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Unity Makes Strength. Transcendental Intersubjectivity, Technics, and the Institution of Objectivity: Husserl, Fink, and Merleau-Ponty

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ABSTRACT. In this paper, I defend the claim that objectivity, in classical phenomenology, is best read as an instituted invariant: not a static given but the diachronic achievement of cooperative validation within transcendental intersubjectivity, mediated by technics—above all, writing and inscription—that ensure the iterability, transmissibility, and public critique of sense. The essay unfolds in five movements. The first revisits Husserl's critique of the mathematization of essences, showing how the very ideality of meaning depends on technical exteriorizations—above all writing—which sustain intergenerational communication and open the space for a non-reductive account of objectivity. The second turns to Fink's analysis of objectivation and mundanization, redefining science as a form of supra-individual habituality. The third expands on Merleau-Ponty's notion of expressive technicity, in which linguistic and artistic expression institutes fields of objectivity through indirect language and style. A fourth section develops a comparative synthesis—sociogenesis, diachrony, technics—and formulates criteria for instituted objectivity (addressability, iterability, transmissibility, responsivity). The conclusion bridges classical phenomenology and contemporary debates on digital technics, arguing that what endures is not what withdraws from history, but what remains fit to be repeated, challenged, and renewed within it.

Keywords: phenomenological objectivity; transcendental intersubjectivity; technics and inscription; institution and diachrony; expressive formation.

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I. Husserl: Writing, Ideality, and the Communalization of Inquiry

The question of objectivity enters Husserl's thought at a moment of deep disquiet[1]. Indeed, what the *Crisis of the European Sciences* names is not merely a historical downturn in research, but a spiritual fracture in the very meaning of science: the triumph of formal rationality over the *life-world* that first made it intelligible. The success of mathematical physics, achieved through the abstraction of quantifiable properties, produced an unforeseen and detrimental loss—the forgetting of the world of experience from which idealization had arisen[2]. What had been a living relation between cognition and world actually ossified into a purely technical calculus, indifferent to its own sense. The paradox of modernity is thus that the very progress of scientific reason conceals a deep crisis of objectivity: the detachment of truth from the conditions of its manifestation, a paradox already embodied in Galileo's double gesture—the discovery of a mathematically ideal nature and, at the same time, the covering-over of the lifeworld from which such idealization arises[3]. From within this fracture, the problem of objectivity re-emerges as a question of how meaning endures. How can knowledge remain valid for everyone when its procedures estrange it from the world of lived experience? What makes an ideal truth more than a private conviction yet more than a social convention? Phenomenology's wager is that this question cannot be resolved by invoking an external reality "out there," nor by reducing reason to empirical psychology. The origin of *geometrical* objectivity must instead be sought in the intersubjective life

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[2] Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology,* trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), §9.

[3] See Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis,* §§9–12. Here, Husserl presents Galileo as both "discoverer and coverer" (*Entdecker und Verhüller*) of nature's sense: his mathematisation of the world discloses a new mode of ideal objectivity, yet simultaneously conceals the experiential ground (*Lebenswelt*) from which such idealisation arises. The Galilean gesture is therefore not an error but a constitutive ambiguity of modern reason—its founding act also inaugurates a forgetting. For Husserl, the task of phenomenology is precisely to recover this forgotten origin, not by rejecting the scientific attitude, but by making it self-reflexive: science must continuously re-discover the sense of its own constitution, lest it reduce truth to technical success and the human community of inquiry to mere instrumentality. See also Patrick A. Heelan, *Space-Perception and the Philosophy of Science* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), ch. 6 and Dominique Pradelle, 2012.*Généalogie de la raison - Essai sur l'historicité du sujet transcendantal de Kant à Heidegger.*

of meaning—in the ways sense is instituted, shared, and renewed across generations of investigators[4].

Within this horizon, Husserl's late reflection on writing and inscription acquires decisive importance. Against the backdrop of the *Crisis,* writing becomes the missing mediation between finite acts of intuition and the enduring life of ideal objects[5]. The *Origin of Geometry*, appended to the *Crisis*, is not a nostalgic tribute to mathematical purity but a critical meditation on the mathematization of essences[6]. Here, geometry functions as a limit case through which Husserl exposes the technical condition of ideality itself: what can be written can be programmatically *iterated*; what can be iterated can be always checked; what can be checked can be legitimately *handed down* and reactivated[7]. Indeed, the "identity" of a theorem or proof thus

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[4] See on this Dan Zahavi, *Husserl and Transcendental Intersubjectivity* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2001). Moreover, this "return to the life-world" does not mark a weakening of reason but its strength: an acknowledgment that rational objectivity must constantly test and renew itself within the horizon of lived experience. The phenomenological a priori is not formal but material—it is the *Lebensweltliche Bodenständigkeit*, the rootedness of inquiry in the world of possible verification. For Husserl, such rootedness secures the very normativity of reason as a self-correcting process, not a withdrawal into subjectivity. See Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis,* §§33–34.

[5] Husserl explicitly insists on the constitutive role of writing (*Schriftlichkeit*) in the *Origin of Geometry*, where "the written linguistic expression makes communication possible without limit, in the infinite openness of the community of investigators" (*Crisis,* p. 357). It is "through the fixed expression, through the enduring linguistic form, that what was originally meant and intuited can be reactivated by others" (ibid., p. 358). Writing is thus no mere external aid but a transformation in the mode of being of ideal objects: what is inscribed "can be handed down from one generation to the next" (ibid., p. 359), allowing sense to survive beyond the originating act. On the phenomenological implications of *Schriftlichkeit* as a technical a priori of reason, see Jacques Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's "Origin of Geometry": An Introduction,* trans. John P. Leavey Jr. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), pp. 73–76; and Dominique Pradelle, *Intuition et idéalités. Phénoménologie des objets mathématiques* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2020), pp. 112–118. In this sense, writing does not externalize thought but institutes its public temporality: it is the medium through which reason becomes capable of self-critique, continuity, and renewal—the ethos of objectivity itself.

[6] Dominique Pradelle, *Intuition et idéalités,* pp. 51–55.

[7] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 355. *The Cartesian Meditations* (1931) already prepare this shift from the solitary ego to the intersubjective community that alone makes objectivity possible. In the Fifth Meditation, Husserl shows that transcendental subjectivity is not an isolated monad but a community of monads (*Monadengemeinschaft*) whose mutual pairing (*Paarung*) grounds the constitution of a shared world (see Hua I, §§42–63). This intersubjective co-intentionality—the possibility that different subjects can mean the same object—is what ultimately founds geometry as a universal science. The geometrical object, unlike a merely empirical one, endures through acts of communal validation that presuppose a horizon of possible reactivation by others. What the *Origin of Geometry* later radicalizes is the recognition that such intersubjectivity is historically mediated through writing. Inscription does not create geometrical ideality but allows its continual re-institution: it stabilizes the conditions under which ideal sense can circulate, be reactivated, and corrected within a community of investigators. In this way, geometry

depends not on metaphysical sameness or the persistence of ink, but on a structure of invariance under reactivation. The proof is the same only insofar as it can be re-performed by any competent *reader*, following the inscribed articulations—definitions, lemmas, diagrams—that expose the chain of reasoning to public correction. Husserl's terms *communalization* and *infinitization* must therefore be read phenomenologically: inscription does not merely record results but institutes a horizon of task, within which each achievement calls for repetition, refinement, or refutation[8]. Husserl himself captures this movement through the pair *Überlieferung* (handing down) and *Wiederbelebung* (re-activation)[9]. Accordingly, these are not metaphors for historical continuity but names for the phenomenological structure of sense's persistence through time. What is handed down are not fixed concepts but operative articulations—rules of construction, proofs, notations—that can be redoable by any subject properly initiated into their logic. In this renewed context, for Husserl, tradition is not passive reception but the actual possibility of re-living[10].

Accordingly. Derrida's *Introduction to the Origin of Geometry* makes explicit what is only implicit in Husserl: iterability is not a threat to ideality but its very condition[11]. The Euclidean diagram, far from a pictorial aid, is a script of action—draw, extend, bisect—whose marks render the path of reasoning both visible and

functions as a limit case of intersubjective ideality—an exemplary formation in which intuition, expression, and verification converge. The written trace ensures that the work of reason, born in communication, remains open to its renewal. See Edmund Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge,* Husserliana I, ed. S. Strasser (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1950), §§42–63.

8 In this horizon, the possibility of error is not a failure but an intrinsic moment of the historical life of reason. For Husserl, objectivity remains an open task in which truth and error belong to the same dynamic of correction and renewal. Fink would later describe this structure as the methodical finitude of transcendental life, the necessity that sense be endlessly revised in and through experience. In Enzo Paci's existential reading of phenomenology, this becomes the very possibility of the possibility of history: error as the condition of learning, responsibility, and human openness. See Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis,* §§70–73; Eugen Fink, *Sixth Cartesian Meditation: The Idea of a Transcendental Theory of Method,* trans. Ronald Bruzina (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), §§11–13; and Enzo Paci, *Funzione delle scienze e significato dell'uomo* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1963), pp. 81–85.

9 The terms *Überlieferung* and *Wiederbelebung* are introduced by Husserl in *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie, Husserliana VI*, ed. Walter Biemel (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954), Beilage III and Appendix VI, pp. 367–373. *Überlieferung* designates the "handing down" of meaning through written and institutional sedimentations, while *Wiederbelebung* names the act of "reactivation" (*Wiedererweckung*) by which a successor reawakens the sense originally intended. These concepts articulate Husserl's late phenomenology of history, in which ideality endures only through its possible renewal in living consciousness. See also Husserl, *The Crisis,* pp. 354–359; and Dodd, *Crisis and Reflection,* pp. 93–97.

10 Renaud Barbaras, *Introduction à la philosophie de Husserl* (Paris: Vrin, 2015), p. 143.

11 Dodd, *Crisis and Reflection*, pp. 92–95.

contestable. Disagreement and critique are possible precisely because the trace stabilizes what is to be re-done[12]. The ideal object is identical only insofar as it can be repeated in other contexts; its historicity is not the negation but the realization of its truth. Iterability binds sameness and difference, grounding both stability and revisability as co-essential to objectivity. This reframing anticipates the radical step that Eugen Fink will take: if writing already transforms intuition into method, Fink will show that this transformation is not accidental but constitutive of the very form of transcendental life. The "crisis of objectivity" thus becomes, in his hands, a question of how reason institutionalizes itself, how the infinite task of verification takes shape in concrete communities, practices, and traditions. Later phenomenologists—from Merleau-Ponty to Stiegler—will inherit this gesture, extending Husserl's insight into the domain of expression and technics, where the instituted invariant of sense becomes the very measure of historical responsibility[13].

II. Fink: Objectivation, Method, and the Worldliness of Reason

If Husserl's late work reveals the technical conditions of ideality, Fink's *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* radicalizes this discovery by reinterpreting phenomenology itself as a methodical *institution* of sense[14]. Indeed, what Husserl had thematized through the interplay of inscription and reactivation becomes, in Fink, a full-fledged theory of the constitution of objectivity as *objectivation* (*Objektivierung*)—a process that is neither merely cognitive nor merely historical, but the very way transcendental life attains self-articulation[15]. Accordingly, Fink's departure from Husserl is less a

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12 Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry,* p. 92.

13 See Anthony J. Steinbock, *Home and Beyond: Generative Phenomenology after Husserl* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1995).

14 Indeed, the term *Stiftung* (institution) is phenomenologically central. In Husserl and Fink it names the act through which meaning attains historical endurance—an institution not of authority but of sense, whereby an originary event becomes a norm for further renewal. Merleau-Ponty will later reinterpret this notion as the "institution of meaning" (*institution du sens*), mostly emphasizing its bodily and expressive dimensions (*L'institution. La passivité, course notes, Collège de France, 1954–1955*, ed. D. Darmaillacq et al., Paris: Belin, 2003), while Castoriadis will expand it into the idea of the "social imaginary institution," the collective creation of meaning (*L'institution imaginaire de la société*, Paris: Seuil, 1975). A fuller comparison follows below; here the reference is only schematic, indicating how Fink's conception of *Stiftung* already prefigures the intertwining of history and sense.

15 Eugen Fink, *Sixth Cartesian Meditation: The Idea of a Transcendental Theory of Method,* trans. Ronald Bruzina (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), §2. Moreover, the notion of *Objektivierung* carries a productive ambiguity. For Fink, objectivation is both the act through which sense becomes communicable and the process by which it risks fixation. It marks, as Husserl had already seen in the *Crisis* (§73), the tension between sedimentation and reactivation: the need for stability that may turn into

rupture than a transformation of emphasis. Where Husserl had still spoken of ideality as a correlate of intersubjective praxis, Fink deepens this in the movement of method itself—the reflective self-doubling of the transcendental field— and the true origin of objectivity. The subject, as he writes, "is not a point of origin but a movement of grounding" (*ein Bewegungsgrund*), and method is the form in which this movement gains stability[16]. Objectivity, in this sense, is the "worldly" face of transcendental life: not an external product, but the sedimented trace of the world's self-disclosure in finite consciousness. Against the charge of "idealism," Fink insists that objectivation does not separate thought from world, but rather worlds thought. The act of objectifying transforms both the object and the one who constitutes it. In this transformation, method itself becomes a historical institution, an inheritance of sense comparable to Husserl's *Überlieferung* and *Wiederbelebung*, but now internal to the very dynamism of the transcendental[17].

rigidity. Fink radicalizes this by showing that every constitution of objectivity entails a moment of *alienation*—a necessary exteriorization of meaning—which is at once the possibility and the peril of reason's history. Merleau-Ponty will later inherit this dialectic in his reflections on expression and institution (*Phénoménologie de la perception*, Paris: Gallimard, 1945, pp. 196–198), and Derrida will echo it in his reading of *iterability* as the joint of preservation and deformation.

16 Fink formulates this idea in the *Sechste Cartesianische Meditation*, §5: "*Das transzendentale Ich ist nicht Ursprungspunkt, sondern Bewegungsgrund der Konstitution*" ("the transcendental I is not a point of origin but a ground in motion for constitution"). See Eugen Fink, *Sechste Cartesianische Meditation: Die Idee einer transzendentalen Methodenlehre*, in *Nachlass* Ms. E III 7, fols. 15r–17v, Eugen-Fink-Archiv, Universitätsbibliothek Freiburg i.Br.; cited from the English translation in *Sixth Cartesian Meditation,* p. 41. Here, Fink's formulation captures his effort to reconceive transcendental subjectivity as a generative movement (*Bewegung des Sinns*), rather than as a fixed origin—an idea that will underpin his later cosmological interpretation of phenomenology.

17 Fink, *Sixth Cartesian Meditation,* §11; see also Husserl, *Die Krisis*, pp. 367–373. Fink repeatedly stresses that the transcendental method acquires reality only through its inscription. As he writes, *"Die Methode ist kein bloßes Tun, sondern eine Einschreibung der Sinnbewegung in die Dauer der Geschichte"* ("Method is not a mere doing but an inscription of the movement of sense into the duration of history"), *Nachlass* Ms. E III 8, fol. 10r, Eugen-Fink-Archiv, Universitätsbibliothek Freiburg i.Br. Elsewhere he notes that *"die Schrift der Philosophie"* is not an accidental medium but the *"Gestalt, in der sich das transzendentale Leben faßlich wird"*—the form through which transcendental life becomes graspable to itself (ibid., fol. 9v). Writing, for Fink, is thus not a supplement to thought but the very space where method attains visibility and historicity: "The transcendental field can only be made accessible through a work of inscription that institutes the continuity of questioning" (*Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, p. 46). In this sense, *Schrift* and *Einschreibung* name a constitutive tension of phenomenology: every act of objectivation requires an exteriorization that at once stabilizes and risks the living flow of sense. Fink thereby extends Husserl's insight from the *Origin of Geometry*—that ideality endures only through iterability—into a full methodology of inscription, where the written trace is both a product and a condition of transcendental reflection. On the continuity and displacement between Husserl's *Schriftlichkeit* and Fink's *Einschreibung*, see Pradelle, *Intuition et idéalités,* pp. 115–118.

I argue Bruzina rightly calls this process the "second birth" of phenomenology[18]. Indeed, what Fink here discovers is that the transcendental subject cannot be conceived as a timeless witness; rather, it must be understood as what would be later defined as a finite field of play (*Spiel*), in which experience, reflection, and institutional form are reciprocally constituted[19]. Indeed, the world, far from being a neutral backdrop, is the living *arena* of this play, namely, the site where objectivity appears through acts that are always already shared, corrected, and transmitted. Fink's insistence that "the world is not a sum of things but the unity of play" (*die Welt ist nicht Summe von Dingen, sondern Einheit des Spiels*) clarifies that reason's universality is not anterior to history but born from it[20]. This conception of objectivity as play transforms the very sense of transcendental philosophy. The historical life of reason, already opened by Husserl's concern for *Schriftlichkeit*, now appears as a cosmic practice of sense—a mode of self-ordering through which humanity institutes a world. Every scientific or artistic articulation is, in this perspective, an act of mundanization (*Mundanisierung*). By mundanization, Fink labels a way of re-embedding transcendental activity into the temporal and social thickness of existence[21]. On his account, the phenomenology of the world thus becomes a phenomenology of the *institutions of reason*—not only of how sense is constituted, but of how it endures through the sedimented practices of language, education, and, finally, culture.

Indeed, such a reading anticipates later developments that would take the institutional aspect of objectivity as their point of departure. Accordingly, Bernet interprets this as the moment when phenomenology becomes self-critically historical,

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[18] Ronald Bruzina, "Introduction", in Fink, *Sixth Cartesian Méditation,* pp. xxii-xxiii.

[19] The concept of *Spiel* (play) develops in Fink from a methodological to a cosmological principle. In the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation,* play names the dynamic field of constitution, where subject and world emerge through reciprocal movement. Later, in the *Nachlass* notes for *Spiel als Weltsymbol* (1930s–1940s), this becomes an ontological motif: the world itself "plays," that is, unfolds as a finite totality of appearing and withdrawal. In *Grundphänomene des menschlichen Daseins*, Fink integrates this theme into his notion of the *kosmologische Differenz*—the difference between being and the world—treating play as the symbol of the world's self-showing and concealment. The continuity is thematic far more than terminological: *Spiel* remains the figure of reason's self-movement and finitude, the expression of a transcendental life that is never closed upon itself. See Eugen Fink, *Spiel als Weltsymbol*, in *Eugen Fink Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 7, ed. Franz-Anton Schwarz (Freiburg/München: Karl Alber, 2010); Eugen Fink, *Grundphänomene des menschlichen Daseins* (Freiburg/München: Karl Alber, 1979); and Bruzina, *Eugen Fink,* pp. 315–320.

[20] Eugen Fink, "Nachlass zur Phänomenologie des Spiels," Freiburg i. Br.: Fink-Archiv, Ms. E III 10, fol. 23r.

[21] Eugen Fink, "Das Problem der Phänomenologie Edmund Husserls," in *Studien zur Phänomenologie 1930–1939*, Husserliana: Dokumente III/2, ed. H. Ebeling et al. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1988), pp. 179–200.

aware of its own conditions of possibility[22]; Mensch reads it as a proto-hermeneutic gesture, opening the path to Gadamer and Merleau-Ponty[23]. Yet what is essential in Fink is that this historicization of the transcendental does not dissolve its normativity, for it rather grounds it. By showing that every constitution of objectivity already implies the possibility of its correction, Fink transforms Husserl's "infinite task" into a method of renewal: a world-forming, *dialogical* and *diachronic rationality* that remains open to revision because it is grounded in finitude itself. In this sense, Fink provides the second moment of the triad: if Husserl had uncovered the technicity of ideality, Fink discloses the institutional and world-forming dimension of method. Objectivity is no longer the residue of a founding act, but the ongoing enactment of a shared horizon of sense. The transcendental, here, is not opposed to the world; it is the world's own effort to become intelligible. The next section will turn to Merleau-Ponty, in whom this dialectic of institution and expression finds its most embodied form, linking the objectivity of thought to the style and gesture of existence itself.

III. Merleau-Ponty: Expression, Institution, and the Flesh of Objectivity

If Husserl had exposed the technical conditions of ideality and Fink had transformed method into a historical institution, Merleau-Ponty gives these themes a new ontological density. The problem of objectivity, for him, no longer concerns only the transmission of sense or the methodology of its constitution, but the embodied field in which sense and world interweave. What emerges in Merleau-Ponty's late philosophy is an understanding of objectivity as flesh (*chair*): a texture of interrelation where expression, institution, and perception are inseparable[24]. Already in *Phénoménologie de la perception* (1945), Merleau-Ponty rejects the notion that perception offers a neutral access to things. To perceive is already to inhabit a horizon of meanings sedimented through language, gesture, and shared praxis. Here, the world is never given "all at once" but unfolds as a horizon of visibility, structured by what he calls "operative intentionality" (*intentionalité opérante*)[25]. In his lectures at the Collège de France Merleau-Ponty redefines Husserl's term *Stiftung* as appropriate institution du sens: the event by which a meaning is inaugurated within experience, initiating a history of its own reactivation[25]. Accordingly, every institution is both event and sedimentation: the establishment of a norm that must

[22] See Rudolf Bernet, *La vie du sujet* (Paris: PUF, 1994), pp. 205-215.

[23] James Mensch, *Postfoundational Phenomenology: Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Derrida* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), pp. 58–62.

[24] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le Visible et l'invisible*, ed. Claude Lefort (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p. 139.

[25] Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, pp. 248–250.

be continually re-lived. "Instituting acts," he writes, "do not close history; they open it"[26]. This insight extends Husserl's idea of Überlieferung and Wiederbelebung by situating them in the chiasm of body and world.

It is no longer only the written mark that survives but the gesture, the expressive form through which meaning circulates between generations[27]. Yet, this epistemic and ontological shift reaches its mature form in *Le Visible et l'invisible*. Here, Merleau-Ponty abandons the language of consciousness and replaces it with that of flesh—a reversibility of seeing and being-seen that grounds both perception and thought. Objectivity becomes the fold of visibility, the intertwining (*entrelacs*) where subject and object exchange their roles. The visible world, he writes, "is not what I think, but what I live through"[28]. Far from relativizing truth, this chiasmic ontology actually *restores* to objectivity its living yet distant source: a sense of belonging to a world that precedes us yet is continually re-instituted through our expressive acts. It is in this light that Merleau-Ponty's writings on language and art—*La prose du monde* and *Langage indirect et les voix du silence*—acquire decisive significance. For him, artistic creation exemplifies the very logic of phenomenological institution, because it inaugurates new structures of visibility while remaining faithful to the opacity of the sensible. The painter, like the philosopher, institutes meaning not by representing but by revealing; the painting is "a thing among things" that opens the space of their mutual appearance. In the indirect voice of language, as in painting, truth does not impose itself but comes to speech obliquely, through the style of expression that renews our contact with being[29].

Artistic and linguistic expression thus continue Husserl's and Fink's investigations on technics and inscription, revealing objectivity as an unfinished dialogue between sedimented visibility and creative gesture. Merleau-Ponty's conception reconfigures the Husserlian–Finkian trajectory: if Husserl located objectivity in inscription and Fink in methodical institution, Merleau-Ponty locates it in expression as incarnation. The

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[26] Merleau-Ponty, *L'institution. La passivité,* p. 58.

[27] Ivi, pp. 57–60. The continuity between Husserl's *Stiftung* and Merleau-Ponty's institution du sens lies in their shared understanding of sense as a temporal genesis that must be both instituted and reactivated. Whereas Husserl conceived institution as the transmission of an ideal meaning, Merleau-Ponty interprets it as the embodied opening of a history, where sense is founded through expressive gestures—linguistic, perceptual, and artistic. This continuity also marks a transformation: institution now implies not only a historical a priori but an aesthetic one, anticipating *La prose du monde* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), where art becomes the paradigm of a living objectivity, a logos visible that constantly reinstitutes meaning. See also Claude Lefort. "Le corps, la chair et le monde vivant." In *Sur une colonne absente. Écrits autour de Merleau-Ponty*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), pp. 139–165.

[28] Merleau-Ponty, *Le Visible et l'invisible*, p. 182.

[29] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *La prose du monde* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), pp. 12–18; and *Signes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), "Le langage indirect et les voix du silence," pp. 49–82.

world institutes itself through us, and we, in turn, are instituted by it. In this reciprocal process, every objectivation is a gesture of embodiment, every perception an act of inheritance. Objectivity becomes the continuity of sense through visibility—the flesh of history, where what has been instituted can still be transformed[30]. Merleau-Ponty therefore offers the third term in the triad: technics (Husserl), institution (Fink), and expression (Merleau-Ponty) converge into an ontology of interrelation. The stability of objectivity is not the stillness of form but the tense equilibrium of an expressive order constantly renewed by perception, dialogue, and artistic creation. It is through this living equilibrium that phenomenology discovers its most concrete universality: one that does not negate finitude but assumes it as the very medium of truth.

IV. Iterability and Inheritance: From Writing to Technics

If the first three movements of this study—Husserl's inscription, Fink's institution, and Merleau-Ponty's *stylistic* expression—have traced the genesis of objectivity within the field of intersubjective life, the fourth must confront its temporal and technical condition. For it is not enough that meaning be instituted and reactivated; it must also survive the passing of its originators, persisting in forms that can be reclaimed and reinterpreted. How, then, does sense endure without becoming static? What allows objectivity to be both transmissible and revisable? It is here that phenomenology, at its limits, meets its deconstructive and post-phenomenological continuations in Derrida and Stiegler. Jacques Derrida's 1962 *Introduction to Husserl's Origin of Geometry* remains the most faithful and the most radical reading of Husserl's insight into writing. Derrida's claim is not that writing undermines phenomenology, but that phenomenology discovers itself in writing. The act of inscription (*écriture*) makes explicit what phenomenology had always presupposed: that sense, to be ideal, must be iterable—that is, repeatable beyond its originary context[31].

Iterability, as Derrida famously remarks, is a structure of both continuity and alterability: the written trace properly ensures the survival of meaning but exposes it to difference, misunderstanding, and transformation. Yet, this "contamination" is not a defect of reason but the very movement of its historicity. Objectivity, therefore,

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[30] See on this Renaud Barbaras, *Le tournant de l'expérience. Recherches sur la philosophie de Merleau-Ponty* (Paris: Vrin, 1991); Emmanuel de Saint Aubert, *Vers une ontologie indirecte. Sources et enjeux critiques de l'appel à l'ontologie chez Merleau-Ponty* (Paris: Vrin, 2004), and Komarine Romdenh-Romluc, *Merleau-Ponty and Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 2011)

[31] Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's 'Origin of Geometry'*, pp. 54–57.

is not a fixed correspondence between subject and object but the ongoing *readability* and *verifiabily* of sense within a horizon of potentially infinite re-inscription. In this sense, Derrida can be seen as carrying forward the logic of Husserl's *Überlieferung* and *Wiederbelebung* while making explicit their technological dimension. Writing (écriture), as the paradigmatic exteriorization of sense, becomes the condition of possibility for all forms of ideal objectivity—from geometry to law, from art to ethics. "The written," he notes, "is not an accident of speech, but its condition of transmissibility"[32]. To write is to project meaning into an iterable medium that allows others, in other times, to take up the same sense otherwise. Derrida's logic of *différance* thus radicalizes Husserl's *Crisis* thesis: history and ideality do not merely coexist; they are structurally inseparable[33]. Bernard Stiegler inherits this problematic but translates it into the epochal language of technics. In *Technics and Time 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, he proposes that the "fault" of the human is precisely the necessity of exteriorization: our memory is always already technical[34].

Stiegler's reading of Husserl, Heidegger, and Derrida converges on the thesis that all retention—indeed, all temporal continuity—is supported by tertiary retention, that is, material memory stored in technical systems. From writing and photography to digital archives, these supports are not neutral containers but protentional structures that shape what can be remembered and foreseen. Technics, in this sense, is the *epiphylogenetic* dimension of history: the process through which humanity inherits itself by means of external traces[35]. This reconceptualization has decisive implications for the phenomenology of objectivity. If every act of knowing depends upon technical inheritance, then objectivity itself is a function of care—of the maintenance, critique, and renewal of the supports through which meaning persists. The "truth" of an inscription is not simply in what it states but in the conditions of its re-readability. Stiegler calls this the "economy of attention": an ethics of inheritance that binds epistemology to responsibility[36]. Objectivity becomes not a timeless form but a time-bound practice of preservation and transformation, a way of living with and through technics. What unites Derrida and Stiegler, despite

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[32] Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967), p. 25.

[33] Ivi, pp. 23-28.

[34] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth & George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 3–10.

[35] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time 2: Disorientation*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 17–20; see also Richard Beardsworth, *Derrida and the Political* (London: Routledge, 1996).

[36] John Peters, "Digital Memory and the Future of Phenomenology," *Theory, Culture & Society 34*, no. 7–8 (2017): 23–45; Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), pp. 1–7.

their differences, is a shared re-reading of phenomenology in diachronic terms. Derrida's iterability and Stiegler's grammatisation describe the same structure from two perspectives: one semiotic, the other technical. Both uncover the non-coincidence that constitutes meaning—the interval between intention and inscription, between writing and reading, between act and memory. In this interval lies the possibility of renewal. Objectivity survives only by being re-exposed to difference. To inherit is to transform.

From a phenomenological standpoint, this does not annul the project of grounding meaning; it reframes grounding as re-grounding (*Nachstiftung*), the continual reinstitution of sense across historical and technical media. The very survival of rational inquiry depends upon this openness: as Husserl foresaw, scientific reason must not conceal but constantly rediscover its origins in the life-world. Derrida and Stiegler make explicit that this rediscovery can occur only through technics, through the written and the digital as the living organs of tradition. In this respect, the fault that defines the human—its dependence on external supports—is also its possibility of transcendence. The exteriorization of memory is not the loss of authenticity but its extension; it is what allows a finite being to participate in the infinite task of truth. The phenomenological project thus finds its ethical culmination in the care for inheritance: the responsibility to sustain the technical and cultural conditions through which objectivity remains alive[37].

V. Responsibility and Re-Institution: The Ethics of Objectivity

At the end of this itinerary, objectivity no longer appears as the mirror of a pre-given world but as the historical achievement of a community of sense—a fragile yet solid equilibrium between stability and transformation, fidelity, *treason* and renewal. From Husserl's discovery of inscription to Fink's analysis of constitution, from Merleau-Ponty's expressive reversibility to Derrida's iterability and Stiegler's technicity, what emerges is a single, diachronic insight: truth lives only through its

[37] Indeed, Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics offers a complementary perspective on this problem of inheritance. In *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960), Gadamer conceives *Überlieferung* (tradition) as a dialogical continuity, a living medium of understanding in which sense is renewed through interpretation rather than through external inscription. While Derrida and Stiegler insist on the technical materiality of inheritance, Gadamer recalls that such mediation presupposes an event of understanding (*Verstehen*) that re-appropriates the past in the present. The two perspectives are not opposed but reciprocal: hermeneutical transmission names the subjective dimension of what Stiegler calls tertiary retention, just as technical exteriorization provides the objective correlate of Gadamer's "effective history" (*Wirkungsgeschichte*). See also Jean Grondin, *Hans-Georg Gadamer: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.

inheritance. Objectivity is not a property of objects but a practice of re-institution, the perpetual work of confirming, correcting, and transmitting what has been received. To understand this, one must return to the paradox of modern reason already diagnosed by Husserl in the *Crisis*: the very progress of science threatens to obscure its own origin in the life-world. When objectivity forgets its genesis in the communicative acts of finite subjects, it becomes an idol—an opaque authority that conceals the labor of meaning beneath it. Phenomenology's task, from the *Cartesian Meditations* onward, has been to retrace the transcendental movement by which reason renews itself from within history. Writing, institution, expression, and technics are not external supplements but forms of self-critique through which reason guards against its own dogmatism[38]. This dynamic gives rise to what may be called an ethics of objectivity. In its deepest sense, ethics here does not refer to norms of conduct but to the responsibility inherent in any act of sense-giving. Every inscription, every formulation, carries the obligation to remain readable and revisable by others—to open itself to verification and reinterpretation.

The intersubjective constitution of truth is therefore not only epistemic but also moral: it requires the cultivation of shared attention, the patience of reactivation, and the humility of correction. As Enzo Paci noted in his reflections on the "good error," error is not a defect of reason but its condition of growth: the moment when the finitude of thought reveals the infinite task of re-understanding[39]. Bernard Stiegler, reinterpreting this theme, shows that the survival of rational life depends on how we care for our technical supports. To neglect the systems that preserve collective memory—whether written, digital, or institutional—is to endanger the continuity of critique itself. His notion of pharmacology captures the double bind of technics: it is both a poison and a cure, depending on whether we use it to automate or to cultivate reflection[40]. Responsibility, then, lies in recognizing the *pharmakon* as a condition of human becoming—the exteriority through which we inherit, transform, and re-institute our common world. Gadamer's hermeneutics converges with this insight from another direction. For Gadamer, understanding (*Verstehen*) is always an event within effective history (*Wirkungsgeschichte*): to understand is to participate in the self-renewal of a tradition.

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[38] Husserl, *Die Krisis,* §§7–9; Natalie Depraz, "La rationalité en crise: Husserl et la tâche éthique de la phénoménologie," *Alter 14* (2006): 43–59.

[39] See Paci, *Funzione delle scienze e significato dell'uomo,* pp. 171–175, and Cirolla, Andrea. 2015. « La parola che nasce. Paci lettore di Rilke. » *Rivista di estetica* 58: 147–165.

[40] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), pp. 6–9.

The task is not to dissolve mediation but to inhabit it reflectively—to acknowledge that every act of comprehension is also a transformation. In this respect, the hermeneutical fusion of horizons complements the phenomenological re-grounding of sense: both describe how truth emerges in dialogue, through temporal distance and the risk of misunderstanding. The ethics of objectivity, therefore, is not the preservation of invariance but the responsibility for diachrony: to keep open the spaces where meaning can still be questioned and renewed. Each generation receives not a stable corpus but a field of unresolved tensions, and it is precisely by confronting them that it becomes capable of knowledge. To inherit phenomenologically is to assume the burden of transmission—the care for what exceeds one's own present, for those who will come after. Such care defines the ethos of phenomenology itself: a practice of attention to what endures through transformation, a life in common oriented toward the future perfect, the "has-will-have-been" of truth[41].

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[41] See Bernhard Waldenfels, *Antwortregister* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994); Jacques Derrida, *L'animal que donc je suis* (Paris: Galilée, 2006); Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise,* trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), pp. 201–207; Natalie Depraz, *Attention et vigilance. À la croisée de la phénoménologie et des sciences cognitives* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2014), pp. 245–260.

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