an attribute not only of alienworlds but also of homeworlds.

In the encounter of the home with the alien active and passive tendencies are intertwined. Insofar as they are transgressive experiences, encounters between homeworlds and alienworlds transform both. Naturally, some forms of transgressions will be highly objectionable. I want to emphasize that encounters necessarily rely on a partly passive and partly active *becoming alien of the home*.¹⁷²

One could say that the encounter between home and alien is a form of activity insofar as contacts must be sought after and cultivated. Homeworlds would have to send out messengers, traders, texts, missionaries, and even military expeditions in order to establish contacts. The drawback is that active self-promotion can easily turn transgressive experiences into outright impositions. The becoming alien of the home could provide an antidote for this type of imposition. Nevertheless, countering the tendency to cast the alien into the familiar molds of the home is but a fraction of what passivity accomplishes. Encounters also supplement the transgression of the home toward the alien with a transgression of the alien toward the home. In some sense, the latter also requires the homeworld members to take it upon themselves not only to learn how to interpret alienworlds but also to send out invitations to foreigners and prepare to accommodate guests. This places the host in a position of power which

¹⁷² The theme of alienation in the sense of becoming other/stranger/foreigner has been prominent in the works of French philosophers such as Ricoeur, Derrida, Deleuze, and Kristeva. I will not be able to address all the ramifications of this theme but I will single out Husserl's contribution to this discussion. Some students of Husserl have already called attention to this aspect of Husserlian phenomenology. For example, Waldenfels says that "just as the perception of temporality implies a becoming temporal of perception, so does the experience of the alien imply a becoming alien of the experience peculiar to the own." See "Experience of the Alien in Husserl's Phenomenology" in *Research in Phenomenology*, vol. XX, Humanities Press, Inc. 1990, p. 29 and also Steinbock (1995) p. 245. If the becoming alien of the home is indeed tied to passivity, then Husserl's account of the constitution of the homeworld can be likened to Nancy's "practice of non-self-sufficiency."

allows him/her to select who to invite and under what conditions the alien could enjoy a hospitable welcome.¹⁷³ If the becoming alien of the home had something to do with hospitality would it not be improper to describe it as a form of passivity? This would most certainly be true if passivity were understood merely as compliance with commonly held beliefs. In this case, passivity would prescribe whatever attitude towards the alien prevailed in a given community. In traditionally hospitable communities, passivity would generate a welcoming embrace of foreignness. In traditionally xenophobe communities, passivity would mean excluding the foreign.

But encounters are not brought about through sovereign decisions. First, homeworlds find themselves in the position of having to respond to unforeseen calls coming from alienworlds whose contact was far from being coveted or sought after. Second, the attempt to understand alienworlds reveals the incompleteness of the self-understanding of the homeworld.¹⁷⁴ For obvious reasons, many would shrug off the idea of passivity if it implied indiscriminate acceptance of alienness.¹⁷⁵ Eager to preserve their privileges, Western liberal democracies could claim that unrestricted openness toward alienworlds would conflict with legitimate concerns for security and

¹⁷³ In Derrida's terms, the law of hospitality is "pervertible" (53, 65). Hospitality is an unlikely feature of homes vulnerable to violations and encroachments. Hosts who cannot protect their home would not have the power and sovereignty to decide what guests to receive. But deciding who to receive also means excluding the undesirables. We are left with the risks and promises that arise in the interval between "the conditional juridico-political" and "the unconditional hyperbolic" regimes of hospitality. "We will always be threatened by this dilemma between, on the one hand, unconditional hospitality that dispenses with law, duty, or even politics, and on the other, hospitality circumscribed by law and duty. One of them can always corrupt the other, and this capacity for perversion remains irreducible. It *must* remain so." *Of Hospitality*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000, p. 135.

¹⁷⁴ Charles Taylor argues that cross-cultural interpretation must account for self-definitions operative in alien cultures which "may be different enough to force us to extend our language of human possibilities" (*Understanding and Ethnocentricity* p. 131) and therefore to change our self-definitions.

¹⁷⁵ Thomas Mann regarded the "political passivity" (*politische Willenslosigkeit*) of the thirties as an unmistakable sign of intellectual destitution. "Culture and Politics" in *Order of the Day: Political Essays and Speeches of two Decades*, trans. H.T. Lowe Porter, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942, 228-37.

labor control policies. Ex-colonial countries could claim that only by resisting the obliteration of cultural traditions and by practicing a politics of national self-assertion (i.e., resolute rejection of the alien) can the colonized extricate themselves from relations of domination. If home and alien communities must be passive toward one another, passivity cannot mean random transplants of foreignness or blind cultural mimicking. But those who claim that welcoming alienness is an exigency impossible to fulfill must be reminded that it is also a demand which cannot be surrendered. Far from abrogating the responsibility for the home, the openness toward the alien encourages a fine-tuning of self-perception and discloses that the identity of the home is already fragmented, that any cultural genealogy is a form of bastardization and that disappropriation is just as much a part of any culture as appropriation.

One could think of passivity not as mere receptivity toward the alien but that which necessarily places the homeworld in the open space of an encounter. Without ever escaping this space, the homeworld and alienworld constitute themselves through their reciprocal interaction. As a consequence of the fact that cultural self-understanding must include interpretations received from without along with autochthon responses to those interpretations, both homeworlds and alienworlds recognize their non-self-sufficiency. The homeworld and the alienworld are both infinitely transformed through their encounter.

Conclusion

Throughout my dissertation I argued that passivity and activity are mutually determining moments constitutive of the life of consciousness on all its levels. By challenging binary oppositions such as form/content and constituting/constituted Husserl's account of "the absolute time-constituting flow of consciousness" (PCIT, 77) sets the stage for rethinking the relation between passivity and activity. Central to this account is the fact that the self-manifestation of absolute flow of consciousness does not require the ego to carry out another sequence of acts in addition to the acts of perception unfolding in immanent time. Rather, the self-manifestation of the absolute flow is an inherent passive dimension of subjectivity as such which makes possible all "inner perception." The perception of temporal objects, whether external or internal, is an activity of the ego. While listening to a melody I actively accomplish objectifying syntheses. My synthetic activity unfolds in time along with the melody. Thanks to a reflective turn of regard, I become aware of my act of listening. But even before I turned my perception into an object for reflection I was *implicitly* aware of the fact that it was I who listened to the melody. The synthesis of temporal objects would be impossible were it not accompanied by the passive pre-thematic pre-reflective self-awareness.

Thus, Husserl questions the narrow representation of passivity as a 'lower' level of conscious life in opposition to 'higher' levels of categorial activity. Passivity and activity are correlative moments in all the achievements of consciousness rather than distinct levels thereof.

Receptivity is the first major meaning of passivity. Reluctant to assign passive receptivity the limited function of material provider for higher level interpretations, Husserl strives to disclose a system of crisscrossing references connecting hyletic passivity and eidetic evidence. By investigating the relation between affection and prominence (*Abgehobenheit*), Husserl comes to conceive of passivity as a low energy form of activity. Prior to the production of an actual affection the ego opens its field of receptivity, tends toward affection or lets the affection arrive. These phrases suggest that even the most passive life of the ego, while antecedent to cognitive activity, is still a form of *doing*. On the one hand, there is the radical passivity of the *pure affective pregivenness* (EJ 60) and of the *preconstitutive* (EJ, 108) temporal flow. On the other hand, there is the active-passive *simple apprehension* identified as the initial stage of the dynamics of perception. The simple apprehension is passive insofar as it takes up a pregiven object that allures the ego. This accomplishment presupposes that the ego complies with or yields to the allure. But simple apprehension is also active insofar as it requires a “turning toward” the affective allure. While retention is a passive sinking into the past of objective contents, simple apprehensions actively hold in grasp the actual impressional content thereby interrupting its submersion into the background consciousness. Unlike the passively unfolding retentions, simple apprehension is a type of activity. Contemplative explication and relational contemplation further extend the thematic interest or the “turning toward” an object by laying out the horizons of internal and external determinations. But the thematic interest is already aroused in simple apprehension.

Sedimentation is the second major meaning of passivity. Husserl uses the term sedimentation as a generic name for all the modifications undergone by constituted meanings once the process of constitution is accomplished but he focuses on the important phenomena of memory and habitus. The function of memory is to open the primordial sphere of impressional self-givenness toward non-original reproductive givenness. Retention is supposed to transfer the evidence of original impression to rememberings. Husserl tends to oscillate between assigning passive sedimentations the capacity to preserve objective contents intact and blaming passivity for muddling associative chains and for paving the way for error and forgetfulness. Husserl's attitude is similarly ambivalent in his account of habitus. Although habits deserve credit for saving a great deal of psychic energy and for establishing typicalities, the taken-for-granted-ness inherent in them backfires by contributing to the onset of cultural crises.

In both cases however, Husserl leans more toward the first alternative. Passive memory sediments are not responsible as much for the mixing up of associative chains as for keeping prominences in reserve in a space where they can be at once held in grasp and let loose. Habituation means not as much relinquishing the quest for originary evidence in favor of ready made truths as a special type of ego participation in the performance of acts. All acts of judgment have their necessary trains of passive sedimentations. Philosophy itself assumes pedagogical responsibilities and acquires the status of a habitus of challenging habitualities. Consequently, passivity is not just a stumbling block in the triumphant march toward "the infinite goals of reason" (C,

299). Crises are not brought to a close by replacing passivity with activity but by having more of both.

The accounts of passivity in terms of receptivity and inactual sedimentation have their disadvantages. The former comes dangerously close to collapsing the distinction passivity/activity by reducing it to a matter of degree. The latter sometimes seems to violate the method of phenomenology by positing acts of consciousness that consciousness is not aware of. However, all the key examples of passive phenomena: temporal syntheses, affection, memory and habitus hint at the possibility of extricating passivity from its opposition to activity. On this account, passivity could be interpreted as openness to alterity.

Passive time-constitution is necessarily intertwined with hyletic alterity because there is no temporalization without temporalized contents: the hyletic core of every living present is in a way alien to consciousness. Moreover, time constitution also involves a special type of self-alterity. The absolute flow of time-constituting consciousness appears to itself intuitively but only in a not-thematic, pre-reflective way. The absolute flow is presentable only as reflectively unrepresentable. The distinction between the lived body and the physical body corroborates Husserl's point about temporal self-alienation. Moreover, there is a similar accessible inaccessibility in the relation between the ego and the alter-ego. On the one hand, temporal and bodily self-alterity open the way for a more radical experience of the alien whether as alter-ego or as alien-world. On the other hand, this latter alien experience reverberates back and sharpens the ego's inner alterity.

The explanation of the reciprocal relation between self-alterity and the alterity of the alter ego centers on the two-fold meaning of the retentional transfer of evidence: retention broadens of the concept of presentification and at the same time inserts non-givenness, absence and non-originality in the primordial sphere. As a result, the frontier separating the original givenness or presence from non-original givenness or absence becomes more permeable. The capacity to transcend itself makes the primordial sphere hospitable toward absence and otherness.

This has important implications for the discussion of intersubjective passivity. The example of translation shows that passivity, understood as alienation, can also provide the palliative for cultural crises. Husserl's account of the interaction between homeworlds and alienworlds can be regarded as an extension of the theory of translation as foreignization. Neither translation nor cross-cultural interpretations are passive in the sense of being non-active. Yet both are passive in the sense of entering a space of an encounter where self and other, domestic and foreign, homeworld and alienworld are summoned to respond to one another's unforeseen calls. The confrontation with the accessible inaccessibility of the alienworld reveals the incomplete self-understanding and the non-sufficiency of the homeworld.

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