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List of Abbreviations

- AE:*** *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie*
- Crisis:*** *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie*
- EU:*** *Erfahrung und Urteil*
- FTL:*** *Formale und transzendente Logik*
- Hua:*** *Husserliana*
- Ideen I:*** *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und einer Phänomenologischen Philosophie, Erstes Buch. Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie*
- Ideen III:*** *Ideen zur einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Drittes Buch: Die Phänomenologie und die Fundamente der Wissenschaft*
- LU:*** *Logische Untersuchungen*
- PP:*** *Phänomenologische Psychologie. Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1925*

References to Husserl's manuscript are made to the original pagination. For Husserl's published texts, references are made to the Husserliana edition. In few instances, I quoted the official English translations of Husserl's works. The reference is first to

the page number of the Husserliana edition; then, the page number in square brackets refers to the English translation. Consider the following example: ‘Hua III, p. 22 [p. 23]’ means that the original German excerpt is at page 22 of the third volume of the Husserliana; and the English translation is at page 23 of the relevant translation. For those works that have been translated into English, but in separate volumes, I specify which text I refer to in square brackets. For example, ‘Hua IX, p. 10 [*EB Article*, p. 13]’ means that the translation of the excerpt in question of the *EB Article* is at page 13 of the relevant translation.

Introduction

Edmund Husserl's eidetic phenomenology¹ has always attracted and keeps attracting many criticisms, even raised by other phenomenologists: in fact, critics include, among others, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas, Michel Henry, Jacques Derrida *etc.*² One may consider, as an example, the debate about the tension between genesis and structure, or that between phenomenology and history, of the second half of the twentieth century.³

More recently, phenomenologists such as Claude Romano and Sebastian Luft have also voiced doubts about and raised criticisms toward Husserl's eidetics. Romano would rather argue for the importance of hermeneutical analyses⁴; and, roughly, Luft is in favor of interpreting phenomenology as a form of philosophy of culture.⁵ But these are not all the criticisms. In addition, according to other contemporary phenomenologists, eidetic phenomenology is worrisome inasmuch as grasping essences requires a method

¹ Husserl's eidetic phenomenology, or, more simply, eidetics, is also often referred to as 'Husserl's essentialism'. I avoided as much as possible the use of this expression, as it might be thought to have a pejorative meaning; that is, to indicate a view that "arrests change, solidified process, closes forever the possibility of revising the truths of the present – and ends up by making the real world, human experience, and scientific cognition rest on, and within the constraints of, an inviolable grid of unchangeable truths." [J. N. Mohanty, *Phenomenology: Between Essentialism and Transcendental Philosophy*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, IL, 1997, p. 89].

When the expression 'Husserl's essentialism' occurs in this dissertation, it is simply intended to indicate the view according to which, first, every type of objects has a corresponding essence, which can in principle be grasped through (a special kind of) intuition, and, second, essential structures and eidetic laws regulate *a priori* any possible experience.

² I do not cite Martin Heidegger among the critics of Husserl's essentialism, for Heidegger's thoughts about it are very complex to assess and deserve the attention of specialized scholarship.

³ This debate is nicely summarized in Vincenzo Costa, *La generazione della forma. La fenomenologia e il problema della genesi in Husserl e in Derrida*, Jaca Book, Milano 1996, pp. 29-37.

⁴ While explicitly rejecting one the pivotal features of Husserl's eidetics, namely, the idea that essences are intuitively given, Romano argues that, if there are essences, they are just simply self-evident truths about experienced objects. As he writes, "[a]s long as we stick to elementary examples the eidetic method may be possible. But the more complex descriptions become, the less plausible it seems to maintain that phenomenological description proceeds as a mere report of laws of essence." [C., Romano, *Au cœur de la raison, la phénoménologie*, Gallimard, Paris 2010 [*At the Heart of Reason*, trans. Michael B. Smith and Claude Romano, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, IL, 2015, p. 28]. See also *Chapter 12* and the *Conclusion* of Romano's book.

⁵ In a recent paper, Luft has clarified his position toward Husserl's essentialism. Discussing his book *Subjectivity and Lifeworld in Transcendental Phenomenology*, he wrote: "Here I am [...] critical of a certain aspect of Husserl's philosophy – namely the eidetic project – an aspect which admittedly I should have perhaps been franker about, though this is a point which I am able only as of late to see and articulate in greater clarity." [S. Luft, 'Defending the "One Structure": Comments on Nicolas De Warren's "Husserl's Hermeneutical Phenomenology of the Life-World as Culture Reconsidered"', manuscript, p. 5] See also the following passage: "In order to remain in touch with the "rich bathos" of culture and the lifeworld, one should steer clear of the eidetic." [ivi, p. 12]

(*i.e.*, the method of eidetic variation) that deviates or betrays phenomenology's commitment to being faithful to the original givenness of phenomena. Indeed, according to those critics, phenomenologists should stay closer to the givenness of phenomena, rather than trying to purify them through phantasy, as required by the eidetic method. Others, instead, seriously doubt that human beings are capable of grasping essences, and, accordingly, they suspect that what we would call 'essences' are rather constructs or projections of our most deeply-ingrained beliefs. Thus, the question arises: should we simply reject essences?

This dissertation moves from the idea that these criticisms are to a greater or a lesser extent challenges for eidetic phenomenology; and, accordingly, they must be taken seriously before accepting Husserl's eidetics or rejecting it and attempting to overcome it. This may be particularly important today, as contemporary phenomenologists are to understand, once again, which direction phenomenology should take and which place it should have within the larger philosophical landscape. Contemporary phenomenologists can decide to set aside Husserl's eidetics and the related project (or some of its aspects), but it is important to examine carefully what this setting aside implies. Then, this dissertation aims to provide a firm basis for the discussion of this issue, and to give a preliminary reply to the question concerning the rejection of essences.

The reply that this dissertation aims to give is preliminary because a complete defense of Husserl's eidetics would also require advancing a defense of eidetic variation, and thus, more generally, a defense of the possibility of grasping essences intuitively. From a phenomenological perspective, it is indeed impossible to accept essences without considering how to attain them and showing that one can have justification for them. Despite being aware of the importance of justifying the eidetic method for accepting essences, I will approach the question from a different angle.

The two primary objectives of this dissertation are to clarify how the notion of essence is to be understood according to Husserl, and to show that, once properly understood, the notion of essence is worthy of a place within phenomenology; in particular if one understands essences as minimal structures that can only be grasped through reduction. Further, this dissertation aims to show that skepticism about essences has undesirable consequences: it leads to the impoverishment of the descriptive power of phenomenological analyses.

As such, I am of the opinion that this dissertation lays the necessary groundwork for becoming open toward the adoption of a phenomenological account of essences; or, at least, this dissertation prepares one to consider grasping essences as worth to try, even if one may lack absolute justification for them. Because of that, I attempted to offer reasons that even philosophers that are skeptical about the possibility of intuiting essences would take seriously and may accept; or reasons appealing even to philosophers who consider intuition as reliable and trustworthy, despite judging essences as doubtful or worrisome. Accordingly, this dissertation does not take issue with those criticisms directed toward the correctness of the method of eidetic variation.⁶

The first three chapters of this dissertation intend to achieve the first of the primary objectives; that is, to clarify Husserl's notion of essence. As such, in these chapters, we present the development of the notion of essence within Husserl's phenomenology.

In particular, the first chapter takes the move from an analysis of the notion of essence as it is gradually presented in the course of lectures of 1902–1903 titled *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie*, where Husserl uses it with awareness for the first time. From there, the chapter ventures to uncover the ancestors of the notion of essence in the *Logische Untersuchungen*, and to reconstruct the possible reasons leading Husserl to introduce the new term and its cognates in place of the term 'species'. In this chapter, particular attention is devoted uncovering the origin of Husserl's conception of essences. I argue that it stems from an original combination of aspects from Brentano's mereology and Lotze's and Brentano's philosophical thought, and that this mixture deeply shapes Husserl's conception of essences.

The second chapter continues this examination, focusing, instead, on the first sections of *Ideen I*, where Husserl introduces for the first time the notion of pure essence or *eidos*; which Husserl arrives at after several years of continuous work on essences.

Moreover, the chapter disambiguates between the notion of essence and that of idea in the Kantian sense: a distinction that is fundamental for pointing out the difference

⁶ This dissertation does not take issue with, for example, the circularity objection. David Kasmier nicely presents several objections to the method of eidetic variation and the relevant possible replies to each of them. See his 'A Defense of Husserl's Method of Free Variation,' in *Epistemology, Archaeology, Ethics: Current Investigations of Husserl's Corpus*, edited by P. Vandavelde and S. Luft, Continuum Press, London and New York, NY, 2010.

between carrying out analyses of essences and analyses of the meaning or the sense of phenomena. Further, the second chapter insists on the idea of essential laws as the framework of our experience. This fundamental aspect of Husserl's eidetics is already at play since Husserl's introduction of the relevant lexicon in 1902–1903; but Husserl makes it more and more explicit, and decisively insists on it.

The third chapter adds some important elements for the discussion of Husserl's eidetics. In particular, it investigates what it means for an essence to be pure. On the basis of the the distinction between natural ontologies (such as phenomenological psychology) and transcendental phenomenology, I distinguish between the idea of purity as generality, which is achieved by any general object that can be called 'essence' and the idea of purity as separateness from nature, which it is attained by the phenomenologists through the transcendental reduction.

Once this investigation is concluded, this chapter addresses the question concerning how to grasp pure essences. More precisely, it presents Husserl's account of the method of eidetic variation, and it shows how one's use of imagination deeply affects the end result of the variation and its purity. Lastly, this chapter shows that perfectly pure essences are very thin, where the adjective 'thin' is intended to refer to an essence that features very few properties.

All these clarifications and explanations are put into play in the fourth and final chapter of this dissertation. This chapter addresses some of the most central objections leveled against Husserl's eidetics. These objections are lumped into two main classes: *the Betrayal Objection* and *the Skeptical Objection*. According to *the Betrayal Objection*, even if it was successful, Husserl's eidetic project constitutes a betrayal of phenomenology and of his original aspiration to clarify all possible phenomena through intuition. *The Skeptical Objection* cast doubts, instead, on the possibility of attaining pure essences because of the impossibility to transcend one's subjective point of view through phantasy.

After having provided the replies Husserl could have given to these objections, the chapter concludes with personal considerations on the issue at hand. The core of the argument advanced against *the Skeptical Objection* and in favor of eidetics relies on the advantages of preserving a kind of normativity that is materially grounded, and that it would be lost if one decided to reject essences. Indeed, if considered essences as mere

subjective constructs, one would fail to appreciate the difference between concepts and essences; and, then, one would consider every experiential object as contextually-historically-, conventionally-determined, *etc.*, losing the distinction between subjective constructs and the rest of experiential objects and, what it, the possibility of accounting for the richness and complexity of experience.

At the same time, this chapter argues against *the Betrayal Objection* on the basis of the idea that analyses of essences can only shed light on minimal truths about experiential phenomena, and, therefore, they do not aim (nor are meant) to substitute other kinds of analyses within phenomenology: pure essences offer a minimal structure, to be used for the phenomenological description of the sense of experience.

CHAPTER 1

THE ORIGIN OF ESSENCES: *ALLEGEMEINE* *ERKENNTNISTHEORIE* (1902–1903) AND EARLIER WORKS

1.1 Introduction

What does Husserl mean with the term ‘essence’ and the adjectives ‘essential’ and ‘eidetic’ in the early stages of phenomenology? Where does such term come from? Which are its ancestors? Which are its roots? More generally, what is its etiology?

Is there a gap between Husserl’s previous conception of ideal object¹ and his view after the introduction of essences within his work? Or between his conception of material law (or material a priori) and of law of essence? And if *Yes*, how large is this gap?

Is Husserl’s introduction of the lexicon of essences an ingenuous move? Is it some sort of *residuum* of recent influences or of an old tradition, as some scholars have claimed?² Or is it a voluntary and meaningful introduction? Does it serve a specific function?

¹ I preferably translate the German term ‘*allgemeine*’ with ‘general’, rather than with ‘universal’, despite some English translations favor the term ‘universal’ as a translation of ‘*allgemeine*’. In the last chapter, I will use the term ‘universality’ when I will take issue with the objections of scholars who adopt this translation.

² Zahavi, for example, claims that the “interest in essential structures is so widespread and common in the history of philosophy that it is nonsensical to take it as a defining feature of phenomenology.”[Dan Zahavi, *Husserl’s Phenomenology*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2003, p. 37]. Similarly, Didier Frank claims that phenomenological reference to essences is a sort of *nostalgic* attempt to fulfill the ideal of modern philosophy. Cf. Didier Frank, *Chair et corps, sur la phénoménologie de Husserl*, Éditions de Minuit, Paris 1981 [*Flesh and Body. On the Phenomenology of Husserl*, Bloomsbury Academic, London-New York 2014, pp. 13-14].

This chapter aims to give preliminary answers to these questions, focusing on Husserl's writings of 1902–1903 in which the idea of phenomenological analyses as analyses of essences is first introduced. Then, this chapter will compare these writings with earlier texts and, especially, with the *Logische Untersuchungen*³ [1900-1901], to attempt to clarify Husserl's reasons for the introduction of the term 'essence' within phenomenology.⁴

This clarification is a much-needed first step to answering those questions concerning whether there is an original account of essences within phenomenology and whether essences must necessarily be a part of the phenomenological method.

1.2 The Introduction of Essences: The Breakthrough of *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie* (1902-1903)

1.2.1 Essences as Ideal Objects

Before reconstructing Husserl's reasons for the introduction of the phenomenological notion of essence, as well as Husserl's sources of inspiration concerning this issue, we start by examining the first meaningful technical use of the term 'essence' in Husserl's writings. Husserl's first technical use of the term 'essence' and of the expression 'law of essence' (and of their respective cognates)⁵ dates back to the course of lectures of the winter semester 1902–1903 titled *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie*⁶.

This is the earliest of Husserl's works in which he clearly states that phenomenological analyses are analyses of essences [*Wesensanalyse*]⁷; that is, the

³ Hereafter also *LU*.

⁴ This does not imply that the notion of essence that it is at play there is already the full-fledged notion of essence. As we will see in the next chapter, in *Ideen I*, Husserl's provides a much more explicit and detailed description of the notion of essence and of eidetic sciences in general.

⁵ Consider that the adjective '*eidetisch*' does not appear before around 1911–1912. Specifically, Husserl uses it in a text probably written in March 1911, contained in *Hua XXVI*, p. 219 as Appendix XIX. The adjective settles into Husserl's language around 1912–1913, as evidenced by *Ideen I* and *Ideen II*.

⁶ Hereafter also *AE*.

⁷ Husserl's characterization of phenomenology as an eidetic science goes, indeed, through several steps. In a nutshell: In the *Logischen Untersuchungen*, phenomenology is considered as a descriptive method that is limited to the "*reel Bestand*" of the lived-experiences. Then, starting from 1902–1903,

first of his works in which, despite still characterizing phenomenology as a descriptive psychology⁸, Husserl adopts this way of positively⁹ describing the non-empirical character of phenomenological analyses.¹⁰ The following passage explicitly states this thought.

Die Phänomenologie der Erkenntnis ist danach rein immanente Beschreibung oder vielmehr Wesensanalyse der psychischen Erlebnisse des Denkens und Erkennens, und insofern ist sie deskriptive Psychologie.¹¹

Shortly after this passage, Husserl explains that phenomenological analyses must be *Wesensanalyse*, for they deal with their subject matter – *i.e.*, lived-experiences [*Erlebnisse*] – not as temporally-determined particulars [*Einzelheiten*] of an individual consciousness, but, rather, with regards to their essence [“*Wesen*”, *Essenzen*].¹²

Husserl begins to speak of phenomenology as consisting of essential analyses of lived-experiences [*Wesensanalyse von der Erlebnisse*], but still not as a science of essences. In 1905, phenomenology is characterized as the essential doctrine of consciousness [*Wesenslehre des Bewusstseins*], and, finally, after the introduction of the transcendental reduction (1906–07), it turns into an eidetic science of pure (*i.e.*, reduced) lived-experiences and of their *correlata*.

⁸ Interestingly, the very first characterization of phenomenological analyses as eidetic analyses predates Husserl’s rejection of his early identification of phenomenology and descriptive psychology. It may be hypothesized that, at this stage, Husserl believed that specifying the essential character of phenomenology (*i.e.*, its non-empirical character) could have sufficed to shield the latter from being misunderstood for traditional descriptive psychology. Yet, Husserl will abandon the label of ‘descriptive psychology’ as a synonymous of phenomenology soon after; notably, in the review to Elsenhans written in 1903 [Hua XXII, pp. 203-208]. However, the first part of *AE* (which goes back to the fall and winter of 1902), predates the review to Elsenhans and, so, the rejection of the label ‘descriptive psychology’ for phenomenology.

⁹ Before then, Husserl clarified the difference between phenomenology and the natural sciences of consciousness through concentrating on the merely descriptive character of the theory of consciousness, and through the limitations of his subject matter to the “*reel Bestand*” of lived-experiences. Yet, this distinction was still insufficient to provide a positive characterization of phenomenology and of its subject matter. For further clarification, see Henning Peucker, *Von der Psychologie zur Phänomenologie: Husserls Weg in die Phänomenologie der «Logischen Untersuchungen»*, Felix Meiner, Hamburg 2002, pp. 172-173.

¹⁰ This modification was judged by Husserl himself as an improvement of his theory of knowledge. In a letter to Heinrich Gomperz of February 18, 1905, Husserl admits to consider *AE* as a more advanced step than *LU* towards the phenomenological clarification of the theory of knowledge and of the same phenomenological method. These are his words: “Ich bin so fest überzeugt, in ihr [= der phänomenologischen Methode] die wahre Methode der Erkenntniskritik zu besitzen, daß ich es als mein Lebensziel sehe, mittelst ihrer die Hauptprobleme der Erkenntniskritik der Reihe nach zu lösen – und daran arbeite ich unausgesetzt, Jahre um Jahre. [...] Vielleicht wird die Herausgabe meiner Göttinger Vorlesungen über Erkenntnistheorie, in welchen die methodischen und prinzipiellen Fragen den Hauptinhalt machen und eine ungleich klarere Darstellung gefunden haben als in den Log<ischen> U<ntersuchungen> zu unserer Verständigung beitragen.”[Hua Dok. III/4, pp. 148-149]

¹¹ Hua Mat. III, p. 77.

¹² Exactly as psychology, phenomenology deals with lived-experiences, but differently from psychology it does so with the purpose of clarifying the theory of knowledge. In fact, in the *Logische*

Es liegen zwar Erlebnisse dem Phänomenologen vor, aber nicht als Erlebnisse kommen sie in Betracht, als zeitlich bestimmte Einzelheiten individuellen Bewusstseins. Und festgestellt werden nie und nirgends Einzelheiten, sondern „Wesen“, Essenzen, und unter Abstraktion von aller empirischen Objektivierung, von der Beziehung auf das empirische Ich etc.¹³

Husserl clearly uses the terms ‘*Wesen*’ (which Husserl puts within quotation marks) and ‘*Essenz*’ – both translated in English as ‘essence’ – in opposition to particulars (that is, ‘*Einzelheiten*’). More precisely, lived-experiences considered essentially are taken as being different from particular lived-experiences attached to an empirical consciousness. In other words, *Erlebnisse* are not considered in phenomenology as psychic events, as they are considered in psychology.¹⁴

Leaving aside for a moment the questions concerning why Husserl uses two terms to indicate essences, and whether they are actually synonymous (and, relatedly, the question concerning why ‘*Wesen*’ is in quotation marks), we can take the move from the opposition between essences and particulars to achieve a preliminary characterization of the phenomenological notion of essence.

First, the fact that essences are introduced as opposed to particulars implies that the term ‘essence’ [‘*Wesen*’, *Essenz*] is used to indicate something general; that is, more

Untersuchungen, Husserl already claims that lived-experiences enter the field of phenomenology not because they are the primary interest of phenomenologists, but rather for the sake of the clarification of ideal objects; *i.e.*, for they necessarily are the basis for the ideative [*ideierende*] abstraction of species or for the categorical intuition of ideal objects needed to clarify the objective validity of pure logic. However, Husserl does not give any further specification regarding their status. Cf. *Hua Mat.* III, p. 77.

¹³ *Hua Mat.* III, p. 77. See also this passage: “Wir treiben dabei keine dingliche Erkenntnis, wir erforschen auch nicht die Seele als ein angebliches Ding, an dem die Erlebnisse als Akzidenzien hängen; das einzelne Erlebniswesen oder die Erlebnisgattung, so, wie sie sich da darstellt, ist unser Denkobjekt.” [*Hua Mat.* III, p. 80]

¹⁴ To consider the essence of lived-experiences means to look at them in a way radically different from the psychologist. Within psychology, as Husserl writes, “*gelten die Erlebnisse wirklich als Erlebnisse, Akte empirischer Persönlichkeiten*” [*Hua Mat.* III, p. 77]. Within phenomenology, on the contrary, lived-experiences are not taken in the true psychological sense as events [*Vorkommnisse*] of an individual consciousness that occur in a certain specific time, but rather as essences [*Wesen, Essenz*]. Husserl’s insistence on the fact that phenomenology deals with lived-experiences considered essentially has the function to radically differentiate phenomenology and its analyses from that of classical psychology (and even from Brentano’s descriptive psychology). Husserl connects the non-psychological character of the analyses of the *Erlebnisse* with their being analyses of essences, that is, with their being “general”. Considering a lived-experience (whatsoever) essentially means for Husserl to disengage from its psychic character, and this is a move that makes phenomenological analyses different from psychological analyses.

precisely, in Husserl's terms, a *general object*.¹⁵ In other words, lived-experiences are not taken as particulars of an individual consciousness, but, rather, as *generalities*: each of them is a general object.¹⁶

Further, given that Husserl characterizes particulars as temporally-determined [*zeitlich bestimmte*], and that he writes that each lived-experience pertains to an individual consciousness [*individuell Bewusstsein*], we can rightly attribute to essences the following other two characteristics:

1. Essences are not temporally determined; that is, they are non-temporal objects¹⁷;
2. Essences do not have any connection to anyone's individual consciousness.

Then, each lived-experience ceases to be understood as a real empirical *datum*: it is not individualized; that is, spatially or temporally located. Nor is it realized, that is, causally attached to anyone's individual consciousness.

Husserl stresses the latter characteristic (that is, (2)) few lines after the passage above; where he states that phenomenological analyses of lived-experiences abstract from any reference to the empirical *ego*.

The other characteristic of essences (that is, (1)) becomes more informative when we consider it in the light of the second *Logische Untersuchung*. Husserl writes there that temporality is the main characteristic of *real objects*, and distinguishes real temporal objects from their opposite: *ideal objects* [*ideale Gegenstände*]. In Husserl's own words,

¹⁵ In *LU*, Husserl clarifies his use of the term 'object' with reference to ideal objects: "I often make use of the vaguer expression *Gegenständlichkeit* since we are here never limited to the objects in the narrow sense, but have also to do with state of affairs, properties and non-independent forms, whether real or categorial ones." [Hua XIX/1, 45] See also this passage from Husserl's course of lectures of the summer semester of 1909: "*Ich nenne Ideen Gegenstände, Subjekte möglicher Aussagen.*" [Hua-Mat VII, 87] In addition, Husserl writes that objects are those things that can be predicable. Cf. Edmund Husserl, 'Entwurf einer Vorrede zu den Logischen Untersuchungen', edited by E. Fink, in *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* (1939), pp. 106-133; pp. 319-339.

¹⁶ Given that every empirical natural-scientific description is always a description of particulars, Husserl maintains that phenomenology does not describe [*beschrieben*], but, rather, abstracts [*abstrahiert*] or generalizes [*generalisiert*]. Consider the following passage: "Empirische und naturwissenschaftliche Deskription ist Beschreibung seiender individueller Dinge, Vorgänge etc., und Deskription ist Unterlage für die Aufsuchung von empirischen Allgemeinheiten und von Naturgesetzen. In der Phänomenologie wird in diesem Sinne nicht beschrieben, sondern abstrahiert, generalisiert, es werden Essenzen und Verhältnisse solcher bestimmt." [Hua Mat III, p. 78]

¹⁷ In his later works, Husserl states that ideal objects are '*Überzeitlich*', but, at this time, he prefers to say that they are '*unzeitlich*'. Cf. Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil*, p. 313. Hereafter *EU*.

Real ist das Individuum mit all seinen Bestandstücken; es ist ein Hier und Jetzt. Als charakteristisches Merkmal der Realität genügt uns die Zeitlichkeit. Reales Sein und zeitliches Sein sind zwar nicht identische, aber umfangsgleiche Begriffe. Natürlich meinen wir nicht, daß die psychischen Erlebnisse Dinge sind im Sinne der Metaphysik. Aber zu einer dinglichen Einheit gehörig sind auch sie, wenn die alte metaphysische Überzeugung im Rechte ist, daß alles zeitlich Seiende notwendig entweder ein Ding ist oder Dinge mitkonstituiert. Soll aber Metaphysisches ganz ausgeschlossen bleiben, so definiere man Realität geradezu durch Zeitlichkeit. Denn worauf es hier allein ankommt, das ist der Gegensatz zum unzeitlichen " Sein" des Idealen.¹⁸

Therefore, because of (1) and (2), we can add that essences are not real objects, but rather their opposite, *i.e.*, ideal objects: essences are not simply generalities, but they are the kind of generalities that Husserl characterizes as *ideal objects*;¹⁹ or as ideas [*Idee*]²⁰ and species [*Spezies*], according to the lexicon of the *Logische Untersuchungen*.²¹

Husserl explicitly contrasts essences with *empirical generalities* shortly after the passage under scrutiny, where he compares phenomenological analyses of essences (and, as we will see, of essential or ideal laws) with scientific analyses dealing with empirical generalities and natural laws [*empirischen Allgemeinheiten und Naturgesetzen*].²² In so doing, he explicitly distinguishes essences as ideal generalities from empirical generalities.

The above passage from *LU II* helps, thus, to clarify that the opposition which is at stake here, is not simply the opposition between particulars and generalities, but more

¹⁸ Hua XIX/1, p. 129. See also the following passage: "Jede Tatsache ist individuell, also zeitlich bestimmt." [Hua XVIII, p. 126]

¹⁹ I prefer to make explicit the fact that Husserl refers to ideal general objects (and that essences are general ideal objects), because some philosophers argue that ideal objects can be both general and individual. See for example, Robert D. Rollinger, *Meinong and Husserl on Abstraction and Universals: From Hume Studies I to Logical Investigations II*, Rodopi, Amsterdam and Atlanta 1993, p. 127.

²⁰ The term 'idea' in this phase of Husserl's thought should be understood as synonymous of 'general ideal object'. In *Ideas I*, as we will see, Husserl will instead warn the reader not to confuse essences and ideas.

²¹ Husserl will later change his mind about the identification between ideal objects and species. At that point, it will be evident that every species is an ideal object, but not *vice versa*. Meanings, for example, are ideal objects, but not species. Cf. footnote 26.

²² Hua Mat. III, p. 78. See also *ivi*, p. 189, 191, 192.

importantly, that between real and ideal objects, which was precisely the kind of opposition that lies at the core of the *Logische Untersuchungen*.²³

To summarize, the preliminary characterization of the notion of essence that we find in these pages is then the following: essences are general objects, since they are not particulars; and they are ideal (that is, they are not temporal, or contingent).²⁴ More simply, essences are ideal objects. As such, they have at least a kinship with species or ideas; which are the model of *ideal objects* in the *Logische Untersuchungen*.²⁵

We can also notice that the introduction of this new terminology coincides with Husserl's attempt to find a positive determination for the status of lived-experience within phenomenology; a determination that would immediately suggest that phenomenology is different from any other psychology (including Brentano's psychology).

1.2.2 The New Notion of Essence and Its Degree of Generality

With the characterization of essences as ideal objects we have reached a minimal understanding of Husserl's notion of essence. This section analyzes more closely the notion of essence that is at play in the 1902–1903 course of lectures titled *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie*.

Shortly after having claimed that phenomenological analyses are analyses of lived-experiences considered as essences, Husserl further elaborates this idea. Specifically, he makes some further specifications of it, thereby introducing a very precise lexicon and very precise distinctions. As we will see, such specifications will help us to understand the relationship between essence and species [*Spezies*], which, as

²³ In *LU*, Husserl deals with the opposition between the “spezifischen (oder idealen) Gegenstände” and “den individuellen (oder realen).” [Hua XIX, p. 112] One of the central problems of the theory of knowledge [*Erkenntnistheorie*] is to understand how the ‘ideal’ gives itself in the ‘real’ (*i.e.*, the lived-experiences).

²⁴ As Husserl himself explains, “Tatsachen sind „zufällig“, sie könnten ebenso gut auch nicht sein, sie könnten anders sein.” [Hua XVIII, p. 129]. Contrary to real objects, ideal objects are not *contingent*.

²⁵ Species are so much the model of ideal objects in *LU* that Husserl erroneously mistake meaning for a species. This is a mistake that Husserl himself will correct approximately around 1908 (Cf. his *Vorlesungen über Bedeutungslehre* in Hua XXVI). For Husserl's own comments regarding his old identification between meaning and species, see Husserl's letters to Ingarden of November 21, 1930 [Hua Dok. III, p. 269] and of April 5, 1918 [Hua Dok. III, pp. 181-182]; Husserl's *Erfahrung und Urteil* (hereafter also *EU*), §64d, and *Formale und transzendente Logik* (hereafter also *FTL*) §57b [Hua XVII, p. 163].

explained, is the notion used in *LU*, together with the notion of idea, to refer to ideal objects.

Few lines after the previously quoted passage, Husserl reiterates that, within phenomenology, every phenomenon, every lived-experience, is taken as an ideal generality. Then, as he specifies, what allows one to consider live-experienced essentially is an act of ideation; and, specifically, an ideation of the lowest level [*die niederste Stufe der Ideation*].²⁶ This low-level ideation directly carried out on the relevant lived-experience allows the phenomenologist to grasp a generality; that is, the lived-experience as a generality. Husserl characterizes this generality, few lines ahead, as a generality of the lowest level of differentiation [*ein Allgemeines niederster Differenzierung*]; or, in other words, through this low-level ideation of the lived-experience, we achieve an ideal object of the lowest degree of generality.

As explained, the considered actual lived-experience is no more a psychic phenomenon, but a ‘this’ [*Dies*]²⁷. The following is the relevant passage in which Husserl states this.

Was da analysiert wird, sind, objektiv geredet, psychische Phänomene; aber als das sind sie nicht in der phänomenologischen Intuition gegeben, vielmehr nur gegeben im Status der modifizierten cartesianischen Evidenz als "dies", was wohl schon die niederste Stufe der Ideation ist.²⁸

No psychic phenomena as such (*i.e.* as individual empirical phenomena) can be the subject matter of phenomenological analyses. When a phenomenologist considers

²⁶ The introduction of a low-level ideation is an important addition to the account of ‘ideation’ presented in *LU*. In *LU*, Husserl does not distinguish the ideation that lead to a singular essence (this nuance of read) from the intuition of the corresponding generality (red as idea or red as general)]. See for example *Hua Mat. V*, [p. 48]: “Man kann sagen, jeder eigentlich (intuitiv) vollzogenen Verallgemeinerung liege ein Einzelnes zugrunde, der empirischen Verallgemeinerung ein empirisches Einzelnes (also zeitlich Individuelles), hingegen der Wesensbildung, der ideierenden Generalisation, ein phänomenologisch Einzelnes, und das ist kein Individuelles im psychologischen Sinn.”

In *AE* there appears for the first time to be a difference between low-level ideation and ideation as generalization [*Verallgemeinerung*]. The first kind of ideation gives the phenomenon as a ‘this’ [*Dies*], but it is still not a generalization. Cf., e.g., *Hua Mat. V*, p. 48 and *Hua XLI*, p. 74, 92. Husserl consistently works on this issue in the years 1905-1907. See *Chapter 2*, especially *Section 2.4*

²⁷ In the next chapter. we will see the development of this idea of a generality of the lowest kind [*Dies*; later *Dies-da*], which, according to Husserl, is an individual essence.

²⁸ *Hua Mat. III*, p. 78. This passage implies that the essence *lived-experience* requires the lowest level of ideation.

each experienced psychic phenomenon,²⁹ in virtue of a low-level of ideation, this phenomenon loses its individuality, and is transformed into something else: a ‘Dies’.

Just after this passage, Husserl further clarifies what this act consists in. If we continue reading, indeed, we learn that this ideation of the lowest kind transforms the phenomenon at hand by abstracting its content [*Inhalt*]. It is also useful, in this case, to quote the relevant passage. As Husserl writes, within phenomenological analyses:

Blicke ich auf „dies Phänomen“ hin, so blicke ich rein auf seinen „*Inhalt*“, der nicht gemeint ist als etwas in Raum, Zeit und individuellem Bewusstsein, also schon als Allgemeines, ein Allgemeines niederster Differenzierung, wenn auch nicht eine Differenz einer Gattung im aristotelischen Sinn (also Konkretum im allgemeinen Sinn). Am besten sage ich daher nicht in der Phänomenologie Erlebnis, sondern *Erlebnis-Idee* oder *Erlebnis-Wesen*³⁰, *Erlebnis-Essenz*. [*my italics*]³¹

In the quoted passage, it appears clearly enough that the transformed phenomenon [*Dies*] (i.e., the essence-lived-experience) coincides with the content [*Inhalt*] of the initially experienced phenomenon. We can present this idea as follows: the phenomenon as *Dies* is the experienced phenomenon reduced to its content. A phenomenon is reduced to its *Inhalt*³² when all the determinations of phenomenon that are not included in its content are dropped; that is when its individuation in space

²⁹ Husserl seems to prefer the term ‘psychic phenomenon’, rather than ‘lived-experience’, when he wants to indicate a lived-experience considered as individual phenomenon attached to an empirical consciousness (therefore, before the ‘phenomenological’ conversion described in these passages).

³⁰ Interestingly, this passage contains again both the term ‘*Wesen*’ (which is not in quotation marks) and the term ‘*Essenz*’.

³¹ Hua Mat. III, p. 78. From this passage we learn that: the phenomenon of phenomenological analyses is a ‘Dies’, that is:

- i. The content [*Inhalt*] of the phenomenon one looks at.
- ii. A generality of the lowest difference [*Allgemeines niederster Differenzierung*], but not the *differentia* of a genus in the Aristotelian sense.
- iii. A *concretum*.
- iv. It is described as ‘*Erlebnis-Idee*’, as ‘*Erlebnis-Wesen*’, or as ‘*Erlebnis-Essenz*’.

These are all way to express the status of lived-experiences within phenomenological analyses.

³² Husserl elaborates the notions of *Inhalt* and of *Ideale Inhalt* of a concept in his writings of/on logic and mathematics. In the *Logik* of 1896, Husserl provides the following definition of *Inhalt*: "Die Merkmale, aus denen ein Begriff sich wirklich konstituiert, die also seinem Inhalt im gewöhnlichen Sinne des Wortes zugehören, nennt man auch konstitutive Merkmale, die aus ihnen ableitbaren die konsekutiven. Die Gesamtheit der konstitutiven und konsekutiven Merkmale, die zu einem Begriff gehören, ist also der ideale Inhalt des Begriffs." [Hua Mat. I, p. 71]

and time and its attachment to an empirical consciousness are dropped.³³ The phenomenon reduced to its content is a generality, because it loses the determinations qualifying it as an individual object: its locality in time and space and its causal attachment to an individual consciousness. This means, in other words, that the *Dies* – this generality of *niederster Differenzierung* – coincides with the individual object once it has been de-individualized and de-realized because of a shift of focus towards its content. As Jean-François Lavigne rightly notes, the *Dies*, the phenomenon reduced to its content, is what Husserl will later call an ‘eidetic singularity’³⁴.

Eidetic singularities are described by Husserl in the first book of *Ideen* as the lowest level of generality [*niedersten spezifischen Differenzen*]. Consider, in particular, this passage:

Jedes Wesen, ob ein sachhaltiges oder leeres (also reinlogisches) Wesen, ordnet sich in eine Stufenreihe von Wesen, in eine Stufenreihe der Generalität und Spezialität ein. Heruntersteigend gelangen wir zu den *niedersten spezifischen Differenzen* oder, wie wir auch sagen, den *eidetischen Singularitäten*; emporsteigend durch die Art- und Gattungswesen zu einer obersten Gattung. Eidetische Singularitäten sind Wesen, die zwar notwendig über sich "allgemeinere" Wesen haben als ihre Gattungen, aber nicht mehr unter sich Besonderungen, in Beziehung auf welche sie selbst Arten (nächste Arten oder mittelbare, höhere Gattungen) wären. Ebenso ist diejenige Gattung die oberste, welche über sich keine Gattung mehr hat.³⁵ [*my italics*]

Eidetic singularities occupy the lowest level within the eidetic hierarchy, which is nothing but the classical hierarchy of the Porphyrian tree.

Interestingly, Husserl uses the Aristotelian lexicon of genera, differentia, and species to refer to essences in *Ideen I* and in *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie*; whereas, he had already extensively used it in the *Logische Untersuchungen* with reference to ideal objects.³⁶ More precisely, since *LU*, with reference to ideal generality, Husserl

³³ The content of a psychic act does not include any reference neither to space and time, nor to an empirical consciousness.

³⁴ Cf. J.F. Lavigne, *Husserl et la naissance de la phénoménologie (1900-1913). Des Recherches logiques aux Ideen: la genèse de l'idéalisme transcendantal phénoménologique*, PUF, Paris 2005, p. 300.

³⁵ Hua III, p. 30

³⁶ Husserl extensively deals with Aristotle's distinctions since his logical writings of the second half of the '90s. See, for example, Hua Mat. I, p. 64: "Mit Beziehung auf die Klassifikation spricht man von

distinguishes indeed between ‘genera’ [*Gattungen*], ‘species’ [*Arten*] and ‘differentia’ or specific difference [*spezifischem Unterschied*].

Let us remind here briefly that the idea of different degrees of generalities is connected to that of extension [*Umfang*]: each general object has an extension [*Umfang*]; and the extension of a general object is defined as the set [*Gesamtheit*] of objects that can be subsumed under the relevant general representation. The extension of each general object determines its degree of generality; indeed, more specifically, the greater the extension of a general object, the greater its degree of generality. As such, the extension of a general object may include particular individuals as well as other ideal objects depending on their degree of generality.

This clarification helps us to understand why eidetic singularities occupy the lowest level within the eidetic hierarchy.³⁷ The latter lie at the bottom of the eidetic hierarchy because their extension does not consist of other ideal objects, but only of particular individuals. More precisely, eidetic singularities are essences that cannot be further specified, but only instantiated by particular individuals [*Einzeffallen*]. Using Husserl’s words, eidetic singularities are general objects but are like “individuals in the realm of ideas” [*Individuen in der Ideenwelt*].³⁸

Even though the term eidetic singularity is absent from the course of lectures *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie*, and Husserl only uses the terms ‘*Idee-Erlebnis*’ or ‘*Essenz- Wesen-Erlebnis*’, his account of eidetic singularity fits well with what he describes in this course of lectures with these terms. Indeed, in *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie*, the first general object discussed by Husserl is the concrete essence³⁹ individualized in a phenomenon, that is, an individual essence or an eidetic

Gattung und Art. Der höhere Begriff, der eingeteilt wird, heißt Gattung, die niederen Begriffe, in die er eingeteilt wird, heißen die koordinierten Arten dieser Gattung [...] In jedem Fall wird man einen äquivalenten Begriff finden, welcher sich bloß durch solch eine Determination von dem Gattungsbegriff unterscheidet. Diese Determination heißt die Differenz. Im Gattungsbegriff Farbe wären die Arten etwa Rot, Blau usw., und zwar unterste Arten. Hingegen wären die einzelnen Nuancen Karminrot u.dgl. nicht als unterste Arten zu bezeichnen. Im Gegensatz dazu pflegt man, eben weil diese Nuancen selbst wieder Begriffe sind, eben diese als die niedersten spezifischen Differenzen zu bezeichnen. Wenn man von Differenz der Röte, Bläue usw. spricht, meint man gerade diese Nuancen”.

³⁷ General and singular essences belong to a structured hierarchy; that is, they can be genera and species. More precisely, generalities of the lowest degree (e.g. eidetic singularity) have a general essence as their genus.

³⁸ Hua XIX/2, p. 832.

³⁹ As the editor of Hua XLI explains: “In relative frühen Texten dieses Zeitraums ist die Terminologie noch nicht endgültig fixiert, so dass das niederste Allgemeine bisweilen auch als „individuelles Wesen“, „erstes Allgemeines“, „imaginatives Wesen“ oder als „Phantomwesen“ bezeichnet wird, später ist allerdings meist von „konkretem Wesen“ die Rede.”[Hua XLI, p. xxviii]

singularity: specifically, a *concretum*⁴⁰; inasmuch as lived-experience is a concrete object.⁴¹

Accordingly, the lived-experience reduced to its content (that is, the essence-lived-experience) is directly instantiated by the lived-experience itself. Additional evidence for this is the characterization of the essence-lived-experience as “a generality of the lowest difference, but not as the differentia of a genus in Aristotelian sense” [*ein Allgemeines niederster Differenzierung, wenn auch nicht eine Differenz einer Gattung im aristotelischen Sinn*]⁴². In fact, this means that the essence-lived-experience is not a species⁴³ since the differentia of a genus is, according to Aristotle, a species. As explained, each essence-lived-experience is even subsumed under a species, for eidetic singularities only have particular individuals under it.

Further, in a passage from 1905 word-by-word revision of the passage contained in *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie*, Husserl adds an explicit reference to the concrete essence: “Auch „dies da“ ist ein Wesen, nur ein konkretes Wesen, ein Wesen niederster Wesensbesonderung”⁴⁴. This confirms that the singular lived-experience

⁴⁰ Husserl makes this specification in the above-mentioned passage; that is, Hua Mat. III, p. 78.

⁴¹ Eidetic singularities do not identify *tout court* with *concreta*. Rather, among eidetic singularities, one can distinguish between *abstract* eidetic singularities (e.g. *red*) and *concrete* eidetic singularity (e.g. *table*). In the case at hand, Husserl speaks of singular essences as concrete, because lived-experiences belongs to this latter kind [a *concretum* is an independent essence; whereas an *abstractum* [*Abstraktum*] is a dependent essence]. For further clarification, see for example Hua III, p. 35: “Ein unselbständiges Wesen heißt ein Abstraktum ein absolut selbständiges ein Konkretum. Ein Dies-da, dessen sachhaltiges Wesen ein Konkretum ist, heißt ein Individuum [...] Ein Konkretum ist selbstverständlich eine eidetische Singularität, da Artungen und Gattungen (Ausdrucke, die üblicherweise die niedersten Differenzen ausschließen) prinzipiell unselbständig sind. Die eidetischen Singularitäten zerfallen demnach in abstrakte und konkrete. Disjunkt in einem Konkretum enthaltene eidetische Singularitäten sind notwendig "heterogen", mit Rücksicht auf das formalontologische Gesetz, daß zwei eidetische Singularitäten einer und derselben Gattung nicht in der Einheit eines Wesens verbunden sein können, oder wie man auch sagt“. See also *EU*, p. 406.

⁴² Hua Mat. III, p. 78.

⁴³ That the lowest generality is not a species is explicitly stated by Husserl in other places, for example in this text of 1907: “Das Wesen niederster Stufe, das „individuelle Wesen“, ist noch kein Allgemeines im Sinne einer Spezies. Die niederste Stufe, die der individuellen Wesen, der letzten Differenzen, soll andererseits unter sich enthalten die individuellen Einzelheiten. Das ist aber ein Problem.“ Solcher Ideation liegt sicher keine Ideation zugrunde: Es ist kein Wesen aus Wesen als Spezies entnommen.”[Hua XLI, p. 34]

⁴⁴ This is the whole passage: “Blicke ich auf „dies“, diese Wahrnehmung hin, dieses Urteil etc., so bin ich rein beschäftigt mit diesem als das, was es in sich, rein „immanent“ ist; und zu diesem nach seinem immanenten Inhalt gehört nichts von Raum, Zeit, individuellem Bewusstsein. Also es ist schon ein Allgemeines, ein Allgemeines niederster Differenzierung. Es ist, was es ist, unabhängig davon, ob es zu diesem oder jenem oder „einem“ „Bewusstsein überhaupt“ gehört (Bewusstsein als Seele oder dgl.). Freilich, es ist nicht ein durch Verallgemeinerung Gewonnenes. Aber Ideation ist auch nicht Verallgemeinerung. Wir müssen Idee und Allgemeines (Gattung im ursprünglichen Sinn) auseinanderhalten. Das Rot ist nicht dasselbe wie Rot überhaupt (gehörig zum generellen Urteil), wie Farbe überhaupt (im Gegensatz zu „die Farbe“), der „allgemeine Inhalt“ (oder Gegenstand); besser: das Wesen Rot, das Wesen Wahrnehmung etc. Auch „dies da“ ist ein Wesen, nur ein konkretes Wesen, ein Wesen niederster Wesensbesonderung.”[Hua Mat. V, p. 48]

described by the phenomenologist in an eidetic fashion is an ideal object of the lowest degree of generalization.

However, this does not mean that Husserl adopts the term ‘essence’ only to refer to the lowest level of generality. In fact, Husserl also uses the term ‘essence’ to refer to ideal objects of a higher level of the generality in the rest of the course of lectures;⁴⁵ essences that can be grasped thanks to another type of ideation. Rather, ‘essence’ is the new term preferably used⁴⁶ by Husserl to indicate ideal objects of all level of generalities, as it is for the term ‘*Spezies*’ in the *Logische Untersuchungen*.

But it is nonetheless true that this essence of the lowest degree of generality is particularly important because it shows that phenomenological analyses are essential analyses at any level, even when they describe a particular phenomenon, a particular *Erlebnis*. This fact is especially relevant when it comes to distinguishing phenomenology from psychology, which is, of course, of great importance for Husserl.

1.2.3 Essence and Species: A Few Remarks on Their Relationship

Now, according to Lavigne, the use of the term ‘essence’ in *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie* neither should be mistaken for its traditional Aristotelian use, nor it should be understood as having exactly the same meaning Husserl attributes to the notion of species and of ideal generality used in previous texts.⁴⁷ Lavigne holds that the introduction of the notion of essence implicitly hides the distinction between that notion and the notion of species, (although Husserl sometimes conflates the two terms) as one reason leading Husserl to introduce the new notion is the need to refer to something other than species.⁴⁸

Lavigne does not elaborate much on this, but some of his claims seem to suggest that he considers the difference between essence and species to be the following: contrary to the notion of species, the notion of essence is suitable to describe a kind of

⁴⁵ Husserl deals with/ focus on ‘*spezifischen Wesen*’, ‘*Erlebnisse überhaupt*’, and ‘*Erlebnis-Gattung*’ later in the text. He specifically claims that ideal law or law of essences are grounded in general essences.

⁴⁶ I write ‘preferably used’ because Husserl often shifts the terminology he employs.

⁴⁷ Cf. Lavigne, *Husserl et la naissance de la phénoménologie*, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

⁴⁸ Cf. Lavigne, *ivi*, p. 335

general object that is anchored to the individual (as, for example, this shade of red as *Inhalt*], while that of species only intends a general object (such as red in general).⁴⁹

If Lavigne's idea is right, then it gives one of the reasons behind Husserl's introduction of the term 'essence'.

Yet, even though this view is plausible, it seems to me that it does not tell the entire story. Surely, the idea of essences as the *Inhalt* of lived-experiences is an innovation with respect to the *Logische Untersuchungen*, where this dimension of generality pertaining to lived-experiences and the ideation leading to it are not thematized,⁵⁰ and it is a matter of fact that Husserl's introduction of the term 'essence' coincides either with the thematization of a previously neglected aspect or, as argued by some scholars (including Lavigne) with a conceptual shift within his thought according to which lived-experiences themselves can be considered as general and ideal objects, rather than as contingent psychical events.

Further, it is also clear that Husserl was dissatisfied with the way in which he dealt with generality in the *Logische Untersuchungen*, and that the introduction of the term 'essence' comes after his explicit realization that he failed to give a complete account of general objects and of consciousness of general objects in *LU*. This dissatisfaction is evident in Husserl letter to Stumpf of May 11, 1902 (which predates the beginning of the course of lectures *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie*), that Lavigne uses as support of his view:

Was sich in der Darstellung störend und unbefriedigend geltend macht, ist, daß keine endgültige Klarheit geschaffen wird über das Verhältnis der verschiedenen

⁴⁹ Lavigne [*ivi*, p. 206] claims that the ideality that pertains to essence is not to be confused with the ideality of the species.

⁵⁰ As we have already reminded the reader, the very fact of considering lived-experiences themselves as general ideal objects is an element of novelty of the course of lectures *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie* that is missing from the *Logischen Untersuchungen*. In the first edition of the *LU*, indeed, lived-experiences were understood as *real*, in opposition to the ideal objects that they intend. For confirmation of this, consider the following passage "Die Erlebnisse sind reale Einzelheiten, zeitlich bestimmt, werdend und vergehend." [Hua XVIII, p. 134]. Cf. H., Peucker, *Von der Psychologie zur Phänomenologie: Husserls Weg in die Phänomenologie der «Logischen Untersuchungen»*, p. 169 and pp. 172-3. See also R., Bernet, *Conscience et Existence. Perspectives Phénoménologiques*, PUF, Paris 2004.) Lived-experiences were, then, the basis for ideation of a general ideal object, instead of being themselves ideated, as in *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie*. According to Lavigne it is only during Easter 1902 (course of ethics of 1902), that Husserl begin to consider lived-experiences themselves as not merely real/empirical. Precisely he advances the idea that there are some *a priori* propositions that concern also lived-experiences. Cf. Lavigne, *Husserl et la naissance de la phénoménologie, op.cit.*, p. 277.

"Formen des Allgemeinheitsbewußtseins", und daß die zur Unterscheidung dieser Formen gehörigen deskriptiven Analysen so gut wie ganz fehlen.⁵¹

Yet, it seems to me that this passage can be interpreted in a different way. The passage, for example, does not necessarily imply that Husserl thinks to have failed to account for the lowest level of generality that in *AE* will belong to transformed lived-experiences⁵², nor that he needs to introduce the term 'essence' to account for this level of generality. If we read the passage carefully, it appears that what Husserl complains about is above all his inability to account for different kinds of consciousness of generality rather than for the level of generality itself. This interpretation accords well with what we have underlined in the chapter, that is, the fact that Husserl did not resort to the concept of ideation of the lowest kind (*i.e.*, of the consciousness of the generality of lowest kind), but only of ideation as generalization. This is an aspect that Husserl actually has been correcting after his letter to Stumpf. On the contrary, if we open the first edition of the *Logische Untersuchungen* we see that Husserl already deals there with the lowest level of generality, even without using the name 'essence'; for he speaks, for example, of *infima species*. It would be unfair to say that the notion of species [*Spezies*] could only stand for generalities like 'red' or 'perception'. Eidetic singularities are exactly as different from species as eidetic singularities are different from specific essences, or as *infima species* are different from species.

One may distinguish, indeed, between '*Spezies*' as a general name to indicate ideal objects in general (exactly as the term '*Idea*'), and '*Art*' as a specific kind of generality within the hierarchy of genus and species. The term '*Spezies*' used as synonymous of 'ideal object' or 'idea' should not be conflated with the term 'species' [*Art*] that Husserl always uses in association with that of genus [*Gattung und Art*]. Differently from this latter, *Spezies* does not indicate an ideal object of a lower level of generality with respect to its *Gattung*, but it rather seems to be, so to speak, 'the representative term' for ideal objects of different levels of generalities. In other words, there are ideal general objects of different degrees of generalities (genus and species [*Gattung und Art*]), and when Husserl is not interested in specifying their

⁵¹ Hua Dok. III-I, p. 169. *Letter of May 11, 1902*.

⁵² As explained, the *Essenz-Erlebnis* in the sense thematized in the course of lecture under examination is not a species [*Art*].

degree of generality, he uses the term ‘*Spezies*’ to generally refer to these. This is arguably why Husserl uses all of the following terms in *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie*: ‘*Spezies*’, ‘*Genus*’, ‘*Art*’, ‘*differentia*’, etc., but only reserves ‘*Spezies*’ as shorthand to refer to ideal objects in general.⁵³

For this reason, *Spezies* and essence are not distinct notions in the early phase of Husserl’s thought⁵⁴, even if he seems to prefer to use the term ‘essence’.

Then, it becomes relevant to answer the following question: why does Husserl introduce the term ‘essence’ if he could have just employed the notion of *Spezies* in its place? The reason why he introduces the term ‘essence’ is not simply to give name to a new level of generality (which he could also have call ‘*infima species*’), but because of the expressive potentiality of the newly introduced term.

The terms ‘*Essenz*’ and ‘*Wesen*’ are better choices than ‘*Spezies*’ to indicate ideal objects not because they can also refer to ideal objects of the lowest level of generality, but because they make immediately evident the fact that phenomenology is not an empirical science. ‘*Essenz*’ is, indeed, obviously in opposition to existence. Accordingly, the essentialist lexicon serves the function of flagging the anti-psychologism of Husserl’s phenomenology.

It is also interesting to note that Husserl puts the German word ‘*Wesen*’ in quotation marks. This may hint at a certain embarrassment Husserl may have with the use of the lexicon of essences; or it may indicate, at least, a cautious use of the term ‘*Wesen*’. Yet, the function of the Latin calque of the German ‘*Wesen*’ still remains to be explained. Perhaps, the term ‘*Essenz*’ alludes more explicitly than ‘*Wesen*’ to the metaphysical notion of essence (understood in relation to the traditional opposition between existence and essence). According to Lavigne, Husserl introduces two terms instead of one just to significantly underline the eidetic character of lived-experiences.⁵⁵

⁵³ In *LU*, Husserl uses the term ‘species’ as short for ‘genera and species’. Probably, this is because while every genus is also a species, the contrary does not hold true (*i.e.* not every species is also a genus). Sowa [also agree that Husserl uses the term ‘*Spezies*’ in a peculiar sense that it is not reducible to species as ‘*Art*’. Cf. R. Sowa, *Ideation, freie Variation, materiales Apriori. Husserls Lehre von der Wesensanschauung und seine Methode der Aprioriforschung. Neu dargestellt unter dem Primat des eidetischen Satzes und unter Zugrundelegung des als Sachverhaltsfunktion aufgefassten Wesens*. Dissertation, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven 2005, pp. 74-76

⁵⁴ Differently from Sowa, who claims that the terms ‘*Wesen*’ and ‘*Eidos*’ refer to a notion different from the notion of species of *LU*, I do not think this to be the case yet as early as 1902. The two notions become distinct as soon as essences acquire a characterization they still lack in *AE*; that is, as what constitute the proper nature of their object. Cf. Sowa, *Phd Thesis, op. cit.*, p. 219.

⁵⁵ Lavigne, *Husserl et la naissance de la phenomenologie*, p. 301.

Let us briefly summarize what has been argued in this section. First, ‘essence’ is a term referring to generalities of various degrees. Second, essences with a lower degree of generality stand in a hierarchical relation of subordination with essences of higher degree of generality. That essences can have different degree of generality also means that essences are neither identical with a genus nor with a species, but that these formal-ontological categories apply to them. Third, essences are grasped through an act of ideation. A higher degree of ideation gives rise to a higher degree of generality. Fourth, an essence of the lowest degree of generality coincides with the *Inhalt* of the phenomenon in question. Thus, it coincides with the phenomenon itself, once one frees it from its individuation in space and time and its realization in a certain empirical consciousness.

1.3 The Origin of Husserl’s Introduction of the Notion of Essence

Thus far, our analyses have revealed that Husserl’s notion of essence occupies the conceptual space that was first occupied in *LU* by the notions of ‘*Spezies*’.

Because of this, the origin of the introduction of the vocabulary of essences crosses for the better part with that of ideal objects, so that, to reconstruct the history of the introduction of the notion of essence, one has to start from the reasons behind Husserl’s introduction of ideal objects within phenomenology.

This task appears to be extremely broad, for these reasons come indeed from several different fields and contexts: from the theory of meaning, to his theory of manifold (in mathematics),⁵⁶ from the debate on Kant’s synthetic *a priori*, to Husserl’s fierce anti-psychologism, and to the investigation of the concept of space. Accordingly, a reconstruction of the reasons that led Husserl to admit of ideal objects within of his ontology (despite his teachers’ denial of these objects⁵⁷) would greatly exceed the scope of this dissertation.

⁵⁶ Guillermo E. Rosado Haddock, for example, writes that “from 1894 [...] on, Husserl’s views on mathematics were Platonist. [...] his Platonism was a sort of structuralist Platonism, clearly influenced by Riemann’s notion of a manifold and to a lesser extent by Cantor’s views.”[Haddock, G.R., ‘Platonism, Phenomenology and Interderivability’, in *Phenomenology and Mathematics*, *Phenomenologica* 195, M. Hartimo (ed.), Springer, Dordrecht 2010, p. 27]

⁵⁷ Both of Husserl’s teachers, Carl Stumpf and Franz Brentano hold that abstract objects are pure fictions *cum fundamento in re*. Scholars agree that Husserl introduces the notion of ideality somewhere between 1894 and the publication of the *Prolegomena*. By Husserl’s own admission, he took him a

Luckily, Husserl himself helps us in this attempt by underlying the main source for his adoption of ideal objects; and this is particularly interesting because it is important at once for both his introduction of the notion of species and of that of essences. This source is Hermann Lotze; and in particular his “genial” interpretation of Plato’s theory of ideas in the third book of his *Logik*. This is one of the many passages in which Husserl states his indebtedness to Lotze with regard to the issue of ideality:

Die voll bewusste und radikale Umwendung und den mit ihr gegebenen « Platonismus » verdanke ich dem Studium der Logik Lotzes. So wenig Lotze selbst über widerspruchsvolle Inkonssequenzen und über den Psychologismus hinausgekommen war, so steckte seine geniale Interpretation der platonischen Ideenlehre mir ein erstes grosses Licht auf und bestimmte alle weiteren Studien. Schon Lotze sprach von Wahrheiten an sich und so lag der Gedanke nahe, alles Mathematische und ein Hauptstück des traditionell Logischen in das Reich der Idealität zu versetzen.⁵⁸

Lotze’s interpretation of Plato’s theory of ideas is for Husserl a source of inspiration at multiple levels, even though Husserl takes distance from some of Lotze’s views, such as his interpretation of ideality as opposite to ‘being’,⁵⁹ and, more generally, from his theory of knowledge.

In particular, two views that Husserl inherits *via* Lotze from Plato’s and Aristotle’s views are worth considering at this point:

- (i) The first is the view according to which ideas or species illustrate what is in common to their many individual instances.⁶⁰

while to emancipate his view from the positions of his teachers Brentano and Stumpf, who consider general objects to be some sort of abstract and fictional entities.

⁵⁸ Husserl, *Entwurf*, *op. cit.*, p. 129. There are also other relevant passages in which Husserl expresses his indebtedness to Lotze. Consider also the following passage from Husserl review to Pelagý: “Was speziell meine Begriffe von den „idealen“ Bedeutungen, den idealen Vorstellungs- und Urteilsinhalten anbelangt, so kommen sie, wie schon der Ausdruck „ideal“ besagt, gar nicht ursprünglich aus Bolzanos, sondern aus Lotzes Logik. Besonders dessen um die Interpretation der Platonischen Ideenlehre sich gruppierende Gedankenreihen haben auf mich tief eingewirkt.” [Hua XXII, p. 156]. See also Husserl’s personal notes on abstraction (dated by Husserl October 5, 1895) in Ms. A III 1/69a–70a, where he explicitly refers to pp. 44, 48 and 53 of Lotze’s *Logik*. For a general reconstruction of the influence of Lotze on Husserl see Varga, “The Missing Chapter from the *Logische Untersuchungen*: Husserl on Lotze’s Formal and Real Significance of Logical Laws”, *op. cit.*

⁵⁹ As it is known, Husserl includes both real and ideal objects in the domain of beings.

⁶⁰ Sowa confirms Husserl’s closeness to Lotze, by saying that Husserl uses ‘generality’ [*Allgemeine*] (in agreement with a tradition that goes from Aristotle to Lotze, Cf. R. Sowa, The Universal as “What is in

This view is largely at play in the *Logische Untersuchungen* and earlier writings.⁶¹ Whereas Husserl's descriptions of ideal objects are mostly negative (that is, derived in opposition to those of real objects), in *LU*, he gives at least one positive description of the former: an ideal object, or a species, is what gives unity to particulars that are similar in certain respects. In other words, it refers to the ideal unity of a manifold. Indeed, to describe ideal generality, Husserl uses expressions such as "unity in multiplicity," or as "unity and identity over against the dispersed multitude of concrete individual cases." As Husserl writes in the *Prolegomena*, ideal generality

[...] ist Identität im echten und strengsten Sinne: es ist dieselbe Spezies, oder es sind Spezies derselben Gattung u. dgl. [...] ihrer identischen Einheit gegenüber einer verstreuten Mannigfaltigkeit von konkreten Einzelfällen.⁶²

A well-known example of an ideal generality given by Husserl is that of the species *red*; which he describes as the identical over against the multiplicity of individual pieces of red paper having the same color [*Einheit gegenüber der Mannigfaltigkeit*]. This example illustrates the function served by ideal generalities. Ideal generalities have a unifying function towards particular individuals; and this unifying function holds *a priori* (that is, prior to our capacity to identify the similarities between real objects). Contrary to the empirical theory of abstraction that characterizes Brentano's school, Husserl believes, indeed, that it is absurd to suppose that we are capable of finding what unifies some particular individuals through abstracting their common characteristics, unless one supposes their *a priori* ideal unity.⁶³

Common": Comments on the Proton-Pseudos in Husserl's Doctrine of the Intuition of Essence in Ierna, C., Jacobs, H., and Mattens, F. (eds.), *Philosophy, Phenomenology, Sciences: Essays in Commemoration of Edmund Husserl*, *Phenomenologica* 200, 2010, p. 533.

⁶¹ This idea is also expressed in writings slightly predating *LU*. See, for example, this passage from a text approximately dated from 1896–1900: "Ein Identisches als Spezies ist ein Identisches in einer Mannigfaltigkeit von Einzelfällen, also ein Identisches gegenüber einer Mannigfaltigkeit von abstrakten Momenten. Zu jeder Spezies gehört eine Klasse von abstrakten Teilen und damit eine Klasse von Gegenständen." [Hua XL1, p. 21]

⁶² Hua XVIII, p. 135.

⁶³ Husserl puts forth this argument in the second *Logical Investigation*: "Man wird daher fragen dürfen, was denn die Einheit des Umfanges herstellt, was sie für unser Bewußtsein und Wissen möglich macht, wenn uns die Einheit der Spezies fehlt und zugleich mit ihr die Denkform der Allheit, durch die sie Beziehung gewinnt auf die gedanklich vorgestellte (im Sinne des Ausdrucks Allheit der A gemeinte) gesamte Mannigfaltigkeit der A. [...] Die empiristische Auffassung, welche die Annahme der spezifischen Gegenstände durch Rückgang auf ihren Umfang ersparen will, ist also undurchführbar." [Hua XIX, pp. 119-120]

It is important to stress that Husserl's view concerning this ideal unity is not merely conceptual, but ontological. The unity Husserl refers to is not (only) a unity of discourse; rather, the unity in question concerns objects in their determinations.⁶⁴ For, according to Husserl, terms must always have a reference to be meaningful; and, thus, essences and ideal objects in general are to be regarded as the reference, or the objective correlate, of general concepts: they lie, to speak in a technical terminology, on the side of the state-of-affairs [*Sachenverhalte*], and make general concepts meaningful.⁶⁵ In other words, according to Husserl, single aspects of reality find their unity in certain structures; and he uses the lexicon of genera and species to talk about these ontological structures.

It is important to note that Husserl preserves this characterization of ideal objects when he introduces the notion of essence and *eidos*. Essence inherits this determination of species: essences too have the function of giving unity to particulars instantiating them. In other words, when Husserl speaks of essences as ideal objects, they may (and should), then, be understood as having the function of unifying manifolds of particulars.

- (ii) The other, absolute decisive, view inherited from Lotze's *Logik* is the normative interpretation of Plato's views of essences.

According to Lotze, Plato's greatest philosophical achievement is the conception of "universal laws" [*allgemeine Gesetze*], which "rule the operation of things."⁶⁶ This is an aspect that, according to Lotze, Plato should have cultivated even more than he did. In fact, as Lotze writes in his *Logik* while referring to Plato:

⁶⁴ This aspect seems to derive from Aristotle. As Sowa rightly notices, "Aristotle's answer distinguishes two aspects doing justice to the phenomenon of universality: On the one hand, the universal is given to us as something linguistic or semantic, that is, as something that characterizes certain kinds of linguistic expressions, namely nouns, verbs and adjectives, and that prototypically occurs in assertoric sentences as what is asserted about the subject of the sentence, that is, as the "predicate." On the other hand, the universal is something ontic, that is, something that concerns objects in their determination, provided that they are apperceived linguistically or pre-linguistically by us, that is, insofar as they are perceptually apprehended with a certain universal signification, for example, as "a man," as "green" or as "running.""[Sowa, *The Universal as "What is in Common"*, *op. cit.*, p. 529]

⁶⁵ "Every general, objectively considered, is called an essence (*Wesen, Essenz*)."[Hua XXIV, Engl. tr. p. 296]

⁶⁶ Lotze, *Logik*, p. 521; Engl. tr. 447

“instead of making a systematic collection of the flora of the Ideas, he ought to have turned his thoughts to the general physiological conditions which in each single plant bind limb to limb according to a law of growth. Or, dropping the figure, the existence of a world of Ideas possessing a definite meaning and an unchangeable validity being once clearly and emphatically established, the next task was to investigate the universal laws which govern its structure, through which alone, in an Ideal world as elsewhere, the individual elements can be bound together into a whole.”⁶⁷

As we will argue in this dissertation, Husserl fully embraces this normative view,⁶⁸ and his analysis of essences is inseparable from that of the essential laws grounded in them. Using a grammatical metaphor, rather than one taken from botany (as in the case of Lotze), we can say that Husserl’s eidetics investigates the grammar and the syntax of phenomena: that is both the structures and the links between the various structures of phenomena.

After this brief examination of Lotze’s importance for understanding the origin of Husserl’s view of ideality, it seems appropriate to spend some words to present Husserl’s sources for his extensive use of distinctions concerning genus and species. In fact, at first, it may seem quite odd that the founder of phenomenology – a method intended to be rigorously presuppositionless – makes use of old Aristotelian vocabulary.

While Lotze (and Bolzano and Plato, *via* Lotze) are the main sources for the adoption of the notion of ideality, it seems to me that Husserl’s use of the Aristotelian lexicon of genera and species, (or, at least, his familiarity with it) comes mostly from the school of Brentano, exactly like his theory of abstraction.⁶⁹ In fact, the lexicon of genera and species was massively used by Husserl’s former teachers Franz Brentano

⁶⁷ Lotze, *Logik*, p. 50; Engl. tr. 449

⁶⁸ It is important to stress that Neo-Kantians – whom Husserl will later be influenced from since the years in which he conceives of *Ideen* – inherit Lotze’s normative interpretation of the theory of ideas. So, we can say that Husserl was influenced by this interpretation from every side. For the Neo-Kantian interpretation of Plato, Cf. Andrea Le Moli, ‘Platone e la Scuola di Marburgo. Ontologia e metafisica in Cohen, Natorp, Hartmann’ in *EPEKEINA. International Journal of Ontology. History and Critics*, 1 (2012), pp. 7-26. See also Frederick C. Beiser. Normativity in Neo-Kantianism: Its Rise and Fall, *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 17-1 (2009), pp. 9 – 27.

⁶⁹ Cf. Heidegger *Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung*, GA 17, p. 54.

and Carl Stumpf, as well as by some of Brentano's other students (as, for example, Anton Marty⁷⁰), whom Husserl was in touch with.

In particular, Brentano's influence (with whom Husserl takes his first steps into philosophy) is likely the primary reason leading Husserl to adopt the Aristotelian lexicon of genera and species. Following Aristotle, Brentano makes a consistent use of the distinction between of genera and species in the context of his mereology (that is, in his study of the relations between a whole and its parts), which is dealt with in several of his courses: from his courses on logic and metaphysics to that about descriptive psychology.⁷¹

More precisely, genera and species are included within Brentano's mereology as logical parts of a whole, and are as such distinguished from both physical and metaphysical parts.⁷² To illustrate Brentano's view, consider the example of a red table. The red table is a whole having its legs as physical parts, its red and the extension of its surface as metaphysical parts. Besides its physical and metaphysical parts, the table also has logical parts such as color (as a genus) and red, when the latter is understood as a *general* property; that is, a property that the table shares with other red objects (as a species).

Logical parts (*e.g.*, red as species) are different from metaphysical parts (*e.g.*, red as the observable red of the table at hand) in virtue of the general character of the former. While both logical and metaphysical parts are abstract parts of a whole (that is, they are not physically part of it), logical parts are properties of a whole when these are looked at (/considered) as common to all objects having them, and

⁷⁰ In his *Deskriptive Psychologie* of 1894–95, in the context of his theory of relation, Marty as well makes a large use of the Aristotelian lexicon of genera, species and differentia. See also Husserl's letter to Marty of 7 July 1901, in which he discusses precisely his notion of abstract intuition. Hua XII, pp. 419–426.

⁷¹ The treatment of the mereological composition of the world was one of the points in which the young Brentano was a faithful disciple of Aristotle. See A. Chrudzimski and B. Smith, 'Brentano's Ontology: from Conceptualism to Realism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Brentano*, Cambridge University Press, 2004. In a course of Logic that Brentano teaches in Würzburg in the winter semester 1869–70, for example, he also uses the denomination 'in Aristotelian sense' that Husserl uses. Cf. Ms, EL 80, 13.027, p. 68.

⁷² In his course of logic of the winter semester 1869–70, Brentano distinguishes between: "1. physischen, 2. metaphysischen, 3. logischen Teilen (im Aristotelischen Sinn) ad 1. z.B. eine Herde, ein Haus, Geist und Leib, ein Körper (quantitativ); ad 2. wie zwei Eigenschaften z.B. ein Held aus Menschheit und Tapferkeit ad 3. ein logischer Teil ist z.B. der Begriff Urteilendes gegenüber dem Begriff Leugnendes, Farbiges gegenüber Rotes, Figur gegenüber Kreis. Wir sehen, ein Begriff ist der logische Teil eines anderen, wenn beide einem Gegenstand demselben physischen und metaphysischen Teil nach zukommen und der eine in dem anderen eingeschlossen ist." [Ms, EL 80, 13.027, p. 68]

metaphysical parts are simply properties of the whole when taken as something individual.⁷³

Brentano does not merely indicate that there are logical whole and parts, but he also illustrates the kind of relationship connecting logical parts to a whole, as well as the kind of relationship holding among logical parts.

An explanation of how Brentano understands the relation between a whole and its logical parts can be found in his course of metaphysics at Würzburg, which appears to have greatly influenced Brentano's students.⁷⁴ Here Brentano explains that

The logical whole ("res", thing) is an individual of a genus; the logical part is the determination of this genus [*seine Gattungsbestimmtheit*]. Logical parts (such as 'color' or 'bird') [...] and each part (different colors, birds) of a logical whole (red colored thing, sparrow) [...] are *conceptually independent* from the logical whole, the species (is independent) from the individual, the genus [is independent] from the species.[MS, 31567]

The logical parts are a *real unity* [*sind real eins*]. They all are posited in the same line of predication. The concept of each true difference [...] entails the concept of genus, and the previous difference entails the following one. [...] The last difference [...] is equal to the relevant [...] total species (its definition). But it is *logically dependent* on that part which is its genus.[MS, 32001 and 31957]⁷⁵

Roughly, Brentano's idea is that more general logical parts are included within less general logical parts, and those more general logical parts then (partly) determine those who are less general. For example, the genus *color* is part of the species *red*; and so partly determines the species *red*. The species *red* is part of the specifically

⁷³ Consider the following interesting passage: "Denn wenn Farbe und Röte logische Teile bezeichnen, so ist Farbe ein Teil von Röte; wenn sie aber metaphysische Teile bezeichnen, so ist die Farbe eines roten Dinges und seine Röte dasselbe, sie bezeichnen denselben metaphysischen Teil." [Brentano EL80-13.120, p. 146] In other words, according to Brentano, when color and red are taken to be logical parts, then color is part of red, or, in other words, its genus; instead, when color and red are taken to be metaphysical parts, the color of some red object and its being red are exactly the same part.

⁷⁴ Brentano taught his course on metaphysics five times at Würzburg between 1867 and 1873. Stumpf attended this course in 1868. Husserl had a transcription of these lectures. See R. D. Rollinger, *Husserl's Position in the School of Brentano* (Phaenomenologica 150), Kluwer academic publishers, Dordrecht 1999.

⁷⁵ This passage is quoted in W. Baumgartner, 'Franz Brentano's Mereology' in D. Fisette and G. Fréchette, *Themes from Brentano*, Rodopi, Amsterdam 2013, p. 234. The unpublished *Würzburger Metaphysikkolleg* is in the Brentano-Nachlass at Brown University, Providence, RI, USA, under the reg. no. M 96 I and II.

whole *red colored thing*, and thus partly determines it. All logical parts included in a certain whole (a genus, its species, the species of the species, *etc.*), are arranged in a hierarchical order, and determine the whole, which is thus individualized.

Brentano's disciple and former Husserl's teacher Carl Stumpf develops similar distinctions.⁷⁶ In his syllabus for logic, he claims indeed that the parts of a complex presentation can be of four kinds:

(a) Collective parts (member of a sum), (b) physical parts, *i.e.* those which border on each other, such as spatial and temporal sections, (c) metaphysical ones, *i.e.*, properties or moments, such as direction and velocity of a motion, intensity and quality of a tone, (d) logical ones, *i.e.* genera and differences, such as color and red. In the last two cases the parts or features are also called '*abstracta*', for they interpenetrate each other and are distinguished from each other only by a peculiar concentration of consciousness (abstraction).⁷⁷

Stumpf also claims that genera, like colors, and differences (or species) like red, are logical parts of a whole, for example a colored table. He also adds, coherently with Brentano's idea and terminology, that these parts are abstract parts, inasmuch as they are not physically given together with the whole, and they can be presented by a specific act of consciousness that Brentano and Stumpf call 'abstraction'.

Therefore, as it is evidenced by the Brentano's and Stumpf's views on the matter, it is clear that the notions of genus and species were well-known among the adherents to Brentano's school. In light of this, it seems exceedingly plausible that Husserl was well aware of these either by having attended Stumpf's and Brentano's lectures, or by having read the transcriptions of their lectures, or by simply having discussed with them. Textual evidence also supports this idea: Husserl himself refers to Aristotelian genera and species as Brentano's logical parts in the following passage of the first edition of the *Logischen Untersuchungen*:

⁷⁶ "Stumpf shares Brentano's [*Trendelenburg's*] opposition to Kant's Apriorism and his inclination towards Aristotelianism." [R. D. Rollinger, *Husserl's Position in the School of Brentano*, *op. cit.*, p. 102]

⁷⁷ "If the distinguishing feature of a species (the specific difference) is a substantial feature, the species is called natural one. there are highest or most general generic concepts (categories such as 'space', 'color', 'judgment'). There are however in general no lowest species, for the extension of each concept can be infinitely narrowed by adding new features. Only if the features are to lie within a definite category or if they are to be substantial, does this process receive a limit." [Stumpf, *Syllabus for Logic* in Rollinger, *Husserl's Position in the School of Brentano*, *op. cit.*, p. 314]

Dass die beiden unterschiedenen Begriffspaare wirklich auseinander zu halten sind, lehrt beispielsweise das dem Verhältnis von Aristotelischer Gattung und Art entsprechende Verhältnis anschaulicher Momente, das „logische“ Teilungsverhältnis in Brentanos Terminologie.⁷⁸

There are many other proofs that Husserl was influenced by Brentano's and Stumpf's mereological distinctions. In 1890, at the beginning of his philosophical production, for example, Husserl adopts Brentano's terminology defining the abstract properties of a whole like redness as its "metaphysical parts".⁷⁹ Husserl rejects the expression 'metaphysical part' later on, as appears, for example, in his review of Tardowski of 1896.⁸⁰

Husserl also adds a note to his *Logik* of 1896 to amend his conception of the 'Abstraktum' as a part [*Teil*] of the representation.⁸¹ This rejection is also explicit in the *Prolegomena*, where Husserl claims that the whole [*Konkretum*] does not have the species *red* as psychological or metaphysical parts in it.⁸² Yet, these corrections do not change the fact that Husserl's treatment of ideal generalities, genera and species, and later essences, arises within the framework of the mereology of Brentano's school; and that it continues to be influenced by Brentano's views even after having rejected some of his aspects. Husserl's effort to conceive general objects in terms of parts is clearly noticeable, although it ultimately leads to a rejection of this idea. Thus, even if there were other sources, there are far too many similarities to deny that Brentano and his school are (at least) one of Husserl's primary source for his use of the Aristotelian lexicon of genera and species.

The influence of Brentano's mereology is arguably central to the development of Husserl's view on this matter, for it leads Husserl to conceive of the relationship

⁷⁸ Hua XIX/1, p. 230. See, also the following passage: "Brentano fasst das Verhältnis von logischer Gattung und Art als Teilverhältnis." [Ms. A III (56b), p. 59]

⁷⁹ "Das Adjektivum rot bezeichnet direkt das Rot-sein (das Abstraktum Rot als metaphysischen Teil umfassend) und eben dies kann dann als Merkzeichen für den Gegenstand selbst dienen" [Hua XII, p. 343, 347]

⁸⁰ "Die Beschaffenheit Röte ist ihm z.B. ein „metaphysischer Teil“ des roten Gegenstandes, obschon identisch dieselbe Röte mannigfachen Gegenständen zukommen kann." [Hua XII, p. 335]

⁸¹ Hua Mat. I, pp. 60-61.

⁸² "Ein Rotes haben wir vor Augen. Aber das Rote ist nicht die Spezies Rot. Das Konkretum hat die Spezies nicht als (,psychologischen', 'metaphysischen') Teil in sich." [Hua XIX, p. 128]

between genus and species as an ontological relation reflecting the structure of reality.⁸³

Yet, despite the influence of Brentano's mereology for Husserl's adoption of the Aristotelian lexicon of genera and species, there are great differences between his and his former teacher's views.

As we have already clarified well, the crucial difference is that Husserl employs the lexicon of genera and species to give a characterization of ideal objects, while Brentano and Stumpf believe that these terms can be employed to describe only abstract generalities, since they deny the existence of ideal objects⁸⁴.

Thus, although the general Aristotelian framework adopted by Husserl is fundamentally Brentanian, the idea of an ideal general object that the particulars have (*a priori*) in common is not Brentanian. Lotze's *Logik* may have influenced Husserl in this regard.⁸⁵ Husserl finds, indeed, in Lotze's *Logik* the lexicon of species and genera (which he was probably already familiar with from Brentano's work) embedded in a view according to generalities are understood as ideal *a priori* unities of manifolds.⁸⁶

⁸³ Brentano presents genera and species as ontological structure of real objects. Chrudminski rightly notices this, as he writes, "Unter den logischen Teilen versteht man Strukturen, die allen Gegenständen gemeinsam sind, die unter einen bestimmten allgemeinen Namen fallen. In diesem Sinn bilden die logischen Teile die ontologischen Korrelate der allgemeinen Namen." [Chrudminski A., *Die Ontologie Franz Brentanos*, (Phaenomenologica 172), Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht 2004, p. 96]

⁸⁴ "For Brentano and Stumpf abstracta are simply *fictio cum fundamento in re*. Abstracta, or metaphysical parts, 'are only determined as different things through a fiction of our understanding. Abstract are therefore *divisiva*: they are created by the mind 'as entities', but they are not genuine entities in Brentano's early ontology." [G. Frechette, 'Stumpf on Abstraction', in Fisette, D. and Martinelli, R. (eds.) *Philosophy from an Empirical Standpoint: Essays on Carl Stumpf*, Brill, 2015.]

⁸⁵ Varga writes that "Husserl purchased Lotze's *Mikrokosmos* even before he started his philosophical studies with Brentano, and later he bought almost every work of Lotze published at that time." [Varga, P.A., "The Missing Chapter from the Logischen Untersuchungen: Husserl on Lotze's Formal and Real Significance of Logical Laws", in *Husserl Studies* 29 (2013) p. 182]. Indeed, the notions of genera and of species that Husserl inherits from Brentano, thanks to the mediation of Lotze, are not employed to refer to abstract objects [*ficta*], but rather, as explained in the previous section, to ideal objects.

⁸⁶ Interestingly, regardless of whether we take as a starting point the theory of meaning, or mathematical manifold, or *etc.*, it is arguable that the sense of ideality that emerges is that of ideality as unity. Since Husserl admits ideality within his ontology, he applies the Brentanian schema of genera and species to it (as he finds this schema ready-made and useful to characterize ideal objects). The latter also takes another connotation within Husserl's hands; a connotation that it does not have *per se*, that is, a non-empirical character. As soon as Husserl conceives of ideal objects next to real objects, he uses species and genera to indicate the unity of a manifold that is naturally opposed to the empirical notion of class: Der Unterschied der psychologischen Betrachtungsweise, welche die Termini als Klassentermini für psychische Erlebnisse verwendet, von der objektiven oder idealen Betrachtungsweise, in welcher eben dieselben Termini "" ideale [A: Aristotelische"] Gattungen und Arten vertreten, ist kein nebensächlicher und bloß subjektiver; er bestimmt den Unterschied wesentlich verschiedener Wissenschaften. Reine Logik und Arithmetik, als Wissenschaften von den idealen Einzelheiten gewisser Gattungen (oder von dem, was a 'priori im idealen Wesen dieser Gattungen gründet), trennen sich von der Psychologie, als der Wissenschaft von den individuellen Einzelheiten gewisser empirischer Klassen [Prolegomena. Par. 48 Par. 47, German, p. 180] Consider also the following passage: "Offenbar vorausgesetzt sind hierbei die wesentlichen Unterschiede zwischen

Let us summarize what this means, as far as the origin of Husserl's introduction of the notion of essence goes:

- a. On the one hand, the notion of essence has mathematical and logical roots; inasmuch as essences are ideal objects, and the notion of ideal object has these roots.
- b. On the other hand, the notion of essence is sourced in the lexicon of the mereology of Brentano's school: not only because of Brentano's and Stumpf's uses of the Aristotelian notions of species and of genera, and their description as logical parts of a whole; but also, because Husserl inherits from Brentano an intentionalist view of semantics according to which any concept must have a referent to be meaningful. This view has weight when it comes to the ontological dimension of Husserl's treatment of essences.

In conclusion, the source of Husserl's views about essences lies at once in a eclectic elaboration of Bolzano's and Lotze's influences on the former, within the broader environment of Brentano's school.

It is noteworthy that the notion of essence present in the 1902–1903 course of lectures examined in the previous sections does not seem to consist of more than this characterization of ideality; and, relevantly, this is also the characterization of the notion of species presented in *LU*. If Husserl has (later) explored or come across other sources, those are not taken into account in this period.

There is no other reason to think that Husserl had other main sources, like a direct reading of Plato or Aristotle; especially since his characterization of essences until and including 1902–1903 is still very simple. An individual essence is just the content [*Inhalt*] of a lived-experience, that is, the set of all its predicates, once its locality in space and time and its causal connection to a particular consciousness have been dropped. General essences are simply the generalization of this *Inhalt*. And, as we will see soon, they are the ground of ideal possibility and necessity.

Naturgesetz und idealem Gesetz, zwischen universellen Sätzen über Tatsachen (die sich vielleicht als generelle Sätze verkleiden: alle Raben sind schwarz — der Rabe ist schwarz) und echt generellen Sätzen (wie es die allgemeinen Sätze der reinen Mathematik sind), zwischen empirischem Klassenbegriff und idealem Genusbegriff u. dgl.”[Hua XVIII, p. 181]

1.4 Essences as Grounds of Necessities and Ideal Possibilities in *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie*

We have clarified, so far, how Husserl understands the notion of essence:

- i. Essences are general objects with generality of various degrees. That essences can have different degree of generality also means that they are neither a genus nor a species, but that these (formal-ontological) categories apply to them.
- ii. The essence of the lowest degree coincides with the *Inhalt* of the phenomenon in question. Thus, it coincides with the phenomenon itself, once one has freed it from its individuation in space and time, and its realization in a certain empirical consciousness.
- iii. Different degrees of ideation give rise to different degrees of generality.
- iv. The notion of essence is still not different from the notion of species (in the specific sense in which the latter notion is used in *LU* as synonymous of generality); but the name essence is preferable because it immediately alludes at the non-empirical character of phenomenological analyses, even when they concern the singular lived-experience reduced to its *Inhalt*.

We will now see that Husserl further clarifies that essences are grounds for necessity and ideal possibility.

To introduce some other distinguishing features of Husserl's characterization of essences in *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie*, let us now return once more to comment the text. In the second part of this course, after the claim that lived-experiences should be considered as essences, Husserl takes as an example the essence of a certain kind of lived-experiences, that is, presentation [*Vorstellung*].

Notably, the consideration of the essence *presentation* does not take the form of an analysis of the essential properties of particular presentations (as one may expect on the basis of a traditional understanding of the notion of essence); rather, the analysis of the essence *presentation* consists in disclosing the ideal possibilities belonging to presentation. In particular, Husserl does so in this passage:

Zum Wesen der Vorstellung gehört die ideale Möglichkeit, sich mit anderen Vorstellungen zu identifizieren, und Synthese der Identifikation ist jeweils Bewusstsein vom einen und selben Gegenstand. Ferner, zum Wesen von Vorstellung überhaupt gehört die Beziehung zur Wahrnehmung und letztlich zur adäquaten Wahrnehmung. Zum Wesen jeder Vorstellung gehört apriori, wie der Satz vom Widerspruch besagt, die Möglichkeit entweder der adäquaten Erfüllung in einer Wahrnehmung oder der Enttäuschung durch Wahrnehmung. [...]Vielmehr erschauen wir es in *specie*, dass zum identischen spezifischen Wesen dieser Vorstellung, zu ihrem identischen Sinn die Möglichkeit gehört, in Wahrnehmung Erfüllung zu finden.⁸⁷

Husserl explains here that the fact that a presentation can be adequately fulfilled by a perception is not simply a chance, or something that depends on which contingent events happen to occur in the world; but, rather, the adequate fulfillment of a presentation is an ideal possibility that is grounded in the general essence of the presentation.

Ideal possibilities are obviously not necessarily realized. They may happen or not happen to occur; but if they do, then they occur in virtue of being delineated in the corresponding essence.⁸⁸

This holds true of every essence: for any essence, a set of ideal possibilities belongs *a priori* to it. The term ‘ideal’ indicates that these possibilities are non-empirical, that is, they do not depend on the configuration of the actual world or from laws of nature. This notion is closely related to the notion of *a priori*; and ‘*a priori*’ is understood as meaning ‘before and independently from our experience of the relevant phenomenon’.

⁸⁷ Hua Mat. III, p. 198. In *AE*, Husserl analyses also the ideal possibility grounded on the essence perception: “Zum Wesen der Vorstellung gehört die ideale Möglichkeit, sich mit anderen Vorstellungen zu identifizieren, und Synthese der Identifikation ist jeweils Bewusstsein vom einen und selben Gegenstand. Ferner, zum Wesen von Vorstellung überhaupt gehört die Beziehung zur Wahrnehmung und letztlich zur adäquaten Wahrnehmung. Zum Wesen jeder Vorstellung gehört apriori, wie der Satz vom Widerspruch besagt, die Möglichkeit entweder der adäquaten Erfüllung in einer Wahrnehmung oder der Enttäuschung durch Wahrnehmung. Oder, was dasselbe: Für jede Vorstellung besteht apriori die ideale Möglichkeit, dass ihr Gegenstand zur Gegebenheit kommt oder mit einem Gegebenen in Widerstreit tritt.”[*ibid.*]

⁸⁸ “Diese Möglichkeiten sind aber ideale. Wenn wir einen roten Kreis in einer Anschauung gegeben haben und aufgrund dieser Momentananschauung die intuitive Allgemeinidee eines roten Kreises bilden, so erfassen wir damit die ideale Möglichkeit, dass überhaupt ein Rotes Kreis oder ein Kreis ein Rotes sei. Aber über die reale Möglichkeit, über (die) Tatsache, dass im Verlauf irgendeines empirischen Bewusstseins es kommen könne, dass ein Kreis in roter Färbung wahrgenommen ist, ist damit nichts gesagt”[Hua Mat III, p. 135]

On this basis, we gain further insights into the notion of essence. Essences may be phenomenologically understood as *structures of ideal possibilities*, concerning all the particular individuals that they gathered together (or unify). In other words, general essences bestow unity to particulars prescribing⁸⁹ at the same time a set of ideal possibilities for those particulars.

With this important specification in mind, we begin to see that modalities are introduced within eidetics. Although essences (and, more generally, ideal objects) themselves are not understood in modal terms (for example, as a set of necessary properties), modality becomes part of the field of eidetics, since essences ground ideal possibilities.

And this is not all: as Husserl also explains, not only essences ground ideal possibilities; they also ground necessities.

Husserl claims that any general essence (both formal and material)⁹⁰ grounds ideal laws, that are synthetic *a priori* truths⁹¹ with a normative “turn”⁹² that hold necessarily for every particular individual which the relevant essence belongs to. Husserl did not use the label ‘*Wesensgesetze*’ in *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie*, but he will introduce this denomination very soon, at least since 1904 exactly to refer to this *Idealgesetze* grounded in general essence of sensory (i.e. material) objects.⁹³

The fact that eidetic laws are necessary does not originate from a modal characterization of the essences which they are grounded in. Instead, essences themselves ground necessity. Even more precisely, the ideal possibilities belonging to essences can be understood as those possibilities that are compatible with eidetic necessity.⁹⁴ In fact, ideal possibility is governed by eidetic necessity. Accordingly, essential laws are, according to Husserl, *a priori* norms grounded on essences and regulating how any possible experience must necessarily be. As they ground a

⁸⁹ Husserl will use the lexicon of prescription in his later writings.

⁹⁰ More precisely, Husserl distinguishes between laws grounded “in den besonderen Gattungen des Sinnlichen” and laws grounded in the pure categories. Cf. Hua Mat. III, p. 178. This latter are logical laws. One can notice that in this pages Husserl still does not know how to call material essences; for this reason he keeps on shifting his terminology, Cfr. Hua Mat. III, p. 189.

⁹¹ Cf. Hua Mat. III, p. 202.

⁹² Husserl speaks of ‘*Normative Wendung*’ in his letter to Lipps of Genuary 1904 [Hua Dok. III/2, p. 127].

⁹³ Cf. Husserl’s review to Elsenhans [Hua, XXII p. 208].

⁹⁴ Husserl will later clarify this aspect. See, for example, Husserl’s letter to Brentano of March 27, 1905: “Die Wesensgesetze umgrenzen in idealer (also absoluter) Allgemeinheit alle Möglichkeit” [Hua Dok. III/1, p. 37]

structure of possibilities and necessities, essences can be said to provide the conditions of possibilities of particular individuals.

A goal of phenomenological analyses explicitly becomes, then, not only to individuate essences, but also to bring to light the eidetic laws that are grounded in those essences, and regulate *a priori* any possible experience. As Husserl writes, the two eidetic aims must proceed hand in hand:

[...] mit der Deskription Hand in Hand geht die Konstatierung der apriorischen Gesetze, die zum Wesen der Erlebnisse, d.i. zu den Spezies, dem Gattungsmäßigen dieser Erlebnisse gehören, und die durch adäquate generelle Intuition zu erfassen sind.⁹⁵

And this holds not only for lived experiences, but potentially for every other phenomenon, at least at this moment of Husserl's thoughts. One of Husserl's favorite example of this time is, indeed, that of the laws that regulate sounds.

Before concluding, it is important to notice that Husserl had already introduced the idea that some possibilities belong *a priori* to the content of phenomena, before introducing the term 'essence'. One can find statements of this kind in the *Prolegomena*, for example, where Husserl writes that general objects have the value of ideal possibilities for the particulars under them,⁹⁶ and in other passages of the second volume of *LU*. And the same holds true for the view according to which there are laws that are grounded in the nature of the contents of experience and in their relations. This is exactly the account of material *a priori*⁹⁷ developed in the third *LU*; that Husserl completely rewrites for the second edition of the work in accordance to the developed view of eidetic laws.⁹⁸ This is once again a proof that the introduction of essences does not bring about a complete break with those texts in which Husserl has already introduced general objects.

⁹⁵ Hua Mat III, p. 193.

⁹⁶ "Und wie das Sein oder Gelten von Allgemeinheiten auch sonst den Wert von idealen Möglichkeiten besitzt — nämlich in Hinsicht auf das mögliche Sein von empirischen Einzelheiten, die unter jene Allgemeinheiten fallen — so sehen wir dasselbe auch hier." [Hua XVIII, p. 135]. Similarly, in his *Logik* of 1896 and of 1902-1903 he attributes to every genus and species an extension of ideal possibilities.

⁹⁷ Actually, the very label 'material *a priori*' belongs to the second edition of *LU*. In the first edition, Husserl spoke of synthetic (material) necessity. Cf. Hua XIX/1, p. 255.

⁹⁸ At first glance, the account developed in the first edition of *LU III* and later accounts of essential laws are in accordance with each other. It would be interesting to see, however, whether the first one could not be a valid alternative to the latter.

1.5 Influences

In the second section of this chapter, we have seen that there is a strong case to be made that Husserl introduces the lexicon of species and genera through Brentano's and Stumpf's influences, and, more generally, through the addition of ideal objects to the mereological framework of Brentano's school.

This is also true for the idea that we have just presented; that is, the idea that essences ground synthetic *a priori* truths that function as norms for particular individuals.

This time we have to turn our attention to another relation accounted by Brentano in his mereology, *i.e.*, that concerning metaphysical parts.⁹⁹

Metaphysical parts are the parts of the whole that can be distinguished only by abstraction from it, as they are not independent parts of the whole. According to a famous example by Brentano himself, color and extension are considered to be metaphysical parts of a surface, for they cannot exist unless as parts of a surface.¹⁰⁰ Relevantly, Brentano characterizes the relation between metaphysical parts as a relation of mutual inseparability: two metaphysical parts that belong to a whole are mutually inseparable since one cannot exist without the other.

Such a distinction is important, for like the notion of logical part, the notion of metaphysical part has been adopted by Stumpf and developed in both his published works and courses of lectures. In *Über den psychologischen Ursprung der Raumvorstellung* – which demonstrably exercises a great influence on Husserl – Stumpf elaborates Brentano's idea of the mutual inseparability between color and extension employing a different terminology. More specifically, Stumpf employs the distinction between independent contents [*Selbständige Inhalte*] and partial contents [*Teilinhalte*]: As Stumpf himself explains, “independent contents are given wherever

⁹⁹ “These parts are what Aristotle defines ‘accident’ of a substance (whole). This confirms the Aristotelian spirit of Brentano's mereology. Brentano distinguishes the notion of metaphysical parts, which he introduces for the purpose of giving an analysis of the Aristotelian notions of substance and accident. Among properties one can distinguish two groups: the essential and the accidental. The properties of an object are essential if they could not be lost without bringing about the destruction of the object itself.” [A. Chrudzimski and B. Smith, *Brentano's Ontology: from Conceptualism to Realism*, p. 203]

¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, Brentano sometimes uses the term ‘essence’ to refer to these parts already at the end of 1860. In his *Descriptive Psychology*, Brentano will change the name of these parts to ‘*sich durchwohnenden Teile*’. However, the idea will remain the same. See G. Frechette, ‘Essential Laws: On Ideal Objects and their Properties in Early Phenomenology’, in D. Seron, S. Richard and B. Leclercq (eds.), *Objects and Pseudo-Objects: Ontological Deserts and Jungles From Brentano to Carnap*. De Gruyter, 2015, pp. 143-166.

the elements of a presentational complex can, by their nature, also be separated; partial contents wherever this is not the case.”¹⁰¹ Then, in this new terminology, color and extension are partial contents since they cannot be separated from each other, they form a single content of which they are parts.¹⁰²

Husserl takes up the idea that there is a necessary link between parts of a whole that can in no way be cut off. In the *Logische Untersuchungen*, he quotes Stumpf almost word by word, only replacing the expression ‘partial contents’ with ‘dependent contents’.¹⁰³ Husserl’s interest in the relation between dependent and independent parts sparkes even before the *Logische Untersuchungen*, such as his *Psychological Study of Elementary Logic* written in 1894.

How is this related to eidetic laws? The answer is that the distinction between independent and dependent parts becomes relevant for Husserl’s account of synthetic *a priori* laws (and, later, eidetic norms) when it is accompanied by the reformulation of the Kantian distinction between synthetic and analytic *a priori*. The relation of dependency between metaphysical parts (borrowing, once more, Brentano’s term) plays, indeed, a fundamental role in the solution of this issue.

To reformulate the distinction between analytic and synthetic *a priori* truths, in the third *Logical Investigation*, Husserl moves from Bolzano’s own solution of the issue. Following Bolzano, Husserl formulates the distinction at stake as follows: analytic *a priori* truths are true entirely independently from the nature of their reference; while synthetic (or material) *a priori* truths are true in virtue of being grounded in the nature of their reference.

After having presented this distinction, Husserl claims that synthetic *a priori* truths – such as, for example, the proposition ‘Each color is extended’ – can function as a norms. Their necessity, which is grounded on the materiality of the concepts of propositions, has normative force.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ C. Stumpf, *Über den psychologischen Ursprung der Raumvorstellung*, p. 109

¹⁰² *ivi.*, p. 112

¹⁰³ Hua XIX/1, p. 233

¹⁰⁴ For Husserl’s insistence on norms, the privileged sources seems to be the third book of Lotze’s *Logik*: ““world of Ideas” as a system of “eternal relations which subsist between different Ideas—and through which some are capable of association with each other while others exclude each other and form the limits within which what is to be possible in perception falls.”[H. Lotze, *Logic, in three books: of Thought, of Investigation, and of Knowledge* (1874), ed. and trans. B. Bosanquet, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1884; 2nd edition, 1887. p 510 [437]]

“This is Plato’s “great philosophical achievement”: the conception of “universal laws” (*allgemeine Gesetze*), which have not themselves “being like things and which nevertheless rule the operation of things.”[H. Lotze, *Logik*, p. 521 [447]]

To understand Husserl's position, it should be clear that the way in which Husserl understands the reference to the nature or materiality of the concepts is stronger than Bolzano's. Husserl's distinction between the matter and the form of concepts does not exclusively concern the semantics of the discourse (as according to Bolzano), but, rather, belongs to an ontological dimension. This means that, whereas Bolzano suspends judgment concerning how to understand the materiality of the concepts of synthetic propositions, Husserl thinks instead that some object must always refer to the materiality of concepts.

Then, Husserl takes an important step further than Bolzano, linking synthetic *a priori* truths with essences. Why is it so? Beyond this move, there is Husserl's intentionalist view of semantics, according to which, a concept is meaningful just in case it has a reference. Once again, the demand for a reference for synthetic *a priori* truths is satisfied thanks to ideas developed within the Brentano's school; and precisely thanks to the idea that there are necessary relations between the parts of some contents of experience; or, more generally, that there are necessary relations that do not depend on our subjectivity, but have their roots in the nature of things. The thesis that synthetic *a priori* truths are grounded in the nature of their content follows from it. To indicate that he is not referring to particular things one can come across, but of what all things of a kind have in common, Husserl uses also the lexicon of genera and species as synonymous to that nature.

Der Gegensatz von Naturgesetz als empirisch begründeter Regel eines tatsächlichen Seins und Geschehens ist nicht das Normalgesetz als Vorschrift, sondern || das Idealgesetz im Sinne einer rein in den "Gattungsbegriffen" gründenden und daher nicht empirischen Gesetzlichkeit.¹⁰⁵

This also clarifies why species and genera (as essences), as ideal objects, are the reference of the relevant concepts.

Die Notwendigkeiten, oder Gesetze, welche irgendwelche Klassen von Unselbständigkeiten definieren, gründen, so betonten wir mehrfach, in der [B: wesentlichen] Besonderheit der Inhalte, in ihrer Eigenart; oder genauer gesprochen, sie gründen in den Aristotelischen Arten oder Differenzen [/B:

¹⁰⁵ Hua XVIII, par 43, p. 168

reinen (P. 256) Gattungen, Arten, Differenzen], unter welche [B als zufällige Einzelheiten] die betreffenden unselbständigen und ergänzenden Inhalte fallen.¹⁰⁶

In the second edition of the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl talks about essences in a similar vein to the 1902–1903 course of lectures. He uses the term ‘essence’ instead of ‘nature’ and the expression ‘eidetic laws’ as synonymous with ‘synthetics laws’. With the introduction of this new lexicon that ‘every color has an extension’ is a necessary truth grounded in the essences of color that must hold true *a priori* for every colored object we can ever meet in our experience.

1.6 Summary

The term ‘essence’ [*Wesen*]; *Essenz*] appears to be a new name introduced to indicate what Husserl previously called ‘species’ or ‘ideal object’ (or ‘idea’ [*Idee*]).

The introduction of the term ‘essence’ and of its cognates in 1902–1903 does not overthrow Husserl’s previous conception of ideal object as unity of a manifold, which Husserl previously refers to thanks to the lexicon of Aristotelian genera and species. In a certain respect, it seems correct to say that essences simply identify with ideal objects.

Husserl prefers to speak of essences and eidetic laws to distinguish eidetic analyses from so-called ‘ideal analyses’, which is a label that can be also used to indicate the idealization typical of geometry. To talk of analyses of genera and species to refer to phenomenological analyses does not seem a good candidate either; especially for there were contemporary philosophers of Husserl that used the terms ‘genera’ and ‘species’ within a nominalist and empiricist view of general objects; precisely, Husserl’s former teacher Brentano and Stumpf.

If this hypothesis is right, the notion of essences has primarily the function of stressing aspects already implicitly present in Husserl’s account of ideality; and, first of all, the non-empirical character of the analyses, which adds something original to them. This may be further confirmed by the fact that one of Husserl’s central effort in

¹⁰⁶ Hua XIX/1, p, 255-256

these years consists in convincing his contemporaries of the difference between phenomenology and an empirical science such as psychology.

As far as Husserl's characterization of essences is concerned, we have underlined that the origins of this notion (which is derived from an original mixture of different influences, included Brentano's mereology) has (at least in the period under examination) a peculiar connotation when compared to more famous essentialist views.

First of all, essences represent the ideal unity of a multiplicity of relevantly similar particulars. For example, the essence *red* is what all the particular reds have in common regardless of the circumstances of their occurrence.

Further, at this stage, Husserl does not explicitly characterize essences as modal notions. He does not describe the essence *red* as the set of the necessary properties of any particular red. When referring to the essence *color* or the essence *perception*, Husserl does not spell out its modal properties. Yet, we have seen that modality becomes part of the account of essences, as Husserl specifies that essences ground a system of necessity and possibility concerning all particular individuals which the essence in question belongs to.

We should now examine whether this conception survives the changes that Husserl's phenomenology runs into, in particular the transcendental reduction, as well as the influence of sources.

CHAPTER 2

WESEN AND EIDOS. HUSSERL'S EIDETICS AT THE TIME OF IDEAS I

2.1 Individual Essence and Eidos in Ideen I

In the years after Husserl's introduction of the notions of essence and of law of essence within phenomenology, we witness a progressive increment of their use. This ubiquitous presence of the essentialist lexicon becomes evident in the first book of *Ideen*; that is, at the heart of the transcendental turn of Husserlian phenomenology. Husserl decides, indeed, to open *Ideen I* with some sections (*i.e.*, §§2–17) introducing the notion of essence and the entire family of formal ontological objects related to it (*i.e.*, τὸδε τι¹, essence, *eidos*, genus and species, regions, axioms), with the intention of justifying the aspiration of establishing phenomenology as an eidetic science; and, more precisely, as the eidetic science of pure (*i.e.*, transcendently reduced) consciousness.²

In these sections, the notion of essence is introduced and justified in opposition to a more familiar notion; that is, the notion of contingent individual object. Specifically, Husserl shows that the usual and utterly uncontroversial characterization of individual

¹ As Majolino has argued τὸδε τι is an eidetic notion. Cf. C., Majolino, 'Individuum and Region of Being: On the Unifying Principle of Husserl's "Headless" Ontology', in *Commentary on Husserl's "Ideas I"*, A. Staiti (ed.), de Gruyter, Berlin/Boston 2015; especially p. 36.

² The methodological reasonableness of this move does not prevent scholars from asking whether there is a contradiction between the intention of starting a science that aims to be presuppositionless and the acceptance of all these formal ontological objects.

object as contingent [*Zufällig*] actually implies the related notion of essence. That an object is contingent means, in fact, that “considered with respect to its own essence [it] could have been different, could just as well be at any other place and have any other shape, could also be changing though it is in fact unchanging, or could be changing otherwise than in the manner in which it is changing in fact.”³ In other words, we could not distinguish which predicates of some object are contingent, without the opposite feeling that its other predicates are necessary.

The fact that the book that I am reading has a blue cover, for example, is utterly contingent, for (according to what is to be a book) it could have had a red or green cover without being anything other than a book (or anything other than what it is as much as being a book or book-like), because the property of being red or the property of being green is not necessary implied in the book’s being a book.

The contingent dimension of individual objects is, therefore, explained in relation to its opposite, that is their essential core. This means that the essence of an individual object is (at least explanatorily) prior to the object itself; in the sense that it explains what it necessarily is and what it necessarily is not, or it could possibly be.⁴ Thus, it belongs to the sense of contingency for it to be correlated with a sense of necessity.⁵

That some individual object could have been different with respect to its own essence means that its essence does not prescribe for the object in question to be exactly as it is. The essence of an individual object of experience prescribes what the object in question necessarily is, what it necessarily is not, and, importantly, it also prescribes what it can (logically) possibly be.⁶ Then, at least part of the contingent dimension of an individual object is inscribed in its essence. Husserl uses the terms ‘facticity’ and ‘factual contingency’ to refer to this view, which seem to express the idea that the contingent dimension of individual objects necessarily belongs to them in virtue of their essences.

³ Hua III/1, p. 12.

⁴ See Hua III/1, p. 9.

⁵ As we will more clearly see later, an individual is always part of a normative framework, in virtue of its having an essence.

⁶ See Hua III/1, p. 9

Husserl starts from this intuitively plausible idea to make it easier to accept something less easily accepted; that is, the view that every individual object is contingent within the limits prescribed by its essence, and, so, because of its essence.

From this discourse on the contingency of individual objects, we gain the insight that each individual has a corresponding essence that it is bounded to.

Later in the *Introduction to Ideen I*, Husserl expresses this idea by saying that every individual object (every *Dies-da*) is not only a contingent individual, but also has an essence and it is, thus, the bearer of certain essential predicables. Moreover, he explains that the essence instantiated into an individual can be “apprehended purely”⁷ or “put into an idea”⁸; that is, it can be grasped in itself, regardless of the individual in which it is embedded.⁹

In the course of the chapter we will examine closely what the act of putting the essence of an individual into an idea consists of, as well as what it means for an essence to be put into an idea. However, before doing this, we will start with the clarification of Husserl’s eidetic constellation at the time of *Ideen I* from the disentanglement of Husserl’s view about the essence of an individual object (or individual essence), distinguishing its intrinsic features (although they appear intrinsically connected to each other). They are the following:

- (a) The essence of an individual is its “what” [*Was*].
- (b) The essence of an individual is a stock of essential predicables that constitute its what.

After having analyzed in the previous chapter the origin of the notion of essence, when phenomenology was in its infancy, our goal is to provide a clarification of the distinct kinds of ideal objects belonging to the family of essences (such as individual essences,

⁷ As Husserl writes, “Zum Sinn jedes Zufälligen gehört, eben ein Wesen, und somit ein rein umfassendes Eidos zu haben, und dieses steht nun unter Wesens-Wahrheiten verschiedener Allgemeinstufe.”[Hua III/1, p. 12]

⁸ Consider the following passage as well. “Zunächst bezeichnete „Wesen“ das im selbst eigenen Sein eines Individuum als sein Was Vorfindliche. Jedes solches Was kann aber „in Idee gesetzt“ werden.”[Hua III/1, p. 13]

⁹ It is indeed possible to distinguish between the essence of an individual (*i.e.*, an essence that is strictly connected to a certain individual), and an essence that is put into an idea.

concrete essences, pure essence or *eidōs*, etc.) as they are conceived in a time when phenomenology has developed into a mature philosophical methodology.

2.1.1 *Wesen as the “Was” of an Individual*

In *Ideen I*, Husserl characterizes essences, first of all, as the “what” [*Was*] of an individual. He explicitly claims, indeed, that “at first ‘essence’ designated what is to be found in the very own being of an individual itself as its ‘What.’”¹⁰ Husserl’s idea is that the what of any particular individual is its most fundamental core: it tells what an individual properly is.¹¹

This idea should not be mistaken for the view according to which any individual has its own unique essence.¹² Husserl calls, indeed, into question those essentialist views according to which each individual has an essence that is uniquely of that individual, and allows one to distinguish it from other individuals. An individual essence in Husserl’s terminology is not to be confused with an essence that is specific of only one individual.

Surely, individual essences do not indicate at a first glance what unifies any set of individual of the same type, as general essences do. Understood as the what of an individual (that *i.e.*, as what tells what an individual is inasmuch as it is that individual, or *Dies-da*),¹³ this characterization of essence is only about the essence of an individual; that is, it is an *individual essence*, or as Husserl also writes in *Ideas I*, a *Wesen in der Konkretion*; or *vollen Konkretion*.¹⁴ However, Husserl says that the individuals of the

¹⁰ Cf. Hua III/1, p. 13.

¹¹ As Ingarden explains, “Das Was an einem tode ti, - das ist das ti einai, was es ist, nicht wahr, und das habe ich ‘Natur’ genannt.”[R., Ingarden, ‘Probleme der Husserlischen Reduktion. Vorlesung gehalten an der Universität Oslo’, Oktober/November 1967, in *Analecta Husserliana, Volume 4, Ingardeniana*, A.T Tymieniecka (ed.), Reidel Publishing, Dordrecht 1976, p. 6]. Hereafter *Oslo Lectures*.

¹² Husserl’s notion of essence is not identical to Jean Hering’s notion of individual essence. Nor is it close to Kripke’s characterization of essence in *Naming and Necessity*.

¹³ When we look at a *Dies-da* as something that instantiated one of many essence(s), it appears not only as a contingent individual, but, using a terminology borrowed from Aristotle, a *τόδε τι*. Majolino, [‘Individuum and Region of Being’, p. 35] claims that Husserl employs two notions of individuality: *Individuum* and *Dies da* (or *τόδε τι*). As he explains, “an individual is ultimately nothing but a this-here fully determined by the sum-total of all and only its predicable features.”[Majolino, p. 40].

¹⁴ Cf. Hua Mat V, p. 48.

same kind are instantiation of the same essences; so that, on reflection, there is no difference between an individual essence and the general essence it instantiate.¹⁵

Thus, individual essences may be roughly understood as general essences¹⁶ looked at from the point of view of, or in connection with, a particular individual instantiating them. As an illustration, consider the following example. When you see a particular table, you can divert your attention to its tableness, that is, to its *Was*; but its *Was* just is the tableness¹⁷ of all tables. If Husserl had thought of the individual essences as Saul Kripke and other philosophers do, the essence of the table in question would not coincide with the tableness of all tables, as it would have been constituted of some properties that two tables cannot possibly share, such as being made of a particular lump of wood. Husserl explicitly states, instead, that two or more individuals can share the same individual essence. An individual essence can be grasped as a general essence when it is considered as something that the individual in question has in common with other individuals (of the same kind). Once one realizes this, one may look at the particular individual instantiating the essence as just one instantiation of the essence in question among many other instantiations.

If we return to considering the 1902–1903 course of lectures *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie*, we see that the same holds for the conception of essence-lived-experience as the content [*Inhalt*] of a given psychic phenomenon. If we take a psychic phenomenon and we abstract its content from its specific individuation in a certain space and time and its realization in a specific consciousness, we have something that it is still linked to a certain phenomenon, but that could potentially be identical to many other essences instantiated in other phenomena. On this respect, the notion of individual essence at play in *Ideas I* is not different from that which is at least latently present in *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie*. The difference between the two accounts lies in the

¹⁵ For example, in Hua XXIV, pp. 303-304 Husserl writes in support of this that: “[t]he particularization of the essence is given in such a way that the universal coincides with the moment”

¹⁶ Consider that each individual object instantiates essences of varying degrees of generality. A certain red object, indeed, instantiate for example, both the genus *color* than the species *red*.

¹⁷ For the use of the form ‘tableness’, see Ingarden, *Oslo Lecture*, p. 7: Dieses Wort ‘Was’ bei Husserl hat sich dann bei anderen Leuten zu einem besonderen Substantivum gestaltet, z.B. Max Scheler spricht immer von ‘Washeiten’. -Wenn wir in der Geschichte der Philosophie weit genug zurückgehen, finden wir etwas Ähnliches - das ist das *ti*, das *ti einai* von einem *tode ti*. Z.B. dieses Ding ist eine Brille, dessen *ti* ist ‘Brillheit’ (wenn Sie das Wort erlauben); und das ist ein Tisch, - dessen *ti* ist eben ‘Tischheit’ usw. ”.

additional description of individual essences in terms of what makes an individual that kind of individual.

2.1.2 *Wesen as Stock of Essential Predicables*

Husserl provides another characterization of the notion of individual essence in the first paragraphs of *Ideas I*. Immediately after having claimed that “it belongs to the sense of anything contingent to have an essence” – what Husserl refers to as the ‘what’ of an individual – Husserl elaborates this idea as follows:

Ein individueller Gegenstand ist nicht bloß überhaupt ein individueller, ein Dies da!, ein einmaliger, er hat als „in sich selbst“ so und so beschaffener seine Eigenart, seinen Bestand an wesentlichen Prädikabilien, die ihm zukommen müssen (als „Seiendem, wie er in sich selbst ist“), damit ihm andere, sekundäre, relative Bestimmungen zukommen können.¹⁸

Husserl’s idea that each individual has an essence is clarified in terms of it having some essential predicables. Husserl writes, indeed, that, inasmuch as each individual has an essence (*i.e.*, it is so-and-so constituted according to its *Eigenart*), there are some essential predicables that must pertain to it and complement it.

This characterization makes us see that, according to Husserl, the individual essence of an individual (a *Dies-da*) – *i.e.*, its what [*Was*] – is articulated¹⁹ as a stock of essential predicables [*Bestand an wesentlichen Prädikabilien*].

The essential predicables of an individual are the predicables that the object must have, as Husserl clearly states, if other secondary, or relative/contingent,²⁰ determinations are to belong to it.²¹ In *Ideen I*, Husserl does not further elaborate on

¹⁸ Hua III/1, pp. 12-13.

¹⁹ One might wonder whether the what of the individual is the *substratum* of the essential predicables, or their ground, or whether, instead, the predicables themselves constitute the what of the individual. This second alternative is in my view closer to Husserl’s idea.

²⁰ In *Copy D*, the word ‘relative’ is changed to ‘contingent’.

²¹ Ingarden explains this point in the following way: “Das Was an einem *tode ti*, - das ist das *ti einai* [...] Und das Andere, diese wesentlichen Prädikabilien, ist das *poion eina*; *poion* - wie ist das, was Tisch ist,

why he decides to use the term ‘predicable’ instead of some other, less unusual candidates, as, for example, the term ‘property’.²² Nor he gives examples that could allow us to have a better grasp of what he has in mind. Yet, the fact that he uses the expression ‘essential predicables’ in opposition to the secondary, or relative, determinations of the object²³ leads us to think that Husserl refers to each of the essential determinations (or essential properties) of the individual object with the term ‘essential predicable’. Further, Husserl uses again the term ‘predicables’ [*Prädikabilien*] with reference to essences in a text of 1918 (contained as Text 11 of *Hua XLI*), while defining predicables as the “Inneren Momente des Gegenstandes (des Individuum)”.²⁴

We could, then, rephrase Husserl’s idea in this way: every individual object of a specific kind [*Eigenart*] has an essence consisting of some essential determinations or essential properties. These essential properties belong to the respective individual objects in addition to secondary, or relative, determinations; that is, of accidental properties. Importantly, according to Husserl, accidental determinations are, in turn, dependent from the essential determinations. In fact, he claims that any object must have essential predicates to have secondary determinations truly predicated of it.

The fact that the essence of an individual consists of essential predicables adds an original element to Husserl’s account of essence compared to the account presented in the course of lectures of 1902–1903. Even though, according to the very definition of *Inhalt*, the *Inhalt* of a phenomenon could be understood as a set of properties (or even of

wie ist das weiter bestimmt? Ja, es gibt viele Bestimmtheiten, die alle zusammen dieses *poion* ausmachen, aber jetzt muss eine Scheidung vorgenommen werden.”[Ingarden, *Oslo Lectures*, p. 6] “Dieses Was bestimmt, welche andere, nicht das Was bildende Bestimmtheiten da hinzugehören, so dass eine bestimmte innere Kohärenz, eine innere gegenseitige Abhängigkeit zwischen dem Was - dem *ti* - und einem Teil von *poion* - einem Teil von der Mitbestimmtheit - bestehen musste.”[*Ibidem*, p. 7]

²² As we have seen in *Section 1.2.2*, in early writings Husserl defines the *Inhalt* of a concept as the set of its properties [*Merkmale*], and the ideal content as the set of “der konstitutiven und konsekutiven Merkmale” [[*Hua Mat. I*, p. 71]. The idea that the what (or *Inhalt*) of an individual is articulated as a set or stock of predicables surely originates as a development of this idea.

²³ It would be very interesting to attempt to examine what these secondary determinations consist of. Is Husserl referring only to object’s individuation in space and time as secondary determination?

²⁴ Here he claims that: “Jedes Individuum hat sein individuelles Wesen, und zu diesem gehört die individualisierende Lage. Verstehen wir unter „Wesen“ das eidetisch Gemeinsame, so dürfen wir unter Wesen eines Individuums (und in diesem Sinn individuelles Wesen) nur verstehen eben das „Allgemeine“, Generische und Spezifische, nach allen seinen ebensolchen Komponenten. Dann ist die Lage (die individuelle Differenz der Extension) kein Wesensmoment. Andererseits kann man unter „Wesen“ auch den Gesamtbegriff der Prädikabilien, die inneren Momente des Gegenstandes (des Individuums) verstehen, und dann gehört dazu einerseits der „begriffliche“ Inhalt, und anders *das hic et nunc*, das zwar allgemein zu bezeichnen, aber nicht in der individuellen Besonderung zu best Immen ist.”[*Hua XLI*, p. 149].

constitutive properties)²⁵, Husserl did not explicitly characterize the *Inhalt* as the set of ‘essential’ predicables of an individual in previous works. On the contrary, if we read the course of lectures *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie*, we may come to doubt that all of the predicates of an object constitute its *Inhalt*. Indeed, grasping it only involves bracketing those characteristics that cause its individuation and its realization (*i.e.*, its attachment to an empirical consciousness).²⁶

Accordingly, used in the context of *Ideen I*, that is, to refer to essential predicables of an individual, the adjective ‘essential’ takes a new meaning: it does not mean only ‘not empirical’, as the adjective ‘eidetic’, but rather ‘not accidental’.²⁷

Thus, to summarize, at the time of *Ideen I*, the notion of essence [*Wesen*] have at least three connotations.

At the lowest level, that is at the level of individual essences,

- (1) The *Was* of an individual, which comprises everything that constitutes its very being.
- (2) The stock of essential predicables, or determinations, of an individual object; that is, roughly, the set of properties that makes an object precisely an object of that kind; and that an individual of that kind must necessarily have.

And at a higher level,

- (3) The general essence that more individuals (of some kind) have in common.

Interestingly, Connotations (1) and (2) find room only partially in *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie*, where a notion of individual essence is significantly at play, but without the latter being explicitly characterized as what makes an individual object the kind of object it is, and as the stock of essential predicates. As we have seen, in 1902–1903, Husserl merely regards essences as general, non-temporal, and consciousness-independent (*i.e.*, ideal) objects.

Let us now add another element to the account presented by Husserl in *Ideen I*; that is, the notion of *eidos* as pure essence.

²⁵ But as we have seen in chapter 1 the characterization of the *Inhalt* is not *Hua Mat. I*, p. 71

²⁶ We will see in Section 2.4 some details of the passage from *AE* to *Ideen I* with regard to Husserl’s determination of the *Inhalt*.

²⁷ I agree with Sowa on this particular point. See Sowa, ‘*The Universal as What is in Common*’, p. 536.

2.2 *Eidos as Pure Essence*

In addition to the interpretation of essence presented before, these pages of *Ideen I* introduce next to the term ‘essence’ the Greek term ‘*eidos*’.²⁸ Naturally, then, one may ask: what does ‘*eidos*’ mean? Is it just another term for ‘essence’ (like ‘*Essenz*’ and ‘*Wesen*’, which are often used interchangeably)? Or is Husserl alluding to a more specific (and substantial) notion?

A precise explanation of the meaning of the term ‘*eidos*’ could dissolve all doubts; but, unfortunately, it is missing from Husserl’s work.²⁹ There are, however, clues scattered all over these initial pages of his work that may help us making clearer the issue at hand. These clues all point to the conclusion that the *eidos* should be understood as a pure essence; that is, as a purified essence. Let us consider each of these clues, one at a time.

(a) The very first indication Husserl gives about his use of the term ‘*eidos*’ is contained in the *Introduction* [*Einleitung*] of *Ideen I*, where Husserl says that he used the Greek term ‘*eidos*’ to avoid the ambiguities of the terms ‘idea’ and ‘ideal’. In fact, Husserl himself employed the terms ‘idea’ and ‘ideal’ in the first edition of the *Logical Investigations*, but he specifies that, from now on, he will be using the term only with reference to the specific notion of idea in the Kantian sense.³⁰ I will delve into this point in the next section [2.3]. For the moment, it suffices to bear in mind that there is a relation between *eide* and the semantic couple ‘idea’ and ‘ideal’.

(b) Secondly, Husserl writes that we grasp an *eidos* (or pure essence) when the what [*Was*] of an individual, *i.e.* its essence [*Wesen*], is put into an idea:

Jedes solches Was kann aber "in Idee gesetzt" werden. Erfahrende oder individuelle Anschauung kann in Wesensschauung (Ideation) umgewandelt werden -

²⁸ There are no (on my knowledge) previous occurrence of the term, even not in the research manuscripts.

²⁹ Importantly, in *FTL* Husserl will write: “the concept *eidos* [...] defines the only concept belonging to the multisignificant expression, a priori, that I recognize philosophically. That concept alone is meant wherever the locution a priori occurs in my writings”[Hua XXVI, p. 255[p. 248, Author’s Note].

³⁰ I will discuss this point in the next section, but for now it is important to bear in mind the robust connection between *eidos* and idea and between *eidos* and *a priori*.

eine Möglichkeit, die selbst nicht als empirische, sondern als Wesensmöglichkeit zu verstehen ist. Das Erschaute ist dann das entsprechende reine Wesen oder Eidos, sei es die oberste Kategorie, sei es eine Besonderung derselben, bis herab zur vollen Konkretion.³¹

This passage offers an important clue for it establishes equivalence between *eidos* and pure essence, which explains that the former is a purified essence. The fact that Husserl defines the *eidos* as a pure essence, implies that this act of putting the individual essence into an idea – which Husserl calls ideation or intuition of essence – is a sort of purification.³² Considering that, in the *Logical Investigations*, as we have seen, the term ‘idea’ indicates what is common to more individuals and gives them unity, we can reasonably suppose that the *eidos* has something to do with a certain generality or unity of a group of individuals.

If this is true, we start to see how the notion of *eidos* differs from that of essence as the what of an individual. At this stage (when we deal with *eidos*) we should have already moved on to consider the essence of an individual as being identical to the essence of other individuals, or as exemplified by other individuals too.

When we perceive something individual, as we have explained, we can grasp the individual in its particular character, as well as its own essence: its *Was* and its stock of essential predicables. Further, we can also do another thing: we can look at the what and at its properties as something that its repeatable in other individuals; or as what the individual in question shares with other individual of the same kind. When we orientate our look to the individual essence of an individual as repeatable in other individuals, we manage to look at the individual in question as a mere example of the essence and at the essence in question as a general or specific essence. Thus, we can mean by ‘essence’ the commonality among individuals. Understood as such, essence is ordered, according to his degree of generality, within a hierarchy of genera and species, whose highest degree consists of the highest genera, and the lowest of the eidetic singularity. One may think

³¹ Hua III/1, p. 13

³² See also this passage: “it belongs to the sense of anything contingent to have an essence and therefore an *eidos* which can be apprehended purely; and this *Eidos* comes under eidetic truths belonging to different levels of universality.”[Hua III/1, p. 12] For this interpretation of *eidos* as pure essence, See Husserl further annotation to his copy of *Ideas I* [Marginal annotation C].

that the transition from the *Was* of an individual to the *eidōs* consists in this orientation of our look from the essence of an individual to the essence as exemplified in many individuals. One may think that when we look at the essence of an individual as an essence in itself that is only exemplified by that individual, we are interested in the essence in itself, that is, in the essence as idea. Yet we should consider things more carefully before accepting this claim, for Husserl gives other indications when it comes to the status of *eidōs*.

Is the process described above – which consist of moving from an individual to a general essence – sufficient to grasp a pure essence? Are *eide* simply general essences? Husserl gives us another clue that helps us answering this question.

(c) The third clue that Husserl gives us provides further insights on the kind of purity that is it a stake here. Husserl says that the *eidōs*, the pure essence, can be equally exemplified by what is intuitively given in experience, by what is given in perception, memory, etc., but just as well by what is given in mere fantasy”:

Das Eidos, das reine Wesen, kann sich intuitiv in Erfahrungsgegebenheiten, in solchen der Wahrnehmung, Erinnerung usw., exemplifizieren, ebenso gut aber auch in bloßen Phantasiegegebenheiten. Demgemäß können wir, ein Wesen selbst und originär zu erfassen, von entsprechenden erfahrenden Anschauungen ausgehen, ebenso wohl aber auch von nicht erfahrenden, nicht-daseinerfassenden, vielmehr "bloß einbildenden" Anschauungen. Erzeugen wir in der freien Phantasie irgendwelche Raumgestaltungen, Melodien, soziale Vorgänge u. dgl., oder fingieren wir Akte I des Erfahrens, des Gefallens oder Mißfallens, des Wollens [13J u. dgl., so können wir daran durch "Ideation" mannigfache reine Wesen originär erschauen und evtl. sogar adäquat [...]. Würde die freie Fiktion, durch welche psychologische Wunder auch immer, zur Einbildung von prinzipiell neuartigen, z.B. sinnlichen Daten führen, die in keiner Erfahrung je vorkamen, noch je vorkommen werden, so würde das an der originären Gegebenheit der entsprechenden Wesen nichts ändern: obschon eingebildete Data nie und nimmer wirkliche Data sind.³³

³³ Hua III/1, pp. 15-16.

This passage suggests that a pure essence is an essence that does not have any connection to actualities, or (actual) individuals.³⁴ Its reference to the individuals that could exemplify it is, indeed, severed, or at least neutralized.

The *eidōs* can be exemplified by everything because it does not have any link to any individuality whatsoever, that is, because it is a pure universality.

This is strongly confirmed by the last sentence of the passage above, where Husserl writes that even a completely imaginary individual (even if it were truly possible to imagine something completely imaginary) would properly serve as a basis to grasp an *eidōs* with evidence having the same trustworthiness of the perception of an actual individual. Similar claims help to see how radical the separation between an *eidōs* and the corresponding individuals can be.

(d) This interpretation of purity as independence from individuality is confirmed by the following sentence of *Ideas I*: “Positing of factual being annulling the pure universality.”³⁵ We may thus take this latter claim as further evidence for the interpretation defended.

We can now give at least a tentative answer to the question we set out to answer at the beginning of this section. Looking at an essence as what is common to many individuals does not give us the *eidōs* or pure essence, because doing that would still be considering this latter with reference to individuals (no more to one single individual, but to a multiplicity of individuals). Thus, that may be a step towards grasping pure essence, but, if one takes seriously Husserl’s reference to purity and purification, that does not seem sufficient. More precisely, it would be a step in the right direction only if the reference to the individuals considered as exemplifying the relevant essence were severed or neutralized; that is, provided that the individuals considered were truly considered merely as exemplifications of an essence that can be grasped *per se*, and independently of any of them. Only in this way, ideation truly is purification. In a nutshell, to grasp the *eidōs*, one has to cut off any link between the essence and the

³⁴ Sowa confirms this idea; as he writes, “[t]he purity that makes them [i.e. pure essences] suitable for descriptive eidetics nevertheless satisfies the same criterion as that of geometric concepts: a descriptive concept is “pure” when it neither explicitly nor implicitly co-positives factual mundane entities or a factual world of entities.”[R., Sowa, *Eidetics and its Methodology*, in *The Routledge Companion to Phenomenology*, S. Luft, S. Overgaard (Eds.), London & New York 2011, pp. 254-265, p. 257]

³⁵ Hua III/1, p. 33

individuals exemplifying it. For example, one has to attempt to grasp the essence *perception* “in general” [*überhaupt*], rather than the essence of the perception of something particular. The *eidōs*, in this sense, is not the essence of any individual object, but it is itself a new object.³⁶

It is interesting to notice, at this point, that Husserl’s claims seem to imply that a purification of the essence of an individual object (*i.e.*, ideation) is always possible. For Husserl claims that to any contingent being of whatever kind belongs an essence, “and therefore an *eidōs* which can be apprehended purely”³⁷. We will examine whether this conception remains the same in later stages of Husserl’s work when we focus on the notion of purity.³⁸ But we can still anticipate that several years after *Ideen I* Husserl declares that the concept of *eidōs* “defines the only concept belonging to the multi-significant expression, *a priori*, that I recognize philosophically. That concept alone is meant wherever the locution *a priori* occurs in my writings.”³⁹

(e) The last indication concerns the fact that the *eidōs* is not necessarily a generality of a higher degree of generality than the corresponding essence of the individual object(s) from which it is grasped. For Husserl explicitly states that it can be either “from the highest category or a particularization thereof— down to full concretion.”⁴⁰

Yet, there is another sense in which an *eidōs* can be said to be more general than an essence; precisely, a pure essence or *eidōs* is more general than an essence connected to actual individuals with reference to its extension [*Umfang*]. Its extension comprises, indeed, not only actual individuals, but also possible individuals. Pure generalities, indeed, can be characterized as having non-actual extension, that is, as an extension that

³⁶ “Das Wesen (*Eidos*) ist ein neuartiger Gegenstand.”[Hua III/1, p. 14]

³⁷ “Zum Sinn jedes Zufälligen gehört, eben ein Wesen, und somit ein rein zfassendes Eidos zu haben, und dieses steht nun unter Wesens-Wahrheiten verschiedener Allgemeinstufe. See also this passage: Wir folgen unserem allgemeinen Prinzip, daß jedes individuelle Vorkommnis sein Wesen hat, das in eidetischer Reinheit faßbar ist und in dieser Reinheit zu einem Felde möglicher eidetischer Forschung gehören muß.”[Hua III/1, p. 12]

³⁸ *Eidos* and purity are always intertwined terms. Yet, Husserl later distinguishes between different kinds of purity; it will later become clear that an *eidōs* can remain not completely pure, if one does not completely break with actuality. Husserl will then start to introduce the denomination pure *eidōs*, which is an *eidōs* that is completely pure.

³⁹ Hua XVII, p. 255. This seems to be the reason why the concept of ‘material *a priori*’ of the third *Logical Investigation* seems to gradually disappear and to be absorbed by that of *eidōs* and eidetic laws.

⁴⁰ Hua III/1, p. 10.

is not limited to things actually or really possible (that is, *actualizably* possible). We will devote the next chapter to better understand this issue.

2.3 *Eidos and Essence versus the Notion of Idea in the Kantian Sense*

At the end of the *Introduction*, Husserl provides an important statement. After having discussed the ambiguities surrounding the old philosophical distinction between *a priori* and *a posteriori*, Husserl moves on to discuss two other admittedly ambiguous terms ‘idea’ and ‘ideal’, and he writes:

Vielleicht nicht ganz so schlimm hinsichtlich beirrender Vieldeutigkeit steht es mit den Ausdrücken *Idee* und *Ideal*, aber im ganzen doch schlimm genug, wie mir die häufigen Missdeutungen meiner *Logischen Untersuchungen* empfindlich genug gemacht haben. Zu einer Änderung der Terminologie bestimmt mich auch das Bedürfnis, den höchst wichtigen *Kantischen Begriff der Idee* von dem allgemeinen Begriff des (formalen oder materialen) Wesens reinlich geschieden zu erhalten. Ich benutze daher als Fremdwort das terminologisch unverbrauchte *eidos*, als deutsches Wort das mit ungefährlichen, gelegentlich allerdings ärgerlichen Äquivokationen behaftete „Wesen“.

Husserl admits to be aware of the fact that the frequent misinterpretations of the *Logical Investigations* were partly caused by his use of the terms ‘idea’ and ‘ideal’; and, then, he immediately adds that, from now on, he will revise his terminology, and – as if there was an obvious connection – that, to this end, he will distinguish the Kantian notion of idea from the universal concept of essence. He also explains that he will use the Greek term ‘*eidos*’ and the German ‘*Wesen*’ for the latter. This seems to imply that he decides that he will reserve the word ‘idea’ only to refer to the Kantian notion of idea.

As the passage is unclear, it requires careful examination. For starters, the conceptual couple ‘idea’ plus ‘ideal’, as it was used in the *Logical Investigations*, is responsible for some misunderstanding concerning its content. This is one reason Husserl identifies for not using this terminology in the same sense of the *Logical Investigations* anymore. The

need to distinguish between the notion of idea in the Kantian sense and the notion of essence also contributes to this terminological revision. Importantly, the notion of idea in the Kantian sense is a notion that Husserl introduces after the *Logical Investigations*, and, maybe, in the wake of some doubts concerning the terminology employed in that work. In fact, it seems that, some time after the publication of the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl starts to take the term ‘idea’ to have the sense of ‘the Kantian notion of idea’; that is, he restricts the meaning of this term to that of the expression ‘idea in the Kantian sense’.

This implies the following.

1. First, the conceptual couple ‘idea’ and ‘ideal’ is dismembered, and the whole semantic field of ‘idea’ and ‘ideal’ becomes occupied by at least three terms: ‘Kantian idea’, ‘*eidōs*’, and ‘*Wesen*’. This, in turn, seems to indicate a certain family resemblance between the notion of idea and the notion of essence.
2. Second, the term ‘idea’ will only be used with reference to the ‘Kantian notion of idea.’
3. Other nuanced meanings encompassed by the old terminology will go under different names. Presumably, the new term ‘*eidōs*’ (which as we have seen refers to an essence put into idea) will occupy part of that semantic field.

To see things more clearly, we can begin with disentangling the ambiguities of the expressions ‘idea’ and ‘ideality’ in the *Logical Investigations*.

As we have seen, in *LU* and all other works that predate *Ideas I*, Husserl uses the notion of idea to refer quite generally to an ideal object that constitutes the ideal unity [*Einheit*] of a manifold of individual objects a certain kind, and he equates this sense of idea with the meaning of ‘species’. Well-known examples of ideas constituting an ideal unity include (i) that of the species *red* (*i.e.* the idea of red) *vis-à-vis* the red slips of paper [*II LU*]; but they also include (ii) meaning as the ideal unity of the different acts of meaning intending some particular meanings [*I LU*].⁴¹

⁴¹ Hua XIX/1, p. 155

At the time of the *Logical Investigations* (and still several years later), Husserl considered these examples as both examples of how ideas constitute an ideal unity, to the extent that, in the *Logical Investigations*, meaning is treated as a species, exactly like the species *red*.⁴² However, (as already anticipated in *I.2.1*) Husserl gradually came to realize that the model of species cannot be the only model to think about ideality or ideal objects, and that the two examples mentioned above must be distinguished.

In the first example, (*i.e.*, example (i)) the idea of red unifies the slips of paper as red slips; that is, the idea of red indicates what all the red individual objects have in common. In the second example, instead, (*i.e.*, example (ii)), meaning is not a universal instantiated in the acts of meaning.⁴³ Meaning is an ideal object; that is, meaning as an ideal object is something identically repeatable in many individual acts; but it is not a universal in the sense of the species, that is, as something instantiated in all the acts of meaning.

Thus, to summarize, in the years immediately after the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl gradually comes to realize that the notion of idea that he previously employed should, in fact, can have two meanings, and, as such, they are to be disambiguated. More precisely, he understands that the notion of idea could not be merely identified with that of species (as a general object)⁴⁴, because it can also indicate an ideal object such as meaning, which is identical, but not universal in the sense in which the species

⁴² As Husserl writes, “[t]he genuine identity that we here assert is none other than the *identity of the species*. As a species, and only as a species, can it embrace in unity (*sumballein eis en*), and, as an ideal unity, the dispersed multiplicity of individual singulars (*der individuellen Einzelheiten*). The multiplicity of singularities for the ideal unity *meaning* is naturally that of the corresponding act-moments of meanings, the *meaning-intentions*. Meaning (*Bedeutung*) is related to various acts of meaning (*Bedeuten*) (...) just as redness (*Röte*) in *specie* is to the slips of paper that lie here, and which all “have” this same redness (*diese selbe Röte*). Each slip has, in addition to other constitutive aspects (extension, form, etc.), its own individual redness, *i.e.*, its *individual case* (*Einzelfall*) of this color-species, though this neither exists in the slip nor anywhere else in the whole world, and particularly not “in our thought” (*in unserem Denken*), in so far as this latter is part of the domain of real being, the sphere of temporality” [Hua XIX/1, p. 105-106] See also Hua XIX/1, p. 108).

⁴³ “It is a great temptation to think that the proposition belongs to the various acts of which it is the sense by virtue of its generic universality, as, for example, many red things belong to the generic essence (*Gattungswesen*) “redness”. Just as all these things have red in common and the red apprehended by an ideating abstraction is a general essence (*allgemeines Wesen*), so will the ideal-identical proposition (*ideal-identischer Satz*), which indeed is common to many acts, be a general essence, and this means a generic essence (*Gattungswesen*)” [Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil*, p. 134]

⁴⁴ Cf. Hua XL1, P. 79. Husserl explains there that, in the *Logical Investigations*, he mistakenly characterized the sense of idea as species.

red is universal. The two examples considered in this section are examples of these two possible characterizations of the idea as an ideal unity. One can therefore distinguish between:

- i. Ideality as generality (or species);
- ii. Ideality of the identical, or the ideality of meaning.

It follows that an ideal object is not necessarily a species, because meaning is precisely an ideal object indicating some sort of ideal unity, but that it is not general or universal in the sense in which a species is.

Therefore, it is highly probable that when Husserl mentions the ambiguity of the terms ‘idea’ and ‘ideal’ in the Introduction to *Ideas I*, he is referring exactly to the dual meaning of ‘idea’ as ideal unity. This at least partly explains why Husserl acknowledges an ambiguity in his old terminology.⁴⁵

What we have just shed light on is important for understanding the evolution on Husserl’s notion of idea, as the notion that he introduces in *Ideas I* breaks the identity between idea and species and, thus, between idea and essence, for, as explained in *Chapter I*, Husserl’s notion of species is the ancestor of his notion of essence. The break of the identity between idea and essence is the assumption that Husserl relies upon for his later modification of the notion of idea, and, thereby, the introduction of the notion of idea in the Kantian sense, which in *Ideas I* Husserl wants to radically distinguish from both that of essence and of *eidos*. At the time of *Ideas I*, Husserl decides, indeed, to find a new name for the notion of idea understood as a species, so to exclusively employ the term ‘idea’ in another context.

Investigating the transformation leading Husserl to elaborate the notion of idea in the Kantian sense starting from the decomposition of the semantic couple ‘idea’ plus ‘ideal’ into (i) idea as species and (ii) idea as the identically repeatable present in many individual acts greatly exceeds the scope of this section. Still, a preliminary analysis of

⁴⁵ For Husserl’s interpretation of his past work, see Hua XL1, p. 79. He writes there: “In den Logischen Untersuchungen habe ich Idee und Ideation in dem Sinn von Spezies und erschauender Abstraktion von Spezies gebraucht und habe fälschlich die Sinne als „Ideen“ in diesem Sinn gebraucht. Andererseits gebraucht man auch Idee, idealer Gegenstand, als Gegensatz von realem Gegenstand, also als irrealer Gegenstand, als unzeitlicher oder überzeitlicher. Endlich haben wir den Begriff der Kantischen Idee, der seiner eigenen Klärung bedarf.”

the notion of idea in the Kantian sense allows us to understand to what extent this should not be conflated with the general concept of essence; and, more precisely, neither with essence nor with *eidōs*.

As Husserl explains in § 143 of *Ideas I*, the notion of idea in the Kantian sense designates the ideal of the perfect givenness of something; or, in other words, the full givenness of some particular object, which, in its being impossible to reach fully, is, in fact, an ideal.⁴⁶

The idea in the Kantian sense indicates the ideal unity of multiple appearances of a particular individual. Its being ideal is to be understood in two senses: first, it is the identical pole which all the appearances and the determinations of a particular individual converge to; and, second, it is the *telos* which we aim at when constituting the object, but that cannot be fully reached (or, in other words, the ideal of complete determination which is impossible to attend to). It is the idea of the particular individual (as it were) given in its fullness.

Thus, the idea in the Kantian sense is akin to what we have characterized as the ideality of meaning (that is, (ii)). It is, in fact, an ideal that cannot be conflated with the ideality of species, or ideality as generality.

We can also push the comparison one step further by pointing out that the idea in the Kantian sense can be identified with the full-fledged sense of a phenomenon. Following Donn Welton's characterization, it may be said that the idea in the Kantian sense is a "reidentifiable determination"⁴⁷ of the individual object which is delineated within the course of experience itself, and in relation with the type of, and concept(s) attached to, that object, and by repetition.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ "But perfect givenness is nevertheless predestinated as "Idea" (in the Kantian sense) – as a system which, in its eidetic type, is an absolutely determined system of endless processes of continuous appearances, or as a field of these processes, an *a priori* determined continuum of appearances with different, but determined, dimensions, and governed throughout by a fixed set of eidetic laws." [Hua III/1, p. 331]

⁴⁷ See also Welton's view, according to which "the object manifest in and through its profiles displays a certain invariant pattern or a reidentifiable 'determination', what Husserl calls a 'sense' (*Sinn*). The sense is what organizes the profiles internally into a coherent series of presentation of the object" [D. Welton, *The Other Husserl: The Horizons of Transcendental Phenomenology*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2003, p. 16].

⁴⁸ I take 'sense' as meaning something different from 'concept' as well, even though their relationship may be tight; and it is surely worth to be made explicit.

Importantly, the idea in the Kantian sense as the idea of the perfect givenness has a regulative function⁴⁹. It is worthy of citation Rudolf Bernet's lucid explanation:

The Idea in the Kantian sense is the idea of the thing in itself, meaning the idea of the complete givenness of the thing, nearer to which each new actual, intuitive, and harmonious experience draws me, without my ever reaching it completely. Far from being an idea in the sense of an essence, the Idea in the Kantian sense is thus the idea of a particular reality. And it is this idea that guides the infinite progress of my experience of the thing. One could also say that the Idea in the Kantian sense is the ideal of an adequate givenness of a particular reality and that this unreachable ideal—which does not have the status of a real possibility—nonetheless guides all the actual experiences of the thing and all the real possibilities related to it.⁵⁰

The notion of sense of an object is wider than that of essence of an object⁵¹, for it include also those the contingent and peculiar (not essential) aspect of it. Further, contrary to essences, the sense of a phenomenon is completely bounded to our experience or to an intersubjective experience of it, as this sense emerges from past experiences of the object or of similar objects. The ideality of sense is indeed, as Jacques Derrida claims, a “bound” ideality and not a “free” one.⁵² However, the two notions have something in common for the sense or idea of an object, just as essences,

⁴⁹ Compare Michela Summa's observations. “For Kant, the ideas of reason have no constitutive use, since they do not provide any concept to the understanding. However, they do have an excellent and necessary [*vortrefflichen und unentbehrlich notwendigen*] regulative function, which consists in orienting the understanding toward a certain aim.”[M., Summa, *Spatio-temporal Intertwining. Husserl's Transcendental Aesthetic*, Springer, Dordrecht 2014, p. 220] “Not being in principle the correlate of any possible experience, the idea of adequate givenness of the thing is the rule for the dynamic unfolding of experience.”[*ivi*, p. 221] “Such a tension between the structural incompleteness and the anticipation of an unreachable infinite totality of possible appearances animates the dynamics of the perceptual process.”[*ivi*, p. 222]

⁵⁰ Bernet, ‘Husserl's Transcendental Idealism Revisited’, *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 2004, p. 15.

⁵¹ Mohanty ‘view about the relationship between the notions of essence and of sense is both complex and ambiguous. On the one hand, he explains that the notion of essence is an ontological notion, while the notion of sense is properly phenomenological notion; and that Husserl's phenomenology registers a progressive shift from being concerned with essences to being concerned with sense. On the other hand, he confuses the two notions (and also the notion of concept with the notion of sense), when he states, for example, that, according to him, eidetic variation serves the aim of meaning clarification, or of conceptual analysis, rather than the aim of grasping essences. See Mohanty's ‘Method of Imaginative Variation in Phenomenology’ and Mohanty's *The Possibility of Transcendental Philosophy*.

⁵² J. Derrida, *Introduction à “L'origine de la géométrie” de E. Husserl*, PUF, Paris, 1962 [Eng., tr. p. 71].

motivates expectations and allows one to make predictions about the course of experience, as they guide one's active and passive determination of the relevant object. In other words, the sense of an object – exactly like its essence – constitutes a horizon of possibilities that helps us to orientate in experience. Yet, the sense (or the idea in the Kantian sense) of an object has a different normative power than essences and eidetic laws have, because they have different kinds of normativity. The normativity of sense emerges *a posteriori*, and functions *a posteriori*; that is, after actually experiencing the relevant object); and, for this reason, it does not match the power that the normativity of essences and eidetic laws. In fact, while the norms prescribed by essences and eidetic laws admit no exception, the sense of the object acquired through each one's experience may be revised by further experience or, for instance, by history. Moreover, the normative power of sense is subordinated to that of essences and eidetic laws, since future experience cannot possibly contradict the norms prescribed by essences and eidetic laws.⁵³

Such a distinction between the idea in the Kantian sense and the essence must be strictly maintained despite some apparent ambiguities. The fact that Husserl speaks of 'idea in the Kantian sense' with reference to exact essences in § 74 of *Ideas* should not deceive us into thinking that this is not right. When Husserl uses the Kantian notion of idea with reference to exact essences such as the essences of geometrical objects, he employs the notion of idea in a somewhat different way. The relevant passage is the following:

Die geometrischen Begriffe sind "Ideal" begriffe, sie drücken etwas aus, was man nicht "sehen" kann; ihr "Ursprung" und damit auch ihr Inhalt ist ein wesentlich anderer als derjenige der *Beschreibung Begriffe* als Begriffe, die unmittelbar der schlichten Anschauung entnommene Wesen und keine "Ideale" zum Ausdruck bringen. Exakte Begriffe haben ihre Korrelate in Wesen, die den Charakter von "Ideen" *im Kantischen Sinne* haben. Diesen Ideen oder Idealwesen stehen gegenüber die *morphologischen Wesen*, als Korrelate der deskriptiven Begriffe. Diejenige Ideation, welche die Idealwesen ergibt als *ideale "Grenzen"*, die

⁵³As Husserl himself writes, "[the *eidōs*] is *prior to all "concepts"* in the sense of verbal significations; indeed, as pure concepts, these must be made to fit the *eidōs*." [Hua I, p. 71] I think that we can extend this claim to senses as well.

prinzipiell in keiner sinnlichen Anschauung vorfindlich sind, denen sich jeweils morphologische Wesen mehr oder I minder "annähern", ohne sie je zu erreichen, diese Ideation ist etwas grundwesentlich anderes als die Wesenserfassung durch schlichte "Abstraktion", in welcher ein abgehobenes "Moment" in die Region der Wesen erhoben wird als ein prinzipiell Vages, als ein Typisches.⁵⁴

Husserl distinguishes between *exact essences* (as the essence of the geometrician's *triangle*)⁵⁵, and the *inexact* or *morphological essences* (as the essences of *sound*, of *color*, of *lived-experience*, of *perception*, and so on). Both are material essences, but while the latter are directly instantiated in individuals, the former are not. While the essence *sound* and the sounds one hears in one's experience are homogenous, there is no homogeneity between the essence *triangle* and the triangular shapes that one sees, as they always are imperfect with respect to the perfection of the essence *triangle*. The latter is, then, given directly, in his perfection, as an idea in the Kantian sense, that is, in his perfect determination.⁵⁶

As much as geometrical essences are concerned, the notion of idea in the Kantian sense is to be taken in the same sense as when Husserl speaks of the full determinations of perceptual phenomena; but it assumes also a further characterization. Within this dimension, the notion of idea in the Kantian sense stands for an ideal unity, a totality of perfection (as limit case) that it is immediately given without the mediation of any actual object. The ideal triangle, for example, is given, and can only be given, as a limit, only as a Kantian idea.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Hua III/1, p. 155. Husserl focuses on the relationship between exact essences and ideas in the Kantian sense in the years immediately before the publication of *Ideas I*. See for example this similar passage: "Demgegenüber (gibt es eine grundwesentlich andere Art, Wesen zu erfassen (und korrelativ: grundwesentlich andere Wesen, die eben nur so erfassbar sind): die Ideation in einem speziellen, ausgezeichneten Sinn. Ihr entspricht die Wesensgattung, die Kant als „Idee“ bezeichnet. Die Idee ist nicht die eidetische Umwendung sozusagen eines reellen abstrakten Moments, sich in einem solchen vereinzelt, wie sich etwa das allgemeine Rot in diesem Rotmoment vereinzelt, sondern ein grundwesentlich Neues; etwas, das als eine ideale Grenze im anschaulich Gegebenen und in einer Reihe anschaulicher Gegebenheiten so liegt wie eben ein ideales Annäherungsziel zu den bloßen „Annäherungen“." [Hua XL1, p. 65]

⁵⁵ Note that one of Husserl's favorite examples of ideal or exact essences is the essence of pure red. See for example Hua XL1, p. 65. Husserl is however referring in this case to a particular discipline, that is to say, the geometry of color. Pure red is here the perfect examples of red, the limit idea of red, exactly like the ideal triangle vis-à-vis the (imperfect) examples of triangles that we have experience of.

⁵⁶ Cf. Hua XLI, p. 79. See also Hua XIX/1, p. 254.

⁵⁷ "Die Ideation, welche die geometrischen und chronologischen Begriffe ergibt (aber noch viele Begriffe derselben Art, die jedoch in der mathematischen Naturwissenschaft keine Funktion üben), ist zwar keine

In the case of exact or ideal essences, their perfection is not given as an anticipation (or an assumption) or as a *telos* to be reached, but it is immediately given through an act of idealization. More radically, an ideal essence can be given only in such a way; that is, only because heterogeneous to reality. We can notice, between the lines, that the kind of purity which is at stake in the case of geometrical essences is quite different from the kind of purity of the *eidos*. Both kinds of purity imply a fracture from reality, but the sense of perfection as ideal limit that characterize geometrical exact essences, is totally absent from the characterization of *eide* (for example of the *eidos* perception) as morphological pure essences. The *eidos perception* has nothing to do with a perfect example of perception with respect to any particular act of perception. We will have time to develop this argument in the next chapter.

So, to summarize, we can say that at the time of *Ideas I*, the sense of ideality as *Ideal-Identische* (that is, ideality of sense) is divorced from the ideality as generality or universality (ideality of species). The latter is now referred to with the terms ‘essence’ and (for the reasons examined in *Section 2.2.2*) ‘*eidos*’; while the first sense of ideality is referred to with the use of the notion of sense, or *noema*, and with the notion of idea in the Kantian sense. The notion of idea in the Kantian sense and of the notions of essence and *eidos* should not be conflated, even despite Husserl’s use of the notion of idea in the Kantian sense in his discussion of exact essences.

Such separation between idea and essence has an important meaning, as we will try to show, in Husserl’s phenomenology, because it is one of the tools phenomenology has to account for the complexity of experience.

2.4 The Genesis of the Eidetic Account of Ideas I (1904-1912)

As showed in *Section 2.2*, a careful examination of *Ideas I* reveals how Husserl characterizes the essence, firstly, as the what [*Was*] of an individual; that is, as what tells what an individual is inasmuch as it is that individual. The what of an individual is,

Abstraktion, aber doch eine Art unmittelbarer Herausschauung aus Anschauungsreihen. Im Wesentlichen ist es das, was Kant unter dem Titel „reine Anschauung“ zu fassen suchte. Primitive geometrische Ideen kann man gewissermaßen sehen, jedenfalls ist die Ideation (innerhalb der Gattung von Einsichtigkeit, die überhaupt begriffliche Wesen hierhergehöriger Art ergibt) eine unmittelbar zu fassende.”[Hua XLI, p. 64]

in its turn, unpacked in terms of a stock essential predicables, or essential determinations. Then, Husserl explains that, once understood as the what of an individual, and its stock of essential predicables, an individual essence is nothing but an example, among others, of a general essence. This means that an individual essence can also be taken as an example of a general essence that other individuals can just as well exemplify. Lastly, a general essence that is exemplified not only by actual individuals, but also by purely imaginary individuals, is a pure essence or an *eidōs*.

Given its complexity, it seems that the account presented in *Ideas I*, appears to be more articulated than the account presented by Husserl in 1902–1903, in the course of lectures *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie*, where he introduces for the first time the view that phenomenological analyses are analyses of essences.

The two accounts of essence – the account of 1902–1903 that presented in *Ideas I* – are surely compatible, but, although the account of *Ideas I* is the natural development of the former, they do not necessarily stand in a relation of implication. On reflection, Husserl could have remained neutral (or at least more cautious) about whether the individual essence as the what of an individual object is what makes it what it is inasmuch as it is that object. In fact, this is a claim that puts Husserl's later account close (at least apparently) to a more traditional kind of essentialism.⁵⁸ Similarly, Husserl could have also avoided characterizing essences in terms of essential predicates, or as predicates that the thing must have in order to have secondary, accidental predicates, even though this is a traditionally well-liked idea. Yet, this is a path that Husserl walks pretty soon after the course *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie*, while reflecting on the matter.⁵⁹

In this section, I would like to indicate the essential features of the transition between the two accounts mentioned above. For the sake of clarity, I divide the investigation in as many subsections as there are elements of novelty introduced in these years:

(a) *Essence as the Was of an Individual*

⁵⁸ Even though Husserl does not have a robust essentialist account à la Kripke.

⁵⁹ I will return to this in a later chapter.

Despite Husserl introduces the term ‘*Was*’ in 1907, the rough idea behind it is much older. In fact, it already finds its roots in Husserl’s characterization of essence as the “true and proper content” [*Inhalt*] of lived-experiences in his review to *Elsenhans* of the spring of 1903.

The idea that essence is the content [*Inhalt*] of a lived-experience is not new, because, as we have seen in *Chapter 1*, it was already introduced by Husserl in *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie*.⁶⁰ However, Husserl seems to revise his account in 1903, as he claims that the content [*Inhalt*] of a lived-experience is what the lived-experience itself is. This claim seems to open the door for the later characterization of the individual essence (or *Inhalt*, or *Was*) as what makes an individual what it is inasmuch as it is that individual. The passage in which Husserl discusses this issue is the following:

Deskription blickt auf das im strengsten Sinn Gegebene hin, auf das Erlebnis, so wie es in sich selbst ist. Sie analysiert z.B. die dingliche Erscheinung, nicht das in ihr Erscheinende [...]. Die auf dieser Analyse gebaute erkenntnistheoretische Aufklärung ist nichts weiter als intuitive, adäquate Abstraktion, die im phänomenologisch Fixierten das allgemeine Wesen, den „wahren und eigentlichen Inhalt“ der logischen Begriffe und Gesetze zum evidenten Bewußtsein bringt und damit zum „klaren und deutlichen“ Verständnis.⁶¹

Although Husserl still embraces here an old conception according to which phenomenology is only interested in clarifying logical concepts, it seems to me that he already uses a terminology including expression like ‘what is proper to it’, ‘what it is in itself’, ‘what actually is’, *etc.*

If one judged that the textual evidence is too weak, and, then, was not be convinced by this line of thought, one is only to wait until 1904–1905 to find an account closer to that of *Ideas I*. In the works of these years, in fact, Husserl also begins to speak of essential properties.

⁶⁰ In *AE* Husserl explains that when the phenomenologist looks at a lived-experience to grasp its essence, he looks not at its contingent moments (that is, at the moments that characterize this lived-experience only contingently), but, rather, at its content [*Inhalt*]; that is, at what the inherent content of the experience of the lived-experience. Cf. *Hua Mat III*, p. 98 and p. 199.

⁶¹ *Hua XXII*, p. 206

(b) *Essential Characteristics, and Essential Predicables*

More Precisely, Husserl first steps towards characterizing the essence of an individual (its *Was*, or *Inhalt*) in terms of essential predicables go back to two courses of lectures he produced in the winter semester of 1904–1905 on the topics of phantasy, and of attention and perception, respectively.

In the course on phantasy, for example, Husserl claims that what matters from the phenomenological point of view is what is immanent within any lived-experience, “its internal characters” [*innere Charaktere*], what, in them, is essential [*Wesentliches*], that is to say, what serves as the basis for eidetic generalizations.⁶²

In other passages of the same course of lectures, Husserl also discusses of *Wesenseigentümlichkeit*, within similar circumstances.⁶³

Analogously, in the other course of the same years on perception and attention, Husserl states that phenomenology is interested in grasping the essential (rather than the contingent) characteristics of lived-experiences⁶⁴ to shed light on the distinctive characteristics that specifically characterize the various kinds of lived-experiences (and allow one to distinguishing one kind from another).⁶⁵ Then, Husserl further adds that, after having grasped these characteristics, one can, on their bases, make further generalizations to grasp the specific essence in question. We may see, then, that in 1904–1905, it is already prefigured the distinction between individual and general

⁶² “Phänomenologisch kommt es ja nur auf das Immanente an, auf der in reiner Adäquation erschauten Erlebnisse, auf ihr Wesentliches, d.h. auf das, was zu Wesensverallgemeinerungen Anlass gibt, somit zu Begriffsbildungen Anlass gibt, die adäquate Realisation gestatten, indem wir das begriffliche Wesen in evidenten Generalisation direkt zu erschauen vermögen.”[Hua XXIII, p. 5]

⁶³ “Es ist eine immanente Bestimmtheit der Phantasievorstellung, eine Wesenseigentümlichkeit, die durch evidente Analyse als rein inneres Moment solcher Erlebnisse zu finden ist, und so gehört mit dem Erlebnis selbst auch der Umstand, dass es sich auf Gegenständliches bezieht, dass es sich darauf in dieser Art und Form bezieht, und als was sich darin das Gegenständliche darstellt, zur phänomenologischen Analyse des Erlebnisses.”[Hua XXIII, p. 3]

⁶⁴ “Es handelt sich nicht um zufällige phänomenologische Beschaffenheiten, sondern um wesentliche, im Wesen der betreffenden Wahrnehmungen gründende.”[Hua XXXVIII, p.16]

⁶⁵ “Indem wir wesentliche Demarkationslinien suchen, welche die betreffenden Spezies von Erlebnissen trennen, indem wir die Wesenseigentümlichkeiten suchen, durch die jede von ihnen in sich charakterisiert ist, beziehen wir uns zunächst in vagen Begriffen auf vage unterschiedene Gruppen von Erlebnissen, wir heben von diesen letzteren solche heraus, die uns in phänomenologischer Anschauung als feste und klare gegenüberstehen und suchen sie zu analysieren.”[Hua XXXVIII, p. 6]

essence, as well as the passage from one to the other through a generalization.^{66,67} We will be examine next what is the nature of this generalization exactly.

Before that, it may be noteworthy to consider two other works that come closer to the terminology of *Ideas I*, as they employ the expression ‘essential predicables’.

The first is the course of lecture of 1906–1907 titled *Phenomenology and Theory of Knowledge*, where Husserl clearly states that everything conceptually graspable about any individual, namely identifiable through “internal predicates” [*innere Prädikate*], is its essence or belongs to its essence.⁶⁸

The second work is a text from 1907, collected in a recent Husserliana volume on eidetic variation, where we find the following analysis:

Ich blicke bloß auf den Inhalt des Gegenstandes, auf den ganzen Inhalt, auf das ganze Was hin. Ich kann nämlich von dem wirklichen Gegenstand sagen, was er ist, eventuell prädikativ seinen Inhalt auseinanderlegen. Und jedes solche Prädikat (jedes „innere“) gehört zum Wesen.⁶⁹

This passage is particularly instructive, because it shows that in 1907, soon after the introduction of the transcendental reduction, Husserl has already adopted the conception of individual essence of *Ideas I*; that is, the individual essence is understood as the what of an individual, that can be unpacked predicatively. The closeness to *Ideas I* goes further, as Husserl names ‘pure essences’ in opposition to this individual essence few lines after the passage quoted above.

(c) *Individual Essence, General Essence, and Pure Essence*

⁶⁶ “Durch die Erkenntnis der inneren und relationellen Eigentümlichkeiten gewinnen wir in genereller Intuition bald enger, bald weiter, bald einfacher, bald komplizierter zu fassende spezifische Wesen, durch welche wir dann den ursprünglich vagen allgemeinen Worten ihren bestimmten und durch Beziehung auf die erschauten Wesen geklärten Sinn geben.”[Hua XXXVIII, p. 6]

⁶⁷ “Phenomenology aims at grasping the Eigentümlichkeiten that belongs to the essence in question, i.e. “was dem Ton überhaupt, der Farbe überhaupt et... wesentlich ist.”[Hua Mat. V, p. 44]

⁶⁸ “Alles am Gegenstand begrifflich Fassbare, und zwar durch innere Prädikate Bestimmbare, ist sein Wesen oder gehört zu seinem Wesen.”[Hua XXIV, p. 299]

⁶⁹ Hua XL1, p. 33.

As we have seen, since 1904–1905, Husserl distinguishes between the individual object⁷⁰, the individual essence⁷¹, and the general (or specific) essence.⁷² In the years 1905–1912, he constantly insists on this distinction between individual essence and general essence, and on the transition from individual essence to general essence, so that all these texts of this period are important sources of information to integrate and clarify the very dense sections of *Ideas I* dealing with the issue at hand (§§ 2-3). Despite the varying terminology, these texts can really help to clarify what is going on in the pages of *Ideas I*, or at least to confirm the interpretation given.

In particular, from 1905 onwards, as we have anticipated, Husserl describes the passage between the individual and the general essence as a sort of generalization [*Wesensverallgemeinerungen*] of higher degree⁷³, and, more generally, as a change of attitude [*Einstellung*]⁷⁴ (even though this idea is already implicitly at play in *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie*, where Husserl indicates that there is an ideation of lowest kind allowing to grasp the individual essence and an abstract generalization, that give general essence). Through this act, one advances from considering the individual essence, and reaches the general essence. For example, one departs from the individual essence *perception*, and grasps the general essence *perception*, or, as Husserl also writes, to perception “*überhaupt*”. In *Die Idee der Phänomenologie* (1907), Husserl connects the intuition of general essences on the basis of individual essence to an unidentified⁷⁵ phenomenological reduction.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ In addition to *Dies* and ‘*Dies-da*’, in some works of the years 1905 and 1906/7, Husserl uses also the term *haecceitas* to indicate the existent, unique individual, that we cannot find in *Ideas I*. See for example Hua Mat. V p. 49. Hua XXIV, p. 226.

⁷¹ As we have already recalled in the previous chapter, Husserl’s terminology concerning this is not very stable. He uses the terms ‘concrete essence’, ‘singular essence’ [*singuläre Essenz*] and other similar terms as *volle Wesen*.

⁷² In the course of lectures of 1902-1903, this distinction is still too implicit for this text to be counted among those in which Husserl is clear about it.

⁷³ See for examples Husserl’s lecture on *Ding und Raum*. “Auf diese singulären Gegebenheiten beziehen sich die evidenten Wesensverallgemeinerungen höherer Stufe; z.B. entnehmen wir ihnen das allgemeine Wesen „Wahrnehmung überhaupt“ das sich in ihnen so und so singularisiert.”[Hua XVI, pp. 13-14] In other texts, such as in Hua XXIV, p. 225, Husserl speaks of the transition from individual essence to general essence as the result of an abstraction.

⁷⁴ XL1, p. 31

⁷⁵ Husserl does not specify whether he is referring to the transcendental or to the eidetic reduction. Despite the context, it is not obvious that he is referring to the latter, because transcendental reduction as well enter Husserl’s eidetic account, because of the distinction between transcendental eidetics and natural eidetics. Cf. Hua III/1, [p. xx]. In *Ideen I*, Husserl distinguishes between the eidetic reduction, which allows moving from facts to essences, from the transcendental reduction, which frees the eidetic

Since 1907, then, Husserl begins to add an original element to this view. He stresses that a general essence can be grasped not only on the basis of the actual experience of an individual object, but also on the basis of phantasy (and obtaining exactly the same results).⁷⁷

In *Ideen III* (1912), he even states that a particular act of imagination could be sufficient for grasping a general essence.⁷⁸

With this reference to phantasy, pure essences (which will only be called ‘*eide*’ in 1912⁷⁹) make their way too. Indeed, at the same time in which Husserl stresses the role phantasy can play next to perception, he also introduces the notion of pure essence. Although, arguably, Husserl roughly assimilates the latter with the notion of general essence, as the two notions were almost synonymous, it is interesting to see how, already at that time, pure essences seem to have a privileged connection with phantasy. In fact, contrary to ‘general essence’, the expression ‘pure essence’ appears only in those works in which Husserl also discusses phantasy). In a text of 1907 contained in the previously mentioned Husserliana volume (Hua XLI), Husserl claims, for example, that pure essence is an objectuality that can be given as well through phantasy.⁸⁰ Thus, despite a pervasive lack of clarity⁸¹ in these works, as well as in *Ideen I*, as far as the connection between general essence and pure essence go, and, in particular, concerning

investigation from any ties to actuality. Cf. *ibidem* [p. 7]. Phenomenology is the eidetic science of pure or reduced phenomena, for it is the only eidetic science in which both reductions are accomplished. For reasons, I will later touch upon, I take this definition of phenomenology as equivalent to the following: phenomenology is a science of pure essences.

My impression is that Husserl refers to the transcendental reduction. This is a topic that we deal with in the next chapter.

⁷⁶ “Ich habe eine Einzelanschauung, oder mehrere Einzelanschauungen von Rot, ich halte die reine Immanenz fest, ich Sorge für phänomenologische Reduktion. Ich schneide ab, was das Rot sonst bedeutet, als was es da transzendent apperzipiert sein mag, etwa als Rot eines Löschblattes auf meinem Tisch und dgl., und nun vollziehe ich rein schauend den Sinn des Gedankens Rot überhaupt, Rot *in specie*, etwa das aus dem und jenem herausgeschaut identische Allgemeine; die Einzelheit als solche ist nun nicht mehr gemeint, nicht dies und jenes, sondern Rot überhaupt.”[Hua II, pp. 56-57]

⁷⁷ In *Ding und Raum*, Husserl says, for example, that for grasping general essence perception, phantasized presentifications of perceptions could serve us just as well.

⁷⁸ Hua V, p. 26. The intuition of essence can here be given on the basis of a single act of phantasy. An act is sufficient to grasp the general essence, on the assumption that it has sufficient strength to really bring to intuitive givenness the corresponding noematic essence.

⁷⁹ The first occurrences are in *Ideen III* and *Ideen II*.

⁸⁰ “Und dieses gegenständliche Wesen ist mir ebenso gut gegeben in der parallelen Phantasie.”[XLI, p. 33]

⁸¹ A reason for which Husserl may be not clear about these points may be that the essences that matter in phenomenology are always pure essences. Whether there are general essences that are still not pure does not interest phenomenology.

the question about whether all general essences are pure, it is at least clear that Husserl discusses of pure essence only in combination with phantasy, and, specifically, when he states that general essences can also be exemplified by imagined individuals. In this way, there appears to be a robust relation between the idea of purity, and the neutralization of actuality.

The passage that comes closer to *Ideen I* is contained in a course of lectures that Husserl delivered in 1909. In this course, he explicitly introduces a particular attitude, that allows to grasp “generalities in pure ideality” [*in reiner Idealität*]: that is, the attitude of pure ideation [*Einstellung reiner Ideation*].⁸² For instance, it allows to transition from the individual essence, e.g., *perception*, to the idea of perception as such [*die idee der wharnemung als solche*].⁸³ Husserl does not use the term ‘*eidōs*’ here, but what he tells the reader about generalities grasped in pure ideality, as well as the terminology that he uses (in particular, as he speaks of the idea of perception as the result of this act) strongly reminds the passage of *Ideen I* when he characterizes the *eidōs* as the individual essence put into idea (especially given the familiarity between the lexicon of idea and ideal that we have explored in the previous section). Therefore, Husserl has not yet adopted the term ‘*eidōs*’ and its vocabulary in the course of lectures of 1909; but the account that can be found there seems to be very close, if not identical, to the account of *Ideen I*. This transition invites us to focus on the (thin, but real) distinction between ideation and pure ideation, where only the latter can lead one to grasping pure essences, or *eide*.

Textual evidence supports the admission that there must be a difference between general essence and pure essence, and between ideation and pure ideation. More specifically, this evidence comes from the course of lectures of 1910–11 entitled *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*. In this course, as we will see more clearly at the beginning of the next chapter, Husserl explicitly distinguishes between two kinds of eidetic analyses: the first kind, which we may call ‘natural eidetics’, in which essences that are tied to the actual world (which constitute the kind belonging to “real

⁸² Hua Mat VII, p. 82

⁸³ This text shows that in 1909, ‘*Idee*’ and ‘*Wesen*’ are still synonymous. See the following passage: “Heben wir aber ideierend nur das allgemeine Wesen selbst, die Idee sozusagen, heraus, so haben wir eine Einheit, die in keinem Fluss steht, die im Fließenden sich nur vereinzelt, aber dadurch nicht selbst in den Fluss hineingezogen ist. Ideen oder Wesen sind „überzeitliche“ Gegenständlichkeiten.” [Hua Mat VII, p. 87]

ontologies” or “ontologies of nature”⁸⁴); and the second kind of eidetic analyses, which we may call ‘transcendental eidetic’, that severs this tie with the actual world (and is the specifically phenomenological kind).⁸⁵ On the basis of this specification and distinction, we could say that the difference between general essences and *eide* is precisely that, for grasping *eide*, one needs the certainty of having severed the tie to the actual world, while this is not necessary for grasping general essences. This is in line with the privileged connection between phantasy and pure essence detected earlier.

Before further exploring these issues in the next chapter, there is another aspect of Husserl’s account of eidetics of the years of *Ideen I* that deserves to be mentioned.

2.5 The Eidetic Framework [Rahmen] of Experience

The conception of essences as grounding eidetic laws is another fundamental aspect that strongly emerges from the reading of *Ideen I*, and that also finds room, with more or less emphasis, in all the other texts of the years 1903–1913.

More precisely, Husserl’s idea is that each general essence grounds *a priori* truths, and that these truths prescribe laws of experience expressing “an unconditionally valid norm for any possible empirical existence.”⁸⁶

Consider a well-known example. A proposition such as ‘color is extended’ is, according to Husserl, an *a priori* truth grounded in the essence *color*, which holds as a law for every possible instance of color; so that any color (seen or imagined)⁸⁷ must be extended. Since this is true of every essence, Husserl argues that the structure of reality is, then, completely interwoven in a fabric of norms.⁸⁸ Accordingly, laws of nature are

⁸⁴ Cf. Hua XIII [p. 39]

⁸⁵ “The transcendental reduction as an attitude of such a kind that the *empirical*, being the characteristic of the givenness of the natural attitude, remains completely disengaged, and indeed in such a way that *also its essence as essence of nature remains disengaged*.”[Hua XIII, p. 32]

⁸⁶ Hua III/1, p. 142 and Hua V, p. 29.

⁸⁷ “Die Wesenswahrheiten gelten und gelten in-unbedingter Allgemeinheit und Notwendigkeit wie für alles Mögliche, so für alles in der aktuellen Erfahrung sich als wirklich Ausweisende.”[Hua V, p. 42]

⁸⁸ In *Ideen I*, Husserl claims, indeed, that reality is not a chaos, but an ordained whole. “Die reale Wirklichkeit kein Chaos sondern ein regional geordnetes Ganzes ist.”[Hua V, p. 27]

norms looming on the landscape of eidetic laws, and can only bind those things that eidetic laws has left unbound.⁸⁹

Now, Husserl's remarks are made first of all from an ontological, rather than from an epistemic, point of view. Eidetic laws are, in fact, valid independently of one's having any knowledge of them or being able to know them; and they structure anyone's experience of objects independently of one's knowledge of them.⁹⁰

Yet, it is interesting to notice that this ontological account of essence also has epistemic import. Analyses of essences and of the correspondent eidetic laws provide, indeed, the unconditional norms [*eine unbedingte Norm*] for every possible factual cognition.⁹¹

If we are able to grasp them, it is possible for us to predict in advance on their basis, some of the aspects of the particular instantiations of the essences we come across. Thus, in spite of their being norms of experience of any particular individual, they can also function as guide for our experience – that is, from the epistemic point of view – prescribing the way in which our experience can and cannot progress and offering help to bring the object⁹² to “complete determinacy,” as Husserl writes.⁹³ For example, if we came across a sound (or if we were about to come across a sound) and we knew the essence *sound*, we would be able to predict (or to form actively or passively the expectation) that it would have a certain intensity inasmuch as it is part of the essence of sound to have an intensity; for any essential property must necessarily belong to any of its corresponding instantiations. In virtue of the normative function essences and eidetic laws have, they can be said to constitute a horizon of comprehension of particular individuals from an epistemic point of view.

⁸⁹ Hua V, p. 48

⁹⁰ All our discoveries happen within this always-present eidetic framework. As Husserl writes, “Alle Entdeckungen und Erfindungen der Fachmänner bewegen sich im Rahmen eines absolut unüberschreitbaren Apriori, das man nicht von ihren Lehren, sondern nur aus der phänomenologischen Intuition schöpfen kann.”[Hua V, p. 22]

⁹¹ Hua V, p. 23. See also the following passage: Sie [die Begriffe] besitzen doch ein vor allem judikativen Bestand fixierbares reines Wesen, das sich in Wesenszusammenhänge einreihen mag, die wertvolle Erkenntnis hinsichtlich der Möglichkeit entsprechender Gegenstände in sich bergen mögen. ”[Hua V, p. 28]

⁹²Our knowledge of essences and eidetic laws can satisfy our need of prediction because they are norms that hold for every possible individual necessarily.

⁹³ It would be better to say ‘to almost complete determinacy’ because for Husserl complete determinacy is only a teleological idea.

This aspect is underlined, among others, by Landgrebe, according to whom essences provide the horizon⁹⁴ of possibilities of comprehension of the factual world.⁹⁵ Similarly, De Palma argues that essences make the world more familiar to us, so to speak; that is, thanks to one's knowledge of essences and eidetic laws, the world one lives in is always partly known to one.⁹⁶

Knowledge of essences and eidetic laws may satisfy, then, a certain need of prediction⁹⁷ that phenomenology (at least partially) shares with other sciences, as it aims to be a rigorous science; without compromising, at the same time, its commitment not to mathematize consciousness or nature.

That said, it is important to stress how limited is our predictive capacity if merely based on knowledge of essences and eidetic laws. Although these provide some knowledge about the world, it is only experience that gives us full knowledge about the actual individuals. Essences provide only what Husserl calls the pure sense of phenomena.⁹⁸ The pure sense of phenomena does not coincide with the full sense of the object given in actual perception, which is extremely richer than its pure sense. The full sense remains necessarily indeterminate after one grasps the essences, inasmuch as the phenomenon is something real with properties and possibilities that are not predetermined *a priori*.

For example, knowing the essence *sound* helps us in making predictions about instances of sound. For example, we can know that a sound will have a certain pitch,

⁹⁴ The metaphor of the horizon is also used by Mohanty. I think this metaphore is instructive, as it is also Husserl's own metaphore, that of 'framework' [*Rahmen*]. I will speak about this in the final chapter of the dissertation.

⁹⁵ See Landgrebe, L. *Phänomenologie und Geschichte*, p. 32 ff; quoted in *Introduction* in McKenna, W., Harlan R. M., and Winters L. E. (eds.), *A priori and World. European Contributions to Husserlian Phenomenology*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, Boston, and London 1981, p. 14.

⁹⁶ Consider De Palma's statement, for example: "[è] appunto in virtù di questa struttura eidetica che il mondo ha sempre un preliminare orizzonte di notorietà, nonostante la mutevolezza, l'indeterminatezza e la molteplicità di oggetti individuali, e che questi ultimi appaiono così come appaiono e vengono esperiti così come vengono esperiti." [*Il soggetto e l'esperienza*, p. 29]

⁹⁷ Hua III/1, p. 38. See also the following passage: "Es gilt systematisch zu zeigen, wie durch ihr Wesen all die Zusammenhänge wirklichen und möglichen Bewußtseins von ihnen - eben als Wesensmöglichkeiten - vorgezeichnet sind: die intentional auf sie bezogenen schlichten oder fundierten Anschauungen, die Denkgestaltungen niederer und höherer Stufe, die verworrenen oder klaren, die ausdrücklichen oder nichtausdrücklichen, die vorwissenschaftlichen und wissenschaftlichen, bis hinauf zu den höchsten Gestaltungen der strengen theoretischen Wissenschaft." [Hua III/1, p. 198]

⁹⁸ Hua V, p. 29.

etc. That does not mean, however, that once we know the essence *sound* we can deduce something concrete about those particular sounds we may hear.

Essences leave many possibilities open; they leave room for a number of determinations.⁹⁹ It is necessary to become better and better acquainted with the real object, to determine more exactly what of it remains left open in the course of experience.¹⁰⁰

As Derrida has already stressed,¹⁰¹ Husserl has no pretention at all to deduce *a priori* the existence or all properties of particular individuals from their correspondent essences. Such a goal is completely alien to Husserl's philosophy; for it is meant to start from the bottom up [*von unten*]¹⁰², that is, from experience, rather than approaching the world top-down, that is from speculative theorizing; for Husserl is well aware that particular individuals have accidental properties that cannot be predicted from anything but previous experience of the same thing or of similar things; and for essential properties are only a small though undeniably important part of the properties of each particular individual.

Within the eidetic framework there is the space for another framework; that is, the framework constituted by the sense of things that one forms through experience.¹⁰³

Therefore, knowledge of essences and eidetic laws give us only a limited predictive capacity, together with knowledge of the structural basis of experience; a sort of skeleton of experience, if you wish.

Then, such knowledge does not suffice to allow subjects to orientate within their experience, and so requires to be at least compensated with other kinds of analyses, and most of all with descriptions. For example, one can doubt that the knowledge of an essential property of life, such as that of striving for something, can exhaust the description of life from the phenomenological point of view.

This account of general essences as grounds of ideal possibility and necessity does not seem to differ much from the account presented in the course of lectures of 1902–1903 and previous works. However, one should not underestimate the importance of the

⁹⁹ Hua V, p. 26.

¹⁰⁰ The sense can be expanded by exploring reality through experience; or, alternatively, one can play with phantasy remaining within the realm of pure possibilities.

¹⁰¹ Derrida, J., *Edmund Husserl's Origins of Geometry*, p. 112.

¹⁰² See the letter Husserl wrote to Natorp on the 18th of March 1909.

¹⁰³ Hua V, p. 31.

introduction of the notion of pure essence (and later of pure *eidos*) in this regard. Indeed, one should reflect on the fact that the laws of essences that phenomenology should be interested in are grounded in pure *eide* rather than in impure *eide*. We will come back to this aspect in the last chapter of this dissertation, when we will draw some conclusions about the place of the notion of essence within phenomenology, and consider the ups and downs of Husserl's account.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined the development of Husserl's notion of essence in the period between his introduction in 1902–1903 and the first book of *Ideen*, where its use has already been consolidated.

With this regard, we have seen that Husserl does not edit his account of essences of 1902–1903 when he writes *Ideen I*, but that he adds to its new elements. In particular, two aspects are especially relevant for our investigation:

- i. The development of an understanding of the content [*Inhalt*] of a psychic phenomenon (that is, of its individual essence) in terms of essential predicates.
- ii. The introduction of pure essences as the privileged objects of phenomenological investigations.

The first aspect (that is, (i)) has, as a consequence, that some kind of necessity enters within Husserl's account of essences; although Husserl still considers modality as grounded in the essences (and he does not explicitly abandon this view of essences as grounds of modalities). These two ways of characterizing essences may be considered at odds with each other (as, for example, according to some other philosophers); but they lie here one next to the other without entering into conflict.

The second aspect (that is, (ii)) launches the issue of purity and of its phenomenological attainability. We will focus on this issue in the following chapter, setting aside our focus on the interpretation of Husserl's notion of essence, unless in

case it will be important to point out some major revisions of Husserl's view of essences. As it will be showed, Husserl's accent on the purity of essences is fundamental to provide a complete account of the role played by essences within phenomenology.

Last, but not least, we have seen that, gradually, the notion of essence and that of sense and of the idea of the particular individual come to take different paths during the years of *Ideen I*, and configure themselves as accounting for different dimensions of experience and, correlatively, different objectives of the phenomenological analyses of experience. We will return to his issue in the last chapter of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 3

PURE ESSENCES: WHAT ARE THEY?

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we explained that, according to Husserl, some essences are pure, and that he prefers to use the term ‘*eidos*’, and later ‘*pure eidos*’ to name these essences. We also established that, in Husserl’s words, phenomenology is “a doctrine of essences, not of real but of transcendently reduced phenomena.”¹

This and the following chapter aim to examine more carefully this idea. More precisely, this chapter aims to address the following question: what does it mean for an essence to be pure?

We will answer this question starting from an investigation into a distinction internal to the realm of the *a priori*; that is, from Husserl’s distinction between natural ontologies² and transcendental phenomenology. In particular, we will shed light on their different attitudes towards essences and the different kinds of purity at stake in these disciplines.

This investigation is followed by an analysis about what pure essences consist of and how to grasp more or less pure essences. To this end, we will present Husserl’s account of eidetic variation.

¹ Hua III/1, p. 3.

² Husserl calls these disciplines with many names, the most famous of which is ‘regional ontology’. I prefer to call them natural ontologies, or natural eidetics, to stress the fact that they deal both with nature and with essences.

3.2 Natural Ontologies and Empirical Essences

Husserl presents the distinction between natural ontologies and phenomenology in many of his works, starting from the course of lectures of 1910–1911 titled *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*. After having distinguished between the natural attitude (having nature and “objectivity of existence” as their subject matter [*Daseinsgegenständlichkeit*]) and eidetic or *a priori* attitude (dealing with ideas or the “objectivities of essence” [*Wesensgegenständlichkeiten*]³) Husserl makes an important specification concerning the latter. He distinguishes, indeed, between two kinds of *a priori* attitudes, and, correlatively, of *a priori* sciences: the *a priori* sciences that have a connection with nature, such as natural ontologies, and the *a priori* sciences that sever their ties to nature, such as phenomenology and formal ontologies.⁴

Natural ontologies belong to the first kind of *a priori* sciences for they are ontologies of nature, as ontologies of the physical and psychical in general.⁵ As Husserl also puts it, they aim at grasping the *a priori* of nature⁶. They do not deal with “nature as a fact”, as the empirical sciences; yet, they still deal with nature in some sense; namely, with “nature as an idea”. As Husserl writes,

³ Consider the following passage: “Man muss dementsprechend unterscheiden zwischen natürlicher oder empirischer Einstellung und andererseits nicht-empirischer, apriorischer Einstellung. In der einen kommen Daseinsgegenständlichkeiten, in der anderen Wesensgegenständlichkeiten, in der einen Natur, in der anderen Ideen zur Gegebenheit. [...] Es ist offenbar eine andere Einstellung, wenn wir in Wahrnehmung oder Erinnerung eine Farbe als Moment ein einem Ding gegeben haben, es wahrnehmend und erinnernd meinen, und wenn wir uns sozusagen anders wenden und nur die Idee dieser Farbe, die entsprechende Farbenspezies als reine Gegebenheit, erfassen.”[Hua XIV, pp. 125-126]

⁴ As we will see, phenomenology and formal ontologies distance their subject matter from actual existence in different ways. Accordingly, there is a distinction between formal *a priori* and material *a priori*.

⁵ Despite recurring to some of the methods of phenomenology, natural ontologies are distinct from transcendental phenomenology. Nevertheless, they may in a certain sense be described as phenomenological; especially when compared to the empirical sciences with which they share the corresponding themes of research.

⁶ Cf. Hua XIV, p. 139. Because these disciplines allow one to grasp the *a priori* of nature, they have a subordinated role with regard to the natural sciences. Husserl adds, indeed, that these ontologies “constitute themselves only as instruments of natural-scientific research”. This is one of the reason because of which “with this group of *a priori* disciplines”, according to Husserl, “we do not yet have the higher and more proper level of the philosophical problematic.”[Hua XIV, p.126]

Der Natur als Faktum stellen wir gegenüber Natur als Idee. Auf die Natur als Faktum beziehen sich die Naturwissenschaften im gewöhnlichen Sinn, die empirischen, auf die Natur als Idee die reinen Naturwissenschaften. [...] Fassen wir diese der Idee der Natur entsprechenden Disziplinen unter dem Titel Ontologie der Natur.⁷

Thus, reading carefully the relevant pages of the course of lectures of 1910–1911, we learn that, although the *a priori* (or eidetic) attitude always brings an “existence-free sphere to givenness”⁸, as it would not otherwise be *a priori*, it should not necessarily sever its connection with nature; or, in other words, it does not necessarily imply a full disengagement from nature. Natural ontologies are evidence of this: inasmuch as they deal with the idea of nature and its *a priori*, rather than with nature as a fact, they imply a disengagement from any actual positing of real existence, but, since their theme of interest is still nature in this sense, they do not imply a full disengagement from nature. That is to say, while all *a priori* sciences sever their ties with existence, not all of them also sever their ties with nature; or, putting this issue under a slightly different light: not all investigations of essences are investigations of essences completely disengaged from nature, for it is also possible to search for essences that are still connected to nature; and this is precisely what natural ontologies do. In short, the bracketing of existence and the disengagement from nature do not coincide. This distinction is accomplished in *Ideas I*, when Husserl distinguishes between the eidetic reduction, which allows moving from facts to essences; and the transcendental reduction, which frees the eidetic investigation from any link to actual existence.⁹

In his later works, Husserl reiterates the idea that some sciences are *a priori* insofar as they deal with the *a priori* of nature. Further, he elaborates upon this claim, adding that these disciplines have to do with the “*eidos Nature*”; that is, with the pure idea of

⁷ Hua XIV, p. 128

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ As Husserl writes: “Die zugehörige Reduktion, die vom psychologischen Phänomen zum reinen „Wesen“, bzw. im urteilenden Denken von der tatsächlichen („empirischen“) Allgemeinheit zur „Wesens“ Allgemeinheit überführt, ist die *eidetische Reduktion*. Fürs Zweite werden die Phänomene der transzendentalen Phänomenologie charakterisiert werden als *irreal*. Andere Reduktionen, die spezifisch transzendentalen "reinigen" die psychologischen Phänomene von dem, was ihnen Realität und damit Einordnung in die reale "Welt" verleiht. Nicht eine Wesenslehre realer, sondern transzendental reduzierter Phänomene soll unsere Phänomenologie sein.”[Hua III/1, p. 6].

a possible nature in general [*überhaupt*].¹⁰ Consider, for example, the following passage from Husserl's lectures of 1917 titled *Phänomenologie and Erkenntnistheorie*, which is collected in volume XXV of the Husserliana, and where Husserl explains that, while the empirical sciences are sciences of actual natural experience [*Wissenschaft aus aktueller natürlicher Erfahrung*], natural ontologies are science of the *eidōs Nature*:

Ziehen wir sie heran, so werden wir der faktischen Natur mit all ihren physischen und psychophysischen Wirklichkeiten gegenüberstellen das *Eidōs Natur*, die reine und allgemeine Idee einer möglichen Natur überhaupt. Naturwissenschaft bedeutete uns bisher, wie allgemein üblich, die Wissenschaft von der Natur, die Tatsachenwissenschaft, die Wissenschaft aus aktueller natürlicher Erfahrung. Aber diese Wissenschaft ist als singuläre Vereinzelung unterzuordnen der Idee möglicher Tatsachenwissenschaft überhaupt von einer Natur überhaupt, das „*überhaupt*“ im Sinne reiner Allgemeinheit verstanden. Oder was äquivalent damit ist: Der Naturwissenschaft im gewöhnlichen Sinn muss gegenüber oder vielmehr vorangesetzt werden eine eidetische Wissenschaft, bezogen auf Natur überhaupt, die also in reiner („*unbeschränkter*“) Allgemeinheit von jeder möglichen Natur als solcher handelt. Damit ist gesagt, da wie die physische Natur (die Unterschicht sozusagen der Allnatur), so auch die animalische und psychische Natur ihr *Eidōs* haben muss, das in Reinheit gefasst und nach dem, was darin in eidetischer Notwendigkeit („*a priori*“) beschlossen ist, durchforscht werden muss.¹¹ [*my emphasis*]

Reading this passage, one can immediately notice how Husserl repeatedly stresses that the eidetic analyses of natural ontologies belong to pure generality. But this indication should not lead us to think that there is no difference between natural ontology and phenomenology. That such essences are pure generalities only means that, despite their empirical nature, they are essences rather than mere actual generalities.¹² Natural eidetics deals with the *eidōs Nature* or with possible nature in

¹⁰“Die mögliche Natur ist nicht eine wie die Natur, die wirklich erfahrene, sie ist ein Titel für endlos mannigfaltige mögliche Naturen und mögliche Gegenständlichkeit in ihnen.”[Hua XXV, p. 157]. See also Hua XXV, p. 153.

¹¹ Hua XXV, pp. 154-155. For the notion of the *Eidōs Natur* and of possible nature *überhaupt*, see also Hua XXV, pp. 158-159.

¹² I agree with Donn Welton on this issue. As he writes, “the difference between empirical and pure essences is not that the extension of the first is limited to actual objects while the second extends to

general, where ‘in general’ is to be taken in the sense of pure generality; that is, in the sense relating to essences, and not to empirical generalities. There is, then, according to Husserl, a middle ground between empirical investigations and pure (or transcendental) *a priori* investigations; exactly as there are essences that are bound to nature, even if they are essences, and not empirical generalities.¹³ Keeping this distinction in mind, these essences can be called, following Husserl, ‘empirical essences’.¹⁴

Yet, as we already said, the purity that these *a priori* disciplines aim to reach is still qualitatively different from the purity of phenomenology. In fact, as we will see more closely in *Section 3.3*, the purity that phenomenology aims to reach does not only consist of the purity of generality, but it also involves a divorce from nature.¹⁵

Before continuing further with our inquiry into purity, it is useful to stop to offer an example of natural ontologies that will help to shed light on phenomenology’s eidetic investigations. We choose Husserl’s favorite example for this purpose: rational or eidetic psychology. Additionally, this will also serve as proof of the distinction that drawn in this section.

possible object”. Pure essences requires that “we not only break the connection to actual and possible object, but also suspend what *Experience and Judgment* calls ‘empirical horizon’”. [D., Welton, *The Other Husserl: The Horizons of Transcendental Phenomenology*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2003, p. 45] In other words, empirical essences are those essences that does not suspend the empirical horizon.

¹³ Then, Husserl’s reference to the *eidōs* Nature should not mislead us; and the same holds true for his specification that ‘in general’ is to be taken in the sense of pure generality. In fact, it does not change the fact that natural ontologies and phenomenology are pure in a different sense; and that there are different levels of purity. While, natural ontologies always carry out their eidetic analyses within reference to nature (although not necessarily to actual nature), this is not the true of transcendental phenomenology.

¹⁴ In paragraph 60 of *Ideas I*, Husserl calls this essences “transcendent essences” [*transzendenten Wesen*], and he gives the following examples: “the essence *physical thing, spatial shape, motion, color of a physical thing, [...]* and also the essence *human being, human sensation, psyche, psychical process*” [Hua III/1, p. 128.]. In the same paragraph, he also compares such essences to “immanent essences” [*immanenten Wesen*], like “the essential structures of transcendental consciousness” (for example, the essence *perception*). [ivi] These latter are what I call pure essences in the transcendental sense.

¹⁵ The phenomenological divorce from nature does not imply that nature fully disappears within phenomenology. Of course, in fact, phenomenology still deals with natural objectualities as *noemata*, that is, as the object of intentional acts of consciousness. Further, phenomenology can still deal with transcendent or empirical essences in some occasions. Although the grasping of so-called transcendent essences is the subject matter of natural ontologies rather than of transcendental phenomenology, it does not prevent the phenomenologist from attempting to genuinely grasp the essences given through the evidence of lived-experiences, exactly as he can attempt to clarify the transcendent objects [*noemata*] putted in bracket through the reduction. In fact, the phenomenologist should do so, insofar as phenomenology aims to be a comprehensive critique of reason. In this occasion the phenomenology should only avoid to take for granted the findings of natural eidetic sciences and verify their findings. It is clear, however, the essences of these objectualities are not part of transcendental phenomenology’s theme of research. Phenomenology is interested in the essence of consciousness, as the only absolute, pure, and transcendental theme of analysis.

3.3 Pure Psychology: A Well-Known Example of Natural Ontology

Husserl's favorite example of natural ontology or natural eidetics is indubitably pure, or rational, psychology¹⁶; that is, the eidetic science that aims to grasp the *a priori* of that part of nature that is the psyche.

As it will become clear in this section, pure psychology can be understood as a form of naturalized phenomenology, as the former is an eidetic science of subjectivity too¹⁷; and, precisely because of its special relation with phenomenology, pure psychology is indeed very illustrative of how natural ontologies differ from phenomenology, despite their similarities (and, above all, despite both phenomenology and other natural ontologies are eidetic sciences).

The idea of a pure psychology – *i.e.*, of a psychology that aims at grasping the essence of the psyche and of psychic life, rather than empirically investigating it – appears in parallel with the idea of *a priori* disciplines of nature in Husserl's writings; that is, relatively late in Husserl's writings.¹⁸ Before then, Husserl used to describe psychology exclusively as an empirical (that is, *a posteriori*) science dealing with psychic lived-experiences of actual human beings and animals, and formulating empirical concepts and judgments.¹⁹ Around 1910, Husserl begins, in fact, to consider the possibility of there being an *a priori* psychology; that is, of a psychology that investigates *a priori* the psyche and psychic life. This science makes its first notable appearance in the already examined course of lectures of 1910-1911, where Husserl writes that despite the prevailing empiricism of psychologists, “the long-buried”²⁰

¹⁶ This is the same discipline Husserl will later preferably refer to as phenomenological psychology.

¹⁷ Relying upon this aspect, Lavigne defines pure psychology also as 'psychological phenomenology'. J.F., Lavigne, *Accéder au transcendantal? Réduction et idéalisme transcendantal dans les “Ideen I” de Husserl*, Vrin, Paris 2009, p. 129.

¹⁸ Husserl speaks of pure psychology at least starting from October 1910. See Husserl's *Preparatory Notes for the Course of Lectures (1910–1911)* in *The Basic Problem of Phenomenology*, p. 91. Other important occurrences of the expressions 'a priori psychology', 'eidetic psychology' or 'rational psychology' can be found in *Ideas III* (1912) and in a few central passages of *Ideas I*. For later occurrences, see for example Husserl's lecture *Phenomenology and Psychology* which is from 1916 in Hua XX.

¹⁹ In 1906, for example, despite the introduction of the phenomenological reduction, Husserl still wrote that: “Psychology is a natural science, a science of real matters of fact. It truly deals with the real I and real occurrences in egos. As a natural science or science of matters of fact, it starts with what is given it at first, that is with precisely the particulars of a mental nature that are established by perception, at least directly and in initial substantiation. What is given by perception and experience is placed under empirical concepts. *Induction* then supplies propositions of empirically universal validity”. Hua XXIV, p. 47. See also *ivi*, p. 206.

²⁰ Husserl probably refers to Kant, who condemned for good the idea of a scientific psychology in the *Paralogisms of Pure Reason*.

idea of a rational psychology ought to be reawaken. Just as there is an *a priori* of the physical, one should also admit of a *psychological a priori*, explicating what belongs to the essence of the empirical positing of ‘souls’ [*Seelen*], the positing of humans, the positing of human lived-experiences, *etc.* As Husserl writes,

Wie es ein Apriori gibt, und selbstverständlich gibt, hinsichtlich des physischen Dinges, ein Apriori, welches nichts anderes besagt als das zum allgemeinen Sinn empirischer Dingsetzung Gehörende, so gibt es auch ein psychologisches Apriori, nämlich dasjenige, das auseinanderlegt, was zum Wesen oder Sinn empirischer „Seelen“ Setzung, Setzung von Menschen, Setzung von Erlebnissen als Erlebnissen von Menschen u.dgl. gehört.²¹

Despite Husserl’s claim that the idea of rational psychology ought to be reawaken, Husserl does not intend to reawaken a discipline that had been traditionally practiced;²² and this is evidenced by the fact that the name ‘rational psychology’ stands for Husserl’s original idea of an *a priori* psychology, having almost nothing to do with the traditional sense in which the name is understood.²³ Husserl himself specifies, indeed, that the meaning that he attributes to the name ‘rational psychology’ is completely different from the “old metaphysical sense” in which it was used; namely, from a psychology “construed from above out of empty concepts”.²⁴ Rather, Husserl uses this expression to allude to an “eidetic doctrine drawn from pure intuition”; that is, to a psychology which aims to discover the essences of the psyche [*Seele*] and of psychic states by means of eidetic intuition.²⁵

Expressions such as ‘psyche’, ‘human’, ‘human lived-experiences’ (or ‘psychic states’), which Husserl uses with reference to pure psychology, are key to understand the difference of this eidetic science of subjectivity with phenomenology. Husserl uses them, indeed, to stress the fact that the rational psychologist considers

²¹ Hua XIV, pp. 139-140.

²² “Even up until today, an ontology of material nature and a rational psychology have been lacking (up to the psychological phenomenology just beginning to appear.”[Hua V, p. 101 [p. 85]].

²³ I mean ‘rational psychology’ in Wolff’s and Leibniz’s sense; that rational psychology which Kant criticizes in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

²⁴ Hua V, p. 26 [p. 21]

²⁵ Husserl writes in the first draft of the *EB Article* that phenomenological psychology “is not a matter of empty ‘*a priori* speculation’. Rather, it consists of *rigorously scientific work* carried out in the framework of concrete psychological intuition, the work of systematically shaping pure psychological concepts – along with the evident, necessarily valid laws of essence that pertain to them - into an infinite but systematic hierarchical series.”[Hua IX, p. 247 [*EB Article*]

subjectivity as something that belongs to nature and that is still “posited” (in the Husserlian technical meaning of the term) as belonging to nature, although it is posited as belonging to nature in general, giving its analyses their eidetic character. Husserl himself emphasizes that he prefers to use the term ‘consciousness’ [*Bewusstsein*] to refer to phenomenology’s subject matter and the term ‘psyche’, or ‘soul’, [*Seele*]²⁶ to refer to psychology’s subject matter; and similarly, the term ‘lived-experiences’ when he talks about phenomenology; whereas he often refers to the latter as ‘states of the psyche’ when he discusses psychology.

In the course of lectures of 1906–1907 titled *Introduction to Logic and the Theory of Knowledge*, Husserl also specifies that he prefers to use the term ‘consciousness’ whenever he engages in epistemological investigations, instead of the expressions ‘psychic lived-experience’ [*psychisches Erlebnis*]. In Husserl’s own words,

Warum sagt man dann in erkenntnistheoretischen Untersuchungen statt psychisches Erlebnis schlechthin mit Vorliebe "Bewusstsein"? Eben darum, weil man fühlt und gelegentlich deutlich merkt, dass die intellektiven Akte bei den erkenntnistheoretischen Ursprungsforschungen nicht in empirisch psychologischer Apperzeption fungieren und dahinter liegt, dass der innere Zug der Sachen unbemerkt dahin drängt, die reinen Phänomene unter Absehen von der empirischen Apperzeption zu betrachten; und so tendiert man dann auch <dazu >, einen Terminus in dieser Hinsicht zu bevorzugen.²⁷

More precisely, Husserl says in this passage that he uses the term ‘consciousness’ in place of the term ‘psyche’, or ‘soul’, when he wants to underline the fact that he is referring to the lived-experiences in a particular way; *i.e.*, in a way that suspends the “empirically psychological apperception”. He motivates suspending making references to actual human beings, whom consciousness and lived-experiences belong to, by stressing the philosophical aim of the phenomenological analyses of consciousness. Phenomenology, indeed, investigates consciousness and consciousness

²⁶ As Hanne Jacobs rightly notes, “while we might be tempted to identify the object of psychology with intentional acts or the stream of consciousness in general, we should instead acknowledge that the soul is the object of psychology.” [Hanne Jacobs, ‘From Psychology to Pure Phenomenology. Section II, Chapter 2, ‘Consciousness and Natural Actuality’” in A. Staiti (ed.), *Commentary on Husserl’s Ideas I*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin 2015, p. 101]

²⁷ Hua XXIV, p. 219. In the epistemological [*erkenntnistheoretische*] investigations into consciousness, intellectual acts are not at work in the *empirically psychological apperception*. Behind this lies the fact that the intrinsic pull of the things imperceptibly presses one to look at the pure phenomena while looking away from the empirical apperception.

lived-experiences not because it is mainly interested in them (as the psychologist), but only for their philosophical sake; and so only indirectly.²⁸

It follows from this that, conversely, making reference to the psyche implies an “empirically psychological apperception”. The psychologist, contrary to the phenomenologist, does not suspend making reference to human beings’ lived-experiences, *etc.*, and he considers the very lived-experiences as the “state” [*Zustände*] of the psyche of animals and human beings. Now, in the case of eidetic psychology this claim should be slightly revisited; for eidetic psychology cannot be said to investigate the psyche in an “empirically psychological apperception”, insofar as it is an eidetic science. But, nonetheless, inasmuch as it still is a psychology, it investigates the psyche in some kind of ‘psychological apperception’.²⁹ After all, if pure psychology abandoned any kind of ‘psychological apperception’, it simply would not make any sense to describe it as psychology anymore. So, we can say that the pure psychologist suspends the empirically psychological apperception, but not a psychological apperception *tout court* (*i.e.*, he does not stop making reference to the psyche of possible human beings). This interpretation is confirmed by another passage in which Husserl reaffirms the difference between the psyche and consciousness adding, this time, an explicit reference to eidetic psychology:

Zunächst ist es von größter Wichtigkeit, sich von dem Vorurteil zu befreien, Erlebnis, Bewusstsein sei an sich etwa Psychisches, *eo ipso* Sache der Psychologie, sei es der empirischen oder (wenn man dergleichen zugesteht) der rationalen, eidetischen. [...] Wir werden, in der Überzeugung, den wirklich herrschenden Sinn von Psychologie und Psychischem zu treffen, darin fortfahren, unter Psychischem das Seelische in dem von uns geklärten Sinne zu verstehen, was streng zu beachten ist. Dann ist ein Erlebnis Psychisches als Zustand einer Seele, bzw. eines menschlichen oder animalischen Ich, dieser in der physischen Natur fundierten Realität. Wer sich von dieser besonderen Apperzeption nicht befreien, wer nicht die phänomenologischen Reduktionen vollziehen und das reine, absolut gesetzte Erlebnis, das reine Bewusstsein als Idee erfassen kann, dem ist wie das Eindringen in die

²⁸ In the previous passage, Husserl explicitly observes the usefulness of these analyses for epistemological problems, but such usefulness extends also to practical philosophy and to the critique of evaluative reason.

²⁹ See, for example the following excerpt: “I say in psychological apperception because what is presented to the psychologist in his psychological intuition is precisely something psychic, psychic-real, that is to say the lived-experiences in a given case as psychic states.”[Hua V, p. 44 [p. 36]]

Transzendentalphänomenologie so dasjenige in die Philosophie überhaupt versagt.³⁰

Husserl clearly claims here that eidetic psychology is still a psychology in the “prevailing sense of psychology”, inasmuch as it has the psyche as subject matter: it looks at subjectivity in a traditional (non-philosophical) sense, that is, without suspending making reference to human beings or animals. For this reason, it is still separate from phenomenology, and it is still close to empirical psychology. Yet, instead of investigating the psyche in an empirically psychological apperception, it deals with it “in the psychological-eidetic apperception”³¹. Within this attitude, the psyche is still posited as a piece of nature, although of possible rather than simply of factive, actual nature, as it is for empirical psychology.

Other passages of *Ideas III*³² confirm that although eidetic psychology does not take into account the factual existence of the psyche and of its states (for it takes them as mere examples, precisely as the geometrician does³³), it is still a science that investigates the psyche by means of a psychological (/natural) apperception.³⁴ The only difference is that while the empirical psychologist refers to actual human beings and actual animals, the pure psychologist refers to these as mere possibilities,

³⁰ Hua V, p. 74. it is of the greatest importance to be freed from the prejudice that lived-experiences, consciousness, is in itself something psychic, *eo ipso* a matter of psychology, whether it be of the empirical or the *rational, eidetic (if one concedes such) psychology*. [...] convinced that we are getting at the actually *prevailing sense* of psychology and the psychic, we shall continue to understand by the term ‘psychic’ the psychic in the sense clarified by us [...] Then, a lived-experience is something psychic as state of the psyche [*Zustand einer Seele*], i.e., of a human or animate Ego, of this reality [*Realität*] founded in psychical nature.

³¹ Husserl himself uses the expression ‘psychological-eidetic apperception’. See for example Hua V, p. 44 [p. 36]. There Husserl says that within the field of rational or eidetic psychology “the imposing themes of noesis and noema are necessarily to be treated both out of psychological interest and in the psychological-eidetic apperception.”

³² This text written in 1912 (in particular (§§ 5-19) contains one of Husserl’s richest exposition of his idea of eidetic or rational psychology, and it is crucial to understand how Husserl characterizes eidetic psychology in *Ideas I*. In § 79 of *Ideas I*, Husserl himself claims that he postpones any clarification of the idea of eidetic psychology and of its relationship with phenomenology to this text. In Husserl’s own words, “[t]he relations touched upon here between phenomenology (or between eidetic psychology, which has not even been separated from phenomenology in a preliminary way, and which in any case is intimately tied up with phenomenology) and psychology as an experiential science will also be subject to clarification in the *Second Book* with all the profound problems pertaining to it.” [*Ideas I*, p. 194 [pp. 189-190]]

³³ Hua V p. 44 [p. 36].

³⁴ Hua XXV, 150: “Jede Apperzeption, die in ihrem Sinn" Natur" befasst und sie in ihrer Setzung mitsetzt, ist eine naturale Apperzeption”.

inasmuch as he makes use of the eidetic method³⁵. In Husserl's own words, "[i]f we grasp the psyche not as fact, but as eidetic essence, then the states are also taken as eidetic essences and have the eidetic form of the set of states [*Zuständlichkeit*]"³⁶. Further, Husserl seems to hint that phenomenological psychology is some type of phenomenology, precisely a phenomenology that works in the psychological or natural apperception.

This type of reflections holds also for Husserl's conception of phenomenological psychology of '20s and 30s, whose subject matter is the essences of the psyche and of psychic life; or the essence of "psychic consciousness"; and, more generally, for any of his later works. So, even in this case, we have an example of eidetic analyses that do not suspend the psychological natural apperception. In his 1917 *Phänomenologie und Erkenntnistheorie*, for example, Husserl writes very clearly that:

Die eidetische Psychologie, wie die eidetische Naturwissenschaft überhaupt, ist Forschung auf dem beständig gegebenen Boden einer ideal möglichen Natur überhaupt, oder was wieder dasselbe, Forschung im beständigen Vollzuge möglicher Erfahrungen überhaupt, eben der mögliche Natur überhaupt gebenden [Es ist zunächst ein freies Phantasieren von Natur und Naturobjekten.]³⁷

These words exemplify well Husserl's understanding of *a priori* sciences of nature, or natural ontologies. Eidetic psychology, exactly as all of the other natural ontologies, carries out its investigations within reference to possible nature in general. Their eidetic natural apperception consists precisely in this.

Likewise, in an appendix to *Ideas I* written in 1929, Husserl explains clearly the relation between the natural apperception (which in the case of eidetic psychology means having humans and animals has its theme of research) and *a priori* analyses (which translate the natural apperception as an interest for possible, rather than actual, human beings and animals).

³⁵Husserl speaks of "psychic essence" [*psychischen Wesen*].[Hua V p. 49 [p. 41]]. He explains that for the eidetic psychologist even the stream of *Erlebnisse* is interpreted as a total state of the psyche. See Hua V p. 55 [p. 46].

³⁶ Hua V, p. 41 [p. 34]

³⁷ Hua XXV, p. 156. See also Hua XXV, p. 159: Die Naturwissenschaft und speziell empirische Psychologie stellen sich auf den Boden wirklicher Erfahrung, die eidetische auf den Boden möglicher Erfahrung. Indem sie auf Grund ihrer exemplarischen Phantasien die reinen Möglichkeiten von Naturgestaltungen überhaupt, naher von psychologischen Gestaltungen erfasst, vollzieht sie immerfort ein Allgemeinheitsbewusstsein (das eidetische Allgemeinheit konstituierende), das in seiner eidetisch allgemeinen Theses diese generellen Möglichkeiten setzt und ihr so ihren Boden gibt.

Es sei gleich beigelegt, daß hier das nicht nur Erst-Notwendige, sondern auch Erst-Zugängliche eine eidetische reine Psychologie ist (eine eidetische Wissenschaft von den Möglichkeitsabwandlungen der Erfahrung von rein Psychischem), und nur auf diese kommt es für uns an. Statt in der faktischen Welt faktischer Menschen und Tiere stehen wir dann in einer eidetisch möglichen Welt überhaupt mit anschaulichen, aber als eidetische Möglichkeit „vorstellbaren“ Menschen und Tieren überhaupt, und das eidetisch mögliche rein Psychische ist dann mögliche reale Komponente in diesen möglichen Konkretionen.³⁸

Thus, to summarize, exactly as phenomenology, eidetic psychology is a science of essences; that is, a science that aims to determine the essences of the psyche and of psychic life; but, contrary to phenomenology, it investigates the essential structures of the psyche in the natural apperception. This roughly implies that eidetic psychology carries out eidetic analyses of the psyche *of possible human beings* and *of possible animals* and *their* psychic states, which constitute the theme of research of this discipline. For this reason, Husserl characterizes it as a science of the psyche and of psychological states, and contrasts it with phenomenology, which is an eidetic science of *pure phenomena*;³⁹ that is, a science of phenomena put between brackets (inasmuch as it suspends both making references to the natural psychological apperception, and to the validity of any transcendence).⁴⁰ The main difference between these eidetic disciplines and phenomenology lies neither in their content matter, which is indeed the same (that is, subjectivity), nor in their eidetic character, but in the particular apperception in which the eidetic analyses of the two disciplines are carried out.

³⁸ Hua III-2, p. 591 [*Beilage* 38, 1929].

³⁹ Husserl himself in *Ideas III* distinguishes between the two eidetic sciences in these terms. He says indeed that “it is a fundamental necessity, and of cardinal importance for philosophy, to lift oneself to the recognition that one must differentiate between the eidetics of *states* of consciousness [*Eidetik der seelischen Bewusstseinszustände*], which is a piece of the rational ontology of the psyche, and the eidetics of the *transcendentally purified* consciousness [*Eidetik des transzendental gereinigten Bewusstseins*] (or of being lived-experiences) [*oder Erlebnis-Seins*], that the latter, the genuine and pure phenomenology, is just as little rational psychology as rational natural theory.”[Hua V, p. 77 [p. 64]]

⁴⁰ In *Appendix IX* of *Ideas I*, written in 1929, Husserl writes that transcendental phenomenology does not have as its field or ground one’s experience as a given, and, thus, that it has no validity in experience; nor has humans and animals as its theme of research.

3.4 Transcendental Purity: Severing the Ties to Nature

As explained in *Section 3.2*, natural ontologies are eidetic sciences, as they deal with essences, (and, more precisely, with the essences of nature in general [*überhaupt*]; and, as it is called in later works, with the *Eidos nature*); but, at the same time, they do not sever the connection between essences and nature. In short, natural ontologies are eidetic, and yet natural (that is, not transcendental) sciences. They reach what we have called the purity of the *überhaupt*, but not the purity of the transcendental as purity from natural.

Then, we have seen that natural ontologies do not exhaust the realm of the *a priori*. There are also, and more importantly, *a priori* disciplines that aim at a higher degree of purity, or at purer essences, since they bracket any reference of their subject matters to nature. Therefore, such disciplines neither deal with nature: “nor with factual nature, nor with possible nature”.⁴¹ According to Husserl, both phenomenology and the disciplines belonging to formal ontology (such as mathematical sciences, pure logic, the doctrine of pure multiplicity, *etc.*) lie on this side of the realm of pure *a priori* sciences. They belong to pure *a priori* disciplines being, respectively, an example of material and formal pure *a priori* sciences.

Yet, the way in which phenomenology severs its tie with nature is different from the way in which formal ontologies sever their ties. Formal ontologies sever their ties with nature in virtue of their being formal; that is, of not being about material objects. For this reason, in Husserl’s view, they cannot reach the state of genuine philosophical disciplines.⁴² In fact, for that to happen, one needs adopting an attitude that allows one to disengage from nature while still dealing with phenomena that appear in nature. In Husserl’s words, for the state of genuine philosophy to be reached, one would need to adopt an attitude where “the empirical, being the characteristic of the givenness of the natural attitude, remains completely disengaged, and indeed in such a way that also its essence as essence of nature remains

⁴¹ Cf. Hua IX, p. 96.

⁴² Husserl clearly claims that natural ontologies are still far from a genuinely philosophical consideration because they serve as premises for the development of the correspondent empirical disciplines; and that the same holds for formal ontologies. See, for example, the following passage: “Surely, the transition from the impure *a priori* of the narrow, empirically minded mathematics to the strict *a priori* of pure mathematics is of great philosophical significance and an indispensable step toward establishing genuine philosophy. He who has not made this step can never climb to the heights of true philosophy”[Hua XIV, p. 128]

disengaged, while, on the other hand, components that enter into the essence of nature or, to be more precise, that enter into nature itself in *individuo*, are maintained.⁴³ This is exactly what the genuine phenomenological attitude consists of.⁴⁴ Thus, phenomenology, contrary to formal ontology, severs its ties with nature even if it deals with material essences, namely even if the essences it is interested in are essences of objects that are part of nature; and because of this is the true philosophical science.⁴⁵ Phenomenology does this by cutting the empirical relation between *cogitatio*, or each lived-experience [*Erlebnis*], and *res*, or the individual. This is possible, according to Husserl, for there is nothing in the essences of material phenomena that contradicts this divorce.⁴⁶ As he explains,

Wir können daher ohne Widersinn die empirische Verbindung zwischen dem Erlebnis und allem dinglichen Dasein gleichsam durchschneiden. Wir vollziehen eine gewisse *distinctio phaenomenologica*. Was soll sie besagen, was soll das für ein Durchschneiden sein? Ist es denn nicht wahr, dass die Erlebnisse Erlebnisse von erlebenden Menschen sind, also Beziehung zum Leib haben, Einordnung in die Natur? Kann ich daran etwas ändern? Es ist nun einmal so, das gewiss. Aber wir können doch die Erlebnisse an und für sich betrachten ohne sie in ihrer empirischen Beziehung zu betrachten. Wir können jede natürliche Setzung (Setzung von Naturdasein) in dem Sinn ausschalten, dass wir wissenschaftliche Betrachtungen anstellen, in denen wir schlechthin von keiner Setzung von Natur Gebrauch machen und die somit Geltung behalten, ob es eine Natur, eine geistig-leibliche Welt überhaupt gibt oder nicht.⁴⁷

⁴³ “Nun frage ich: Können wir nicht eine Einstellung gewinnen derart, dass das Empirische, das Eigentümliche der Gegebenheit der natürlichen Einstellung, ganz ausgeschaltet bleibt, und zwar so, dass auch sein Wesen als Wesen von Natur ausgeschaltet bleibt, während andererseits doch Komponenten erhalten bleiben, die in das Wesen von Natur, bzw. in die Natur selbst *in individuo* eingehen?”[Hua XIV, p.141]

⁴⁴ Geometry too does not investigate its subject matter in a natural apperception without being formal. But still it is not an example of genuine philosophy for Husserl. It does not deal with consciousness, and it is not a descriptive, but rather a deductive science.

⁴⁵ We have seen that natural ontologies do not produce genuinely philosophical analyses of the *a priori* of nature, for they are subordinated to the advancement of empirical sciences.

⁴⁶ “[I]n the essence of sensation of color and sound, in the essence of lived experiences of perceiving, judging, desiring, questioning, etc., there is no essential relation to a thing, as if being joined to a thing was essentially necessary for the being of such *cogitationes*. However, if this is so, then we can cut through the empirical relation between *cogitatio* and *res* without thereby making an abstraction in the sense of Hume’s *distinctio realis*, *i.e.*, in the sense of a distinction between essentially dependent and inseparable moments of a *concretum*. [...]. We thereby achieve a kind of *distinctio phaenomenologica*. [Hua XIV, p. 143 [p. 35]].

⁴⁷ Hua XIV, p. 144

Thus, although lived-experiences are always lived-experiences of humans, the phenomenologist can break the connection with nature, and can deal with the phenomena of his or her experiences without considering them in light of their empirical and natural relations. In Husserl's words, in phenomenology, "we can disengage each natural positing (positing of the existence of nature). We make no use at all of any positing of nature and where, accordingly, these considerations keep their validity, whether or not nature or an intellectual-embodied world [*geistig-leibliche Welt*] exists as such"⁴⁸; that is, whether nature exists or not.⁴⁹

When one disengages from nature in this way, Husserl claims that one can grasp the phenomena in question in themselves. Husserl gives the example of a lived-experience, precisely, of a feeling [*Gefühl*]. He claims that the phenomenologist does not grasp the feeling as something referred to humans, animals and to nature in general (as it is grasped in the natural apperception), but rather the feeling as it is purely in itself [*rein in sich selbst*].⁵⁰ Indeed, whenever Husserl uses the expression 'in itself', he takes it to mean precisely the any natural apperception (regardless of whether it is empirical or eidetic) is suspended. In Husserl's own words:

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*

⁴⁹ In the Cartesian Mediation, Husserl describes the passage from perception to the pure eidos perception in the following way: "Wir versetzen gleichsam die wirkliche Wahrnehmung in das Reich der Unwirklichkeiten, des Als-ob, das uns die reinen Möglichkeiten liefert, rein von allem, was an das Faktum und jedes Faktum überhaupt bindet. In letzterer Hinsicht behalten wir diese Möglichkeiten auch nicht in Bindung an das mitgesetzte faktische ego, sondern eben als völlig freie Erdenklichkeit der Phantasie — so daß wir auch von vornherein als Ausgangsexempel ein Hineinphantasieren in ein Wahrnehmen hätten nehmen können außer aller Beziehung zu unserem sonstigen faktischen Leben. Der so gewonnene allgemeine Typus Wahrnehmung schwebt sozusagen in der Luft — in der Luft absolut reiner Erdenklichkeiten. So aller Faktizität enthoben, ist er zum Eidos Wahrnehmung geworden, dessen idealen Umfang alle idealiter möglichen Wahrnehmungen als reine Erdenklichkeiten ausmachen. Die Wahrnehmungsanalysen sind dann Wesensanalysen, alles was wir über die zum Typus Wahrnehmung gehörigen Synthesen, über Horizonte der Potentialität usw. ausgeführt haben, gilt, wie leicht ersichtlich, wesensmäßig für alles in dieser freien Variation zu Bildende, 5 also für alle erdenklichen Wahrnehmungen überhaupt, mit anderen Worten in absoluter Wesensallgemeinheit und für jeden herausgegriffenen Einzelfall in Wesensnotwendigkeit, also auch für jede faktische Wahrnehmung, sofern jedes Faktum als bloßes Exempel einer reinen Möglichkeit zu denken ist"[Hua I, pp. 104-105].

⁵⁰ "Blicken wir etwa auf ein Gefühl, das wir gerade erleben, hin und erfassen wir es rein in sich selbst! Wir ziehen nicht mit in unser Erfassen die „empirische Apperzeption“, d.h. das Gefühl fassen wir nicht auf als den Gefühlszustand, in dem wir, diese empirischen Personen, diese Menschen, unter den momentanen psychophysischen Umständen uns befinden. Wir ziehen nichts von der Natur herein, bzw. wir unterlassen jedes Hineinziehen des Gefühls in die psychophysische Natur, jede Setzung desselben als etwas von unseren leiblichen Zuständen Abhängiges, in der objektiven Zeit seine Stelle einnehmend, in der Zeit, die durch Uhren bestimmt wird. Das alles lassen wir beiseite. Dann bleibt nicht etwa ein Nichts übrig, sondern es bleibt übrig das Gefühl in <sich> selbst, das in sich ist, was es ist, mag die ganze Natur sein oder auch nicht sein, das gar nicht davon tangiert wird, wenn wir auch die ganze Natur annulliert dächten." [Hua XIV, pp. 146-147]

Ich kann also das Gefühl an <sich> selbst und für <sich> selbst erfassen und setzen, und finde ich mit ihm eine Auffassung und Setzung, die es als psychischen Zustand bezieht auf das Naturobjekt Mensch und so einordnet in die Natur, so erfasse ich eben und setze ich in einem neuen Akte eben diese Auffassung und Setzung in <sich> selbst. „In sich selbst“, das heißt aber, ich mache die empirische Auffassung zum Objekt an und für sich, aber ich mache sie mir jetzt nicht zu eigen. Das will sagen, dass ich jetzt davon absehe, das was sie setzte, weiterhin zu setzen, oder von dem, was sie als Wirklichkeit setzte, irgendeinen Gebrauch zu machen.⁵¹

Looking at a phenomenon as it is in itself means, then, to detach it from its being part of nature and the reference system of nature. For example, dealing with perception *qua* perception, or with perception in itself, means dealing with perception independently from any actual or possible instance of perception one can experience in nature. In Husserl's terminology, 'in itself' becomes therefore synonymous with 'pure' and 'transcendental'; and these adjectives refer to a break from (both actual and possible) nature.

Therefore, in phenomenology, the word 'pure' has this additional meaning according to which it means 'unnatural' in the sense that we have just presented. It follows that eidetic psychology and all of the other natural ontologies cannot be considered as dealing with pure essences, when 'pure' is intended in this specific sense, even though they actually grasp essences and not empirical generalities. The kind of purity that natural ontologies manage to achieve is purity from actual existence, or, as we may call it 'the purity of the *überhaupt*'; while phenomenology must reach both the purity of the *überhaupt* and the purity of the *in sich selbst*; that is, purity from any reference to nature. According to Husserl, only when one achieves purity in the second sense, one reaches the state of genuine philosophy.

⁵¹ "Thus, I can grasp and posit the feeling in itself and for itself. And if I find, united with it, an apprehension and positing that relates it as a psychic state to the human being, taken as a natural object, and thereby inserts it in nature, then I will seize and posit this apprehension and positing in itself in a new act. But "in itself" means that I now make the empirical apprehension an object in and for itself, but I do not go along with it. By that is meant that I now refrain from further positing what the apprehension posited or refrain from making any use of that which the apprehension posited as reality." [Hua XIV, pp. 147-148]

3.5 What Does It Mean for an Essence to be Pure? Transcendental Purity and Eidetic Purity

We are then able to understand the difference between ‘*überhaupt*’ and ‘*in sich selbst*’. Both indicate a kind of purity, but each of them indicates a different kind. The first indicates the purity belonging to any eidetic analyses; while the second the purity belonging exclusively to phenomenology.

To explain the kind of purity pertaining to all the essences, it may be useful to make use, just as Husserl sometimes does, of the idea of possible worlds. Applying this idea, we could say that the pure essence of a phenomenon is the one that holds true in any possible world, in which at least an instantiation of the relevant essence can be present without contradiction. If essences are understood as the set of essential determinations that an object has, the definition of pure essence may then be modified as follows: pure essences are the set of properties that any of the corresponding instantiations has in any possible world, or, better, in any possible worlds in which at least an instantiation of the relevant essence can be present without contradiction.

Let’s consider again the example of the pure essence *perception*. The idea would be, roughly, that any pure essential property of perception, such as its being perspectival, is a property that perception has in any possible world in which some subject can perceive regardless of whom that perceiving subject is and how other things are. This applies also to the essential laws that are grounded on pure essences as well: these laws hold in any possible world in which at least an instantiation of the relevant essence can be present without contradiction.⁵² For example, the essential law according to which any object is perceived perspectively, grounded on the essence *perception*, holds in any possible world in which some subject can perceive

⁵² Cf. Hua XXIV, p. 234. As Husserl himself explains here, “[i]f I make clear to myself what it means for sounds to be higher and deeper, that means I call to mind different sounds in pure intuition and I arrive at the insight that belonging to the essence of the quality of sound is that *as*, being higher than *b*, rules out *bs*, being higher than *a*, and that if *a* is higher than *b*, which is higher than *c*, *a* is higher than *c*. Then, I have there laws whose validity in pure intuition is absolutely certain and indubitable. Sounds for which that did not hold would just not be sounds. The laws speak of sounds as sounds in the intuitively seen and captured sense. I can naturally use the word sound as a designation for something else, for colors, trees, apes, but it is not a matter of words and arbitrary meanings that may append to them. It is a matter of the universal that is there before our eyes as sound. And, if I capture the meaning, then I see this law’s being valid as something irrevocably belonging to the sound’s identical meaning. I am of course the one who sees and says that. But, the law says nothing about me and does not presuppose my existence, is not asserted and based upon any hypothesizing of that existence. The law does not belong, say perhaps, to me as a specimen of the species *homo*, *animal*, and so on, but belongs to sounds as such and to nothing else. [...]”.

regardless of whom that perceiving subject is, while there is no such law in any imaginable world in which there cannot be any perceiving subject.⁵³

The addition of a no-contradiction clause is motivated by the material status of the relevant essences. Contrary to formal essences, material essences (which are the only kind of essences phenomenology is directly interested in, as we have often repeated, are not pure in the sense that they are instantiated in every possible world whatsoever. Rather, they are subject to certain limitations. In the following passage from *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, Husserl gives us a clue about what it consists in:

In a certain sense every eidetic cognition is a product of “pure” reason — *pure from all empeiria* (a characteristic likewise indicated, from another side, by the word *apriori*); but not every eidetic cognition is pure in a *second sense*, the one pertaining to *form as a principle*. An *apriori* proposition about all *sounds* as such, about sounds meant with “pure” universality, is pure only in the first sense; it is, as we may say for certain reasons, a “contingent” *Apriori*. It has in the *eidos sound* a materially determinate core, which goes beyond the realm of the universality of “principles” in the most radical sense, and *restricts it to the “contingent” province of ideally possible sounds*. “Pure” reason is not only above everything empirically factual, but also above every sphere of hyletic, materially determinate, essences.⁵⁴

This passage elicits how all material essences (including the transcendently-purified ones) are not absolutely pure, for they are tied to their material type (for example, the type *sound*, or the type *perception*, etc.). Their unbreakable tie to a material type connects material essences to the worlds in which the material core of the type can be

⁵³ See, for example, Hua XXIV, p. 146. As Husserl writes here, “[i]f I have a right to assume nature, or to assume a heaven with angels, and to consider the thoughts of possible living beings other than natural ones, then I can say that wherever living beings, beings with minds, may be found, whether on earth or in heaven, whether in empirical reality or in a make-believe, possible reality, they can only judge correctly if they judge sounds the way I judge. Sounds cannot occur to them that do not exhibit that without which sounds would just not be sounds. What holds for these trivial laws of sounds holds for all laws of essences. They are all *a priori*.”

⁵⁴ “In gewissem Sinne ist jede Wesenserkenntnis ein Gebilde „reiner“ Vernunft — rein von aller Empirie (was von anderer Seite auch das Wort *apriori* anzeigt); aber nicht jede ist in einem zweiten Sinne, dem der prinzipiellen Form, rein. Ein *apriorischer* Satz über Töne überhaupt, also in „reiner“ Allgemeinheit gedachte, ist nur rein im ersten Sinne, er ist, wie wir es aus gewissen Gründen nennen können, ein „kontingentes“ *Apriori*. Er hat in dem *Eidos* Ton einen sachhaltigen Kern, der das Reich der im radikalsten Sinne „prinzipiellen“ Allgemeinheiten überschreitet und den Satz an das „kontingente“ Gebiet der ideal möglichen Töne bindet. Die „reine“ Vernunft ist nicht nur über alles empirisch Faktische, sondern auch über alle hyletisch-sachhaltigen Wesenssphären erhaben“ [Hua XVII, p. 33 [p. 29]].

given. Such a tie does not make, however, transcendently pure essences *bounded* in the same sense in which empirical essences (*i.e.*, the essences grasped by natural eidetics) can be characterized as bounded essences.⁵⁵ Whereas the latter are bounded essences in a very specific sense, that is, being closely tied to nature, transcendently pure essences may be considered to be bounded only inasmuch as they are tied to their material type.⁵⁶

The idea that pure essences are linked to possible words in which individuals of a certain type can appear can also be explained in the following way: a pure essence has an extension that holds in principle (*i.e.*, it is *a priori* true) not only for the instances that are given – or that can be given – in the actual world, but also for those instances that can be given in possible worlds different from ours. Pure essences have, therefore, the greatest extension, or – as Husserl also says – unrestricted generality. Then, the notion of purity and that of generality are strictly linked to one another and they may even be thought to coincide. For an explicit reference to the term ‘extension’ consider, for example, this passage from *Erfahrung und Urteil*:

If we speak of animals, plants, cities, houses, and so on, we intend therewith in advance *things of the world*, and in fact the world of our actual, real experience (not of a merely possible world); accordingly, we think of these concepts as *actual* generalities, that is, as bound to this world. The extension of such concepts is indeed infinite, but it is an *actual* extension, the extension of things actually and really possible in the given world. These real possibilities, which belong to the extension of empirical concepts, must not be confused with the *pure* possibilities to which pure generalities refer.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Cf. *EU*, p. 330.

⁵⁶ So, it is true that all material essences cannot be said to be completely unbounded or free because of their tie to some material type; but, still it is important to distinguish within material essences themselves between bounded essences (or empirical essences) and unbounded essences, (or transcendently pure essences); and it is also important not to take the difference between bounded and unbounded (or free) essences as equivalent to that between material, or inexact, essences and formal, or exact, essences. Although the equivalence is correct in a certain sense, as I have explained above, it may risk overshadowing the difference between essences that are tied to nature and essences that are not. For this reason, from now on, when I speak of ‘bounded essences’ I will refer only to the former, *i.e.*, empirical essences. The distinction between bounded and unbounded (or free) essences is not exactly identical to the distinction between exact and inexact essences, but rather it is identical to the distinction between pure and impure essences (which are called in *Experience and Judgment* ‘empirical essences’). Cf. *EU*, p. 82; and *Phenomenological Psychology* § 9.

⁵⁷ “Sprechen wir von Tieren, von Pflanzen, von Städten, Häusern usw., so meinen wir damit von vornherein Dinge der Welt, und zwar der Welt unserer wirklichen, faktischen Erfahrung (nicht einer bloß möglichen Welt); dementsprechend meinen wir jene Begriffe als wirkliche Allgemeinheiten, das heißt als an diese Welt gebundene. Der Umfang eines jeden solchen Begriffs ist zwar ein unendlicher,

Now, if an actual extension “is the extension of things actually and really possible in the given world,” as Husserl explains in the passage quoted above, essences like the ones the natural ontologies aim to grasp are not examples of essences with an actual extension; for, as we have seen, they are not interested in grasping the merely actual. The kind of extension pertaining to generalities bounded to this world differs from that pertaining to so-called “pure generalities,” which, conversely, can be characterized as having non-actual extension, that is, as an extension which is not limited to things actually or really possible (that is, actualizably possible). This is precisely the thesis that I wanted to argue for: pure essences are generalities with an extension greater than actual extension. This thesis is supported by textual evidence. Consider, for example, the following passage:

Die reine Allgemeinheit [hat] [...] keinen Umfang von Tatsachen, von empirischen Wirklichkeiten [...], die sie binden, sondern nur einen Umfang von reinen Möglichkeiten.⁵⁸

Regardless of whether eidetic analyses are carried out adopting the natural or transcendental attitude, Husserl’s idea of purity as unrestricted generality is at the core of his eidetics. A pure essence is an essence with the highest degree of generality; that is, an essence referring to purely possible individuals rather than to mere actualities.

As far as phenomenology goes, the possible-world model used to describe purity in this section is instead not completely adequate. In fact, the notion of possible world is not fully suitable to express the suspension of the empirical horizon that phenomenology seeks. In other words, whereas the model is useful to understand the notion of purity as unrestricted generality that is sought after by natural ontologies, it is not fully adequate to describe what is at stake in transcendental phenomenological investigations of pure consciousness. However, this negative characterization of how to understand the notion of purity at stake in phenomenology let us gain an insight on the notion itself.

aber es ist ein wirklicher Umfang, ein Umfang von wirklichen und real möglichen Dingen in der gegebenen Welt. Diese realen Möglichkeiten, die zum Umfang der empirischen Begriffe gehören, sind nicht zu verwechseln mit den reinen Möglichkeiten, auf die sich die reinen Allgemeinheiten beziehen“[*EU*, p. 398 [eng. P. 330]].

⁵⁸ *EU*, p. 426.

Now, we want to shed light on an important fact, namely that purity as unrestricted generality (in the sense of the *überhaupt*) is practically more or less achievable. A certain connection with actual or actualizable possible experience (characteristic of the empirical attitude) can persist if one fails to attentively consider possibilities other than those merely actualizable. This holds true in particular within natural ontologies, that can be limited by their theme of research in the use of the phantasy; but it should not happen to the phenomenologist that has pure essences (in the highest sense possible) as main goal of his research.

3.6 Grasping Pure Essences: The Method of Eidetic Variation

To complete the picture, we need to account for the method for grasping pure essences in both the senses of *überhaupt* and *in sich selbst*. Even though some aspects were inevitably anticipated in previous sections of this chapter, let's start from the basics.

Famously, according to Husserl, pure essences can be intuitively grasped through a special kind of intuition, which he refers to with the expressions “eidetic intuition”, or “eidetic insight” [*Wesenschau*]. If we wanted to be more accurate, we would distinguish between a handful of accounts of how one can grasp essences. Husserl's position on this matter at the time of *Allgemeine Erkenntnistheorie* is, indeed, not as developed as it is in *Ideas*, where he begins to distinguish between individual, general and transcendently pure essences and to attribute a prominent role to imagination and phantasy in grasping essences. Likewise, Husserl's position about the problem of the constitution of essences, and eidetic variation in the '20s and '30s is not exactly identical with that presented in *Ideas*. Revisions of and alternatives to Husserl's original account run parallel with the development of his understanding of essence, and with the introduction of the before-mentioned distinctions among essences. Yet, for the purposes of this dissertation, I choose to privilege Husserl's discussion of eidetic variation⁵⁹ as it is presented in *PP*, *FTL*, and *EU*, since it consists of Husserl's final words on this issue, and, thus, plausibly, the most developed version of the account of how one intuitively grasps essences. Let us only stress that, while eidetic

⁵⁹ There is only one occurrence of the term in a published work, precisely in *Hua XVII*, p. 296.

intuition seems not to require more than carefulness and attention in Husserl's earlier works, Husserl gradually comes to emphasize that a successful eidetic insight involves the completion of some mental operations under the guidance of a rigorous method. This is justified by the aim of grasping pure essences, that is, essences having unrestricted generality.

The idea that an essence shows up as the product of some (more or less difficult) operations may be easily understood by means of an analogy. Virtually everyone would agree that numbers show up at the end of mathematical calculations, and that these calculations, rather than producing the numbers, only let them show up. The same goes for material essences (such as the essences of *sound*, of *color*, of *lived-experience*, the *triangle*, etc.). In those cases, it is just more difficult to figure out what kinds of operations one should carry out to let them show up; for it is clear that mathematical operations and formalizations can do nothing to let one grasp a material essence.

According to Husserl, there are two kinds of mental operations that allow one to grasp a material essence; for there are two kinds of material essences: *exact essences* (as the essence of the geometrician's *triangle*), and the *inexact* or *morphological essences* (as the essences of *sound*, of *color*, of *lived-experience*, of *perception*, and so on)⁶⁰. The latter are exactly the kind of essences the phenomenologist aims to grasp. Each of these two kinds of material essences requires carrying out specific kinds of operations to let them show up: exact essences (such as those of geometry) require a process of *idealization* (*Idealisierung*)⁶¹; while inexact or morphological essences require a completely different method, which, as explained, Husserl calls "ideation" in the *Logical Investigation* and in *Ideas*, and "eidetic variation" in the '20s and '30s.

The fact that phenomenology requires making use of a particular method sheds light on the eidetic status of such discipline. Phenomenology is neither "mathematics"⁶², nor "geometry" of the lived-experiences⁶³; and the same holds true

⁶⁰ For the discussion of this distinction see Hua III/1, p. 155.

⁶¹ See Hua XIX, p. 245. Husserl writes there: "The essences which direct ideation elicits from intuitive data are 'inexact essences', they may not be confused with the 'exact' essences which are ideas in the Kantian sense, and which (like 'ideal point', an ideal surface or solid, or ideal species of colour in the ideal colour-pyramid) arise through a peculiar 'idealization'. For further clarifications see Andrea Zhock, *The Ontological Status of Essences in Husserl's Thought*, In *New Yearbook for phenomenology and phenomenological Philosophy*, vol. XI, 2012, 99-130.

⁶² Hua III/1, p. 149.

⁶³ *Ibidem*. After reflecting on the similarities between geometry and phenomenology, Husserl concludes that "no science operating with ideal substractions, no matter how highly developed, can

for natural ontologies. In other words, the method of those other disciplines (namely, *formalization* and *idealization*) simply does not work in a “sphere, where the only legitimate concepts” are the morphological or inexact ones.⁶⁴

That said, what does exactly the method of eidetic variation consist of?

Husserl does not write extensively about eidetic variation; but in his *Lectures on Phenomenological Psychology* [§9], in *Experience and Judgment* [§§ 86-93], in *Formal and Transcendental Logic* in particular, and to a less extent in other works, one can find very helpful clues to understand what Husserl has in mind with it. Then, I will illustrate the mature version of Husserl’s account of eidetic variation, which can be found in these works; and I will make some remarks on his earlier account whenever necessary.

One can summarize the method that leads from an individual to its corresponding pure essence, on the basis of the above-mentioned works, by isolating the following steps:

- (1) The first step consists in intending an individual or a quasi-individual (*e.g.*, a phantasized one). It does not really matter if such individual is perceived, or just imagined, or remembered, *etc.*⁶⁵
- (2) Such an individual is “freed from its character of contingency”⁶⁶. As such, it is then taken as an example whatsoever [*belieber*] of the universal one wants to investigate and it assumes the character of a “guiding model [*Vorbild*]” of the entire process.⁶⁷
- (3) Next, the guiding model is arbitrarily modified by pure fantasy⁶⁸, but kept within the boundaries set by the universal in question. This means that there should remain some similarities between the individual which one starts with

perform the original and legitimate task of pure descriptions.”[Hua III/1, p. 156 [p. 167]]. See also Hua III/1, p. 158. For a discussion of the issue, that contrary to what I said, underlines Husserl fascination for the process of idealization of the lived-experiences, see Jacques English, *Sur l'intentionnalité et ses modes*, PUF, Paris 2006.

⁶⁴ Hua III/1, p. 155.

⁶⁵ See for example Hua IX, p. 73 [PP]

⁶⁶ *EU*, p. 410.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*. See also Hua IX, p. 76 [PP].

⁶⁸ At Hua IX, p. 77 [PP], Husserl claims that there can also be some variants that are produced by passive fantasy.

CHAPTER 4

OBJECTIONS AND REPLIES

4.1 Objections

As anticipated in the introduction of this dissertation, Edmund Husserl's eidetic phenomenology had attracted – and continues to attract – many criticisms.

It is worth to delve deeper into those criticisms at this point, since we can now discuss the objections raised in view of the characterization of essences emerged through the analyses of the first three chapters of the dissertation.

More specifically, for this purpose, we will concentrate on two classes of objections that are most prominent in the Husserlian scholarship, and, more generally, in the phenomenological literature,¹ and which most of the objections to phenomenological eidetics can be (implicitly or explicitly) gathered under.² For convenience, let us henceforth call these two classes of objections to Husserl's eidetic phenomenology as follows: *the Betrayal Objection*, and *the Skeptical Objection*.

This chapter examines each of these classes of objections one a time to see whether they are right, and whether there is any good to them. I will provide concrete examples of each class of objections.

Before moving on, let us quickly note two important points about these examples. First, it should be clear that, in this chapter, it is impossible to reconstruct the views of

¹ This chapter is primarily concerned with the objections to eidetic phenomenology coming from within the phenomenological tradition, for it is arguably most interesting to discuss the views of scholars and philosophers who share (at least some of the) core phenomenological assumptions, while at the same time rejecting this specific part of phenomenology.

² Criticisms that do not completely fit these two groups will be mentioned separately, if at all, and only when considered appropriate.

philosophers such as Jacques Derrida or Maurice Merleau-Ponty in all their complexity: attempting that would greatly exceed the scope of this dissertation, and would probably require at least as many pages as this dissertation is. Thus, despite attempting to be as charitable as possible, some of the positions presented are somewhat simplified. Second, for the most part, I will consider some of the claims made by these philosophers as exemplifications of the objections presented, without having the intention to give a complete account of their views.³

After this careful examination, the chapter focuses on some of the possible replies that Husserl could have given to these criticisms.

In addition, this chapter also attempts to offer original contributions to the issue.

4.1.1 *The Betrayal Objection*

The Betrayal Objection may be summarized as follows:

The Betrayal Objection the phenomenological attempt to grasp (pure) essences is a deviation or a betrayal of the phenomenological commitment to the original givenness of phenomena; or, in short, a betrayal of the so-called *Principle of All Principles*.⁴

To understand this objection, we need to untangle the argument leading to it.

Firstly, phenomenology is interested in describing the phenomena of experience.

Then, in their description of experiential phenomena, phenomenologists must follow what Husserl calls *the Principle of all Principles* of phenomenology. This principle states “that every ordinary presentive intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition, that everything originally (so to speak, in its ‘personal’ actuality) offered to us in ‘intuition’ is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it is presented there.”⁵

³ This decision is also based on the fact that some of them have changed their minds over the years.

⁴ Hua III, §24, p. 51 [p. 44]

⁵ *Ibid.* The original German is as follows: “daß jede originär gebende Anschauung eine Rechtsquelle der Erkenntnis sei, daß alles, was sich uns in der "Intuition" originär, (sozusagen in seiner leibhaften Wirklichkeit) darbietet, einfach hinzunehmen sei, als was es sich gibt, aber auch nur in den Schranken in denen es sich da gibt.”

Lastly, pure morphological essences can be grasped through the method of eidetic variation, that is, through to a method that consists in purifying the corresponding phenomena through imagination.

Given these premises, critics argue that such purification of phenomena violates *the Principle of all Principles*. More precisely, according to advocates of *the Betrayal Objection*, *the Principle of all Principles* is violated for the following two reasons. First, the eidetic method only allows one to grasp pure or purified phenomena, when, instead, no phenomenon (except for mathematical entities) is given as pure. Accordingly, what is given through the eidetic method oversteps the limits within which it is given. The second reason is that, through eidetic variation, one is not truly having intuitions, but rather manipulates certain phenomena. In other words, advocates of *the Betrayal Objection* argue that (pure) essences are not originally given, but are in a certain sense the products of an imaginative process that transforms the phenomena.

The key assumption of *the Betrayal Objection* is the following: grasping (pure) essences requires manipulating their corresponding objects, since grasping (pure) essences involves resorting to modifications of their corresponding objects in phantasy. As such, essences are not originally given, but are in a certain sense the products of a process. When the phenomenologist attempts to grasp the essence of a phenomenon, he breaches the specifically phenomenological principle of faithfulness to the original givenness of phenomena. Therefore, to summarize this objection, eidetic phenomenology is worrisome since grasping essences requires a method that is to be understood as a deviation or as a betrayal of phenomenology's commitment to being faithful to the original givenness of phenomena.

Stefano Bancalari's criticism of eidetic phenomenology in his book *Intersoggettività e mondo della vita* perfectly illustrates *the Betrayal Objection*. According to Bancalari, Husserl's claim that eidetic variation gives rise to an intuition is highly problematical at best. Despite the fact that Husserl holds that essences are the correlate of an intuitive consciousness of generality, Bancalari argues that their intuitive character is dubious⁶; and that it also has troublesome consequences from the point of view of their phenomenological legitimacy.⁷

⁶ Claude Romano is another scholar who explicitly disputes that essences can be given intuitively. As he writes, "je pense que l'essence ne peut être offerte à une quelconque intuition"[Claude Romano, 'Avons-nous besoin des essences en philosophie?', in *Autour de Claude Romano, L'événement et la*

Bancalari argues that this is the case for two reasons. First, he defends this idea for, as explained, he (as well as other scholars sharing his view) understands eidetic variation as an imaginative manipulation [“escogitazioni della fantasia”] of the phenomenal *datum*⁸, and accordingly holds that essences seem more the outcome of an arbitrary subjective process⁹ than an object given through intuition.¹⁰ In his words,

Phantasy [*Phantasie*] is the faculty in virtue of which the transcendental subjectivity carries out that “variation” that allows it to reach the eidetic level, as Husserl clearly claims [...]; and, as a consequence, the “general type” [*allgemeiner Typus*], or the essence, obtained through eidetic variation is a “completely free contrivance [*Erdenklichkeit*] of imagination” [Hua I, p. 104].¹¹

raison, edited by P. Cabestan, Cercle Hermeneutique, Paris 2016, pp. 203-204]. Dominique Pradelle makes an analogous point, as he writes, “Or cette modalité subjective de l’itérabilité indéfinie, décrite dans la Logique comme une présupposition idéalisante propre à la pensée mathématique [...], ne contrevient-elle pas, en posant l’eidos comme corrélat d’une itération infinie impossible à réaliser au plan intuitif, à l’exigence intuitionniste de ne pas outrepasser les limites du donné intuitif, et suffit-elle à assurer l’invariance objective de l’eidos saisi dans la variation?” [Dominique Pradelle, *L’archéologie du monde - Constitution de l’espace, idéalisme et intuitionnisme chez Husserl*, Phänomenologica 157, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht 2000, p. 119]

⁷ Stefano Bancalari, *Intersoggettività e mondo della vita: Husserl e il problema della fenomenologia*, Cedam, Pisa 2003, p. 115. Bancalari’s criticism of eidetic phenomenology is embedded in the broader issue of the practicability of the move from adequate evidence to apodictic evidence from the phenomenological point of view.

⁸ In eidetic variation, the phenomenal *datum* is modified by phantasy to achieve its apodicticity.

⁹ Bancalari uses Italian translation of the expression ‘contrivance of imagination’ to translate the German term ‘*Erdenklichkeit*’. This expression is uncharitable, especially given the arguably negative connotation of the word ‘contrivance’.

¹⁰ Bancalari puts forth a second objection to essences concerning the possibility of sharing them with other people. This worry may be called the problem of the intersubjective validity of essences. As Bancalari writes: “Ma anche ammesso che il raggiungimento dell’*eidos ego* non comporti le difficoltà appena esposte, la distinzione tra fatto e *eidos* può garantire al più che il fenomenologo, individuata una struttura essenziale del fluire della propria vita trascendentale, sia in grado «di poter[la] descrivere e, per così dire, documentare in affermazioni salde», ma come aggiunge immediatamente Husserl, valide «solo per la sua persona». Il raggiungimento della «generalità eidetica», infatti, non è sufficiente a delimitare un ambito di validità più esteso di quello dell’ego individuale del fenomenologo.” [ivi, p. 116]. This objection relies, once again, on the fact that essences, according to Bancalari, are products of imagination. This objection is especially worrisome for the possibility of attributing to essences a more than merely functional role depends on their intersubjective validity. Thus, Bancalari’s distrust also concerns essences *tout court*. In this chapter, however, we are only interested in the aspects of his criticism that are directed towards eidetic phenomenology, such as his declination of *the Betrayal Objection*.

¹¹ Bancalari, *ivi*, p. 115. This is the original Italian passage quoted: “La facoltà in virtù di cui la soggettività trascendentale opera quella «variazione» che gli consente di raggiungere il piano eidetico è, come Husserl afferma chiaramente [...], la «fantasia» (*Phantasie*); di conseguenza il «tipo generale» (*allgemeiner Typus*), ossia l’essenza, che si ottiene per variazione eidetica è una «escogitazione (*Erdenklichkeit*) completamente libera della fantasia» [Hua I, p. 104].” According to Bancalari, in virtue of being attained through phantasy, essences are subjectively constructed rather than being given. For this reason, Bancalari is clearly critical of essences *tout court*; not only in virtue of their

For Bancalari, this is especially problematical for phenomenology, since it is constituted as such precisely in his vindication of its originality and, consequently, in its radical denial of the possibility of equating the phenomenon to an image.¹²

The second reason why Bancalari argues that the intuitive character of essences is dubious is that, according to his interpretation, essences are thought by Husserl as having apodictic evidence, and it appears that, for Bancalari, apodicticity escapes intuition. He indeed writes that what is within the scope of apodicticity¹³ seems to concern more formal logic than transcendental logic, or, in other words, it seems to concern more logic *tout court* than phenomenology specifically. Apodictic evidence is more a limit concept than a given phenomenon. Bancalari's objection probably echoes Derrida's objection to the possibility of intuiting any idea in the Kantian sense; which, in fact, is a limit concept.¹⁴

According to Bancalari, then, Husserl's phenomenological eidetic project involves a double violation of the original intuitiveness of the phenomenal *datum*:

- (a) The violation of the intuitiveness of the phenomenal *datum* in favor of imaginative manipulations of it through phantasy (which is implicitly understood as some sort of thought experiment).
- (b) The denial of one's interest towards what is given in experience in favor of grasping phenomena with apodictic evidence.¹⁵

betrayal of *the Principle of All Principles*. This shows that advocates of *the Betrayal Objection* can also be defenders of *the Skeptical Objection*. The distinction between these two objections is not so clear-cut; and, in fact, Bancalari is also skeptical about the possibility of there being essences.

¹² As Bancalari himself writes: "[...] si tratta di sottoporre il dato fenomenico ad «escogitazioni» della facoltà della «fantasia», le cui prestazioni risultano quanto mai problematiche dal punto di vista di una fenomenologia, che si costituisce come tale proprio nella rivendicazione del carattere di originalità della fenomenologia e nel conseguente e radicalissimo rifiuto della possibilità di equiparare il fenomeno ad un'immagine." [Bancalari, *ivi*, pp. 115-116]

¹³ Incorrigibility is an essential feature of apodicticity: we call 'apodictic' those insights whose future validity is supposed to be unshakable. Accordingly, apodicticity concerns the character of our insights.

¹⁴ In his book *Le problème de la genèse dans la philosophie de Husserl*, Jacques Derrida argues that since an idea in the Kantian sense is a limit concept, it cannot be given with ordinary evidence; and so cannot be dealt with by phenomenology. (Cf. Derrida, *Le problème de la genèse dans la philosophie de Husserl* p. 244) Bancalari transposes Derrida's criticism towards ideas in the Kantian sense to essences, since Bancalari considers the latter as being limit concepts; even when he discusses morphological essences.

¹⁵ This reduction of the experiential *datum* to its apodictic variant through imagination is a Cartesian motive.

Thus, Bancalari concludes that the attempt to analyze experiential phenomena within eidetics is bound to fail, as it is hard to match with the phenomenological faithfulness to *the Principle of all Principles*.¹⁶ A genuinely phenomenological perspective of experiential objects cannot remain “at the level of thought experiments”¹⁷: apodicticity must therefore be given up.¹⁸

Another instance of this sort of considerations is present in Jean-Luc Marion’s book *Réduction et donation*. In the introduction, Marion indeed provocatively writes as follows:

La restauration, mieux l’irrépressible consécration de l’objectivité par Husserl, ne marque-t-elle pas l’extrême difficulté, pour la phénoménologie, de rester fidèle à sa propre tentative ? Plus que les débats convenus sur le « réalisme » et le « tournant transcendantal », *l’idéal de l’objectivité* met en cause l’objectif même de la phénoménologie – le retour aux choses en question. Car il ne va aucunement de soi que le choses en question ne se donnent que sous la figure de leur objectivation constituée.¹⁹ [*my italics*]

What Marion claims perfectly fits under the heading of *the Betrayal Objection*: the attempt to rearrange phenomena into something objective is for him a betrayal of phenomenology’s original principles; that is, the idea that phenomenologists should occupy themselves with the “things in themselves”, or, in other words, with phenomena as they give themselves.

Although Marion does not explicitly refer to essences in this passage, and although the target of his critique is certainly broader (for it seems to concern the idea of constitution at large), his reference to the ideal of objectivity makes it clear that essences are primarily targeted by his criticism; for essences embody Husserl’s ideal of objectivity and rationality (of Husserl’s “intellectualism” as Marion would say);

¹⁶ Bancalari, *ivi*, p. 140.

¹⁷ Bancalari, *ibid*.

¹⁸ Bancalari argues that, since Husserl realizes this, in his latest writings, he renounces both the conceivability of apodictic evidence and of essences (although this is not strictly relevant for the account of the objection given in this section).

¹⁹ Jean-Luc Marion, *Réduction et Donation*, PUF, Paris 2004, p. 8. The English translation of the passage is as follows: “Does not the reestablishment, or better the irrepressible consecration of objectivity by Husserl indicate the extreme difficulty that phenomenology has in remaining faithful to its own endeavor? More than the conventional debates over “realism” and the “transcendental turn”, the ideal of objectivity calls into question the very objective of phenomenology – the return to things in question. For it is not at all self-evident that the things in question are given only in the form of their constituted objectification.”[Marion, *ivi*, p. 2]

and for essences are the most objective side of phenomena. Because of this reason, then, Marion can be surely considered as one of the most prominent advocates of *the Betrayal Objection*.

In summary, according to the proponents of *the Betrayal Objection*, phenomenologists must stay closer to the givenness of phenomena, and attempt to grasp objects in their original givenness within the limits they are given (as *the Principle of all Principles* states) rather than try to purify the essence of phenomena; especially given that such purification involves a manipulation of what is given.

The proponents of this objection need not directly cast doubts on the fact that each object has an essence, as this is not the target of their criticism. Rather, they claim that phenomenology should focus on the correspondent individual object, that is, on the experiential object we originally come across; or, that one should at least carefully reflect upon whether phenomenology should aim to the apodicticity or objectivity of essences, rather than be primarily concerned with the level of experiential objects.

As explained, *the Betrayal Objection* does not focus specifically on the limits of phantasy and on the difficulties related to the attainment of pure essences,²⁰ but its criticism is a matter of principle: even if it were possible to attain apodictic truths such as those grounded in pure essences, it would be wrong to focus on them instead of concentrating on objects of experience.

4.1.2 *The Skeptical Objection*

Differently from *the Betrayal Objection*, *the Skeptical Objection* centers on the difficulty of grasping pure essences. Critics individuate such difficulty in one or more aspects of the eidetic method²¹, and thereby shake one's confidence into essences themselves.²²

²⁰ This does not mean that scholars or philosophers that address *the Betrayal Objection* could not be also skeptical about essences. The two objections are not mutually exclusive.

²¹ In fact, there are plenty of objections to the method of eidetic variation in the literature: many scholars do not simply trust this method or think that it is at best incomplete.

²² There are also special cases. For example, Claude Romano rejects the eidetic method without getting rid of essences or downplaying them. According to him, one can know essences only through reasoning. (Cf. *Au coeur de la raison, la phénoménologie, op. cit.*). Yet, this position is not phenomenological in a strict sense, since it denies that essences are given through intuition.

The objection is often formulated moving from the following questions: how do we know that we have considered enough examples to grasp truly universal essences? Is phantasy truly able to take us out of our own world and experience? Are the essences that we grasp truly detached from our experience? If each passively pre-constituted *eidōs* – which serves as a guiding model for eidetic variation – were constituted starting from a world with a specific ontological structure, how can it have the pretense to be valid for any possible world whatsoever? If this is so, how can *eide* have a universal character? If types are understood in light of an exotic culture, can the end product of variation independently hold identical to itself?

Doubts like those have led many scholars to distance themselves from Husserl's view on essences.

According to the degree of the loss of confidence into essences, one can distinguish between a moderate and a bold version of *the Skeptical Objection*:

The Moderate Skeptical Objection: It is doubtful whether “essences” are actually pure, that is, whether they hold universally for everything that falls under them.

The Bold Skeptical Objection: What Husserl and others call ‘essences’ do not display how *things* are, but they rather display what we put into them. In fact, they are ultimately subjective constructs.

On the one hand, according to the moderate version of the objection, essences display the nature, or the being-thus [*Sosein*], of things in this world but they do not hold universally. In other words, their universality is put into question. In view of this objection, essences can still be properly understood as not being subjective constructs, but their universal value (according to which they are considered as pure) is pushed aside.

On the other hand, according to the bold version of *the Skeptical Objection*, essences display our view of things around us, and are ultimately fruits of subjectivity.

Consider the following famous criticisms towards eidetic phenomenology chosen to illustrate this objection.

For starters, in my opinion, Merleau-Ponty's treatment of essences in the section *Interrogation et intuition* of *Le visible et l'invisible* exemplifies the *Moderate Skeptical Objection* well.

As Merleau-Ponty notes, essences supposedly hold universally; that is, regardless of the reality they are instantiated in; and, in virtue of this, they are thought of as principles grounding all possible things.²³ However, Merleau-Ponty disputes these two claims, as he argues that they are both far from obvious. As he writes, "Their authority as essences, their affirmative power, their dignity as principles are not self-evident."²⁴ He claims that

Des essences que nous trouvons, nous n'avons pas le droit de dire qu'elles donnent le sens primitif de l'Être, qu'elles sont le possible en soi, tout le possible, et de réputer impossible tout ce qui n'obéit pas à leurs lois, ni de traiter l'Être et le monde comme leur conséquence : elles n'en sont que la manière ou le style, elles sont le *Sosein* et non le *Sein*, et si nous sommes fondés à dire que toute pensée aussi bien que la nôtre les respecte, si elles ont valeur universelle, c'est en tant qu'une autre pensée fondée sur d'autres principes devrait, pour se faire reconnaître de nous, entrer en communication avec nous, se prêter aux conditions de la nôtre, de notre expérience, prendre place dans notre monde, et, finalement, que tous les penseurs et toutes les essences possibles ouvrent sur une seule expérience et sur le même monde.²⁵

Merleau-Ponty's idea is that we do not have the right to claim that essences hold universally and ground all possible things; or that no possible experience will ever

²³ Consider, for example, the following passage: "Les essences sont ce sens intrinsèque, ces nécessités de principe, quoi qu'il en soit des réalités, où elle de mélangent et se brouillent sans que d'ailleurs leurs implications cessent de s'y faire valoir), seul être légitime ou authentique, qui a prétention et droit à l'être et qui est affirmatif de lui-même, parce qu'il est le système de tout ce qui est possible au regard d'un pur spectateur, l'épure ou le dessin de ce qui, a tous les niveaux, et quelque chose, – quelque chose en général." [Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, Gallimard, Paris 1964, p. 143]

²⁴ "[...] leur autorité d'essences, leur puissance affirmative, leur dignité de principes ne vont pas de soi." [ivi, p. 145]

²⁵ *ivi*, pp. 145-146 [p. 109]. The English translation of this passage is as follows: "We do not have the right to say that the essences we find give the primitive meaning of Being, that they are the possible in itself, the whole possible, and to repute as impossible all that does not obey their laws, nor to treat Being and the world as their consequence: they are only its manner or its style, they are the *Sosein* and not the *Sein*. And if we are justified in saying that every thought respects them as well as does our own, if they have universal value, this is so inasmuch as another thought founded on other principles must, if it is to make itself known to us, to enter into communication with us, adapt itself to the conditions of our own thought, of our experience, take its place in our world, and inasmuch as, finally, all the thinkers and all the essences possible open upon one sole experience and upon the same world."

disprove them, as the advocates of the usefulness to put them in play within the philosophical discourse usually state. Simply, Merleau-Ponty argues, their having universal extension and the value often attributed to them is not self-evident at all.

Yet, according to Merleau-Ponty, essences hold true for the actual world: they can truly tell us about how our world is, or, in other words, they express the *Sosein* of the objects of our experience. Therefore, essences do not possess a universal value, if ‘universal’ involves validity for all possible worlds. But they do have a ‘universal’ value within the limits of our experience, or within the actual world, since essences tell us about how it is. They express the way things are in our world, and their value is shared among us, since we share the same sort of experiences and live in the same world. If essences held for subjects different from us (or subjects from other possible worlds) this would be the case because the considered subjects would have either to be like us in some relevant way, or accommodate the way things appear to them to the way they appear to us, for, otherwise, it would be impossible for them to communicate with us. In Merleau-Ponty’s words, “another thought founded on other principles must, if it is to make itself known to us, to enter into communication with us, adapt itself to the conditions of our own thought, of our experience, take its place in our world.”²⁶

Thus, the direction of the implication is reversed for Merleau-Ponty: it is not that our experience must agree with essences, for they hold universally; but essences seem to hold universally, for they must agree with our experience, as they are the expression of how objects of experience appear to us.

Interestingly, Merleau-Ponty’s remarks in the pages of *Le Visible et l’invisible* discussed before imply an essential truth; that is, the truth that there are no truly universal essences. Merleau-Ponty himself notices this, and responds that this truth is an essential truth, but not universally valid; that is, it holds exclusively for the experience shared by subjects of the actual world. Merleau-Ponty argues that this is an essential truth. In his response, Merleau-Ponty anticipates, and arguably neutralizes, an important objection to his argument according to which the claim that there are no essences is contradictory, since it claims to possess the universal value that also denies.²⁷ According to Merleau-Ponty, this is the only possible view of essences.

²⁶ Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l’invisible*, Eng. tr., p. 109.

²⁷ Cf. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l’invisible*, p. 146. Jacques Derrida and J. N. Mohanty offer analogous objections. Mohanty writes: “But from where did the anti-essentialist philosopher derive his

Truly universal essences, or, using Husserl's terminology, pure essences could only be grasped by pure subjectivity; that is, a pure spectator that would be able to take the appropriate distance from his experience and his world; as Merleau-Ponty writes, "a spectator without secrets, without latency". Only this subject would be able to carry out the total variation at the end of which pure essences would show up.²⁸ In Merleau-Ponty's words,

L'essence émerge de cette épreuve [...] ; et la solidité, l'essentialité de l'essence est exactement mesurée par le pouvoir que nous avons de varier la chose. Une essence pure qui ne fût pas du tout contaminée et brouillée par les faits ne pourrait résulter que d'un essai de variation totale. Elle exigerait un spectateur lui-même sans secrets, sans latence, si nous devions être certains que rien n'y fût subrepticement introduit. Pour réduire vraiment une expérience en son essence, il nous faudrait prendre envers elle une distance qui la mît tout entière sous notre regard avec tous les sous-entendus de sensorialité ou de pensée qui jouent en elle, la faire passer et nous faire passer tout entiers à la transparence de l'imaginaire, la penser sans l'appui d'aucun sol, bref, reculer au fond du néant.²⁹

In fact, according to Merleau-Ponty, we are too closely connected with and immersed into our experience to be able to reduce an experiential object to its essence. The variations that we are able to carry out can never really be detached from our experience. Merleau-Ponty uses a vivid expression to convey this idea; that is, so-

insight that reality and human existence and cognition are incurably historical, process-ridden, totally contingent and open-ended? Is this fundamental position borne out by experience?"[J. N. Mohanty, *Phenomenology: Between Essentialism and Transcendental Philosophy*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 1997, p. 89] Cf. Derrida, *Le problème de la genèse dans la philosophie de Husserl*, PUF, Paris 1990, p. 225.

Cf. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 146

²⁸ Barbaras also makes a very similar point; as he writes, "The solidity of the essence is measured by our power to vary the thing. Then we must add that essence is never pure, since this power is a finite power, inscribed in an experience." [Renaud Barbaras, *The Being of the Phenomenon: Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*, translated by T. Toadvine and L. Lawlor, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis 2004, p. 95] And he adds, "While the world is utterable, and this allows it to escape from pure facticity; it is never completely utterable (and this allows it to escape from pure essentiality)" [*ivi*, p. 110]

²⁹ Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, pp. 147-148. The English translation of this passage is as follows: "A pure essence which would not be at all contaminated and confused with the facts could result only from an attempt at total variation. It would require a spectator himself without secrets, without latency, if we are to be certain that nothing be surreptitiously introduced into it. In order to really reduce an experience to its essence, we should have to achieve a distance from it that would put it entirely under our gaze, with all the implications of sensoriality or thought that come into play in it, bring it and bring ourselves wholly to the transparency of the imaginary, think it without the support of any ground, in short, withdraw to the bottom of nothingness." [Eng. tr. p. 111]

called essences, the end products of eidetic variation, are always “already encrusted in the joints” of experience.³⁰ This idea is also clearly conveyed by the following passage:

Sous la solidité de l’essence et de l’idée, il y a le tissu de l’expérience, cette chair du temps, et c’est pourquoi je ne suis pas sûr d’avoir percé jusqu’au noyau dur de l’être: mon incontestable pouvoir de prendre du champ, de dégager du réel le possible, ne va pas jusqu’à dominer toutes les implications du spectacle et à faire du réel une simple variante du possible; ce sont au contraire les mondes et les êtres possible qui sont des variantes, et comme des doubles, du monde et de l’Être actuels.³¹

In other words, then, Merleau-Ponty maintains that the end products of our eidetic variations are some sort of redoubling of the structures of the world we are which immersed into: we are immersed in a world containing familiar material objects given according to a common style, and the essences reached through eidetic variation are nothing more than the expressions of the latter.

As things stands, given the impossibility of total variation, Merleau-Ponty suggests that we should abandon the distinction between facts and essences, and, accordingly, the view that essences are principles grounding all possible reality. This means that we should abandon Husserl’s idea that essences are pure in the true sense of holding true for its possible instantiations in all possible worlds.

Once one accepts the impossibility of total variation, it would be preferable to renounce the distinction between facts and essences, Merleau-Ponty suggests, then to consider essences as limit concepts (that is, as unattainable *desiderata*) one ought to strive to grasp.³²

³⁰ In the original French, Merleau-Ponty writes that “les idées [sont] déjà incrustées a ses jointures.”[Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l’invisible*, pp. 151-152]

³¹ *ivi*, pp. 148. The English translation of this passage is as follows: “Under the solidity of the essence and of the idea there is the fabric of experience, this flesh of time, and this is why I am not sure of having penetrated unto the hard core of being: my incontestable power to give myself leeway (prendre du champ), to disengage the possible from the real, does not go as far as to dominate all the implications of the spectacle and to make of the real a simple variant of the possible; on the contrary it is the possible worlds and the possible beings that are variants and are like doubles of the actual world and the actual Being.[...] there is no positive vision that would definitively give me the essentiality of the essence.”[Eng. tr. p. 111-112]

³² *ivi*, p. 159

This idea does not entail or is not identical with getting rid of essences altogether. Once understood as holding true merely for our experience, essences can still find room as functioning concepts³³; or what Merleau-Ponty also calls ‘verbal *Wesen*’.³⁴ In the philosophy of perception, essences were considered as a tool for analyses; those analyses of visible and invisible that contradict this position.³⁵

Jacques Derrida is in agreement with Merleau-Ponty. Analogously to Merleau-Ponty, Derrida holds that essences cannot be universal because of their subjective genesis: if they appear to be universal, this is because they are generated from the experience shared by subjects of the world.

In *Le problème de la genèse dans la philosophie de Husserl*, Derrida claims that essences must be the starting point of any possible philosophy. His motivation for this claim is that, if one does not begin philosophical reflections with *a priori* essential analyses of the world, there can never be any claim to rigor. As Derrida writes,

Existence itself, in its most originary coming forth, will not be able to appear to a philosophical gaze. So any reproach addressed to this Husserlian essentialism in the name of an empirical or existential originarity or in the name of some preceding moment of genesis will, in order to have a sense, have to suppose an already constituted eidetics.³⁶

Then, Derrida’s idea is that philosophical reflections should move from essential analyses to avoid confusion, and, thereby, get things started. At a certain point, however, it should become clear that the starting point itself is already constituted beforehand by genesis.

Essences, the starting point of philosophical reflections, are revealed to be the end products not only of an active genesis, but also of a passive genesis; that is, they require both a historical and singular genesis.

³³ *ivi*, p. 156.

³⁴ In a note of 1959, Merleau-Ponty writes: “That in addition this rosinness gives rise to a ‘general idea’, that is, that there be several roses, a species rose, this is not insignificant, but results from the being-rose considered in all its implications (natural generativity)—in this way—striking all generality from the first definition of the *Wesen*—one suppresses that opposition of the fact and the essence which falsifies everything.”[*ivi*, p. 226; Eng. tr. p. 174].

³⁵ It is noteworthy that Merleau-Ponty does not fully reject essences. Indeed, in *Phénoménologie de la perception*, for example, he states that essences are to be taken as the workman’s tools. In Merleau-Ponty’s words: “Husserl’s essences will bring back all the living relationships of experience, as the fisherman’s net draws up from the depth of the ocean quivering fish and seaweed”[Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Gallimard, Paris 1945, Eng. tr. pp. x-xv]

³⁶ Derrida, *Le problème de la genèse dans la philosophie de Husserl*. Eng tr., pp. 137–138]

Husserl's late phenomenology accounts for the passive genesis of the essences, but, according to Derrida, it fails to draw the consequences of their passive origin; or, in other words, Husserl fails to appreciate that the passive constitution of essences must radically affect our understanding of them. Derrida conveys the idea writing that, while eidetics is grounded in a passive genesis, this passive genesis is "integrated into the transcendental constitution only in a formal and a conceptual way."³⁷ In the original French,

L'idéalisme étant constitué par la finitude de l'existence temporelle, jamais une eidétique universelle pure de la genèse ne sera possible. La constitution dialectique du temps original est telle que l'ego, contrairement à ce que dit Husserl, ne « peut effectuer des variations de soi-même avec une liberté telle qu'il ne maintient même pas la supposition idéale d'une structure ontologique familière ». Or, où nous voyons une limite existentielle absolue, Husserl ne voit qu'une limite méthodologique ; au moment où nous croyons que tout idéalisme doit se convertir en son contraire, Husserl ne croit franchir qu'une étape.³⁸

According to Derrida, Husserl would have taken passive genesis seriously only if he had recognized that a passive genesis cannot but affect the supposedly universal character of essences; and, more precisely, if had concluded that it must follow from this that essences cannot be truly pure; that is, they cannot have universal value. IN fact, how can essences be universal if the *ego* carrying out the variation is an egological temporal subject immersed in a world passively constituted?³⁹

Husserl's claim that eidetic variation is carried out "with a freedom such that it does not even maintain the ideal supposition of a familiar ontological structure" must be rejected. Variation cannot extend further the familiar ontological structures of our world; the world in which the subject of the variation is immersed. But, if this is so,

³⁷ Ivi., Eng tr. p. 141.

³⁸ Derrida, *Le problème de la genèse dans la philosophie de Husserl*, p. 228. The English translation is as follows: "The dialectical constitution of original time is such that the ego, contrary to what Husserl says, 'cannot carry out variations of the self with a freedom such that it does not even maintain the ideal supposition of a familiar ontological structure.' Now, where we see an absolute existential limit, Husserl sees only a methodological limit; at the moment when we believe that any idealism must be converted into its opposite, Husserl believes he is merely getting through a stage. Not only does he think that an absolute eidetic reduction of ontology is possible and that it will found a universal phenomenology of genesis, but he holds that within the provisional limits that he has just set for his research, an eidetics of genesis is already possible in all its rigor. It is here that a graver inadequacy is hidden." [Eng. tr. p. 140]

³⁹ Ivi, p. 179.

the essences that we reach thanks to eidetic variation are not as pure as Husserl claims them to be. Rather, there is an original contamination between facts and essences.⁴⁰

Once again, the target of the criticism it is the universal value of Husserl's essences; and, once again, essences are not completely rejected, but only a certain interpretation of them is. Importantly, according to Derrida, exactly as according to Merleau-Ponty, reporting this limit does not mean abandoning any philosophical discourse on essences.

Similar objections to eidetic phenomenology are directed towards the claim of purity and universality that characterizes Husserl's project, and that is more and more emphasized from *Ideen I* onwards.

Let us now turn to the bold version of *the Skeptical Objection*. *The Bold Skeptical Objection* is presented, for example, in Jocelyn Benoist's article '*A priori ontologico o a priori della conoscenza?*'⁴¹ The core of Benoist's argument is offered in the following passage (translated in English from the original Italian):

Essences are not pure structures of the world; rather, they must always have to do with the tools with which one gets accustomed to the world, and with the questions that one raises in getting accustomed to it. These essences are, in fact, a normative grid, although it merely displays the immediate and simple normativity belonging to the vital relation between a living being and its environment. Treating essences as the so-called pure 'in themselves' means taking fragments of consciousness, isolate them from their real relations to the world, to then later hypostatize them, and cast them onto the world. Who truly wants to be a realist must take into account the intertwining of the subject and the world in which is merely entangled what is sometimes called material *a priori*.⁴²

⁴⁰ In support of this point, consider, for example, Alfred Schutz's view. He writes that "free variation is not so free. [...] Can these free variations in phantasy reveal anything else but the limits established by such typification? If these questions have to be answered in the negative, then there is indeed merely a difference of degree between type and eidon. Ideation can reveal nothing that was not preconstituted by the type." [A. Schutz, '*Type and Eidos in Husserl's Late Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, p. 164]

⁴¹ But note that, in other writings, Benoist defends a slightly different position.

⁴² Benoist, '*A priori ontologico o a priori della conoscenza?*', p. 55; *my translation*. This is the original passage: "Le essenze non sono pure strutture del mondo, ma hanno sempre a che fare con gli strumenti con cui ci si accosta a questo mondo, e con le domande che vengono poste ad esso. Tali essenze costituiscono infatti una griglia normativa anche se (nel caso limite che abbiamo considerato) soltanto di quella semplice e immediata normatività che appartiene al rapporto vitale di un organismo con il proprio ambiente. Trattare le essenze come un cosiddetto puro 'in sé' significa prendere dei frammenti della conoscenza, isolarli dal mondo e dal nesso di rapporti reali in cui stanno, per poi ipostatizzarli e riproiettarli sul mondo. Chi vuole essere davvero realista deve prendere in considerazione questo

Benoist's position is apparently very similar to Merleau-Ponty's. Benoist analogously insists on the fact that essences are not pure, but can nevertheless be functioning concepts within philosophy. They can function in relation to explaining our world and our experience. Benoist expresses this idea by writing that essences provide a normative grid; that is, that they function as norms of actual experience despite only functioning within the limits of our experience of the actual world.

Similarly to Merleau-Ponty, Benoist rejects the idea that essences ground all possibilities, as Husserl believed. Benoist argues against Husserl's idea of material nonsense [*Widersinn*], namely the idea that what contradicts the so-called *a priori* laws grounded on essences (as, for example, the material *a priori*) is nonsense, or an unimaginable impossibility. Citing one of Husserl's favorite examples of material *a priori*, Benoist claims that we do not have the right to say that nobody will ever find it possible that color has no extension.⁴³ More generally, it is impossible to determine *a priori*, on the basis of alleged essences, whether some statement would never make sense for somebody: essences should not determine the extension of the domain of sense;⁴⁴ and ontology should always be critical towards its claim to holding unconditionally.⁴⁵

As explained before, this does not mean, however, that *a priori* truths such as 'Every color is extended' do not hold true for our world. But we cannot ascribe to this truth a universal value. More rigorously, we should not say that these truths are *a priori*, but rather that they function as if they were *a priori*.⁴⁶

intreccio tra soggetto e mondo in cui soltanto si annoda ciò che talvolta si chiama a priori materiale. Ciò porta però naturalmente a relativizzare l'apriorità di tale a priori."

⁴³ Consider the following passage: "[I]l vero realismo deve sostenere che per noi la percezione del colore è associata a quella dello spazio, e che non si può rappresentare (almeno *nel senso autentico*) un colore senza estensione, ossia che questa possibilità sembra non avere nessun senso, ma che però, non si può escludere a priori (questo è, appunto, il problema) che per altri esseri, dotati di un altro apparato cognitivo, questa dissociazione [tra colore ed estensione] possa avere invece un senso. Un colore non esteso non è rappresentabile (in senso proprio) e, a un certo livello (nei limiti della nostra rappresentazione), non ha nessun senso. Però non è completamente da escludere: tipicamente, non è del tutto insensato il racconto di un marziano che ha una visione non estesa dei colori." [Benoist, 'A priori ontologico o a priori della conoscenza?', pp. 54-55]

⁴⁴ Consider the following passage: "Si può concepire una civiltà in cui la promessa (esempio classico di apriori materiale) non funzioni esattamente come da noi e che ci spinga dunque verso una nuova definizione di promessa. Questa circostanza non impedisce che, nei limiti di certi impieghi della parola, e di un certo tipo di rapporto con il mondo da parte di certi tipi di esseri, - che ha la sua normatività - il concetto di promessa funzioni, e funzioni come un 'apriori'." [ivi, p. 56]

⁴⁵ Cf. *ivi*, footnote 9.

⁴⁶ Cf. *ivi*, p. 54.

As already seen, Benoist's and Merleau-Ponty's views are very close. Yet, differently from Merleau-Ponty, Benoist considers essences to belong, so to speak, more to the side of the subject than to the side of the object. According to Benoist, essences are not simply doubles of the world; they do not simply express its style, and the *Sosein* of its objects, as claimed by Merleau-Ponty. Rather – at least in this article – Benoist understands essences as some sort of crystallization of our thoughts about experiential objects, and of the concepts employed in our grasp of them.

Benoist's reply to the question 'What are essences?' is, indeed, that they are the shadows of our concepts or the most general representations of experiential objects casted onto the world.⁴⁷ Statements analogous to this show that, according to Benoist, essences not only display the world as it is, but that they also display what the subject puts into them. There is a strong subjective component hidden within what essentialists often call essences. As Benoist explains,

Who reasons in terms of essences claims that they are structures of being itself, independent from the thought turned towards it. It must however be acknowledged that, when you come to think of it, the frontiers of these ontological essences are often very weak, and seem to depend from certain (even implicit or naturalized) decisions, as much as from the way of representing the corresponding reality, or from contingent facts rooted in the being of the subject and in the both particular and general context of his encounter with the world.⁴⁸

In summary, the essences that we grasp hide within themselves our experiential relation with the corresponding phenomena, rather than holding independently from us.

This version of *the Skeptical Objection* appears to be more radical than the other because of the way essences are understood according to it. If essences express our

⁴⁷ Consider the following passage: "Che cosa sono le essenze? Mi sembra che non siano altro che frammenti di significato proiettati sul mondo. Quine afferma che il significato non è altro che l'essenza, una volta che ha divorziato dalla cosa e si è sposata con la parola. Che cos'è l'essenza degli essenzialisti se non l'ombra che lasciano sulle cose stesse i significati, i modi di dire e, più in generale, di rappresentare tali cose?"[*ivi*, p. 52]

⁴⁸ Benoist, *ivi*, p. 53, *my translation*. In the original Italian, the quoted passage reads as follows: "Chi ragiona in termini di essenze pretende che esse siano delle strutture dell'essere stesso, indipendente dal pensiero che si rivolge a esso. Si deve però riconoscere, a ben pensarci, che le frontiere di queste essenze ontologiche sono spesso molto fragili, e sembrano dipendere da qualche decisione (anche implicita o naturalizzata) quanto al modo di rappresentare la suddetta realtà o, anche, da fattori contingenti radicati nell'essere del soggetto e nel contesto, sia particolare che generale, del suo incontro con il mondo"

way of thinking, and even a way of seeing things that is based on our constitution, then they preserve, on reflection, almost nothing of the original sense in which they were meant to be taken. Essences are like concepts, with the difference that (in their case) we forgot their subjective origin and we pretend they actually represents things as they necessarily are.

One may discuss whether this position and that defended by Merleau-Ponty are only verbally different. However, this version of the objection considered is for sure less cautious than this latter in underling the subjective roots of essences.

The Skeptical Objection may be summarized as follows. The core of *the Skeptical Objections* (regardless of their kind) is skepticism about phantasy, which is, as shown in *Chapter 3*, the capacity decisive for grasping (pure) essences. According to *the Skeptical Objections*, (pure) essences cannot be grasped because of the worldly rootedness of the subject carrying out each eidetic variation, and his incapacity to leave his point of view. Accordingly, advocates of this objection argue that embracing skepticism towards essences is reasonable: only a subject that could get out of himself (that is, that could detach himself from his experience and subjective point of view) could grasp pure essences (cf. *the Moderate Skeptical Objection*), or essences *tout court* (cf. *the Bold Skeptical Objection*). This is impossible, however, and it is mistaken to think that this fact would leave our interpretation of so-called essences untouched, as Husserl claims.

4.2 Husserlian Replies to the Objections Considered

After having presented the core objections that phenomenologists have with regard to essences, eidetic analyses, and their place within phenomenology, it is useful to return to Husserl's view and attempt to give the replies to these objections that Husserl could have given.

In doing so, we do not aim to neutralize these objections; nor we want to neglect them. Rather, remembering Husserl's position on these issues will serve the purpose of determining which versions or aspects of the objections presented are sufficiently robust to deserve further examination, and which do not. Husserl's replies may not be satisfactory, or erase all doubts, but they help to identify which versions or aspects of

the objections considered are worrisome for eidetic phenomenology. After having considered Husserl's replies, we will attempt to build upon them to meet the most profound challenges raised by scholars towards eidetic phenomenology.

4.2.1 Rethinking the Betrayal Objection

As we have seen, the core of *the Betrayal Objection* lies in the belief that essences are not intuitively given; or, at least, that the transition from individuals and their singular essences to pure essences is not genuinely intuitive. The conclusion of this kind of reasoning appears to be that, rigorously, essences should not deserve a place within phenomenology, because accepting essences would mean sacrificing phenomenology's original faithfulness to intuitive givenness, as it is expressed by *the Principle of all Principles*.

Now, some of the arguments that advocates of *the Betrayal Objection* base their criticism upon, seems to be uncharitable to Husserl's position, if compared with what has emerged in the previous chapters of this dissertation. For this reason, even though the advocates of this objection know that, for Husserl, essences are intuitive, to judge this objection from a better position, it is not pointless to briefly remember Husserl's arguments in favor of the intuitive character of essences. This will clear the air from misunderstandings, and hopefully allow us to determine what is of *the Betrayal Objection* after having considered Husserl's case more closely.

(a) Phantasy and Intuition

The first aspect to be clarified concerns the role attributed to phantasy in the attainment of essences and of pure essences.

Advocates of *the Betrayal Objection* find it troublesome that eidetic phenomenology relies on phantasy. For they see phantasy somehow as in opposition to intuition and to intuitive givenness. Since, in their view, phantasy gives us essences by manipulating some given phenomenon, they conclude that what phantasy can arrive at grasping is not given intuitively (or at least not in a genuine way). Then, if

phantasy is needed for attaining essences, this means that essences are not given intuitively; and that essences resemble mental images.

In opposition to this view, one should notice that the role of phantasy within eidetics is not the role they attribute to it; and this is particularly true as far as Husserl's account of eidetic variation goes;⁴⁹ that is, concerning the account of eidetic intuition in which phantasy acquires the most prominent role.⁵⁰

Remember that, as explained in *Chapter 3*, phantasy serves two specific functions in the method of eidetic variation. More precisely, it plays an important role within eidetic variation in both *Step 2* and *Step 3*. In *Step 2*, phantasy allows to consider the selected individual as an example whatsoever, or the guiding model of the entire process. As such, phantasy frees the selected individual from its facticity. In *Step 3*, phantasy allows to produce variants of the guiding model.

These two are necessary functions without which it would be impossible to grasp essences and, especially, pure essences; but they are not sufficient for grasping essences.⁵¹ In fact, phantasizing is preceded and followed by essential insight or intuition; and, accordingly, the givenness of essences stands as originally given.

Phantasizing is preceded by essential insight because we are necessarily acquainted with the idea that experiential objects are not merely contingent; with the idea of an essential core of experience. Further, in the method of eidetic variation, the individual object taken as the guiding model and each of its variants produced through phantasy present an individual essence that does not require phantasy for being given.⁵² If

⁴⁹ Husserl's position in the *Logical Investigations* is ambiguous. In *LU III*, Husserl shows how imagining can provide an insight into the essential relations of dependence between the elements of a presentational complex, and the corresponding *a priori* laws. The head of a horse can be imagined as separate from its body; and the head of a horse can be imagined as it is, while imagining that its body is arbitrarily varied. This fact gives us an insight into (/evidence of) the fact that the head and the body of a horse are independent elements of a whole. Contrary to the previous example, it is impossible to imagine the color of something as separate from its extension, and to modify each of them independently of each other. This fact gives us an insight into (/evidence of) the fact that the color and the extension of a colored thing are dependent elements of a presentational complex. We can also express this idea by saying that the limits of imagination (which we make experience of when we are unable to vary a certain object through imagination) coincide with the givenness of the object in question; and this is why this experience provides us an insight into the essence of object at hand.

⁵⁰ The role that Husserl ascribes to imagination within eidetics becomes increasingly prominent from the *LU* (1900–01) onwards. Husserl's emphasis on imagination culminates in his account of eidetic variation as it is presented in *PP* (1925) and *EU* (1938).

⁵¹ Cf. *Chapter 3* and *Section 3.3* in particular.

⁵² From the time of *Ideas*, it is clear that Husserl consider phantasy as not being the act that gives us essences. Husserl explicitly states this, for example, in his lectures on phantasy of 1918. As he writes, "Although the concrete essence as *eidōs* can be drawn from the act of imagining, it is only given in eidetic intuition [*Wesensschauung*]. And it cannot be otherwise, since what phantasy can give, as an intuitive act, are quasi-individuals and not generalities." [Hua XXII, *Text 18* (1918), p. 500; *my*

essences were given only thanks to eidetic variation, then Husserl's account would fall prey of circularity.⁵³ Fortunately, however, as explained in *Chapter 3*, eidetic variation is to be understood as a method for purifying essences. Accordingly, phantasy (together with eidetic variation) serves mostly for purifying an already intuited universal object.⁵⁴

Phantasizing is also followed by eidetic insight because the process of eidetic variation ends up with the active grasping of a pure essence, which had already been passively prefigured thanks to a synthesis of the variants considered.

After that the variants are produced, as Husserl writes, they obtain “overlapping coincidence”, and, as a result – Husserl explains – the unity so-prefigured is already the *eidōs* that one grasps at the end of the process. In Husserl's words,

In this transition from image to image, from the similar to the similar, all the arbitrary particulars attain overlapping coincidence in the order of their appearance and enter, in a purely passive way, into a synthetic unity in which they all appear as modifications of one another and then as arbitrary sequences of particulars in which the same universal is isolated as an *eidōs*. Only in this continuous coincidence does something which is the same come to congruence, something which henceforth can be seen purely for itself. This means that it is passively preconstituted as such and that the seeing of the *eidōs* rests in the active intuitive apprehension of what is thus preconstituted— exactly as in every constitution of objectivities of the understanding, and especially of general objectivities.⁵⁵

It is exactly thanks to this passive synthesis that the *eidōs* is prefigured before its being actively grasped. Therefore, pure essences show up at the end of the process of imaginative variation, but it is still an intuitive act that allows one to grasp them.

translation] In other words, intuiting an essence is not an act of imagination. Exactly as eidetic intuition, imagination is an intuitive act, but its intended objects are (*quasi-*) *individuals*, and not generalities.

⁵³ One cannot vary the initial example without knowing in advance the type that one wants to investigate. Yet, I will not focus of this objection, because I think that it can be easily resolved by understanding the process of variation as a process of purification (rather than of discovery), as I have illustrated in *Chapter 3*. For the solution to the circularity objection, see Kasmier's ‘A Defense of Husserl's Method of Free Variation’. The circularity objection is not so radical to warrant examination in this section. I am only interested in the criticisms that even with an advanced understanding of the eidetic method (as, for example, the treatment of it presented in *Chapter 3*).

⁵⁴ Cf. David Kasmier, ‘A Defense of Husserl's Method of Free Variation, *op. cit.*

⁵⁵ *EU*, Eng. p. 303.

Phantasy and intuition are both necessary: if the variants are not sufficiently many and diverse, the synthesis will not produce a sufficiently pure essence; and, if, by absurd, the synthesis had not taken place, there would not be any pure *eidōs* to grasp.

This shows that essences (regardless of whether pure or impure) are not the end result of imaginary manipulations of an experiential object freely carried out by the experiencing subject; but that they too are intuitively given, and they are not given as mental images.

Phantasy does not serve the purpose of submitting the phenomenal *datum* to imaginary manipulations until its essence is attained. Rather, it serves the specific functions of neutralizing the individual object's facticity and of broadening the examples on the basis of which intuition is carried out. Edward Casey perfectly stresses the latter aspect in the following way:

Imagination allows for the unrestricted invention and exfoliation of examples – and for the detailed development of aspects of examples – which form the basis for eidetic insight.⁵⁶

Thus, the importance of phantasy is not at odds with intuition. Phantasizing synergistically promotes the attainment of the givenness of essences; or, in other words, it provides a basis for eidetic insights.

In view of this, it is mistaken to hold that the phenomenological attempt to grasp essences constitutes a betrayal of *the Principle of all Principles*.

This said, proponents of *the Betrayal Objection* can still advance their criticism on other grounds. Even if they concede that the account of the role of phantasy in eidetics present before is right, they can still criticize Husserlian phenomenology for its care of essences in view of the fact that pure essences – unlike experiential objects – require the subject to resort to a specific method for appearing to him. This holds particularly true for pure essences, since they can only be given, as repeated several times, through eidetic variation alone.

Proponents of the objection might ask the following question: given that pure essences show up as the end result of a process of purification (*i.e.*, eidetic variation),

⁵⁶ Edward Casey, 'Imagination and Phenomenological Method,' in *Husserl: Expositions and Appraisals*, edited by P. McCormick and E. Elliston, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 1976, p. 76.

is it unfair to say that their givenness is somehow induced, and, thus, not original? Is not the very idea of a purification of the givenness of experiential *data* a betrayal of the part of *the Principle of all Principles* that states that “everything originally [...] offered to us in ‘intuition’ is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it is presented there”? More generally, is not purification always an attempt to overcome the limits in which an experiential object is given?

Another side of *the Betrayal Objection* consists in exactly this worry: inasmuch as pure essences require the purification of some given phenomena to be grasped, care of pure essences betrays the phenomenological faithfulness to the original givenness of phenomena.

Once again, this argument seems appealing, but it trades upon misunderstandings of Husserl’s view. Accordingly, and as anticipated, this brings us to clarify another aspect of Husserl’s thought:

(a) Pure Essences and *the Principle of all Principles*

The process of purification allowing one to grasp pure essences cannot be a betrayal of *the Principle of all Principles* because this principle does not concern the path leading to intuition, but only the very act of intuition. On the contrary, the principle states that when one intuits, one must take its content as it is given, and within the limits in which it is presented. Thus, its jurisdiction covers intuition only, when it occurs; and, in the case at hand, the intuition of pure essences, when it occurs. In other words, the principle does not state that one should not purify experiential *data*; especially if this purification leads to an intuition, as it is for pure essences (which are, in fact, grasped through an eidetic insight).

(b) Pure Essences *versus* Limit Concepts

Pure essences – of the kind that phenomenology is interested in – are morphological essences, that is, not exact. As such, they are not the limit concepts of their corresponding objects. There is not the same relation between, on the one hand, the essences of experiential objects of perception and the phenomenal perception of these experiential objects and, on the other hand, between the geometrical circle and a

perceived ring. Morphological essences are not, so to speak, an improved version of the phenomena; something that, once it is attained, free us from our examination of the corresponding phenomenon.

If this is so, then the process of purification that allows to grasp pure essences is not an attempt to overcome the limits of what is given, but, rather, it is the attempt to grasp a new and different object.

(c) Eidetic ‘Purification’ and the Description of Experiential Objects

Given the account of eidetic purification just considered, proponents of *the Betrayal Objection* seem to presuppose that looking for pure essences of individuals would take away any room for other kinds of analyses, especially for the description of the given phenomena, as if purification were to involve an eidetic rewriting of phenomena themselves.

However, as Husserl would have presumably replied, eidetic purification of individuals and of their individual essences does not imply that the contingency and non-essential properties of phenomena cannot be the subject matter of phenomenological descriptions. In other words, there is no need to choose between eidetics and descriptions of phenomena (although it is true that, according to Husserl, only eidetic phenomenology scientific value; that is, it can serve as a basis for rigorous science).⁵⁷ The analyses of the meaning of phenomena are not overshadowed or erased by eidetic analyses; on the contrary, on reflection, the latter have an accessory function with respect to the former. The phenomenological objective of clarifying the sense of phenomena is in need of eidetic analyses, of the tools offered by such analyses, because the clarification of the sense of phenomena partly rests on, and is better served with, them. I will develop further this thought in the last sections of this chapter.

After this critical examination of *the Betrayal Objection*, it seems to me that this objection stems from some plausible observations, but none of them is sufficiently decisive to support the conclusion put forth by its advocates; that is, the thesis that dealing with essences is not properly phenomenological.

⁵⁷ This is an aspect that can be criticized in view of a certain interpretation of phenomenology that does not consider scientific rigor as necessary for phenomenology. Yet, I do not think that such an argument would be sufficient to deny essences, but only to dispute their importance within phenomenology and relegate them to the background.

In particular, the critical suggestion that I would like to keep is the following: even though essences and pure essences are intuitively given, it is clear that there is a disparity between their givenness and the givenness of experiential objects, inasmuch as the constitution of essences has a methodic form that the constitution of transcendental objects does not. This aspect should be examined more closely, as it seems to suggest that some artificiality pertains to essences. But, with this doubt, we have already stepped in the field of *the Skeptical Objection*

4.2.2 Rethinking the Skeptical Objection

Let us now turn to *the Skeptical Objection* and examine the possible replies that Husserl could have given to it. As explained before, *the Skeptical Objection* casts doubt on the possibility of grasping pure essences. The core premise of this objection is the recognition of our subjective embeddedness in the actual world. More specifically, given the configuration of Husserl's method of eidetic variation, such skepticism about pure essences takes the form of skepticism about phantasy; that is, the mental faculty that should help one overcome one's limited point of view on the world. (It is noteworthy that this does not imply full distrust of phantasy.)

Importantly, the appeal of *the Skeptical Objection* partly derives from the fact that it appears not apply exclusively to difficult cases – such as the *eidōs history*, the *eidōs ego* or the *eidōs Welt* – but to pure essences in general.

Attaining some essences involves specific difficulties that Husserl himself is aware of, but all essences can be shown to be problematical to grasp.

For example, any attempt to grasp the *eidōs Welt* and the *eidōs history* stumbles upon the issue of finding an adequate starting example; an issue one does not encounter in the case of the *eidōs sound*, or *color*, or *etc.*⁵⁸

The *eidōs Welt* illustrates this very well.⁵⁹ Whereas individual sounds are experienced in their completeness, at least to a reasonable approximation, the same cannot be true of our experiences of the world. In fact, the world cannot be grasped as a whole, but only as an endless flux with an indeterminate horizon; so that the essence

⁵⁸ As Husserl himself writes, “es ist nicht so leicht, das Eidos „Welt“ zu gewinnen wie etwa das eidos ‘Ton’.”[Hua Mat. IV, p. 163]

⁵⁹ Cf. Hua XLI, texts n. 27, 28, 29, 30

grasped on the basis of a variation of such an incomplete example will necessarily reflect its incompleteness. In some of Husserl's unpublished manuscripts, he acknowledges this issue, and, accordingly, he seems to suspect or cast doubts about whether one can grasp pure *eide* starting from incomplete or inadequate examples.⁶⁰

The *eidōs history* appears to face the same and other issues. Exactly as it is impossible to grasp the world in its completeness, it is also impossible to take all the aspects of a historical fact in at a glance. Moreover, it seems extremely difficult to have a grasp of a historical fact sufficiently clear and complete to make it the guiding model for eidetic variation. In addition, the attempt to attain the *eidōs history* is saddled with the other following issues:

- i. In normal instances of eidetic variation, such as that intended to attain the *eidōs color*, at some point, one reaches the feeling that one can stop the process, for no other variants of the guiding model would modify the prefigured essence. This is not so in the case of history, in which it seems difficult not to have the feeling that considering another historical event or period, another cultural or social environment could turn the tables.
- ii. The production of variants is not as free from considering cultural facts and societies that actually existed in the past as it is in other cases.
- iii. It cannot be ruled out that, if two or more cultures differ in terms of content, then they may also present different forms of historicity, and different modalities of historicization.
- iv. It is unreasonable to suppose that any historical fact be erected as a model. The starting example may be too particular to serve the function of guiding model.⁶¹

For this reason, it is doubtful that one can reach other than empirical generalities, conceptions, or interpretations of history.⁶² In other words, there is the risk that when

⁶⁰ See for example this passage: "Aber die Welt ist mit einem unerschlossenen Horizont gegeben, und die Wesensanschauung reicht nur so weit wie die Anschauung der exemplarischen Möglichkeiten. In jedem Fall kann es kein „reines“ Eidos sein, da dieses ja jegliche Bindung an faktische Erfahrung ausschliesse"[Hua IX, 74]. See also Husserl's lectures on *Natur und Geist*, in Hua Mat. IV, p. 163.

⁶¹For a complete examination of the problem, see Dominique Pradelle's article 'Est-il possible d'élucider l'a priori de l'historicité?', in *Germanica*, XXXIII, 2003, pp. 129-158

⁶² As Pradelle writes, "Cette neutralisation de la facticité pose au projet de phénoménologie de l'histoire des problèmes fondamentaux, car de toute part l'empirie refuse sa réduction et réclame ses droits propres, faisant apparaître en retour l'intuition des essences non comme un acte neutre de vision

one thinks to have grasped the pure essence of history, one has merely elevated a contingent object to the realm of the essential, or has just inductively derived one or more general types, or has given a conceptual interpretation of history.

Last but not least, let us turn to another case well-known for being problematical; that is, the *eidōs ego*.

As far as the attainment of this *eidōs* is concerned, the complications lie in the very special nature of the *ego*. They can be shortly summarized as follows:

- i. Given that facticity is constitutive of the *ego*, the eidetic singularity that should lead the process of variation as a guiding model cannot be obtained by divorcing the concrete *ego* from its facticity.⁶³ Rather, in the case of the attainment of the *eidōs ego*, eidetic singularity and individuality are conflated; and, as a result, if there can be a guiding model of the process of eidetic variation, it must be the concrete *ego* itself, including its facticity.⁶⁴
- ii. For each one of us, all the variants produced through eidetic variation must be variants of one's *ego*; that is, variants of one's *ego* taken as the guiding model, rather than different instantiations of the *eidōs ego*. Others' *egos* are not (and cannot be) taken into account within the entire process.⁶⁵

Both these closely connected aspects undermine the claim to universality of the *eidōs ego*.

Now, if one would only consider cases as difficult as those presented above to argue in favor of skepticism about pure essences, one might contribute to the thought that simpler cases are not problematical: as long as one only deals with these cases, it remains plausible that eidetic variation allows one to grasp pure essences in other

des structures, mais comme un acte de conceptualisation producteur d'intelligibilité." [D. Pradelle, '*Est-il possible d'élucider l'a priori de l'historicité?*, op. cit., p. 19]

⁶³ In support of this, consider the following passage: "Nebenbei bemerkt zeigt sich, dass das Ego die Eigentümlichkeit hat, dass es einen niedersten Allgemeinbegriff der Art, wie wir ihn als *absolutes Konkretum* früher definiert haben, nicht hat. Das Ego kann nicht wiederholbar werden als eine Kette von rein möglichen koexistenten und absolut gleichen Egos [...]. Darin liegt: das Ego hat die merkwürdige Eigenheit, dass für es *absolutes Konkretum und Individuum zusammenfallen*, dass die niederste konkrete Allgemeinheit sich selbst individuiert." [Hua XXXV, p. 262]

⁶⁴ See Daniele De Santis, "*Selbstvariation*" *A Problem of Method in Husserl's Phenomenology*, manuscript.

⁶⁵ In support of this idea, consider the following of Husserl's passages: "I feign only myself as if I were different [*anders*]; I do not feign others." [Hua I, p. 106] See also this passage: "Solche Abwandlungen ergeben immer nur mich selbst in meinen eigenen verschiedenen Denkarbeiten." [Hua XIII, p. 314]

cases. For this reason, the cases considered up to this point fail to give support to *the Skeptical Objection*.

Interestingly, however, as anticipated in *Section 4.1*, there is no need to consider these cases to call into question the purity of essences. *The Skeptical Objection* targets all essences; even those that, at least at a first glance, are not troublesome, such as the pure essences of colors, of sounds, or the *eidōs perception, etc.* Then, difficult cases like those considered before cannot but make more evident a difficulty that is intrinsic of any attempt to resort to the method of eidetic variation.

Let us consider a simpler case to illustrate this point. Suppose that a phenomenologist is interested in grasping the pure essence of perception; and suppose that he wants to know whether perception is essentially perspectival. How can he be sure that the variants considered are sufficiently varied and sufficiently removed from actuality to allow him to grasp absolutely pure essences? To really be sure that the essence *perception* grasped is pure, he should seriously consider, among other things, radically unfamiliar variants such as God's perception, and aliens' perception, *etc.* Remember, indeed, that for eidetic variation to achieve its purpose – that is, for it to allow one to grasp a pure essence – one should strive to imagine variants of the guiding model sufficiently varied and sufficiently removed from actuality to serve as its basis.

Seriously considering these variants means that they cannot be simply thought of, but they are to be given intuitively in imagination. Accordingly, the phenomenologist interested in grasping the pure essence of perception should imagine how God, or aliens, would perceive⁶⁶.

However, imagining those variants is impossible regardless of which meaning one attributes to 'imagining'. In fact, either one considers imagining as a kind of mental pictorial representation of the imagined object, or, in a specifically Husserlian fashion, as an intuitive act consisting in the "simulation of possible experience."⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Note that there are some objects whose pure essence is impossible to grasp, for their facticity cannot be separated from them. In those cases, we do not have pure essences because it is even impossible to carry out *Step 1* of the method eidetic variation (Cf. *Section 3.3*). See Sowa, 'Essences et lois d'essence dans l'eidétique descriptive de Edmund Husserl,' *Methodos* 9 (2009), pp. 1-29.

⁶⁷ Julia Jansen, 'Husserl,' in *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Imagination*, edited by A. Kind, Routledge, New York 2016, p. 73. According to Harald A. Wiltsche, Husserl considers possible imaginings as only including imaginings from the first-person perspective. See his 'How Essential are Essential Laws? A Thought Experiment on the Perspectival Givenness of Physical Things,' in: K. Mertens and I. Günzler (eds.), *Wahrnehmen, Fühlen, Handeln. Phänomenologie im Wettstreit der Methoden*, Paderborn, Mentis 2013, p. 421-436.

But it is clearly not possible to have a mental pictorial representation of God's perceiving or aliens' perceiving; nor it is possible to have an intuitive grasp of them from the first-person perspective as if they were experienced. Then, the phenomenologist cannot really consider these variants seriously; and, therefore, he cannot be sure that perception is essentially perspectival. Obviously, this objection generalizes.

This way of presenting the problem may not be strictly phenomenological, but it helps to show that we may never be guaranteed that essences obtained through eidetic variation are pure. In other words, if grasping pure essences is only possible through eidetic variation, we will always lack warrant for the unrestricted extension of essences.

If Husserl had claimed that one can grasp pure essences by a nonmediated eidetic insight, rather than through an eidetic insight arising after a careful scrutiny of examples, he could have shielded eidetic phenomenology from this objection. He could have maintained that we have a nonmediated access to, for example, the essence *perception*, or to the ideal possibility grounded in the nature of perception; and he could have deduced from that that every subject who perceives must perceive in that way (*e.g.*, perspectively, *etc.*); and that, otherwise, he or she would not have perceived, but *derceived* (where 'derceiving' refers to an act of consciousness other than perceiving).⁶⁸

Yet, Husserl does not take this route. In fact, until his latest writings, he chooses to insist on the importance of considering a sufficiently varied set of sufficiently unfamiliar examples to ensure the essence showing up as the end result of one's variation is pure.⁶⁹ And he continues to insist on the method of eidetic variation not only because it is in line with his idea that every objectuality is constituted,⁷⁰ but, most importantly, because he considers this method to be necessary for grasping essences, and thinks to be able to justify our recourse to it.

Besides his trust in imagination (specifically, both in its power to disclose phenomena and in bringing the subject to overstep his experiential boundaries), Husserl offers some replies to the objection presented above.

⁶⁸ Husserl pursues this strategy before explicitly emphasizing importance of producing sufficiently many examples for achieving purity with an eidetic insight.

⁶⁹ See *Chapter 3*, especially *Section 3.3*

⁷⁰ According to Husserl's mature thought, we need to trace back the way in which every objectuality is given to us.

One of his arguments against this objection may be presented as follows. As anticipated before, Husserl holds that one does not have to consider a potentially infinite number of variants of the guiding model to grasp the corresponding essence; but only examples that are sufficiently varied; or, in other words, variants diversified to the extent that they suffice to acquire knowledge of being in the position to grasp the relevant essence. At a certain point in the process of phantasizing (that is, producing imaginary variants) one knows indeed with evidence that what one has done is sufficient to grasp a pure essence and the eidetic laws grounded in it. The reason why Husserl thinks this to be the case arguably derives from his mathematical background. Very roughly, Husserl's treatment of the concept of the definite manifold has, indeed, affinity with the idea that it is not necessary to consider all cases to know about some result with certainty. As Husserl writes, "[i]f the systems are 'definite', then calculating with imaginary concepts can never lead to contradictions."⁷¹ A similar reasoning may be applied to the method of eidetic variation. The addition of imaginary variants – even of conflicting ones – may not change the result when sufficiently many and varied examples have been considered.⁷²

Moreover, it must be taken into account that the possibility of making mistakes does not suffice to motivate skepticism about the method of eidetic variation.⁷³ Our

⁷¹ "The concept of the definite manifold served me originally to a different purpose, namely to clarify the logical sense of the computational transition through the 'imaginary' and, in connection with that, to bring out the sound core of Hermann Hankel's renowned, but logically unsubstantiated and unclear, 'principle of the permanence of formal laws'. My questions were: Under what conditions can one operate freely, in a formally defined deductive system (a formally defined 'manifold'), with concepts that, according to the definition of the system, are imaginary? When can one be sure that deductions that involve such an operating, but yield propositions free from the imaginary, are indeed 'correct'—that is to say, correct consequences of the defining forms of axioms? How far does the possibility extend of 'enlarging' a 'manifold', a well-defined deductive system, to make a new one that contains the old one as a 'part'? The answer is as follows: If the systems are 'definite', then calculating with imaginary concepts can never lead to contradictions. Without referring to these problems, I gave a detailed description of the concept of the definite in my *Ideen*." [FTL, p. 135] For further clarification, see Claire Ortiz Hill, 'Tackling Three Of Frege's Problems: Edmund Husserl on Sets and Manifolds,' *Axiomathes* 13(1), pp. 79-104, 2002.

⁷² The details of this idea should be developed more carefully; but it suffices to offer evidence against the objection presented.

⁷³ Mohanty makes a very similar point; as he writes: "There is no *a priori* guarantee that every cognitive claim made by pursuing this or any other method will hit the target with unerring certainty. Various things may go wrong. One may start with a case that it is not the right exemplar. One may give up the possibilities of permissible variation too early; one's power of imagining variants may come to its limits too quickly. (Just ask how many of us thought of the possibility, to which Strawson draws our attention; that my mental life may in fact be dependent, in three different manners, on three different bodies?). Or, even after rightly reaching such limits, one may still go wrong in focusing upon what features constitute the constraints on possible variations. By intentions, however, in case an essence has been discovered, such discovery must be apodictic." [J.N. Mohanty, 'Method of Imaginative Variation in Phenomenology,' *op. cit.*, p. 265]

knowledge of essences is, just like our knowledge of anything else, defeasible.⁷⁴ A body of apodictic evidence may be defeated by some other body apodictic evidence. As Husserl writes,

Selbst eine sich als apodiktisch ausgebende Evidenz kann sich als Täuschung enthüllen und setzt doch dafür eine ähnliche Evidenz voraus, an der sie „zerschellt“.⁷⁵

In sum, from the defeasibility of our knowledge of essences, it need not follow that one must be skeptical about the method of eidetic variation.

4.3. A Decisive Argument in favor of Husserl's Eidetic Project: Eidetic Normativity

After having reviewed some popular objections to eidetic phenomenology and the replies to these available to Husserl, we can finally develop a personal contribution to the issue at hand.

First, despite the doubts it may give rise to, it seems to me that the admission of essences within phenomenology offers a clear explanatory advantage over their rejection. More specifically, this advantage lies in the normative function of essences within experience presented in *Chapter 2*.

For starters, experience is normatively structured: norms of experience tell us how something must be or ought to be, and they are useful to guide our action, as they allow us to make predictions about how things will be.

With the admission of essences, and the insistence on their normative function, Husserl suggests that next to norms of experience that are (inter-) subjectively determined, there are also norms grounded in the nature of objects, and therefore completely independent from the subject experiencing them. As he explains in *Ideas I* and in other places, this kind of norms determines both passively and actively⁷⁶ how

⁷⁴ Alternatively, one might lose one's knowledge of the essences of some objects simply because those objects are altered through time into some other kind of objects. After all, if objects have a dynamic identity, then essences should also be dynamic entities.

⁷⁵ Hua XVII, p. 164. The English translation of this passage is as follows: "Even an ostensibly apodictic evidence can become disclosed as deception and, in that event, presupposes a similar evidence by which it is "shattered"."[Eng. tr. p. 156]

⁷⁶ Clearly, one need not know essences for they to hold as norms of one's experience.

the relating objects must be constituted in order to be the specific type of objects at hand.

Differently from other philosophical traditions that greatly stress the importance of norms, phenomenology acknowledges, by means of essences, a kind of normativity that is ontologically grounded. For convenience, we will call this kind of normativity of experience ‘eidetic normativity’.

Admitting eidetic normativity does not take away from other kinds of normativity, but it consists of an enrichment of the normative space of experience. Indeed, Husserl’s eidetic normativity does not exclude other kinds of norms to be effective in human experience, as we have already seen in *Chapter 2*. There is a variety of different kinds of norms of experience and phenomenology can account for all of them. Apart from essences, it is necessary to consider the idea of an object as acquired via sensory perception alone, or as acquired on occasion of the subject’s upbringing within pre-given social and cultural frameworks. The pertaining ideas too motivate expectations about future experience and provide a guide for one’s active and passive determination of the relevant experiential object. In addition to it, it is also necessary to consider that types⁷⁷ and concepts provide norms of experience; although of yet another kind. All these norms are different kinds of norms, despite being obviously interconnected. For examples, whereas norms prescribed by essences do not admit of any exception, the same does not hold for purely experientially acquired norms. The latter are context-dependent and allow for revision by further experience or through history.⁷⁸

Husserl’s account of the normativity of experience accommodates all these kinds of norms. It thus provides a complex and rich view that paves the way for many other intriguing questions concerning the relationship between different kinds of norms.

⁷⁷ In support of this idea, see, for example, Lohmar’s article ‘Husserl’s Types and Kant’s Schemata’. As he writes: “The function of the type of an empirical concept (e.g., dog) in the case of apperception consists in that of an intentional *fore-prehension* (*Vorgriff*). This *fore-prehension* allows us to expect something determinate (e.g., a part, future behavior, or a quality) within a fluid variability. Our expectation is thus, on the one hand, already determined with respect to content. On the other hand, however, it remains flexible in order to “adapt” to the respective intuition, for example, through perspectival correction.” [Dieter Lohmar, ‘Husserl’s Types and Kant’s Schemata,’ in *The New Husserl: A Critical Reader*, edited by D. Welton, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 2003, p. 106]

⁷⁸ What is the difference between concepts and essences? On reflection, it seems that concepts are context-sensitive and they are always formed by a subject, or better, by an intersubjective community. They depend upon association, abstraction, habits, *etc.* On the contrary, essences are not context-dependent, and are not subjective formation. Further, concepts possess many notes [*Bemerken*]; that is, they are highly informative regarding the correspondent objectuality. Essences are, instead, very much shallow, that is, they do not provide much information about the individuals instantiating them.

A philosophical methodology that has room for all these kinds of norms and for these distinctions must be considered as more faithful to the richness of experience and more accurate in describing it. If we pause to reflect on this issue, it seems clear that essential truths bind us more than concepts, which could often be revised (as it is well-known, for example, due to the possibility of conceptual engineering). The proposition that *color is extended* holds regardless of how a given community formulates their concepts or ideas of color and extension. In other words, even though the ideas and concepts that we have will be revised more or less substantially in the future, no revision of the essential truth that *color is extended* can possibly happen: eventually, the concepts or ideas of color and extension should make it true. This may not be the most sophisticated example, but it helps us to understand this point.

Further, this example also helps us to get clearer about an important function of essences, that is, the function of setting some limits to conceptual revision or, alternatively, freeing it in case there are no essential truths to bind its creativity.

It is at least noteworthy that, as a result, essences can serve as fighters against prejudices and stereotypes often hidden or embedded in our concepts and types.⁷⁹ While often people criticize essentialism because it may be thought of as leading to naivety and prejudices, it seems to me that a sophisticated notion of essence and a critical use of it, can have the opposite effect. Indeed, if we show that some supposedly-true proposition is not essentially true, but is rooted in a subjective construct, it can be revised or rejected. This may be the case for ethically-relevant and hotly-debated issues such as, for example, race and gender.

Then, to summarize, the first argument is as follows: neglecting eidetic normativity would mean to ignore an important part of the normativity of experience, and important differences between kinds of norms of experiences within experience (in particular, between eidetic norms and other kinds of norms such as conceptual norms, typical norms, and linguistic norms) and their functions.

However, what has been said about eidetic normativity and its importance does not exempt us from looking for the most sophisticated way to account for it. If one wants to defend essences on this basis, it should address some other questions and, mostly,

⁷⁹ Types are absolutely fundamental; but they may hide or mask several prejudices.

one would need a sophisticated interpretation of essences and of ontological constraint.⁸⁰

What this argument can and was meant to accomplish is to show why we choose to insist on essences rather than simply reject them.

4.4 Further Observations

Despite the reasons to admit essences within eidetic phenomenology that have been considered in the previous section, there are still some aspects concerning these to be clarified.

The first concerns the alleged purity of essences. Even with Husserl's defense of the possibility to grasp pure essences through eidetic variation, I agree with advocates of *the Skeptical Objection* that there are strong reasons to raise doubts about it. If, as it is barely disputable, phantasy faces some limits when it comes to imagining the experience of an irreducible *alter*, then essences grasped through the method of eidetic variation (and through any other method carried out by subjects) are actually more closely bounded to the actual world, and, in particular, to our nature *qua* humans than Husserl wishes to admit.

In view of this doubts concerning one's warrant of being able to attain purity, it seems that a good move is to put into bracket, or neutralize, the claim to absolute pure universality of essences grasped through the method of eidetic variation. Whereas Husserl could not give up this claim because he was afraid that his analyses could have been mistaken for being naturalistic and psychologistic in nature,⁸¹ contemporary phenomenologists can judge otherwise, and neutralize such a claim as they are not afraid to stumble upon into this risk. It is also arguable that bracketing the issue of pure universality may be more in line with the spirit of phenomenology.

An important clarification is however due. Bracketing the issue of pure universality does not involve giving up the attempt of grasping pure essences, but it rather means withholding judgment about the certainty of having succeeded in it.

⁸⁰ Further work needs to be done on this issue. This dissertation does not address it, as a detailed analysis of experiential normativity would greatly exceed its scope.

⁸¹ It is true that, at some point, Husserl acknowledges that there may be investigations of some essences that are empirical, or naturalistic. However, essences remain a clear mark of Husserl's anti-psychologism throughout his writings.

Although one is bound to lack justification about whether the end result of the eidetic variation is purely universal, one may still distinguish different degrees of purity and universality. Indeed, the reviewed versions of *the Skeptical Objection* show that there is reason to cast doubts on one's capability to grasp *absolutely pure* essences, but, importantly, not about whether grasping essences is *tout court* possible; nor that there can be different degrees of purity or universality. Provided that absolute purity or absolute universality are doubtful, it is still possible to show that the essences the phenomenologist can arrive at through eidetic variation are purer and more general than those of someone whose imagination is bounded to consider only examples closely connected to actual experience (regardless of whether it is imagined experience or not) can arrive at. Then, it is not doubtful that there are different, and higher, degree of purity and generality.

Having said that, the idea I want to defend is that after having put into bracket the possibility of grasping unconditionally pure essences, the phenomenologist can still – and indeed should – attempt to grasp pure essences, behaving as if it were possible to do so. There are reasons why, despite lacking warrant about the possibility to grasp absolutely pure essences, it still makes sense phenomenologically to try to do so; and, accordingly, not to quickly dismiss the phenomenologist's attempt to grasp pure essences as being hopeless.

The reason why this is so is the following: due to the relation between purity and generality, the purer an essence is, the less it says about its corresponding experiential objects. Pure essences are very thin or shallow; that is, they consist of very few properties, or they underpin only few possibilities. On the contrary, the more bounded an essence is, the more it says about the corresponding experiential objects. On the contrary, bounded essences are thicker than pure essences; that is, they are more informative about how experiential objects are. To better understand this, it may be useful to consider some famous examples of claims considered to express pure eidetic truths:

1. Perception is perspectival.
2. Intentionality has a noetic-noematic structure.
3. Color is extended.
4. Sound has a pitch.

Claims (1)–(4) do not have the pretense to give a complete portrayal of the relevant phenomena; but only to offer a very uninformative general framework for them.

If we recall the normative function of essences – that is, the fact that essences can inform us about the structure of possible experience –, then the reason for defending the attempt to grasping pure essences becomes clear. Since pure essences are not very informative, they help us in orienting in experience, without making the facticity of the corresponding phenomena vanish, or hide it to the phenomenologist. Thus, phenomena cannot be fully accounted for by means of eidetic analyses; and, because of this, eidetic analyses of experiential objects (especially when intended to attain pure essences) leave plenty of room for other kinds of descriptions that may also take into account their contingency.

Accordingly, grasping pure essences does not prevent the phenomenologist from carrying out other kinds of analyses, and, instead, (insofar as they inform us about how our experience is necessarily) they can be of help to other kinds of descriptions of the relevant phenomena. As such, eidetic phenomenology uncovers a core of minimal truths that allow one to consider other aspects of phenomena.

This also provides an answer to *the Betrayal Objection*. The purification of phenomena that serves as a basis for grasping pure essences does not involve a violation of the evidence which phenomena are given with. On the contrary, it serves the purpose of clarifying phenomena providing a framework for their analyses. Eidetic analyses are not exclusive of other kinds of analyses and can instead be of aid to them; and, especially, it can be of aid to the clarification of the sense of phenomena, which famously is the primary goal of phenomenology. Phenomenological eidetics sheds light on the minimal structure of experience that is needed to clarify the sense of phenomena, and without putting them, at the same time, in the cage of an unchangeable definition. In other words, it offers a minimal structure of experiential objects that does not imply forgetting any of their subtleties, but that, instead, adds to the phenomenological description of our experience, precisely in terms of its accuracy or faithfulness to experience.

In summary, phenomenology should admit of pure essences, and the phenomenologist should attempt to grasp them, while putting into bracket the issue of their absolute pure universality. In doing so, on the one hand, the phenomenologist can reach some essential truths and the possibility grounded in the nature of experiential objects that can greatly help the description of the sense of phenomena.

On the other hand, the phenomenologist must take more seriously into account the subjective constitution of essences, which may affect the end result of the method of eidetic variation.

Appendix

This table summarizes how the following terms and expressions have been changed between the first and the second edition of the *Logische Untersuchungen*. The first column indicates the terms and expressions used in the first edition. The second column indicates the terms and expressions used in the first edition.

Aristotelische Gattungen und Arten	ideale Gattungen und Arten	(A 177 – B 177, Hua VIII, p.180)
Aristotelischer Gattung und Art /		(A 224, Hua XIX/1, p. 230)
echte (Aristotelische) Gattungen und Arten	reine Gattungen und Arten	(A 274, B 281, Hua XIX/1, p. 288)
Aristotelische Arten	reine Arten	(A 411, B 437, Hua XIX/1, p. 454)
Aristotelischer Differenzierung	Differenzierung eines gattungsmäßigen Wesens	(A 405, B 432, Hua XIX/1, p. 448)
In aristotelischem Sinne	In wesentlichem Sinne	(A 405, B 432, Hua XIX, p. 448)
Gattung (im Aristotelischen Sinne)	reinen Gattung	(A 241 – B 246 Hua XIX/1, p. 250)
Gattungsbegriffen	begrifflichen Wesen	(A 165 – B 165 Hua 18 p. 168)
Gattung	Wesensgattung	(A 410 – B 437 Hua 19/1 p. 453)
Allgemeinheiten	reinen Allgemeinheiten	(A 246 – B 253 Hua 19/1 p. 257)
allgemeinen Bestände	Wesenbestände	(A 259 – B 265 Hua 19/1 p. 271)
allgemeinen Bestimmtheiten	Wesensbestimmtheiten	(A 243 – B 249, Hua 19/1 p. 253)
gründet a priori im Begriff der Gattung	gründet im Wesen der Gattung	(A 132 – B 133 Hua 19/1 p. 139)
Ganze theoretische Einsicht	alle Wesensbeziehungen umspannende theoretische Einsicht	(A 224 – B 224, Hua 18 p. 256)

Ideen	Idealbegriffe (Wesensbegriffe)	(A 187 – B 187 Hua 18 p. 189)
Natur	Wesen	(A 268 – B 275 Hua 19/1 p. 281; A 302 – B 311 Hua 19/1 p. 319, A 309 – B 322 Hua 19/1 p. 330)
Analyse	Wesenanalyse	(A 675 – B2 203 Hua 19/2 p. 732)
descriptive Analyse	descriptive Wesensanalyse	(A 214 – B 216 Hua 19/1 p. 219; A 412 – B 439 Hua 19/1 p. 455)

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