

EVIDENCE AND STRUCTURE

Perspectives on the Metaphysics of Presence and Non-Presence

INTRODUCTION: PRESENCE, ABSENCE AND ANOTHER PLACE

This paper discusses the concepts of evidence and structure from within a phenomenologically inspired epistemology. It situates these concepts against two metaphysical backgrounds, a metaphysics of presence versus a metaphysics of non-presence or absence. The paper contains three parts.

It starts with an introduction into Husserl's theory of knowledge, in which *evidence* functions as an ideal point that founds a corpus of knowledge and serves as a teleological anchorage in the process of knowledge. In a Derridean spirit, this viewpoint is interpreted as relying upon a metaphysics of *presence*, in which the play of structure is (ideally) stabilized by a source point of evidence.

It further presents a Derridean critique of evidence, by opposing a metaphysics of presence to a metaphysics of *non-presence* or *absence*. According to Derrida, the condition of possibility of structure is absence. The continuous play of the elements within a structure emerges from an original non-presence, and this absence is situated beyond the specific structural functioning.

Finally, this paper investigates whether a metaphysics of absence can be relevantly interpreted and actualized from within Merleau-Ponty's account, as developed in his *The Structure of Behavior* (1942). This account involves dynamic, stratified structures, which ask for a functional interpretation coming from outside the structure itself. In line with Derrida, a point of absence is required in enabling the play of the elements, and this point of absence is articulated as a point *external* to the structural functioning in focus. In the interpretation presented here, the absence is situated at *another* organizational level, i.e. a level other than the one of the structure at issue. From this *other place*, a structure can be endowed with meaning or with function. For a structure to be revealed *as* structure, *another place* is required. This is how the issue of *perspective* can be epistemologically clarified.

1. EVIDENCE AS THE CORNERSTONE OF HUSSERL'S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

1.1. Evidence as a Justificatory Basis

In his quest for a firm foundation of knowledge, Husserl encounters the problem of reason (*Vernunft*), i.e. the problem of finding the conditions of *truly existent* objects. In the *Cartesian Meditations* (1931), Husserl refers to this as a Cartesian problem: "How can evidence (*clara et distincta perceptio*) claim to be more than a characteristic of consciousness within me? Aside from the (perhaps not so unimportant) exclusion of acceptance of the world as being, it is the Cartesian problem, which was supposed to be solved by divine *veracitas*" (Husserl, 1960: 82–83).¹

The gap between consciousness and truth is for Descartes bridged by God's benevolence. Thanks to God, something untrue cannot be evident. Husserl, in contrast, aims at achieving an evidence theory of truth without recourse to God as a guarantee for truth. The notion of evidence shall function as a removal tool for the presence of God; in itself, it has to guarantee a secure basis for knowledge.

Husserl believes the origin of the Cartesian problem is twofold. It lies, firstly, in the fact that Descartes has not understood the real meaning of the transcendental reduction and the reduction to the pure ego. Indeed, the Cartesian ego remains a mundane ego, i.e. part of the world, which is, to Husserl, an absurdity. Secondly, Husserl believes, contra Descartes, that the *cogitatum*, and not only the *cogitato*, is part of absolute evidence. This means that the object is not totally external to the subject, and therefore it does not require, as for Descartes, a source of divinity guaranteeing its truth.²

Even if phrasing and points of focus differ, Husserl will stick to this intuition throughout from the *Logical Investigations* to the *Ideas*.³ Evidence is the ultimate justificatory basis in his theory of knowledge. In the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl states that without evidence, truth remains out of reach, even within an internally coherent ensemble of judgments. "We therefore conceive 'knowledge' in a wider, but not wholly loose sense: we separate it off from baseless opinion, by pointing to some 'mark' of the presumed state of affairs or for the correctness of the judgment passed by us. The most perfect 'mark' of correctness is inward evidence, it counts as an immediate intimation of truth itself" (Husserl, 2001, vol. 1: 17).⁴

Meanwhile, Husserl also admits that the immediately evident is trivial. This is no underestimation from his side of what is immediately evident;

knowledge does not reach any further than evidence does. Yet, evidence only holds for a very limited number of cases, and therefore knowledge via evidence is not yet science. For the latter we need a systematic coherence, a structured corpus of judgments, in a theoretical sense. Thus, against the background of ultimately justifying evidence, a theory of knowledge also has to study how systematic coherence is possible, and it does so by investigating the knowledge-relations between founding evidences and inferences (*Begründung*).

1.2. Evidence as an Ideal Possibility

Thus, for Husserl, insight into truth is accompanied by evidence. “Inner evidence is rather nothing but the ‘experience’ of truth” (Husserl, 2001: 121).⁵ The possibility of evidence is, however, *ideal*. In the case in which evidence is psychologically impossible, it may ideally be well possible. For example, evidence is *psychologically* impossible if we encounter very large numbers; *ideally*, however, it remains a possible experience. Evidence does not *only* – but in its *essence* it does – fall under ideal laws. Although evidence also resides under psychological conditions, it may in no way be reduced to a *feeling* of evidence. This implies that psychology is inapt to say something which pertains to the essence of evidence. Psychology can only account for the natural conditions of human cognition under which the occurrence or non-occurrence of the experience of evidence falls. It has, however, nothing to say about evidence as an ideal possibility, which is a possibility for pure consciousness in general.

In the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl considers the experience of evidence in the case of judgment and in the case of perception as similarly structured. “The inwardly evident judgment is (...) an experience of primal givenness: the non-self-evident judgment stands to it much as the arbitrary positing of an object in imagination stands to its adequate perception. A thing adequately perceived is not a thing merely meant in some manner or other: it is a thing primarily grasped without residue” (Husserl, 2001: 121).⁶

So, evidence is not a *psychological* concept, but in the first place an *epistemological*, and even a *metaphysical* concept. It is the agreement between what is merely meant and that which is meant in its originary presence. In other words, it is the agreement between the meaning (*Sinn*) of the proposition and that which is meant given in *primal fashion* (*originär*). More generally, in evidential knowledge, the object itself (which may be real or ideal) is present to us.

In perception, for example, the ideal limit of agreement between intention and intuition is a case of evidence.⁷ The object is present or given precisely as it is intended. No partial intention remains without intuitive fulfillment. The ideal limit is the case in which the absolute self of the object is present in perception, and this for each side and each aspect of the object. This limit is, however, ideal, and is never experienced in actual sense-perception. To each truly existent object thus corresponds the Idea of a possible consciousness, in which the object is *originarily* and *adequately* graspable.

Whether Husserl deals with judgments or with perceptions, evidence remains to him the ultimate foundation of knowledge, the ideal point which secures grip on truly existent objects, the epistemological cornerstone that provides the ideal closure for the structure of perception and scientific knowledge. It is the never-to-be-reached limit of the process of knowledge and functions as its teleological pole of attraction.

2. THE METAPHYSICAL GESTURE BEHIND HUSSERL'S VIEWPOINT ON EVIDENCE: A DERRIDEAN CRITIQUE

2.1. *The Stabilizing Presence of the Center*

Derrida (1967: 409ff)⁸ considers Husserl's phenomenology, especially in the first *Logical Investigation*, as indicative of a metaphysical gesture that is characteristic of the Western philosophical and scientific tradition or *episteme*. It consists in neutralizing a structural play of elements by providing it with a center, a point of presence or a fixed origin. It is with regard to that metaphysical gesture that Derrida wishes to make a difference, or at least wants to indicate a potential "event".

It is true that in the Western episteme the concept of structure captures both the constrained functioning of elements and the dynamical interplay between the elements in function of the structural whole. Elements function differently within a structure. They are not functioning freely or randomly but instead obey principles related to the organization or structure. It is also true that the introduction of a center or a point of fixation has been naturally accompanying this classical viewpoint.⁹ The center is the point that equilibrates, orients and organizes a structure. It brings the structure to rest by reducing or neutralizing the structurality of the structure. This happens by limiting what Derrida calls the *play* (*jeu*) of the structure.

The center itself, however, is closed off from the play of structure: if all elements in a structure are substitutable, not so for the center of the structure, which precisely indicates the limit of the play of substitution. The center both closes off and opens up or enables the play of structure (Derrida, 1967: 409). The center of a structure thus has a special status. It both installs in the structure that which commands it, and it neutralizes the structurality of the structure. In that sense, it is both *in* and *out* of the structure. Derrida refers to the concept of a centered structure as a *grounded* play, i.e. a play that is constituted by a founding immobility and a reassuring certainty that is itself excluded from the play (Derrida, 1967: 410).¹⁰

The center is named indifferently beginning and end, the unique point of presence that can reveal the historical meaning (origin and telos) of the repetitions, substitutions and transformations of the elements grabbed within the structure.

Clearly, a *metaphysics of presence*, implying a center that limits the ever-ongoing dynamics of the elements in the structure, is at work in Husserl's theory of knowledge. The point of presence is situated in his concept of evidence. In this, Husserl overtly admits his Cartesian roots and ambitions. Even if he refuses the Cartesian solution in terms of a guaranteeing God, he does look for a guaranteeing, fixating point, a point bringing the processes of knowledge, judgment and perception to rest, a point outside the structure of knowledge enabling and guaranteeing its ultimately faithful functioning. The position of the guaranteeing divine presence is taken in by the ideal limit of evidence. In line with Descartes, and with many philosophers having worked within the same metaphysical option, Husserl looks for certainty, for mastering. As Derrida correctly states, it ultimately concerns a mastering of anxiety, an anxiety related to being implied and grabbed in the play.

2.2. *A Metaphysics of Absence*

In opposition to a metaphysics of presence, Derrida focuses on the conditions of possibility of structure in terms of *absence*. What renders structure possible is that which escapes the structure, that which cannot be captured from within the structure. A structure has no privileged center, no privileged subject or reference. "Therefore, one has to abandon the scientific or philosophical discourse, the *episteme*, that has as an absolute requirement, that is the absolute requirement to return to the source, the center, the foundation, the principle, etc." (Derrida, 1967: 420, our translation).¹¹

The play of structure, with its endless movement of substitution, repetition, transformation and permutation of the elements, does no longer have as its horizon the possible or impossible exhaustion of a field. In contrast, it points to the *absence* of a center that would stop and found the play of substitutions, and implies as such a radically different nature of the field itself. In this regard, Derrida believes that the metaphysical shift has become possible by the progressive reflection on the notion of structurality of structure, initiated at the end of the 19th century and culminating in the structuralist movement.

It is true that the metaphysical space that thereby opened up, involved what Derrida calls an *invasion by language* of the problematic field of universality. In the absence of a center of presence, in the absence of a point of origin or telos, everything becomes discourse, that is, a system in which the central signified (originary or transcendental), is never absolutely present outside a system of differences.

It is useful here to note that the absence of a center does not mean that at the heart of structure there is an empty place, or that the center is still there but has been emptied. Rather, structure is only made possible from a void point, i.e. from something that escapes the structure. Indeed, the solution Derrida proposes, is not so much to stop the infinite play of the structure by securing it through a point of presence or by introducing an emptiness at the heart of structure. It is to consider any answer to the absence of a fixating point of origin, not as a fulfillment (a presence), but as a floating addition, a local and temporal supplement, something that comes on top of, or in the place of, the absence. "It is impossible to determine the center and exhaust totalisation because the sign that replaces the center, that *supplies* for it, that takes its place in its absence, that sign comes in addition, on top, as a *supplement*. The movement of meaning adds something, which implies that there is always more, but that addition is floating because it substitutes, it supplies for a lack at the side of the signified" (Derrida, 1967: 423, our translation).¹² Since the structuralist movement, the signifier is typically what has been considered to fulfill this task. It is in itself void, indefinitely interpretable, and functions as a suppletion in the sense meant here. Therefore, from the moment the supplement enters the scene, what we call Derrida's 'metaphysics of absence', is more appropriately called a 'metaphysics of delay' or a 'metaphysics of postponement'.¹³

In the final part of the paper, this metaphysics of absence, involving the idea of suppletion, is given some "flesh" on the basis of an

organisational point of view, inspired by Merleau-Ponty's *The Structure of Behaviour* (1942).

3. MERLEAU-PONTY: STRUCTURE AND MEANING

If we go along with Derrida's idea of a metaphysics of delay or postponement, the big issue is to conceive of "the other place" as a genuine condition of possibility of structure. That must be done without recourse to a point of presence or fixation, or even without appealing to an empty place at the heart of structure. The "other place" does not point to an absence that should be completed. It points to a place from which structure *as* structure becomes possible. In other words, it is the perspective from which structure can be seen. That will be articulated in terms of a "logic of suppletion" related to a metaphysics of delay. To this end, a phenomenological account of organizational levels is presented based on Merleau-Ponty (1942). That account serves as a framework to outline the idea of perspective, from both an organizational account and a "logic of suppletion".

3.1. *A Structural Approach to the Organism*

In his structural account of the organism, Merleau-Ponty criticizes vitalist or holistic, as well as atomistic or reductionist viewpoints. He considers both options of holism and atomism as two sides of the same coin. Indeed, from the point of view of vitalism, the unity of the organism is established through a principle (entelechy) that unifies otherwise separately working mechanisms. This principle not only brings about the living system as a meaningfully organized, purposive system. At its basis also lies a mechanistic image of a living being, i.e. a material mass *partes extra partes* that asks for a unifying principle. Merleau-Ponty believes that the whole of the organism is more than the sum of its parts. But he resists the vitalist solution, in as far as it invokes a mysterious unifying principle. What exactly will then be his solution?

Firstly, he acknowledges that in describing the behavior of living systems, it is impossible to set out the relation between stimulus and response in a linear way. There is no linear, causal relation between what sensitively or otherwise comes in and the patterns of response the organism produces.

Secondly, in accounting for this impossibility, Merleau-Ponty will make the structural assumption in relation to the organism.¹⁴ It is because of

the structured nature of the organism that stimulus and response are not coupled linearly.

Thirdly, the assumption of structure goes hand in hand with a *functional* account. As the stimulus in itself does not dictate the ways in which it is to be taken into account, an explication of the *perspective* out of which a stimulus acquires a meaning, is unavoidable. The issue of perspective is the big issue in relation to living systems, and stands in close connection with the issue of functionality.

This issue has two aspects. On the one hand, it refers to the actively interpreting, dynamically structured organism itself. On the other hand, it refers to an interpreting instance, a perceiving subject that cannot but acknowledge the intrinsically purposive, meaningful nature of living systems.

To Merleau-Ponty, it is beyond doubt that the behavior of the organism involves meaningful relations. The object of biology is unthinkable without acknowledgment of the meaningful unities that it unfolds and that are encountered by a perceiving subject. Merleau-Ponty is clear about the fact that this does not lead to a new form of vitalism. "There is no question – as we have said often enough – of returning to any form whatsoever of vitalism or animism, but simply of recognizing that the object of biology cannot be grasped without the unities of signification which a consciousness finds and sees unfolding in it" (Merleau-Ponty, 1998: 161).¹⁵

What, however, will secure the fact that it is not a vitalist solution? In this regard, it is necessary to be more precise about Merleau-Ponty's ideas of structure and function. To this end, we return to the idea of perspective.

Firstly, we have seen that stimulus and response are *intrinsically, not linearly*, related because a living, actively interpreting structure is involved. The implication of structure makes stimulus and response two moments of a *circular process*, by which the behavior of the organism cannot be understood as a simple function of the physical surroundings. The organism *contributes* to the constitution of the 'stimulus'; it creates or even is the *perspective* out of which the stimulus can have a specific impact and can stand in a specific relation to the response. Meaning therefore arises from the dialectic mutual exchange between organism and environment. It is neither passively present in an external order and as such assimilated (cf. realism), nor *de novo* constructed by a creative mind (cf. idealism). So, circular causality is at work in the organism, but also in the relation between organism and its milieu.

Secondly, those phenomena of structure stand in relation to *human experience*, which is experience of a multitude of structures or meaningful wholes. In this regard, Merleau-Ponty states that the structure of behavior is articulated in terms of the correlation between perception and form. “The structure of behavior as it presents itself to perceptual experience is neither thing nor consciousness; and it is this which renders it opaque to the mind. (...) behavior is not a thing, but neither is it an idea. It is not the envelope of a pure consciousness and, as the witness of behavior, I am not a pure consciousness. It is precisely this which we wanted to say in stating that behavior is a form” (Merleau-Ponty, 1998: 127).¹⁶ In other passages, Merleau-Ponty uses the terminology of ‘meaning’ and ‘consciousness’, instead of ‘form’ and ‘perception’. “Vital acts *have* a meaning; they are not defined, even in science, as a sum of processes external to each other, but as the spatial and temporal unfolding of certain ideal unities. (...) it is only to say that it is a whole which is significant for a consciousness which knows it, not a thing which rests in-itself (*en soi*)” (Merleau-Ponty, 1998: 159).¹⁷ The organism is perceived and known as a unity of meaning; its unity is no appearance, but a phenomenon. A phenomenon, however, is only visible from a certain perspective, in this case the perspective of human perception.

3.2. *Function and Perspective Within a Stratified Viewpoint*

Merleau-Ponty’s ideas about structure and perspective are to be situated within a stratified point of view. Its core can be formulated as follows.

Firstly, to conceive of the behavior of an organism in structural terms, implies the idea of a dialectics between something functioning at a certain level of organization, and something situated externally to it, at another level of organization. More specifically, it is always the organizational level *situated above* the structural level in focus that does the interpreting. Or in other words, to interpret always requires a level *from which* something is seen as meaningful. It is impossible to acknowledge meaning from within the level of focus, as a level above is required to realize meaningful interpretation. In this way, Merleau-Ponty states that anatomy borrows from physiology, and that physiology borrows from biology. A physiology that merely talks and explains from its own level is impossible. A physiology that borrows from biology is instead an informed, interpreting physiology able to recognize the meaningfulness of physiological processes. This stratified organizational viewpoint therefore quite

naturally expresses the idea of *another place*, i.e. the place external to the organizational level in focus from which interpretation is initiated.

Secondly, the stratified account inevitably involves a *functionalist* viewpoint. Something on the physiological level can only have a function if it is related to the biological level situated above it. In the same vein, function takes precedence over anatomy, and organization over juxtaposition. Therefore, it is the interpretive impact of the organizational level situated above the structural level in focus that renders the function visible or conceivable. Moreover, such a functionalist point of view on the organism correlates with the biological *values* of the organism.

Thirdly, Merleau-Ponty suggests a *hierarchical* picture in which human consciousness or human perception functions as the ultimate interpretive instance, the ultimate organizational layer from which the meaningfulness of the other layers can be revealed.

Those three points show that a structural account involves the idea of *stratification*, implying the idea of a dialectics between something functioning at a certain level of organization, and something situated externally of it. It is at the organizational layer situated externally to the level in focus, that eventually the epistemological perspective enters the scene. That perspective is intrinsically interpretive and functionalist.

3.3. *The Interpretative Perspective: Presence or Suppletion?*

As Merleau-Ponty suggests a hierarchical picture in which the final interpretative instance is human consciousness or perception, it is important to be as precise as possible about the place of that instance. Does consciousness or perception function within a metaphysical context of presence, as in Husserl's evidence theory of knowledge? Or is it instead an instance that precisely *supplies* for a lack or an absence of a central signified?

In this regard, the first thing to be stressed is that consciousness is not the *central* issue for Merleau-Ponty, but *perception*. *Perception* is the irreducible element in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, and correlatively, structure is equally irreducible. The field of perception and the phenomenal givens are first, and they cannot be explained on a physiological basis. "The living physiology of the nervous system can only be understood by starting from phenomenal givens" (Merleau-Ponty, 1998: 88).¹⁸

The second important thing, and tightly connected with the first, is that Merleau-Ponty's basic issue is not *meaning*, but *structure*. A structure

is an organized form, and a form is a whole which has a *sense*. Structure is the contingent way in which matter shows itself to us in order to have a meaning. It is due to that connection with (material) existence that Merleau-Ponty escapes idealism. Meaning or signification belong merely to the order of consciousness, whereas structure is inseparable from its material incorporation. Structure is the way in which matter has a meaning for us. It is not dissolvable into the idea of a pure spirit. Structure is therefore the limit of critical thinking. Because it is not reducible to meaning, the real enters transcendental thinking. "What is profound in the notion of 'Gestalt' from which we started is not the idea of signification but that of *structure*, the joining of an idea and an existence which are indiscernible, the contingent arrangement by which materials begin to have meaning in our presence, intelligibility in the nascent state" (Merleau-Ponty, 1998: 206–207).¹⁹

Merleau-Ponty thus recognizes the rights of both transcendentalism and realism. On the one hand, he refuses the idealist and intellectualist aspects of transcendentalism. Realism shows that reality is not open for a constitutive consciousness, but on the contrary resists it. On the other hand, Merleau-Ponty rejects the realist idea that everything in the outside world is pre-constituted. The notion of structure precisely expresses the crossroads between transcendentalism and realism: it is the way matter has meaning for the perceiver.

As a consequence, consciousness or perception does not only have to deal with pure meaning (cf. Husserl and the issue of fulfillment in intuition), but also with the resistance of the perceived world. Such a resistance disturbs the presence of a point of evidence. The world is no longer transparent for consciousness, but, as perceived, a matter of continuous interpretation from a certain perspective. That happens in the way of a continuous suppletion for the absence of pure meaning or a central signified. Structure and perception can only be considered as provisory, or as delayed and postponed in reference to what has been supplied for.

3.4. *Consequences for Transcendental Conditions of Possibility*

Merleau-Ponty, through his structural account, realizes a radical change in the status of transcendentality and hence contributes to a change in metaphysical "gesture" in the way Derrida conceives of it. The transcendental is rooted in the empirical, without, however, collapsing into an empirical issue. For Husserl, this change in status of the transcendental would have appeared an oxymoron. It is not only because of his evidence

theory of knowledge that his phenomenology is indicative of a metaphysics of presence. It is also based on a metaphysics of presence to the extent that it involves a space in which conditions of possibility are clearly set apart as untouchable and untouched products of a conscious or transcendental ego that is ultimately present to itself (cf. Derrida, 1967).

Merleau-Ponty aims at avoiding an unwarranted intellectualism or idealism that he sees implied in that view on transcendentalism. In that, he relies more on Husserl's transcendental-genetic work, where the body and the issue of intersubjectivity become the main sources of conspiracy between the transcendental and the empirical. In this regard, the term 'transcendental empiricism' (N. Depraz, 2001) has been introduced, referring to a form of transcendentalism that ruins any kind of *pure* transcendentalism. For Depraz, the idea of a transcendental empiricism is very Derridean, it is the place where the pureness of the transcendental analysis is confronted with the impurities (stemming from the other, time, the empirical world) by which the transcendental analysis is precisely fed. In that sense, it is the last word of Husserlian phenomenology, and it is the starting point of Merleau-Ponty's analysis. A structural point of view can no longer claim the pureness of transcendental conditions the way Husserl has. From the moment structure enters the scene, the conditions of possibility of the perspective are mixed up with the empirical and with the resistance of the perceived world. That resistance is especially clear in the case of living beings, which resist an approach in terms of pure meaning or signification, and require a point of view that takes into account the intrinsic values of the organism itself. The functionalist perspective cannot fixate the determinations of the organism on an exclusively extrinsic basis.

4. CONCLUSION

The core difference between presence and suppletion can be formulated as follows. In the case of presence, there is an *absolute, fixed* stabilizing anchorage of the structure, whereas in the case of suppletion, something comes on top as a floating element *partially* and *temporarily* stabilizing the dynamics. The assessment of the difference between the two metaphysics therefore involves two things.

Firstly, the distinction relies upon a difference in stabilizing potential. The stabilizing function of a suppletion is temporary and local, whereas the stabilizing function of a point of presence is absolute and universal. The most important issue therefore becomes the issue of stability and

stabilization. The aspect of more or less stabilization renders the distinction between both metaphysics *gradual*. There is, however, also a second aspect.

Secondly, whether or not that which comes to cover the absence is a suppletion, basically depends upon whether it is recognized as such, i.e. whether it is recognized as resulting from a perspective. Therefore, there also remains an *essential*, decisive difference between both kinds of metaphysics in that a metaphysics of presence does not require an articulation of the issue of the perspective, whereas a metaphysics of delay or postponement intrinsically does. In other words, a metaphysics of non-presence awakens the issue of the perspective. It thereby includes the knowing (stabilizing-destabilizing) subject itself into the dynamical process. The latter has methodological as well as ethical consequences.

A metaphysics of presence closes off from the very start the potential destabilization involved in any interactive process, of which the knowledge process is a part. In this way, Husserl's notion of evidence clearly aims at excluding the observer's or knower's perspective at the heart of structure. Evidence functions at the heart of the structure of perception and knowledge, both as origin and as teleological point of attraction. In evidence it is the thing itself which comes into grip.

A metaphysics of non-presence, on the other hand, opens up the issue of the interpretative perspective. In as far as a structure is only possible if there is a point external to the structure that interprets the structure at issue, a functionalist space is opened up wherein the points of interpretation need to be specially argued for. It is here that the interests, purposes and anxieties of the human subject, alongside those of living beings in general, are revealed as potentially destabilizing or stabilizing factors. In that way, a metaphysics of delay or postponement creates a richer space in which stabilizing and non-stabilizing effects of living systems, at various organizational levels, have to be taken into account.

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NOTES

¹ "Wie kann die Evidenz (die *clara et distincta perceptio*) mehr beanspruchen, als ein Bewußtseinscharakter in mir zu sein? Es ist (unter Beiseitelegung der vielleicht nicht so gleichgültigen Ausschaltung der Seinsgeltung der Welt) das Cartesianische Problem, das durch die göttliche *veracitas* gelöst werden sollte" (Husserl, 1931: 116).

² "Or cette découverte a le sens d'un dépassement du cartésianisme, car Husserl a eu alors la révélation que le *cogitatum*, et non seulement la *cogitatio*, fait partie de la sphère de

l'évidence absolue. Cela signifie que l'objet n'est pas totalement étranger au sujet, qu'il ne lui est pas absolument extérieur et qu'il ne requiert donc pas, comme c'est le cas chez Descartes, la garantie de la véracité divine" (F. Dastur, 1995: 42–43).

³ Independently from whether or not the transcendental reduction is explicitly operational.

⁴ The German original speaks in the first version of some 'mark' for the *truth* of the presumed state of affairs, and in the second version of the *existence* of the presumed state of affairs. "So fassen wir überhaupt den Begriff des Wissens in einem weiteren, aber doch nicht ganz laxen Sinne; wir scheiden ihn ab von dem grundlosen Meinen und beziehen uns hierbei auf irgendwelche 'Kennzeichen' für das Bestehen des angenommenen Sachverhalts, bzw. für die Richtigkeit des gefällten Urteils. Das vollkommenste Kennzeichen der Richtigkeit ist die Evidenz, es gilt uns als unmittelbares Innwerden der Wahrheit selbst" (Husserl, 1975: 29).

⁵ "Evidenz ist vielmehr nicht anderes als das 'Erlebnis' der Wahrheit" (Husserl, 1975: 193).

⁶ "Das evidente Urteil (...) ist ein Bewußtsein originärer Gegebenheit. Zu ihm verhält sich das nicht-evidente Urteil analog, wie sich die beliebige vorstellende Setzung eines Gegebenes zu seiner adäquaten Wahrnehmung verhält. Das adäquat Wahrgenommene ist nicht bloß ein irgendwie Gemeintes, sondern, als was es gemeint ist, auch im Akte originär gegeben, d.i. als selbst gegenwärtig und restlos erfaßt" (Husserl, 1975: 193). The German quotes are again from Husserl's revised edition.

⁷ We may also say that evidence is the *experience* of the agreement between intention and fulfilment, and thus the experience of truth. Husserl's account involves an intimate connection between truth and the experience of truth. The intimate connection between truth (as universal) and the experience of truth (as particular) is, however, problematic, as the instantiation of a universal is not necessarily also the experience of that instantiation. (Cf. G. Patzig, 1977)

⁸ Unless explicitly mentioned, all references to Derrida's 1967 are to 'La structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines', pp. 409–428 in *L'écriture et la différence*. Derrida's interpretation is neither a correct account nor a refutation of Husserl's point of view, it is an inspiring reading of Husserl. The reason why we do not consider it to be a correct representation, has to do with the fact that Derrida pushes retention to the side of representation, in order to arrive at a purified source-point in the now-moment.

⁹ Recognizable, for instance, as *eidōs*, *archē*, *telos*, *energeia*, *ousia*, *aletheia*, ...

¹⁰ "Le concept de structure centrée est en effet le concept d'un jeu *fondé*, constitué depuis une immobilité fondatrice et une certitude rassurante, elle-même soustraite au jeu" (Derrida, 1967: 410).

¹¹ "Il faut donc renoncer ici au discours scientifique ou philosophique, à l'*épistémè* qui a pour exigence absolue, qui est l'exigence absolue de remonter à la source, au centre, au fondement, au principe, etc." (Derrida, 1967: 420).

¹² "On ne peut déterminer le centre et épuiser la totalisation parce que le signe qui remplace le centre, qui le *supplée*, qui en tient lieu en son absence, ce signe s'ajoute, vient en sus, en *supplément*. Le mouvement de la signification ajoute quelque chose, ce qui fait qu'il y a toujours plus, mais cette addition est flottante parce qu'elle vient vicarier, suppléer un manque du côté du signifié" (Derrida, 1967: 423).

¹³ We are grateful to E. Evink for this suggestion. Cf. his *Transcendentie en inscriptie – Jacques Derrida en de hubris van de metafysica* (2002).

¹⁴ This is in fact the move Kant had already made in his third Critique, and indeed, it could be argued that *The Structure of Behavior* is in many ways comparable to the second part of Kant's third Critique. For a more detailed description of Kant's solution, cf. G. Van de Vijver, 2004, G. Van de Vijver et al., 2003, G. Van de Vijver, 1999.

¹⁵ “Il n’est pas question, nous l’avons assez dit, de revenir à une forme quelconque de vitalisme ou d’animisme, mais simplement de reconnaître que l’objet de la biologie est impensable sans les unités de signification qu’une conscience y trouve et voit s’y déployer” (Merleau-Ponty, 1942: 174–175).

¹⁶ “La structure du comportement telle qu’elle s’offre à l’expérience perceptive, n’est ni chose ni conscience et c’est ce qui la rend opaque pour l’intelligence. (...) le comportement n’est pas une chose, mais il n’est pas davantage une idée, il n’est pas l’enveloppe d’une pure conscience et, comme témoin d’un comportement, je ne suis pas une pure conscience. C’est justement ce que nous voulions dire en disant qu’il est une forme” (Merleau-Ponty, 1942: 138).

¹⁷ “Les actes vitaux *ont* un sens, ils ne se définissent pas, dans la science même, comme une somme de processus extérieurs les uns aux autres, mais comme le déploiement temporel et spatial de certaines unités idéales. (...) c’est dire seulement qu’il est un ensemble significatif pour une conscience qui le connaît, non une chose qui repose en soi” (Merleau-Ponty, 1942: 172).

¹⁸ “On ne peut connaître la physiologie vivant du système nerveux qu’en partant des données phénoménales” (Merleau-Ponty, 1942: 97).

¹⁹ “Ce qu’il y a de profond dans la ‘Gestalt’ d’où nous sommes partis, ce n’est pas l’idée de signification, mais celle de *structure*, la jonction d’une idée et d’une existence indiscernables, l’arrangement contingent par lequel les matériaux se mettent devant nous à avoir un sens, l’intelligibilité à l’état naissant” (Merleau-Ponty, 1942: 223).

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