The Temporality of Sexual Life in Husserl and Freud

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Introduction

In this text there are two things I would like to show:¹

Firstly, that the so-called “timelessness” of the Freudian unconscious, which poses such great interpretative problems, can be elucidated through an interpretation of the concept of Nachträglichkeit as it functions in Freud’s texts, and showing thereby that there is indeed a temporality specific to the workings of the unconscious. Freud’s analysis of early psychic trauma related to sexual phenomena pointed to a serious complication for all believers in the immediate transparency of consciousness. For the “wound” itself was constituted over time, and the possibility of coming to understand the trauma (thereby achieving a certain freedom from its repercussions) was again only possible after the event had passed. The Nachträglichkeit involved in the psychoanalytical understanding of sexual trauma thus hinges on a threefold temporal process at work in subjective life.

Secondly, I wish to show (albeit tentatively) that Husserl, in his analyses of time and intersubjectivity, delivered the materials with which a phenomenological clarification of the Freudian idea of Nachträglich-

¹ This text is a reworked version of a paper first presented at the NOSP-conference in Reykjavik in 2006 and then in Stockholm in 2007. I would like to thank the participants there for their comments, in particular Klaus Held and Françoise Dastur. The issues discussed in this text are more fully developed in my book Towards a Phenomenology of Repression. A Husserlian Reply to the Freudian Challenge (Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, 2010).
keit can be given, at least in its most formal outlines. Since Nachträglichkeit is essentially tied to the structure of repression (and thus the very constitution of the unconscious), what I am suggesting is a prolegomenon to a phenomenological clarification of Freudian repression. This clearly suggests the need for further investigations into the phenomenology of sexual life.

It is well known that Freud in virtually all his major works spoke of the unconscious as being timeless (Zeitlos). Few attempts have been made – both from phenomenological and analytical philosophers – to clarify what this really means. The same holds a fortiori for psychoanalysts. It is also well known that many phenomenological thinkers have argued that the resources of Husserlian transcendental phenomenology are insufficient for a clarification of the Freudian concept of the unconscious. In the general phenomenological debate, Freud’s investigations have served as both a welcome and an important contribution, at least from the second wave of phenomenologically inspired thinkers onwards.² By incorporating Freud’s insights into their own analyses, and thereby also expanding the original sense it had, the phenomenological unconscious has found itself situated at the crossroads of primary sensibility, drives as pre-intentional structures, and

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² Disregarding some negative statements pertaining to the unconscious in general by the early Husserl and also by Martin Heidegger, see Husserl: Hua XII, Philosophie der Arithmetik. Mit ergänzenden Texte (1890–1921), ed. Lothar Eley (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1970), 59; Hua XIX/1, Logische Untersuchungen, ed. Ursula Panzer (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1984), 72, 75, 398f.

Heidegger: Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges, GA 16, ed. Hermann Heidegger (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2000), 23. The more precise first wave critique by Scheler, Geiger (and later on also Heidegger) criticize Freud as being a part of the Erlebnis-psychology (Wundt, Lipps etc.) which was guided by the natural-scientific demands of causality: the unconscious, according to the critics, only serves to fill in the gaps in the causal chain of the lived experiences; see Max Scheler, “Die Idole der Selbsterkenntnis” (1911; 2nd revised and extended ed. 1915) in Vom Umsturz der Werte (Francke: Bern, 1955), 281f, 249;

Moritz Geiger, “Fragment über den Begriff des Unbewussten und die psychische Realität” in Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung IV (1921), 79; and Heidegger Zollikoner Seminare, ed. Medard Boss (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1994), 260.
pathic-emotional proto-experiences in a pre-linguistic surrounding. Arguing that the further investigation of these themes are of some importance in the overall project of articulating the depth-dimensions of subjectivity, many amongst these phenomenologists have accordingly stated that the Freudian unconscious represents not only an unsurpassable limit for transcendental phenomenology in its Husserlian program of an act-intentionality, but also that a step beyond this program must be taken.

For these thinkers, this means that the very project of transcendental phenomenology must, by implication, undergo more or less substantial revision. This, in one way or another, and with internal variations, holds for Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur, Derrida, Levinas and Michel Henry.\(^3\)

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3. Just to mention some particularly important points of reference, see for instance Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l’invisible, suivi de notes de travail*, ed. Claude Lefort (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), 292f; Jaques Derrida, *La voix et le phénomène* (Paris: PUF, 1967), 72f, *De la grammaéologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967), 97f. Along a less immediate path, Paul Ricoeur in *De l’interprétation. Essai sur Freud* (Paris: Seuil, 1965) is positive toward Freud’s deconstruction of Cartesian subjectivity, which shows that there is narcissistic desire and drives operative prior to knowledge, while Husserl’s analysis of passive genesis according to Ricoeur is only helpful in explaining the constitution of objects and cannot be of help in accounting for the constitution of the subject (408ff, 424f). So for the larger project of engaging Freud’s “demystifying” hermeneutics and the “restoration of the sacred” (which is lost to modernity) in a “dialectics,” by means of an interpretation of equivocal expressions, “symbols,” such as the dream (which is given a paradigmatic position), transcendental phenomenology is of little avail. In the cases of Levinas and Henry the substantiation of this claim would call for more general references, but see for instance Levinas, *Autrement qu’être ou au-delà de l’essence* (Paris: Le livre de poche, 2004), 192ff. Henry from early on criticized Husserl for not being able to conceptualize the sphere of immanence in a sufficiently radical way, and developed his version of “material” or “radical” phenomenology to address this lack. In this project Freud is both friend and foe, whereas transcendental phenomenology in its Husserlian form must be fundamentally reinterpreted; see Michel Henry, *Généalogie de la psychanalyse. Le commencement perdu* (Paris: PUF, 1985), 343ff; *Phénoménologie matérielle* (Paris: PUF, 1990), 175.
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The Zeitlosigkeit of the Unconscious

Let me begin by giving just one example of this supposed timelessness of the unconscious. In the 1915 essay “The Unconscious,” Freud says:

The processes of the Ucs [unconscious] system are timeless; i.e. they are not ordered temporally, are not altered by the passage of time; they have no reference to time at all.4

Of course if we take this (and all similar statements) at face value, we would come up against some insurmountable problems in the theoretical foundations of psychoanalysis. But this denial of any relation between time and the unconscious, instead of being construed as a complete separation, should be understood as calling for deeper investigation, i.e. of a psychoanalytical investigation into more originary modes of temporality pertaining to conscious life.5 There are at least two trends of thought in Freud’s texts that support such a hypothesis, and these can be connected so as to form an argument validating my first claim. The first step consists in establishing that the links or interfaces between the unconscious and consciousness that Freud presents are precisely of a temporal nature (I will turn to this right away), and the second step will simply be to show that with the concept of Nachträglichkeit the unconscious is made to speak, in the language of time.

5. Derrida has pointed the way for my interpretation, by saying that Freud’s concept of Nachträglichkeit “should lead, if not to the solution, at least to a new way of posing the formidable problem of the temporalization and the so-called “timelessness” of the unconscious. The timelessness of the unconscious is no doubt determined only in opposition to a common concept of time, a traditional concept, the metaphysical concept: the time of mechanics or the time of consciousness. We ought perhaps to read Freud the way Heidegger read Kant: like the cogito, the unconscious is no doubt timeless only from the standpoint of a certain vulgar conception of time” (“Freud and the scene of writing” [1966], in Writing and Difference, London: Routledge, 1997, 215).
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In the brief text called “Zur Einleitung der Behandlung” (1913), Freud seems to argue against his own convictions; there he states that “the ‘timelessness’ of our unconscious processes” actually corresponds to the long duration of the psychoanalytical cure, which implies that there is after all a temporal correspondence between conscious processes and the unconscious. This, if we pause and reflect, is indeed what makes the cure possible, for as Freud states elsewhere: “psychoanalytic treatment is based upon an influencing of the Ucs. from the direction of the Cs., and at any rate [it] shows that this, though a laborious task, is not impossible.” How then does Freud go about explaining this correspondence or influence of consciousness to the unconscious?

On Freud’s view, it falls upon the preconscious to make communication possible between its contents and those of the unconscious, and thereby the unconscious processes are, so he says at one place, given “an order in time” (zeitliche Anordnung). The preconscious thus receives the gifts that the unconscious provides, beyond the control of the active and awakened I, so that the unconscious becomes a source of donation of that which cannot be harboured within the I, that which emerges in various well known forms of enigmas in subjective, everyday life. The preconscious thus “co-operates” with the unconscious, primarily through the so-called derivatives (Abkömmlingen) of the unconscious, which are described as a continuation (Fortsetzung) of the unconscious into the preconscious.

Through these links, the unconscious is, in return, always susceptible to the ongoings and effects of the awakened life, and it therefore

6. This text from 1913 (not available in PFL) is to be found in SA Ergänzungs Band (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1975); see 192. Likewise, in Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Freud after having enumerated the negative characteristics of the timelessness of unconscious processes – they are not ordered temporally, that time does not change them in any way and that the idea of time cannot be applied to them – states that these characteristics “can only be clearly understood if a comparison is made with conscious mental processes” (PFL 11, 299f). In a similar vein, cf. “The unconscious”: “The full significance of the characteristics of the system Ucs. […] could only be appreciated by us if we were to contrast and compare them with those of the system Pcs.” (192).
8. Ibid, 193.
stands in a *reciprocal* relation of influence to the preconscious.⁹ Amongst these derivatives of the unconscious, which continuously transgress the border, are phantasies, associations, dreams and bodily symptoms. The preconscious is thus not only the passive receiver of the unconscious material, but rather the co-editor or the co-writer, in that it helps in determining which one of these derivatives is chosen in each case. Being open to these often unwanted gifts, that is to say, accepting that kind of otherness within oneself, is at once a necessary condition for the unravelling of these layers of subjective life, *and* an exposure to danger, a putting oneself at risk, since we thereby make the experience in flesh, that our world is made of the same stuff as that of the insane. These phenomena thus represent the primary modes of what Freud calls a “communication” (*Verkehr*) between the unconscious and conscious, and this communication is essentially *reciprocal*, in that movements in both directions occur. The distinction between the two systems is therefore by Freud shown to be one that is *relative* and not absolute:

Study of the derivatives of the Ucs. will completely disappoint our expectations of a schematically clear-cut distinction between the two psychical systems.¹⁰

So far a connection has been established between time and certain phenomena stemming from the unconscious in Freud’s texts, indicating thereby that there must be another concept of time operative than the one that was dismissed in relation to the “timelessness” of the unconscious. That is to say, there must besides this “vulgar” or “natural attitude” concept of time, as Heidegger and Husserl would no doubt have called it, also be a concept of time that corresponds more closely to the specific workings of the unconscious. What is this, and in what direction should an interpretation go searching for it?

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⁹. “In brief, it must be said that the Ucs. is continued into what are known as derivatives, that it is accessible to the impressions of life, that it constantly influences the Pcs., and is even, for its part, subjected to influences from the Pcs” (“The unconscious,” PFL 11, 194).

¹⁰. Ibid.
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It has been suggested, both by Derrida and Lacan, that the most central idea to be advanced by Freud, directly impacting on the philosophy of time, is that of Nachträglichkeit. Not only is it a constant running through Freud’s work, but furthermore this concept stands in the most direct relation to the unconscious in its major manifestations, such as repression, sexuality and memory. What then is the structure of this experience according to Freud? In his most lucid accounts of Nachträglichkeit, Freud refers to a threefold series of events, related at first to his theory of trauma and seduction in relation to children. First, there is the occurrence of a shocking event, vibrant with both meaning and emotions, and often of a sexual character. This traumatic event is such that the child cannot comprehend; it remains within her as an indigestible core in the form of a passive enigma: it becomes repressed.

Second, there is the revival of this event at a later stage, say puberty, when the sexual implications that were at first withheld from language and understanding in that sense, resurface. This surfacing is motivated by an association from present day life that connects with the repressed event. This is the constitution of the trauma proper: the growing suspicion that something horrible has happened and that it was related to sexuality becomes a wound in the soul that is always open, bleeding. What is most remarkable from our point of view is the fact that it is the second event which is responsible for, so to speak, filling in the first event with a trauma-constitutive force, something that it did not have by itself:

11. Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis give credit to Lacan for having reopened the issue of Nachträglichkeit in Freud’s works; see The Language of Psychoanalysis (London: Karnac Books, 1988), 111; however, Derrida should also be mentioned in this context. It is no exaggeration to say that Freud’s concepts of repression and Nachträglichkeit are amongst the most elementary for the whole enterprise of deconstruction and différence, in the early phase. This is clearly legible also in the significance that he describes to these concepts: “Let us note in passing that the concepts of Nachträglichkeit and Verspätung, concepts which govern the whole of Freud’s thought and determine all his other concepts, are already present and named in the Project. The irreducibility of the “effect of deferral” – such, no doubt, is Freud’s discovery” (“Freud and the scene of writing,” 203).
... a memory is repressed which has become a trauma only after the event (nur nachträglich).\textsuperscript{12}

It is the retardation (\textit{Verspätung}) of the sexual development in children that makes this possible in the classical examples that Freud presents. But there is no real insight connected with this second event, i.e., no understanding of \textit{why} severe psychic and/or bodily suffering has occurred and why it has taken the particular forms it has: its origin has not been grasped, and therefore its effects on present day living cannot be overcome.

It is only with the third event that we have true insight that qualifies as an experience of what we may call psychoanalytical truth, and whereby the understanding brings about a “dissolution of the symptom,” as the early Freud somewhat exaltedly puts it. This usually only takes place – if at all – many years, or even decades after the first event, and this fact has most certainly been a factor for Freud in the determination of the unconscious as zeitlos.\textsuperscript{13}

So we see that the basis of the whole idea is the fact that certain past events undergo revision when they are brought back to memory, according to which a new meaning comes to be ascribed to the previous event, a meaning that it did not have at the time. This is what lies behind the choice of words of the English translators of Freud’s collected works, when they render \textit{Nachträglichkeit} as “deferred action:” the action which is triggered by the trauma, only comes into being \textit{after} the event. Although thus stressing the performative nature of


\textsuperscript{13} When for instance the Wolfman had reached twenty-five, he recounted the trauma-constitutive event which took place when he was four, and which in turn relates back to the supposed \textit{Urszene} (watching his parents make love) when he was one and a half: “We must not forget the actual situation which lies behind the abbreviated description given in the text: the patient under analysis, at an age of over twenty-five years, was putting the impressions and impulses of his fourth year into words which he would never have found at that time [\textit{nach 25 Jahren Eindrücken und Regungen} […] \textit{Worte verleiht, die er damals nicht gefunden hätte}].”\cite{1918}
recollection, its “dynamic” effects (when the trauma-to-be changes its manifestation from *dynamis* to *energeia*), a mechanistic-causal cloud threatens to obscure Freud’s intentions: for what is at stake is certainly more than the postponement of an action from time A to time B. What this translation occludes is the ancient light, that black sun that still, through Freud’s own words, discloses the fundamental experience which can be said to govern all his undertakings: Εđipus’ moment of truth.14 Thus speaking of the understanding available in the case of the Wolfman as an adult in analysis, Freud says: “This is simply a second instance of *Nachträglichkeit*.”15 What happens here is the becoming flesh, so to speak, of a logos previously hidden (which has always been the central task of psychoanalysis), through the long and arduous task of bringing an experience which was previously wordless to words. This performative or constitutive power of logos reveals itself by bringing into being an event that – perhaps, but how could we ever know? – did not exist prior to its articulation, but which yet, and this is the interesting complication, is not a mere figment of the imagination (whatever that would be): its relationship to truth rules such an option out. The relation between this logos and truth is thus groundless in any empirical sense – at least in the sense that there is no one single event there, in the history of her subjective life, to which

14. In his reading of the Sophoclean tragedy, which takes us underneath its Appolinian surface, Nietzsche argues that the “inside and horrors of nature,” which manifest themselves there, can only be seen (of course it is the eye that is at stake here) through a kind of inversion or destruction of normal seeing: “When after a forceful attempt to gaze on the sun we turn away blinded, we see dark-colored spots before our eyes, as a cure, as it were [gleichsam als Heilmittel]; conversely, the bright image appearances of the Sophoclean hero – in short, the Appolinian aspect of the mask – are the necessary offspring from a glance into the inside and horrors of nature, as it were, luminous spots to cure eyes damaged by gruesome night”; *The Birth of Tragedy*, § 9, tr. W. Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967); tr. mod.

15. “Es ist dies einfach ein zweiter Fall von Nachträglichkeit” (SA VIII, 163n / PFL 9, 278n; tr. mod.). The English translation has: “This is simply another instance of deferred action”; but that misses the point: it is precisely a *second* instance, one that occurs after the trauma has been constituted (which represents the first instance), and now with the “full” understanding.
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a statement could correspond in adequation. Instead it gains another ground by means of recourse to dreams, phantasies and reconstructions of the past. Our experience of truth thus finds itself hovering between an event which at the time of its occurrence was devoid of meaning, and a later reconstruction when its “truth” can no longer be empirically checked with reality. Thus, we are at a loss, hanging over the abyss between on the one hand the craving for solid, empirical truth, and on the other the impulse to give it all up to fancies of the imagination, all the while refraining from accepting either of these alternatives. By way of bringing to a close this first part, it seems as if the “timelessness” of the unconscious is something that can actually be overcome (Überwindung), but only by subjecting oneself to the temporality that inheres in the unconscious, as it manifests itself in consciousness for those with eyes that are no longer eyes – eyes that, as Nietzsche has it, are able to see around corners, or as with Oedipus, that are able to see only after they are no longer there. Thus instead of being a question of a mere time-lapse, such as that between stimuli and a postponed response (even in more sophisticated forms), Freud’s concept of Nachträglichkeit corresponds to Oedipus’ moment of truth.

In search for a point of transition to take us from this Freudian topic to phenomenology, and thus to move to my next hypothesis, I will suggest that Husserl’s analysis of conflict in our engagement with the world, of Widerstreitsbewusstsein (which activates concepts such as Hemmung, Verdrängung, Deckeinnerungen etc.), played out as it is in the perceptual field, serves as a highly relevant first stop.16 What primarily characterizes the Freudian unconscious is that it manifests itself precisely in conflicts with our ordinary experience and expectations, i.e. as breaches in experiential life. Without going into details, one must at least state that 1) Husserl did indeed reflect systematically on these issues, and 2) that temporality is undoubtedly at work underneath these phenomena of conflict, so that inner time-consciousness is shown to be the formal framework in which the breaches of experience

16. Already in Logische Untersuchungen Husserl speaks of the synthesis of knowledge as a consciousness of a certain Übereinstimmung, and notes that to this there always corresponds the possibility of Nicht-Übereinstimmung, i.e. of Widerstreit (XIX/2, §§ 11f, 32–35). This analysis is repeatedly taken up in later texts.
are synthesized, and possibly also therefore the phenomena pertaining to the unconscious.

Phenomenological clarification of Nachträglichkeit

But in order to reach my last point concerning the possibility of a phenomenological clarification of the formal aspects of the concept of Nachträglichkeit, I must proceed to other fields, more directly related to this issue.

In Husserl’s analysis of retentional consciousness, it is shown how the relation between the Längsintentionalität and the Querintentionalität gives an account of both the pre-objective self-manifestation of the flow and of hetero-manifestation (preceding both the constitution of the I and the world). According to this theory, each retention is connected to the whole previous sequence of retentions, thus forming the backbone so to speak of my inner history. This is, formally speaking, what makes possible my return to previous events, memory, recollection etc. Let us see how this takes on a more concrete shape in Husserl’s analysis of the intersubjective reduction, first presented in the 1910–11 lecture series, Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie.

His analysis proceeds stepwise, first by insisting that the Cartesian reduction to immanence must be extended and complemented by a new reduction: “we discover the noteworthy fact that each lived experience permits of a double reduction,” that is to say, one that also reaches into the horizons that surround that which is apodictically given in Gegenwärtigung, i.e. to include also the sphere of Vergegenwärtigungen. This means that we reduce not only the punctual ego

cogito, but also the sphere of its “retentions, rememberings, expectations.”20 It is only by doing so that the “artificial restriction,” which characterizes the previous presentations of the reduction in for instance Die Idee der Phänomenologie, can be aufgehoben.21

Then in a further step, Husserl shows how this also holds in the case of the other, so that we can reduce not only my empathizing with the other, that is to say, my living-myself-into-her-life, but also her as empathizing with me, i.e. her living-herself-into-my-life.22 I will briefly return to this intersubjective reduction at the end, or more specifically, to how it is presented in relation to the intentionality of the drives. When for instance the reduction is applied to a memory, a recollection, then we also reduce and thus make available for transcendental inquiry that which was given in the background of the thing or event that was then at the center of attention, so that its whole horizon becomes a possible theme. This paying attention to that which at the time one gives scant attention, i.e. to the background, which, Husserl says, can only occur nachträglich. So that with this new, double reduction, all that which is in one way or another intentionally connected to the first thing or event, becomes available in the transcendental field for possible retrieval.23

But what role is actually ascribed to the concept of “Nachträglichkeit” – carefully placed in brackets – here? That is to say, could it be replaced at will, or does its appearance signify something else? It is clear that some concept or other that is able to account for the phenomenon of bringing back to experiential life a whole segment of previously lived experience, must be employed. If nachträglich means only this however, then it could indeed be replaced, it seems. But, if we consider the specific context, namely the bringing back of the horizon of an object

20. Ibid., 178.
21. Ibid., § 34, 177.
23. All this was worked out in greater detail with the notion of intentional implication in Erste Philosophie II; see Hua VIII, Erste Philosophie (1923/4). Zweiter Teil: Theorie der phänomenologischen Reduktion, ed. R. Boehm (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1959), 47. Vorlesung: “Intentionale Implikationen und Iterationen.”
that was previously perceived, that is to say, the background which was precisely not attended to at the time (and thus not perceived), then, it seems to me, things begin to look different. For what is at stake is the “bringing back” of a background which was never perceived at the time, and which thus has to be constituted after the event, for the first time. The hyletic material would be there as a potentiality for constitution, dormant in the sedimented sphere, for it later to be the source of a non-apodictical project of what was there, though one that is always open for confusion and unclarity.

Thus it seems to me that it is clearly not the question of a mere revival of a previously lived experience, but something more along the lines of what Derrida spoke of in relation to the Freudian Nachträglichkeit, namely that “it produces the present past.”24 In connection with this, Derrida as an open question asks whether “sexual deferral” really is “the best example or the essence of this movement,” and I think that Husserl has been trying to tell him his view on the matter for some time now. This “production” of the past must not be misunderstood; it is not the question of random fabrication, it is of course guided by the object as remembered and other constitutive signals.

The much discussed analogy between the givenness of my own past and the givenness of the other – which is given its paradigmatic presentation in the Grundprobleme – for me testify what is at stake: in the deepest respect of the phenomena at hand, i.e. the past and the other, Husserl insists that we must make do with this. The constitution that is at stake occurs in a kind of inevitable greyzone: neither private phantasy nor objective reality, but a reconstruction of a “reality” that was supposed to have occurred. Its evidential validity is of necessity weaker than the object that is at the center of attention, for as far as the latter is concerned, there is always a possibility of comparison with how it is at first remembered, and how it can be presented through an

24. “This impression has left behind a laborious trace which has never been perceived, whose meaning has never been lived in the present, i.e., has never been lived consciously. The postscript which constitutes the past present as such is not satisfied, as Plato, Hegel, and Proust perhaps thought, with reawakening or revealing the present past in its truth. It produces the present past.” “Freud and the scene of writing,” 215.
act of recollection, where our searchlight is set upon the recalling of
details that we want to fill out. This is why Husserl always insisted how
the Cartesian way to the reduction has evidential priority over and
above the non-Cartesian ways, which supplement it (such as the
psychological way, which is foreshadowed here). The tentative outcome
of this is that Nachträglichkeit in the more radical Freudian sense is to
at least some extent, operative in Husserl’s first analysis of the extended
reduction to intersubjectivity through an intentional analysis of
Vergegenwärtigung.

Later on, the development of genetic phenomenology led Husserl
to again consider the possibility of unconscious contents becoming
conscious at a later point. For as he says in a text from 1926, it is
possible that there are affective tendencies arising out of that which is
repressed in the “unconscious,” whilst our attention is directed to
other matters:

Perseverance. There may therefore exist continuous affections from
the unconscious, but such that are suppressed. Intensive attention –
this brings about the suppression of affections that stem from an
interest, but a different interest than the one that is intensely attended
to. In the moving present something new arises, which favours
something suppressed and awakens it.\(^{25}\)

And in a yet later text Husserl also approaches the aspect of Nachträgli-
chkeit that Freud calls the “revision” of a former event through a
present recollection. “At the time I only had eyes for this and that,”
Husserl says in this manuscript, “but I could have seen it in a different
light, since the recollection shows now that it is different than I
thought it was.” He goes on:

\(^{25}\) Hua XI, Analysen zur passiven Synthesis. Aus Vorlesungs- und Forschungsmanuskripten
Phänomenologie der Assoziation” [1926], 416. The German text reads: “Per-
severance. Es können also aus dem ‘Unbewussten’ fortlaufend Affektionen da
sein, aber unterdrückt. Intensive Aufmerksamkeit – Unterdrückung von Affek-
tonen des Interesses, aber eines andern Interesses. In der beweglichen Gegenwart
Neues, das einem Unterdrückten zugute kommt und es aufweckt.”
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But precisely this constant possibility to let my present powers of interest play a part in the representified past, and from now onwards not only bring to words how that past concretely was, but also to bring to words nachträglich that which “lies” within it, is never the less important also from a constitutive perspective.26

Here Husserl indeed seems to discuss something like the general possibility of Nachträglichkeit, understood in its Freudian sense, were it not for the lack of references to sexual life. If transcendental phenomenology would have nothing to do with sexuality, then it would be more difficult to pursue the present task.27

Now it seems to me that the question can be pushed further, once the intentional analysis advances so that the formal and slightly dry investigation of temporality is disclosed in its concreteness – of course through experiences of the flesh, and notably the flesh of the other. With the reduction to the “living present” (lebendige Gegenwart), which is presented in several major later texts, for instance in the C-manuscripts, Crisis and Hua XV, Husserl at one place describes what he calls the “originary structure” (Urstruktur) of the living present as consisting in originary kinaesthesia, originary feelings and originary drives:

Now I consider whether not by means of the Rückfrage we finally come up with the originary structure in its transformation of primal hyletic

26. D 14/21 [1931–32]. The German text reads: “Aber eben diese beständige Möglichkeit, meine gegenwärtige Interessenkraft in die vergegenwärtigte Vergangenheit hineinspielen zu lassen und vom Jetzt aus nicht nur, sie, wie sie konkret war, sondern was in ihr ‘liegt’ zu Worte zu bringen, jetzt, nachträglich, ist doch wichtig auch in konstitutiver Hinsicht.”

27. It should be now already clear that there is reason for questioning the position reached by Derrida on this issue, both in De la grammaologie and La voix et le phénomène: “It is the problem of the deferred effect (Nachträglichkeit) of which Freud speaks. The temporality to which he refers cannot be that which lends itself to a phenomenology of consciousness or of presence and one may indeed wonder by what right all that is in question here should still be called time, now, anterior present, delay, etc.” (De la grammaologie, 97f). “Ce n’est pas un hasard si les Leçons sur la conscience intime du temps confirment la dominance du présent et rejettent à la fois l’‘après-coup’ du devenir-conscient d’un ‘contenu inconscient,’ c’est-à-dire la structure de la temporalité impliquée par tous les textes de Freud,” La voix et le phénomène, 70f.
matter etc. with its originary kinaesthesia, originary feelings, originary instincts. According to this it resides in the fact that the originary material proceeds precisely in a form of unity that is an essential form prior to the worldliness. Thereby the constitution of the whole world seems to be predelineated for me already “instinctively,” such that the functions that make this possible themselves have their essential-ABC, their grammar of essence in advance. That is to say that it lies within the fact that a teleology occurs in advance. A full ontology is teleology, but it presupposes the fact.²⁸

The primordiality of this structure is best described as a system of drives, and when we understand this primordiality as an originary standing streaming (urtümlich stehendes Strömen), we see that in this streaming, we also find therein the drives that stem from the other and that are directed to me:

The drive can be in a state of undetermined hunger, which does not yet carry its object within itself as its “where to.” Hunger in the ordinary sense is more determined, when it as a drive refers to eating – in the originary sense it is directed in a determinate way [...]. In the case of sexual hunger in its determined direction it is the other that is its affecting, alluring goal. This determined sexual hunger has its figure of fulfilment in copulation. In the drive itself lies the relatedness to the other as other, and to her correlative drive. The one and the other drive can have the mode – mode of transformation – of refraining, or of wanting again. In the originary mode it is however an unmodalyzed drive “without inhibition,” which always reaches into the other and

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whose intentionality of drives has always reached through to the other through her correlative intentionality of drives. In the simple, originary mode of fulfilment we do not have two separate fulfilsments each in the one and the other primordiality, but a unity of both primordialities that is brought about by means of the fulfilment of one-within-the-other.\textsuperscript{29}

The transcendental framework should not hinder us from seeing what Husserl is saying: the most basic structure of inner time-consciousness, when reduced in a sufficiently radical way, shows that at the heart of ourselves as temporal beings, that old familiar song is played out once again: “I want you, and you want me;” and we are also promised that this is indeed the very first recording. Behind the sober earnestness of the transcendental façade, we thus find Eros and time united in ecstatic entwinement, as two aspects — one concrete and one formal — of one and the same flow:

In my old doctrine of inner time-consciousness, I treated the intentionality that has been demonstrated here precisely as intentionality — aimed forwards through the protention and modifying itself through retention, although preserving the unity — but I did not there speak of


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the I, did not characterize it as pertaining to the I (in the widest sense of an intentionality of willing).  

The drive is a mode of temporalization, and as such a fundamental aspect of self-manifestation, which at the same time is also a fundamental aspect of hetero-manifestation. That is to say, the drives as originary modes of temporalization, are what makes possible the manifestation of myself and of alterity. This process is also inherently spatializing by means of the proto-kinaesthesia that opens my lived body to myself as flesh, the originary process in passivity that discloses my flesh as always already directed towards the other, prior to a distinct “I” or the objectivated givenness of “my lived body” as “separate” from a “you” and “your lived body.” This process can also be analyzed from a worldly perspective:

“Prior” to the world lies the constitution of the world, lies my self-temporization in the pre-time and lies the intersubjective temporization in the intersubjective pre-time. The intersubjective “act of conception” “motivates” new processes in the other, it changes the self-temporization and in the disclosure of the worldly side, as a human, I experience what shows itself there as worldly and what by means of further inductions can be said about this in relation to the physiology of pregnancy.


31. Hua XV, Nr. 34 [1933], 597. The German text reads: “‘Vor’ der Welt liegt Weltkonstitution, liegt meine Selbstzeitigung in der Vorzeit und liegt die intersubjektive Zeitigung in der intersubjektiven Vorzeit. Der intersubjektive ‘Zeugungssakt’ ‘motiviert’ in dem anderen Leben neue Prozesse, abgeänderte der Selbstzeitigung, und in der Enthüllung von seiten der Weltlichkeit, als Mensch,
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The radicalized reduction leads to an intersubjective streaming that is the foundation of an “originary empathy,” and which manifests itself as reciprocal sexual drives. These drives towards the other are also constitutive of my own, pre-egoic selfhood as flesh (Urleib), which at a higher level manifests itself as lived body (Leib).32 This originary spacing by means of my own hyletic-temporizing (Zeitigung) becoming proceeds at different levels: first as the originary event of proto-kinaesthetic flesh (Urleib), and then as pre-reflective givenness of my own lived body (Leib) which, (at least as presented in Cartesian Meditations) by means of associative pairing then becomes body as objectivated object in nature (Körper). These steps permit the full constitution of my lived body as the Nullkörper which is my “absolute center of orientation,” which Husserl began to analyze already in the 1927 lectures on Ding und Raum. And the constitution of the world necessitates the prior constitution of my lived body as a body in nature by means of reflection (one hand touching the other, my seeing my own hand, etc.).33 My lived body is thus “non-spatial” or pre-spatial in the sense that it precedes the constitution of objective space as its condition of possibility. In originary experience, my lived body as flesh has no progressive movement (Fortbewährung) nor rest, only an inner movement and rest that is unlike that of outer objects; it has “extension” but is not subjected to change or spatial consistency like an external body.34 The radicalized reduction discloses an important aspect of this at a genetically foundational level, by highlighting the implicit bodily self-awareness, the constant self-affection, which is a touching oneself prior to the touch, that sets this whole process in motion:

erfahre ich, was da weltlich sich zeigt und was in weiteren Induktionen in bezug auf die Physiologie der Schwangerschaft zu sagen ist.”

32. See Hua XIII, 327f; IX, 107.
33. See Dorion Cairns, Conversations with Husserl and Fink (The Hague, 1976), 4, 6. This is also developed in many manuscripts; see for instance D 17 [1934]; published in Philosophical Essays in Memory of Edmund Husserl, ed. Marvin Farber (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1940), 307–325.
34. See D 17, in Farber (1940), 315.
In the streaming primal present we already have a ceaseless perception of the lived body, and so in the temporization of immanent time my bodily perception runs through the totality of this time as it synthetically and identically constitutes this same lived body in an all temporal way.  

This analysis of the originary pre-empathic intersubjectivity also enables us to understand better the lacunae or blind spots in the account of the constitution of the other in *Cartesian Meditations*. The whole problematics of how to account for the fact that the other, on the one hand, by necessity exceeds my constitutive powers, and, on the other hand, remains inscribed within my horizontal system of noematically given, can now be recognized as resting on a ground that is moving from a static egology to a genetic order of being, intersubjective from the outset. When Husserl says that the apperception of my lived body as physical body (or quasi-physical, since I can never wholly transform myself into an object in nature) is a “first presupposition for empathy” to come about, the other and I are already engaged in a reciprocal sexual drive-intentionality in this apperception, by virtue of the most originary temporizing-spatializing pre-egoic life in the living present. Thus in order for my flesh to be able to be perceived as body, it is simply necessary that the body of the other is drawn into the process.


37. On this point, see the innovative analyses by Dider Franck in *Chair et corps. Sur la phénoméologie de Husserl* (Paris: Minuit, 1981), 153: “La chair n’est objective qu’à condition d’être essentiellement en relation à une autre chair.” See also Natalie Depraz, *Transcendance et incarnation. Le statut de l’intersubjectivité comme*
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In as much as inner time-consciousness in conjunction with passive synthesis of kinaesthesia is generally said to make up the foundation of subjectivity in Husserl’s philosophy, we might now venture the statement that sexuality, as an originary drive, and as a concrete form of this kinaesthetic temporalization, is an integral part of the foundation of subjectivity.

With this final step taken, where the living present is shown to consist of an *Urstruktur* that in part consists in sexuality as a *Trieb-zeitlichkeit*, I think that at least the major components required for a phenomenological clarification of Freud’s concept of *Nachträglichkeit* are in place.

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*altérité à soi chez Husserl* (Paris: Vrin, 1995), 132: “Pour que ma chair puisse s’apercevoir comme corps dans le creusement d’un écart d’abord infime du sein de la primordialité, il est nécessaire que soi supposé dès cet instant un autre corps qui, lui ressemblant point par point, s’intrigue dans cet écart.”