

# OPÚSCULO 1

*- Pequenos textos de Filosofia, Ciência e Filosofia da Ciência -*

## **Edmund Husserl's later phenomenology: an approach to mental disorders**

~

António Fragoso Fernandes



Centro de Filosofia das Ciências  
da Universidade de Lisboa  
<http://cfcul.ul.pt>

**FCT**

Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia  
MINISTÉRIO DA CIÊNCIA, TECNOLOGIA E ENSINO SUPERIOR

## OPÚSCULO 1

*Edmund Husserl's later phenomenology: an approach to mental disorders*

© António Fragoso Fernandes

Centro de Filosofia das Ciências da Universidade de Lisboa - Lisboa, 2009  
<http://cfcul.fc.ul.pt>

# Edmund Husserl's later phenomenology: an approach to mental disorders

António Fragoso Fernandes  
Centre for Philosophy of Science, University of Lisbon

## Introduction

The swiss psychiatrists Ludwig Binswanger and Medard Boss had a deep knowledge of Phenomenology and they employed its method in their praxis. However they were also in close contact with the psychoanalytic movement and well aware of its evolution. Nonetheless they neglected any thoughtful research so far the main problem of the connexions between Phenomenology and Psychoanalysis is concerned. In the same way , the many phenomenologists that thereafter devoted themselves to psychoanalytical themes showed no interest whatsoever in pointing out in Husserl 's phenomenological way what should be considered the core of any dialogue between both disciplines : we mean the mixture of agreement and disagreement that links and makes appear side by side, even when in their encounter one excludes the other, the conscious and the unconscious. On the other hand ,after 50 years of psychoanalytical literature one cannot avoid noticing how the authors also seem to ignore the precise places where Freud leaves the cues allowing us to proceed to the heart of the problem. The present Communication intends to show how both Freud and Husserl introduced new theoretical tools and developed original ideas allowing the convergence between Phenomenology and Psychoanalysis to be put under another light.

\*\*\*

At first sight ,trying to make phenomenological sense of the notion of Inconscious seems doomed to failure from the start. After Husserl introduced the *Principle of all Principles* in the 24<sup>th</sup> paragraph of the *Ideen I* the very use of the word looked unacceptable. Nonetheless, after reading carefully the same paragraph, we understand how after the shift from static to genetic method

it is no more in the same spirit that the § 24 should be read. A full transcription should be given here: “ every originally given intuition is a rightful source of knowledge, everything that presents itself to us originally in “intuition”(in its bodily reality, as it were) is simply to be taken as that which it gives it self to be- but also only within the bounds in which it gives itself”. The last sentence makes all the difference when you read it from a static or a genetic point-of-view. Now a few words are in order to define both viewpoints. In Husserl’s terminology a static approach asks about the interplay of intention and fulfilment qualities of an act as well as the structural or essential possibilities of the particular object or act within the intentional correlation. Here one examines the structures and the being of those structures (as the formal and material essences typicalities, regions, etc.). In fact, Husserl began with static research taking the being of things for granted, i. e., he preferred a constitutive approach. By a genetic approach is meant that Husserl emphasised *primordial constitution* as a phenomenology of passive experience, including apperception, motivation, affection and association. Later, as his work was taking shape, Husserl came to ask how far it is possible to even undertake a static phenomenological approach leaving out the genetic dimension. Therefore it must be said that Husserl understood the problem of genesis as more concrete and more fundamental than the problem of static analysis. However, dealing with the problem of phenomenological constitution along a regressive direction compelled him to make out of primordial constitution the synonym of passive synthesis. From an epistemological viewpoint the emphasis on passive synthesis, far from breaking the *astounding correlation* Husserl spoke about, had the opposite effect. In fact the relation between active synthesis and passive synthesis became more clear. Underlining the importance of the noematic pole in the noetico-noematic correlative structure, Husserl made visible the role played by the passive analysis and strengthened the meaningful role it performed in the process of constitution. Moreover he achieved a paradoxical formulation of the process of cognitive activity in which both active and passive synthesis are definitely tied together in an *active passivity*. Now, in order to find the conducting thread along this Communication, we shall see how his interest in passive synthesis leads Husserl to the problem of the unconscious.

We have already seen how passivity designates the area of experience in which the ego is inactive and therefore does not participate in the constitution of sense. Passivity explains then the emergence of primordial objects, of formations lacking the participation of the ego in temporal acts. Those primordial formations proceed from the two main components of passive synthesis: affect and association. As far as the affect is concerned Husserl gave it a new

meaning, completely different from the usual definition. In fact Husserl to explain the affect, used a motivational relation, which means that he proposed a co-variant connexion rather than a causal relation which is present as kind of a stimulus

But the affective action is what allows something to present itself to us as in-itself. On the ground of this appearance is a turning-towards-something, instigated by a primordial formation that establishes itself as a unity of sense and depends upon the affective force. The constitution of those forces takes place as the organisation of a field of affective forces. This organisation consists in the differentiation of the degrees of intensity of the forces that compose the field. Now in order to understand what Husserl has in mind when he speaks about the unconscious in a phenomenological sense, we must first be aware of what he means when he defines a completely undifferentiated field of affective forces. For Husserl this is only possible after something exerted an affective force in the living present. But this must have happened in such a way that the zero-point of affective force took place as an inactive point of attraction in the retentional past. Now, this field of active forces completely inactive corresponds to what Husserl conceived as the Unconscious. By now we can accept without difficulty what Bernet understands under the husserlian model of the unconscious. For Bernet, the phenomenology of consciousness can show how it is possible that consciousness can bring to present appearance something unconscious, something alien or absent to consciousness, without incorporating it to the conscious present. The awakening of the field of affective forces is possible in so far as the later theory of phantasy of Husserl produces the presentification of an object in the present that nonetheless belongs to the past. Moreover it becomes clear by now that we are dealing with remembering. We shall now take advantage to speak about the fundamental role played by Husserl's theory of association in this context. Genetic affective sense-unities and association are for him, indissociable, since the sense-unities are associative concretions. Now Husserl treats remembering as produced by awakening forces and calls that reproductive association. To sum up: in his texts "Analysis concerning passive and active synthesis", Husserl leaves an advice as if he was addressing himself to Freud: *Only a radical theory that does justice in the same way to the concrete structure of the living present and to the structure of the particular concretions themselves arising from constitutive elements can solve the enigma of association, and with this all enigmas of the unconscious and of varying modes of becoming conscious.*

(Texto inicialmente apresentado no Congresso de Psicologia e Filosofia, Outubro de 2009.)