

One

Unsuspected Horizons

On the Husserl Question

Phenomenology inaugurates a new style of philosophy.

—Levinas

The relationship between phenomenology and empiricism is complicated. While on the one hand Husserl's reflections show a pervasive preference for the Cartesian path into phenomenology, it is also true that empiricism bears a most striking resemblance to phenomenological research. There is a danger to empiricism, however, that qualifies any resemblance. Empiricism conflates impression or sensation with appearance, and this conflation conceals what, strictly speaking, appears within the properly phenomenological attitude. Phenomenology is an empiricism in the sense that it returns philosophy to experience. But it is not just any experience to which we are returned. Phenomenology returns us to experience as it is *lived*. Empiricism puts fragments and particulars at the basis of experience reflected upon, whereas phenomenology puts the interwoven *morphe* and *hyle* at the basis of experience as lived. This leads Husserl in §6 of the "Epilogue" to *Ideas II* to write that, although Hume's work is quite close to the phenomenological disposition, it is in the end a "sensualistically perverted" transcendental phenomenology (Hua IV, 156/423).

Though he is certainly not a Humean, we might well say the same of the philosophical work of Levinas. Particularity and singularity lie at the basis of the experience *his* work evokes. From the outset of his philosophical itinerary, Levinas has insisted on the phenomenological character of his work, even in its most pronounced departure from Husserlian descriptions. He has demanded that his philosophical work be seen as phenomenological despite the fact that, by his own admission, it does not always follow the rules laid down by Husserl and does

not share Husserl's "obsession" with representation and theory. The fact that Levinas will come to characterize his own position as a phenomenology of the noumenal (cf., LC, 43/21) clearly distinguishes the aim of his work from that of Husserl, who sought the *logos* of the phenomenal. Levinas will always emphasize his distance from the Husserlian program, but will exceed it only by way of the horizons Husserl's labors open up. This exceeding is phenomenology itself. This exceeding takes its point of departure within the myriad horizons of a phenomenological empiricism. Much of the task of the present work is to document the meaning of this departure and how it is rooted squarely within a set of distinctly Husserlian problematics.

In what sense can Levinas's work be called phenomenological? And, indeed, how can a work that is so critical of the primacy of identity and theory be aligned with Husserl, whose work is nothing if not the rigorous pursuit of the Eidos? If Levinas's work is a sensualistic perversion of the transcendental, then in what sense can it still be a phenomenology? If phenomenology inaugurates a new style of philosophy, as Levinas will say in 1959, then it must also be said that Levinas inaugurates a new style of phenomenology. This new style is not brought about through the wedding of the transcendental with another set of privileges, the arguments of numerous commentators notwithstanding, but rather only through the explosion of the horizons of phenomenology from within phenomenology itself. Levinas puts phenomenology in tension with itself and develops his own position out of this tension. So the centrality of phenomenology for Levinas's work must be emphasized. This emphasis has its locus in Levinas's reworking of Husserlian horizons, which the present work documents. The enigma of sensibility produces what may be called a sensualistically perverted transcendental phenomenology. The decisive nuance here is that this perversion is authorized by the very phenomenology it perverts. This authorization has manifold features, all of which will come to mark the phases of Levinas's constantly renewed debate with Husserl.

To establish the basic parameters of this new style of phenomenology, we first need to ask what general thematic concerns unite Levinas with Husserl. We must ask what makes Levinas's work eminently phenomenological. To begin with, it is noteworthy that both thinkers demand the intertwining of the question of sense with relationality or intentionality and subjectivity. As early as his "Sur les *Ideen* de E. Husserl," Levinas

will underscore the basic feature of intentionality: Concretely, the question of intentionality insists on the primacy of relation, where we understand this relationality to be *constitutive of the very meaning of subjectivity* (SLI, 62). Further, to ask what it means to be a subject is already to implicate the problem of sense with intentionality. Intentionality, the relationality constitutive of subjectivity, is “secured” or “grounded,” in the end, in the logic of sense-bestowal. Thus, the problem of the directional flow of sense, where it comes from and how it is generated (which answers the question of the relational structure of primordial subjectivity), will be what occupies much of our attention in the following study. The problem of sense-bestowal emerges from the concretion of phenomenology’s transcendental project. In this regard, Levinas and Husserl are bound to the phenomenological demand to return to the concrete, as well as the necessity of establishing the transcendental character of what is rendered as concrete in explicating the structure of lived-experience. In spite of the fact that Levinas’s language of alterity will contest the letter of Husserl’s work at virtually every moment, the two share a common logic and spirit: the return to sense-bestowal and the primacy of relation. This is the logic that constitutes any genuinely radical philosophy. As we shall see, Levinas’s work enacts a reversal of the Husserlian position, but (perhaps paradoxically) this does not amount to a repudiation of the strategies of phenomenology. To the contrary, Levinas will show us both how this reversal is necessitated by the methods and matters of phenomenology itself and how only the structures of sense-bestowal can render the reversal adequately. Thus, we will have to show exactly how this reversal is demanded and how Levinas’s inverting of the Husserlian world is only accomplished from within the horizons of phenomenology as a radical philosophy.

Levinas’s work is for the most part critical of Husserl’s phenomenology. This fact is evident upon even the most cursory glance at Levinas’s writings. But the fact that his critique of Husserlian phenomenology is still necessarily phenomenological opens the general question of the function of critique. To put it simply, given the pursuit of the enigmatic that characterizes Levinas’s lifelong work, there are legitimate rhetorical reasons for considering Levinas’s relation to phenomenology as primarily, and for the most part, critical. Indeed, Levinas will often portray Husserl’s phenomenology as a foil to his own researches. What in Husserl’s thought is a dominating preoccupation

with the formalistic question of method seems, at best, only marginally present in Levinas's original work. However, to construe this relation as one of opposition is to fundamentally misunderstand the status of phenomenology in Levinas's work. It is to fail to appreciate what is radical about phenomenological philosophy. In pursuing what is radical in phenomenology, Levinas's explosion of phenomenological matters and methods is written into the very demand that phenomenology seek what is without presupposition and purge its descriptions of metaphysical structures. Relentless self-critique, self-overcoming, and self-transformation are demanded by the very idea of a rigorous science. Now, it is quite clear that the rhetoric of rigor and science will fall by the wayside in Levinas's work. He no doubt spends his philosophical career problematizing the legitimacy of the first position of identity, but the method and matter of Husserl's phenomenology will be both the matter of his point of departure and the method of his contestation of the primacy of identity.¹ Because phenomenology is defined by self-critique and self-overcoming, the present study may legitimately contend that the strict opposition of Levinas to Husserl misconceives both the methodological status of Levinas's work and the possibilities of phenomenological "reflection."² In those moments where he is most critical of Husserl, Levinas, paradoxically, is perhaps the most phenomenological.

With this much said, the following question still stands: What is the meaning of "phenomenology" in the context of Levinas's work? To answer this question it is imperative that we gain clarity regarding the essence of phenomenological inspiration, as well as what is shown in the concrete experience of phenomenology. The irreducible items of this experience and inspiration are captured in the intertwined function of intentionality and sense. Presently, our first concern will be with the general structure of this problem. Throughout Levinas's reading of Husserl's phenomenology, the structural relation between intentionality and sense is essential. It establishes the very logic at work both in the transcendental/formal and concrete/sensual moments of phenomenological researches. We will follow this problematic with consideration of the thematic orientation prevailing in Husserl's treatment of the question of intentionality and sense. This consideration will highlight the method of reflection against which Levinas's work will labor. A glance at the brief critical concerns regarding Husserl's treatment of intentionality and sense in Levinas's *Theory of Intuition* will conclude

our first foray into Levinas's phenomenology. Reading Levinas's early critical concerns set the stage for more fully developed problems of transcendence and sensibility from the 1940s and 1950s. The present chapter aims at the formal task of setting out the (exploded) boundaries of the phenomenology within which Levinas first encounters and subsequently rewrites the Husserlian prerogative. First, then, let us gain some clarity regarding the scope of phenomenology and the point of departure for its general project.

Intentionality and Sense

For Husserl, the problem of intentionality is both the matter (Hua III, 167ff/199ff) and the method (Hua IX, 270) of phenomenology. Intentionality defines the "nature" of consciousness or subjectivity. Intentionality is not a property of consciousness, but wholly and simply consciousness itself. Though the Husserlian conception of intentionality is dominated by the thematic structure of consciousness of a proposed something, and thereby ultimately refers back to a spontaneous ego, the problem of intentionality as such is the problem of relation. That which is given in experience is constituted by a set of relations. The relations themselves constitute the form and content of subjectivity or consciousness. Subjectivity is this relation. The subject does not adopt an intention, but rather is the relation itself. The matter of phenomenology, its thematic orientation, and its method are guided by this irreducible relationality.

The relationality named by the general problem of intentionality brings us to the primordial construal of the phenomenological field. As Levinas will argue in the third chapter of *Theory of Intuition*, intentionality and the primordial phenomenological field are inseparable (TIPH, 65–85/37–51). The first book of the *Ideas* names this field the stream of lived-experience (*Erlebnis*). Husserl writes that

[b]y lived-experience in the broadest sense we understand everything and anything to be found in the stream of lived-experience; accordingly not only the intensive lived-experiences, the actional and potential *cogitationes* taken in their full concreteness, but also whatever is to be found in the way of really inherent moments in this stream and its concrete parts. (Hua III, 65/75)

This “but also” qualification introduces an important set of concerns for Levinas. Such a qualification will allow Levinas to retain, despite his sustained critique of the traditional concept, a sense of the term experience. The broadest sense of *Erlebnis* is not delimited by the positional and actional conceptions of the ego. That is, *Erlebnis* does not designate only what the ego actively seeks and produces. *Erlebnis* has also its dimensions of passivity. All modalities of relation—active and passive—are set in this original field of phenomenology. The concrete parts and inherent moments constitutive of the meaningfulness of lived-experience are already operative in the stream of experience. In the *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl calls this field, in its full concretion, the “monad.” Though the term “monad” is rather awkward and misleading, Husserl is simply designating as monadic the whole of concrete life and its constitutive parts. The monad, or subjectivity in the comprehensive sense of the matrix of intentionalities,

includes the whole of actual and potential conscious life, [and] it is clear that the problem of explicating this monadic ego phenomenologically (the problem of his constitution for himself) must include all constitutional problems without exception. (Hua I, 102–103/68)

All constitutional problems lie within the scope of phenomenological research. What this means is that the field within which phenomenology works is unconstrained in theme. The primordial field is thus composed of a multiplicity of horizons. The horizons are intentionally constituted—relationally structured. All horizons demand an explication concrete and free of naive metaphysical adventure (Hua I, 166/139). Out of this concretion emerge both passive and active modalities of relation, which is to say, passively bestowed and actively instituted intentions.

The principle of concretion is a principle that Levinas will adopt as the centerpiece of his phenomenology. And this concretion will transform Husserl’s construal of the things themselves. Levinas’s return to the concrete things themselves will have dramatic consequences for the idealistic construction of intentionality. We shall have more to say about this concretion later, but for now we note the immediacy and unconstrained character of the original phenomenological field. At its outset, the field of phenomenology is not constrained by a particular preroga-

tive. Indeed, the field is unconstrained precisely because of a lack of preconceived construals of its structure(s). Lived-experience is in its original manifestation open and pregnant. The project of a phenomenological idealism, as Levinas understands it, closes the horizons of this openness, thereby constraining what appears to the idealist according to the work of the transcendental ego.

This closing and its subsequent compromises quite clearly trouble Levinas. For Levinas, the idealism that inheres in Husserl's work will always compromise the scope of his descriptions—the programmatic claims made regarding the possibilities of this original phenomenological field notwithstanding. However, this compromise is *not* wholly negative. Rather, it opens upon another positivity. There remain open horizons forgotten and betrayed in the privilege of the idealist's mode(s) of relationality. The task of a radical phenomenology, one that displaces and replaces the transcendental, is to recall with all due constitutive force what is both forgotten and indispensable. Levinas writes:

Phenomenology is the recall of these forgotten thoughts, of these intentions; full consciousness, return to the misunderstood implied intentions of thought in the world . . . It is the presence of the philosopher near to things . . . Recalling the obscured intentions of thought, the methodology of phenomenological work is also at the origin of some ideas (*idées*) which seem to me indispensable to all philosophical analysis. (EeI, 20–21/30–31)

The “ideas” Levinas has in mind originate in a consideration of intentionality. To be more precise, these indispensable and forgotten ideas emerge from a consideration of the relationality constitutive of affective life—our affective presence to the world. This affective presence turns us to a concrete consideration of what animates consciousness (what Levinas will later call *psychism*),³ both in and outside of accomplished egoic life. Levinas writes:

[Phenomenology] consists in respecting the intentions which animate the psychic and the modalities of appearing which conform to these intentions, modalities which characterize the diverse beings apprehended by experience. It consists in discovering the unsuspected horizons within which the real is apprehended by

representative thought, but also apprehended by concrete, pre-predicative life. (DL, 406/292)

The horizons of phenomenology do not solely include those apprehended in acts of active synthesis. Rather, the unsuspected horizons within which thought is caught include the concrete pre-predicative life of the ego. Intentional analysis will also always be directed toward the relations constitutive of that life. Intentional analysis must exceed the constraints of egology, and this exceeding is demanded by the situation in which phenomenology already finds itself. Levinas's critique of Husserl, which comes from within this explication of pre-predicative life, is immanent to phenomenology. Husserl generates the very critical tools that Levinas puts into action.

A phenomenology aimed at describing this pre-predicative life (with all qualifications due regarding the term "description") opens up the possibility of another *practice* of phenomenology. That is, the exploration of the relational structures of pre-predicative life explodes the limitations imposed by the idealist's closed system of predelineated horizons. To do phenomenology, then, is not necessarily to find oneself constrained by a closed system of horizons. Phenomenology may also be a description of how the noumenal lends itself to appearance and the perhaps absurd logic of that lending. This is precisely what Levinas means by his call to a phenomenology of the noumenal. *This* extension of the practice of phenomenology is not bound by the abstract notion of signification on which any idealism turns. Doing phenomenology in this Levinasian sense

is not only . . . to guarantee the signifyingness of a language threatened in its abstraction or in its isolation. It is not only to control language by interrogating the thoughts which offend it and make it forget. It is above all to search for and recall, in the horizons which open around the first "intentions" of the abstractly given, the human or interhuman intrigue which is the concreteness of its unthought (it is not purely negative!), which is the necessary *mise en scène* from which abstractions are detached in the said of words and propositions. It is to search for the human or interhuman intrigue as the fabric of ultimate intelligibility. And perhaps it is also the way for the wisdom of heaven to return to earth. (TeI, 28/158)

This passage is remarkable for the very reason that in it Levinas tells us how the abstract concerns of idealism are so radically transformed by their own forgotten horizons that they *already* point the way to “the return of the wisdom of heaven to earth.” In this remark, Levinas employs the figure of heaven in order to evoke the transcendence of the face of the Other and the language of earth in terms of the sensible relation. It is phenomenology that leads us to this transcendence. Phenomenology describes the peculiar relationality such transcendence manifests. Phenomenology remains a pregnant possibility because it always demands a return to the originary stagings that precede what is abstractly given as representation. This is a significant series of remarks. They qualify Levinas’s often quick identification of phenomenology with representation. In particular, what we learn from this passage is that the phenomenology set out as an explication of representation is always already exceeded and superseded by the call to the original *mise en scène* from which representation first arises. The complexities of this original, pre-reflective, and concrete *mise en scène* form the horizons forgotten by idealism. But, and this is the decisive twist, those unsuspected horizons remain irreducible relations constitutive of sense.

It is important to here hesitate and consider the meaning and significance of Levinas’s evocation of the “horizons” of phenomenology. If we are conceiving Levinas’s work as a certain kind of phenomenology, then the problem of horizon calls for careful definition. First, the significance of the notion of a *forgotten* horizon is that it allows Levinas to claim that his concerns have a certain and decisive immediacy for the phenomenological project. That is to say, if the horizons that occupy Levinas’s work with and against idealism are already implicated in the original field within which idealism is motivated, then the critique and surmounting of the terms of idealism are immanent to Husserlian phenomenology. The critique and surmounting are genuinely built into the idealist project of phenomenology. The unsuspected horizons surround and often offend its researches. The horizons are unsuspected precisely because, like anything unsuspected, they are not *foreseen*. Husserl does not *foresee* these horizons because his prerogative puts another kind of foreseeing first. But what is unforeseen, in this case, retains a secret constitutive force. The Levinasian prerogative will see—albeit in a very peculiar manner—what Husserl forgets.

But Levinas’s employment of the notion of horizon is neither unproblematic nor without qualification. The meaning of this Levinasian

horizon is far from clear. Indeed, in *Totality and Infinity* for example, Levinas will outright reject the positivity of the phenomenological notion of horizon for his own work. In this vein, he will write that

[a]n existent is comprehended in the measure that thought transcends it, measuring it against the horizon whereupon it is profiled. The whole of phenomenology, since Husserl, is the promotion of the idea of *horizon*, which for it plays a role equivalent to that of the *concept* in classical idealism . . . The existing of an existent is converted into intelligibility, its independence is a surrender in radiation. (TeI, 15/44–45)

In this account, Levinas sees the problem of horizon as inseparable from the problem of mediation and the medium of truth. The notion of horizon that is coextensive with mediation and truth is one determined by the activity of projection—whether that be the projection of the constituting ego, the practical interests of Dasein, or the openness of Being. This projection plays a conditioning role wherein what appears (the existent) is always already determined in and through projection.

The Levinasian notion of horizon seeks a phenomenological account capable of returning the “wisdom of the heavens to earth.” So it cannot be determined by a projection set out from the subject. The concrete relation Levinas describes is marked by its lack of mediation, its singularity, and its immediacy. To this end, the problem of signification is our first clue to a positive notion of horizon. The concrete relation is first indicated by a signification, a signification out of which a notion of sense is generated as *not* construed by the active projections of the ego. Concrete signification points to another horizon that surrounds, but is not reducible to, the horizons of transcendental subjectivity. Forgotten by idealism, this horizon is understood by Levinas in terms of a horizon of sense. Thus, this horizon bears within it the problem of constitution. The problem of constitution is the problem of intentionality. Constitution asks about the problem of relations constitutive and generative of a particular sense. How the logic of this constitution and generation works is the task of the following chapters, but at this point it is important to pause and note that the horizons forgotten by idealism are horizons of relations that bestow sense. Indeed, as Levinas will claim in the “Preface” to *Totality and Infinity*, the unsuspected horizons in which idealism is planted and which surround its

projections do in fact bestow sense (TeI, xvi/28). The horizons to which Levinas's work is dedicated are not horizons of meaning; they are horizons of sense.⁴ We will carefully distinguish sense from meaning in Levinas's work below, but it is important to state here the claim that relations that concretely bestow sense are not determined by mediation and the medium of truth. In the positive sense that Levinas wants to give it, we can think of horizon as intentionally structured without necessarily conflating that relationality with the active and positional subject. Sense is bestowed otherwise than idealism through a horizon of relations first signified in the concrete.

Now, it should be said that Levinas's concern in his own work will always be with the problem of alterity and the necessity of articulating its *first* position. This brings us to the obvious question: Is intentionality genuinely adequate to the radical nonadequation of the thought of alterity? How can intentional analysis legitimately be ascribed to the language of alterity? This difficulty is due in part to Levinas's own self-understanding. In his rejection of the rules of Husserl's method and the parameters set by the Husserlian conception of the transcendental, Levinas will nevertheless retain the methodological work of intentional analysis as that which recovers the forgotten sense in phenomenology (cf., DQVI, 139–143). The reversal of intentionality, which ruptures the boundaries of the theoretical, is accomplished in the setting out of the intention from the Other. This is still a relation, still an intention, but it must be said otherwise (DQVI, 141). Intentional analysis must come to terms with the structure of the language of this saying. On this intentionality, Levinas notes in *Ethics and Infinity* that “[t]he relationship with the Other can be sought as an irreducible intentionality, even if one must end by seeing that it ruptures intentionality” (EeI, 23/32). Levinas puts two senses of intentionality to work in this remark. First, the irreducible intentionality. This intentionality manifests the general feature of intention—that of relationality. The relation to the Other is irreducible. This will be the site of the weight of concern alterity places on the Same, wherein I cannot evade the Other and cannot reduce or neutralize the relation. The intentionality interrupted and ruptured is the interpretation of relation in terms of positionality and the noesis-noema structure, both of which are interpreted by Levinas in terms of the economy of representation. The rupture is manifested in saying relation otherwise than the theoretical.

The saying of relation “otherwise” than the theoretical, as Levinas will put it, departs from the straightforward immediacy of the horizons of lived-experience. This general phenomenological point of departure, then, becomes the problem of how to make sense of the subject’s presence to world—that is, where we understand “world” to be the “universal horizon of all experience,” as Landgrebe has put it.⁵ Phenomenology is concerned explicitly with the question of how we ought to construe the relationality constitutive of this presence to world. In Mohanty’s phrase, phenomenology is the attempt to understand the “cunning of intentionality” that has secretly constituted the sense of the relation.⁶ The Husserlian words for this presence to world are the thematizing modalities of relation: *Erlebnis*, absolute subjectivity, and pure consciousness. The Levinasian words for this presence will be the affective modalities of presence to world: transcendence, sensibility, and proximity. For both Levinas and Husserl, the presence of the subject to world is always exceeded by the intentional horizons implicated in the explicit collection of significations. What is signaled in lived-experience is the starting point of exposition for both thinkers. What is signaled in lived-experience—the things themselves—will be the locus of Levinas’s debate with Husserl and thus the debate is immanently and eminently phenomenological. Further, though intentionality is constitutive of our presence to world, this intentionality or horizon of intentionalities cannot be conceived solely as a static structure. Rather, the matrix of relations constitutive of presence to world effects a production of sense. This production of sense points us beyond the horizon of intentions explicated in static analysis and toward the problem of sense-genesis. This brings us to yet another question: What, in general, is the status of “sense” as both a static and genetic item in the presence of the subject to world? How is it possible for Levinas to retain the phenomenological notion of “sense” in his own descriptions?

In describing his own project, Levinas will write that “. . . my task does not consist in constructing an ethics; I only seek its sense” (EeI, 85/90). What does it mean to seek the sense of ethics? Ethics is concretely produced in the presence of or proximity to the Other. How is it possible to assign the term “sense” to this proximity, in light of the fact that the term is so typically bound up with the thematic orientation of the noesis-noema correlation? Here we come up against a crucial set of distinctions in phenomenology between modalities of meaningfulness, all of which turn on how we understand the relation

between the problem of the structure of constitution and the primordial relational problem of intentionality. It is crucial for our attempt to develop what might be a Levinasian phenomenology to distinguish these modalities of meaningfulness, as we hope to show that Levinas will not abandon the transcendental logic of constitution. He will of course abandon the dominant form of constitution that obtains in idealism—constitution as set out from the active transcendental ego—but the logic of constitution, under the rubric of the genetic and a reversed model of sense-bestowal, is maintained. As we have already indicated, Levinas will also not abandon the problem of intentionality as the problem of relation, although he will abandon the dominant form of intentionality in idealism: the intentionality set out from the ego. The relation of constitution generates a sense. For Levinas, ethics will always be a relation and a sense that is constituted otherwise than idealism. What sense, then, are we to make of the appeal to “sense”?

There are three basic modalities of phenomenological meaningfulness: *Sinn*, *Bedeutung*, and *Meinung*. Simply put, to seek the *Sinn* of the ethical is not the same as to seek a *Bedeutung* or a *Meinung* of the ethical. Levinas is quite careful in this regard. The choice of the phenomenological notion of sense as *Sinn* as the character of what is produced in the ethical relation—instead of and in direct opposition to *Bedeutung* and/or *Meinung*—is significant. From the outset, Levinas translates the German word *Sinn* as *sens* and it is only *sens* that will hold a primary positive phenomenological position. In his treatment of the problem of sense in *Theory of Intuition*, Levinas will translate the German *Sinn* into the French *sens* (TIPH, 90/56). This is consistent with his translation of the Fourth and Fifth of Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditations*, where he all but exclusively renders *Sinn* as *sens*. In his remarks on *Sinn* from the *Theory of Intuition*, Levinas notes that the phenomenological notion of sense must be distinguished from the more restricted notion of sense as a noematic core and thus sense as a noetic correlate (TIPH, 90/56). This distinction is decisive. *Sinn* or *sens* is neither reducible to a correlate of one act (noesis) nor to one modality of constitution (noema). Sense will always require an adjectival and contextual qualification. This adjectival and contextual qualification attaches sense to its generative source thereby making sense a more pluralistic or fluid structural item than meaning. Sense can be attached to a multiplicity of sites of genesis. Thus, even when, in his translation of the *Cartesian Meditations*, Levinas on one occasion renders *Bedeutung* as *sens*,⁷ the

context of the translation keeps it in line with the philosophical point of our discussion. That passage pertains to the status of “meaningful” descriptions of empirical *Bedeutung*. Levinas translates *empirische Bedeutung* as *sens “empirique”* and thus the phenomenological status of what is at issue requires an adjectival and contextual qualification. The phenomenological position of sense is therefore held fast.

The other words that come to stand for “meaning” and with which “sense” could easily be confused are distinguished according to their structural status. Levinas’s translations of *Sinn*, *Meinung*, and *Bedeutung*, along with his implicit quarrels with other translators, can tell us a lot about how he understands the problem of *Sinn* and its difference from the problem of *Meinung* and *Bedeutung*. The latter two ultimately either refer to the question of the propositional models of intentionality set out from the ego (*Meinung*) or to the economy of manifestation (*Bedeutung*). As early as his first essay on Husserl in 1929, “Sur les *Ideen* de M. E. Husserl,” Levinas will translate the German term *meinen* with *penser* (SLI, 83) and Husserl’s *bedeuten* and *Bedeutung* into the French *signifier* (SLI, 83) and *signification* (SLI, 53). In a footnote to *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas will translate the substantive form of *meinen* as *vouloir-dire*, which somewhat departs from his translation in 1929. The translation in *Otherwise than Being* aims at distinguishing the phenomenal status of *vouloir-dire* from *visée*. Levinas’s target here is Paul Ricœur, who renders *Meinung* as *visée* in his translation of *Ideen I*. For Levinas, Ricœur’s translation is too blatantly voluntaristic and thereby fails to be attentive to the neutralization of the will that phenomenology attempts to institute through the reduction. Suzanne Bachelard, for her part, renders *Meinung* as *intention* in the translation of *Formale und Transzendente Logik*, which is close to the sense Levinas wants to capture in his 1929 translation. But, the French *intention* is still too broad. Not all intentions are inextricably bound to thought. *Meinung* as *intention* risks conflation of thought with intentionality, thereby restructuring any phenomenological account of relation. Levinas’s translation of *meinen* into *penser* locates the modality of meaningfulness appropriate to *Meinung* within thought. But *meinen* as *penser* does not, as does Bachelard’s translation, reduce all intentions to the intellectual sphere. According to Husserl, sense is not reducible to an attitude or disposition of the positional ego (Hua III, 191/224); the same cannot be said of *Meinung*.⁸ The essence of *Meinung* sought in Levinas’s revised translation of it as *vouloir-dire* is of course captured in the *vouloir*,

the wanting of the wanting-to-say. The will is secretly at work in the intention. The intending will and thought animate, however clandestinely, what has meaning. This translation of *Meinung* locates meaning as a correlate of an attitude or disposition. Meaning is distributed from a position of the ego. Levinas's translation of *Meinung* as *vouloir-dire* therefore neither reduces intentionality to the intellectual—it is not *intention*—nor does it ascribe a necessary voluntarism to all modalities of meaningfulness.

The translation of *Bedeutung* as *signification* is perhaps less complicated. The phenomenal and structural status of *signification* is one of dependency; signification is founded on a sense and points to sense in its signifying. The signifyingness of signification derives its sense from *Sinn* or *sens*. This much is evident from Husserl's work on *Bedeutung* in *Ideas I* and the First of the *Logical Investigations*, where *Bedeutung* is described in its expressive manifestation of *Sinn* (cf., Hua III, 257/295). What is to be gained from Husserl's analysis is that *Bedeutung*, by itself, is always reducible to the economy of manifestation. Manifestation is not freestanding. It points to a prior constitution. In Levinas's account, and here he is eminently phenomenological, it is not enough to end with the modality of signification. We need a further account of the sense signified in manifestation, even where manifestation is freed from the logic of thematization. Sense and signification are interwoven. "It is phenomenologically irreducible," Levinas declares, "sense signifies."⁹ And so too the converse. Just as every sense signifies, every signification has a sense. To explicate signification is to explicate the sense, however it is constituted, of what signifies.

Now, this account of sense will be a site of contention between Husserl and Levinas. The former will, quite famously, seek the genesis of the sense that underpins signification in the ego. The latter seeks the genesis of sense in an origin prior to accomplished egoic life. And, this relation between *signification* and *sens* explains why the terms retain a positive position in Levinas's exposition of the intentionality proper to the ethical relation. To be sure, *signification* will be transformed, along with *sens*, in the course of the exposition of the ethical relation, but *visée/vouloir-dire/pensée*, as modalities of meaningfulness, will for Levinas always be aligned with idealism and the philosophy of the Same. These translations of *Meinung* do not take an adjectival form. "Aimed at," "wanting to say," and "thought" are wholly active and point to a constituting ego. *Signification* and *Bedeutung* are founded on *sens* and

this *sens*, while it always takes us to the point of its genesis, does not always and of necessity point to the ego of the Same. All sense refers us to sense-bestowal, but all sense-bestowal does not refer us to the transcendental ego. Sense and signification may be produced out of the relation of passivity.

At this point it may be objected that *Meinung* is actually more productive, as one might say that the other who interrupts my life institutes a reversed relation of *Meinung*. And of course this relation would be anchored, not in the ego, but the Other. The distinction between analyses of intersubjectivity and subjectivity is decisive here. An analysis of intersubjectivity might proceed on the basis of the presentational clues in the Other's body, seeking, in various modes of empathy, the intentions of the Other. Perhaps through gestures, perhaps through dialogue, an analysis of intersubjectivity might try to how the Other *means* or *intends* a set of demands for me. But this is not Levinas's concern. Levinas is concerned first with the condition of the subject at the origin of responsibility. This is what it means to write an ethics of ethics, to seek the ethical, or, more astutely, to establish the *sens* of *l'éthique*. To ask what the Other intends me to give, what s/he asks as my response, is to write—if only for myself—an ethics. The sense of the ethical lies only within the boundaries of the oneself as accused. To ask outside this boundary is to put myself in the place of the Other. Such displacement is quite literally violence *par excellence*. But, to ask the sense of the ethical, and even to ask whence its bestowal, puts the Other at a distance—a separation—marked by respect. This relation only reintroduces the Other as the origin of *sens unique*. It is a relation, to be sure, but a relation in which my grasp is halted at the limit of myself as the subjected subject.

Intentionality and sense—as well as signification, as the expressive clue to investigation—are thus adequate to the demands of the ethical relation. But, as we have already noted, this sense and this relation must be understood or said otherwise than the constraints of Husserlian idealism. Sense and relation are transformed by Levinas, not through another thinker or a supplement to phenomenology, but in his very confrontation with Husserl. This is a confrontation over the *Sinn* of the things themselves. In order to set the context of this confrontation, let us turn to some of the general features of Husserl's constraining of intentionality and sense and hence his circumscription of our presence to the world.

The Limits of Idealism

How does Levinas understand Husserl's rendering of the relation between intentionality and sense? How does this rendering serve to delimit the scope of *Erlebnis*? In Levinas's work that is *critical* of Husserl, he is primarily concerned with the delimitation of lived-experience in the idealism of *Ideas I*. The structures of Husserl's idealism and the essential stages that lead to it must be outlined so that the context of Levinas's work may be appreciated.

As we noted at the outset, intentionality is the matter and method of phenomenology for Husserl. Husserl will also claim in the *Ideas I* that the phenomenological method operates exclusively in acts of reflection (Hua III, 144/174). What is discovered in acts of reflection is, to use Mohanty's phrase, the cunning of intentionality. In other words, the constitutive and synthetic work that labors in the implicit is made explicit in phenomenological reflection. Reflection in phenomenology is not an inner-perception that turns away from the world of lived-experience. Reflection is rather an attempt to render present to the ego's ray of regard the implicit relations of constitution borne by experience itself. This, for Husserl, is inherent in the kind of being properly ascribed to *Erlebnis*. He writes:

The kind of being belonging to lived-experiences is such that a seeing regard of perception can be directed quite immediately to any actual lived-experience as an originary living present. This occurs in the form of "*reflection*," which has the remarkable property that what is seized upon perceptually in reflection is characterized fundamentally not only as something which exists and endures while it is being regarded perceptually, but also as something that *already existed before* this regard was turned to it. (Hua III, 83/98)

This is the concrete sense of reflection. It is not a turn inward, but a thematization of what was already there in pre-reflective life. The "already" of this conception of reflection is decisive, as it guarantees the integrity of the coinciding of the reflected and the reflecting.

Phenomenological reflection is not limited to the thematizing the flow of experience. Reflection becomes philosophically significant when it seizes upon invariance. Reflection is guided by the search for the

Eidos. The methodological point of access to the reflective attitude is the phenomenological reduction and the *epoche*, both of which put out of play the question of the “what” of that which appears in favor of the question of the “how” of its appearing. In so doing, Husserl eliminates the subject-object problem of the moderns, conceiving instead the primordially of an irreducible relation.¹⁰ The how of appearing is seized upon according to its eidetic core. The elimination of the what of that which appears in the reduction gives phenomenology its descriptive (i.e., nonmetaphysical, nonspeculative) character. The invariant that composes the theme of reflection is the noematic core of what is signified in lived-experience. The noematic core performs a predelineating function vis-à-vis the “how” of the appearing of what appears. Husserl writes:

Perception, for example, has its noema, most basically its perceptual sense, i.e., the *perceived as perceived* . . . In every case the noematic correlate, which is called a “sense” here (in its extended signification) is to be taken *precisely* as it inheres “immanently” in the lived-experience of perception, of judging, of liking, and so forth; that is, just as it is offered to us when we *inquire purely into this lived-experience itself*. (Hua III, 182/214)

This is significant. To the extent that we understand the noema as an invariant found already there in lived-experience, the formal content of reflection may genuinely claim to be based on a deformalized, concrete instantiation of the form. Reflection is thus seizing upon the already there, where the content of the already there is conceived in its invariant and predelineating function. In reflection, the Eidos is lifted out of the concrete.

For static phenomenology, the noematic core of thematic reflection is the locus of the problem of constitution. Yet the noema is only rendered to a first level reflection. The first level of reflection manifests, among other things, a necessity for a second level reflection by way of the already implicit work of the second level in the first level. The noema points to a noesis, as the two are an irreducible correlation. Just as the first level of reflection reveals the noema as what constitutes the synthetic identity of what appears, the second level of reflection reveals the noema to be itself already constituted by the higher level noetic intentions. The noema is not self-sufficient. Noesis and noema belong

together in a correlation bound by eidetic law (Hua III, 206/241). The noesis is composed of a multiplicity of “higher forms” that are constitutive of the simple unity of the noema (Hua III, 206–208/241–243). But, the noesis is not a reflective construction. Rather, the noesis is a “really inherent component part” of lived-experience (Hua III, 202/237) that “runs through” the noema and into the predelineated flow of *Erlebnis* (Hua III, 212/247). Further, the noetic intentions are themselves constituted. The reflective unfolding of the intentional complex first signaled in lived-experience finds its constitutive terminus in the transcendental ego. Husserl writes:

Every positing begins with a *point of initiation*, with a *positional point of origin* . . . This initiation belongs precisely to the positing as positing qua distinctive mode of original actionality. It is, perchance, like the *fiat*, like the initiating point of willing and acting . . . [E]very act of no matter what species can begin in the *mode of spontaneity pertaining, so to speak, to its creative beginning* in which the pure Ego makes its appearance as the subject of the spontaneity. (Hua III, 253/291)

The transcendently pure ego is the singular pole of genesis—creative, original, and spontaneous.¹¹ By identifying genesis with a spontaneous ego, Husserl privileges the actional and the positional. Such privilege aims ultimately at making explicit the constituting function of the actional-positional in the presence of the subject to world.

On the basis of this reflective unfolding of the horizon of intentions already at work in the phenomenological point of departure, Husserl concludes that world-sense is constituted by the transcendental ego. Every intentionality is already noetic, and the noetic is always already caught in the creative productions of the transcendental ego. Husserl notes:

Owing to its noetic moments, every intente lived-experience is precisely noetic; it is of its essence to include in itself something such as a “sense” (*Sinn*) and possibly a manifold of sense on the basis of this sense-bestowal (*Sinngebung*) and, in unity with that, to effect further productions which become “senseful” (*sinnvolle*) precisely by this sense-bestowal. Such noetic moments are, e.g., directions of the regard of the pure Ego to the objects “meant” by

it owing to sense-bestowal, to the object which is “inherent” in the sense. (Hua III, 181/213–214)

Husserl’s is an idealism rooted in the claim that all reality is existent by way of *Sinngebung*. This sense-bestowal, however, does not lead to a subjective idealism (Hua III, 106ff/128ff). Instead, as Levinas himself notes, this regressive unfolding leads back to the original phenomenon that makes the subject-object problem in modern philosophy possible. Even the transcendence of the world—i.e., the world *as* transcendent—is constituted in the performances of the transcendental ego (TIPH, 50/25). Husserl’s idealism is not the idealism of a Berkeley (TIPH, 68ff/39ff, 109/71), for, regarding their respective conceptions of “consciousness,” Levinas notes that Husserl and British Empiricism “have nothing in common but the name” (TIPH, 64/35–36). One could say in Husserl’s name what Heidegger said of the moderns: the scandal is not that the modern problematic was never solved, but that it was ever even a problem. Phenomenology jettisons the very abstractions that fated the moderns to scandal. Thus, in Husserl’s hands idealism is able to retain its claim to concreteness to the extent that its structures are found already operative in lived-experience. The *Sinn* that concerns phenomenological idealism is the *Sinn* limited to what appears within the juridical boundaries of noematic unity. If the noema is the unbreakable core of lived-experience, a core *only* exceeded by the noetic intentions, then the field of transcendental phenomenology may be said to be limited to and exhausted by idealism.

However, as we have already remarked, the Husserl of *Ideas I* is explicit regarding the privilege given to the positional and the actional. This calls for an obvious question: What of the pre-positional and the pre-actional intentionalities that play a constituting function? These intentions compose horizons forgotten by Husserl’s turn to idealism and, at least as a point of departure, the horizons recollected by Levinas. We should here hesitate before the term “horizon,” mindful of Levinas’s identification of horizon with ocularity in *Totality and Infinity*—an identification that makes the horizontal encounter with the beyond being impossible (TeI, 166/191). For Levinas, the forgotten horizons of Husserlian phenomenology are forgotten modalities of relation. They are forgotten because they are not reducible to the economy of vision. The notion of a lost horizon is therefore not, for Levinas, a seeing that