

<https://doi.org/10.21638/2226-5260-2023-12-1-74-102>

## HUSSERL AND DERRIDA ON THE PROCESS OF SENSE FORMATION—GAPS AND EXCESSES

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This paper deals with the problem of the origin of sense and meaning. For Husserl, the determination of the ideal identity of something new can only take place retroactively in the totality of the preceding series by stepping back towards the original foundation of sense. In this regard, J. Derrida questions the ideality of the same as presence and the possibility of retrieving any *arché* of sense in his writings *Speech and Phenomena* and *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry*. Phenomenology is not oblivious to these difficulties, as results from a closer reading of the correlation between idealities and sensory experience: It will show that there are at least four interrelated gaps in the Husserlian phenomenology which testify the difficulty in grasping a retraceable *arché* of sense. First, the gap between the ideality of sense and its representation. Second, the gap between sensory and categorial intuitions, whereby both exceed one another. Third, the gap between the ideality of sense and the sense which exceeds our expectations. Fourth, the gap between the experience of the new that overcomes us and its apprehension by consciousness. Hence, there is a fundamental gap between the conceptual idealities and the essential indeterminacy of our phenomenological sensory experience, which is correlative to an excess of one in respect to the other. In this sense, Derrida's concepts of «*différance*» and “invention” allow us to conceive of this self-givenness of sense as the expression of its constant self-renewal. This expression takes the form of a trace, which, neither present nor absent, suspends meaning and full presence, leaving the narrative “open” for the reinvention of sense.

*Keywords:* *arché*, *différance*, excess, event, gap, meaning, presence, sense, trace.

# ГУССЕРЛЬ И ДЕРРИДА О ПРОЦЕССЕ СМЫСЛООБРАЗОВАНИЯ: РАЗРЫВЫ И ЭКСЦЕССЫ

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В статье рассматривается проблема истока смысла и значения. По Гуссерлю определить идеальную идентичность чего-то нового можно только ретроактивно, в тотальности предшествовавших серий, отступая назад к исходному основанию смысла. В этом контексте Ж. Деррида в работах «Голос и феномен» и «Введение» к работе «Начало геометрии» Эдмунда Гуссерля ставит вопрос об идеальности того же самого как присутствию и о возможности вновь задействовать всякое *архэ* смысла. Феноменология не игнорирует эти затруднения, как видно из внимательного разбора корреляции между идеальным и чувственным опытом: мы покажем, что имеют место, по крайней мере, четыре взаимосвязанных разрыва, указывающие на то, как трудно ухватить и проследить *архэ* смысла. Во-первых, это разрыв между идеальностью смысла и его представлением. Во-вторых, разрыв между чувственной и категориальной интуицией, при том, что обе исключают друг друга. В-третьих, разрыв между идеальностью смысла и смыслом, выходящим за рамки наших ожиданий. В-четвёртых, разрыв между опытом нового, с которым мы сталкиваемся, и его схватыванием средствами сознания. Следовательно, имеет место фундаментальный разрыв между понятийными идеальностями и сущностной неопределённостью нашего феноменологического чувственного опыта, разрыв, соответствующий тому, что одно выходит за рамки другого. В этом смысле такие понятия Деррида как «различание» и «изобретение» позволяют нам постичь эту само-данность смысла как выражение такого постоянного самообновления. Это выражение принимает форму следа, ни присутствующего, ни отсутствующего, приостанавливает значение и полное присутствие, оставляя нарратив «открытым» для переизобретения смысла.

*Ключевые слова:* *архэ, различание, эксцесс, событие, разрыв, значение, присутствие, смысл, след.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The ultimate aim of phenomenology lies in the consideration of the world as a “formation of sense (*Sinngebilde*)” [mod. transl. of ‘meaning-construct’] (Husserl, 1970, 113). The world is by no means an addition of objects or a universe of mere facts; on the contrary, to understand the experience in its “constantly flowing horizontal character” implies that the determination of worldly things exceeds that what our experience may grasp. Our experience resembles—in Husserl’s words—a “Heraclitean flux” (Husserl, 1970, 156). “Things, objects [...] are ‘given’ as being valid for us in each case [...] but in principle only in such a way that we are conscious of them as

things or objects within the world-horizon” (Husserl, 1970, 143). Insofar as the process of sense formation develops within this “flux” and extends itself within an open horizon, the determination of the originary foundation of sense can only take place retroactively in the totality of the preceding series by stepping back towards the original first impression. Here the question arises as to where this origin is to be situated and what kind of fulfilment it involves. For this purpose, we will distinguish between the sphere of ontological or significative “sense” (*Sinn*) and the one of ontological or logical “categorical predication” or “meaning” (*Bedeutung*): While the former rather involves the constitution of an “experiential” sense, that is, it proceeds on the basis of “judgments of perception” that are related to a wide and vague “statements’ sense” and may not “become the true carrier of its meaning (*Bedeutungsträger*)” (Husserl, 2001b, 196), the latter primarily presupposes certain “expressive acts”—the “true giver meaning”—that mediate between percept and words (Husserl, 2001b, 196), which carry concepts and categories that may not have its counterpart in perception. However, these spheres are not at all separate, as it will turn out upon considering the sphere of pre-categorical experience, in which a progressive sense-formation takes place, thereby laying the foundation for categories and concepts.

Regarding the *origin of sense*, we may ask whether it implies a) an “internal fulfilment” of intentional sense of what in the sphere of immanence is absolutely self-given, or whether it involves b) an “external fulfilment” of sense either as the coincidence of sense and intuitive intentions in a significative fulfilment. Does it further imply a) the adequation to the idea of a perfect givenness of the thing in itself, or b) the coincidence of meaning-intentions with an invariable or contingent eidetic intuition, or c) the significative fulfilment in the adequation to regulative ideas and whether these ideas are given in intuition, or lastly, d) the “optimal” determination of the sensuous object? Regarding the fulfilment of significative sense, there are two possibilities: Either it is to be situated at the “*semantic level of sense*,” involving the coincidence of acts of expression and acts of intuition, or at the “*ontological level of the object*,” that is, sense is fulfilled by perceptive objectivities.

Regarding the origin of categorical predication, we could single out four possibilities: a) Is it a “sensuous, external origin,” referring to objects of external perception? b) Or is it an “internal or reflexive sensuous origin,” referring to reflection on the act of linking the subject and the predicate together in a predicative structure? c) Or should it be understood in terms of retrieving the “intuitive fulfilment (*Erfüllung*)” of categorical forms? (Pradelle, 2012, 350) Or lastly, d) is it to be located at the pre-predicative, pre-logical level, that is, in passive constitution of sense? Regarding the fulfilment of the categorical predication itself, we could ask whether it is so be located a) at

the “*syntactic* level of sense” or ideal meaning, involving an “ideal formal nexus” between subject and predicate<sup>1</sup>, or b) at the “*ontological* level of the object,” that is, sense is fulfilled by categorial objectivities (Pradelle, 2012, 350).

In this connection, Jacques Derrida questions the possibility of retrieving any *arché* of sense and of asserting the concomitant ideality of the same as presence and in his writings *Speech and Phenomena* and *Edmund Husserl’s Origin of Geometry*. Derrida claims that ideality does not arise from the originary foundation (*Urstiftung*) of a new sense—from an *arché*—but originates from the eternal return of sense to its presence, that is, from its presentification. If in this way every *arché* as source of sense as well as its ideal presence are denied, it would follow that sense is subject to an unending change, so that it must be “re-invented” in each lived experience. Derrida understands this lack of retraceable *arché* of sense as the work of an “*arché-writing*” of a trace, which as the absolute origin of sense, opens to appearance and signification. The trace is not only the origin of ideality but the origin of sense too, such that, neither present nor absent, it resists idealization and any determination of meaning. For Derrida, meaning is always deviance: Since the trace only repeats itself by differing from itself, meaning always misses itself, making thus up *a system of fractured and deviant meanings*.

Even if we may not endorse this Derridean critique, we still have to recognize that there are at least four interrelated cleavages in the Husserlian phenomenology which testify the difficulty in grasping a retraceable *arché* of sense: First, the gap between the ideality of sense and its representation. Second, the gap between sensory and categorial intuitions, whereby both exceed one another. Third, the gap between the ideality of sense and the sense which exceeds our expectations. Fourth, the gap between the experience of the new that overcomes us and its apprehension by consciousness. What unifies all these cleavages is the acknowledgment that there is a fundamental gap between the conceptual idealities and the essential indeterminacy of our phenomenological sensory experience, which is correlative to an excess of one in respect to the other. In this regard, Derrida’s concepts of “*différance*” and “invention” allow us to conceive of this self-givenness of sense as the expression of its constant self-renewal. This expression takes the form of a trace, which suspends meaning and full presence, leaving the narrative “open.”

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<sup>1</sup> For space reasons and in order to ensure the thematic coherence of the text, I will not delve in this subject. See (Pradelle, 2001) for a detailed enquiry into the origins of predicative structures and into propositional logic.

## 2. HUSSERL: GAPS AND EXCESSES IN THE PROCESS OF SENSE CONSTITUTION—ONTOLOGICAL/SIGNIFICATIVE SENSE AND ONTOLOGICAL/LOGICAL SENSE

Edmund Husserl treats the problem of the experience of things from the *Logical Investigations* on. In *Ideas I*, he recognizes the need to include the transcendent object in the scope of phenomenology, as a structure of sense. Thus, we read: “In a certain sense and with the proper care in the use of words we may even say that all real unities are unities of sense” (Husserl, 1982, 128). In what follows, we will enquire into the origin and fulfilment of sense.

### 2.1. The sphere of ontological/significative sense—‘internal’ fulfilment but what is absolutely self-given or strictly evident, origin as ‘internal’ in the reflexive act of consciousness’ self-grasping

In *Ideas I*, Husserl adopted the stance of a “transcendence in immanence” made possible by the transcendental reduction: “Unities of sense presuppose [...] a sense-bestowing consciousness which, for its part, exists absolutely and not by virtue of another sense-bestowal” (Husserl, 1982, 182). The “transcendental space of meaning” (Crowell, 2001, 70) “presupposes” consciousness, but it is still not clear what does “transcendental sense” mean. In a series of lectures given in 1907 and published in *The Idea of Phenomenology*, the reduction is motivated through Cartesian and ontological considerations in the search for apodictic evidence and the principles of objectivity (Kern, 1964, 223): “Phenomenology carries out its clarifications in acts of seeing, determining and distinguishing sense [...]. The procedure of seeing and ideating within the strictest phenomenological reduction is its exclusive domain” (Husserl, 1999, 43).

Thus, reduction allows consciousness to see and adequately apprehend itself—the evidence of consciousness—and to adequately grasp its *cogitation* and the universal objectivities and states of affairs. Evidence thus “signifies nothing other than adequate self-giveness” (Husserl, 1999, 44–45). The reduction is limitation to what is absolutely self-given and thus evident in strict sense. Accordingly, the phenomenological reduction does not involve limitation to the “sphere of real (*reellen*) immanence,” that is, to the contents of the *cogitation*, nor to the “sphere of *cogitation*” or the “sphere of what is perceived,” but to the “sphere of pure self-giveness.” In short, the idea of final fulfilment of sense means the fulfilment of intentional sense, that is, “what is given in exactly the same sense in which it is meant—and self-given in the strictest sense—in such a way that nothing that is meant fails to be given” (Husserl, 1999, 45). Here,

immanence means the “absolute givenness” of transcendental consciousness (Kern, 1964, 212). Hence, the idea of final fulfilment is *constitutive*, since it endows sense to what is intentionally contained. Here, sense is ‘internally’ fulfilled, that, is immanently fulfilled by what is absolutely self-given to consciousness or apodictically evident.

In the *Logical Investigations*, the basic functioning of intentionality is characterized in terms of an “*identifying synthesis*,” meaning the “recognition of the sameness of meaning (*bedeutungsmäßig dasselbe*)” of the unified sense of the words (Husserl, 2001b, 204). The “significant relation to objects of intuition” pertains to “words in their meaningful, their semantic (*bedeutungsmäßigen*) essence”: This implies that the “unified sense (*Sinn*) of the word covers [...] an ideally delimited manifold of possible intuitions” (Husserl, 2001b, 204). When the “act of meaning” finds its fulfilment in the “act that renders the matter intuitive” there arises a “synthesis of recognition” of the agreement between meaning and intuition, that is, when the object intended emptily coincides with the object given in intuition. It amounts to saying that “the intentional essence of the act of intuition gets more or less perfectly fitted into the semantic essence of the act of expression” (Husserl, 2001b, 206). Correlatively, in case of disagreement—when the intention does not encounter such coincidence—we face a “synthesis of distinction,” where frustration or conflict is set beside fulfilment as its “incompatible contrary” (Husserl, 2001b, 211). On this basis, knowledge is the consciousness of an agreement between significant and intuitive intentions, that is, as the unity of a meaning-intention and an intuition in a synthesis of identification. Fulfilment is thus to be situated at the “*semantic level of sense*” since it involves the coincidence of acts of expression and intention.

## 2.2. The sphere of ontological/logical sense—‘external or significative fulfilment’ in perceptive objectivities, origin as ‘internal or reflexive sensuous origin’ in the linking act

Further on in the text of the *VI. Logical Investigation*, the fulfilment involves the “*ontological level of the object*,” that is, sense is fulfilled by *perceptive objectivities*.

### 2.2.1. *The idea of final fulfilment in objectifying acts—ontological level of the object*

Objectivation is carried out by subsuming acts of meaning under the “class of objectifying acts” (Husserl, 2001b, 218). Both, “meaning-intentions and acts of meaning-fulfilment, acts of ‘thought’ and acts of intuition, belong to a single class of objectifying acts” (Husserl, 2001b, 218). Perception fulfils itself through the synthesis of

“identical thinghood (*sachlichen Identität*)” when the thing meant “establishes itself through its very self,” that is, the perceptual intention offers us “*the object itself*”—“the object, as it is *in itself*”—in the “ideally strict and most authentic sense,” when the “purely ‘perceptual’ content in ‘external’ perception” or “‘sensed’ content” coincides with the “perceptual interpretation” or the meaning-intention (Husserl, 2001b, 221). In this synthetic identification, “*thing is really and truly so*” constituted (Husserl, 2001b, 216). Thanks to this identification, a meaning-intention coincides with “the act which offers it in *fulness*, i.e. the object which is meant in it is the same as the object meant in the fulfilling act” (Husserl, 2001b, 222). In this case, fulfilment involves the coincidence of meaning intentions and perceptual intentions. In sum, both in *The Idea of Phenomenology* and the *VI. Logical Investigation*, the function of the idea of final fulfilment is *constitutive* of objectivity.

2.2.2. *The idea of fulfilment in categorially  
formed objectivities—transcendental logic as  
a transcendental ontology—the contingent determinacy of logical categoriality*

While in *The Idea of Phenomenology* the reduction is introduced in the context of the search for apodictic evidence, in the lectures of 1906–1907 published as *Einleitung in die Logik und Erkenntnistheorie* (Husserl, 1984) it concerns ontological considerations deriving from the idea of transcendental logic (Crowell, 2001, 70). In this text Husserl proposes a doctrine of categories, a logic of “the form” of “real and possible objects,” that is, an ontology in the transcendental sense, a “transcendental logic,” which concerns that “what a priori belongs to the possibility of knowledge of the real” (Husserl, 1984, 111–112). Logical categoriality includes not only formal determinations but also the “essential categories of reality” in the wake of Aristotle (cf. Breuer, 2019b) and Kant, for instance “thing, quality, real connection (between things), real whole, real part, cause and effect, real genus and art, etc.” (Husserl, 1984, 112). Already at this early stage of his enquiries he emphasizes that “general concepts never render an equivalent individuality,” since while the individual phenomenon is variable, its conceptual determination remains unchanged (Husserl, 1984, 222–223), a conception he expands on in the *VI. Logical Investigation*.

At this stage Husserl has in view a theory of categories that, as it is clearly articulated in *Formal and Transcendental Logic* of 1929 (Husserl, 1969), concerns the “ontological [...] objectivity” of objects, that is, it is the science “of the possible categorial forms in which substrate objectivities can truly exist” (Husserl, 1969, 145). Husserl reiterates the theory of truth as a synthesis of identification (Husserl, 1969, 156)

found in the *VI. Logical Investigation*, except that now the objects of the fulfilling acts are “the things themselves” (Crowell, 2001, 71): All the actively acquired particular formations “have categorial coherence by virtue of the identity of the substrate-objectivity,” which, constituted “in judging identification” progressively leads to the constitution of the “*determining concept*” (Husserl, 1969, 116). Thus, Husserl emphasizes that “*categorially formed objectivity* is [...] *an ontological concept*,” which is “always in progress, always being further fashioned and refashioned” (Husserl, 1969, 116), according to the variations of our convictions and judgments. Being the case that this variable concept constitutes the objectivity of the object, it follows that the latter can only be *provisionally* determined. Husserl seems to imply this when he claims that a determining concept like: “Nature itself’ [that is] the idea of Nature ‘as it itself is’ [...] is the categorial correlate of the idea of a process of judgment that can be prolonged harmoniously *ad infinitum*” (Husserl, 1969, 117). Hence, even the *determination of a concept is contingent and provisional*.

Having clarified how the concept is constituted, there remains the problem of truth. In order to solve it Husserl recurs to “a double sense of evidence”: In the first sense, evidence amounts to the self-given “truly existing predicatively formed affair complex,” and in the second and correlative sense evidence signifies “itself-giveness of the correctness of the judicial meaning,” that is based on its fitting with the evidence in the first sense, such that they are related in an order of foundation: the evidence of truly existing substrate-objectivities grounds the evidence of the categorial objectivity. Husserl thus concludes that “[i]f the fulfillments are ideally perfect then the substrate-objectivities with all their categorial formings are themselves given in the strict sense; the evidence actualizes and seizes upon them themselves as they are in truth” (Husserl, 1969, 145). However, the question about the objective dimension of evidence must be complemented by the question about its subjective character, since “evidence too belongs to the subjective dimension” (Husserl, 1984, 156). In *Einleitung in die Logik und Erkenntnistheorie* he argues that in everyday experience “one lives in evidence, but does not reflect on evidence” (Husserl, 1984, 164).

In order to reveal this field of evidence Husserl introduces the notion of the “phenomenological reduction,” which opens up the sphere of transcendental subjectivity, that is, to the correlation between noesis and noema. This reduction to the sphere of immanence does not bracket the transcendent object itself, but it is reduced to the “status of transcendence phenomenon” (Crowell, 2001, 74), grounding thus the transcendental concept of the object as meaning. Hence, the whole of “worldly being” is reduced to “intentional sense,” such that “worldly transcendence is immanent” (Kern, 1964, 213). Immanence means neither the real containment of an object as representation within

psychological consciousness, nor the “*reell*” parts of intentional experiences like hyletic data, the absolute givenness of transcendental consciousness, a memory of a perception, or a perception of a perception, but the simple givenness of “worldly being” to transcendental consciousness as “intentional sense” (Kern, 1964, 212–213). The transcendental reduction is thus motivated by the search of the ultimate sense of being, which determines the conditions of possibility for philosophical knowledge: In the notion of the phenomenological reduction “lies the genuine Archimedean point of philosophy” (Husserl, 1984, 211). Hence, not only any determination of sense and meaning but the very possibility of epistemology presupposes the phenomenological reduction.

### 2.3. The idea of final fulfilment as constitutive/regulative for the constitution of objectivity—the gap between the a priori idea of the thing in itself and the sensuous experience of the same thing

In *Ideas I*, Husserl interprets the function of the idea of final fulfilment as *regulative*, that is, as an idea in Kantian sense. He claims that though objects as realities are inadequately given in experience (we perceive them only from a certain perspective), “their perfect givenness is nevertheless predestinated as ‘Idea’ (in the Kantian sense).” This idea doesn’t entail an all-encompassing view of things, but an overall cognition of the object, which is step by step achieved in the “unending process of continuous appearing.” Husserl determines this continuum as “infinite on all sides,” that is, as an “all-sided infinity” (Husserl, 1982, 342), in which the object is continuously and harmoniously determined.

In his drafts for the new elaboration of the *VI. Logical Investigation* of 1913 published in a supplementary volume (Husserl, 2002), he determines the idea of the continuum and the idea of perfect givenness as the *thing in itself*, i.e., as the *idea of a particular reality of the thing*, as Rudolph Bernet (2004a, 161; 2004b, 130) rightly observes (cf. Tengelyi, 2007, 72–86), which is the correlate of the idea of this never a priori possible full determination of the continuum. Only “actual experience” can “cut out” the particular reality “of the thing,” of the thing “fully determined in itself,” from the unending and ambiguous possibilities (Husserl, 2002, 198). Husserl defines thus “the reality of a thing (as) an ‘idea’ in Kantian sense, correlative to the ‘idea’ of a ‘certain’ process of perception, which is never a priori fully determined, but rather unendingly ambiguous [...] and determined according to a type” (Husserl, 2002, 197). As Husserl will reiterate later in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, the “original giving intuition, that is, evidence can embrace infinities,” such that a “particular intuition (as original giving act) grasps this whole ‘series’ that progresses according to a firmly determined

sense” and is characterized by an “open horizon or ‘margin’ (*Spielraum*)” (Husserl, 2002, 199–200). The idea in Kantian sense is thus the ideal of the adequate givenness of the thing in its particular reality, an unreachable ideal despite being the horizon in which the actual experiences of the real thing are inscribed. It thus turns out that the reality of a thing can only be determined by experience, that is, a posteriori, while the possibility of a continuous fulfilment progress is given a priori, that is, according to the rule of the thing in itself, that is, the ideal type as its particular realization.

Husserl further on makes a clear distinction between on one hand, the “ideation which yields ideal essences, as ideal ‘limits’ which it is essentially impossible to find in any sensuous intuition but which morphological essences ‘approach’ [...] without ever reaching them” and on the other hand, the “exactness of ideal concepts,” which as geometrical objects cannot be seen (Husserl, 1982, 166; cf. Breuer, 2019a). Here, we may recur to what happens in the exact sciences according to Jacques Derrida: there is “the ideality of the object itself (in our context, the ideality of the ideal concepts) which then assures the ideal transparency and univocity of language” (Derrida, 1973, 52). Nevertheless, this idea in the Kantian sense “is presented in intellectual seeing” and as idea it is adequately given by its essence (Husserl, 1982, 343). Hence, we encounter a *disbalance between the apriori idea of the thing in itself and the sensuous experience of the same thing* (Husserl, 2001a, 174), which result in an excess of the determinacy of the former with respect to the latter. Here we can locate the *first* type of already mentioned *gap*, that is, the *gap between the indeterminacy of phenomenological sensuous experience and the constitution-regulative ideas* whose determination no sensory intuition can or, as argued below, need not attain.

#### 2.4. ‘Sensuous, external’ origin, intuitive fulfilment in the ‘optimal’ determination of the sensuous object—the gap between meaning intention and sensory intuition

Here we find the *second type* of *gap*: Although sensory intuitions are the ground of categorial intuitions, the intuited or perceived object remains inadequately given in experience, hopelessly striving for a thorough determination, that it nevertheless *need not attain*: “the intuition fulfills the intention [...] as offering us the last fulfillment of our intention.” Our intention is fulfilled by an *optimal* and not perfect determination of the perceived thing (Husserl, 2001b, 261). Husserl here draws a clear distinction between “the perfection of the adaptation to intuition [...] and the perfection of final fulfillment which presupposes this fulfillment, and which is an adequation with ‘the thing itself.’” The description of an intuitive object provides an example of the former

perfection (Husserl, 2001b, 261). This means that the ideal of the significative fulfillment, that is, the intention of meaning, is given in intuition, while the adequation with “the thing itself” is not, since the function of this idea as *telos* is not only constitutive, but regulative, implying thus that the goal of coincidence between the meaning-intention and the sensory intuition of the full-determined object need not be attained: the meaning-intention can be fulfilled by multiple sensory intuitions that vary according to our interests. Hence, not only *essences* and the *adequation to the thing in itself*, but also the *constitutional process is characterized by variability and the impossibility of full determination of objectivity*.

### 2.5. The idea of fulfilment of meaning-intentions by an invariable vs. contingent eidetic intuition—the essential indeterminacy of objective sense

But, as shortly advanced above, ideas also belong to the field of pure intuitional givenness and entail intuitive a priori eidetic and categorial intuitions. Concerning the former, in the *Cartesian Mediations* Husserl grounds transcendental phenomenology on the apriority of eidetic laws (Husserl, 1960, 155). Phenomenology is based on the method of eidetic variation which yields the universal, i.e., the *eidōs*, as the invariant structure inherent to all possible factual realities (Husserl, 1977, §9). Actually, it was as early as 1910/11 that Husserl defines phenomenology as a rigorous science of the pure essences of psychic phenomena in *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft* (Husserl, 1987, 3–62). But it is only in *Ideas I* that Husserl exposes and executes this program. In this work, Husserl argues that the only philosophy that can provide a rigorous clarification of consciousness as such is transcendental phenomenology by means of descriptive eidetic analyses. Phenomenology’s rigor is based on the fact that its results are eidetic, that is, universally true for any consciousness. In the first section Husserl argues that an individual object possesses qualitative determinations that make up its essence. In an Aristotelian way, Husserl defines the essence as the “what” of an individual being. Just as the “empirical intuition” grasps the individual in its bodily singularity, the “eidetic intuition” is presentive of a “pure essence [...] in its ‘personal’ selfhood” (Husserl, 1982, 10). The two sorts of intuition are “essentially different” insofar as one grasps matters of facts, that is, individual factual existences, while the other intuits an *eidōs* or idea, “the *pure essence*.” Essences can be seized both from experiential data and from data of mere phantasy (Husserl, 1982, 11). As Husserl argues in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, they are “the *invariant*, the indissolubly identical” in the ever-changing factual existences, “the universal essence by which all ‘imaginable’ var-

variants of the example, and all variants of any such variant, are restricted. This invariant is the ontic essential form (a priori form), the *eidōs*” (Husserl, 1969, 248).

Even though intuition of an essence implies no positing of existence, the intuition of something individual or the consciousness thereof—be it existent or not—is required to intuit an essence (Husserl 1982, 10). Husserl clearly distinguishes between cognition of matters of fact and eidetic cognition about essences: while any predication concerning individual facts grounds in experience, thinking about pure essences grounds in the seizing of essences (Husserl, 1982, 16). Accordingly, Husserl conceives of individual existence as “contingent. It is thus; in respect of its essence it could be otherwise” (Husserl, 1982, 7). In contrast, every description of essence “expresses an unconditionally valid norm for possible empirical existence” (Husserl, 1982, 14). Essences are thus the objects of formal logic, that is, of a judgment, be it universal or about single particulars, and have no ontological reality, such that each predicatively formed affair complex is an “eidetic necessity in so far as it is a singularization of an eidetic universality [...]. Eidetic universality and eidetic necessity are therefore correlates” (Husserl, 1982, 14). Hence, at the time of *Ideas I* Husserl still conceives of any factual actualization as an “eidetic particularization grounded on apodictic eidetic universalities” (Husserl, 1982, 14). He also still conceives of essence in an Aristotelian sense: there are certain possibilities potentially available for the unchanging essence, possibilities which are a priori necessary, but which vary according to each individual.

However, later on in *Ideas II*, Husserl revises this conception and posits the *openness and variability of the eidōs* (cf. Breuer, 2020a). Husserl asks himself whether a thing is “an identical subject of identical properties” and whether its behavior is “predelineated by its own essence.” The groundbreaking question, which breaks with the Aristotelian tradition, reads:

But those each thing [...] have such an essence of its own in the first place? Or is the thing, as it were, always underway, [...] in principle only a relatively identical something, which does not have its essence in advance or graspable once and for all, but instead has an open essence, one that can always take on new properties according to the circumstances of givenness? (Husserl, 1989, 313)

This means that even though the *eidōs* is as such a universal necessity, it can vary and assume new qualities according to changing circumstances. Hence, if the individual *eidōs* or idea is contingent, then any predication about essences is only provisional, such that meaning-intentions can only be provisionally fulfilled by eidetic intuitions. Objective sense is thus subsumed to constant change and cannot be unambiguously and fully determined, such that the process of constitution is also characterized by an *essential indeterminacy of sense*.

### 3. HUSSERL: GAPS AND EXCESSES IN THE PROCESS OF MEANING CONSTITUTION—THE SPHERE OF CATEGORIAL PREDICATION

Indeterminacy also applies to both sensory and categorial intuitions (cf. Breuer, 2015) as it turns out from a close reading of the *VI. Logical Investigation*. In what follows, we will enquire into the origin and fulfillment of categorial predication.

#### 3.1. The idea of fulfillment by sensory and categorial intuitions

Indeterminacy applies also to both sensory and categorial intuitions, as it turns out from a close reading of the *VI. Logical Investigation*. Let us recall that in previous chapters of the *L. U.*, Husserl had conceived of the fulfillment of the categorial meaning-forms according to an order of foundation: Sensory and categorial intuitions are constitutive of objectivity, sensory intuitions are built up out of the material of perception (*Auffassungstoff*), while categorial intuition arises out of the forms of perception (*Auffassungsform*) (Husserl, 2001a, 276). Although categorial perception is an intuitive intentional act addressing an ideal object, it is far from being either an *a priori* condition of perception or a sensory perception that is embedded with a non-intuitive sense. “Expression” is rather an “image-like counterpart of the percept” (Husserl, 2001a, 276), such that each element of expression corresponds to a sensuous intuition through which the meaning of the expression can be fulfilled, such that there appears to be no gap between sensuous intuition and meaning. However, Husserl recognizes in the second section, “Sense and understanding,” that categorial intuitions exceed sensory intuitions. This new appraisal leads him to question the “parallelism between meaningful reference and fulfilling intuition” (Husserl, 2001b, 272).

#### 3.2. “Sensuous, external” origin, fulfillment at the “ontological” level of the object—the excess of categorial sense

However, upon enquiring into the “problem of the categorial meaning-forms” and their fulfillment by intuition, Husserl realizes that the assumed coincidence does not apply when we take such terms as “being” and “non-being,” “the forms of quantity and the determinations of number, etc.,” which find no “possible *objective correlate*” in sensory perception (Husserl, 2001b, 278). Here, we find an *excess* or “surplus of meaning” insofar as only those determinations capable of being united in the concept of the object can be actually perceived. Husserl explains this using the example of the concept “white”: The meaning of this concept is far richer than the particular white gradation

that is actually perceived (Husserl, 2001b, 278). This means that the meaning intention cannot be fully accomplished by intuition, which only offers a rough or inadequately evident object (Husserl, 2001b, 278). This also means that the concept or categorial intuition exceeds the sensory intuition, since perception offers only a rough and indeterminate intuition of the object (Husserl, 2001b, 273; cf. Tengelyi, 2014, 525–533). From these difficulties, Husserl recognizes that this Aristotelian idea of a “mirror-like mode of expression” is “quite unavailing” in describing the relation between meanings and perceptions (Husserl, 2001b, 275). The sensuously given is merely grasped by the logical forms without providing it with new experiential determinations, since thought only confers a logical sense (Husserl, 2001b, 289). The demand for a foundation through what is perceived sets, however, a limit to reason that can be transcended: The complementary forms of thought and speech that find no counterpart in sensory perception refer to “transgeneric concepts of forms or categories” as László Tengelyi (2014, 530) remarks: This is the case of words like “is,” or “this,” wherein lies a reference to the categories “being” or “particularity.” This distinction between intentions of meaning and corresponding sensory intuitions helps him to keep the “sharp limit” between the sensory given and the categorial forms (Tengelyi, 2014, 531).

### 3.3. The idea of fulfilment by sensory and categorial intuitions—“internal” or “reflexive” origin—fulfilment at the “semantic” level of sense

Only with the introduction of the concept of “categorial form” or perception is the “parallelism now re-established.” Now, far from applying to the relation between “the meaning-intentions of expressions and the mere percepts with correspond to them,” this parallelism applies to the relation between “meaning-intentions” and those “*perceptually founded acts*” (Husserl, 2001b, 273). A categorial perception is an intentional act that is “performed on a basis of actual perception,” in which not only the elements of meaning corresponding to a sensory perception but also the categorial forms are fulfilled (Husserl, 2001b, 273). According to this view, even the transgeneric concepts are fulfilled in perception. The reason is that they are now not considered for themselves, but as components of the aforementioned linking or shaping acts that can be assigned to a fulfilling perception. Thus, not only simple sensory perceptions are considered as *Anschauungen*, but also any act that “renders identical services to the categorial elements of meaning” (Husserl, 2001b, 280). By saying that “categorially structured meanings find fulfilment, confirm themselves in perception,” Husserl means that “they relate to the object itself in its categorial structure,” that is, “it is not merely thought of, but intuited or perceived” (Husserl, 2001b, 280). Hence, “ag-

*gregates, indefinite pluralities, totalities, numbers, disjunctions, predicates (right-ness), states of affairs*, all count as ‘objects’” while the acts through which they are given “count as ‘percepts’” (Husserl, 2001b, 281). In this way, the concept of *Anschauung* “must be *widened*,” such that it encompasses a narrower sense as “*sensuous*” and a wider one as “*supersensuous*” or categorial perception (Husserl, 2001b, 281). In this way, Husserl expands the realm of perceptions to categorial structures and thus “closes” the gap by re-instating their parallelism.

#### 3.4. Sense as pre-predicative, pre-logical formation—The surplus of sensory sense—the twofold gap between sensory and categorial intuitions

This surplus of categorial meaning is by no means the only surplus engendered by the process of sensory perception. Husserl did not infer its counterpart, i.e., an intuitive surplus: Given that the sensory sense of the perceived thing is submitted to a process of continuous formation during the perceptual process, while its concept remains the same, there is a sensory excess that the concept cannot completely exhaust or grasp. Here, we find the *second* type of gap: The one *between sensory and categorial intuitions*, which involves an *excess* that is *twofold*: Both types of intuitions exceed each other in different respects.

To disclose this, we need to step back to the pre-categorial level. In later reflections, Husserl recognizes that the categorial grounds in the non-categorial, that is, in the pre-predicative or passive synthesis. This recognition of a passive, pre-categorial, original creation of sense and of the constantly developing formation of sense of the identical object along the continuous course of perception will turn out to imprint a sensory surplus on the object that the categorial perception is not able to redeem. In fact, in the lectures of 1918–1926 published in *Analyses concerning Passive and Active Synthesis* (Husserl, 2001c), Husserl discloses a passive, pre-categorial process of sense formation. Here, Husserl claims that the origin of categories can be traced back to the sensory intuition itself, that is, to sensuousness itself, where feelings and sensations endow the hyletic data with sense, initiating thus the process of constitution. He now clearly distinguishes “between the intentionality of feeling itself and the objectivating—be it passive or, in higher levels, active—” and “the objectivating that objectivates the contents arising in the intentionality of feeling and that makes use of them in order to constitute new predicate layers” (Husserl, 2001c, 279 ff.).

In passive objectivation the object undergoes a process of sense formation; a sense which remains in continuous transformation alongside the continuous process of perception. The origin of the categories therefore lies already in the pre-categorial

stage where an “original formation of sense is constituted with respect to the objective sense [...], a formation of sense by virtue of which the words ‘subject’ and ‘determination’ originally gain their signification” (Husserl, 2001c, 293). Once this passively constituted object has been intentionally grasped through a “fully conscious positing of goals and goal-oriented activity,” categorial intuition fulfills the active objectivation, which itself engenders “genuine objectivities” as “firm unities of identity” (Husserl, 2001c, 288). In his later *Formal and Transcendental Logic* of 1929 he resumes this issue and emphasizes that this “identifying synthesis” takes place in passive consciousness, such that the judgment during the active constitution “becomes the continuously abiding selfsame judgment, as a preserved *acquisition* dependent on functionings of passivity” that takes place “during the living progression of retentional modification,” that is, amid the temporal flow (Husserl, 1969, 320), which thus enables the continuity of the process and the concomitant linking of sense. This means that in sensuousness, that is, in the pre-categorial sphere, a sense-forming process takes place, from which the formation of predicative meaning emerges.

The most primitive series of development begins with the hyletic data, which homogeneously intertwine with each other in the “field of living presence” (Husserl, 2001c, 207) as “affective hyletic units” (Husserl, 2001c, 210). A hyletic fusion takes place—from originally temporal continuity—within each sensory field. At this stage, the perception of the relationships of continuity, affinity and contrast in which the interweaving hyletic data stand, gives rise to a sequence of continuous sense enrichment, while the laws of association make unification possible (Husserl, 2001c, 207). Affection functions as an objectifying mode of the lowest level: Affection arises in the play between a stimulus emitted by the objects and the emotional turn of the ego aroused by it (Husserl, 2001c, 210). Such an object “is actually a limit-concept” and a necessary abstraction, since this “unity of constitutive manifolds” is constituted in a “blind way” (Husserl, 2001c, 288). This process endows the “object” with a *sensuous surplus* insofar as the hyletic unity continuously increases its intuitive content, while it is, however, conceptually grasped as a fixed and contextually detached unity. In the above example, a white rose may offer different shades of “white” depending on the light, the form and disposition of its petals, etc. Here the intuition is far richer and more nuanced than the meaning intention. This means that a continuous process of sensory sense formation takes place such that the “object” exhibits a pre-categorial sensuous surplus of sense that cannot be exhausted by categorial intuition. It follows that the predicative and pre-predicative levels are characterized by two peculiar excess-structures: While a surplus of meaning emerges on the predicative level, a sensuous affective surplus structure emerges on the passive, pre-predicative level.

As a result, there remains a *continuously deferred difference between sensuousness and categoriality*, which calls into question the “parallelism between meaning reference and fulfilling intuition” (Husserl, 2001b, 272) that Husserl had tried to re-establish through a widened concept of *Anschauung* in the *Logical Investigations*.

### 3.5. Concluding remarks of sections 2 and 3

In conclusion, we face the radical impossibility for the sensory to attain the perfection of final fulfilment, because, on the one hand, the thing only needs to achieve an optimal and not a perfect determination, and on the other, as Husserl claims in his *Analyses concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, everything that appears is surrounded by a certain “empty horizon,” an “emptiness to be filled out,” by which every appearance is a “determinable indeterminacy” (Husserl, 2001c, 42). Here, returning to the static analyses, we encounter the ideality of a *telos*, which the sensory cannot attain, while in the later genetic period—as we shall see—we face the ideality of an *arché*, which the sensory cannot retrieve. Both impossibilities are nevertheless not to be considered as a failure of phenomenology but as its essential features.

## 4. HUSSERL—THE OPENNESS OF HORIZONS—THE APPEARANCE OF THE NEW—THE GAP BETWEEN THE IDEALITY OF SENSE AND THE SENSE WHICH EXCEEDS OUR EXPECTATIONS

Husserl’s later development of a genetic phenomenology distinguishes between the “finished apperceptions” as “ideal possibilities of concordant modes of givenness” characteristic of the static nexuses, and the “constitutive phenomenology” which follows the history of the objects of a possible knowledge, insofar as it leads them back to their genesis “in original time-consciousness” (Husserl, 2001c, 634). Every perception implies an entire perceptual system, specifically in the form of intentional horizons. The appearing object is therefore never given completely and no self of the object can ever be exhausted, so that “every appearance implies a *plus ultra* in the empty horizon,” as a system of references outlined in advance. As perception pretends to give the object completely in every appearance, “every perceptual givenness is a constant mixture of familiarity and unfamiliarity, a givenness that points to new possible perceptions,” not only those that would result in familiarity, but to those which hold a new sense (Husserl, 2001c, 58). Husserl thus allows for an openness of the perceptual horizon that may entail the occurrence of “something else” (Husserl 2001c, 238) and thus the disappointment of the corresponding expectations. It is also evident that here

the open possibility involves the impossibility for all possible courses of the world to be exhausted. *Inexhaustibility, unavailability on the part of the subject and indeterminacy of the anticipations are therefore the key features of the world's horizon.*

In this context, Husserl claims that “something new arrives in accordance with something already familiar” (Husserl, 2001c, 263) and as an answer to expectations, because the arrival of the expected confirms the permanence of the world as a horizon for the unending wealth of possible occurrences. Perception is thus mainly a continuing process of cognizance, in which expectations are susceptible either to fulfillment or disappointment (Husserl, 2001c, 263). We encounter something new when our expectations become disappointed. Normally, something new shows itself in advance through a “quasi-expectation,” which apprehends something as a variation of an existing type. This means that the determination of its ideal identity can only take place *retroactively* in the totality of the preceding series by stepping back towards the original foundation (*Urstiftung*) of sense: this concerns a regress (*Rückgriff*) to an object as idea that acts simultaneously as rule and telos of the process of perception, as the concept of “type” does.

Accordingly, Husserl remarks that “the process of perception is a constant process of acquiring knowledge that holds on to what was created [*geschafft*‘, transl. modified] epistemically in sense” (Husserl, 2001c, 49). The experience of the thing proves thus to be a constant and stable place for the emergence or creation of something new, which “can be a slap in the face to all expectation,” because “the event itself may occur without any anticipations (*Vordeutung*),” as Husserl argues in his lectures of 1917–1928 published in *Die Bernauer Manuskripte über das Zeitbewusstsein* (Husserl, 2001d, 11). Thus, “a new ‘primordial institution,’ or [...] a primordial impression” arises, “since a moment of primordial originality emerges” (Husserl, 2001d, 11). This event can therefore not be traced back to the fulfilment of any expectations: A new sense exceeds anticipations, so that there is a *gap between the ideality of sense and the sense which exceeds our expectations*—the *third* type afore mentioned.

##### 5. HUSSERL—THE OPENNESS OF HORIZON—THE GAP BETWEEN THE EXPERIENCE OF THE NEW THAT OVERCOMES US AND ITS APPREHENSION BY CONSCIOUSNESS

Furthermore, when we speak of the disappointment of expectation, we mean that we *experience* this disappointment, we experience it before consciousness may grasp it, since a new sense really overwhelms us as an unexpected event. As Husserl argues in *Experience and Judgement*, this leads to the “negation” of the old sense, now overlaid by the new one (Husserl, 1973, 90). This negation, as Husserl says, happens “in the pre-pred-

icative sphere of receptive experience” (Husserl, 1973, 90), such that this passive, pre-intentional experience as the process of a new sense formation is separated through a *gap* from the active and predicative foundation of new sense which bears the conceptual apprehension and its linguistic expression, that is always *nachträglich*, i.e. retroactive: The conceptual apprehension and consequently, the expression of meaning is always in delay. On the other hand, it is the very acknowledgement of this *gap* which enables the experience of disappointment, since only in face of our failure to grasp the sense of what is given to us in experience, we come to realize that we have encountered something that does not meet our expectations. This means that a new sense is first *given to us before* it can be named: in Husserl’s words, the “objectlike formation [...] is a progressive creation of sense, a progressive constitution of the object, specifically, an original activity, so far as its unity reaches, possesses the character of the unity of self-giving” (Husserl, 2001c, 297). We *encounter* the new, which awaits our conceptualization. Here we find the *fourth* type of gap: the *gap between the experience of the new and its apprehension by consciousness*. The afore mentioned not only means that *passive experience is the ‘place’ for the foundation of the new*, that is, *of the unforeseen* but also that it is due to the disappointment of our expectations that a surplus of *excess of sense* may arise. A surplus of sense that exceeds any system of anticipations: this excess is one of the main features of the world’s horizon.

## 6. HUSSERL—CONCLUDING REMARKS OF SECTIONS 4 AND 5

When we also consider that, firstly, things give themselves only in the way of an encounter, that is, only by experiencing their contingency and by recognizing them (*Wiedererkennen*) during the perceptual act, and secondly, we are unable to lead their sense back to an original or first cognition that would be simultaneous and coextensive with sensuous experience, we cannot but acknowledge the impossibility of grasping an *arché* of sense, since sense formation is always deferred in respect to experience. This is why sense (*Sinn*) is endowed with a kind of “darkness,” as Marc Richir emphasizes, that should be distinguished from their concept or meaning (*Bedeutung*), which has always to be presupposed. This also means that there is an *excess of phenomenality as to the linguistic meaning*, which is neither traceable nor capable of expression or description (Richir, 2000, 64). The phenomenon is something that remains to be said or named. Hence, there is a gap or *distance between this phenomenological basis and the institution of the categorial sense*.

As Richir argues, this act of *creation* of sense, this—in his words “symbolic foundation”—cannot proceed from a conscious act but is a relative “blind invention” that

evidences itself not only by crossing out the basis which it exceeds but by forming new layers of the same basic structure that build up the forthcoming foundations of a new sense (Richir, 2011, 72). This is why the phenomenological sense is not given but is the product of a “symbolic invention” and of a “symbolic discovery” too, since it provides evidence for the never-ending resources of sense. In Husserl’s terms, which will be further on questioned, the “creation of a new sense (*Sinnesschöpfung*), that is, a progressing constitution of the object,” takes place within the course of an “actually creative activity” (Husserl, 2001c, 297). We are thus faced with the circularity of the process: While the sensuous intuitions are the base on which concepts are formed, new senses appear in the process of sense constitution, such that by exceeding the established ones, they lay the foundations for new categorial intuitions<sup>2</sup>. We may question this perfect circularity, because our conscience tends to ignore those senses which she is unable to “domesticate,” such that, as Merleau-Ponty (1969, 68)<sup>3</sup> argues, there is always a *rest*, a remaining “wild sense” that escapes this teleological circle and lingers in this “indifferent dimension” waiting for its apprehension—if this is ever possible. What unifies all these cleavages is the acknowledgment that there is a *fundamental gap between the logical idealities and the essential indeterminacy of our phenomenological sensuous experience*. Phenomenology is thus characterized by both a *surplus of sense of irretrievable origin and an inexhaustibility of perception due to the non-achievability of its telos*.

## 7. DERRIDA: AGAINST PRESENCE—AGAINST IDEALITY

“Deconstruction is inventive or it is nothing at all, it does not settle for methodical procedures [...] its *process* involves an affirmation, this latter being linked to the coming—the *venire*—in event, advent, invention” (Derrida, 1991, 218), says Derrida. Based on this assessment, he understands this invention as a “discovery” or “revelation” of something, which was already there in a veiled or virtual way (Derrida, 1991, 217–218). Husserl would agree, since in normal experience something new is apprehended as a variation of something already existing, that is silently awaiting to be disclosed. This disclosure, which involves the establishment of the renewed identity of the object, requires us to step back towards the original and anonymous formation of sense (*Urstiftung*), which takes place only deferred in respect to the sensuous experience, as we have already seen. This formation of sense is not “blind” in Richir’s terms,

<sup>2</sup> This circularity was put in evidence by Richir (2000, 64).

<sup>3</sup> In Merleau-Ponty’s words: « transmutation [...] du sens en signification » (Merleau-Ponty, 1969, 68). Merleau-Ponty defines “wild sense” as the expression of an experience by the experience: « un sens sauvage, une expression de l’expérience par l’expérience » (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, 203).

but anonymous, since it takes place in a passive way, where the subject is, in Husserl's terms, "devoid of Ego." Hence, neither the subject nor consciousness is fully present to itself, that is, conscious of the process of sense-formation, nor the object is fully present to the subject, since the object is only gradually being constituted, such that the *arché* of sense is but an *ideal* origin that no consciousness may ever fully grasp. Hence, Derrida seems to be at first sight right in questioning the possibility of retrieving an *arché* of sense and of a consciousness fully present to itself.

In this regard, in *Speech and Phenomena* and *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry*, Derrida questions the ideality of the same as presence which serves as a foundation to the Husserlian distinction between expression and indication. For Husserl, there is an "essential distinction" between expression and indication: The expressive sign is equivalent to a linguistic sign which expresses meaning and erases itself before it, whereas the indicative sign is an autonomous object of perception that represents meaning. "Expressions function meaningfully in even in isolated mental life," that is, meaning is present to the mind without serving to "indicate anything" (Husserl, 2001a, 183). Contrary to Husserl, Derrida holds the entanglement of both, in order to display how every sign is worked through the "*différance*." In the name of this "*différance*" Derrida will deconstruct the idea of presence which serves as the foundation of the distinction between expression and indication. Derrida, as Bernet remarks, is right in saying that expressions are characterized by the "proximity to the pre-expressive layer of thought," but he understands this presence in a twofold sense, that is, as the presence to itself of the subject and the presence of the intentional object to thought, which the expression anticipates. Hence, the "*idealization and spiritualization of the expressive sign*" is due to the "proximity to the ideal *Bedeutung*," which the sign merely represents (cf. Bernet, 1995, 6).

Concerning ideality itself, Derrida claims that even though Husserl "affirms the non-existence or non-reality of ideality," he does so to point out that ideality is a way of being that is "irreducible to sensory [mod. transl.] existence of empirical reality" (Derrida, 1973, 53), since the ideality of *Bedeutung* of the expressive sign is opposed to the contingency of the indicative sign. Nonetheless ideality is thought of as a non-actual presence by the subject, such that there is no presence without representation and without the risk of falsehood, since once uttered, the meaning detaches itself from the intention of the meaning subject. From this Derrida follows that a pure presence of the speaking subject to itself, that is, the presence of consciousness to itself, is impossible, such that the possibility of the phenomenological reduction would be seriously questioned (Bernet, 1995, 10). For Derrida, namely, "absolute ideality is the correlate of a possibility of indefinite repetition" and this ideality "depends entirely on the possibility of acts of repetition" (Derrida, 1973, 52).

Here, Derrida seems to be alluding to what Husserl defines in the *Crisis* as an “idealization,” which has to be carefully distinguished from the above-mentioned “ideation” (cf. Breuer, 2020b, 249–275). Husserl describes this process as follows: “What arises first is the idea of continuation which is repeatable with unconditional generality, which its own self-evidence, as a freely thinkable and self-evident possible infinity, rather than the open endlessness [described above]: rather than finite iteration, this is iteration within the sphere of the unconditional “again and again, of what can be renewed with ideal freedom” (Husserl, 1970, 346). This is, as is well known, the product of the severance of ideas from their correlation to sensuous givenness. For this reason, Husserl carefully distinguishes between these “free” idealities characterized by their unchanging purity and those “bound” idealities, which are ‘attached’ to concrete and contingent occurrences. Hence, Derrida neglects the difference between ‘free’ idealities, which are indeed subject to an indefinite repetition, and “bound idealities,” which do not. Secondly, Derrida obliterates the difference between “presentation” (*Gegenwärtigung*), where the retained past is part of the perception of the present, and “recollection” (*Vergegenwärtigung*), which is indeed a representation of the past in the present. Moreover, he reduces every kind of representations to a redoubling of previous indicative signs, whereas imagination is not (Bernet, 1995).

As Derrida explains, the translatability of the word lion, then, will not in principle be absolute and universal. It will be empirically conditioned by the contingent encounter in a receptive intuition of something like the lion. The latter is not an “objectivity of the understanding,” the former, an “object of receptivity,” as Husserl explains in *Experience and Judgment* (Husserl 1973, 250 ff.) The ideality of its sense and of what it evokes irreducibly adheres to an empirical subjectivity. This would be true even if all men had been able to and could in fact encounter and designate the lion. Under those circumstances the tie to a *de facto* anthropological generality would not be reduced any further. This is because the ideality of sense, considered in itself and like that of language, is here a “bound” ideality and not a “free” one. This distinction between “free idealities” and “bound idealities,” which is only implied in Derrida’s *Origin*, enables us to understand what the absolute ideal objectivity of, for example, the geometrical object can be and what distinguishes it from that of language as such and from the sense-content as such. Hence, even though Husserl claims that idealities are “irreducible” to the sensuously given, this does not mean that they are detached from them, such that they become idealized products of a process of iteration. But exactly this ‘silent’ equalization of idealities and idealization is that what allows Derrida to deny both the presence of the subject to itself and the presence of the sensory givenness (Derrida, 1978a, 71). Husserl concludes:

Thus it appears that even cultural systems are not always completely free idealities, and this reveals the *difference between free idealities* (such as logico-mathematical systems and pure essential structures of every kind) and *bound idealities*, which in their being-sense carry reality with them and hence belong to the real world. All reality is here led back to spatiotemporality as the form of the individual. [...] free idealities [...] are omnispatial and omnitemporal. Bound idealities are bound to Earth [...]. (Husserl, 1973, 267; cf. Derrida, 1978b, 71, fn. 69)

In contrast to free idealities, which are to be understood in the language of the *Crisis* as idealizations, “bound idealities” are anchored in the real world, that is, their correlative objects have their individual place in the objective time of the world. Moreover, free idealities, that is, the objectivities of the understanding, are of a “higher level” than those of receptivity. They are not pre-constituted, like the latter, in the pure passivity of sensory receptivity, but in a predicative spontaneity. As Husserl emphasizes, “the mode of their original pre-giveness is their production in the predicative activity of the Ego” (Husserl, 1973, 251). This means that for Husserl, the ideality of sense is correlative to the empirically given. The strategy of Derrida consists precisely in ignoring this correlation, detaching thus idealities from the constituting subject—the same strategy Husserl deplors in the proceeding of science.

For Derrida, ideality depends thus on repetition, because pure ideality concerns an ideal object, which is present as representation (*Vorstellung*)—that is, “as something that is accessible and available in general and first for a regard or gaze” (Derrida, 1978a, 64)—during the act of repetition. Ideal identity depends on repetition, which at its turn, enables the representation of ideality (cf. Derrida, 1978b, 71). Hence, ideality does not arise from the originary foundation (*Urstiftung*) of a new sense—from an *arché*—but originates from the eternal return of sense to its presence, that is, from its presentification. If in this way every *arché* as source of sense as well as its ideal presence are denied, and there is no repetition of the same without distortion, it would follow that there is neither an ideal object with invariable identity, nor an ideal *arché* of sense. Sense is thus subjected to an unending change, such that it must be “re-invented” in each lived experience. Here, we may add that this eternal reinvention of sense is nevertheless counterbalanced by the formation of sedimentations of sense, that is, of a sense that is grounded on our habitual actions.

#### 8. DERRIDA: THE ARCHÉ-WRITING OF A TRACE—THE DIFFÉRANCE

Derrida understands this lack of retraceable *arché* of the sensory as the work of an “*arché-writing*” of a trace, which “is in fact the absolute origin of sense in general. The trace is the *différance* which opens appearance and signification.” It is not only the

“origin of all repetition, the origin of ideality” but the origin of sense too. If this trace refers to an “absolute past,” it is because it can no longer be understood in the form of a presentification, that is, a modified present or the returning of a present already past, as the trace precedes every phenomenology of consciousness or presence, according to Derrida. For instance, no one remembers when or how he/she began to speak. This trace, which Derrida locates into and at the origin of the linguistic system, can be also located at the origin of sense, but only provisionally, since the trace, in Derrida’s words, “is in fact the absolute origin of sense in general, which amounts to saying [...] that there is no absolute origin of sense in general” (Derrida, 1976, 65). This is because traces as well as sense in general are subject to “erasure” (Derrida) or to be “crossed out” (Husserl) by oncoming traces of senses. But to say that difference or trace is originary is “simultaneously to erase the myth of a present origin” (Derrida, 1976, 203). From the very beginning, in the “indifferent” dimension of their first impression—a dimension that Derrida names “past” but under erasure (Derrida, 1976, 65) or the “primordial absolute” (Derrida, 1978a, 153)—at the threshold of perception the trace opens a way for the predicative work of conscience. Thus, only retroactively can the signified presence be constituted, only by deferral, *nachträglich*, supplementary, as Derrida states in agreement with Husserl.

We cannot here step into further developments, but we may here mention that Derrida neglects the relation between time permanence and fluency. Actually, as Roberto Walton rightly remarks, the correlation between the now of the living present and the primary impression is produced amid a temporal flow, so that it is the living present which grants the sense its affecting force (Walton, 1995, 325–327). Besides, the continuity of the process of sense formation is made possible by the retention of past fulfilments, which allows the synthesis of identification to take place. Moreover, according to Bernet (1995, 15, 19), Derrida obliterates the difference between “presentation” (*Gegenwärtigung*), where the retained past is part of the perception of the present, and “recollection” (*Vergegenwärtigung*), which is indeed a representation of the past in the present. Finally, he reduces every kind of representations to a redoubling of previous indicative signs, disregarding that imagination is not.

It is thus the delay which lies in the beginning: a gap, which according to Derrida escapes temporalization: “Here, delay is the philosophical absolute, because the beginning of methodic reflection can only consist in the consciousness of the implication of *another* previous, possible, and absolute origin in general.” The absolute origin is “always other in its self-identity,” “is present only in being *deferred-delayed* (different) without respite, this impotence and this impossibility are given in a primordial and pure consciousness of Difference” (Derrida, 1978a, 153). The “presence

of the present” arises from the “return, from the movement of repetition,” such that this “bending-back is irreducible in presence or in self-presence.” The trace is for Derrida “older than presence,” which eludes “a simple self-identity.” (Derrida 1973, 68). To install the trace at the origin involves erasing a grounding of meaning and destining it to be that which it is: its own *différance*. Since the trace only repeats itself by differing from itself, meaning always misses itself: We do not face the eternal return of the same, but of the difference, that is, of multiple differences that make up *a system of fractured and deviant meanings*.

These multiple traces, neither present nor absent, leave the narrative “open” by suspending meaning and full presence. As such, to maintain a dialectic between presence and absence would be like maintaining “the chance of aphorism,” as Derrida (Derrida, 1989, 69) claims:

Maintaining [*maintenir*], despite the temptations, despite the possible reappropriation, the chance of the aphorism, is to keep within the interruption, without the interruption, the promise of giving place, if it is necessary/if it is missing [*s’il le faut*]. But it is never given. (Derrida, 1989, 69)

This “interruption” of presence defines an in-between space (see Derrida’s play on ‘entre’ and ‘antre’ in ‘The double Session,’ in (Derrida, 1981, 212 ff.)), that is not the ground of a dialectical mediation between contradictory or “conflicting polarities,” but the generalisable “medium” or milieu in which differentiation takes place. In this type of reading, the in-between space would be something like the place, a “spacing” of spaces, which cannot be defined as inside or outside, nor indeed as simple “in space”: In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida writes:

Spacing (notice that this word speaks the articulation of space and time) is always the unperceived, the nonpresent, and the nonconscious [...]. This deconstruction of presence accomplishes itself through the deconstruction of consciousness, and therefore through the irreducible notion of the trace (*Spur*). (Derrida, 1976, 68 ff.)

“This trace—writes Derrida in *Difference* (Derrida, 1973, 156)—is not a presence but is rather the simulacrum of a presence [...]. *Effacement* must always be able to overtake the trace; otherwise, it would not be a trace but an indestructible and monumental substance.” *Différance* is thus a play of traces, a pure differential trace, which, in analogy to Saussure’s linguistic analysis, refer to one another without being united in the spatiotemporal presence. Presence is thus continually deferred, erased as such, reduced to a play of differential traces that articulate themselves into a system, in which the spatiotemporal distancing between traces is neither presence nor absence.

Thus, first, if traces erase spatiotemporal presence, they cannot be conceived as “being” in terms of full presence or totality; secondly, if traces are defined by their mutual interval in the series, i.e. by their mutual a-temporal difference, then presence as such is de-centered, delayed, never complete; finally, these reflections amount to emphasizing that the product of this play of traces breaks with the idea of representation, of the synthesis of the heterogeneous, i.e. of totality, of a whole that only survives by resisting diversity, difference, separation and plurality.

## 8. CONCLUSION

Derrida’s attentive reading of Husserl has shown that the presence of consciousness to itself cannot be taken for granted. Even though the phenomenological reduction can neither be reduced to the opposition between expression and indication, nor to a mere trace, Derrida’s interpretation deserves the merit of having made evident that the retrieval of an *arché* of sense or the permanence of an ideal identity of sense is by no means guaranteed by performing the phenomenological reduction. But we have shown that these “impossibilities” have already been advanced by phenomenology itself: At least four interrelated gaps in the Husserlian phenomenology testify the difficulty both in grasping a retraceable *arché* of sense and in establishing a correlation in which intended objects and their conceptual determination fully correspond or “cover” one another: First, the gap between the ideality of sense and its representation, that is, between the indeterminacy of phenomenological experience and the ideas or concepts whose determination no sensory intuition can or rather, need not attain, since intention is fulfilled by an optimal apprehension rather than by a through determination by concepts. This has led us to the second gap, that is, the cleavage between sensory and categorial intuitions, which involves a twofold excess insofar as both types of intuitions exceed one another in different respects. Third, once an unexpected sense arises, a new primordial impression is constituted, such that it breaks with instituted sense. Hence, this results in a gap between the ideality of sense and the sense which exceeds our expectations. This new sense overcomes us and awaits our conceptualization, which is always retroactive. However, since the “birth” of sense is never simultaneous with its conscious apprehension, a new sense is only “latent,” never fully present. Hence, there is, fourth, a gap between the experience of the new and its apprehension by consciousness. The preceding reflections on the indeterminacy of experience make evident that passive experience is the ‘place’ for the foundation of the new, that is, of the unforeseen. This requires that our expectations either be deceived

or exceeded—or both: the deception of our expectations is thus the condition of possibility of the new.

What unifies all these cleavages is the acknowledgment that there is a fundamental gap between the conceptual or eidetic idealities and the essential indeterminacy of our phenomenological sensuous experience, which is correlative to an excess of one in respect to the other. Phenomenology is thus characterized by both a *surplus of sense* due to its irretrievable *origin* and an *inexhaustibility of sense* due to the non-achievability of its *telos*. Both have not to be seen as shortcomings, but precisely as the fundamental characteristics of the openness of the world's horizons. From this it becomes clear that, as Derrida is right in emphasizing, the Husserlian phenomenology cannot be thought of as a system of pure presence: From the analyses of sensuous perception to those on the constitution of meaning, there is always an excess that permits to further future or previous accomplishments, such that there is a fundamental openness to change, and fundamentally, to the arrival of something unforeseen. However, and *contra* Derrida, neither meanings nor sense are doomed to repetition, since firstly, they are not fully coextensive with experience, secondly, they can be modified according to changing experiences, and thirdly, there are representations that do not 'represent' previous presentations by repeating them, such as imaginations. Neither can it be sustained that idealities "detach" themselves from experience, since even though they are not "reducible" to it, "bound" idealities are correlative to empirical reality. Finally, even though the *arché* of sense can only be retroactively disclosed and although this cannot be achieved with absolute certainty, this does not justify as going so far as either reducing sense to a mere trace or abolishing any presence *per se*, since for Husserl, all these constitutional processes take place amid a temporal flow.

Notwithstanding the above, Derrida is right in pointing out that there is no *ex-nihilo* creation of sense, but sense is 'invented': The invention finds something for the first time inasmuch as it unveils something that was already there awaiting legitimation. Invention gives way (*donne lieu*) to an event, it inaugurates a new sense: Herein resides its singularity or novelty without which there wouldn't be any invention at all. This understanding of the appearance of something unexpected but located in an indifferent dimension of self-givenness may confirm our claim about the impossibility of subsuming the totality of excess sense to categorical intuition: A rest of sense, a wild sense, always remains at the threshold of conscience. But what induces this sense to breach, that is, to cross this threshold and attain expression? Maybe this event requires us to undergo an affective limit-experience, where "normality" and "habituality" are suspended, where we are seized by the affective force of the given, in sum, when we undergo the experience of the sublime. The appearing of a new sense is an

event, something that overcomes us, and, as Derrida rightly remarks, something that is submitted to a permanent change and deviance: Sense always exceeds itself towards its own difference, in this sense it is always *différance*.

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