

# Actual Objects as Productions of Meaning: How Are Actual Objects Constituted Phenomenologically

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**Abstract:** This article is to describe the structure within which an actual object is constituted phenomenologically by introducing Husserl's analysis on the constitutional intentionality as a sense-bestowing. This process has a hierarchical structure. I will argue that the most fundamental stratum of this structure is a mere presentation of a "mere object" or "mere thing", which is not necessarily an actual external thing. Based on it there is the level of presentation act of posits-taking as a higher noetic level, in which a sense of being actual or being illusionary can be given.

**Keywords:** phenomenology, actuality, constitution, intentionality, Husserl, meaning

## 作为“意义”之产物的实在对象：实在对象的现象学构造

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**摘要：**本文试图论证，外部对象乃是被一种特殊的现象学“意义”所构建的。根据胡塞尔的理论，对象的基本构成方式乃是“意义投射”，而此行为又有一个层级结构。在此层级结构的最底层乃是一个单纯客体化的表象行为，此行为并不设定对象的存在，亦即，无论是实在的还是虚幻的对象都首先需要被作为一“纯然物”而被客体化。而设定一对象之存在的行为则是一个建基于表象行为之上的意识行为层次，只有在这个层面上，作为特殊意义的“真”或“假”才参与到对对象的构建之中。

**关键词：**现象学，实在性，构建，意向性，胡塞尔，意义

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This article describes the structure within which an actual object is constituted phenomenologically. This topic has long received attention from phenomenologists. In general, discussion of this topic within the framework of Husserlian phenomenology focuses on the following two questions. (1) Does actuality, or an actual thing, also fall within the structure of intentionality? (2) If it does, how can this understanding of actuality be differentiated from subjective idealism? The answer given to the first question is typically in the affirmative. Husserl (1950/1998) explicitly stated that “all real unities [...] presuppose a sense-bestowing consciousness which, for its part, exists absolute and not by virtue of another sense-bestowal”. As Sokolowski (1964) explained, the question of whether a thing is actual can be asked only when the thing is related to the one who asks the question, namely, the intentional consciousness. The second question above, however, is more complicated. Because Husserl believed that all intentional objects were constituted by their correlated acts, one might infer that objects, including actual ones, were created by the acts of a subject. Husserl himself explicitly rejected this possibility, saying that a theory based on the absolute consciousness was not “Berkeleyan idealism” (Sokolowski, 1964). But the more demanding question is whether Husserl’s rejection of this reading of his theory is logical and coherent. The proposition that objects are constituted by the acts of a subject and that actual objects are independent of the determining power of this subject must be coherent, is, according to Sokolowski (1964), “an enigma”: unsolvable within Husserl’s framework. As a result, many people believe that despite Husserl’s own rejection of this reading, his theory is still essentially a form of subjective idealism. According to Smith (2008) in Husserl as an Externalist, this reading of Husserl was still popular in the academic world when Smith’s article was written. Fortunately, continued efforts have been made to shed some light on the enigma. For example, Ameriks (1977) argued that Husserl should be treated as a realist, and Holmes (1975) asserted that Husserl’s idealism was epistemological rather than metaphysical. The above-mentioned article by Smith (2008) also addressed the enigma, for which the author offered a structural explanation. According to Smith (2008), the path toward a solution to the enigma lies in a

material-form schema, which according to Husserl is the fundamental form of all intentional consciousness. Husserl had already used this schema to describe intentionality in *Logical Investigations*, and his description of it varied over his career. Although Smith's (2008) project was reasonable, the problem can be clarified further by describing the schema in greater detail. To this end, this study focuses on the version of Husserl's schema in *Ideas I* (Sokolowski, 1964). Similar descriptions can be found in certain manuscripts written by Husserl in 1921, which implies that *Ideas I* represents a mature form of his understanding of the topic (Husserl, 1996/2001). Some scholars have doubted that this schema is applicable across all types of intentional acts (Harvey, 1989), but it must at least work for all acts directed towards transcendent objects, namely, objects that are not intentional acts undertaken by the same subject.

### **I . A Brief Discussion of the Sense-bestowing Structure of Intentional Act**

In *Ideas I*, the form-material structure is described as a process of "sense bestowal", in which the sense bestowed is the form, and what receives the form is the material. The term "sense" (Sinn) obviously requires clarification. But it should first be noted that regardless of the exact definition of the term, it signifies the form of the so-called noetic mental process. As Husserl (1950/1998) explicitly stated, "every intensive mental process is precisely *noetic*; it is of its essence to include in itself something such as a 'sense'." The mental process is a stream of acts that belong to the same subject, which Husserl (1950/1998) described as a "pure Ego". In other words, the sense involved in sense-bestowal belongs to the acts in the structure of intentionality named the Noesis in *Ideas I*, rather than to the objects named the Noema. Not only the sense, but the other part of the sense-bestowal structure belongs to the category of acts. According to Husserl (1950/1998), among "the mental processes designated [...] as 'primary contents' [...] belong certain 'sensuous' mental processes which are unitary with respect to their highest genus, 'sensations-contents' such as colour Data, touch-Data and tone-Data, and the like, which we shall no

longer confuse with appearing moments of physical things—colouredness, roughness, etc. —which ‘present themselves’ to mental process by means of those ‘contents’”. The acts that belong to a mental stream have sensuous contents. These contents form a flow that underlies every act of constitution, which is named the “hyletic flow” by Husserl. These contents differ from the objects’ properties. For example, red as a sensuous form of Data differs from the redness of a red object. Note that although Husserl uses the word “appearing” to describe the relationship between sensuous Data and the properties of objects, he is not saying that Data are productions of objects that causally affect the consciousness. On the contrary, he regards objects appearing with special properties as productions of sense-bestowal, which occur structurally but not causally. For the sake of convenience, this article uses the term “objective properties” or “noematic properties” to refer to features on the side of objects, and the term “sensuous Data” or “sensuous contents” to refer to materials on the side of acts. According to Husserl (1950/1998), such Data or contents are “animated by ‘*construings*’ within the concrete unity of the perception and in the animation exercise the ‘*presentive function*’, or as united with the *construings* which animate them”. In other words, contents can be used to yield noematic properties only when they are used to build an object with the help of the sense. It is now time to briefly consider the term “sense”.

First, as Husserl (1950/1998) acknowledged, the word “sense” (Sinn), as well as “sensuous” (sinnlich), is ambiguous. It can mean “what is conveyed by the ‘senses’ in normal perception of the external”. Husserl admitted that “[a]fter the reduction there becomes apparent an essential kinship among the remaining ‘sensuous’ Data of intuitions of the external”. Therefore, in the term “sensuous Data”, the word “sensuous” is related to properties that we can see, hear and touch. Another meaning of the word “sense” as used by Husserl in the phrase “sense-bestowal” is evident from a paragraph in section 89 of *Ideas I*, according to which the “sense” of a tree is essentially different from a particular tree, in that the latter can be burned but the former cannot. In a later part of *Ideas I*, Husserl explained this essential distinction by describing the sense of the “physical thing” as an

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“idea” or “essence”. The essence is something that can never burn and is strictly opposed to external being. Husserl (1950/1998) used the terms “Noesis” and “Noema” to describe the two sides of intentionality because “it is not unwelcome that the word, nous, recalls one of its distinctive significations, namely precisely ‘sense’”. It thus becomes clearer that the “sense” bestowed on materials to constitute an object is nothing but the essence of the object. Again, to avoid confusion, the term “essence” or “meaning” is used here to refer to “sense” as used in the phrase “sense-bestowal”.

It is only through meaning that sensuous Data can yield properties that belong to an object; otherwise, the Data will merely flow in a continuous and chaotic flux, with neither clear distinctions nor meaningful combinations. Suppose one looks at an apple on a table. The apple has the property of being red and the property of being a sphere. These properties are yielded from the sensuous Data of redness and sphericity through sense-bestowal. But without the essence of “apple”, one would not be able to combine the Data for “red” with the Data for “sphere” and separate the former from the Data for “brown”, which yields the table’s property of being brown. In the process of sense-bestowal, some Data are gathered and some are separated according to the meaning bestowed, enabling different objects to be built separately and properties that belong to the same object to be built together.

Furthermore, according to Husserl, there are multiple categories of sense-bestowal. Even in a single act, multiple meanings or essences may be bestowed. These different essences constitute a hierarchical system. The most fundamental level is that on which a mere object is given:

[...] within the full noema [...] we must separate *essential different strata* which are grouped around a *central “core”*, around a pure “*objective sense*” — around that which, in our example, was described with pure identical objective expressions because there can be something identical in the parallel mental process which are different in sort [...] we must distinguish different concepts of *unmodified objectivities*, of which the “object simpliciter”, namely the something identical which is perceived at one time, another time directly presentiated, a third time presented pictorially in the painting, and the like, only

indicates *one* central concept. (Husserl, 1950/1998)

An object can have different levels, of which mere identification is the most fundamental. This part of a Noema is built by the level of an act that bestows “objective sense”, namely, the meaning of a mere object that is identified with itself. In other words, without a simple self-identification, it is impossible to say that something is *this* something, that the two are one. The object constituted by the most fundamental act is a “mere object” whose identity lies in the so-called “noematic core”. The core is always enwoven with the objective properties yielded by sensuous Data. The properties of an object surround an identified object, which is its core. Husserl (1950/1998) also used the relationship between a substance and its predicates to illuminate the relationship between core and objective properties. Note that although Husserl used the term “predicate” (Prädikate) in the second mode, this is more like the mode of substance-attributes than that of subject-predicates. As Husserl (1939/1973) pointed out in *Experience and Judgement*, in a judgment or sentence, the *s* and *p* are first grasped by different acts in different moments of the mental stream, although finally a relationship is rebuilt. In contrast, a substance with multiple properties is a single object of a single act, in which multiple Data are used to yield the correlated single object.

The objective core is a part of an object built by both the essence of a mere object and multiple noetic contents. It is not the core itself. This indicates that though Husserl often used the term “empty X” to describe the *identifying* core of an identified object, this X, as Smith (2008) realised, “is not a purely formal, empty place-holder, which would be identical in every noema and every experience”. Harvey (1989) also argued that “the sense-predicates of the ‘object’ underwent a [...] synthesis of perspectives that, when condensed, provide the rudiments of the essential sense of ‘wax’”. That is to say, the identified X is not grasped without sense properties. Husserl said that even on the level of the act, which built a mere “this”, the object still showed itself to the consciousness through its appearing noematic properties. The merely presented “this” is not an empty X; like any other objects, it contains the X within itself as a function. X, the core, does not

show itself. At the same time, however, it is not correct to say that the properties show themselves: the object shows itself through the properties, by combining them around the core that cannot show itself.

The level of the act that bestows the meaning of “mere this” is fundamental, and must therefore be present in every act with “higher” meanings, such as the essences of actual objects and illusions. In the following, two corollaries of this statement are offered.

First, the act that constitutes a mere object does not need either of these two higher essences. Regardless of whether something is actual, it must be identified with itself: the statement “it is an illusion” makes sense only when the illusion in question is *one* illusion. As Harvey (1998) pointed out, “[a]ny worldly object that has been bracketed is maintained as an intentional implicated entity, yet suspended as an ontological or judgmental assumption.” Phenomenological reduction places an assumption about the reality of the world into a space enclosed by brackets. However, because intentionality still works after such reduction, intentional objects must still be constituted by sense-bestowal. This indicates that after phenomenological reduction, the ego is still “making the object” by bestowing at least one meaning, namely, that of a mere object (Husserl, 1950/1998). This leads to the conclusion that the identification of an object, built by the most fundamental act, is not effected by the reduction.

Second, because the level of objectification is the most fundamental, the level of act that bestows the meaning of “actual object” requires that the meaning of “identified mere object” is bestowed “before” -in a structural, not a temporal sense. In other words, the objective property of being actual is built upon the mere object. Furthermore, the actual external world itself “has its whole being as a certain ‘sense’ which presupposes absolute consciousness as the field where sense is bestowed” (Husserl, 1950/1998). In *Experience and Judgement*, phantasies are shown to belong to their own special objective time, which builds their imaginary world. Here, the different worlds function as horizons that circumscribe the presence of actual or imagined objects. But when we treat one world as actual and the other as imaginary, we are treating both as objects identified with themselves.

It should also be noted that similar to the level of mere objectification, the bestowing of meanings such as the essence of “tree” or the essence of “apple” is also more fundamental than acts constituting actual or illusionary objects. Husserl (1950/1998) noted that even “optional intuitions in phantasy of physical things, such as free intuitions of winged horses, white ravens, golden mountains, and the like [...] would, in any case, be physical things, and objectifications of them therefore serve as examples just as well as objectification of the physical things given to actual experience”. This means that imaginary things must also have correlated essences. A winged horse is built by an act that bestows the essence of “winged horse”; a dragon by an act bestowing the essence of “dragon”. The form of these acts is the same as that of acts bestowing the essence of “tree”. Indeed, a tree may first be treated as actual and later turn out to be an illusion. Despite this transformation, the same tree is treated. In other words, an essence can be bestowed without the essence of an actual or illusionary object.

## **II . Indeterminate Reality: The Essential Structure of Constitution**

The proposition that an object is presented as actual as the result of sense bestowal faces an obvious objection: does this statement mean that the existence of an external object is determined by the will of the Ego, which is the subject of every sense-bestowing act? Can the Ego then freely determine when to bestow the meaning of “actual object” and when to bestow the meaning of “illusionary object”? This study offers two arguments against this inference. The first focuses on the function of noetic meaning, and the second deals with the spatiality and temporality of constitution.

### **i . Sense as the Determining Power of Actuality**

The first aspect of external intentionality that makes it impossible to magically create something actual is the fact that no external Noemata, actual or not, are given to the Noesis in their entirety. Every transcendent object has parts that are “hidden in the shadow”, or, using more technical terminology, adumbrated. A more “mature” and detailed expression of this



insight can be found in one of Husserl's (1966/1991) manuscripts from the 1920s:

When we view the table, we view it from some particular side, and this side is thereby what is genuinely seen. Yet the table has still other sides. It has a non-visible back side, it has a non-visible interior; and these are actually indexes for a variety of sides, a variety of complexes of possible visibility [...] Original consciousness is only possible in the form of an actually and genuinely original conscious-having of sides and a co-conscious-having of other sides that are precisely originally there.

The term “actual” used in the extract quoted above is another way of saying that a side of a transcendent object is “originally there”. This differs from the actual existence of such an object. In other words, what is “originally here” may be illusionary rather than actual. This statement may seem counterintuitive but is clarified by the following example. In *Ideas I*, Husserl (1950/1998) described an imagined centaur as “a merely ‘one-sided’ appearance presentive of the essence of the centaur”. Indeed, unlike a real animal such as a horse, an imagined centaur can be “turned around” freely by the subject who imagines it; when we freely allow one side of the centaur to face us, other sides of it are still hidden to us, despite our ability not only to freely turn its sides towards us as we wish, but also to “create” them as we wish. Clearly, therefore, Husserl believed that imaginary objects such as the centaur still had sides that were “actually given” in the sense of being “originally given”. The phrase “at the same time” used in this article is not a direct quotation from this section of *Ideas I*, but it is shown later that adumbration is not only a spatial but a temporal description. At this point, the following idea requires more careful explanation: although Husserl used only different sides of a table as an example, givenness-in-sides is not the only possible form of adumbration.

First, it is well known that according to Heidegger, phenomenological spatiality, as the structural quality of the Dasein, contains both “direction” (Richtung) and “distance” or “range” (Umkreis). Although this reading of Heidegger may be too simple, it is reasonable to argue that for Husserl, objective properties can be “hidden” from the grasp of the Ego by not only

direction determined by different angles of the attention of the ego, but also by distance. Husserl (1950/1998) noted that “to ‘us human beings’ a spatial thing always appears in a certain ‘orientation’, e. g., oriented in the visual field of sight with respect to above and below, left and right, near and far; that we can see a physical thing only at a certain ‘*depth*’, ‘*distance*’”. Note that although Husserl spoke of “us human beings”, he was describing this orientedness as a feature of intentional consciousness as such; as Ameriks (1977) correctly pointed out, according to Husserl, the essence of human consciousness is not psychological but pure consciousness, namely, consciousness with the special structure of intentionality. Husserl (1939/1973) also noted that when confronted with a transcendent object with some of its parts hidden in the “empty horizon”, one not only realised that one could “turn it around”, but also that one could “proceed” and “get a closer look”. Obviously, while the act of turning around changes the angle, that of proceeding or getting closer changes the distance. For example, in *Logical Investigations*, Husserl (1984/2001) mentioned that we may treat a waxwork of a lady as a true lady if “she” is perceived by us from far away. Distance hides the colour and light of the wax, the stillness of the eye and other unnatural facial details. In this case, relevant sense Data are neither “on the back” nor “inside”, so their apprehension requires a change in distance, not angle.

Both distance and angle are properties of objects that are seen, constituted by acts of perceiving in a strict sense. These properties are yielded by sensuous Data such as shapes and colours. But Husserl (1950/1998) realised that there were also “odor-and-taste-properties” and so forth that could yield the properties of smell and of taste. When only one kind of property is grasped, different properties of the same object are hidden. If one sees only an object that looks like an apple, its taste, touch and smell are in shadow. The same is true of the waxwork/lady example: one may incorrectly assume that a waxwork is a true human being if one cannot hear “her” voice on touch “her” skin. In addition, when certain special properties on the noematic side are hidden, their correlated sensuous Data on the side of acts are either “absent” from the mental stream or “unused” by the Ego. When

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colours on the back side of a building are hidden, their correlated colour-Data are not included in the mental stream, although they may become evident in the next moment. When we look at something, we may overlook its smell, whose correlated smell-Data are actually present in the mental process but not used by the Ego in the process of sense bestowal.

The adumbration essential to all external objects is the hidden-ness of objective properties, regardless of the cause of such hidden-ness. However, hidden properties on the back side are still properties of the same object. In Husserl's words, they are "co-conscious-of" properties that are present. The function of the essence bestowed in the act of sense bestowal makes such unity possible. More specifically, a physical thing can be grasped through the unity of properties present and properties hidden, involving two essences. The first is the essence of an identical object. Husserl (1950/1998) pointed out that regardless of changes in an object's direction, distance or other mode of givenness, "we effect continua of intuitings which coincide thus and so, which join together into a unity-consciousness: the regard is accordingly directed to the identical, to the X of the sense". In other words, without the essence of the identical object, it is impossible for "newer" properties seen after a change of angle to be connected with "older" ones. The second essence necessary for an adumbrated object is the essence of physical things or external things. Husserl (1950/1998) noted that all properties yielded by sensuous Data had a "physical thing-appearance", which made sense only when pertaining to a "physical thing". Because what is on the back side must also be sensed when the angle is changed, a physical appearance is necessary, which already presumes the givenness of a physical thing. Note that these two essences are required even when an unfamiliar external object is given. We may have no idea what is in front of us, but as long as we are *looking* at it, touching it or even smelling and tasting it, we must treat it as a physical thing. And because it must show itself to us in multiple colours, shapes and etc., we can understand "this" object only by treating it as identical. Crucially, this mode is also essential to adumbrated properties, namely, those that are hidden to us at a particular moment. An actual object is constituted by an act based on the act of constituting a mere physical thing identified with

itself. Therefore, actual objects must also be constituted in the form of adumbration. The adumbration of actual objects makes them independent from the power of the Ego that constitutes them, because the way in which multiple properties of an object are given is determined by the *essence* bestowed by the correlated sense-bestowing act, rather than by the *subject* of the act.

The apple example is again helpful at this point. As described in the previous section, the property of redness is combined with that of sphericity but not flatness (which belongs instead to the table), enabling us to constitute an apple rather than a red flat object. According to the essence of “apple”, an apple should be round, not flat, and according to the essence of “table”, a table should be flat, not round. Therefore, we cannot freely combine or separate sensuous Data on the noetic side due to the requirements of the essence. We also realise that the constituted apple exists beyond merely redness and roundness: it must have hidden properties. The essence of the apple as a special fruit “tells” us that the taste of it, which we are not experiencing now, should be sweet. Here, the constitution not only gives the materials required by the apple but also excludes the materials that it does not need. Even materials that are not presented now are “excluded” if, according to the essence of “apple”, they should not belong to this particular apple. As Smith (2008) pointed out, that some properties could belong to an object while others could not was determined “essentially”. The essence bestowed is also the standard for whether the constituted object is actual, because according to this schema all properties of an apple are in harmony with the requirements of the essence of “apple”. This thesis can be clarified using the waxwork/lady example. When the figure at first treated as a lady is revealed to be merely a waxwork, the harmony between the properties of “lady” is broken and a harmony between the properties of “waxwork” is built. In other words, the properties that can be seen are initially in harmony with the essence of “human being”. But when newer properties are given at a newer angle, with greater proximity or via a more complete method of perception, the harmony is broken: we recognise the smell of wax, the dullness of the eyes and other properties that are excluded from the essence of “human

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being”. However, at the same time we recognise that all of the materials available now are coherent with the essence of “waxwork”, for it is essentially “allowed” that a piece of wax can look like a lady and have limbs and a head. Because the content of an essence is not freely determined by the Ego, it follows that when newer properties that break the harmony appear, the Ego that constitutes must recognize that the object previously constituted is not actual. How the Ego acquires such essences as knowledge is a phenomenological problem beyond the limited scope of this study.

However, an obvious question arises: what about an object whose specific essence is unknown? When we are looking at a physical thing we have never encountered before, can we freely determine whether it is actual? This study offers two answers to this question, a short one and a longer one. The longer one is provided in the next section, and the short one is an interpretation of Descartes’ dream example. The dreaming Descartes is looking at a “wild” image with which he is unfamiliar, and believes it to be true. Then he wakes up. His perception of the wild object suddenly ceases. This means that the continuation of the givenness of properties itself stops, whereas in the waxwork example above, what changes is only the particular contents of the continuation. It becomes clear that for all actual objects, including those which are mere physical things, the continuation of properties itself is essentially required. Even after realising that what we believed is wrong, the nature of our misunderstanding persists. But if we turn and see nothing there, we realise that what we saw was a mere illusion. The continuation of all properties of an object, including those that are hidden now, is not essential for imaginary physical things, although imaginary things are still bound by the system of adumbration. As explained above, for Husserl, even an imagined centaur can only be given “one-sidedly”. But we can freely imagine that when we turn it around, it will completely disappear. The noematic properties are yielded by sensuous Data on the noetic side. Thus, the continuation of properties is yielded by the continuation of sensuous Data. However, it should be mentioned that here the continuation is only the continual givenness of a particular object, not the continuation of the mental stream itself. The givenness of an object and even that of a complete set of

surrounding circumstances can stop, but the stream of consciousness must continue for the Ego. Now, the problem is as follows: how can the change in concrete properties or the continual givenness of an object happen structurally?

## ii . Reality as Spatially and Temporally Determined

It is shown above that for an actual object, the Ego cannot freely stop the continuation of the givenness of its properties. It is also presumed that when constituting an actual object, concrete properties in the continuation are also out of the Ego's control: we *have to* constitute an actual waxwork rather than an actual lady due to the concrete sensuous Data *given* to me, which yield properties belonging to the waxwork. This means that the Ego cannot determine what Data can be used in the hyletic flow, if they are to be used to constitute an actual object. The phenomenological structure responsible is the spatial and temporal structure of the intentional acts.

a) The spatiality of actuality. Spatially, all external objects appear within a horizon, whose ultimate form is the world as such. This horizon contains not only objects attentively intended in the foreground, but also objects that are only passively presented in the background. One crucial aspect of the horizon and the objects passively presented within the horizon is that background objects are always indeterminate compared with the clear determinacy of those in the foreground. Therefore, the existence of something real has no sense but "existence-in", that of a being in the universe, in the open horizon of spatiotemporality, the horizon of real things which are already familiar; not only those of which we are actually aware but also of those, presently unknown, that it is *possible* to experience and subsequently know (Husserl, 1939/1973).

In using the term "possible", Husserl was not saying that the kinds of things possible in the world were determined by our pre-given knowledge (for example, that a dragon cannot exist in this world), but that for every particular external intentionality, the kinds of things present in the passive background were also under the principle of possibility. This possibility is an eidetic open-ness, for what is certain rather than possible is already "closed":

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it cannot be otherwise. When we look closely at a line in a book, we know that there are objects “outside” the book around us, but as our eyes are directed only towards the book, we cannot see the objects surrounding it. We may thus be surprised to raise our heads and find that the sun has already set. Note that in *Experience and Judgment*, Husserl distinguished between two kinds of horizon: internal and external. Whereas different objects appear on the external horizon, different parts of an object constitute its internal horizon (Husserl, 1939/1973). Thus, for Husserl in *Experience and Judgment*, the adumbrated parts of an external object are like things presented on the horizon as the background. They are also essentially open:

On the one hand, this transcendence is relative to the continuously anticipated potentiality of possible new individual realities and of groups which are to be experienced in the realization of the process of their entering into consciousness from the world; on the other hand, this transcendence is the internal horizon, the complex of characteristics not yet perceived, associated with every real thing offering itself to experience. (Husserl, 1939/1973)

Whether something is actual is determined by the harmony of its properties, which appear on its internal horizon. Because this horizon is essentially open, the actual existence of the object must also be under this openness. The openness of the internal horizon of an object is clearly evident from properties that are hidden. No matter how confident we are in the actual existence of the lady we look upon, the parts of her that we can neither see nor touch are unknown to us in a strict sense. Because they are unknown, they may surprise us completely when they become available. Even the continual givenness of an object is under the influence of this openness: whether the “inner” side of the oasis contains any appearing properties remains open until we truly approach it and see. Therefore, the actual existence of things whose types are known and those that are totally unfamiliar is ruled by the principle of possibility, due to the spatial structure of intentionality, and an essential open horizon of possibility must be free from the Ego in a strict sense.

b) The temporality of actuality. That what is potentially in the spatial horizon is always open also points to the second attribute of intentionality,

namely, its temporality. It has already been shown that for Husserl, potential contents on the horizon—internal or external—were “anticipated”. Experience is “extended” in space, and such an extension can only happen in time. It is mentioned at the end of the last section that the mental stream cannot cease, due to the temporal nature of consciousness. Even the continual givenness of a particular object that can stop at any moment is based on temporality, for every particular continuation is possible only in a continual mental stream. Husserl (1966/1991) acknowledged that when the term “continuity” was used to describe time consciousness, it actually had three possible meanings: “1) Temporal continuity, understood as the continuum of time-points (of time-points as points of time; 2) The continuity in time, understood as the unity of the time-content—unity as continuous as ‘real unity’ [...] 3) The continuum of a ‘continuous’ change.” The first senses of “continuity” describe external or objective time; the second describe inner time. Husserl (1966/1991) claimed in his lectures on passive synthesis that an object continued to be itself when grasped temporally by the ego through its core and “the unity of sense”. However, the continuous grasp of the same object always accompanies the third kind of continuity, as follows:

The time-continuum is filled by a continuum of “continuously” self-differentiating moments in which the ultimate differences of a species are individuated [...]. The break, the discontinuity, ruptures the unity; but the unity can also be produced and maintained by means of a different, coinciding moment—for example the spatial continuity coinciding with a color-continuity. If the color-continuity undergoes a break, then the extension is divided but nevertheless remains a unity. (Husserl, 1996/2001)

In the quoted paragraph, two kinds of continuity are discussed. The continuity that may be “ruptured” is the continual givenness of objects, whereas what breaks this identification belongs to another continuity: the continuity of the mental stream. Indeed, two notions of change are offered. The first is change in a particular givenness, such as the change from an actual lady to an actual waxwork, or the change from an actual physical thing to a mere illusion. The second notion of change is more fundamental: that of continual change from the sphere of uncertainty to the sphere of certainty,



which describes the phenomenological relation between the future and the now. More precisely, the uncertain, the undetermined future, is continuously “collapsing” into a certainty now. Using Husserl’s (1966/2001) own words, “[p]roper to every appearing thing of each perceptual phase is a new empty horizon, a new system of progressing tendencies with corresponding possibilities of entering into determinately ordered systems of possible appearances, of possible ways that the aspects can run their course, together with horizons that are inseparably affiliated with these aspects”. The empty horizon contains not nothing but multiple possibilities “hanging” together merely as possibilities. Most multiple possibilities are eliminated, and the only remaining possibility is the “new reality”, which is currently grasped in a primary way. The break happens “when the future comes” and eliminates what was expected by the ego, that is, when the thing not expected truly comes. Both the harmony of properties in the continual givenness of a particular object and this continual givenness can be broken, although either break happens only in the continual mental stream. To realise that what was treated to be a lady is in fact a waxwork and that an oasis is only a mirage requires not only a change in angle, but also the coming of the future.

The continual mental stream is necessary for a break. The reversed statement is still true: the possibility of being disappointed, the possibility of the break, is a part of the *a priori* structure of the inner time consciousness. This implies that for each external intentionality, there is always the essential possibility that in the next moment a break will come, and the previous confidence in the object will be broken. Husserl (1966/2001) himself realised this attribute of external intentionality, which he expressed as follows:

In this way it is the nature of originally transcendent sense-giving, which external perception carries out, that the accomplishment of this original sense-giving is never finished as one expanse of perception progresses to another and so forth in whatever manner the process of perception may advance [...] I spoke an idea lying in infinity, that is, of an unattainable idea. For, the essential structure of perception itself excludes a perception [...] that would furnish absolute knowledge of the object [...] For evidently, the possibility of a plus ultra is in principle never ruled out.

The break is the disappointment of anticipation, which is the opposite possibility of the so-called confirmation for fulfilment (Husserl, 1966/2001). Confirmation happens when new sensuous properties that enter into the now from the future are in harmony with the essence, for the knowledge of the essence guides anticipation. But the essential knowledge is only one of two influences that guide anticipation: the other is the confidence conferred by experience. When we look at an apple and imagine turning it around, we anticipate properties that belong to an apple. We anticipate this not only based on our knowledge of the essence of “apple”, but also because the object has consistently appeared as an apple to us, both in the past and now. If we were to turn the object around and still see the properties of an apple, our confidence would be strengthened by the confirmation of this anticipation. However, this confirmation is only the transformation of a *particular* anticipation of the future into a *particular* confirmation, not the closing of the empty horizon as such. The confirmation that strengthens the belief in an actual object is never an independent act: it describes the relationship between different moments of a temporal consciousness, which always face the future (Zahavi, 2003). This implies that the actuality of an object itself can never be a static and closed fact; it is instead a process that must be continuously confirmed, along with the continuous “danger” of being broken.

Whether an essence can be given in a particular case is dependent upon whether the properties yielded by the given sensuous Data are in harmony with the essence. Thus, Husserl (1966/2001) claimed that “in the process of perceiving, the sense itself is continually cultivated and is genuinely so in steady transformation, constantly leaving open the possibility of new transformations”. Note that here “transformation” does not signify the transformation of senses themselves, because senses, as *a priori* essences, cannot change temporally. Rather the particular act transforms the bestowing of one essence into the bestowing of another, such as the bestowing of the essence of human beings into the bestowing of that of waxworks: the bestowing of being real into the bestowing of being illusionary. Because this transformation is a result of openness that “excludes” any “designing determinations”, which is again the result of the temporal structure of

intentional constitutions, the inability of the Ego to magically make an object real is not consistent with the constitution of objects, but a logical conclusion deduced from the constitution.

The last point to be mentioned in this section is as follows. It may already be clear that the belief in the essential openness of all external intentionality is similar to the basic belief of positive science, namely, that all current scientific knowledge can be denied when new empirical proofs appear. This does not mean that Husserl is ultimately an empiricist like Hume, but it does indicate that one of the tasks of phenomenology is to reveal the grounds for clarifying both the solid claims of empiricism and its weaknesses (Murphy, 1980). Husserl himself maintained that phenomenological reduction did not deny the natural sciences, but found them more solid Cartesian ground. The validity of Husserl's claim may still be in doubt for many scholars, however, this goes beyond the limited scope of this study. It is sufficient here to merely point out the inaccuracy of equating his externalism or transcendental realism with empiricism.

### III . Conclusion

For Husserl, the constitution of external objects did nothing but constitute a particular identified object whose sensuous Data yielded objective properties in harmony with the essence bestowed. The actual object, as the "production" of such a sense-bestowal, also requires such a harmony, or at least the continuation of its givenness. This "requirement" of harmony cannot be freely determined by the ego, because due to both the spatial and the temporal structure of external intentionality, the hidden parts of a given object lie in a continuous unending possibility. Thus the possibility remains that the object that seems to be actual at the moment will disappoint anticipation that it will continue to be actual, because the sides seen in the next moment may break the harmony that the object had previously retained. Because the open possibility is open in a strict sense, it is independent of the power of the ego. This is consistent with the statement that all objects, including actual external things, are constituted by the subject of intentional acts, the Ego.

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