Reducing the Actual: A Phenomenological Bracketing of Deleuze’s Qualities and Extensities

Abstract:

Deleuze is prominent among those philosophers who pronounce that difference must be understood as ontologically prior to identity. He teaches that identity is a surface effect of difference, so to understand the basis of logico-mathematical idealities we must uncover their genesis in the fecundity of differentiation. Deleuze wants to offer a foundation of number and mathematics as a subversive, creative force, an affirmation of Nietzsche’s eternal return as the ‘roll of the dice’. But he begins too late. For Deleuze, virtual intensities (Eternal Return) generate the logical, conceptual, theoretical, lawful principles for empirical domains, and then are held steady in the background, beyond the reach of the conceptual and logical patterns, which cancel them by freezing and isolating them. Applying Heidegger’s deconstruction of Nietzschean subjectivity to Deleuze’s project reveals intensities to function as subjective enframings of the species and parts that develop from them. Intensive processes posit, set in place and represent the qualities that steadily remain throughout the calculation of difference in degree. Deleuze does not appear to recognize that the iteration of extensive quantity is devoid of meaningful sense. His failure to make this distinction leads him to confuse mathematical with non-mathematical idealities and prevents him from locating the fundamental sense of extensive duration. What Husserl, and Heidegger after him, recognized is that numeration never counts anything but its own self-iteration, devoid of sense and meaning outside of the empty ‘same thing, different time’. To experience an object as meaningful beyond this ‘how much’ is to no longer attend to it as calculative, countable iteration, as persisting self-identical presence. What holds only for intensities in Deleuze’s understanding of the structure of time, that every change in degree is simultaneously a difference in kind, constitutes the irreducible, absolute essence of all duration.

Introduction:

In our era, philosophers such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida and Deleuze pronounce that difference must be understood as ontologically prior to identity. They teach that identity is a surface effect of difference, that to understand the basis of logico-mathematical idealities we must uncover their genesis in the fecundity of differentiation. Deleuze grapples with the issue of the relation between an implicit creative dimension of sense and an explicitly logical, extensive field of actuality by proposing to think the two aspects together in a transcendental-empirical synthesis. The transcendental dimension is represented by an anonymous, pre personal field of reciprocally interacting differences from which emerge singularities and intensities. These structures are actualized on the empirical dimension as wholes and parts, qualities and extensities. Deleuzian intensities are external to actualized extensity and quality as their generative cause and impetus of transformation. Intensities affirm the paradoxical, the heterogeneous, the singular, the incompossible, the Eternal Return of the different, the indeterminate, the non-sensical, the roll of the dice within sense, the object=x as
difference in general, the virtual event of sense as intensity, the verb underlying the sleight of hand of the axiomatic, converging, referential functions of actualizing predication.

Deleuze(1987) aligns his intensive-extensive duality with Bergson’s distinction between duration and the empirical multiplicity of magnitude.

“Bergson presents duration as a type of multiplicity opposed to metric multiplicity or the multiplicity of magnitude. Duration is in no way indivisible, but is that which cannot be divided without changing in nature at each division. On the other hand, in a multiplicity such as homogeneous extension, the division can be carried as far as one likes without changing anything in the constant object; or the magnitudes can vary with no other result than an increase or a decrease in the amount of space they striate. Bergson thus brought to light "two very different kinds of multiplicity," one qualitative and fusional, continuous, the other numerical and homogeneous, discrete. It will be noted that matter goes back and forth between the two; sometimes it is already enveloped in qualitative multiplicity, sometimes already developed in a metric "schema" that draws it outside of itself.”

What is the transcendental basis of Deleuze’s thinking concerning the changing behavior of an object in the world, or in our imagination, in terms of differences of degree? What are we doing when we speak of things persisting in self-identical presence as we calculate temporal instantiations of them? For Deleuze, logic and extension by degree are developments and explications (secondary degradations) of the implicit (Virtual). The illusion is confusing the implicit and the explicit, the intrinsic and the extrinsic. The implicit intensities (Eternal Return) generate the logical, conceptual, theoretical, lawful principles for empirical domains, and then are held steady in the background, beyond the reach of the conceptual and logical patterns, which cancel them by freezing and isolating them.

“The transcendental principle does not govern any domain but gives the domain to be governed to a given empirical principle; it accounts for the subjection of a domain to a principle. The domain is created by difference of intensity, and given by this difference to an empirical principle according to which and in which the difference itself is cancelled. It is the transcendental principle which maintains itself in itself, beyond the reach of the empirical principle. Moreover, while the laws of nature govern the surface of the world, the eternal return ceaselessly rumbles in this other dimension of the transcendental or the volcanic spatiun.”(Deleuze 1994)

Deleuze’s distinction between the first and second passive synthesis of time reflects his separation of an implicit unseparated multiplicity from an explicit actual identity. Deleuze appears to misread Heidegger’s model of temporality as consonant with his own, as an interface between implicit virtual time and explicit actual time, the latter being surface effects of the former, which “hides itself by giving rise to that which covers it”.

Deleuze(1994) says:

“What are these systems constituted by the eternal return? Consider the two propositions: only that which is alike differs; and only differences are alike. The first formula posits resemblance as the condition of difference. It therefore undoubtedly demands the possibility of an identical concept for the two things which differ on condition that they are alike; and implies an analogy in the relation each thing has to this concept; and finally leads to the reduction of the difference
between them to an opposition determined by these three moments. According to the other formula, by contrast, resemblance, identity, analogy and opposition can no longer be considered anything but effects, the products of a primary difference or a primary system of differences. According to this other formula, difference must immediately relate the differing terms to one another.

In accordance with Heidegger's ontological intuition, difference must be articulation and connection in itself; it must relate different to different without any mediation whatsoever by the identical, the similar, the analogous or the opposed. There must be a differenciation of difference, an in-itself which is like a differenciator, a Sich-unterscheidende, by virtue of which the different is gathered all at once rather than represented on condition of a prior resemblance, identity, analogy or opposition. As for these latter instances, since they cease to be conditions, they become no more than effects of the primary difference and its differenciation, overall or surface effects which characterise the distorted world of representation, and express the manner in which the in-itself of difference hides itself by giving rise to that which covers it.

The question is whether these two formulae are simply two manners of speaking which do not change things very much, or whether they apply to completely different systems; or indeed whether, while applying to the same systems (and ultimately to the world system), they do not signify two incompatible interpretations of unequal value, one of which is capable of changing everything.”

For Heidegger, however, identity, analogy and opposition are not surface effects of intensities. The condition of possibility of being a surface effect for Deleuze is a capacity located within virtual difference, the capacity to represent itself as a present entity. For Deleuze, the creative becoming that the virtual structure of temporality imparts to experience begins only after and around the temporary self-persistence of identities. These identities don’t only appear as secondary, derived phenomena, in actualized material such as extensities and qualities. The condition of possibility of quality and extension, of molarity, arborescence and striation is a presupposed identity within the virtual parts of desiring machines, a temporary self-reproduction and self-affection within and as original difference-in-itself. Deleuze’s desiring differences each ‘take time’, albeit a very small quantity of time. Difference-in-itself occupies time, is present in time as this ‘now’. Only that which first inheres as itself (even if what inheres is dubbed as difference in itself) in a countable time can undergo change. Deleuze’s virtual-actual, smooth-striated, rhizomatic-arborescent, singular-multiple, temporally coexistent-sequential binaries ground themselves in this dual nature of difference as change, and inhering identity or presencing. Deleuze’s virtual syntheses of production can only ‘let themselves be taken’ as actual species and quantities because difference in itself is already self-calculation as repeatable self-identity. By contrast, for Heidegger taking something as something temporalizes itself via the hermeneutic ‘as’ structure. Letting something be taken as a qualitative species or quantitative part prescinds from the ‘as’ structure. That is, it is a deficient mode of relation, a meaningless staring at something by treating it as a present to hand ‘is’ rather than a circumspective ‘as’.

“It is therefore essential, in first defining the unity of temporality, to eliminate the notion of anything thing-like, present on hand, which is between, as it were, having-been-ness and the
Heidegger doesn’t deny that we can simply stare at a thing repeatedly, but when we isolate it as enduringly present at hand we are merely calculating. That is to say, the way that experiencing something as present to hand modifies the relevant usefulness of ‘as’ structured comportment is by stripping away what is meaningful in our relation with beings, and in the process stripping away their intelligibility. This is why to merely stare at something present at hand is to no longer understand it. It is not enough to say with Deleuze that an actualized qualitative whole’s extensive duration gets its sense and relevance from the virtual intensities that generate it and which then hold themselves steady while the calculative iteration functions autonomously. Heidegger writes about this way of thinking in terms of his notion of standing reserve. In Heidegger’s terms, Deleuzian intensities function as subjective enframings of the species and parts that develop from them. Intensive processes posit, set in place and represent the qualities that steadily remain throughout the calculation of difference in degree. Such instrumental repetition does not carry through intelligible, relevant meaning, it dissolves understanding into the nihilism of empty calculation. This is the case not only for the created object but also for the subject. To be a subject is to act as cause in producing instrumental effects. As Heidegger (2015) explains, disclosing beings by counting the repetition of identical increments of the same qualitative substance is a forgetting of the truth of Beyng.

“The most insidious manner of forgetting is the progressive "repetition" of the same. One says the same with a constantly new indifference; the mode of saying and interpreting changes.”

For all its differences with Heidegger’s thinking of temporality, Husserl’s later work on time consciousness presages Heidegger’s understanding of the self-presencing of quality and extension as deficient modes of experience. In Husserl’s hands, Deleuze’s articulation of two forms of repetition (intensive quantities vs extensive quantification) is transformed into a distinction between constituting (absolute) and constituted (objective) time. The latter corresponds to Deleuze’s first passive synthesis of time, in which the sequential counting of extensive quantities, and the distinguishing between qualitatively different quantities, takes place.

“Each individual object (each unity, whether immanent or transcendent, constituted in the stream) endures, and necessarily endures -that is, it continuously exists in time and is something identical in this continuous existence, which at the same time can be regarded as a process. Conversely: what exists in time continuously exists in time and is the unity belonging to the process that carries with it inseparably the unity of what endures in the process as it unfolds. The unity of the tone that endures throughout the process lies in the tonal process; and conversely, the unity of the tone is unity in the filled duration, that is, in the process. Therefore, if anything at all is defined as existing in a time-point, it is conceivable only as the phase of a process, a phase in which the duration of an individual being also has its point. Individual or concrete being is necessarily changing or unchanging; the process is a process of change or of rest, the enduring object itself a changing object or one at rest. Moreover, every change has its rate or acceleration of change (to use an image) with respect to the same duration. As a matter of principle, any phase of a change can be expanded into a rest, and any phase of a rest can be carried over into change.” (Husserl 1964)
Because for Deleuze species and parts, qualities and extensities are actualized developments of implicit, virtual intensities, there is nothing further that needs to be added to the above description by Husserl, nothing to be extracted from the implicit, virtual dimension in order to complete the picture. The role of intensities is to set up the terms for what is actualized as species and parts, and then later transform those terms. It is in this sense that the virtual role of intensities is hidden and that qualities and extensities are surface effects of this deeper becoming. But the positing and transformation of the sense of the actualized qualities and parts is external to what takes place as actualization. The implicit holds itself steady while the conceptual scheme it generates reproduces itself. Such is not the case for Husserl. The implicit awareness of constituting time reveals what is occluded from explicit awareness of the quantitative iteration of enduring objects, and what this implicit awareness reveals is not a sense peripheral or external to the time of persisting objects, but intrinsic to it. What holds only for intensities in Deleuze’s understanding of the structure of time, that every change in degree is simultaneously a difference in kind, constitutes the irreducible, absolute essence of all duration for Husserl.

“Now if we consider the constituting phenomena in comparison with the phenomena just discussed, we find a flow, and each phase of this flow is a continuity of adumbrations. But as a matter of principle, no phase of this flow can be expanded into a continuous succession, and therefore the flow cannot be conceived as so transformed that this phase would be extended in identity with itself. Quite to the contrary, we necessarily find a flow of continuous "change", and this change has the absurd character that it flows precisely as it flows and can flow neither "faster" nor "slower." If that is the case, then any object that changes is missing here; and since "something" runs its course in every process, no process is in question. There is nothing here that changes, and for that reason it also makes no sense to speak of something that endures. It is nonsensical to want to find something here that remains unchanged for even an instant during the course of its duration.”(Husserl 1964)

To be clear, the constituting time of the living present doesn’t achieve its transcendence of continuous identity, of speeds and slownesses, by virtue of being an empty awareness which abstracts away from all contents of appearance. On the contrary, it is objective time which abstracts away aspects of the actually appearing content in order to arrive at such idealizations as identically persisting qualities and speeds and slownesses of movement.

“Can one speak in the strict sense of change in a situation in which, after all, constancy, duration filled out without change, is inconceivable? No possible constancy can be attributed to the continuous flow of appearance-phases. There is no duration in the original flow. For duration is the form of something enduring, of an enduring being, of something identical in the temporal sequence that functions as its duration. In the case of processes such as a thunderstorm, the motion of a shooting star, and so on, we have to do with unitary complexes of changes in enduring objects. Objective time is a form of "persisting" objects, of their changes and of other processes involved in them. "Process" is therefore a concept presupposing persistence. But persistence is unity that becomes constituted in the flow, and it pertains to the essence of the flow that no persistence can exist in it. Phases of experience and continuous series of phases exist in the flow. But such a phase is nothing that persists, any more than a continuous series of such phases is.”(Ibid)

It is significant that Deleuze’s account of the actualization of the virtual, the development of
Deleuze’s failure to make this distinction leads him to confuse mathematical with non-mathematical idealities and prevents him from locating the sense of extensive duration. Deleuze gives ordinality priority over cardinality within the virtual dimension of intensive quantities, because he says the counting of qualitative differences (intensive quantity) is not the repetition of an identical unit. Deleuze(1987) writes:

“Every number is originally intensive and vectorial in so far as it implies a difference of quantity which cannot properly be cancelled, but extensive and scalar in so far as it cancels this difference on another plane that it creates and on which it is explicated. Even the simplest type of number confirms this duality: natural numbers are first ordinal - in other words, originally intensive. Cardinal numbers result from these and are presented as the explication of the ordinal. It is often objected that ordination cannot lie at the origin of number because it already implies cardinal operations of colligation. This, however, is because the formula 'the cardinal results from the ordinal' has been poorly understood. Ordination in no way presupposes the repetition of the same unit which must be 'cardinalised' every time the following ordinal number is reached. Ordinal construction does not imply a supposed same unit but only, as we shall see, an irreducible notion of distance - the distances implicated in the depth of an intensive spatium (ordered differences). Identical unity is not presupposed by ordination; on the contrary, this belongs to cardinal number and presupposes an extensive equality among cardinal numbers, a relative equivalence of exteriorised terms. We should not, therefore, believe that cardinal number results analytically from ordinal, or from the final terms of finite ordinal series (the preceding objection would then be justified). In fact, ordinal number becomes cardinal only by extension, to the extent that the distances enveloped in the spatium are explicated, or developed and equalized in an extensity established by natural number. We should therefore say that, from the outset, the concept of number is synthetic.”

“The number distributes itself in smooth space; it does not divide without changing nature each time, without changing units, each of which represents a distance and not a magnitude (the freeing of a line that does not pass between two points). The ordinal, directional, nomadic, articulated number, the numbering number, pertains to smooth space, just as the numbered number pertains to striated space.”

Deleuze reads Husserl’s use of ‘cardinal’ as referring strictly to a ‘how many’ that counts identical increments within the same qualitative whole. In other words, the distinction between ordinal and cardinal comes to that between difference in kind and difference of degree. The meaning of number in general is irreducibly grounded in the nature of what is being counted, and because intensive quantities are, as Deleuze says, more original than extensive quantities, change in nature of the elements being counted establishes the basis for understanding what it is we are doing when we enumerate. At the same time, the condition of possibility of extensive quantification must be present within the units of intensive changes in kind. That is, number thought as difference in degree can only arise from number as iteration of difference in kind if intensive difference already begins as briefly persisting qualitative self-identity. An intensive difference occupies an infinitely small duration of time. It counts itself as this brief self-persistence before qualitatively changing into difference in kind. This repetition of self-affecting presence is what makes possible the development of intensity as extension.
For Husserl, number in itself is not tied to anything but itself. Enumeration, as an empty ‘how much’, abstracts away all considerations that pertain to the nature of the substrate of the counting, including whether that substrate offers itself up for measurement in qualitatively or quantitatively changing increments. Enumeration represents what Husserl calls a free ideality. Derrida characterizes this feature of number in the following way:

“I can manipulate symbols without animating them, in an active and actual manner, with the attention and intention of signification (crisis of mathematical symbolism, according to Husserl)” (Derrida 1988).

“Now, Numbers, as numbers, have no meaning; they can squarely be said to have no meaning, not even plural meaning. …Numbers have no present or signified content. And, a fortiori, no absolute referent. This is why they don't show anything, don't tell anything, don't represent anything, aren't trying to say anything. Or more precisely, the moment of present meaning, of “content,” is only a surface effect.” (Derrida 1981).

Numeric idealization is unbound (within the strict limits of its own repetition); no contextual effects intervene such as was the case in the attempt to repeat the same word meaningfully. Contextual change implies change in meaning, and a mathematical ideality can be manipulated without being animated, ‘in an active and actual manner, with the attention and intention of signification’. Such an ideality can be repeated indefinitely without alteration, because its meaning is empty. In the case of a bound ideality, what repeats itself as self-identical returns to itself as ‘the same’ subtly differently each time; the immediate effects of contextual change ensure that alteration is intrinsic to the repetition of an intentional meaning. Because it is a free ideality, it doesn’t matter whether we consider enumeration as a counting of a series of elements composed of differences of kind or of degree. What makes all enumeration cardinal before being ordinal is that in order to know what ‘how many’ means, we have to abstract away from the features of a series of elements that would reveal its iteration to be qualitative or quantitative, and produce a synthetic act that holds in mind simultaneously the memory of previously specifically and separately noticed elements, and a current specifically noticed element.

“In forming the representation of the totality we do not attend to the fact that changes in the contents occur as the colligation progresses.” (Husserl 2003).

Simultaneously holding in mind past elements and a current element is precisely what Deleuze is doing whenever he thinks the idea of an intensive quantity, which is what makes the counting of intensive quantities cardinal in Husserl’s sense but not in Deleuze’s sense. Both Ordinality and what Deleuze means by cardinality (the repetition of identical units) is the answer to a different, higher order question than the simple ‘how many’. So why does Deleuze not see that numeric repetition (counting, quantification, enumeration, calculation), rather than being either a repetition of identities or of differences, is an entirely different kind of synthetic activity? I think for him to do so would require him to deconstruct the presuppositions behind Nietzsche’s Eternal Return in the direction of Heidegger’s critique of presence and time as a countable sequence of nows. I have suggested that, despite Deleuze’s claim that number is ‘originally ordinal’ (intensive) and only secondarily a counting of identical units (extensive), the self-identity of intensive difference precedes and makes possible its role as qualitative differentiator and genesis
of extensities. Deleuze wants to offer a foundation of number and mathematics as a subversive, creative force, an affirmation of Nietzsche’s eternal return as the ‘roll of the dice’. But he begins too late. What Husserl, and Heidegger after him, recognized is that numeration never counts anything but its own self-iteration, devoid of sense and meaning outside of the empty ‘same thing, different time’. To experience an object as meaningful beyond this ‘how much’ is to no longer attend to it as calculative, countable iteration, as persisting self-identical presence. Deleuze does not appear to recognize that the iteration of extensive quantity is devoid of meaningful sense. He misses the qualitative change in sense that is necessary in order to produce the notion of ‘something’ (a unit) as a specifically and separately noticed element of a multiplicity.

Footnote:
In a letter to his friend Stumpf from 1891, Husserl remarks:

“"The opinion by which I was still guided in the elaboration of my Habilitationsschrift, to the effect that the concept of cardinal number forms the foundation of general arithmetic, soon proved to be false . . . By no clever devices, by no 'inauthentic representing,' can one derive negative, rational, irrational, and the various sorts of complex numbers from the concept of the cardinal number. The same is true of the ordinal concepts, of the concepts of magnitude, and so on. And these concepts themselves are not logical particularizations of the cardinal concept."

A number of scholars have interpreted this letter to indicate that over the course of Philosophy of Arithmetic, Husserl changes his mind concerning the primacy of number concepts in grounding arithmetic. Or, more likely, Husserl had already begun to change his mind before writing that book and decided to leave his incorrect ideas about the primacy of cardinality in the first chapters alongside the corrected view in the later chapters. These interpreters believe that in the later chapters Husserl describes purely symbolic calculation for complex forms of mathematics that are completely independent of, and do not derive from, the cardinal numeric concepts in the first section. But I agree with the following from Micah Tillman (2012):

“"Thus, I would argue that Willard's conclusion in "Husserl on a Logic that Failed"-that Husserl ultimately rejects his understanding of calculation as being based upon number concepts-is misleading. What Husserl in fact discovers is that there are three natural, or well-motivated types of calculation. The first two directly involve working with number concepts (in other words, they directly involve conceptualizing numbers), with the second growing out of the first. The third adopts the sign system developed to facilitate the second type of calculation, and works with that system alone, without conceptualizing numbers.

Nevertheless, it is derived from, and justified by, the system of number concepts developed for the second type of calculation. The third type of calculation is not a direct involvement with number concepts, and yet it remains fundamentally based upon the number concepts. Willard is correct, therefore, that Husserl discovers that mathematics-as it is actually practiced by contemporary mathematicians-"is [not] based entirely upon the concept of number." It is, rather, based upon the concept of number by way of a sign system which is itself based upon the concept of number [mechanical, symbolic calculation is based on conceptual calculation]. What Husserl does, then, between writing his Habilitationsschrift and completing PA, amounts to discovering not that his
original theory of arithmetic was wrong, but rather that an important new layer had to be included in his theory's fully-developed version. This is why PA hangs together as a work; the final chapter is not an about-face, but the logical next-and concluding-step in Husserl's argument.

Deleuze’s conflating of logic-mathematical calculation and meaningful sense, free idealities and bound idealities, may help us to understand the basis of his critique of Husserl’s account of the relation between formal and transcendental logic. In The Logic of Sense, Deleuze offers his alternative to Husserl’s transcendental and formal logic. Deleuze thinks the general form of the Husserlian noema as having its effect in a way resembling Deleuzian intensity in the restricted sense that it operates externally to actualized extensity and quality as their generative cause and impetus of transformation. But for Deleuze this is where the similarity ends. Intensities affirm the paradoxical, the heterogeneous, the singular, the incompossible, the Eternal Return of the different, the indeterminate, the non-sensical, the roll of the dice within sense, the object=x as difference in general, the virtual event of sense as intensity, the verb underlying the axiomatic, converging, referential functions of actualizing predication. But from Deleuze’s vantage, strongly influenced by Sartre’s replacement of the Husserlian ego by an anonymous, pre-personal transcendental field, Husserl’s transcendental logic of the noema is a ‘sleight of hand’, a reading back into the transcendental an empirical, general logical predicate (good sense and common sense, the Platonic image of thought, where the ground is larger than the grounded, the immanent is immanent to something transcendent). In other words, Deleuze seems to equate Husserlian noematic sense with empirical sense data bound together and imprisoned by a ready-made self-communicating subject.

Footnote: Deleuze undoubtedly interpreted Husserlian pronouncements such as the following in that light:

“Indeed, perhaps it will turn out later that all externality, even that of the entire inductive nature, physical and even psychophysical, is only an externality constituted in the unity of communicative personal experience, is thus only something secondary, and that it requires a reduction to a truly essential internality.” (Husserl 1977)

Deleuze’s critique would be fitting if it were the case that the noema signified a qualitative content, and its general form represented itself as a sequential flow of empirically objective, ready-made data, which is apparently how Deleuze understands the constituting time of the Husserlian transcendental subject. Put differently, Deleuze reads Husserl as locating within extended, qualified objects smaller actualized quantifiable qualities, which Husserl calls noematic sense. This must be so since Deleuze’s division of the world into a virtual and actual half provides him with only two options for interpreting the status of sense. Deleuze clearly does not believe that Husserl’s constituting strata of objectivation take into account the intensive, paradoxical nonsense within sense. Therefore, from Deleuze’s vantage, it must be the case, for instance, that the immanent consciousness of the individual moments of perspectival adumbration of a spatial object is Husserl’s description of the relation between actualized species and their extended parts. But this is not at all how Husserl sees the full noematic content. The generality of the noema is the empty formality of constituting time, the general sense of sense as constituting flow connecting retention, impression and protention. There is nothing of quantity or
extensity in a spatial object when we understand the logic of its constitution in the most primordial way:

“Can one speak in the strict sense of change in a situation in which, after all, constancy, duration filled out without change, is inconceivable? No possible constancy can be attributed to the continuous flow of appearance-phases. There is no duration in the original flow. For duration is the form of something enduring, of an enduring being, of something identical in the temporal sequence that functions as its duration.” (Husserl 1964)

Meanwhile, given that Deleuze considers actualized forms, including individuals, as analytic predicates, aren’t his categories of actualized species and parts, quality and extension, contentful generalities, formalisms? Deleuze questions the basis of Husserl’s levels of transcendency of sense bestowal, but for Husserl, these levels of idealization (from primary transcendence of spatial objects to secondary transcendence of alter egos) work within what for Deleuze would be the actual. This noetic-noematic structure includes a kind of virtual or implicit within and inseparable from the actual. This virtual within the actual brackets off and reduces Deleuze’s actual, which fails to recognize what the noesis is contributing to the qualitative and extensive idealizations produced as noematic objects. That is, Deleuze’s notion of the actual fails to exclude transcending presuppositions concerning what exists.

Deleuze expects to see heterogeneity, incompossibility, paradox, divergence and singularity where his actualized idealizations of objects and subjects undergo intensive change, because divergence is the only way that natural objects can relate to each other. Instead Husserl describes changes characterized by similarity, synthetic coherence, correlation, recognition, concordance, belonging, unity and ‘ownness’ with respect to a constituting Ego. His notion of doxa (belief) grounds itself in truth by way of the infinite task, infinitization itself via the eidetic method rather than via logico-mathematical calculation. Doxa presupposes validation which expresses the fundamental intricacy of experience in terms of anticipation of relative inferential compatibility. Doxa as validation is unavailable to Deleuze due to the weakly assimilative nature of the relation of difference for him. From Deleuze’s vantage, only an internal gyroscope can force such apparently platonic formations as coherence, concordance and validation into being (he says Husserl “puts into play the highest synthesis of identification inside a continuum, all the lines of which converge or concord”). The continuum Deleuze is referring to is the teleologically organized strata of transcendence constituted within the Ego, leading from immanent object to empirical object and alter ego. Deleuze (1994) considers Husserl’s notion of noematic sense as an example of good sense:

“…the systematic characteristics of good sense are thus the following: it affirms a single direction; it determines this direction to go from the most to the least differentiated, from the singular to the regular, and from the remarkable to the ordinary; it orients the arrow of time from past to future . . . ; it assigns to the present a directing role . . . of distribution in which all of the preceding characteristics are brought together. Good sense plays a capital role in the determination of signification, but plays no role in the donation of sense.”

When one contrasts good sense with the generative power of singularities producing the paradoxical play of sense and nonsense, one locates co-existing elements, external to each
other, in reciprocal relations of difference. Could not Husserl point out that grounding changes of sense in differential elements external to and co-existing with each other retains the naive naturalist presupposition of independent genesis? Each element in reciprocal inter-causation exists instantaneously as an intrinsic content before and outside of its being affected by its relation with other elements. Each element’s intrinsic differential effect is presupposed as a briefly persisting self-identity co-existing among a multiplicity of other briefly, independently self-identical differences, which then affect each other. It is the presumption of brief self-identity within each irreducible element of singular difference (the grounded is identical with the grounding) that justifies Deleuze’s depiction of the actual in terms of extensive duration. For Husserl, by contrast, each element in the flow of experienced time is produced synthetically via temporal association with the previous element, rather than already having its own instantaneous extension that is only secondarily changed by relation with its neighbors. This synthetic, associative belonging of what appears to what preceded it in the flow of time consciousness embues Husserlian difference with its character as intricate and assimilative rather than external and disparate. This structure is the basis of the Husserlian transcendental Ego, and gives the Ego the means to insert itself within Nietzsche’s Eternal return as intricate correlation within naive difference.

Husserl knows that achieving absolute, infinitely repeatable self-identity is only possible through mathematization, but he also knows that numeration abstracts away all meaningful sense. Meaningful, apodictic truth is an infinite task because eidetic method, transcendental reduction and epoche can only get us infinitely closer and closer to a convergence on pure self-identity. But I think one can put into question this teleological arrow of correlation without doing away with what I think is the heart of Husserl’s philosophy, which is the intimacy and content-deprived nature of the flow of constituting experience. Husserl was the first to discover what Gendlin (1987) called the experiential intricacy, which forms the basis of the science of the Lifeworld, whose structure (a priori of correlation) can be uncovered through the infinitizing method of the reduction. This intricacy within difference is invisible to Deleuze, so he misinterprets it as a cancellation of difference, the normative subordination and conformity of differences within a particular superordinate qualitative predicate (Husserl’s transcendental subjective Ego). In other words, Deleuze mistakes Husserl’s notion of noematic sense for an analytic predicate, the converging lines within the circle of a logical proposition expressed by the object =x, the object in general.

References:


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