

## Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past.

### On Husserl, Freud and Derrida.

"Himmlische nemlich sind  
Unwillig, wenn eines nicht die Seele schonend sich  
Zusammengenommen, aber es muß doch; dem  
Gleich fehlet die Trauer."  
(Hölderlin, Mnemosyne)

#### Introduction

Within the context of Husserl's phenomenology in general, but also within the context of considerations that come out of Husserl's phenomenology of time, his attempts to analyze memory, remembering and recollection are of central importance. Throughout his entire career Husserl made several rigorous attempts to understand the constitution of the past not only in regard to the individual, but also in regard to the intersubjective and historical dimension of these concepts. In what follows, I will focus particularly on certain aspects of the *intuitive* past that is constituted in acts, even though I admit that a full account of a phenomenology of the past will always be pushed beyond the past life of an individual. In this essay I am unable to integrate [a] the emotional dimension, [b] the practical dimension, [c] the narrative and symbolic dimension, [d] forgetting, promising and forgiving, as well as [d] the intersubjective, cultural and historical problems that are connected to a philosophy of recollection and memory. However, these basic distinctions do imply that I believe - following Husserl - that we are able to describe and analyze a basic level of remembering and memory that *is not* narrative, although a life identity and

"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

a self is certainly not thinkable without its narrative and symbolic constitution. According to Husserl, the intuitive level founds the narrative level.<sup>1</sup>

Specifically, I intend to explore one central aspect of a phenomenology of memory, namely the relation between recollection and mourning. I will claim that Husserl's analysis of recollection and retention lends *itself* to the inclusion of Non-Husserlian topics, such as [a] a fundamental absence in consciousness, *not* within the lived present, but within one's *past*, which leads us to the consequence that [b] indeed, as Derrida claims, transcendental subjectivity cannot be thought of as the possibility of full self-presence, as well as that [c] it must lead us to an inclusion of concepts such as mourning, and especially death.

Phenomenological debates of the last two decades have often dealt with the development of Derrida's early thinking, which is heavily dependent on the critique of Husserl's distinction between expression and indication that he draws in the first of his

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<sup>1</sup> For this claim see Edward Casey, *Remembering. A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1987), 45; see also Bertrand Russell, *Human Knowledge. Its Scope and its Limits* (London: Routledge, 1997), 441, who claims that memory is "preverbal;" whereas Gilbert Ryle seems to claim that the act of remembering is intrinsically a narrative skill (Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1949), 276: "verbal narration"); see also Ryle, *Concept of Mind*, 274: "Reminiscence and not-forgetting are neither 'sources' of knowledge, nor, if this is any different, ways of getting to know." Paul Ricœur, but also David Carr and Laszlo Tengelyi have convincingly shown that the constitution of one's own past leads always back to phenomenological questions about narrative history. In Husserl, the problem is indicated by the distinction between structure and genesis of meaning, according to which the analysis of meaning is necessarily pushed back to its (historical) genesis. Jacques Derrida deals with this problem especially in his early essay *Structure and Genesis in Husserl's Phenomenology* in Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, tr. by A. Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1980), 154-168. As is well known in phenomenological debates, already here Derrida claims that a structural analysis of consciousness is confronted with the fact that the structure itself is never "closed." The attempt to analyze a structure (closure) is based on its impossibility. Husserl encounters the historical dimension already in *Ideas I* when he explains how a phenomenon cannot be fully clarified within its present horizons, but is already dependent upon something that has been constituted before (history). Phenomenological clarification is only possible because it presupposes a fundamental moment of *incomprehensibility*. Only *because* phenomena are based on a moment of *incomprehension*, are we *forced* to clarify a phenomenon. For this hermeneutical shift within Husserl's thinking see my considerations in Christian Lotz, "Das Ereignis des Unverständlichen. Husserls Hermeneutik und die genetische Phänomenologie," in Marc Roelli, ed., *Von Bergson bis Deleuze. Zum Erfahrungsbegriff der französischen Gegenwartsphilosophie* (München: Fink, 2004), 37-58.

"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

*Logical Investigations*. In addition, in *Speech and Phenomena* Derrida develops a critique of Husserl's phenomenological method as well as of his phenomenology of time consciousness, particularly of the concept of presence that is implied in Husserl's analysis of the phenomenon of time. Several attempts have been made to critically explore Derrida's interpretation of these aspects in Husserl's philosophy, though it is rather infrequently the case that commentators who work within the Husserlian tradition develop topics that Derrida introduced in his writings in his later texts.<sup>2</sup>

I believe that we do not have to overthrow the Husserlian framework of thinking if we are interested in including some of Derrida's and Ricoeur's ideas; rather, an extension of Husserl's thinking is called for.<sup>3</sup> In this vein, I shall show that Husserl's analysis of the distinction between retention and recollection (re-presentation,

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<sup>2</sup> For example, see Natalie Alexander, "The Hollow Deconstruction of Time," in W. McKenna and C. Evans, eds., *Derrida and Phenomenology* (Dordrecht Kluwer, 1995), 121-150. Derrida describes his general relation to Husserl with the following words: "Something that I learned from the great figures in the history of philosophy, from Husserl in particular, is the necessity of posing transcendental questions in order not to be held within the fragility of an incompetent empiricist discourse, and thus it is in order to avoid empiricism, positivism and psychologism that it is endlessly necessary to renew transcendental questioning" (Jacques Derrida, "Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism," in C. Mouffe, ed., *Deconstruction and Pragmatism* (London: Routledge 1996), 77-91, here 81.

<sup>3</sup> David F. Krell (in agreement with Heidegger's general critique) claims that Husserl's phenomenology of memory and remembering is based on the wrong ideal of epistemological objectivity, by "mathematical imagination," (David Krell, "Phenomenology of Memory from Husserl to Merleau-Ponty," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 42/4 (1987), 492-505, here 499, which, according to Krell, led to a general "distortion of phenomena" (ibid., 497). The analysis that I develop in this paper is opposed to this position. What Krell presents in his article as counterexamples are *empirical* descriptions of experiences. For instance, he claims against Husserl's tone example, which Husserl refers to in his *Phenomenology of Inner Time Consciousness*, that one is not able to reconstitute a full melody when one recalls it. However, Husserl does not claim that one is *empirically* able to recall the full melody; rather, he claims that *ideally* one is able to do so. In other words, the eidetic description of the phenomenon of recollection necessarily includes the moment that we must be *able* to reconstitute the full melody, since otherwise one would not know that it was a *melody*, and not only tones. The melody in an act of recollection can be given and intended in an *empty* mode, that is, one might not be able to recall *all phases* of the melody. However, that one intends "the" melody implies that the *time* phenomenon has at least a beginning point and is a unity; for this see Hua XI, 202/253.

"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

presentification, *Vergegenwärtigung*)<sup>4</sup> takes into account a basic "unavailability" of one's past life, which Husserl calls in his *Analysis of Passive Synthesis* "being-in-itself." The process of fulfillment within the sphere of memory and remembering refers to a being of one's life that has to be laid out as something *in-itself*, and hence as that which escapes the possibility of a re-presentation. The past life as *being-for* the subject is a result of remembering and recollection. Consequently, the phenomenology of transcendental subjectivity is pushed beyond its limits, given that it must acknowledge something that remains absolutely "foreign" in consciousness. The possibility of recollecting one's past is, to put it in Derrida's terms, its impossibility, since the constitution of one's past is only possible through a fundamental absence and the impossibility of *truthfully* recollecting it. This concept leads us to an inclusion of Freudian conceptions, such as mourning and melancholia, as well as to the insight that – as Derrida claims in his *Memoires for Paul de Man* – memory is a form of mourning. Given this, we must come to the conclusion that memory, in the form of acts of recollection, is based on a fundamental *absence*, which indicates the finitude of subjectivity itself. The fact that in

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<sup>4</sup> English translations of German key terms are very difficult, since they lack the literal sense that these terms have in German. The main problem seems to be that the English terms have their roots in Latin ("remembering," "memory," "reminisce" go back to "memorari"). The terms "*Gegenwart*" and "*Vergegenwärtigung*" (re-presentation, presentification) are composed of "*gegen*" (towards) and "*wart*" (similar to waiting). "*Zukunft*" literally means something to come, something that is (already) coming and arriving. A crucial distinction has to be made between "*Erinnerung*" (memory) and "*Gedächtnis*" (memory), both terms of which are important for Hegel in his *Encyclopedia* as well as for Heidegger's *What is Called Thinking?* The German "*Gedächtnis*" (memory) points to the term "thought" (*Gedanke*), and "erinnern" (remembering, remembrance) points to something that becomes actively internalized, that is to say, to something that is turned into one's own and belongs to one's inner life. In English the difference between "recalling" (points to voice) and "recollection" (points to gathering and synthesis) is important. In recollection one re-unifies oneself with oneself and gathers oneself together. In addition to this, we must keep in mind that Heidegger tries to establish a connection between "*Gedanke*" (thought) and "*Denken*" (thinking) and "*Dank*" (Thanks). Since thinking, according to Heidegger's later writings, is dependent on something that is given to it ("*Gabe*," gift, present) in thought, namely being, it *confirms* and *thanks* as thinking for what is given prior to it as a gift, and which has to be thought of in thinking.

"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

every act of recollection a moment of loss is *already* inscribed, shifts our analysis to a constitutive relation between recollection and death. These reflections will push my considerations ultimately beyond Husserl, whose thought comes to its limits regarding topics such as loss, forgetting and death.<sup>5</sup>

In Part One of my paper, I will unfold Husserl's thesis that consciousness is unable to constitute itself *for itself* as a unified consciousness without recollection, as well as without encountering an *in-itself* of its own being, the thesis of which is central for Husserl's attempt to understand subjectivity in the *Analysis of Passive Synthesis*.<sup>6</sup> The result of this position is that a past (life) becomes something essentially *unavailable* and *inaccessible* since the process of recollecting ideally refers to a being-in-itself of the recollected past. In part II, I shall relate Husserl's analysis to Derrida's attempt to rethink the relation between memory and mourning with the inclusion of a few remarks on Freud. In particular, I shall show that Derrida's thoughts on mourning, if reconsidered within the Husserlian framework of recollection, are convincing, and thus that they can be taken as a substantial extension of Husserl's phenomenology of memory and recollection.

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<sup>5</sup> Several commentators have claimed that Husserl developed demanding concepts of the *unconscious* as well as of *death* and *absence* in his later writings. In principle, I agree with these commentaries; I remain rather skeptical though about the depth of Husserl's attempts. For instance, the problem of death, given the attention that was given to it after Husserl, is absent from Husserl's writings. For Husserl, death is an *innerwordly* event, that is to say, it belongs to the empirical and anthropological level of world constitution. Husserl was never able to conceive death as a substantial philosophical problem, since, according to Husserl, absolute time consciousness does not have a beginning and an end. It cannot die. He neither made a Heideggerian move, that is to say, [1] he did not realize that death has to do with the *relation* of the subject *towards* its beginning and end, nor did he make a Levinassian or Derridean move, since [2] he did not consider that the subject is unable to represent (recollect) its death's status, the latter point of which is the topic of this paper.

<sup>6</sup> Note: I decided to translate Husserl's term "Wiedererinnerung" with "recollection," since the "Wieder" (= "re") mirrors the English "re-collection."

## **Remembering, Recollection and the Constitution of the Past (Husserl)**

Although they are basic and well known in Husserl research, I would like to recall two distinctions that Husserl draws, namely: [a] the difference between eidetic (structural) and genetic analysis, as well as [2] the difference between retention and recollection.

[1] A phenomenological analysis of remembering and recollection can be carried out in different ways, two of which are the *eidetic* and the *genetic* analysis: either we ask how we have to understand the *specificity* of acts of remembering, or we ask how acts of remembering are fulfilled and constituted within our dynamically constituted lives. The first analysis is static, the second dynamic, or – in Husserl's terms - genetic. The first analysis is based on an *eidetic question*, that is, we try to find out *which* criteria the act of remembering differentiate from other acts, such as acts of imagination or anticipation; the second analysis is based on a *genetic question*, according to which we try to find out *how* and in *which cases* phenomena constitute themselves *through* certain acts, such as remembering, imagination, narration, etc. In other words, the structural and eidetic description of acts provides us with *ideal and conceptual* differences between acts, in addition to which we could present ontological considerations, such as considering the distinction between person, life, psyche, body and lifeworld. The genetic description of acts focuses on the *temporal* constitution of our lives and the constitution of acts within the "flow" of consciousness. For instance, the analysis of phenomena such as recalling, different types of association, and the different temporal chains of remembered acts, as worked out by Husserl in *Analysis of Passive Synthesis*, is a genetic analysis, since it explains how certain structures are constituted *in time*, whereas the pure essential (conceptual) analysis of remembering in contrast to imagination or perception, as worked

"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

out in *Ideas I*, is a static analysis.<sup>7</sup> In the following, I will address both questions without an explicit differentiation, though I am aware of it.

[2] As is well known, the main distinction within the phenomenological field of memory and time that Husserl develops in his earlier writings is the distinction between retention and recollection, that is, the distinction between primary and secondary remembering.<sup>8</sup> I will, however, discuss this later, after some preparatory considerations. First, it is important to note that "retention" is the *non-reproductive* consciousness of the have-been within the lived present and "protention" the consciousness of the "to come" (the arrival), whereas recollection or secondary remembering is *reproductive*.<sup>9</sup>

Let me give an example: *while* I am speaking, I am aware of the beginning and the end of the current phase of my speaking, that is, I have an awareness of time while I utter the sentence "Certain American philosophers have resentments towards European philosophy". If I would not be aware of the "have-been" of the uttered phrase, I would neither be able to come back and to return to the beginning point nor would I know that the phrase had a beginning point. However, when asked after I uttered the sentence what it is that I uttered, I will immediately be able to say "Certain American...". The point is that at all times I am conscious (of) the beginning point of the phrase *while* the phrase is uttered in its temporal "flow." In addition, while I am uttering the sentence, I am aware that something is to come. Otherwise, I would at each moment have to consider how I

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<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, both forms of phenomenological analysis cannot be separated, especially since every genetic analysis presupposes the eidetic analysis. For a discussion of the distinction within the context of J. Klein's interpretation of Husserl, see Burt Hopkins, "Jacob Klein and the Phenomenology of History," *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* 1 (2001), 79-89.

<sup>8</sup> For a nice overview of the aspects of this distinction see Casey, *Remembering*, 49.

<sup>9</sup> Therefore Husserl remarks that the term "primary remembering" is not well chosen, since retentional consciousness is not a form of re-presentation (see Edmund Husserl, *Die 'Bernauer Manuskripte' über das Zeitbewußtsein (1917/18)*, ed. R. Bernet and D. Lohmar, Husserliana XXXIII (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001), 55. Henceforth cited as 'Hua XXXIII' with page reference.

"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

want to finish my sentence; instead I am all the time ahead of myself (to use Heidegger's language). It is neither the case that consciousness in my present has to be described as a series of *points* in time nor is it the case that consciousness in my present must be defined as a single moment in time, as if consciousness were jumping from one moment to the next. Rather, my consciousness is a *temporal* unity and synthesis *while* I am continually experiencing my world within and in the form of a "lived present." The lived present is the temporal – ecstatic – unity of the "has been" of the temporal phase as well as of its "now" point and the "to come" of its future. Past, present and future in this sense are three moments of the lived present; they cannot be described as being *after* each other. The immediate future does not come *after* the present and the immediate past does not come *before* the present, the thought of which would already presuppose a temporal order between two points in time. Husserl usually gives tonal or musical examples to illustrate this. For instance, while listening to Tristan's and Isolde's death song, I am aware of the beginning phase of a tone or tone segment, while already being aware of the coming "moment."

From this primary remembering (retention) we must differentiate acts of recollection that are intentional, which are therefore based on a moment of repetition. I can only re-collect or re-member something that has already gone through my lived present. In addition, acts of recollection have a reference to the ego or "I," and can be fulfilled or modalized. In other words, recollection is reproductive consciousness. Let me briefly turn my attention to the phenomenon of recollection. In the natural attitude, it is usual to think of memories as being "in us" (I shall later come back to this "in us," when I talk about Freud and Derrida); we conceive them via certain concepts, such as "brain,"



"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

and we refer to their being by using metaphors, such as a "store" of objects in our head.<sup>10</sup>

Although we find it philosophically puzzling to move from a conscious process of thought to a memory object that is "stored" in nerves and cells, within the natural attitude we continue to think of our mental life as an empirical phenomenon that we can observe from outside. In this vein, we could think of two main characterizations of recollecting consciousness: [1] we might think that acts of remembering are a form of picture consciousness, or [2] we might think that they are a weaker form of perceptual consciousness. Husserl rejects both possibilities and tries to analyze remembering and memory in *their own right* by giving justice to the phenomenon of recollection itself. According to Husserl, recollection is a specific *eidetic type* of intuitive act and consciousness, which is - in outline and simplified for the purpose of this paper - characterized by the following five characteristics:

- [a] the act of recollection is not a form of sign or picture consciousness,
- [b] it is not a weaker form of perception,
- [c] it is connected to the whole referential and intentional system of one's life (monad),
- [d] the fulfillment and "truth" of recollection can only be found internally, the point of which leads us, finally, to the consequence
- [e] that all acts of recollection refer to a being-in-itself of one's own past, without the possibility of ever fully representing it (the phenomenon of an "absolute past").

The reason for the claim that the past can *never* be fully represented, and therefore that it must be partly conceived as a fundamental absence, can be seen in the fundamental

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<sup>10</sup> For an overview of the metaphorical changes throughout the history see Douwe Draaisma, *Metaphors of Memory. A History of Ideas about the Mind*, tr. by P. Vincent (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2000); "house," "storage," "pit," "hard drive," "disk," "book," "library," "writing pad," "phonograph," "photographic plate," "computer" were very successful, and point to the cultural and technological context of theories of memory.

"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

difference between retention and recollection, which ultimately will lead to the inclusion of Freudian and Derridian topics in the present considerations. Toward this end, I will first develop the five mentioned characteristics of recollection:

### **Ad a) Recollection is not Picture Consciousness**

The naïve and usually material view of consciousness (that our "memories" and "data" are stored somewhere in our brain) normally leads to a "naïve metaphysics" of the natural attitude; and naïve philosophies that are based on it define recollection by a representational<sup>11</sup> or picture theory of consciousness. Husserl himself propounded a similar view in his early philosophy. He thought that acts of recollection are representative acts.<sup>12</sup> In this vein, one could think of recollection as a presentation of the past via a picture or sign, but on closer inspection such a view is unconvincing. If the consciousness that we call recollection would indeed be a "picture consciousness," then the given part of what is past would refer to something that *it is not*. In other words, the remembered past would consist of a present picture of something that is not present, but is referred to *through* the picture or sign, both of which are distinguished and analyzed as separate types of consciousness by Husserl. For instance, when I look at a photo, the perceived "material thing" points me to something that *it is not*, namely to the "real" picture or the motif, of which the material representant is a picture. Put differently, picture and sign consciousness are based on negativity and a "negation-consciousness," a

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<sup>11</sup> At this point the translation of terms becomes difficult, since "*Vergegenwärtigung*" is *not* representational consciousness, according to Husserl, although most of the translators translate "*vergegenwärtigen*" with "representation." "Presentification" might be better. Accordingly, I indicate in this paper the problematic by using the expression "re-presentation."

<sup>12</sup> For this, see Husserl's early manuscripts in Edmund Husserl, *Phantasie, Bildbewußtsein, Erinnerung*, ed. E. Marbach, Husserliana XXXIII (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1980), 55. Henceforth cited as 'Hua XXIII.'

"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

view that was also held by Sartre. If we take a closer look at the consciousness that I have of a remembered thing or event, then we see that it is based neither on a sign or picture nor does it refer to something that it is not; rather, the recollected is presented to me *as what it is*. We do not find a substitute "in" recollecting consciousness that might be interpreted *as* a sign for or a picture of something other than itself. The type of consciousness *of a photo* of me reading for the first time *Being and Time*, is not identical with the type of consciousness *of the recollected moment* in my life. Recollection is not - as a representation theory would assume - a "passage consciousness" [*Durchgangsbewußtsein*]. For in the act of recollection, the recollected *is itself* presented, though not in the form of a perception.

#### **Ad b) Recollection is not a Weaker Form of Perception**

However this may be, the act of recollection must not be confused with a "weaker" act of perceiving, simply because the recollected is presented in recollecting consciousness *as past*. Husserl needed years to formulate an appropriate description of this phenomenon.<sup>13</sup>

In sum, the remembered *noema*, the *cogitatum* of an act of recollection, has a special time index, since it does not appear *as present*, but *as past*. The temporal index, in other words, appears *in addition to* the remembered event or thing. This leads us to conclude that recollection is not a "lesser" form of perception, in which something is just given in an unclear, blurred or "weaker" manner than it is in a "normal" perception. Perception and recollection are, rather, different types of acts altogether.

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<sup>13</sup> The best description of the details of this central point are given in Rudolf Bernet, "Husserls Begriff des Phantasiebewusstseins als Fundierung von Freuds Begriff des Unbewussten," in C. Jamme, ed., *Grundlinien der Vernunftkritik* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1997), 277-306.

"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

Moreover, according to Husserl, perception and recollection are performed by *positing* consciousness, which refers to being, whereas – in contrast to perception and recollection – imagination refers to something that is *not* posited, but is – in his words – “neutralized.”<sup>14</sup> Put differently, everything is totally clear in an act of recollection, the remembered is “in front of my eyes” and presents itself, even if I might ask whether the remembered is *authentically* remembered. Only in the latter sense are we allowed to talk about the lack of clarity in our acts of recollection.<sup>15</sup> However, we must still differentiate between two temporal modes, within which something can appear: something can appear either as something that is given *as present* (perception) or as something that is given *as past* (recollection). The problem of the distinction between recollection, imagination and perception is not primarily a problem of *what* is given in these acts; rather, the problem involves the consciousness and givenness of time that is *given with* the remembered *noema*, or, put differently, the crucial phenomenon is the temporal mode *in which the how of the cogitatum* is given.

### **Ad c) Recollection and its Truth (Fulfillment)**

Given that the act of recollection is not a sign or picture consciousness, we must come to an important consequence, namely to the consequence that recollecting acts are *internally*

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<sup>14</sup> I cannot go into detail at this point. In sum, according to Husserl’s *Ideas I*, imagination (phantasy) is a *neutralized* act of recollection. I have described the difference between the imagined and the remembered in more detail in Christian Lotz, “Verfügbare Unverfügbarkeit. Über theoretische Grenzen und praktische Möglichkeiten der Erinnerung bei Husserl,” *Phänomenologische Forschungen – Phenomenological Studies* 1 (2002), 207-231; see also Paolo Volonte, *Husserls Phänomenologie der Imagination. Zur Funktion der Phantasie bei der Konstitution von Erkenntnis* (Freiburg: Alber, 1997). Section 2 of the Bernau manuscripts on time is very clear in this regard. Imagination is a type of consciousness that “quasi-posit” its noema (see Hua XXXIII, 55)

<sup>15</sup> Casey calls this feature “schematichness” (Casey, *Remembering*, 45). Krell misses this point in his remarks on Husserl; he does not realize that Husserl – although he follows, as Krell claims, a “visual” language (by giving acoustic examples) – does *not* claim that recollection is similar to perception. See Krell, *Phenomenology of Memory*, 495.

"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

referenced. Put differently, acts of recollection refer to acts of the same type; the "intentional reference" of memory is memory. Let me further explain this. There is no access to the past such that I could ever check my memory in the sense demanded by a picture theory of representation. I cannot immediately know whether my *single* act of recollection involves a "true" recollection, I can only find recollection as it exists in itself and within a "contest"<sup>16</sup> [*Wettstreit*] of different acts *of the same kind*. This is the only way of discerning whether it does in fact present my own past or not.<sup>17</sup> Ultimately, then, I can only check reports that the other makes about my past in terms of my own intuition and evidence. Of course, I might believe and trust reports that others give about my past, but then I am already referred to the symbolic and narrative level of the constitution of the past (which requires language). If I want to find out if something "really" happened in *my* past, then I have to go back to my own acts of recollection, although *empirically* it might be the case that most of the time it is difficult to differentiate between imagination and true and false recollections.

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<sup>16</sup> See Edmund Husserl, *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis*, ed. M. Fleischer, Husserliana XI (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1970), 194. Henceforth cited as 'Hua XI' with page reference.

<sup>17</sup> This thesis *includes* that there is, indeed, no criterion for a "false memory," if one does not find a contesting act of recollection. Krell also misses this point in his Husserl interpretation, since he claims that Husserl believes in an intrinsic quality of an act of remembering that shows evidence for its truth or falsehood. However, the process of fulfillment and disappointment of intentional acts is a *genetic* phenomenon, and it requires a modalization of the intentional act. The latter presupposes that a recollection becomes – for what ever reason – *doubted* or *problematic*. See for the analysis of modalization especially the first two sections in Hua XI. In addition, Krell claims that Husserl does not take into account that an act of imagination can interfere with acts of remembering. Of course, acts of remembering and acts of imagination almost always interfere with each other. The point is that *eidetically* conceived Husserl is primarily interested in the pure possibilities of acts of remembering. The eidetic level is based on a criterion of *distinguishing* between recollection and imagination. Krell's arguments are not absolutely wrong, but seen from Husserl's point of view psychologistic, and hence they misconstrue Husserl's analysis. See for the latter context Krell, *Phenomenology of Memory*, 501. Finally, Krell maintains that Merleau-Ponty is aware of the crucial role of forgetting and preserving within the constitution of memory, a point of which he also overlooks in Husserl's analysis, which shows that the *difference* between retention and recollection *is* forgetting, though it is true that Husserl was not fully aware of the central topic of forgetting for the whole context of life, history and autobiography.

"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

Let me give an example: suppose that I remember sitting in a German school for my philosophy examination fifteen years ago when I finished high school. Suppose that for whatever reason I try to become clearer about my memories, since I cannot remember well if I *really* sat in a philosophy examination. Of course, I *could* ask other people or consult photos of my past life, but this would finally only lead to a symbolic, significative or narrative constitution of my past. If I want to fulfill my attempts to remember my past in a German high school, then I am forced to try to find the truth about my past life merely internally and intuitively, that is to say, I have to try to remember my past *better than* I did before. I have to go "in me" and try to remember "better" (with the help of others or symbolic processes) what happened. In Husserl's words, this would lead to either [1] an internal change of my acts, that is to say, to an intuitive *fulfillment of empty* acts, or [2] a contest *between* different acts, which would in turn lead to a modalization of the noematic and given content (I shall return to this point when I discuss the monadic reference system).

A reference to the *present* school building, as one might argue, will not help, since – as we have learned above – in this case I would perceive the school *now* (for instance, I could travel to my home town and check if the school is still there). However, even if I found out that the school is there, my discovery will not give me the final and certain answer to the question if I *really*, that is to say, *in truth*, sat in this building and took philosophy classes in high school. If I *really* want to find out if I *really* sat in this building, then I am *forced* to go back to my intuitive acts. *No logic* and *no rationality* and *no symbolic process* (i.e. photos, descriptions of other people) will give me the final criterion of the truth of my acts of recollection, although most of the time they will help

"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

me recall my past. In other words, the certainty of my past, the truth of my past, is *ultimately* private and up to my own memory. It is, to put it in modern terms, a first person matter. The truth of memory, in other words, is memory itself. This is a puzzling fact, to which I will turn greater attention later. I shall now turn to the fourth aspect of recollection, as outlined above.

#### **Ad d) Recollection and the Intentional Reference System**

The assumption that the past is in some sense "behind" the present is incorrect. Against this, we must analyze the past as something that is a constitutive moment of the temporalization of the lived life itself. The past is something that is *part of* the temporal constitution of someone's life as a whole. Recollection, therefore, is the very act through which one maintains ones own dynamic identity and unity *while* being present and being towards the future.

What does it mean to talk of a past life in this way? We are intuitively familiar with the idea of a unified past of ourselves. When I recall an episode of my high school years, for example, I know immediately that this episode is *one* sequence within my whole past. I know that there is a permanent connection between this episode and my present life. Even if I can remember only a few things and am unable to remember what happened after the episode in question, I know with absolute certainty *that* another sequence followed.<sup>18</sup> If this continuity of my life were not available to me, I would be forced to think that either my past life consisted of "jumps" from experience to

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For a similar description, but without reference to Husserl, see Casey, *Remembering*, 40.

"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

experience or that it was a matter of permanently passing away and coming to be.<sup>19</sup> Yet I know that in all the years "behind" me, no such lack occurred, and I even assume that were my faculties less imperfect I could potentially present my *whole* past to myself. Should someone claim that he or she had not existed in his or her youth for a particular period of time, one could respond by pointing out that whilst recollection of particular episodes of one's youth might be impossible, the negation of a whole past life is patently absurd.

One must, then, conclude, with Husserl, that with every "updating" of even a *single* act of recollection, "the whole consciousness of the past is recalled [*mitwecken*], from which the particular recalled and reproduced detail becomes apparent." (Hua XI, 122). Every recollection of my past implies *intentionally* the *whole* monad or the *whole* life, and given the iterability of intentional acts, that life can be represented and proved (*bewähren*) over and over again. A central Husserlian insight follows from this, namely, that my whole life is always *potentially* included in my lived present;<sup>20</sup> for every change of belief concerning a particular act of recollection involves a modification of the *whole* past; *all* intentional references undergo change. We will later see that this thought is not convincing.

An example can illustrate this point. Suppose I now remember my visit in my friend's house and remember that while there I talked to Mr. X. Suppose further, that I met Mr. X a few days later and he informed me that he was not at my friend's house

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<sup>19</sup> Russell claims that memory is "is not a heap of events, but a series" (Russell, *Human Knowledge*, 227).

<sup>20</sup> This position is not reached by Husserl in *Ideas I*, since there he introduces the concept of intentional potentiality only in regard to the implicit background of explicit cogito-consciousness, whereas in *Cartesian Meditations* potentiality is conceived as the a potentiality of the *whole* intentional reference system of one's life (monad).



"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

during the days I remembered meeting him. Suppose that I would indeed suddenly notice that my act of recollection was not correct, and that I talked to Mrs. X instead. In this case the intuitive component of my recollection would undergo change. My recollection in this case would be accompanied by an "abundance of clarity" that produces a "modified belief;"<sup>21</sup> it is now *intuitively* clear to me that I did not in fact speak with Mr. X at all, but with Mrs. X. Any changing in the subjective act of recollection brings about similar change in the noema, that is, the correlate, as well. The earlier case will be "crossed out," as Husserl puts it, and from now on I know intuitively that I talked to Mrs. X and I will thus remember her presence on the occasion in question.

The crucial phenomenon is the following: From the moment of change (modalization) on, I will *also* remember my *mistake* (*Ent-Täuschung*) and this is part of what Husserl means by "crossing out" (see Hua XI, section 2): because every recollection refers to its intentional horizons of time, by negating some intentional implications and associations of my past not just a particular event but the whole monad is transformed. I establish new temporal connections within new frames of reference and from now on other experiences will be connected to this new structure. Further, since expectations are characterized by repetitions of my past as recollecting ahead [*Vorerinnerung*], my whole structure of anticipations changes as well.<sup>22</sup> For instance, from the change of my recollection it will follow that I became aware that certain actions that followed from my

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<sup>21</sup> Husserl deals with noetic and noematic modalization of the "Urdoxa" in *Ideas I*, see Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, ed. K. Schumann, Husserliana III/1 (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1977), §103pp. Henceforth cited as 'Hua III/1' with page reference.

<sup>22</sup> Husserl's central proposition in this context reads as follows: "Mein selbiges vergangenes Sein bietet sich mir in verschiedener Gegenwart je nach dem lebendig wirksamen Horizont der Gegenwart sehr verschieden dar, seinerseits in verschiedenem anschaulichen Gehalt und verschiedenem von der Gegenwart her gewecktem und in Fortweckung vorschreitendem Horizont." (Hua XV, 418.)

"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

wrong recollection (I talked to Mr. X) are becoming modified as well. The letter that I wrote to Mr. X in order to thank him for his politeness during our talk will produce an "embarrassed index," since from now on I know that I should have written the letter to Mrs. X, and not to Mr. X. All references that are connected to my former belief (I met Mr. X) will change their status and be modified. Let me now turn to the last aspect of the phenomenology of recollection.

### **Ad e) Recollection and the Possibility of an Absolute Past**

Husserl does assume a permanent modification of monadic being, but he never gives up his thesis that ideally all acts of recollection can fulfill themselves apodictically. This apodicticity is present in every act of recollecting, however weak the acts themselves might be. Accordingly, every reference to my past is based on my "true" or "authentic" being (Hua XI, 208). This is an ideal correlate of all of my possible acts of recollecting to which those acts refer, which are simultaneously proved within the acts of recollection themselves.

Although I might be confused about the contents of my own past, it is impossible to transform and negate my past *being* as such. This eventuality would be tantamount to the collapse of consciousness itself, a point that Husserl makes when he speaks of the "being-in-itself of one's own past." Behind every modification, modalization, and alteration, lies not only the possibility of transporting the flow of consciousness [*Bewußtseinsverlauf*] and the unity of my life back in harmony [*Ein stimmigkeit*], but also an ideal possibility to refer, by recollecting, to an unequivocal past. This unequivocal being escapes from my access [*unverfügbar*]. In this connection, Husserl writes in his manuscripts on *Intersubjectivity*:

"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

Modalization or deception in relation to myself all the time concerns my relative Being [...], but not my Being as such, that is, my concrete Being, which lives and has lived its life<sup>23</sup>

As either the ideal possibility of the totality of intersubjective world-perspectives or all experiences of one thing, my past is something phenomenologically *in-itself*. This leads me to the final aspect of Husserl's insights into recollection and memory, namely, the ontological status of the past, that is to say, the concept of an "absolute past."<sup>24</sup>

In a central passage in the *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis*, Husserl asks whether the temporal constitution of subjectivity would be possible if we had only primary retentive remembering rather than secondary recollecting of our experiencing [*Erlebnisse*]. He says:

But could subjectivity in truth have its own past, could we speak meaningfully of this 'having' if in principle every possibility of remembering were lacking [...]? (Hua XI, 124/169).

This question is of central importance for the question with which I am dealing here, since it opens a path for including a concept of absence and loss within the analysis of transcendental subjectivity *without* leaving the Husserlian framework of thinking.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> See Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität III*, ed. I. Kern, Husserliana XV (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1973), 451 (my translation). Henceforth cited as 'Hua XV' with page reference.

<sup>24</sup> Husserl's attempt to reduce ontological questions to "epistemological" questions is clearly *overturned* in his phenomenology of recollection. Seebohm's thesis that all ontological questions should be reduced to phenomenological questions is problematic in the discussed context of memory and recollection. He claims that Husserl's project can only be defended if ontological questions are radically excluded, although Husserl himself is not always clear about the status of ontology in his philosophy; see Thomas Seebohm, "The Apodicticity of Absence," in W. McKenna and C. Evans, eds., *Derrida and Phenomenology* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1995), 186-187.

<sup>25</sup> The other puzzling question is the question of *why* there is a difference between retention and recollection, or between primary and secondary memory. It is unclear *why* consciousness transcends itself *within the lived present*. A possible attempt to explain the gap between retention and recollection is the hypothesis that it has to do with the other. For a first attempt to solve the problem see Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der Europäischen Wissenschaften und die Transzendente Phänomenologie*, ed. W. Biemel, Husserliana VI (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1976), 196. Henceforth cited as 'Hua XV' with page reference. I will return to this point at the end of this paper.

What Husserl has in mind is the following: The subject as an identifiable unity can only be constituted through *repetitions* and through recollections.<sup>26</sup> Without recollection (but with *living through* as the lived present) we would never be able to constitute an *identifiable* past, the consequence of which is that the past of a subject is *exclusively* constituted through recollection and *not* through retention.<sup>27</sup> Put differently, to speak of one's past necessarily includes the possibility of recollection. The reason for this thesis is the following: we could *live* within an ongoing lived present, but we are able to talk about a unity and an identifiable being-for-itself of a life and consciousness only by being aware of the processes of recollection mentioned above. What is at issue here is the possibility of a unified *subjective* life at all, which is made possible through the delay and deferral *between* retention and recollection. Put differently, a constitution of time through the passive synthesis of the lived present would give us a primitive notion of life, even though it does not provide us with a notion of *subjectivity*, the concept of which presupposes at least a minimal *distance* from itself, that is, from its own presence.

Husserl himself (but not Derrida in *Speech and Phenomena*) claims that a past can only *be*, and that the subject can only have a *real* past, if there is a *difference* between retention and recollection. Consequently, consciousness is not self-transparent *because*

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<sup>26</sup> It becomes immediately clear how Heidegger transforms this thought in *Being and Time* into a practical category. Repetition is conceived by Heidegger as the "proper" understanding of Dasein that conceives the past as *future* – and therefore as a repeatable – possibility, through which *resolute action* becomes possible. In addition, the importance of recollection for the constitution of one's life within a narrative is another level of constitution that is not addressed in Husserl; for an overview of these levels see David Carr, *Time, Narrative and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1986), especially chapter 3.

<sup>27</sup> Some commentators have claimed that even in terms of what he himself calls "self-reference" [*Selbstbezug*], Husserl's phenomenology lacks the resources to investigate the life history or the past of a subject. This thesis is exaggerated, although Husserl never fully investigated the relation between narrative elements, time and the constitution of the past life of an individual, a group of people or the whole history. See, for example, Laszlo Tengelyi, *Der Zwitterbegriff Lebensgeschichte* (München: Fink, 1998), 103.

"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

subjectivity is only possible through recollection. The point is that the retentional process of modification [*Abwandlungsprozess*] and the original temporalization [*Urzeitigung*] of consciousness is not identifying, and this then means that we can talk about a self or a subject only on the level at which an "I" *performs* the acts through the acts of recollection themselves.<sup>28</sup> In other words: a past life *as past* is constituted only *in* recollection; and for this reason it cannot be described as a "blind" personal history. Put still differently, without the possibility of repetition we would not *have* – as Husserl puts it – a unified life; rather, we would only *live* it. The past would not appear *as past*, for the possibility of having a past is the *difference* between present and past. This difference is not constituted on the level of the unified present, but is presupposed for recollection. Our life would be an ongoing lived present with retentional and protentional processes, but it would not be accessible as such. It would not be *there*, since there would not *be* (!) anything I *could possibly* refer to. In order to recollect something in my life, in order to recollect and gather myself, I *must* refer to something that is there *beyond* my lived present.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> For an overview of Husserl's different attempts to grasp the relation of the "I" that is included in the lived present *and* in the remembered consciousness see Lotz, *Unverfügbarkeit*. Interestingly, Husserl later thought himself that the relation between the present ego and the remembered ego could be described in term of an intersubjective relation. The past is the very being that appears to me as the past of *an other*. Consequently, the intersubjective relation in *Cartesian Meditation* as well as in the *Crisis* is described as a consciousness of *Vergegenwärtigung* (remembering, re-presentation). See Edmund Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*, ed. S. Strasser, Husserliana I (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1973), §45 (my translation). Henceforth cited as 'Hua I' with page reference; see Hua VI, 189; see Hua XV, 309, 344; within the context of Derrida's critique of Husserl's concept of presence see James Mensch, "Derrida-Husserl. Towards a Phenomenology of Language," *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* 1 (2001), 1-66, here 22. The "now," as Derrida correctly claims, is in the Bernau manuscripts indeed conceived as an absolute presence. The hyletic primordial presence is both *self presence of the hyle* and consciousness of it as *being present* (see Hua XXXIII, 58). This leads to the well known problems of how to conceive self-consciousness in regard to the hyletic level of experience. In the Bernau manuscripts Husserl also still uses the language of "sensation data" for [*Empfindungsdatum*], which shows that he – at least in these manuscripts – had not overcome the sensualistic theory of consciousness.

<sup>29</sup> Krell calls this "ultratranscendence" (Krell, *Phenomenology of Memory*, 103).

"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

Let me further explain this crucial point: recollection alone allows us to speak of an *identifiable* past. For instance, a tone impression that is present within the retentional horizon of my lived present is *within the lived present* unidentifiable. Instead it is just self-consciously given, and it first becomes identifiable through an act of recollection of this impression *as* retentional and *as* an impression. Asked by someone else "What did you hear?," I am able to say *that* I listened to something (thanks to retention), but I *must* recollect in order *know that* it was "a tone." Otherwise, according to Husserl, the tone *as* past tone, that is, the *being* of the heard tone "in me" would not have been constituted as a phenomenon that *belongs* to a subject.

In the quote above Husserl uses a terminology that he takes over from Kant. To speak of an "in-itself," as Husserl surprisingly does, implies the claim that there "is" a level of constitution "in us" that is *not* accessible through recollection and re-presentation, though re-presentation is *constitutive* for subjectivity.<sup>30</sup> This thought is deeply puzzling within the Husserlian framework of thought, since the consequence of it is that the lived present must *transcend* itself; life must go *beyond* itself, if we can speak of subjectivity at all. Transcending the living present is the same as becoming other, and recollection is both repetition and, since repetition is always repetition of something, *difference*.

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<sup>30</sup> Astonishingly so, this thought is similar to the idea of trauma in Freud and Levinas, since both claim that something happens to the subject that constitutes the subject *as* subject, but which cannot be represented by it. For an overview of these contexts, see Rudolf Bernet, "The Traumatized Subject," *Research in Phenomenology* 30 (2000), 160-180.

"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

At this point it is instructive to look to Derrida's concept of an "absolute past, not reducible to any form of presence"<sup>31</sup>. Derrida claims in his early interpretation of Husserl that Husserl's analysis of time consciousness does not account for a fundamental absence within the lived present, which then leads, according to Derrida, to the impossibility of a full self-presence of the subject. Derrida writes:

Without reducing the abyss which may indeed separate retention from re-presentation, without hiding the fact that the problem of their relationship is none other than that of the history of 'life' and of life's becoming conscious, we should be able to say *a priori* that their common root – the possibility of re-petition in its most general form, that is, the constitution of a trace in the most universal sense - is a possibility which not only must inhabit the pure actuality of the now but must constitute it through the very movement of differance it introduces<sup>32</sup>

Interestingly, Derrida does not follow his own observation of the fact that Husserl makes a sharp distinction between retention and recollection.<sup>33</sup> However, Husserl's discovery *that* we have a past to which we can only ideally, but not *really*, return, shakes the traditional idea of a self-transparent subject, and leads us to an integration of certain concepts, such as the unconscious, loss and mourning.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Memoires for Paul de Man*, tr. by C. Lindsay, J. Culler, E. Cadava and P. Kamuf (New York: Columbia University, 1989), 66. Henceforth cited as 'Memoires' and page number.

<sup>32</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, tr. by D.B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1973), 67.

<sup>33</sup> In his further elaboration of Husserl's concept of the lived present Derrida does not realize [1] that Husserl himself was already on the way to an acknowledgment of a *difference* and an acknowledgment of the thought that repetition in the sphere of recollection presupposes loss, as well as [2] that Husserl did not conceive both retention and recollection as forms of repetition. See Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, 67. For a thorough reading of Derrida's essay, see Mensch, *Derrida-Husserl*, 23-36.

<sup>34</sup> In addition, it would lead us to further considerations about the "reality" of the subject. If it is indeed the case that a fundamental absence is inscribed within one's past, then the self is necessarily constituted by an imaginary part that responds to the fundamental absence in its past. The self *always* has to *imagine* and hallucinate about who it *is*, since it *cannot* fully recollect itself.

## Memory, Mourning, Death (Derrida)

Given the analysis that I have unfolded in the first part of this paper I would like to go one step further in the following part of this essay by shifting the analysis of remembering and recollection to the next level, which follows from the considerations presented above, and which is especially introduced by the French branch of phenomenology.

The interpretation of central aspects of Husserl's analysis of recollection revealed the status of our past life as a being-in-itself. Husserl's acknowledgment of a *being-in-itself* of one's past life leads us to three new aspects: [a] we must take into account a basic form of absence and absolute past that is *constitutive* for our life, so that, put paradoxically, recollection is possible because it is impossible, [b] the act of recollection is the attempt to *save* something that had been lost – it is the return of the self to the self - as well as consequently, [c] that memory can be reconsidered as a form and result of mourning, which is to say, through mourning, we constitute the *reality* and the *being* of (past, absent and other) consciousness *within* consciousness. "Memory," as Derrida puts it, "becomes memory only through this movement of mourning"<sup>35</sup>. Accordingly, consciousness *exists because* it recollects, but at the same time it *must fail* to recollect, the latter of which Derrida calls the "law of mourning" (*Mourning*, 144).

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<sup>35</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Work of Mourning*, tr. by P.A. Brault and M. Naas (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2001), 115. Henceforth cited as 'Mourning' and page number.



"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

## Freud's Mourning and Melancholia

Let me first turn to the concept of mourning, as introduced by Freud in his famous essay *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), since it is important for the issue in question.<sup>36</sup> In this short essay, Freud integrates certain key concepts that he later develops in more detail, such as identification, narcissism, ego ideal, and the feeling of guilt. Important for the context of my considerations at this point, is the crucial distinction that Freud draws between mourning and melancholia. Mourning, he states, is a normal "reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken place of one, such as one's country, liberty, and ideal, and so on"<sup>37</sup>. The loss of the other, to which all energy was attached (*cathexis*), and which therefore was an *external part of one's self*, is such that the self becomes shaken through the experience of loss; the "work" and "labor" of mourning, according to Freud, is the very attempt of the self to *accept* the reality of the loss, absence and death. Through the process of mourning, which, according to Freud, takes unpredictable amount of time and must be conceived as an affective rather than a cognitive process, the self becomes aware that something outside of itself was lost. Reality, which is in this case the *reality of death*, is constituted through the painful process of detaching oneself from the identification with the lost object. The process of

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<sup>36</sup> Freud's theory of mourning and melancholia, although not taken over by 20<sup>th</sup> century psychology in its entirety, became a standard model in psychology up until today. For an overview see George Hagman, "Beyond Decathexis: Toward a New Psychoanalytic Understanding and Treatment of Mourning," in R.A. Neimeyer, ed., *Meaning Reconstruction and the Experience of Loss* (Washington: American Psychological Association, 2001), 14-24; for his critique of the "standard model" see *ibid.*, 19-24, who argues that [1] Freud does not provide us with a social model of mourning, that [2] he focuses on specific affections, such as sadness, that are not always connected to it, [3] that the process of mourning is restorative rather than open and world changing, and [4] that it is self-centered, rather than dialogical. However, the empirical study of melancholia is not of central importance for the consideration presented in this paper, since I am more interested in a general view on subjectivity.

<sup>37</sup> Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud XV* (London: Hogarth, 1917), 239-258, here 243.

"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

mourning is the return of the self to the self. The work and labor of mourning has a therapeutic effect. Instead of a repetition of symptoms, which is a sign of a failed decathexis, a successful mourning, according to Freud, will ideally lead back to an uninhibited and unlimited self.

In contrast, melancholia is the situation of the ego within which the process of mourning is not successful. In this way, melancholia is "unresolved mourning," and as such a result of the failure of mourning. In this situation, Freud claims, the identificatory "object cathexis" *turns inward* into one's own self and becomes established as a part of the self. The identification can even be so strong that the other becomes *incorporated* and *introjected* within the self, so that ultimately the self refers to the other *within itself*.<sup>38</sup> In other words, instead of giving up the lost object, as mourning does, in melancholia *death* and *absence* is denied and the other is kept alive with all psychic energy that is connected to it. One's own self is partly exchanged with the identificatory energy, the melancholic subject feels therefore "empty" and experiences the loss as a loss of its own self. Moreover, melancholic consciousness does not know *what* is lost.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> This structure within Freud's own theory marks the development of the concept of the ego-ideal. Freud observed that depressed patients all the time judge and accuse themselves, and are unsatisfied with their own self and past. The melancholic person turns the lost person into itself and thereby incorporates it as an ideal.

<sup>39</sup> In this connection, Freud writes: "In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty, in melancholia it is the ego itself" (Freud, *Mourning*, 246. Here, as Jennifer Radden remarks, the renaissance theory of melancholia enters Freud's thinking. The tradition of thinking about melancholia, which runs from Aristotle through Kant, described melancholia as a mood that appears without a cause. See Jennifer Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy. From Aristotle to Kristeva*, (Oxford: Oxford University, 2000), 282, also 44. The cultural history of melancholia, especially its interdisciplinary status between philosophy, medicine, psychology and art is very stimulating. Even thinking was traditionally conceived as a form of melancholia, since the thinker turns inward into his self and mourns the loss within him or herself.

## From Freud to Derrida

Freud's analysis is of importance in the context of my considerations because of three things: [1] mourning is the very consciousness of death and absence, [2] mourning establishes the relation to the other as an *internal* relation of absence, and [3] mourning is the very movement of recollection, since the absence of the other *forces* me to internalize the other, which is to say, to recollect the other in me. Since the other is dead, is absent, I internalize the *absence* of the other.<sup>40</sup> In other words, death in the form of an absence of the other forces the self to internalize the other in form of an "image" (idealization in Freud, representation and "image" in Derrida), that is to say, in the form of *memory*. Mourning, therefore, is the very form of consciousness, within which the recollected is somehow [1] "*in us*" in the form of [2] a *representation* including the [3] *absence/death* (of the other). This strikingly reminds us of Husserl's general characterization of recollection. Since, as we can learn from Freud, melancholia is the *denial* of the other's death (the reality of death), mourning *is* the very attempt to recollect the other's death, which would include an *acceptance* of death and absence, that is, of something that is real in-itself.

If the process of mourning as that what "institutes my relation to myself and constitutes the egoity of the ego"<sup>41</sup> is inevitably connected with the process of recollection, and if recollection is based on absence, then mourning/recollection *must fail* and with its failure constitute a being-in-itself within itself. Consciousness, in other words, is always mourning and melancholia at the same time, since something is

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<sup>40</sup> For the concept of *differance* in this context see the brief overview in Len Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl. The Basic Problem of Phenomenology* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2002), 232.

<sup>41</sup> Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, 76.

"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

fundamentally lost, where recollection is just the visible side. Put differently, recollection tries to recollect what is unable to be recollected. Something that cannot be recollected (absolute past) cannot be represented. Something that cannot be represented does *not* become subjective and remains foreign. This irreducible otherness is what Derrida has in mind when he claims that mourning is possible, only on the basis of a failure of mourning.<sup>42</sup> Let me further explain this point.

The puzzling question that Husserl never raised is *why* we recollect and how we explain the *force* of recollection. The speculative answer that is given by Derrida is that recollection and memory presuppose a movement of internalization that is identical with absence and "othering" in general. In other words, mourning is just another expression of the fact that recollection refers to a "*being-in-me*," which is, as Husserl claims, constituted as an in-itself. It is inapproachable, lost, gone, inaccessible, and hence, *other than me*. It seems to be appropriate, therefore, to speak of the other of the self in terms of memory and mourning. Recollection is the first form of consciousness that is conscious of something other than itself: the "being-in-me or being-in-us is constituted out of the possibility of mourning," as Derrida puts it (*Memoires*, 34). The paradox becomes immediately clear: although the subject tries to recollect, it is faced with the failure of recollection, since – as we now know – recollection *already* presupposes a difference, which makes it impossible to (truth)fully recollect. "There can be no *true mourning*, even if truth and lucidity always presuppose it, and, in truth, take place only as the truth of mourning" (*Memoires*, 29). Since recollection as a form of mourning must fail in its

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<sup>42</sup> Derrida says: "The non-subjectivable in the experience of mourning is what I tried to describe in *Glas* and in *Memoires for Paul de Man*" (Jacques Derrida, *Points. Interviews 1974-1994*, ed. By E. Weber, tr. by P. Kamuf (Stanford: Stanford University, 1995), 271.

"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

attempt to truthfully recollect what belongs to the self as its reality, it is unable to unify itself as a whole. In other words, if it is true that recollection can never be fully successful (=“untrue”), then the unified history of one’s self, that is, one’s identity and unity throughout one’s life, becomes ambivalent. Identity of one’s self, in this case, would be based on a movement of non-identity and otherness that renders it impossible for the self to reappropriate itself as a whole (contrary to Heidegger’s claims in *Being and Time*).<sup>43</sup> In Derrida’s words:

But *we* are never *ourselves*, and between us, identical to us, a ‘self’ is never in itself or identical to itself. This specular reflection never closes on itself; it does not appear *before* this *possibility* of mourning (*Memoires*, 28)

Given this temporal constitution of our lives, we can see how our present lives are always fundamentally “injured” (*Mourning*, 107), “traumatized,”<sup>44</sup> characterized by an “openness”<sup>45</sup> or fissured by an “open wound”<sup>46</sup>. Every act of recollection presents the attempt to *save* the past and to escape death and dying. The structure of consciousness is possible only through this internal relation to what is dying in it, and the attempt to recollect oneself *as* oneself must fail, since it simply *confirms* what it tries to escape, namely its own death (awaiting it).

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<sup>43</sup> Derrida further writes: “This trace is interiorized *in* mourning *as* that which can no longer be interiorized, as impossible *Erinnerung*, in and beyond mournful memory – constituting it, traversing it, exceeding it, defying all reappropriation” (*Memoires*, 38).

<sup>44</sup> For the attempt to grasp the problem of how the subject can be affected by something that it is unable to represent see Bernet, *Traumatized Subject*.

<sup>45</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, tr. by A. Lingis (Philadelphia: Duquesne University, 1998), 145.

<sup>46</sup> Freud, *Mourning*, 253.

"Recollection, Mourning and the Absolute Past: Husserl, Freud and Derrida," in *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 4, 2004, 121-141.

## **Conclusion**

We must finally come to this result: [a] Recollection is an *infinite* (impossible) process, according to Husserl and Derrida. It is therefore not "closed," in Derrida's words: "it precludes any totalizing summary – the exhaustive narrative or the total absorption of memory" (*Memoires*, 11); [b] recollection is based on a fundamental absence within the self; [c] because of this absence, recollection as the internalized being-in-itself is a process of mourning, in which the self mourns its own finitude; and, finally, [d] the possibility of recollection is intertwined with the *otherness* of consciousness, the question of which I was unable to unfold fully in this essay.