

## JACQUES DERRIDA AND PHENOMENOLOGY

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Born in 1930 in El-Biar (Algeria), Jacques Derrida studied philosophy at the *Ecole normale supérieure* in Paris between 1952 and 1957. Admitted to the *agrégation* in 1957, he began teaching at the *Sorbonne* in 1960, and from 1964 to 1984 taught at the *Ecole normale supérieure*. He defended his doctoral thesis in 1980. In 1983, he became research director at the *Ecole des hautes études en Sciences sociales* in Paris. He is also counted among the founders of the *Collège international de Philosophie*, which he directed from 1983 to 1986. Derrida has taught in several American universities, including John Hopkins, Yale and the University of California at Los Angeles.

Phenomenology has deeply marked the philosophy of Jacques Derrida, and this from the start (see Bennington and Derrida 1991, 299-308). He read Sartre when he was 17 and Heidegger shortly after his admission in “*hypokhâgne*” in Algiers. In 1953-1954, while studying at the *Ecole normale supérieure*, thanks to Maurice de Gandillac and Father Van Breda, he went to the Husserl-Archiv in Louvain to consult unpublished manuscripts. The same year, he wrote his master's paper on Husserl, *The Problem of Genesis in the Philosophy of Husserl*, which would be published in 1990. In 1957 he began the translation and introduction of Husserl's *The Origin of Geometry*, published in 1962. Two years later, he presented the lecture “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology” in Cerisy-la-Salle. In the text “Violence et Metaphysics” (1964) Derrida reconsiders the objections raised by Emmanuel Levinas against Husserl's conception of intersubjectivity. But Derrida's reading of Husserl finds its true fulfilment only in 1967 in *Speech and Phenomena*, a book mainly devoted to the theory of signs defended by Husserl in his first *Logical Research*. The 1968 article, “Form and Meaning : Note on the Phenomenology of Language” may be regarded as an in-depth continuation of the same work, based essentially on *Ideas I*. The major texts Derrida devoted to Heidegger immediately follow. First, in 1968, “Ousia and gramme : A Note to a Footnote in *Being and Time*”. Then, in the 1980's, Derrida successively published the essay “Sexual Difference, Ontological Difference (*Geschlecht I*)” (1983) and the two lectures “The Hand of Heidegger (*Geschlecht II*)” (1985) and “Of the Spirit : Heidegger and

the Question” (1987). Published in 2000, his important book on *The Touch*, devoted to the thought of Jean-Luc Nancy, contains many developments in phenomenology, especially *Ideas II* of Husserl.

These texts and still others attest to a profound and radical questioning of Husserl’s phenomenology. From the first, Derrida’s reading of Husserl coincides with a task of deconstruction : despite Husserl’s avowed contentions, it is a matter of questioning possible “metaphysical presuppositions” within Husserlian phenomenology. As such, deconstruction leads to a full reconsideration of the results of transcendental phenomenology, especially its claim to reach, through the *epoché*, a pure transcendental experience that could give philosophy an absolute and absolutely original certitude. Nevertheless this deconstruction still remains a continuation and extension of the phenomenological critique of metaphysics, characteristically sharing its initial orientation with Husserl’s genetic phenomenology, of which it can be considered a radicalisation. Closely linked to what Heidegger called the “radical tendency” of phenomenology, it aims at highlighting the inalienable residua of transcendence within phenomenological discourse itself, and which the reductive operation would be finally unable to set aside. “It was Husserl, Derrida declared in 1999, who taught me a technique, a method, a discipline, and who has never left me. Even in moments when I thought I had to question certain presuppositions of Husserl, I tried to do so while keeping to phenomenological discipline” (*Sur parole*, 84)<sup>1</sup>.

Derrida’s reading of Husserl’s phenomenology has the sense of a radical challenge, insofar as it finds fault with what simultaneously represents its starting point, its most essential condition as well as its leading motive, namely the theory of reduction. In Husserl, the concept of reduction expresses nothing factual. As an infinite task, the work of reduction first has a teleological meaning. It points to something merely possible, a right and not a fact. But doesn’t this possibility *in infinitum* hide a mere impossibility ? “The whole analysis, Derrida announces at the beginning of *Speech and Phenomena*, will thus progress in this gap between fact and right, existence and essence, reality and intentional function” (*VP*, 21). What Derrida contests is not the opportuneness of the *epoché*, but its very *possibility*. The fully achieved reduction, the pure showing of the “thing itself” freed from all factuality, brought back to pure presence, to consciousness, finally indicates — in essence, one could say — an impossibility.

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<sup>1</sup> See also the interview with Antoine Spire. In *Le Monde de l’éducation*, September 2000, 17 : “Husserl wasn’t my first love in Philosophy. But he left a deep trace on my work. Nothing of what I do would be possible without the phenomenological discipline, without the practice of eidetic and transcendental reductions, without attention in the sense of phenomenality, etc. (...) Even if, having reached a certain point, I believe I have to throw back questions about the limits of that discipline and its principles, about the intuitionist “principle of principles” that guides it.”

A first question is whether the phenomenological *epoché* suffices to fulfil Husserl's project of a philosophy devoid of any "metaphysical" presupposition. In other words, it is a matter of reconsidering the phenomenological enterprise *within the limits of the reduction* in order to examine to what degree the original ground brought to light by Husserl satisfies its initial ambitions. Now, Derrida recalls that Husserl's phenomenology is entirely actuated by the intention of giving itself a purely *ideal*, therefore absolutely apodictic ground, and of securing it against any intrusion of "real" contents. Reduction has no other function than to lead us from the *real* to the *reell*, from the transcendent natural thing to consciousness and to the objects "intentionally included" in it, i.e., objects which are no longer real, but ideal. But recourse to ideality necessarily leads to a number of difficulties. More precisely, it seems that on that basis Husserl himself has come up against a surplus, against some phenomena irreducible to the ideal being-present, and which as such, exceed and profoundly menace the purity, originality and radicality of the transcendental experience.

To be ideal, to be in the mode of the ideal being, means: to be indefinitely iterable, to be always there, always available. What is ideal is what I can always come back to, what I can always make re-appear. "The ultimate form of ideality, that in which, in last resort every repetition can be anticipated or recalled, the ideality of ideality, is the *living present*, the presence of transcendental life to itself" (VP, 4-5). It is that unshared primacy of constant presence, of ideality, that now calls for deconstruction. In that sense, Derrida's argument recalls a recurrent topic of Heidegger's fundamental ontology: what is ideal, is what is always present, "present-at-hand" (cf. VM, 196-198). By substituting a supposedly intemporal ideal ego for the factual and concrete Dasein, Husserl may have actually ignored, as did the whole metaphysical tradition before him, the specificity of the "entity that we ourselves are", as opposed to mundane things. From Plato to Husserl inclusively, metaphysics has been restricted to a single sense of being, namely the presence-at-hand of the mundane thing, to the prejudice of Dasein's one; without that presupposition ever being clarified (for such a clarification would in fact require an interpretation of Dasein's being), metaphysics presupposes that "to be" means: being constantly present. "The determination of the being as ideality, Derrida indicates, paradoxically amounts to the determination of the being as presence" (VP, 59). Nevertheless, Derrida's deconstruction obviously brings something new in comparison with the "destruction" of metaphysics undertaken in *Being and Time*. From the start Derrida was critical of Heidegger's thought of being, strongly recalling that the (metaphysical) opposition between the original and the derivative is only displaced in Heidegger. Once again, it is the thought of presence that occurs in Heidegger's antagonism between the proper (*eigen*) and the improper, "appropriation" (*Ereignis*) and "dis-appropriation" (*Enteignis*), "authenticity" (*Eigentlichkeit*) and inauthenticity, "appropriation" (*Zueignung*, *Aneignung*) and forgetting ? etc. "Heidegger's problematic, Derrida says, is the most 'profound' and 'powerful' defence of what I am trying to query, under the title of *thought of*

*presence*” (*Positions*, 73-75, see also Giovannangeli 1979, 64-67). Even in its Heideggerian form, this antagonism indicates at first, one might say, the necessity of returning to a purity of origin, of a *Schritt zurück* or an *Aufhebung* towards the “thing itself” in its pure and immediate presence. In this sense it must be replaced by the *irreducibility* of the difference between the ideal and the real, by the necessary interlacing of presence and non-presence. The absolute and original presence to self in the transcendental experience is never pure. Necessarily, it always reveals itself as already contaminated by non-presence, non-life, by an inalienable non-originalness.

Since *The problem of Genesis* (cf. *PG*, VII), the theme of *contamination* has provided Derrida’s interpretation of Husserl with both its central theme and its most distinctive problematic. This contamination takes several forms in Husserl (*VP*, 5). It first occurs in the form of the re-presentation (*Vergegenwärtigung*) and then the appresentation (*Appräsentation*). The reading of Husserl in *Speech and Phenomena* finds here its two leitmotifs : first, the time-constitutive movement by which the original donation is modified and repeated in time, then the relationship to the other, communication and intentional mediacy. According to Derrida, re-presentation is not modification of an absolutely original presentation. The “original” shows itself always already as a difference : the opposition between presentation and re-presentation, between the original and the derivative, the same and its repetition, is at work from the very start, from the origin. The original thus shows itself only in its difference from its other, in an irreducible “differential contamination”, which Derrida calls the “*differance*” (*différance*). Such is the sense of Derrida’s deconstruction of Husserl : “We deduce the presence-of-the-present from the repetition and not inversely” (*VP*, 58). The original is from the outset something derivative, secondary, it pertains always already to re-presentation. In Kant’s words, the *intuitus originarius* is always already an *intuitus derivatus*.

### 1. Language

The latter objection applies itself exemplarily to the critique of Husserl’s theory of signs. In his first *Logical Investigation*, Husserl upheld the idea that the sign (*Zeichen*) has two species : expression (*Ausdruck*) and index (*Anzeichen*). On the one hand, expression bears signification, it is presence to self and presence of the object, the living present, immediacy. The expressive sign (i.e., the linguistic sign) “means” something, it presents an ideal *Bedeutung*. On the other hand, the index is meaningless (*sinnlos*, *bedeutungslos*). It communicates, it is the always mediate appresentation, the exhibition, always related to the other and to something else than what exists empirically. Now, every discursive act necessarily implies a factual contamination (but, adds Husserl, not “by right”, not

teleologically), an “interweaving” (*Verflechtung*) of expression and indicative communication. Derrida emphasises this in commenting the first *Logical Investigation* : “As extrinsic and empirical phenomenon, indication must be abstracted, ‘reduced’, even if an intimate relation binds it to expression, interweaves it empirically with expression. (...) The adherent indicative features, sometimes of another type, constantly occur further on and their effacement will be an infinite task. Husserl’s whole enterprise — far beyond the *Logical Investigations* — would be in danger if the *Verflechtung* coupling index and expression were absolutely irreducible, inextricably linked with the principle, if indication were not just added to expression as a more or less tenacious adherence, but rather inhabited the essential intimacy of its movement” (VP, 28). For Derrida, it is within this problematic of interweaving and contamination that the question of reduction must find its meaning, and that finally, coming up against the very opinion of Husserl himself, the “truth of phenomenology” is to be found (VP, 32). “The stake of that dis-interweaving, Derrida claims, is thus the phenomenological motive itself” (FV, 192).

If reduction feeds on the gap between right and fact, between the ideal and the factual, present and non-present, it is because it concerns, more basically, the difference between two modes of meaning. Now, differentiation and the necessary factual contamination of expressive and indicative signs confront the phenomenologist with a paradoxical situation. By right (*en droit*), ideally, reduction leads to purified expression, to coincidence of sign and sense, to the pure presence to self and to the pure presence of objet to consciousness. It leads to a place where the ideal is cleansed from all factuality, to a place where all the “essential distinctions” fixed by Husserl are thus disrupted, and the first among them the distinction between the ideal and the factual : Rightfully and *idealiter*, they efface themselves, since they rely, as distinctions, only on the difference between right and fact, ideality and reality” (VP, 113). *In fact*, Husserl admits, reduction never leads to there, and in the reduction the sign itself always and necessarily exists within the interweaving of expression and indication. Briefly, the distinction of the ideal and the factual is to be found on neither one side nor the other. Husserl’s “essential differences” (between the original and the derivative, transcendental and mundane, pure and empirical, etc.) *efface themselves*. On both sides, Derrida concludes, “their possibility is their impossibility” (VP, 113).

Several inferences can now be drawn from the above. In the first place, we remark that expression is from the start embedded in difference, that the *Bedeutung* is the *same* only as it is repeated in its *other*. Here, phenomenology encounters an “absolute limit”, that no reduction will ever be able to free it from (VP, 97). Secondly, it is a question of recognising the necessity of “effacing” the concept of sign which constitutes the metaphysics of presence and, at the same time, all the distinctions which sustain it (VP, 56 sqq.). Therefore it is a question of thinking the iterative essence of sign without subordinating it to the distinction

between the original and the derivative, the present and the non-present : “Whether it is a matter of expression or of indicative communication, the difference between reality and representation, between the true and the imaginary, between simple presence and repetition, has always already begun to efface itself” (VP, 56). But for all that, the effacement which Derrida indicates does not involve turning towards the presence and the original only. This is precisely the way of metaphysics of presence, which conceives of the sign in opposition to the present and the non-present only in order to “save the presence and to reduce or deduce the sign” (VP, 56-57). Inversely, the task Derrida has in mind then consists of setting free the difference itself, the differential contamination : of thinking an origin always already derivative that would thus correspond to an *original difference*.

From the origin, the contamination of expression and indication substitutes (*supplée*) the original non-presence of sense : it establishes from the outset a “supplement of origin” (*supplément d’origine*) (VP, 97 sqq.). Because the thing itself is actually always shown in the mode of non-presence, meaning is not separable from a movement of “original substitution”. It does not make present, but simply announces this : the thing is lacking. In short, the sign is always put “in place of” the thing, and the thing itself is nothing else, finally, than that of which the sign indefinitely delays the pure and original presentation. As Rudolf Bernet has clearly shown, “exactly on that point Derrida breaks strongly with Husserl’s thought by maintaining that there is no true speech which does not run the risk of turning into falsity and that there is no expression whose fidelity to the *Bedeutung* excludes every misunderstanding. As soon as it is pronounced, the meaning of the expression breaks away from the subject talking. It escapes him just as the object that he is talking about does, and whose original presence will hence be supplanted by linguistic representation, i.e., by what has been said of it. Derrida thus emphasises the fact that there is no presence without representation and without the menace of the loss that hangs over the original presence on this account. This is relevant as much to the presence of the (ideal) object as to the presence of the subject to itself or to the instantaneous presence of the present now” (Bernet 1990, 153). The logos by essence betrays an original substitution of the sign for the thing, a “supplement of origin”. It is always already *behindhand*, not in the sense that it comes after the thing that it brings to expression, but insofar as its origin itself is always already become a non-presence. “Thus understood, Derrida concludes, supplementarity is definitely the *differance*, the operation of deferral which, at one and the same time, splits and retards the presence, submitting it to both division and original delay” (VP, 98). What Derrida opposes to the presence to self is the retarding and the *differance* of the origin.

These elements also include another problematic of a very general character. Indeed, highlighting a necessary contamination of the expression immediately raises the question, already posed by Fink, of the possibility of expressing the transcendental experience in any



language, or rather of preserving its purity in the expression itself (v. *VP*, 6 et 13; *OG*, 60; *T*, 195). And does not language itself, every language, actually betray a debt which is properly speaking irreducible towards the real world? Is a purely transcendental language conceivable? Is it enough to use quotations marks for the words “time”, “life”, etc., to no longer refer to objective time, to psycho-physical life? Besides, does not Husserl admit, in § 36 of his 1904-1905 lessons on time, that to describe absolute subjectivity, “we lack words” (see also *OG*, 77)? Naturally, these questions again refer to the contamination theme. Beyond that, highlighting a necessary *ambiguity* of phenomenological speech enables Derrida to combine his interpretation of Husserl with one of his major thematics: that, exemplarily developed in the 1967 article “Cogito and History of Madness” (*ED*, 51-97), of the necessary coincidence between History, the History of metaphysics and the History of sense.

The results obtained in *Speech and Phenomena* are explored in greater depth in the article “Form and Meaning”, whose starting point is the theory of language laid out by Husserl in his *Ideas I*. The new element here is the distinction between sense (*Sinn*) and meaning (*Bedeutung*). To the interweaving of expression and indication described in the first *Logical Investigation* corresponds, in *Ideas I*, the interlacing (*Verwebung*) of sense and meaning (cf. *FV*, 189, 191). On the one hand, sense is identified with the noematical correlate in the broadest sense of the word. It is the non-linguistic, pre-discursive opposite of meaning, which it reveals in a discursive form. As such, “the *Sinn* must inscribe itself in the *Bedeutung*” (*FV*, 196). The discursive, by itself *unproductive*, adds nothing to sense, being nothing but reflection or copy (*Abbildung*) of the pre-discursive. On the other hand, language does introduce something like a production or an imagination (*Einbildung*): “That reproduction, Derrida remarks, imposes the blank mark of the concept” (*FV*, 198). The linguistic expression of the noematical sense denotes, properly speaking, an “unproductive production of the logical” (*FV*, 198). It is this relation of duplication and “parallelism” — of productive reproduction or unproductive production — between sense and meaning, that should now be brought into question. The question is whether the difference of sense and concept is inessential, that is to say, as Husserl thinks, disrupted by right and *ad infinitum* in the univocity and pure logicity of “ideal” language. Derrida’s answer is most explicit. For him, the non-parallelism of sense and meaning — the “difference of the concept” — is not an accidental fact, but determines *by essence* all expressivity. Even as a *telos*, as an infinite task, “the meaning (*bedeuten*) will never be the duplicate of the sense (*Sinn*): and this difference is nothing less than that of the concept” (*FV*, 201).

The more general problematic of *form* is closely connected with the preceding. If the difference here is irreducible, if discourse by essence constitutes itself in its discrepancy with sense, it is no longer possible to conceive of the relationship of the form (the discursive, the concept, etc.) and the a-morphous in terms of a mimetic duplication. In short, we must “ask

about an *other relationship* between what is, problematically, called sense and meaning” (FV, 206). This “other relationship” Derrida finds reported in Plotin’s concept of *trace*. “The trace would not be the mixing, the passage between the form and the a-morphous, presence and absence, etc., but what, evading this opposition, makes it possible starting from the irreducible of its excess” (FV, 206). Now, this last step forward has a decisive corollary. For the idea of a meaning duplicating the sense at first implies something similar to a “complicity” between the two. But even more, it shows that the being of pre-expressive sense — the being-present of the reduced object — is always apprehended starting from the “is” of the discursive form. The ontological, so to speak, is infallibly led back to its duplicate, to pure logicity : the description of sense is “secretly guided by the possibility (...) of meaning” (FV, 205). In a word, the parallelism of sense and meaning also requires, more basically, a definite decision in favour of a certain logicity of the pre-discursive itself, that is, a determinate interpretation of the sense of being. From the outset, it betrays the metaphysical primacy of being-present : “The form is the presence itself” (FV, 188). In that respect, the concept of trace, insofar as it maintains and conditions the difference between sense and concept, contributes exemplarily to the deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence.

## 2. Time

Derrida’s deconstruction of “essential differences” extends beyond Husserl’s theory of signs exposed in his first *Logical Investigation*. Derrida points out on several occasions in *Speech and Phenomena*, as he had already done in *The Problem of Genesis*, that in Husserl, the question of contamination turns on two basic problems, the problem of *temporality* and that of *alterity*. So this double problematic can only show up, according to Derrida, a significant deficiency in the theory of reduction and consequently in phenomenology itself. Already in his 1953-1954 paper, the question was : “Are not temporality and alterity, if they have an originally transcendental status, always irreducibly, as pure existence, ‘already’ constituted at the moment when they appear as constituting ? And then, is not reduction an abstraction ? This would mean the collapse of the phenomenological enterprise” (PG, 30). Resisting the “principle of principles”, and every intuitionism, the phenomena of time and the other confront us inevitably with a double factuality which can only unsettle the tranquil assurance of the phenomenology of perception. Firstly, temporality and alterity involve an *original synthesis*, i. e., an origin already determined by difference. Then, there is a question of a *passive genesis*, of an origin always already marked by an outside, by a surplus that comes in excess of the actual present of perception (cf. PG, 29, n. 45).

The question of temporality is approached in the fifth chapter of *Speech and Phenomena*, essentially on the basis of *Ideas I* and the 1904-1905 lessons on internal consciousness of



time. Here again, the investigation — the deconstruction — deals with “essential distinctions” : that between the now of perception and the not-now, that of retention (primary memory) and (secondary) memory. First presented by Derrida as a dialectic (*PG*; *OG*, 83), the temporalisation movement of the living present has the sense of a contamination of the Same by the Other. On the one hand, Derrida can but remark that Husserl is a philosopher of presence : the presence to self, the original intuition of oneself by oneself, takes place in the undivided, absolutely *simple* unity of the present instant. But on the other hand, this simplicity appears to be compromised from the start. In his 1904-1905 lessons on time, Husserl finds precisely this : that time is constituted on the basis of a passive original *synthesis* of now and not-now, of perception and retentional or protentional data. The question, here, is that of the original composition or interweaving of perceptive presence with re-presentative non-presence. This can be traced back to the 1954 paper : “How can the originalness of a fundament be a synthesis *a priori* ?” (*PG*, 12).

It is Husserl’s way of settling this single question that Derrida considers unsatisfactory, and that needs to be deconstructed. In a word, Husserl’s argumentation consists of annexing retention and protention to the sphere of perception. For him, there is no discontinuity between perception and retention, and retention is not the other, the opposite of perception. In reality, Husserl continues, the only discontinuity is that which opposes perception and retention to secondary memory. Secondary memory is at the same time opposed to perception and retention, opposed as the non-present is to the present, re-presentation to presentation, etc. In this way, it seems that the threat posed by the originalness of retention over the pure presence to self involved in the transcendental experience is definitely lifted. But it is precisely this point that Derrida contests : “The difference between retention and reproduction, between primary memory and secondary memory, is not the difference, which Husserl intended as radical, between perception and non-perception, but that between two modifications of non-perception” (*VP*, 73). In a word, the primary and secondary memories represent “two ways of referring to the irreducible non-presence of another now” (*VP*, 73). For Husserl’s opposition of retention and re-presentation in memory, Derrida means to substitute that of retention and perception. The originality of retention means that, *from the origin*, the now of perception is inhabited by its other, by reproduction.

### 3. *The Other, The Lived Body, History*

The 1964 article “Violence and metaphysics : Essay on the thought of Emmanuel Levinas” is a polemical text. First and foremost, the article presents itself as a defence of Husserl’s phenomenology (and Heidegger’s thought of being) against the objections raised by Levinas in his book *Totality and Infinity*. Levinas’ critique of Husserl, Derrida observes, consists in

three main arguments (VM, 174-188). Firstly, Husserl's intentionality, synonymous with intuitive objectivation and "adequation", could signify an interiorisation and a neutralisation of the alterity, its assimilation to the same and to the finite totality. Already, Derrida considers this first objection inadmissible. Inadequation, he insists, is a Husserlian theme : the perpetual incompleteness of perception and its infinite openness, the notion of *horizon* itself attest to it univocally. At its very basis, Husserl's intentionality has the sense of an infinite inadequation, and in the first place attests, as such, to the care and respect for exteriority (VM, 177). Moreover, it might also very well be respect itself. In that case, phenomenology does not oppose ethics, but ethics has in it "its own sense, its freedom and radicality" (VM, 178). It also seems that Levinas' second objection, which concerns the "theoretism" and the "primacy of the consciousness of object" in Husserl, is not to be followed. On the one hand, a decisive innovation of phenomenology is to have enlarged the concept of object and made it more flexible. On the other hand (and in the same sense), phenomenological "theoretism" has not the current sense that Levinas ascribes to it, but refers, more basically, to the simple *appearing*, to every appearing including that of "ethical" phenomena themselves. "I have a sight", Derrida concludes, for the visage itself" (VM, 180).

The third objection of Levinas is indubitably the most important one. It refers to the infinitely other and to Husserl's conception of intersubjectivity. According to Levinas, Husserl's concept of analogical apperception finally shows an appropriation of the infinitely other within the sphere of the same, of the ego (for, for Levinas, "the ego is the same", VM, 139). By reducing the other to the *alter ego*, i.e., to the ego itself, Husserl may have perpetrated an act of *violence* in the ethical sense. Derrida answers this objection in two different ways. First, so to speak, he returns the argument against Levinas : "If the other were not recognised as being a transcendental *alter ego*, it would be wholly in the world and not, like me, the origin of the world. To refuse to see him as an ego in this sense is, in the ethical order, the gesture itself of every violence. If the other were not recognised as being an ego, its whole alterity would collapse" (VM, 184). But the controversy with Levinas presents, here, an even more fundamental stake. If encountering the infinitely other must precede all objectivation, if ethics are irreducible to the same, then how can one maintain the possibility of "ethical" thought and discourse ? Does not the radicality of the experience of the infinitely other imply the renouncement of philosophy itself ? Derrida is probably right when he recalls that "it is enough for ethical sense to be *thought* for Husserl to be right" (VM, 178-179). And he adds : "Levinas is speaking *in fact* about the infinitely other, but, in refusing to recognise in it an intentional modification of the ego, (...) he denies himself the grounds and the possibility of his own language. What allows him to say 'infinitely other' if this infinitely other does not as such appear in that zone which he calls the same, and that is the neutral level of transcendental description ?" (VM, 183). What is at stake is nothing less than the possibility of language itself. A language without violence, Levinas tells us, would be a

language beyond being, beyond the verb “to be”, briefly : a language with no verbs, a language devoid of predication (VM, 218). It would be a “language without sentences”, without objects (in the neutral and general sense of what can be thought) and beyond all logic, a language that would no longer be a logos properly speaking. In there lies the “error” of Levinas. This error is a philosophical one : to have professed an *empirism* and to have unduly characterised it as philosophical (VM, 224, cf. 181). Rather, Derrida concludes, the question is that — a Hegelian one — of the relationship between Greek and Jew, the logos and the experience of the infinitely other, “formal tautology and empirical heterology” (VM, 226-228). Once again, beyond the pure ego and the infinitely other, it is a matter of thinking the interweaving of the transcendental and the empirical, of the same and the other.

The re-examination of the phenomenological problematic of intersubjectivity found an unexpected extension in the reading of Husserl’s *Ideas II* undertaken by Derrida in his recent book, *The Touch*, by directly continuing several other texts, including the 1985 lecture, “The Hand of Heidegger (*Geschlecht II*)”. The analysis of the lived body (*Leib*) in *Ideas II* concludes in favour of a primacy of touch (especially by the hand or fingers) over all the other senses. The ego discovers itself as a lived body, insofar it can, with one hand touch the other : “There is a lived body, Derrida comments, only thanks to touch” (T, 193-194). Finally, the lived body is what, in the touch, simultaneously experiences itself as being touched (as a *Körper*) and touching. From this perspective, it appears that the emphasis on the lived body re-affirms a certain “haptocentrism”, indissociable, according to Derrida, from all thought of presence. And the stake of that haptocentrism is nothing less than the possibility of an immediate and original *self-affection*, of the “spontaneity of an ego self-affecting itself immediately and of its own movement as a lived body — or flesh” (T, 184). The touch is supposed to make possible an absolute simultaneity between the touched and touching, that is, a self revelation and a *presence to self* pure from any mediation.

Nevertheless, touching would seem to offer the steadiest resistance to initial phenomenological intuitionism, to the “principle of principles” (T, 198); here, phenomenology inevitably comes up against the question of its own possibility. Husserl’s haptocentrism must be deconstructed, because it has its origin in an indefeasible “teleological hierarchy”, in an “axiological scale” : the privilege of immediate presence to self, that of man over beast. Derrida insists on this : “In fact, it will always be difficult to separate, in their very root, phenomenology and teleology” (T, 191). But in reality what happens ? In spite of Husserl’s distinction between the touched lived body and the real body, it does seem that the concept of a lived body always presupposes the exteriority of the non-ego, of the real thing (T, 200). This certainly indicates leaving the egological sphere, but also, put in extreme terms, an experience of self that finally refers to the more general phenomenon of intersubjectivity : “We are here, Derrida remarks, in the zone of the huge problem of phenomenological

intersubjectivity (of the other and time) which we will not, once again, re-examine for its own sake. May it be enough here again to raise the question : must not a certain introjective intropathy, a certain ‘intersubjectivity’ have already introduced the other and the analogical appresentation in the touching-touched for this rise to an experience of the lived body that enables me to say ‘it is me’, ‘this is my body’ ?” (*T*, 202). The self-affecting of the touching-touched is already definitely a hetero-affection. Once again, it is a matter of re-introducing the other (the non-life, the non-psychical, etc.) within the living present, within the presence to self of the lived body in the double apprehension of the touching-touched (*T*, 206).

In a sense, the different questions raised by Derrida in his dialogue with phenomenology — and first of all, the question of contamination between the empirical and the transcendental — find their clearest and most significant expression in the problem of historicity. The problem, in a word, remains that of *genesis*, or, more exactly, the “aporia of genesis” which must result, in phenomenology, from the introduction of the notion of genesis within the transcendental description (Marrati-Guénoun 1998). Already in his introduction to Husserl’s essay, *The Origin of Geometry*, published five years before *Speech and Phenomena*, Derrida explicitly related the Husserlian conception of History to the distinction between expression and indication fixed by Husserl in his first *Logical Investigation* (*OG*, 90-91 n.). Sense is not only pure ideality, but by essence it also requires, to appear as a sense, a corporeal and factual inscription in sign, a *writing*. Now, this fact necessarily induces that sense already contains in itself, by essence, the possibility of a “disappearing of truth” (*OG*, 91). Even if the sense is always present, by right always iterable, its necessary factual inscription is not separable from a certain virtuality, a virtuality that, precisely, “at the same time makes possible passivity, forgetting and all the phenomena of *crisis*” (*OG*, 84). Synonymous with finitude and historicity, the phenomenon of crisis indicates the watershed between sense and non-sense, reason and madness, presence and non-presence (*ED*, 96). As such, it represents, according to Derrida, “the most difficult problem set by *The Origin* and by Husserl’s whole philosophy of History” (*OG*, 91).

Indubitably, the theme of History (of metaphysics), very early on, constituted for Derrida an opportunity to confront Heidegger’s work (see Giovannangeli 1979, 57 svv.). The text “On Spirit : Heidegger and the Question” is not only a first reaction to the controversy about Heidegger’s national-socialist commitment. Through Heidegger’s *Introduction to Metaphysics*, but also Husserl and Valéry, it represents, more basically, a new attempt at deconstructing the “discourse of crisis”. The initial presupposition of crisis discourse is obvious in Heidegger : crisis means degeneration, abandoning, abdication of the spirit (*Geist*). More precisely, it indicates that the spirit has perverted itself into *Kultur*, that it has succumbed to its instrumentalisation, its cultural or political appropriation, its own misinterpretation. But Derrida here again approaches the same question from a quite different

perspective, emphasising that this contamination of the authentic figure of spirit by its inauthentic one, by *Kultur*, finally marks its irreducible historicity. The losing of the spirit results from its *duplicating*, from an “internal duplication which makes from the one spirit the evil ghost of the other” (*HQ*, 42, 123). Evil inhabits the spirit : there is *in* the spirit an evil genius, a spectre that duplicates and “ventriloques” it. This duplicate is the “Geist” (in quotation marks) already denounced in *Being and Time*. It is the spirit as ego, consciousness, soul, subject, etc., spirit in the sense of Descartes and Husserl (*HQ*, 28-31). For Heidegger, it is in this “spirit” that the degradation of spirit (without quotation marks) into rationality, intellectuality and ideology must originate (*HQ*, 122). But the fact that Heidegger calls for a “new beginning”, one that will “awaken the spirit” and once more inculcate in the German people the sense of their historical responsibility, might indeed show, Derrida says, his shrinking from the original historicity of the spirit, from its original duplicatedness and “heterogeneousness”.

In conclusion, let us recall the historical situation of Derrida himself within the phenomenological movement. Derrida’s work is part of the French phenomenological tradition, continuing its effort towards a re-interpretation of Husserl’s and Heidegger’s phenomenologies, and finally leading to a decisive questioning of them. As such, he is closely connected to the thinking of Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Paul Ricœur, for whom Derrida served as a research assistant at the *Sorbonne* in the early 1960’s. In that respect, Derrida’s attempt at the deconstruction of phenomenology appears as a radicalisation as well as a profound recasting of genetical phenomenology, whose critical content can no longer be ignored. But Derrida’s contribution to phenomenology cannot be limited to an attempt to bring to light and to “deconstruct” still implicit presuppositions of Husserl’s and Heidegger’s phenomenologies. Its true originality, its broad and well-deserved influence on present phenomenological research, are evidence that Derrida’s work also unquestionably represents a crucial, fruitful and positive contribution to phenomenology in general.

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