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PRESENCE AND ORIGIN: ON THE POSSIBILITY OF THE STATIC-GENETIC DISTINCTION

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Introduction

I think at the heart of Derrida's[1] critique of Husserl[2] is a scepticism about a fundamental Husserlian claim: namely, that a rigorous and stable distinction in phenomenology between the *static* and the *genetic* is sound.[3] *A fortiori*, static phenomenology and genetic phenomenology are two distinct *kinds* of phenomenology; and neither is exclusive or contradictory of the other.

As I understand it, Derrida seems to be claiming that, when Husserl recognizes the need for a genetic account, he is simply recognizing demands *within* static phenomenology for considerations that lie beyond its methodologically sanctioned scope.[4] If the approach by which these demands are to be satisfied is genetic phenomenology, then the introduction of genetic phenomenology may count as an admission about the incompleteness and inadequacy of static phenomenology from, as it were, the horse's own mouth. In this light, Derrida's claim is that Husserl himself winds up having to admit that static phenomenology cannot be an autonomous discipline. More damaging still, if in the conduct of genetic phenomenology, Husserl can be shown admitting claims that, by phenomenological standards, must count as speculative, constructive and *externalist*, so not even in principle accessible by intuition [*Anschauung*], thus *non*-phenomenological, then genetic phenomenology may count as the undoing of *phenomenology* as such.[5]

In the following, I want to defend Husserl's basic claim of a stable distinction between the static and the genetic, so that the pursuit of the latter need not be the undoing of the former. Towards this end, I'll start by arguing against the *exegetical* soundness of imputing to Husserl what Derrida calls, and means by, "presence." What Husserl calls "*Gegenwart*" is temporally extensive and genetically loaded, and since Husserl is very clear about this, what Derrida calls "presence" must count as largely foreign to Husserl. For example, conceptual and linguistic competence is not spontaneously acquired in a temporal void. Such competence must be at the tail end of an extensive and complex development during the history of an individual's participation in the life-world. So, insofar as static phenomenology features descriptions of what appears in "*Gegenwart*," as "*gegenwärtig*" and "ver*gegenwärtigt*," static phenomenology must feature what are genetically loaded. In fact, I don't think there can be any kind of phenomenology that is not, one way or the other, about what is genetically loaded. Finally, I want to

talk about to what extent the phenomenological idea of an "origin" can make sense. In my view, not only is the distinction between the static and the genetic sound, but even at the darker fringes of genetic phenomenology, there is much to be defended as plausible.

The Static and the Genetic

As Husserl makes clear in *Analysis Concerning Passive Synthesis*, static phenomenology deals with the structure of judgments or propositions in terms of intentionality.[6] Since, for Husserl, intentionality is the essential feature *exclusively* of consciousness, and consciousness can only be examined from the first-person perspective, judgments or propositions in the phenomenological sense will be internally construed. The structural features or components of any judgment thus internally construed will be simply *given* in consciousness upon introspection.

Such givenness in consciousness – of, for example, language, conceptual normativity and know-how, retention, motivation, expectation, adumbration, etc., in short, the "anthropological world"[7] – Husserl calls "passive genesis."[8] I already possess linguistic competence. I already know how to properly use concepts and, thereby, constitute the meanings of objects. Part and parcel of this constitutive know-how (which Husserl calls "*Ich kann*") will be the ability to synthesize particular intuitions under concepts, which in turn will enable the articulation of intelligible sentences to others as well as to myself. So, in static phenomenology, I can for example begin with the components of intentionality as simply given to me: i.e., the *noeses* or various propositional modes of the "I think," *hyletic* data or experiential *quale*, and *noemata* or representational contents, are all passively available for examination. In other words, in static phenomenology, desires for *explanations* of the birth of a particular kind of lived-body into a particular kind of world, the development of certain motor skills for navigating that lived-body through that world, as well as the inauguration into a particular kind of linguistic community through some process of language acquisition, and with that process the accumulation in habit of conceptual know-how – including the recognition of empirical signals that prompts syntheses of particular intuitions – are all precluded by the *epoché*. The genetic, in contrast, is just a set of these precluded *explananda*. But, just as a chemist may feature the atomic weight of zinc in her predictions about the aggregate behaviour of zinc without, in turn, explaining how that weight was determined, in static phenomenology, one may feature these genetic *explananda* without explaining them. In contrast, genetic phenomenology is a phenomenology that can, as Husserl explicitly puts it, "explain"[9] ["*erklären*"] *how* the given gets to be given at all. So what does Husserl mean by "genetic *phenomenology*"?[10]

As Donn Welton sagaciously notes, genetic phenomenology can be understood in terms of the *constitutive* demands of *transcendental* phenomenology.[11] For Husserl, "transcendental" means the necessary conditions for the constitution of meaning when encountering an object of experience. When encountering an object that may be recognized as, for example, an "apple," some process must prepare that object for determination *as* an apple in a judgment. Whatever happens that makes possible the determination of the object as an apple in a judgment, as well as what makes possible further inferences about that object when that judgment is articulated into a premise, Husserl calls "constitution."[12] The explication of whatever happens in enabling determinative judgments, Husserl calls "constitutive;" as in, for example, "constitutive phenomenology" or "constitutive analysis." Whatever conditions, achieves or performs the constitution, Husserl calls "transcendental;" as in, for example, "transcendental consciousness." Static phenomenology deals with the determinative role of constitution in making sense of consciousness and world. Genetic phenomenology, in contrast, deals with what must precede any successful instance of such constitution.

To see this, it helps to distinguish between determination [*Bestimmung*], in the more traditional Kantian sense, and constitution in the Husserlian sense. Determination of an object by a concept in a judgment is an active process: it is a function of what Kant calls "spontaneity," and what Husserl would call an "*active* synthesis."[13] And the phenomenological description of such judgment producing determination would be a piece of static phenomenology. For example, the relevant empirical object with its prompting features would be given, and so would the concepts "red" and "apple." The phenomenological description, then, would simply be a matter of spelling out the intentional structure of the relevant judgment. Accordingly, the described components would be the propositional attitude (say, "I want"), whatever it might be like to want a red apple (*hyletic* data), as well as the representational content (*noema*), which may in turn be enriched analytically (e.g., the object is a fruit) or inductively (e.g., the object is probably hard).

But the account rendered so far would be of a piece with what Wilfrid Sellars calls the "myth of the given."[14] Without further explanation, there is something magical about such an account of determination. On such an account, a bunch of sense data has been converted into a proposition that may qualify as the true premise of a further inference. One may dissimulate over the magic by claiming that a certain set of sense data causally stimulates the activation of the appropriate cluster of concepts in a judgment. But such dissimulation turns out a question begging about how sense data may cause anything conceptual to happen at all, why it would stimulate the activation of

one set of concepts as opposed to another, etc. In any case, some kind of explanatory bridge would be needed between the perceptual encounter and the conceptual articulation. The notion of *constitution* is supposed to provide that bridge.[15] That is, a constitutive account deals with how any appearance in consciousness may be actively determined by a rational judgment.

So how does constitutive phenomenology propose to do this? In any concrete encounter with an empirical particular, an empirical concept will be typically too coarse-grained. For instance, three-dimensional spatial objects will be given only in perspectives or profiles,[16] while empirical concepts typically determine whole objects. For instance, by "apple" or "door," I do not mean that just the profile given to me at T_1 counts as "apple" or "door." Part and parcel of applying such concepts is a commitment to what Husserl calls the "internal horizon"[17] of the entire three-dimensional object, which in turn motivates expectations about the transcendent *hinter*-side of that object. That commitment results from a responsiveness to the rules of applying such empirical concepts, which in turn allows me to draw further inferences (analytic or inductive) even before the transcendent side appears.

The conceptually and normatively responsive content of a perspective or profile, Husserl calls "*noema*,"[18] which is thus fine-grained enough to capture the way particulars are typically given in consciousness. The notion of constitution comes into play with the claim that I synthesize the ever-changing profiles of an object in what Husserl calls "adumbration."[19] I retain a receding profile in memory, then protend the emerging profile in anticipation under the concept of unified object. This synthetic performance on my part, then, constitutes the three-dimensional object for conceptual determination. Put another way, the concept whose use in a determinative judgment was prompted by the initial encounter with a particular profile gets "fulfilled" ["*erfüllt*"] in the synthesis of the emergent profiles. And that should suffice to bridge the above-mentioned gap between the given and determination. On the other hand, it may now sound as though we wind up with a frictionless form of idealism, one that listens for its own echoes for affirmation of its sounded beliefs.

As inoculation against such frictionlessness, Husserl proposes a kind of pragmatist explanation strikingly similar to Sellars'. Husserl claims that my disposition to recognize a fine-grained profile as the *noema* of some object under a coarse-grained concept has to do with know-how. First of all, I think it makes perfectly good sense to interpret what Husserl means by "*Ich kann*"[20] in such a pragmatist way. The German term for "knowing-how" just is "*können*," as in "*Ich kann* schwimmen" for "I *know how* to swim." So, when it comes to encounters with particulars in experience, I possess an ability to recognize a resemblance between, for instance, a present intuition and a past intuition under a generic concept,[21] a process that Husserl,

appropriately following Hume, calls "association" ["*Assoziation*"].[22] And the ability to recognize such resemblances under a concept – which in static phenomenology registers simply as "eidetic intuition" – Husserl attributes to the sedimentation of repeated conceptual practice in what, again following Hume, Husserl calls "habit" ["*Habitus*"].[23] And as the epistemological story continues, no such sedimentation would have occurred in an echo chamber. Habits form because the practices that make up such habits are overwhelmingly reliable vis-à-vis the history of the agent's business with the world.

In *Ideas* II, a volume devoted to constitutive phenomenology, Husserl attempts to explain how such habit accrues. Husserl claims every *active* synthesis of either determination or constitution builds up on a *passive* synthesis.[24] However, passivity in this sense is strictly relative to a current activity.[25] That is, what is passively given now is a product of some prior synthetic activity. So, for example, relative to the active constitution of a "dozen eggs" by counting the items in a carton, each egg must already be given in passive synthesis. Husserl's idea is that, at some point in my history, I must have gotten into the habit of synthesizing the features of such similar objects as those belonging to "eggs." But what now appears to be a passive synthesis of those features was, at some point, the result of activity. At some point I learned what to look for in looking for an egg. On such a picture of habit sedimentation, through repeated practice an achievement that originally required active effort gradually becomes effortless until the synthetic achievement to a conceptually mature adult begins to appear increasingly passive.[26] In short, passivity is a function of repeated – indeed, statistically overwhelming – success in active constitution. Thus, at this stage of phenomenological analysis, Husserl would concur with more recent advocates of epistemological holism like Sellars and Davidson: the given is a product of a history of activity. In this light, Welton's point is this: constitution thus spelled out remains within the scope of static phenomenology, since habit too is simply given in *Gegenwart*.[27] In contrast, genetic phenomenology deals with *how* such habitual and constitutive accumulation itself is given in terms of their *origin*.

First of all, on the above constitutive picture, passive synthesis is to be construed a kind of badge of mastery. I've become so good at doing it that it only appears as though I'm not really *doing* anything at all. But, assuming against any innatist impulses of some radical Platonism, what was there – if anything at all – when I wore the badge of a novice, when I had to *actively* synthesize the relevant features upon some initial or, as Husserl has it, "primordial" ["*ursprüngliche*"] encounter? I will call this the problem of *primordial genesis*. In Husserl, its proposed resolution is couched in terms of non-conceptual content, both *hyletic* and *noematic*.

Second, as Kantians have long noted,[28] in static phenomenology the normative force of concepts or meanings [*Bedeutungen*] must be presupposed. Even in constitutive phenomenology as described above, it is not as though one constitutes the normative force of concepts. Instead, one constitutes particular *objects* through these concepts and meanings. Put another way, one constitutes an object *as* an instantiation of an already given concept. If the particular object can be thus constituted, then one can determine the object under the concept in a judgment. But obviously, in order to know how to constitute an object in this way, one must already know the rules for applying the relevant concept. In short, conceptual know-how must *precede* constitutive know-how. Genetic phenomenology is at least supposed to accommodate what must precede conceptual know-how and, thereby, avoid any claims *ex nihilo*. That is, the goal is to furnish a phenomenological explanation ["*Erklärung*"] of how the normativity of concepts is itself constituted. I will call this the problem of *conceptual normativity*. In Husserl, its proposed resolution is couched in terms of what can make possible intersubjectively universal agreement – as in, for example, a formal science like geometry.

Presence

In *Voice and Phenomena*, Derrida proposes to articulate the above two-fold genetic problem – i.e., of *primordial genesis* and *conceptual normativity* – by a close reading of the first few pages of Husserl's *First Logical Investigation*. The focus of Derrida's reading is the epistemological function of "presence" which he imputes to Husserl's theory of expression. According to the Husserl of the *First Logical Investigation*, there are two different ways of construing signs. Signs may be construed as either *expressive* [*ausdrückende*] or *indicative* [*anzeigende*]; and Husserl seems to regard this disjunction as one of mutual exclusion.[29] Derrida's critical point is this: in order for Husserl to maintain this exclusive disjunction, he must define expression in terms of presence or immediate availability, an isolated slice of time. However, in order thus to define expression (as distinguished from indication) in terms of presence, Husserl must provide an account of the normative force that can guarantee semantic success in the expressive use of signs. In Derrida's view, on Husserl's conception of expression, such a normative account winds up precluded. In this light, I think it helpful to think of Derrida's criticism as of a piece with some version of the private language argument. But let me start with a brief overview of Husserl's conception of, and his distinction between, indication and expression.

According to Husserl, when construed as indications [*Anzeichen*], signs prompt contingent associations and inferences from the sign to what is indicated by that sign. The examples of indication Husserl provides are as

follows. The brand indicates the slavery of the branded, the flag indicates a nation; but also, the Martian canals indicate Martian intelligence, and fossils indicate extinct animals.[30] On this view, as Husserl readily admits in his discussion of the "communicative function" of signs, the indicative relationship may be enlarged to include relationships between the external and the putatively internal, though only from the third person perspective.[31] Husserl writes:

> all expressions in communicative discourse function as indication. [The expressions] serve the auditor as sign for the 'thoughts' of the speaker ... The auditor perceives that the speaker lets out certain psychic experiences, and as far as that goes, he perceives also these experiences; but [the auditor] himself does not undergo these [experiences], has of them no 'inner' but only an 'outer' perception.[32]

For example, assuming pain is to be construed as an internal state, the cry may be construed a sign indicative of pain from the third person perspective. By the same token, speech will be indicative of the sapience of the speaker – though again, only from the third person perspective. However, from the first person perspective, that same signifier-signified relationship between the indicative sign and the indicated content will be construed as expressive. What is the difference? According to Derrida, the difference between indication and expression is essentially one of *presence*.

From the outset, let's make something very clear. As is well known, "presence" is a central notion for Derrida; and it seems he developed this notion from his early studies of Husserl. Despite its abundant use elsewhere, however, Husserl himself nowhere in the *Logical Investigations* uses the term "presence" ["*Gegenwart*"] in this way to talk about expression. This seemingly innocuous exegetical point needs to be emphasized, since Husserl's use of the term "*Gegenwart*" will turn out to be entirely different from what Derrida seems to have in mind by "presence." For Husserl, "*Gegenwart*" as in "*lebendige Gegenwart*" is temporally extensive: i.e., it is saturated by the past and directed towards the future. Only in reflective abstraction can I talk about a frame of a Bergsonian film reel. For Husserl, one cannot in fact ever enjoy such a frozen slice of time. Even what Husserl calls an "*Urimpression*," which is closer to what Derrida has in mind by "presence," is to be regarded strictly as an abstract function of retention and protention. In short, what Husserl calls "*Gegenwart*" enjoys a genetic profile, which Derrida simply ignores.

Next, let me talk about the importance of normative force for any intelligible – let alone, as Husserl would like it, any logically pertinent – conception of expression. By "normative force" I mean this: normative force is that which certifies as correct my use of an expression; or, conversely, that which keeps me from using an expression incorrectly. In the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl himself addresses the issue of normative force in

terms of "*objectivity*" ["*Gegenständlichkeit*"]. According to Husserl, the objectivity of expression is guaranteed by the "ideal unity" of meaning [*Bedeutung*].[33] By "ideal unity," Husserl means the identity of semantic content [*Inhalt*] that insures the iterability of an expression at different times and by different people: i.e., the ideal unity of meaning is the objective content of thought (what Frege calls "*Sinn*")[34]. Or, as Derrida has it, when I enjoy semantic success, "I must from the beginning of the game operate (within) a structure of repetition, whose element can only be representative ... A signifier (in general) must be recognizable in its form despite, and through, the diversity of its empirical characteristics that can modify it."[35] Accordingly, the contact between the ideal unity of meaning and the corresponding expression in terms of intentionality may be phrased hypothetically: *if what I intend to mean in expression* does indeed *correspond to the ideal unity of meaning*, then the expression will enjoy objectivity by virtue of that correspondence. Let me now briefly elaborate on how objectivity in this sense may be correlated with iterability.

First, an expression will enjoy objectivity if and only if the meaning expressed remains the same over time. According to Derrida, *that* I always meant the same by an expression, cannot be insured in presence, cannot be made immediately available to me with the desired certainty. To borrow an especially strong version of the private language argument from Saul Kripke,[36] which I find compatible with Derrida's point, the consistent failure of memory may mislead me into the belief in successful repetition of meaning. Since such consistent failure of memory is readily conceivable, thus patently possible, the claim of successful semantic repetition cannot be asserted with the confidence of certainty. I may believe that what I mean by "red" now is what I meant by "red" a minute ago; but, if my memory should be consistently unreliable, that belief would be consistently false. If the belief in semantic identity should be consistently false, then there is no guarantee of objectivity in the relevant sense. Second, lest I should feel comfortable checking copies of the same newspaper edition for today's date, the meaning expressed must also remain the same between different users of the expression. But to check on that intersubjective identity of meaning, I must seek the interlocutor's agreement in communication. But as soon as I ask for her agreement and advice, I would be committed right away to an indicative relationship: i.e., the inference of the interlocutor's internal state from her manifest [*kundgegebene*] behaviour. And, as I have glossed above, Husserl himself readily concedes the dubitability of any such inference.

On this issue, Derrida's exegetical claim is this: given Husserl's conception of expression, he *cannot* guarantee the desired correspondence; and, consequently, Husserl cannot win the desired normative force. According to Derrida, that is because on Husserl's conception of expression,

both the above temporal and intersubjective buttresses of normativity are precluded in advance. Husserl precludes such buttresses, according to Derrida, since Husserl defines expression strictly in terms of presence. So Derrida feels confident in writing: "One derives the presence-of-the-present from repetition and not the reverse. Though *contrary to Husserl's express intention* ... something like it can be found implied in his description of *the movement of temporalization and the relationship to the other.*"[37] In opposition to Derrida's interpretation, my exegetical point is this: the latter claim about temporality and the other *does* obtain in Husserl, precisely because it is *not* "contrary to Husserl's express intention" to allow repetition (in habit) priority over any presence.

For Husserl, what motivates claims of the objectivity of semantic content are past semantic success, the reliability of my memory when it comes to these successful past episodes, as well as the reliability of my semantic habits. Put another way, in static phenomenology, one very plausibly takes for granted that both passive genesis and conceptual normativity have always already established a grip on the world and the cognitive community into which I have already been initiated. In the statistically overwhelming majority of cases, virtually nothing resists my use of some garden variety term like "cat" and, thereby, intend an animal I have in my own past, as well as others in my linguistic community, have consistently called a "cat." Failures of such constitution are, in fact, exceptions to the rule – and not, as Derrida (and, for that matter, Kripke[38]) seem to have it, the other way around. And as I suggested earlier in my brief excursus into Husserl's notion of the "*lebendige Gegenwart*," I believe what Husserl calls "expression" in the *Logical Investigations* is genetically loaded with such habitual success and, as a consequence, should count as reliable in ordinary linguistic discourse. By the same token, if earlier success, memories of earlier success, and the development of cognitive and conceptual habits, must all be in play when it comes to expression, the past must be far more important than any presence. To see this, let me now offer some correctives to Derrida's interpretation by looking at what Husserl *himself* means by "*Gegenwart.*"

In the *Crisis*, for example, Husserl writes: "Perception relates itself only to presence [*Gegenwart*]. However, what is meant thereby is that this presence has behind it an endless past and before it an open future." So far, this passage does not appear blatantly inconsistent with what Derrida means by "presence." But Husserl continues: "*in* this presence [*Präsenz*], as that of an extended and lasting object, *lies a continuity* ... of 'retentions,' and in the other direction a continuity of 'protentions."[39] Husserl clearly claims in this passage that the temporal extension *lies within* presence, so presence cannot be construed as a discrete slice of time that can be sharply distinguished from what is retained and what is protended. Similarly, later in the *Crisis*, Husserl

writes: "the perception itself as 'steadfastly streaming' presence is constituted only thereby ... that the steadfast now has a double-sided, although variously structured, horizon, under the intentional heading, continuum of retentions and protentions."[40] In *First Philosophy* II, Husserl writes that the "life of presence [*Gegenwartsleben*] ... carries *in itself* the endless horizon of memory and expectation."[41] Again, the past of memory and the future of expectation are contained *in*, so make up, presence. Later in *First Philosophy* II, Husserl writes: "*To* the *living, streaming* presence itself *belongs* continually a region [*Gebiet*] of immediately conscious past, conscious in immediate echo of a sunken perception; similarly, to a region of immediate future ... rushes, so to speak, the stream of perception."[42] In *Passive Synthesis*, Husserl even speaks of "memories of presence" ["*Gegenwartserinnerungen*"][43]! In short, presence is so to speak temporally dense. Since presence is also structured by the habitual sedimentation of retention and protention, presence is, as I have been saying, genetically loaded. So what Husserl means by "presence" cannot be what Derrida means by "presence."

What Husserl calls "expression" cannot be characterized by what Derrida means by "presence," since Husserl himself does not use the term to talk about expression, nor does he mean what Derrida means when he does talk about "*Gegenwart*." I think the difference between expression and indication can be best understood in terms of privileged access, which in the *Fifth Logical Investigation* Husserl talks about in terms of "inner consciousness."[44] In any case, since what Husserl means by "*Gegenwart*" is genetically loaded, insofar as static phenomenology features items in "*Gegenwart*," static phenomenology will accordingly feature genetically loaded items. But static phenomenology cannot "explain" the origin and emergence of such items. Such an explanation would be the job of genetic phenomenology. And I do not see, as Derrida suggests, that static phenomenology *must* explain the genetic items it features.

But some credit must be reserved for Derrida's critique, though he is certainly not the first to have pointed out the following. In light of the philosophical tradition, the way Husserl uses terms of epistemological strength like "certainty" and "self-evidence," or terms of modal strength such as "necessity" and "apodicticity," is deviant. What he seems to have in mind by these terms are, in fact, a lot weaker than their traditional sense. For reasons I have already mentioned apropos strong versions of the private language argument, by "certainty" or "self-evidence" Husserl cannot mean absolutely devoid of doubt. Since even in "*Gegenwart*" there is temporal extension, consistent failures of memory are conceivable, so it is possible to hold the paranoid view that I did not mean by "cat" a second ago what I mean by that term now. But, as I have been suggesting, such would be an

exotic paranoia, on a par with the sort of pathological solipsism Husserl makes fun of in *Ideas* II.[45] It would just be ridiculously pointless to entertain such a prospect, unless one is hell-bent on coming up with excuses for a radical scepticism. Husserl is similarly relaxed about modal categories as well. For instance, in *Ideas* I, Husserl claims a world without consciousness is logically possible. However, for Husserl, there is no point entertaining such a world, since such a world would be, as he puts it, "counter-sensical." Yet, in the traditional sense, even such "counter-sensical" worlds would problematize any claims of necessity or apodicticity. But the point Husserl seems to be driving at in this passage is the lack of pressure to entertain such prospects involving "no formal contradiction" at all.[46] So what he means by "necessity" or "apodicticity" must not be relative, as it is traditionally, to the wildly unrestricted context of any logically possible world whatsoever. Instead, what he means by "necessity" and "apodicticity" must be bound to basic phenomenological facts and rational structures of "our world." So claims that may be vulnerable to the sort of paranoid suspicions Derrida voices would, nevertheless, be strong enough for Husserl to warrant titles of epistemological and modal strength.

Origin

So, if the problem of original genesis and the problem of conceptual normativity in Husserl have nothing to do with presence in Derrida's sense, what recourse remains for Derrida? Prior to *Voice and Phenomena*, Derrida dealt with these two problems separately. In both *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Philosophy* and "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology," Derrida tackles the problem of original genesis in terms of Husserl's *hyle-morphé* distinction from *Ideas* I. When it comes to the problem of conceptual normativity, Derrida offers a critical interpretation of Husserl's "Origin of Geometry." On exegetical grounds, I disagree with both of Derrida's interpretations.

When Husserl talks about the "pre-predicative," I take him to be talking about what contemporary philosophers would call "non-conceptual content." If in perception, for example, there is any content that cannot be resolved into either propositional attitudes or propositions, that content will be non-conceptual. What Husserl calls "*hyletic* data" is clearly non-conceptual in this sense. But I think Husserl also believes there is something non-conceptual about the noematic. If so, Husserl would be a dualist about non-conceptual content.[47]

In the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl calls this noematic non-conceptual content the "fulfilling sense," ["*erfüllender Sinn*"][48] which he later characterizes as "something from the fullness of the object itself."[49] In *Ideas* I, Husserl writes:

> To the essence of the perceptual experience in itself belongs "the perceived tree as such," namely full noema, which is not touched by the exclusion... The color of the tree trunk, purely as perceptually conscious is precisely "the same" as that which we took as that of the real tree before the phenomenological reduction... Now *this color*, set in parenthesis, *belongs to the noema*.[50]

Even though, under the reduction, one has suspended judgments about the transcendent object itself, notice that Husserl claims the "color of the tree trunk" remains as it did before the reduction. Since we saw colour before the reduction, we will still perceive the colour after the reduction. So by "this colour," Husserl must mean that immanent colour left over after the reduction; and, indeed, he says, "this color... belongs to the noema." Husserl continues: this colour "does not belong as a real [*reelles*] component to the perceptual experience." In fact, he adds, this colour is "noematic or 'objective' color." Since if it is not a "real component" of the perceptual experience, and is noematic, then of course it can be neither *noetic* nor *hyletic*. Further, since concepts cannot be perceived, this colour cannot be conceptual. So it must be noematic yet non-conceptual. Accordingly, Husserl must think there is non-conceptual content other than the *hyletic*. Let's keep this in mind.

In contrast, *hyletic* data are *noetic* non-conceptual content. In *Ideas* I, Husserl says of *hyletic* data that they have "nothing of intentionality," so are devoid of meaning, and are merely the "sensual stuff" animated by the *noesis* proper.[51] I think the most successful interpretation of *hyletic* data would have us regard it as comparable to what contemporary philosophers call "quale of experience"[52] or "the subjective character of experience,"[53] the entirely private *what it is like* when one has experiences. For present purposes, what is relevant about *hyletic* data is the fact that they must be entirely incorrigible. I may be corrected in believing that I see a unicorn, and the person I see walking towards me from across campus turns out be someone else altogether, but what it is like for me to see, or believe, and so on, must be entirely incorrigible. For instance, if I am colour blind without being aware of this defect and what I call "green" would appear "red" to anyone else; still, if publicly I use the word "green" like anyone else, then no one can correct me on this internal error.

Now, in *Problem of Genesis*, Derrida accuses Husserl of "throwing a veil over the mysterious relations between the sensuous 'hyle,' real and nonintentional element of lived experience, the intentional and noetic 'morphe' which comes to animate it, and the non-'*reell*' intentional noema."[54] As he then goes on to make clear, by "veil" in this passage, Derrida means that, on the one hand, it is not "clear what distinguishes it [hyletic data] from the noema;" and, on the other hand, "nothing is said to us, in fact, about the constitutive processes that allow one to distinguish between

the noesis and the hyle, both defined, unlike the noema, as 'real' elements of lived experience."[55] In "Genesis and Structure," Derrida adds teeth to the above complaints. According to Derrida, Husserl winds up with a dilemma. If he does insist on a distinction between the *hyletic* and the *noematic* then, insofar as the *noema* is nevertheless acknowledged *not* to be a "real" ["*reell*"] part of consciousness, consciousness would remain contaminated, so no longer "pure," even after the reduction. However, should Husserl abandon the distinction, then insofar as the *hyletic* remains non-intentional, nothing would distinguish the *noema* from the *noesis*. But without that basic distinction, there would be nothing intentional at all. Either way, "it would have led to converting the whole phenomenological method, as well as to the abandonment, along with the reduction, of transcendental idealism."[56]

But this interpretation cannot stick. As Husserl makes very clear in §33 of *Ideas* I, by "pure consciousness," he only means what is immanent.[57] And by "immanence," Husserl means only what is accessible exclusively from a privileged, first person perspective. So the inclusion of the *noema* in pure consciousness, insofar as *noemata* are immanent, would not get in the way of pure consciousness remaining "pure" in Husserl's sense. Further, since Husserl is a dualist about non-conceptual content, the distinction between the *hyletic* and the *noematic* must be preserved. Let me use an example to establish the distinction. Let's say, while eating porridge, I wish I were eating ice-cream instead. I even try to imagine I am eating ice-cream and presentify to myself what it is like to eat ice-cream from memory. What I presentify is the *hyletic* data associated with eating ice-cream. Nevertheless, the bland taste of the porridge keeps getting in the way. What gets in the way is noematic non-conceptual content, which motivates the determination of the actual experience as one of "eating porridge instead." Now we cannot think of this as an instance of competing *hyletic* data, a competition between what it is like to eat ice-cream and what it is like to eat porridge. Both *hyletic* data may be, and in fact are, entertained; so there is no conflict there. Instead, what Husserl seems to have in mind by *noematic* non-conceptual content is the force of resistance to just the imaginary *hyletic* data regardless of what it is like to eat porridge. And such resistance should suffice to draw a distinction between the *hyletic* and the *noematic*. Crudely put, when reality resists me, I'm resisted by *noematic* non-conceptual content.

In addition to the force of such non-conceptual resistance, there is also the resistance offered by conceptual normativity. At the empirical end of the normative spectrum, there is something that keeps me from calling dolphins "fish," and beech trees "oak." Much of this resistance, at least, must be grounded in intersubjectivity. What keeps me from using concepts in certain ways are the theoretical justifications offered by, for example, marine biologists and botanists. But in addition to such terminological conventions

agreed upon by specialized members of the linguistic community are also formal criteria, such as logical and mathematical principles. By specialist convention, the concept "fish" has been revised to exclude "possession of vertebrae." Since dolphins possess vertebrae, dolphins cannot be "fish." Once such linguistic conventions have been agreed upon to shape a concept, however, notice that the relevant judgment is otherwise determined by the law of non-contradiction. A recognizably genetic question would then be to ask how such formal criteria, whether in logic or mathematics, have emerged.

Derrida singles out Husserl's "Origin of Geometry" to pose this question. According to Derrida, even though Husserl admits the historicity of geometrical developments, the "truth of geometry, its normative value, is radically independent of its history, which, at this point in the Husserlian itinerary, is considered only as a history of facts, removed by the blow of the *Ausschaltung*."[58] According to Derrida, that is because Husserl relies on the relative "continuity and coherence"[59] with which geometrical doctrine has been inherited from generation to generation, as opposed to the upheavals suffered by the empirical sciences. Husserl must rely on doctrinal transmission, since the "first timeness" ["*Erstmaligkeit*"] of geometrical discoveries cannot be restored in "presence" with any veridical guarantees.[60] We cannot know with any certainty what set of experiences may have inspired a Thales or a Euclid. However, doctrinal transmission throughout history occurs *de facto* through writing,[61] which is an empirically malleable product of intersubjectivity.[62] That is to say, the evidence of conceptual rigidity we ascribe to geometry is an intersubjective product traditionally thought to be derivative of and supplementary to the authenticity of presence in speech. By portraying Husserl in this way, Derrida confronts him with another dilemma. On the one hand, one would like to invoke the normative force of geometrical truths to account for the success with which geometrical doctrine has been transmitted from generation to generation through writing. On the other hand, the success with which such doctrinal transmission has occurred *is* the evidence of such normative force. Derrida writes: "It is the possibility of *writing* that will assure the absolute traditionalization of the object, its absolute ideal objectivity, that is to say the purity of its rapport to a universal transcendental subjectivity."[63] Consequently, the "other" (i.e., intersubjective agreement[64]) must precede even the most formal kind of knowledge. For Derrida, it is Husserl's failure to resolve this genetic dilemma that renders this later period of his philosophy so "revolutionary."[65] As Derrida suggests, it is because in the "Origin of Geometry" Husserl's "denunciations of historicism and objectivism has never been so organically united"[66] that he has inadvertently stumbled onto a genetic indeterminacy that Derrida famously dubs the "economy of *différance*."[67]

However, I don't think Husserl is confronted by this dilemma, since one of its horns does not touch him at all. In particular, Husserl would not say that the "possibility of *writing*" is what guarantees the normative force of formal disciplines. Instead, when it comes to formal disciplines, it is the irreducibility of the normative force that enables the transmission by writing. Since normative force is irreducible, the very first discovery of some geometric truth like the Pythagorean theorem would have been compelled by this normative force. In "Origin of Geometry" I think Husserl is fairly clear about such irreducibility.

If that's right, we can diagnose Derrida's interpretation of "Origin of Geometry" as based on two fundamental exegetical errors. First, Derrida seems to think that what Husserl means by "ideal objectivity" is what must be irreducible. In fact, Husserl clearly claims ideal objectivity is at least partially constituted in writing. And, just as when I eidetically vary the essence of some object, the essence I wind up intuiting will be relative to the empirical constitution of my experiential repertoire in memory, ideal objects will be influenced by the empirical contingencies of writing. But what Husserl means by "ideal objectivity" in "Origin of Geometry" is clearly not what is irreducible. What qualifies ideal objectivity as "ideal" at all is that normative force which compels assent to a correct geometrical equation and dissent from an incorrect one.

Second, in a revealing passage, Derrida seems to impute to Husserl *his own* equivocation between Kantianism and Platonism. Almost immediately following his discussion of Kant's theory of geometry, Derrida writes: "if ... the eidos and the ideal object are not, *as in Platonism*, extant before all subjective acts; if, *therefore*, they possess a history, they must relate themselves, as [they do] to their own original foundation, to some proto-idealizations over the substrate of a real world effectively perceived."[68] It is true that one consistent aspect in Husserl is his resistance to Platonism. For Husserl, any claim that there is a Platonic third world in which ideal objects exist is a piece of speculative metaphysical excess. Accordingly, what Derrida seems to be saying in this passage is that, because of Husserl's avowed anti-Platonism, he has to be committed to the claim that ideal objects (of, for example, geometry) must rest on perceptual encounters within the life-world.

Now, Husserl's resistance to Platonism is in fact very restricted: Husserl resists Platonism only if Platonism entails an ontological realism of ideal objects separate from the actual world. Such a world would be precisely a logically possible world involving "no formal contradiction" *per se* that Husserl, nevertheless, excludes from any phenomenological consideration in §48 of *Ideas* I. Remaining completely consistent with this earlier view Husserl writes in "Origin of Geometry," that ideal objectivities "do in fact exist in the world in a certain sense by virtue of these two-tiered repetitions and ultimately

by virtue of sensual corporealization."[69] The "two-tiered repetitions" Husserl is talking about in this passage is collective intersubjective habit, on the one hand, and consecration in writing on the other. So far, Derrida is right: ideal objectivity must be at least partially constituted by writing.

But Husserl then goes on to ask how this constitution of ideal objectivity through language itself is possible. That is, the account so far which would superficially resemble one of the horns of Derrida's dilemma, is by itself for Husserl obviously insufficient. "Now," Husserl writes, "we must reconsider that the objectivity of the ideal image has not yet been completely constituted through such actual transferring of its original production to an other who reproduces it." That is to say, mere transmission in writing of the original discovery of some geometrical theorem to a descendent geometer is insufficient as an account of ideal objectivity. Husserl continues: "Missing" in such an account is an explanation of "the *persistent existence* of the 'ideal objects' even during times in which the inventor and his peers are no longer consciously related in such a way or even no longer alive. Missing is their continuing to be, even when no one actually possesses them in self-evidence."[70] As Husserl makes clear again and again throughout "Origin of Geometry," what is thus missing is the normative force of "primordial self-evidence" ["*ursprüngliche Evidenz*"].[71] When I correctly figure out an equation in geometry, I am compelled by the normative force of self-evidence that must have also been enjoyed by the very first person to have discovered that equation. Husserl writes:

> Only so far as the apodictically general, the content that is in all conceivable variation invariant of spatiotemporal structural sphere, is extracted through the relevant idealization, can an ideal image develop, which can be understood and inherited for all time and by all descendent generations of humans, which can be reproduced with identical intersubjective meaning.[72]

In short, even when it comes to the very origin of conceptual normativity, Husserl appears committed to an irreducible rationalism about normative force. At the conclusion of "Origin of Geometry," Husserl rhetorically asks: "Do we not stand before the great and profound problem-horizon of reason [*Vernunft*], of the same reason that operates in every human, in 'animal rationale,' no matter how primitive?" (p.378). And if that is what Husserl means by "origin," and dealing with such origin is the business of genetic phenomenology, I can see no problem on either score.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that an adequate understanding of Husserl is requisite for an adequate understanding of Derrida. But a part of that understanding of Husserl vis-à-vis Derrida needs to be an acknowledgement of Derrida's basic exegetical errors. What Husserl means by "*Gegenwart*" just is not what

Derrida has in mind by "presence." Consequently, Husserl will turn out to resist any attempt to pigeon-hole him as a "metaphysician of presence." Since Husserl's static phenomenology presupposes the genetic density of what is given, genetic phenomenology will not be the undoing of static phenomenology. Finally, since what Husserl means by "origin" may be available internally in our current experiences of non-conceptual content, as well as our continuing obedience to the normative force of self-evidence in our rational undertakings, genetic phenomenology will remain phenomenological. In brief, even if Derrida turns out right on systematic grounds, it will not be because Husserl is wrong.

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References

1. All references to Derrida will be abbreviated as follows. ED = *L'Écriture et la différence* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967); IOG = "Introduction," *L'Origine de la géométrie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962); PGH = *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Philosophy*, trans. M. Hobson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); VP = *Le Voix et le phénomène* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967). Except from PGH, all translations are mine.
2. Unless otherwise noted, all references to Husserl will be to: *Husserliana*, eds. S. Strasser et al. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff 1950 -), abbreviated as Hua by volume and page number. All translations will be mine, unless otherwise noted.
3. A claim Husserl held until the very end of his active philosophical life. See: Kern, Iso. "Einleitung," Hua XV xv-lxx; also, Welton, Donn. *The Other Husserl* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 222-28.
4. ED 229-51. See also: Lawlor, Leonard. *Derrida and Husserl* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 11-33, 47-87.
5. See: Lawlor. *Derrida and Husserl*, 30-33.
6. Hua XI 340-42, 45.
7. Hua XI 343.
8. Ibid., 72, 76, 342-3
9. Ibid., 340, 345.
10. Of course, what I am calling "the genetic" need not be the exclusive province of phenomenology. Indeed, for most philosophers, it would instead be surprising that there should be anything like a genetic *phenomenology* at all. In fact, Husserl himself originally acquires the term "genetic" from the empirical psychology of his time: in the empirical psychology of Husserl's time, "genetic" was just a cognate for "developmental" (cf. Hua III 10, VI 87, VII 126). So "genetic psychology" is an empirical science that deals with, for instance, when and how humans begin developing perceptual discrimination, the social and physiological conditions of language acquisition, how humans acquire denominational skills, as well as skills of noticing the conceptually relevant resemblance between numerically diverse objects, etc. But the genetic is at least *de facto* also the province of other empirical disciplines like diachronic linguistics or philology, archaeology, historical sociology, evolutionary biology, cosmology; and through some combination of these, something like a unified genealogy, a proverbial "history of everything," would also be conceivable.
11. Welton. *The Other Husserl*, 182, 205ff., 218-219.
12. Hua III 106-108, 309; Hua IV 17-55, 91-97, 162-173; Hua XIX/1 340-42. See also: Sokolowski, Robert. *Formation of Husserl's Concept of Constitution* (The Hague: Martius Nijhoff, 1964), esp. 53-65.

13. Hua XXXI 3-83.
14. Sellars, Wilfrid. "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, vol. I, eds. H. Feigl and Michael Scriven (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956), pp. 253-329. For an interpretation of Sellars' relationship with Kant that favours my view (i.e., of both being committed to a version of the myth of the given at a level higher than crude empiricism), see: McDowell, John. "Having the World in View: Sellars, Kant, and Intentionality," *The Journal of Philosophy* 45 (9) (1998): 431-491.
15. This seems to be what Husserl has in mind in *Ideas* I, where he writes: "the functional problems of the '*constitution* of the objectivities of consciousness,'" (my italic) deal with, "for example, how in terms of nature, *noeses*, which by animating stuff and combining the continuity of the manifold-unity and syntheses, enable [*zustande bringen*] the consciousness of something to univocally *determine* the objective unity of objectivity as 'shown,' 'revealed' and 'rational'" (Hua III 176: my italics).
16. Hua III 68-69, 80-83, 85-87.
17. Hua III 81, 120; Hua VI 165.
18. For the sense I am getting at: Ibid., 202-205.
19. Hua XIX/2 584-613; Hua III 74-80, 154, 162, 202-03, 208.
20. Hua IV 253-257
21. This ability, in turn, can be reverse-engineered in a methodological procedure Husserl calls "eidetic variation." In eidetic variation, I begin with a concept, then presentify [*vergegenwärtige*] particulars in imagination from memory that satisfy that concept: e.g., for "red," I presentify New York City fire-hydrants, stop signs and ripe tomatoes. That morphologically approximated feature shared by these particulars Husserl calls "essence" ["*Wesen*," "*Essenz*"].
22. Hua XI 117-124
23. Hua I 102-03; Hua IV 136, 223-34, 255-57, 277; Hua XI 190
24. Hua IV 4-13, 24
25. Hua IV 11-13, 222, 333
26. Hua IV 220-224
27. *The Other Husserl*, 205-219; but also: Welton, Donn. *The Origin of Meaning* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983), esp. 221-8.
28. See, for example: Ebbinghaus, Julius. "Kants Lehre von der Anschauung a priori," in: Gerold Prauss, *Kant. Zur Deutung seiner Theorie von Erkennen und Handeln* (Köln: Kiepenheier & Witsch, 1973) 44-61
29. Hua III 10, VI 87, VII 126
30. Hua XIX 31
31. Hua XIX 40
32. Hua XIX 40-41
33. Hua XIX 48-51
34. Husserl is explicit about this in XIX 58.
35. VP 55
36. Kripke, Saul. *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language: An Elementary Exposition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982)
37. VP 58: my italics. Given the second sentence of the passage, by "repetition" in the first sentence Derrida seems to have in mind repetition both at different times and by different people.
38. I hesitate from viewing Kripke's version of the private language argument as an exegetically accurate representation of Wittgenstein's original views. See: McGinn, Colin. *Wittgenstein on Meaning: An Interpretation and Evaluation* (New York: Blackwell, 1984).
39. Hua VI 163: my italics.
40. Hua VI 171
41. Hua VIII 86: my italics.

42. Hua VIII 149-50
43. Hua XI 310
44. Hua XIX 367-70
45. Hua IV 80
46. Hua III 90
47. See my "Duality of Non-conceptual Content in Husserl's Phenomenology of Perception" forthcoming in *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences.*
48. Hua XIX 57, in contrast to what Husserl in *Ideas* I calls "*erfüllter Sinn*" or "fulfilled sense."
49. Ibid., 607
50. Hua III 202
51. Hua III 172f.
52. Block, Ned. "Inverted Earth," *Philosophical Perspectives* 4: 53-79.
53. Nagel, Thomas. "What It Is Like To Be A Bat?" *The Philosophical Review* 83: 436.
54. PGH 85
55. PGH 87
56. ED 243
57. Hua III 58-59
58. IOG 26
59. IOG 27
60. Ibid., 32-34
61. Ibid., 68-72
62. Ibid., 73, 77
63. Ibid., 84
64. Ibid., 74, 77, 82-3
65. Ibid., 71
66. Ibid., 4
67. Ibid., 171
68. Ibid., 29: my italics. See also, IOG 110.
69. Hua VI 368
70. Hua VI 371
71. Ibid., 374-5, 380
72. Ibid., 385