

Reading Levinas as a Husserlian (Might do)

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There is a joke about two rabbis, which I'll set between two cardinals because it reminds me of Lenny Bruce on Cardinals Spellman and Shehan encountering Moses and Jesus. The first cardinal, head bowed, walks toward the cross over an altar. There, he proclaims, "Oh suffering path of the cross, before this I am nothing!" A second cardinal, his colleague, crosses around the back, and, never taking his eyes off the altar, murmurs in the direction of the cross, "Oh, life of our savior, that I could imitate this life, but I am merely dust and ashes." They solemnly prepare to leave, backing up. Once at the door, they see a little fellow, the janitor it seems, kneel down before the altar, saying, "ah sinner that I am, an eternal cipher." The one cardinal looks at the other and says, "Now look who says he's nothing!"

This joke might be told by phenomenologists, with Levinas occasionally playing the part of the janitor. But janitor or not, his intuitions into intersubjectivity, passions, and traumatic affects, have haunted since his death a great deal of French phenomenology, notably at the Husserl Archives in Paris.

In many places Levinas will say things like: "Our presentation of notions...remains faithful to intentional analysis, in so far as it signifies locating notions in the horizon of their appearing, *a horizon unrecognized, forgotten or displaced* in the exhibition of an object" (OBBE 183 [n.7]). Or again, responding to Theo de Boer in 1975: "It is not the word 'transcendental' that I would keep, but the notion of intentional analysis. I think that, in spite of everything, what I do is phenomenology, even if...all of Husserl's methodology is not respected" (OGM 87 [n.20]). This is not fanciful, not an appeal to his

interlocutor, nor is this Levinas brandishing Husserlian party papers to counter Heidegger...

So, why is Levinas's "exteriority," for example, why is the face that he describes as pre-intentional, resistant to constitution because not directly perceived—and why is all this dismissed as "smoke and mirrors" or *surreptitious* God-talk? As if Levinas were not Jewish, as though a *Jewish* thinker would try sneak "god" into a human face, into incarnation... It's been done; I think it's called messianism, and Levinas is a rationalist, a *mittnagdist*.

I. So what is the point of my article?

Basically, to show this: that Levinas, as a critical reader of Husserl, worked 'phenomenologically' by exploiting four ambiguities in Husserl's thought.

These ambiguities are as follows, they structure this presentation:

1. Husserl's evolving conception of *Einfühlung*, alternately translated as intropathy or empathy; better, perhaps, would be *in-feeling*.
2. Husserl's crucial distinction between perception and apperception, where "apperception" denotes what is co-given horizontally with perception, or: what you *see and retain* even if you're not paying attention to it at a given time.
3. Husserl's conception of pre-objective time, as the temporizing flow of consciousness, with at least its three aspects or ec-stases, its stretchings: retention, protention, and the standing-streaming present.
4. Finally, he exploits Husserl's 1918-1927 research into passive synthesis, and notably into spontaneous association, memory, and affective forces.

No need to add that Husserl's towering thought itself *evolved*, notably on points 1 and 4. James Dodd can teach us a lot about point 3.

Didier Franck once referred to the communication of phenomenology as a *dramatique des phénomènes*, a dramatic exemplification of what is meant to enhance phenomenological intelligibility or, as Hegel once said, to avoid the “impatience of the concept” when the concept is prematurely detached from what is concrete.”¹ This “paradigmatic method,” as Levinas calls it, is also found in Talmudic reflection. So let me offer two micro-paradigms: the first, from Hegel; the second will be Husserl's ‘re-thinking’ of Hegel.

First then, from Hegel's 1807 *Phenomenology*, ¶¶174 and 179:

“The simple ‘I’ is this genus...for which the differences are *not* differences only by its being the *negative essence* of the shaped independent moments [*negatives Wesen der gestaltenden selbständigen Momente*]; and self-consciousness is thus certain of itself only by superseding this other that presents itself to self-consciousness as an independent life; self-consciousness is Desire [*Begierde*]. Certain of the nothingness of this other [consciousness], it explicitly affirms that this nothingness is *for it* the truth of [that] other; it destroys the independent object and thereby gives itself the certainty of itself as a *true* certainty, a certainty which has become explicit for self-consciousness itself *in an objective manner* [*gegenständliche Weise*]” (emph Hegel's).

Obviously, one cannot simply excerpt a passage from Hegel's dialectic of two self-consciousnesses; it neither begins nor ends there. After all, this is the path to “Spirit,” toward the “I that is a we”, and toward intersubjective formations like the state. But note

here that the evolving self-consciousness negates—it desires, consumes, subjugates—things and beings, which thereby gives it the “certainty of itself as a true certainty.” Up to now, it is self-certainty largely in-itself, but not for-itself. Hegel adds, ¶179:

“Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness;² it has come *out of itself*. This has a twofold significance: first, it has lost itself, for it finds itself as an *other* being; secondly, in doing so it has superseded the other [*es hat damit das Andere aufgehoben*], *for it does not see the other as an essential being, but in the other sees its own self*” (last italics mine).

Still not a self-consciousness in and for-itself, it will be through the resistance of the other, that self-consciousness A ceases to see in this other its own self, and is compelled to recognize B as an autonomous self-consciousness apt to “recognize” and hopefully serve A.

There is much to say about these passages, but note here that what drives the simple ‘I’s quest is called Desire (*Begierde*) (we might add “will”).³ Indeed, Desire *defines* self-consciousness; it is its life and its effectivity.

I’ll now pass to the second *drame*, from Husserl’s 1927 notes, entitled “The Phenomenological Reduction *to* the Alter-Ego and *to* Intersubjectivity.” This is rather late work, written at a time when he was also exploring his famous double reduction. Husserl writes

“I have the experience of others as my fellows”... and he adds, “Guided by the expression of the foreign subjectivity, in its fleshly corporeity *that appears to me*, I posit precisely the existence of this foreign subjectivity.” Although the “foreign subjectivity is increasingly unified with mine” (Hua 14, 400 [No. 21]), its basic “strangeness is never lost” (Hua 15, 631). But

intersubjective contact opens onto action and this implies that “my will is consciously, at the same time *in* the will of the other, and vice-versa. This is particularly clear in the example of the establishment of a master-servant relationship” (Hua 14, 403), because, at the transcendental level, “my will [becomes] *one* with that of the other” (Hua 14 402).

In these two “primal” or paradigmatic scenes, you can see differences, though both logics are guided by the possibility of “Spirit” emerging, that I that is also a we. Absent in Husserl is Hegel’s dualism of *an sich* and *für sich*, as well as Hegel’s dynamic *Begierde*. Husserl starts from “my fellows,” my *Mitmenschen*. And as absent as desire seems to be, patent is the practical passage of willing between the two figures. “My will becomes one with that of the other.” This carrying over of wills occurs thanks to communication, as well as *Einfühlung* and *pairing* (*Paarung*), which, by 1927 are a spontaneous, passive association that belongs to what Husserl calls “my inner sphere.” Nevertheless, there remains an evolving limit on how integrally I can constitute the foreign (embodied) consciousness.

Note immediately that the English term “empathy” may not capture how passive and comprehensive Husserl’s *Einfühlung* is in 1927. By 1932, five years later, Husserl will add that “when we understand each other in a unilateral way or in a reciprocal mode (according to empathic experience), then this amounts—if empathy becomes an intuitive appresentation—to producing...a ‘covering’ between me and the other, [and this] covering...is *something entirely new* (Hua 15 471, *emph added*).

The limit placed on constituting the other, the absolute quality of the other consciousness that Husserl once embraced, is as if set questioned, set afloat in this

‘covering’, even if it is only the covering of our two bodies. This is again the working of empathy, not desire, not the negative.

Here, I need to make a contextual remark: Husserl’s approach to *Einfühlung* easily spans two decades. It begins with his confrontation with the Munich phenomenologist Theodor Lipps (1851–1914), for whom empathy arose out of two basic human ‘instincts’: the drive of Life to express or externalize itself and the mimetic drive (*Triebe der Äußerung* and the *Triebe der Nachahmung*). For Lipps, empathy ‘takes place’, actively and cognitively, when I perceive another’s expression, imagine myself making that expression, and transfer what I feel back onto the other person.⁴ Husserl was familiar with the Munich school, which he initially considered “psychologistic” rather than truly phenomenological. As early as 1913, Husserl expressed doubts about how far we can really access the other’s affects and immanent states through empathic constitution. That is, how can we perform an analogical constitution of the other’s state of mind when we do not even *see* our own externalizations, our own *expressions*, our own *Äußerungen*? Worse, Lipps’ theory of empathy argued that we could feel our egoic subject in a foreign body, which supposed that Lipps *understood what* an ego was and how it developed. He could say nothing about constituting the layers and *a priori* laws of the ego’s development, so Lipps’ egoic subjectivity had really not moved past empirical psychology. So much for Husserl’s 1913 reticence about empathy. A Levinasian might also note the important limit set on constituting the other.

A year later, in notes from 1914, Husserl argued that *Einfühlung*, as he understood it, belonged above all to apperception, or indirect perception (which Levinas will praise

as Husserl's discovery of "horizons"). Apperceptively, the affects and states of mind of the other are indirectly co-given with my perception of their moving body. But already Husserl had moved a little closer to Lipps, asking:

What "lies" in the way in which the external appearance [*Erscheinung*] functions apperceptively? I am referred to my 'here', to which the external appearing of my body [*Körpers*] is referred, as well as to the inner appearance that accompanies it, into which the external appearance must be translated... [This] internal appearance is the *analogon* of that inner appearance which would result if I set my body over there [where the other stands], and likewise my external bodily appearance, which would go from here over to there, is analogous to the external appearance that I have of that body..." (*Hua* 13, 336).

Co-given with the appearance of the other person, "over there," who shares the space around my moving body, is something of their internal appearance, presumably some state of mind. But what *lies* therein, asks Husserl, outside of my kinesthetic body and its feelings, and how do I grasp, in "the external appearing" of the other, that their states might actually be analogous to my states?

By 1914, one sees Husserl's growing rapprochement with Lipps, which is part of a long and fascinating journey. This rapprochement follows the unfolding of Husserl's genetic phenomenology and his extensive notes on intersubjectivity, taken from 1905 through 1935. Now, in 1908, the other had been qualified as being "absolute."⁵ I posit that other, Husserl wrote, as "an absolute being." You can see that, initially, the defining limit that Levinas sets on "constituting" another person phenomenologically, is also found in Husserl, albeit for different reasons—notably, eidetic integrity. For Husserl, what I invariably 'see' is a body 'over there' and various behaviors. In 1961, Levinas speaks in terms of the ungraspable *expression* of the other: "[the face] does not manifest itself by . . . qualities, but *kath' auto*. It *expresses itself*.... [T]he notion of the face

[thus]... opens other perspectives: it brings us to a notion of meaning prior to my *Sinngebung* [meaning bestowal]..." (TI 51).

So much for Levinas, whose perplexing concept of “exteriority” could be seen as a strict limit set on the constitution of the other—at least, initially, before intentionality gives us what he called the “third party.” But between 1921 and 1928, Husserl’s notes on intersubjectivity presented new constitutions of interpersonal encounters, calling them on two occasions “the I and Thou.” (Incidentally, Buber’s book appeared in 1923, in the middle of this period). Something like Levinas’s phenomenology of expression would henceforth depend, for Husserl, both on apperception and the operation of *Einfühlung* and pairing (*Paarung*). Yet working at the eidetic level implied that Husserl describe fully “the original sphere” of the ego, in which this *Einfühlung* unfolded *passively*.⁶ Within this original sphere we find the transcendental consciousness: the flowing pre-objective temporalizing that invariably features ‘now moments’, a larger sphere of the living present that contains all that flows back from the now-moments even as it anticipates what is immediately to-come, and the original sphere contains recollections and phantasy. By the 1920s, I repeat, empathy was expressly part of this original sphere. Let me turn briefly to the complex temporalizing that belongs to, and even characterizes this “sphere”.

The work on what Husserl called “absolute subjectivity” (Hua 10, 74-75) was underway starting from 1905, only to be vastly enriched in 1917 by the *Bernau Manuscripts* on which James Dodd has written beautifully. Let me just add of transcendental subjectivity that the flow just mentioned “streams” as much as it “stands”. That is, the living present is always dynamically ‘there’ even as it presumably flows all

the way back to my earliest experience. Later, Husserl will say that the *ego* streams along with the flow of time consciousness. The ego *lives* in all experienced states of consciousness (C Ms). There is, as you can see, an uninterrupted, what Levinas would call a totalizing quality to “absolute subjectivity” (although not clearly to Lipps’ psychologistic subjectivity or even to the “empirical” ego). And this will pose Husserl other difficulties, such as: how far back does consciousness really flow, or again: does the flow that is absolute subjectivity stop flowing when it reaches a certain degree of ‘pastness’? Or again, what is it that preserves certain contents of our retentions while not retaining others? And finally, as Husserl jotted in one of his famous afterthoughts called the “Beilage” to the notes on passive synthesis: “the constitution of time cannot be founded alone on the possibility of awakening recollection anew, *in infinitum*. Something else in intersubjectivity?...” (Hua 11 379).

These questions, addressing Husserl’s increasingly complex approach to transcendental consciousness, understood as ‘temporization’, as positionally stable *and* dynamic—these were all important to the later Levinas, of *Otherwise than Being*. By exploiting ambiguities in Husserl’s discussion of what *moved* the flow (sensation), Levinas would argue that Husserl’s was perhaps not the only basic structure of “time consciousness,” and that the traumatizing impact of being under the gaze of the other, of being singled out, flows back, sediments certainly, but *recurs* as memories that have the amorphous form of troubling affects. In 1974, Levinas called these recurrences: “obsession,” “persecution,” and “substitution.” Affectivity, understood broadly as anything that *ultimately* attracts the attention of my ego, this affectivity might not enter neatly into the standing-streaming of Husserl’s pre-objective temporalizing

consciousness. To get to his argument, however, Levinas had to plumb the ambiguities arising in Husserl's work on passive syntheses; notably, I think, what made "association"—whether by fusion or by contrast—possible, and along with association, memory and the affective forces in our retentions themselves.

Let me pause for a moment and address an ambiguity which I think Levinas was aware of, since he examined it in a 1965 essay called "**Intentionalité et sensation.**" I don't know how much Levinas knew of Husserl's significant 1917 rethinking of his 1905 time consciousness lectures. I don't know if Levinas met Edith Stein and discussed *her* conception of empathy when he was in Freiburg in 1928. I do know that James Dodd has pondered the relationship between Husserl's 1905 approach to time consciousness and his revisions in the *Bernau Manuscripts*. The point is that in 1905 Husserl offered right triangular depictions of time consciousness to illustrate the vertical 'sinking down' of temporal phases (E to P' to A') and the horizontal passage of sequential now-moments, with their protentions and retentions (A to E, with protentions not indicated). This prompted debates about whether Husserl could really open access, reflectively and *after the fact*, to the pure structure of transcendental subjectivity, in its immediacy and as the *a priori* norm underlying all our lived experiences consisting of intentional aiming and object donation. A lot of ink has flowed on this debate, which concerns in part the status and accessibility of transcendental immanence and immediacy. But perhaps it is enough to say, here, that Levinas was interested above all in the conundrum of "sensation" with regard to the temporalizing flow, where sensation and flow are understood somewhat analogously to primitive matter and form. Levinas stated his interest in the form of a question, one that Husserl also wrestled with. That is, does the material of our sensations,

does the materiality that *is* sensation, propel the ongoing ‘transcendental’ flow, as each ‘new’ sensation wells up and is subtly modified, or must we admit that the flow of consciousness is what makes sensation possible *formally*, once it has become an affect that can attract the attention of the ego? If the second is the case, if the universal form of intentionality is primary, then pre- or proto-conscious sensation is unavailable to us, and a formal dynamic unity becomes primary because it structures sensation allowing it to enter consciousness. If the first is the case, then sensation, which fuels the flow, comes both before and after its own structuring as conscious awareness. It had to be somewhere, in process, before I was aware of it, and it is as as conscious awareness that I ‘experience’ it.

Following Levinas’s 1965 essay, which he concluded simply enough by praising Husserl’s “idealistic” approach, his 1974 work entitled *Otherwise than Being*, exploited the ambiguity that James Dodd has expressed this way: “implicit in every lived experience is the *living through* of that experience as its ‘origin’” (RHTD, 117). Again, and in other words, can the implicit be made explicit without denaturing it or forcing it into what reflection conceives it to be? With regard to sensation welling up into consciousness, how shall we approach chaotic, amorphous sensations and affects? In *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas contested the ultimacy of an uninterrupted living-through, a totalizing transcendental consciousness as *sole* origin of experience. Moreover, despite his protesting to Theo de Boer about Husserl’s recourse to a certain “transcendental” level (itself debated by people like Dan Zahavi and John Brough on time consciousness)—despite Levinas’s protesting, he seeks a pre-reflective, co-temporalizing that would be specific to certain affects or perhaps even, to speak like Husserl in the

passive syntheses, shot through with affective forces, *affective Kräfte*. Levinas is also aware that retention, those interconnected now-moments that have flowed or stretched back and continue to sink and to sediment—he is aware that retention “*is only what it is thanks to an as yet unspecified relation to protention*” or spontaneous anticipation (RHTD, 121). This is how Dodd put it in 2005, preparing discussion of the innovations of the Bernau manuscripts. I like it because it emphasizes, among other things, Husserl’s restless, on-going exploration of the so-called transcendental level and his ‘original sphere’; it points also to an ambiguity that Levinas may well have known. That is, the continuing activity of anticipations, or protentions, even as a given now-moment had flowed back, had functionally vanished from view. These two modes of temporalizing consciousness, retention and protention, prove to be richly interwoven and account for the complexity of consciousness as the precondition for objective time. Protention, active here and now, but *also* ongoingly as the flow continues, points to a *Vorbewusstsein*, a pre-consciousness (I paraphrase Dodd). But this pre-consciousness may have little to no content. As anticipation, it may be closer to a feeling. Could this suggest something about the recurrence of certain affects, whether as memories that scarcely “congeal” in our consciousness or in the wake of an encounter with an “other”? Levinas may have had such a thing in mind when he spoke in 1974 of “persecution” and “recurrence.” For now, let me just pay homage to Dodd’s article on time consciousness, which is more complex than I have indicated, although the ambiguities posed by sensation, and the interweave of retentions and protentions, not to mention associations passively welling up in us, interested Levinas, on a hermeneutic level that Husserl did not explore for reasons I explain in the article. That is, Husserl’s interest in sensibility, understood as affects and

valuing (*Geschmacksempfindungen*) long paralleled his concern with object-constituting sensations. Sensation and sensibility were for him isomorphic things. By extension, the early grounds of Husserl's ethics were rationalistic, even intellectualist, and originally framed on the cognitive-type approach found in the *Logical Investigations* (1900-1901). In short, Husserl's concern with ethics did not initially consider *Einfühlung*, much less hermeneutics, and Levinas's approach to intersubjective affects would not have seemed a viable ground for ethics to Husserl.

I have tried here to set forth, in broad strokes, aspects of Husserl's approach to time consciousness so-called, his approach to "transcendental subjectivity", and in passing acknowledge my debt to James Dodd. However, because the 1917 Bernau manuscripts, on temporalizing consciousness and individuation, so complexify this picture, I cannot spend more time on them here. I wish I knew whether Levinas was familiar with them—even via the story of Edith Stein's great disappointment when she arrived in Bernau, expecting to work with Husserl on the revision of his 1905-1907 time consciousness lectures. But Stein had to leave once Husserl essentially vanished into his study to write these manuscripts. The picture of what transcendental consciousness is, would never be the same after them. What I can say is that Levinas was familiar with Husserl's early work on sensation and time consciousness, as well as with his notes on passive synthesis.

In my initial sketch of Husserl's 1927 encounter between two consciousnesses, it is through *Einfühlung*, empathy or intropathy, that two wills penetrate each other, and thanks to which I come 'to know' the other increasingly well, despite their foreignness. The 1927 notes belong to Husserl's late conception of empathy, as pure spontaneity.

Arising as apperception, and pre-consciously co-given within any perception, *Einfühlung* belongs to my original sphere as I said, because when I perform an egological reduction, I find the other *already* in my reduced consciousness or my “monad,” as Husserl had come to say. He even deliberated about whether a monad might not have “windows” causally opened by others. However, although *Einfühlung* is not tied to passive synthesis in Husserl’s definitive *Ideas I*, published in 1911, *Einfühlung* did come to be tied closely to passivity when Husserl presented his mature phenomenology in the 1928 public lectures called the *Cartesian Meditations*. In those lectures, he argued that in a face-to-face situation, the spontaneity of apperception entails a carrying-over, an *Übertragung*, from my lived body to the other.

This carrying-over was primordial, and it certainly corrected Lipps’ cognitive empathy and his two mythical drives. Through *Übertragung* our two bodies coincide (Hua 1, 141-43) and I think this coinciding parallels the first degree of association through resemblance, which Husserl developed in his notes on passive synthesis. That is, associations of resemblant objects facilitate identification, and later on, concept formation. But these associations also imply reproductive memory, which is tied to the complex interactions of flowing retentions and protentions in transcendental consciousness. At a deep level, Husserl ventured (around 1918) that “the phenomenology of association is...a higher extension of the doctrine of the originary constitution of time” itself (Hua 11, 118). So which comes first, the fact of spontaneous, passive association knitting our experiences together, or the transcendental consciousness that flows and is always there, standing and streaming? It seems hard to decide. But to return to *Übertragung*, the coinciding of our two bodies occurs thanks to a spontaneous

association, effected passively through the merging of recollection and perception. The same applies to apperception, and it too can be scrutinized phenomenologically. Thus, association has an encompassing, even an assimilative quality, despite the fact that in the case of the other person, a dimension of foreignness holds on. Indeed, as I grasp that the other's body is 'like mine', I note that my own, to me partly visible body, must have the *integrity* that the other's has. It is the perceived unity of the other body that gives me a sense of myself as an *empirical* being—"this person here"—and we can recall Levinas's 1961 arguments that the other individuates me; though again, for Levinas, it is through the other's singling me out rather than through association.

For Husserl, in the 'now' of an association through resemblance, there also occurs a moment of "self-alienation" (*Selbstentfremdung*). Beyond questions of self-objectification, this suggests that in my perception and apperception of the other, I momentarily lose something of myself, recognizing that I am squarely in the other's field of vision, even though I do not know his thoughts implicitly. All of this comes to pass—the spontaneous carrying-over as also the self-alienation—at a deep level of my egoic life. As Natalie Depraz argues, self-alienation or *Entfremdung*, sometimes written with a hyphen, "*Ent-*" "*fremdung*," underscores a processual and "structural condition of [my] relation to the other person" (TeI 346). The point was not lost on Levinas, even though he knew the *Cartesian Meditations* as their co-translator but maybe less well, Husserl's notes on intersubjectivity from the 1920s. Important here is the echo we hear in the 1974 Levinas, who introduced his own theme of substitution with the citation from Paul Celan, "I am you, when I am I" (OBBE 99). This seems to me like a radicalization of Husserl's self-alienation.

With apperception and spontaneous *Einfühlung*, Husserl's phenomenology of intersubjective encounters reaches toward the pure psychology he had already considered in his remarkable *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (1910-1911). Already there, we see that he was interested in more than essences or eidetic constitution.⁷ This is important because some readers scarcely tarry with the Husserl who wrote notes on phenomenological psychology and on passive syntheses. Yet if association plays the crucial role I alluded to in the unification of consciousness as temporalizing, as standing-streaming, then the question of *how* associations occur becomes unavoidable. This opens the question of passive synthesis and affective force, something that Levinas took up in his own way. Husserl argued that as our lived now-moments flow back as retentions, they undergo a process of progressive impoverishment, an ongoing intuitive depletion. There is less and less to them. Indeed, depleted of its contents, a retention can actually become quite devoid of content *and* its original affective force almost nil, he argued (Hua 11 173).

At this point in the passive synthesis notes, Husserl makes a strange claim. Empty retentions are not nothing. Empty retentions are “zero degrees of awakening”—they are the source and origin of associations’ awakening—“comparable,” he says, “to the arithmetic zeros...counted nevertheless among the numbers” (Hua 11, 154). Almost anything can be awakened out of “empty retentions”; if not by us or at will, then by another. By the period 1918-1926, this has become part of the phenomenological structure of memory. It is also why Husserl claimed that the foreign quality of the other can be compared to the alien quality of some recollections, because even empty retentions may occasion the return of a hitherto “lost” memory, although the retention is

less a “memory” in itself than the way a present moment, perceived *or* apperceived, stretches indefinitely into my “past,” gradually sedimenting in it—whether intuitively full or empty. If it is the loss of affective force that contributes to the emptying of retentional contents, then affective force plays a role in how well I perceive and/or recall anything. That is, how and what something will awaken in me, invariably passively. I suspect that for Levinas, notably in 1974, the encounter with the other person carries a unique affective force or intensity. Moreover, if what Levinas calls “recurrence,” “obsession,” and “persecution” express the spontaneous passive return of affective forces—as forces that do not yet make sense but leave me *mal dans ma peau*, too tight in my skin—then Levinas is elaborating on something we already find in Husserl’s notes on passive synthesis: the meaningful succession of temporal phases implies ordered objects contributing to a coherent world. Beneath or beside these phases are nevertheless two more “chaotic” levels: the “chaos of ‘impressions’ (*Eindrücke*) in the process of self-organizing; and the chaos of the connections of our many “sense fields (*Sinnesfelder*)” amongst themselves (Hua 11, 414, Beilage XIX). To the degree that he knew of Husserl’s investigations into these deep levels of consciousness, to the degree that they might have discussed this two years after the end of the notes on passive synthesis, when Levinas studied with Husserl in 1928, to that degree that *Otherwise than Being* can be said to step into the deep level of sensuous chaos, it locates the roots of my affective investiture by another, or indeed, as Husserl also understood, by an alien or seemingly senseless *memory*.

Let me illustrate this and recall that in 1974, Levinas wrote:

It is because the assembly of *non-signifying elements into a structure*, and the arrangement of structures into systems or into a totality involves chance or delays, and something like bad or good luck since the finitude of being is not only due to the fate that destines the way it carries on [toward meaningful] manifestation...[it is because of this chance and these delays] that subjectivity in retention, memory, and history intervenes to hasten the elements into a present, to re-present them. (OBBE, 133-134, trans mod.)

The intervention of “subjectivity” to forge meaning is a passive process for Husserl. But *that* some dimension of the subject proves able to order these “non-signifying elements into a structure,” *that* is already idealism. It may well be the case in practice, but it does not justify our overlooking the affective elements, or forces, that come to pass in intersubjective encounters and in traumatic memories. That is Levinas’s wager. Our purely passive “ability” to “totalize” bathes in Husserl’s chaos of sensuous fields. And his chaos becomes Levinas’s “pure susceptibility” (138). To present, reflectively or as a philosophical argument, the “chaos” of recurrent intensities and the affective opening of self that responds to another is impossible, becomes it thereby becomes a *theme* or a hypothesis. Yet Levinas takes up this strange challenge, proceeding with his own *dramatique des phénomènes*, his own paradigmatic method by which he opens an “otherly than being.” This is so called, because the question of *being*, as meaningful thematized existence, already assumes the minimal integration, and erasure, of affective forces and the chaos of sense fields. “The subject arising in the passivity of unconditionality,” writes Levinas, “in the expulsion outside its being at home with itself, is undeclinable.” In other words, it admits no modalizations, and cannot be refused. “[But

t]his undeclinability,” he adds, “is not that of transcendental subjectivity” (OBBE 139). It is not that Levinas rejects Husserl’s method, he transforms it instead into speculation. And it *is* speculation—on the dynamics of intersubjective affects and on the layers of passivity, already opened by Husserl. In my article, I try to show how he has taken up Husserl’s themes of *affective Kräfte*, his levels of chaos, and the questions posed by Husserl’s syntheses of association, whether these are contrastive or concordant and leading to fusion. (Let us recall parenthetically that, for Husserl, the intensity of affection is firstly a “function of *contrast*” (Hua XI, 149), rather than concordance or similarity. Disjunction, as difficulties in identification, would flow from the affections engendered by contrast.) After all, it is there, in the movement of affective forces, and between the spheres of our awakening and forgetting (Hua 11, 154), that Husserl will say, “it is a matter of a phenomenology of the ‘unconscious’ [*des Unbewussten*]” (Hua 11, 154). That is how far Husserl went—not officially, not in his published works—but in his meditations on spontaneous association in radical passivity. It is under *this* influence, I believe, that Levinas unfolded the suffering of recurrent affective memory and even the apperceptive disruption of face-to-face encounters with others.

Let me now come back to Husserl’s evolving approach to empathy. For, it is with passive synthesis that everything changed about *Einfühlung*. Much changed as well in Husserl’s approach to temporalizing consciousness. In the 1920s, in his notes on intersubjectivity, he thrust *Einfühlung* and *Paarung*, pairing, to their deepest intuitive levels, speaking even of “my” spontaneous “grasp” of the other’s internal tumult and psychic excitation (*seine Kraftanspannung, evtl, seine Gemütsregung*) (Hua 15, 472). It was through his radicalization of empathy and pairing that Husserl not only corrected

Lipps's cognitivism, but dug as if beneath Hegel's dialectic of desiring-negating consciousnesses. That is why Husserl could write, sounding somewhat like Merleau-Ponty, "Instead of a juxtaposition [of two consciousnesses, ready to deny the in-itself of the other], we have to do with an *interweave of sociality*, which is clearly part of the meaning of the terms 'master' and 'servant'... The action of the servant is not an isolated, simply private action, but rather an action taken in the awareness of the fulfillment of the voluntary requirements of his master; the order of the master is a will that is projected *into the subjectivity* of the servant..." (Hua 14, 402-403).

In so far as the penetration of one will into another is plausible—and I think it shows up in many intersubjective situations, whatever the affective tones they take on—but in so far as Hegel's agonistics are *also* probative, we seem to have a depth problem. Husserl's example, unfolded at the transcendental level, opens a kind of typology, a certain universality. But Husserl's paradigmatic scene belies a *naïveté* that Hegel's does not. But what if Husserl's projection of the will into another subjectivity wasn't sometimes sooner a projection of desire, even a projection of helplessness—a kind of collapsed will, such as we find in the face of Levinas's "widow, orphan, and stranger"? The point is that the merging of wills—a phenomenon of *Einfühlung* and spontaneous association—but eventually also mergings of passions, can find their extreme translation in Levinas's "substitution," which Levinas defined as an intentional transgression, an obsession that "goes against intentionality" (OBBE 111). Yet this event that "goes against intentionality" is also, maybe firstly, found in Husserl. And though he probably did not know of Husserl's reworking the master-slave dialectic, Levinas too thought of Hegel when he thought of passivity and the chaos of passions. He wrote,

For the venerable tradition to which Hegel refers, for which the ego is equal with itself and consequently for which the return of the being to itself [is] concrete universality . . . when seen starting from the obsession of passivity, of the self, anarchical [without an *archē*], there emerges an inequality behind the equality of consciousness. (OBBE 115; trans. mod.)

This inequality was explored by Husserl as a function of contrastive associations (*Funktion des Kontrastes*), one simple example of which was a “*wahnsinniger Schmerz*” [a maddening pain] (*Hua XI*, 415). This constituted but one form of “extreme contrast,” yielding enduring affective forces that flowed back and no doubt sedimented. But less physically, the seeming “equality of consciousness” that Levinas denounced in Hegel, shows inconsistencies in intersubjective encounters for Husserl. As Husserl argued in 1928

Two *data* are given in the unity of consciousness according to an intuitive distinction and on the basis of which...in pure passivity...they ground phenomenologically a unity of resemblance as distinct appearances.... [However,] finer analysis shows that there is, here, in an essential manner, *an intentional transgression that intervenes genetically*...the moment the members of the pairing have become conscious together and distinctly. (*Hua I*, 142)

Husserl seems to mean that the intentional consciousness—which, through the ray of its attention, slowly builds up the profiles of an object on the basis of the object’s self-giving—intentional consciousness can somehow be transgressed. Little may happen *to the “equality of consciousness” to itself* in this transgression. Yet when the other is there, looking at me, an associative fusion or pairing occurs, called “reciprocal awakening.” And perhaps I may even lose myself as the ego pole of identifications in this face-to-face, when the spaces surrounding our two bodies merge.

I am speculating, but the proliferation of modes of passivity, the emphasis on types of association, including the near physical pairing that goes with *Einfühlung*, and the presence of affective intensities running along our chains of retentions, all this gives us the Husserl who influenced Levinas. From translating the fifth *Cartesian Meditation*, he was aware of the 1920s depths of *Einfühlung*, and even the possibility that affective chaos might not initially enter, associatively, into flowing transcendental consciousness, *even if a systematizing consciousness eventually did prevail*. I cannot summarize the arguments in the article here, not systematically anyway. But again, the purpose of the essay was to show *how* these ambiguities were taken up, re-modalized and sometimes radicalized, by Levinas, as the hermeneute of suffering investiture. I repeat that the starting points in matters of ethics were different for the two philosophers. And, from the material that I have been able to consult, I'm not sure that Husserl was *all that* interested in passions and suffering as they relate to ethics. Nevertheless, I hope I have discussed, if fast and chaotically, the four areas in which I see, in Levinas, a Husserlian who opened intersubjective *Einfühlung* and passivity to their underside, to the inequality-with-self of consciousness that comes to pass, in an instant, in intersubjective encounters and some, embodied, memories.

¹ Didier Franck “La dramatique des phénomènes” in *Dramatique des phénomènes* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2001), 152.

² This is a bit of hermeneutic activism on A. V. Miller’s part, the German reads, more simply: “Es ist für das Selbstbewußtsein ein anderes Selbstbewußtsein; es ist *außer sich* gekommen,” or: “There is, for the self-consciousness another self-consciousness; it has come *out of itself*.”

³ Cf. ¶222: “For consciousness, no doubt, in appearance renounces the satisfaction of its self feeling, but it gets the actual satisfaction of that feeling, for it *has* been desire, work, and enjoyment; *qua* consciousness it has willed, has acted, has enjoyed.”

⁴ See Theodor Lipps, *Psychologische Untersuchungen*, “Das Wissen von fremden Ichen” (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1907), 721.

⁵ Husserl’s “absolute other”—discussed in the B Manuscripts as an “other flow of consciousness . . . [given to me] in a pre-empirical manner [and] posited as absolute”—will be approached by analogy with memory (see B I 4/19a; cited in J.-F. Lavigne, *Husserl et la naissance de la phénoménologie (1900–1913)*, [Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2005], 689-90). Nevertheless, analogously to the other, a recurrent memory is “not a consciousness actually recalled . . . not a consciousness actually perceived and retained in fresh recollection [retention]” (B I 4/18b, cited in HNP 689). The analogy between the other consciousness and recollection underscores that neither is properly *given*, directly or in the flesh. That is the sense of Husserl’s 1908 “absolute.”

⁶ See Husserl’s remark, “Empathy is a false expression” (Hua 13 335). Note that Husserl himself does not always know precisely what *Einfühlung* means: “Third problem: this ‘*Einfühlung*’ is found in my original sphere: what makes up empathy, essentially according to the content of what constitutes the object of empathy and according to its constitutive connections?”

⁷ Husserl wrote, in Chapter 1 “The Natural Attitude and The “Natural Concept of the World,” §1, note 1: “Phenomenology” is here not from the outset regarded as a phenomenological theory concerned with *essence* but rather the attempt is made to consider whether an experiential phenomenology is possible, which is not a theory concerned with essence.” See *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, in Husserl, *Collected Works, From the Lectures, Winter Semester, 1910-11*, trs. Ingo Farin and James G. Hart. In German, *Husserliana Studienausgabe 3*, ed. Iso Kern (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1977).