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RECONSTRUCTING OPACITY. HUSSERLIAN MOTIVATION AS A 'THIRD SYNTHESIS'

The following considerations aim at reassessing the concept of motivation within the horizon of Husserlian work, in order to show the extent to which it is crucial to ground the transcendental subject (probably more crucial than Husserl himself had remarked) and, for this very reason, to throw it into crisis. In my opinion, the most important gain of the transcendental approach is to have remarked that the constitution of the 'natural ego' (psyche) is not equivalent to the constitution of the 'real ego' and accordingly that the psyche always leaves a 'residue': by criticizing the natural attitude, Husserl insists on the fact that the psyche animating the body is not the same that produces the cultural and communal realizations of men. Between *Leben* and *Erlebnis* a discard lingers on, notably a temporal discard, that makes the transcendental finally possible i.e., more concretely, knowledge and its transmission. What I would like to suggest is that this residue stratifies itself forming the 'motivation's realm', which is a sort of 'third synthesis' between the physical one and the psychological one, parallel to the 'tertiary time', highlighted by Paul Ricoeur¹, between the one of the world and the one of consciousness. The structure of motivations touches, as the Kantian Schematism, the most central core of time and the intertwinement (*Verflechtung*) of presentations and presentifications, retentions and memories, retentions and protentions and so on. The domain of motivations is essentially constituted by the *Gesetzlichkeit* which derives from the stratifications of sense of being of the ego. It constitutes itself in the form of time and the flow of retentions and protentions, in their synthetic unity, correspond in its turn to the universal form of 'motivation'. The motivation is a sort of transcendental practical, economical and

¹P. Ricoeur, *Time and narrative 3: Narrated time*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988, p. 354.

ethical schema, that turns *Erlebnisse* into actions. We will see hereinafter which name to give to the motivational sphere and, consequently, to what transformations the transcendental domain will be subjected. In order to understand the deep nature of motivation it will be necessary to start from reconstructing the genesis of the original opacity characterizing the phenomenological field: this opacity configures itself as a spiritual intersection (that is no more subjective than objective) mediating, constituting, binding and at the same time making possible, the reciprocal connection between the world and the individual consciousness.

The introduction of person's and community's dimension in the second part of *Ideas II* goes hand in hand with the reconfiguration of the ego-psyche polarity by dint of the spirit (*Geist*). The notion of *Geist* is quite problematic, since it does not point out an empirical counterpart of the pure subjectivity, but rather a cultural one, whose status complexifies considerably the phenomenological framework. The spirit proclaims the limits of psychologism (which Husserl ascribes to the 'natural attitude') and the ones of conscientialism (which is in turn a subtler form of natural attitude) as well, since it includes in itself the shadow of 'not-individually-lived'. It marks Husserl's first effort to institute a kind of enlarged, pre- and trans-individual experience, wherein the role of passivity and body are not left to a naturalistic explanation but recovered in a transitional and synthetic sphere as a 'functioning life', which never resumes itself in *Erlebnisse*. In order to do that, he goes back to investigate the deep functioning of 'motivations', whose notion appears for the first time in *Logical investigations* and which are now expected to engender the fundamental law of the spirit. 'Motivation' designates the rule, that is not a deterministic causality, according to which consciousness unfolds and it is temporally connected to itself and to the world.

We do not say that in the unity of the stream of my lived experienced each lived experience is necessary, necessarily conditioned by the lived experiences which precede it and are co-lived. If we say that every lived experience of an act is motivated, that relations of motivation are intertwined in it, this is not to imply that every meaning-intending is one 'in consequence of'. When I become aware of a thing, the thesis contained in the perception is not always a thesis 'in consequence of': e.g., when I see the night sky lit up by a meteor shower or hear quite unexpectedly

the crack of a whip. Still, even here a kind of motivation can be exhibited, included in the form of inner time-consciousness.²

The first application that Husserl makes of the concept of motivation consists in examining cultural objects animated by a sense. Somehow the spiritual imprints the physical with its sense to the point of annulling the duality of sense and its vehicle. This means that the motivation is supposed to build a transductive³ continuity between world and consciousness, object and sense, even without melting completely away in one or the other. On the contrary, motivations form a third dimension which gives a metastable shape and balance to the ego and to the world, and to their relationship. Rather than subscribing to an Aristotelian 'hylemorphic scheme' using a static separation between form and matter, as if ego were the *morphé* and the external world the *hyle*, motivations are expected to outline a more dynamic (Husserl would say 'genetic') process of individuation taking into account the becoming of the individual. There is a dynamic and bidirectional relationship between the constituted entity (i.e. the ego) and the constituting process.

Apprehensions of things and of thingly nexuses are 'webs of motivations': they are built through and through from intentional rays, which, with their sense-content and their filled content, refer back and forth, and they let themselves be explicated in that the accomplishing subject can enter into these nexuses.⁴

A static analysis proceeds transcendently in Kantian sense: a certain notion rises as condition of possibility for another notion. So, for example, the experience of spatiotemporal unities is the condition of possibility for someone to perceive a living body. The analytic nexus goes from some data up to their conditions of possibility, making sure that this nexus is a necessary one (it is unthinkable that I could perceive whatever animal without the faculty of perceiving bodies in space and time). But this same nexus, from a genetic point of view, is no more necessary: it is rather 'motivational'. Perceiving spatiotemporal unities does not

² E. Husserl, *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy. Studies in the phenomenology of constitution*, Dordrecht - Boston, Kluwer, 1989, p. 239.

³ See G. Simondon, *L'individuation psychique et collective: à la lumière des notions de forme, information, potentiel et métastabilité*, Paris, Aubier, 1989.

⁴ E. Husserl, *Ideas cit.*, p. 236.

'motivate' in a binding way, but in a generic one, to perceive also living bodies (which have further specific qualities in addition to the simple spatiotemporal unities). By 'motivation' Husserl wants to indicate every type of connection (in final analysis referable to a temporal connection) among conscience's contents: a less specific content motivates the emergence of a more specific one, i.e. the former engenders a privileged channel to apprehend the latter. This is not a causal relationship. The motivational nexus guides experiences in time and, consequently, the temporal (genetic) constitution of concepts, which comes to take the form of a 'system of possibilizations' (*Ermöglichungen*): a first experience opens the possibility of a second and more qualified experience, but it does not entail that the additional level should absolutely give itself. In no way progress in the understanding of the causal relations will advance us in the understanding of the motives for a certain mode of behavior. The 'because' detecting a motivation has a totally different meaning from the one detecting a natural causation. The unity of motivation is a tangle rooted in intentional acts and not in the mere reality as such. Properly speaking, the physiological processes do not motivate me.

If we examine the structure of the consciousness that constitutes a thing, then we see that all of nature, with space, time, causality, etc., is completely dissolved into a web of immanent motivations. In the unity of the total lived experience, which comprises consciousness of a thing there and of an Ego here with its Body, we find distinguishable objectivities of many kinds, and we also find functional dependencies which are not dependencies of an actual thing on the actual Body and the actual Ego in the world, which, in short, are not natural-scientific psychic and psychophysical dependencies. But then neither are they dependencies of subjective appearances (as possessed by the subject of lived experience) on real Objectivities that are posited or received as real.⁵

In this perspective we have to read Husserl's attempt to correct his first interpretation of 'animation', which he had carried out in a very naturalistic way in Part Two of the second volume of *Ideas*, by way of a cultural understanding under the label of 'expression'. The new description emphasizes the extent to which an interpretation of the soul which took its departure from localized sensations had to remain naturalistic. The animation of sensible phenomena can never be exhaustive, since it cannot go through

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 230.

the opacity of a worldly object without dispersing in a certain measure in it. So, the 'expression' is constantly tried out by the risk of ambiguity⁶. This attempt is doomed to failure until Husserl does not realize that the third and deeper synthesis acted by motivations is an issue of the third temporal synthesis, integrating the retentive and the reproductive ones. Thus, the Italian phenomenologist Enzo Paci (in the Appendix to the Italian translation of *Phénoménologie et praxis*, by J.T. Desanti)⁷ states that motivation is a sort of 'transcendental schema', translating, as I have already hinted, the *Erlebnisse* into decisions and actions. I will stop a little longer on this parallelism. Husserl does not want to get out of lived experiences (*Erlebnisse*), but motivations require precisely such an excess, like the transcendental schema requires images. This is the excess of what is never subjectively lived in strict sense, but nevertheless is inherited. After all, it is the same excess of the Idea (Plato) or of the Transcendental (Kant). So, in the issue of transcendental it is at stake also the relation between the living and the dead⁸.

Kant expounds his theory of Schematism in Book II, chapter I, of «Transcendental analytic», after a chapter entitled «Transcendental deduction of the pure concepts of understanding» (I will follow the first edition of the *Critique of pure reason* [1781]). This transcendental deduction is made by three synthesis (that Kant cannot manage to structure all the way): synthesis of apprehension, reproduction and recognition, which I maintain to match to the Husserlian primary memory (retention), secondary memory (reproduction), and 'tertiary memory' (image consciousness), as Bernard Stiegler calls it⁹. Yet, contrary to Husserl, Kant blends the reproductive faculty with the apprehensive one, describing the former as if it were the latter. This sort of transitivity is made possible by the intervention of imagination in perception. So, Kant lays the foundations to grasp the relationship between

⁶Ambiguity and misunderstanding usually pertain, by Husserl's *Logical investigations*, to 'indication' (*Anzeichen*) rather than to 'expression' (*Ausdruck*).

⁷E. Paci, *Sui rapporti tra fenomenologia e marxismo*, in J.T. Desanti, *Fenomenologia e prassi. Marxismo e filosofia di Husserl*, Milano, Lampugnani Nigri, 1971, pp. 103-122; I make reference to p. 108.

⁸Incidentally, Husserl himself (Hua XI: 149, 167 ff., 178) suggests that every realization of the living present, that is every realization of a sense or an object deposits itself in the area of the dead or rather in a sleeping horizon-sphere which constitutes a constant order of sedimentation.

⁹For this analysis, I am in debt to B. Stiegler, *Technics and time, 3: Cinematic time and the question of malaise*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2010, pp. 35-78.

primary and secondary memory (which Husserl will strictly exclude). Retention is straightaway a reproduction. The confusion of the two forms of memory is equivalent to the confusion of the two forms of synthesis, and it rebounds also on the definition of the third synthesis, that of recognition¹⁰. The function of recognition is to guarantee the coherence of consciousness with itself inasmuch it is a flux. Consciousness unifies itself through its objects and this unification is named 'transcendental' since it shows an a priori necessity, which attests a rule (that is a concept). Recognition abstracts a unity from the multiplicity of reproduction and allows it to get a legality. Starting from the reproducible past, the synthesis of recognition unifies the flux of consciousness and grounds the two previous synthesis; in this way, it also prepares and projects the homogeneous future of flux itself and the objects constituting in it. Recognition is a production which entails the matter of a re-production (second synthesis), demanding in turn an apprehension (first synthesis) of perception.

At this stage we shall tackle the question of Schematism. The production is also a kind of figuration and in 1787 Kant talks, indeed, about a figurative synthesis (or synthesis speciosa). 'To figure' is the translation of the Greek verb *skematizo*. Every schema, even in the Kantian acceptance, cannot do without an image, notably an empirical and accidental one. So, the synthesis of recognition slowly reveals its nature: it can unify and project the other two synthesis because it is rooted in the images that the secondary memory reproduces, or rather it can imagine. The schematisation is the process that projects the internal sense into images, making it accessible by the external sense. What is at stake here is the possibility of the transmission and heritage of knowledge (which is in effect the question of transcendental itself): Kant, like Husserl in the *Crisis*, refers to Thales and to the connection between concept and image in geometry. Schematism becomes the 'hidden art' which allows the construction and the articulation of concepts. But if every recognition is *ipso facto* a projection, it is so thanks to the opening and sketchiness of temporal flux of consciousness: schema can produce a knowledge

¹⁰That is the reason why Kant, in 1787, will write a new version of «Transcendental deduction», wherein the triple synthesis disappears to advantage two new forms of 'intellectual synthesis' with the goal of submitting the imagination to the legality of understanding and the internal sense to the unity of apperception.

just because it unifies the reproduced past images. This is the enigma of reminiscence. Figuring is necessary to knowledge because the origin of consciousness is not concurrent to itself. The need of schemata makes the circle of consciousness never to be closed, since reminiscence always entails oblivion. For this reason the three synthesis can be linked neither causally nor deterministically.

Why, then, can we state that motivations are a kind of transcendental schema? Husserl argues that the ego constitutes itself in the unity of a history, that is in a certain form of time: temporal flux, in its synthetic unity of retentions and protentions, organizes its universal form of 'motivation'. According to Husserl, retentions motivate protentions. This looks simple at first: the content of protentions can nothing but derive from what has been experienced, that is from the *Erlebnisse* 'retented' in retentions. In the Appendix I of the *Bernauer Manuskripte*, Husserl speaks of retention as the motivation for protention («und dadurch motiviert eine Protention auf 'Fortsetzung'»¹¹). Retentions offer a content to intentionality (protentions without retentions are empty, we could say); thus retentions constitute the roots of what Husserl calls 'passive synthesis', representing the primal process of constitution of all intentional contents and of subjectivity itself. But Husserl affirms as well that protentions are inverted retentions («die Protention umgestülpte Retention ist»¹²) and I believe he is right, although to all appearances retentions and protentions do not seem symmetric processes: I maintain that if protentions without retentions are empty, retentions without protentions are blind. The fact that at the beginning there is a synthesis, the fact that the origin is not a punctual impression but rather a retention (as Husserl himself glimpses and Derrida will emphasize) makes the beginning to be, at the same time, protentionally ahead to itself. This is a decisive crux, since it means that there is something in memory that makes it immediately a protention: not by chance the third Kantian synthesis, which is a figurative memory (following Bernard Stiegler I have called it 'tertiary memory'), is interpreted by Heidegger as a protentional synthesis (the synthesis of precognition or future)¹³. Individual is the issue of this temporal

¹¹E. Husserl, *Die Bernauer Manuskripte über das Zeitbewusstsein*, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001, p. 18.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹³M. Heidegger, *Phenomenological interpretation of Kant's Critique of pure reason*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1997, p. 264.

'inordinance'¹⁴ wherein each synthesis, in default of origin, does not subsist without the others. Retentions and protentions lay on a line of continuity by virtue of the third memory which makes up for the finitude of consciousness: on the one hand it recovers the past events that are never been properly 'lived' (this is the horizon of inheritance), and on the other hand it constitutes an empirical ek-stasis, an exposition of consciousness projecting and anticipating it out of itself. Cultural and trans-individual background emerges as constitutive for subjective individuation.

These observations are meaningful to recast the Husserlian notion of motivation. If motivation is this kind of schema mediating synthesis of 'no-longer-now' and 'not-yet-now', it has to share with it at least such a feature: the necessity of an external support, or 'prosthesis'¹⁵, and for this reason keeping its genesis and dynamic ultimately opaque. As I have underlined above, it speaks volumes that Husserl always connects motivations to the cultural field. All objects of art and culture down to the humble utensils of everyday life are transmuted, along with motivations – that is along with tertiary memories – into the world of the spirit. Motivations prevent the spirit to be split up in subjective and objective: we can grasp the sense of the world in its unity because we start from the living being in which it is imprinted, and our first lived experience, the one of body, is already the experience of a cultural object. The body is imprinted with sense like a book or a temple since it is our first tertiary memory and our first future.

Describing motivations like a schema means describing them like a mechanism of transduction in which the ego individuates itself through the mediation of retentions and protentions, i.e. through cultural artefacts exceeding consciousness. Thus, motivations abandon the binary or dual epistemology (the opposition, remnant of the rationalist and empiricist traditions, between the ideality of a pure consciousness and the reality of an opaque sensation) that Heidegger and Derrida, under different labels, referred to Husserl as 'metaphysics of presence'. Looking further, and going back to my first question, I would suggest that motivation, as third synthesis, gives life to that peculiar temporality which is precisely the one of history.

¹⁴This expression is borrowed from Shaun Gallagher (*The inordinance of time*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1998).

¹⁵See B. Stiegler, *Technics and time 1: The fault of Epimetheus*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1998, p. 152 and *passim*.

The ruling dogma of the separation in principle between epistemological elucidation and historical, even humanistic-psychological explanation, between epistemological and genetic origin, is fundamentally mistaken, unless one inadmissibly limits, in the usual way, the concepts of 'history', 'historical explanation', and 'genesis' (Hua VI, Appendix III: 370).¹⁶

The realm of motivations can finally be named the realm of history, the imaginative threshold between time of consciousness and time of the world. And if this temporality ruins the status of transcendental (as Kant knew and avoided by deleting, in 1787, the triple synthesis, and as Husserl also knew and avoided by denying to image consciousness the constitutive power), nevertheless the opposition between empirical and transcendental must be overcome without losing the necessary deferring of facts and rights, that is assuring a criterion for decision, which will never be something of merely factual. The notion of motivation calls us to this philosophical mission.

Proposal: 27/12/2010, Review: 19/09/2011, Publication: 04/02/2012

¹⁶E. Husserl, *The crisis of European sciences and transcendental phenomenology: an introduction to phenomenological philosophy*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1970, p. 370.