



VARIATION AND CONFLICT  
REMARKS ON HUSSERL'S METHOD OF EIDETIC VARIATION\*

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ABSTRACT

The present paper aims at offering a preliminary, yet systematic presentation of Husserl's method of eidetic variation as a method grounded in a series of passive experiences, notably passive "modalizations" of consciousness: "passive negation," "problematic possibility," "open possibility." As it will try to show, it is only by seriously taking into account these three passive phenomena of consciousness, and their mutual relations, that some of the most crucial "procedural" aspects of the method of eidetic variation can be really made sense of. In particular, this paper will advance the claim that "conflict" (*Widerstreit*) represents the key-term in order to understand the way in which such method works and proceed.

*Keywords:* Husserl | Eidetic variation | Passive experience | Modalization | Conflict |

RESUMEN

El presente artículo busca ofrecer una preliminar, y sistemática presentación del método de variación eidética de Husserl, como un método fundado en una serie de experiencias pasivas, principalmente "modalizaciones" pasivas de conciencia: "negación pasiva", "posibilidad problemática", "posibilidad abierta". Como se tratará de mostrar, es sólo tomando seriamente en cuenta estos tres fenómenos pasivos de la conciencia, y sus relaciones mutuas, que algunos de los aspectos "procedimentales" más cruciales del método de variación eidética pueden adquirir realmente sentido. Particularmente, este artículo explorará el concepto de "conflicto" (*Widerstreit*) como término clave para entender el modo en el que dicho método procede y funciona.

*Palabras clave:* Husserl | Variación eidética | Experiencia pasiva | Modalización | Conflicto |

*Dedicated to the memory of Edoardo Ferrario (1946-2017), who first taught me Husserl...*

The primary goal of this paper is to elucidate Husserl's highly controversial method of "eidetic variation." Despite this method's importance for Husserl's "eidetic" phenomenology, some of the issues related to its sense seem not yet to have received the critical treatment that they deserve.

The recent publication of the Husserliana volume *Zur Lehre vom Wesen und zur Methode der eidetischen Variation* affords us new material by which to approach the method at stake. As stressed in the editor's introduction, Husserl uses the expression "eidetic variation" for the first time in 1912 in a text, whose title is now: *Der Wesensunterschied in den Wesensbegriffen und ihrer Bildung. Anschauungsbegriffe als Typenbegriffe gegenüber exakten Begriffen als Ideen*<sup>1</sup>. This means that Husserl introduces at one and the same time—namely, in both this manuscript and *Ideas... I* (1912-1913)—both the concept of *eidōs* and the notion of "eidetic variation". Such a fact, however, is more puzzling than helpful in gaining an insight into the real phenomenological sense of that method. Of course, it contributes philologically to discredit Roman Ingarden's reconstruction: according to Ingarden, Husserl did not introduce the method of eidetic variation until the 1920s, that is, until he had read Ingarden's *Essentiale Fragen* (1925), and he did so as a direct response to his (Ingarden's) notion of the "content of the Idea" (*der Gehalt der Idee*)<sup>2</sup>. As a matter of fact, and Ingarden is right about this, Husserl

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1 E. Husserl, *Zur Lehre vom Wesen und zur Methode der eidetischen Variation. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1891-1935)*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2011, ed. D. Fonfara, Husserliana XLI, p. 57: "Es liegt bei der nahen Beziehung zwischen Psychologie und Phänomenologie nahe, zumal es so vielen Forschern schwer wird, die scharfen Demarkationen zwischen beiden zu verstehen, diese selbe Auffassung *mutatis mutandis* auf die Phänomenologie zu übertragen, also zunächst eine systematische Deskription und Klassifikation der reduzierten Bewusstseinsvorkommnisse zu fordern und dann auf dem Weg einer zu den Elementen, [den] abstrakten Bestimmungen, Zusammenhangsformen usw. der Elemente vordringenden Analyse und der Methoden der eidetischen Variation der Zusammenhänge zu einer Erkenntnis von Wesensgesetzen vorzudringen, welche dieses abstrakte und elementare Sein beherrschen." Henceforth cited as Hua XLI with page reference.

2 See R. Ingarden, *Einführung in die Phänomenologie Edmund Husserls. Osloer Vorlesungen 1967*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer, 1992, ed. G. Haeglicher, *Gesammelte Werke* 4, p. 190; Id.,

does not make any systematic use of the notion of eidetic variation until the 1925 Freiburg lectures on *Phenomenological Psychology*, and, except for *Formal and Transcendental Logic*,<sup>3</sup> none of the texts published by Husserl himself present the reader with the technical phrase “eidetic variation.” The latter seems then to be first introduced in 1912 only to fall immediately into oblivion. Why does Husserl’s phenomenology demand such a method? What is the methodological role and function that eidetic *variation* fulfils? What is a variation, thus an eidetic variation, if it is to be concerned with *eide*?

Let us first try to clarify the enigmatic state of affairs reported above, for such a clarification will serve as our starting point. It has been recently maintained that eidetic variation, despite what “some of Husserl’s methodological texts even suggest,” does not serve the “discovery of eidetic laws” or, even worse, of “an alleged intuition of essences (*eide*) as invariants within a variational manifold of ‘coinciding’ variants of a starting-example.”<sup>4</sup> As the same scholar argues, the method of variation serves “the examination of a presumed descriptive eidetic law in the attempt to falsify it, namely, by means of an attempt to construct a valid possibility that is nevertheless seemingly barred by an eidetic law.” Methodologically, it would proceed “from firm exemplars to firm *counterexamples* of the thematic universal and from there to *limit-cases* in which the application of the concept becomes dubitable. This is nothing else but *conceptual clarification* or *conceptual explication*.”<sup>5</sup>

According to this interpretation, the Husserlian method of eidetic variation deals with concepts as occurring in eidetic judgments and, as a consequence, would have nothing to do with the discovery of an intuition of essences. Were we to agree and follow this line of thought, then the method of eidetic variation would turn out to be nothing other than a method of clarification and “conceptual” explication. By contrast, we will take Husserl’s own words at face value: we will be claiming that Husserl’s way of referring to the notion of eidetic variation somehow contains an ambiguity—one to be mastered if one aims at grasping the way the notions of *eidos* and *concept* relate to each other. Let us try to be clearer on this point: by and large, and without getting into any detailed analysis that would take us far beyond the limited scope of this paper, the following can be asserted.

*Der Streit um die Existenz der Welt II/1. Formalontologie 1. Teil*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer, 1965, p. 149; Id., “Essentiale Fragen. Ein Beitrag zu dem Wesensproblem,” *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*, 1925, pp. 125-304.

3 E. Husserl, *Formale und transzendente Logik. Versuch einer Kritik der logischen Vernunft*, Den Haag, M. Nijhoff, 1974, ed. P. Janssen, Husserliana XVII, p. 296; English trans. by D. Cairns, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, The Hague, M. Nijhoff, 1969, p. 291. Henceforth cited as Hua XVII with page reference.

4 R. Sowa, “Essences and Eidetic Laws in Edmund Husserl’s Descriptive Eidetics,” *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 2007, pp. 77-108: pp. 103-104.

5 R. Sowa, “The Universal as ‘What is in Common’: Comments on the *Proton-Pseudos* in Husserl’s Doctrine of the Intuition of Essence,” in C. Ierna, H. Jacobs, F. Mattens, *Philosophy, Phenomenology, Sciences. Essays in Commemoration of Edmund Husserl*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2010, pp. 525-557: pp. 547-548.

By *eidetic variation* Husserl means both (A) a method that contributes to bringing to light eidetic laws (i.e., those ruling over the phenomena belonging to the region “pure consciousness”); and (B) a method which—on the basis of passive experiences and syntheses—is meant to bring to the fore what Husserl refers to as *eide*. In (A)—as suggested in the aforementioned text from *Husserliana* XLI—the phenomenologist strives to establish the cognition of eidetic laws by dealing, more in general, with (pure) concepts as occurring in eidetic judgments. In (B), eidetic variation tackles the intuitive appearance of universalities and is somehow to be regarded as a transposition of a web of passive experiences into the framework of an “active” operation.<sup>6</sup>

On the one hand, then, Rochus Sowa is right in bringing our attention to the “concept” and to the link between “conceptual explication”, “eidetic judgments”, and “eidetic laws.” On the other hand, he is wrong in going too far beyond his reasoning’s conclusions—as if in Husserl’s eidetics there were only room for conceptual clarification and conceptual explication. If this were really the case, why would Husserl describe the *eidos* as the correlate of “*an intuitive and apodictic consciousness of something universal*,” hence as something “*prior to all ‘concepts’*”?

The following analyses will attempt to shed some light on (B), namely, on the method of eidetic variation as dealing with the constitution of universals as *eide*. As we will further explain, (B) is to be understood as a transposition of a series of “passive experiences” into the framework of an active operation. Moreover, we will contend that the very method of variation is based on what we might characterize as a certain experience of “negation,” and on a twofold notion of “possibility.” We will make the case for considering eidetic variation as “methodologically” rooted in “three” specific *passive modalizations of consciousness*: what Husserl refers to as “passive negation”, “problematic possibility”, and “open possibility.” As Husserl also argues, the “method” of variation operates by raising “conflicts”: we will have to explain what a “conflict” is, and what “unity of conflict” means. Now, in order to elucidate this relation, we will first have to recall *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, and then immediately move on to *Experience and Judgment*. Indeed, while the 1929 book gives *direct evidence that the method of variation is based on conflicts and “unity of conflict”*, it is in the latter text that Husserl clearly works out *the direct connection between the two notions*.

6 While the former can be found in *Ideas... I*, the latter is at work in *Phenomenological Psychology*, *Formal and Transcendental Logic* and, last but not least, in *Experience and Judgment*: E. Husserl, *Phänomenologische Psychologie*, ed. W. Biemel, *Husserliana* I, Den Haag, Martin Nijhoff, 1962, pp. 72-93; Id., *Formale und transzendente Logik*, pp. 252-257; Id., *Erfahrung und Urteil*, ed. L. Landgrebe, Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, 1999, § 87; Id., *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und Phänomenologische Philosophie. Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie*, Den Haag, Martin Nijhoff, 1976, § 78.

7 E. Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*, ed. S. Strasser, *Husserliana* I, Den Haag, Martin Nijhoff, 1950, p. 105; English trans. by D. Cairns, *Cartesian Meditations. An Introduction to Phenomenology*, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999, p. 71. Henceforth cited as *Hua* I with page reference.

In a nutshell: the paper will first try to examine the method of eidetic variation in relation to the notion of “conflict” (*Widerstreit*) (§§ 1-2); the method in question will be then traced back to three distinct, yet closely related, passive modalizations of consciousness (§ 3); eventually, we will try to account for the method of eidetic variation as a methodological production of “disjunctions”, based on what Husserl himself calls “unity through conflict” (§ 4). There will also be a short conclusion, in which we will summarize the main outcomes of these investigations so as to pave the way for future and more systematic analyses (§ 5).

## § 1. VARIATION AND CONFLICT (*WIDERSTREIT*)

As already said, among all the texts that Husserl published, the phrase “eidetic variation” appears only once, at the very end of *Formal and Transcendental Logic*. Here is the text in question: “In the context of our expositions, it has already become apparent that this material ontology explicates the all-embracing A Priori of any purely possible world whatever, the Apriori of the eidos world—an eidos that must arise concretely by virtue of the method of eidetic variation, which starts with the world that is given us in fact and takes it as the directive ‘exemplar’ [*Exempel*]” (Hua XVII, 296/291). In this passage, Husserl is briefly summarizing the outcomes of the second section of the book and pointing back to § 98, where, without naming it, he had indeed employed the method of eidetic variation in order to tackle all the “Constitutional Investigations as A Priori.”

Because phenomenology is an a priori science, its investigations and analyses cannot be based on any sort of “empirical generalizations.” Rather, Husserl contends, these investigations are founded on “a variation carried on with the freedom of pure phantasy and with the consciousness of its purely arbitrary character”:

Thus understood, the variation extends into an open horizon of endlessly manifold of free possibilities of more and more variants. Now, in such a free variation, released from all restrictions to facts accepted beforehand, all the variants belonging to the openly infinite sphere—which includes the initial exemplar [*Exempel*] itself as “optional” and freed of all its factualness—stand in a relationship of synthetic interrelatedness and integral interconnectedness; more particularly, *they stand in a continuous and all-inclusive synthesis of “coincidence in conflict”* [*Deckung im Widerstreit*]. But, precisely with this coinciding, what necessarily persists throughout this free and always-repeatable variation comes to the fore: the *invariant*, the indissolubly identical in the ever-again different, the *essence* common to all [...]. This invariant is the ontic essential form (apriori form), the *eidos* [...] (Hua XVII 255/248).

On a closer look, the passage is quite puzzling: it maintains that the eidos stands out by virtue of a *Deckung im Widerstreit*. The same holds in one of the texts published in Husserliana XLI, where Husserl explicitly construes the performance



of eidetic variation as based upon the “phenomenon of conflict, of negation as a cancellation of what comes into conflict [*das Phänomen des Widerstreits, der Negation als Durchstreichung des Widerstreitenden*]” (Hua XLI, 187). Although we are still far from a solution, these two passages already point to the path we will have to take: the one toward a deeper understanding of the relation between “eidetic variation” and “conflict.”

## § 2. VARIATION AND CONCORDANCE; UNITY OF CONFLICT AND UNITY OF EXPERIENCE

In *Experience and Judgment*, despite the absence of the *terminus technicus*, we are presented with the most meticulous description of the method of eidetic variation. Chapter Two (*The Acquisition of Pure Generalities by the Method of Essential Seeing*) of Part Three (*The Constitution of General Objectivities and the Forms of Judging “In General”*) provides the general account of the method whose goal is to lay bare those pure generalities whose constitution “does thus not depend on the contingency of the element actually given as the points of departure.”<sup>8</sup> It is only in § 87, however, that the systematic account is finally provided. The paragraph itself is divided into six sections, and the first five set forth an analysis of the specific role played by “variation” in the acquisition of pure generalities. In order, these sections tackle: (a) the notion of free variation as the foundation of essential seeing; (b) the arbitrary structure of the process of variation; (c) the retaining-in-grasp of the multiplicity of variations as the foundation of essential seeing; (d) the relation of essential seeing to the experience of the individual; and (e) congruence and difference in the variations.

As already explained, in the present paper we will be discussing the method of eidetic variation in relation to the idea of *Widerstreit*. Therefore the leading question will emerge as: in what sense is this method concerned with “conflicts”? What does Husserl mean by that?

To begin with, let us recall § 93, where Husserl retrospectively sums up the phases of the process of variation. For the sake of the argument we are going to develop, we will cite the whole passage by making evident the different methodological steps it involves:

1) If we set out from an object of perception, it is certainly “given originally” to us in perception, but in principle only imperfectly; a systematic disclosure of the objective sense in an ongoing intuition is first required; we must first procure to ourselves a

8 E. Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil*, Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, 1999, ed. L. Landgrebe, pp. 409-410; English trans. by J. S. Churchill and K. Ameriks, *Experience and Judgment*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1973, p. 340.

complete intuition of this thing. [...] on principle, what we obtain in the unity of an actual experience is something self-given imperfectly from “one side”; what comes to self-possession as a thing is surrounded by a presumptive horizon, an internal horizon and an external horizon. We can at best proceed only to the unfolding of this horizon, which, with its systems of disjunctive possibilities, is a horizon of what is anticipated as possible, making clear to ourselves how subsequent experience could advance [...], how, in consequence, the thing could appear, and how it would be realized intuitively in this sequence as the same. [...] We already stand, therefore, in a system of possible variations, we pursue one line of the possible harmonious experiences and their content of appearance, and let ourselves be continually guided by the initial perception with the objective sense established in it [...].

II) [...] We can then carry out free variation, at first by retaining (in the consciousness of free arbitrariness and the purely general) the initial contents of the perception and by throwing into relief the universal of the style being examined.

III) But we can also drop the commitment to the initial content insofar as we change the initial perception into pure possibility and think this possibility itself as varying freely, indeed as arbitrary and capable of being pursued in conformity with all the horizons of sense.<sup>9</sup>

We are presented with three distinct moments.

(I) Starting with an object perceptively given, we can unfold its horizons, for example by going around it and “making clear to ourselves” all the possible experiences included in it. Even though Husserl speaks of “variation,” this is not yet a method: it simply expresses the idea of the object as a web of possible experiences to be brought out by direct perception. Husserl writes that we stand “in a system of possible variations” because the object itself is a system of disjunctive possibilities.<sup>10</sup>

(II) We can then appeal to a variation of this object (we do retain the “initial contents”) and, rather than going to directly see its back side, we simply “imagine” it as a “possible” experience.

(III) We can then drop the commitment to the initial content, that is, to such an individual as given right now, and vary its individuality. We no longer contrive experiences of *this* individual (i.e., as it could look like if seen “from the back

9 Ibid., pp. 437-438; English trans., pp. 360-361.

10 “In jedem Schritt aktueller Erfahrung vollzieht sich dabei eine Auswahl aus der vordem gleichberechtigten Unendlichkeit von Möglichkeitsreihen,” E. Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen. Ergänzungsband. Erster Teil: Entwürfe zur Umarbeitung der VI. Untersuchung und zur Vorrede für die Neuauflage der Logischen Untersuchungen (Sommer 1913)*, ed. U. Melle, Husserliana XX/1, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002, p. 194. Henceforth cited as Hua XX/1 with page reference.

side”): rather, we provide variations which, though free from the commitment to this specific individual (“initial contents”), are still committed, thus Husserl, to the “conformity with all the horizons of sense,” i.e., to the *form itself* of the individuality.

Let us make an actual example. Consider a “red die:” we could (I) turn it and see the actual red of the remaining sides; we could also (II) retain the initial content (the red front side) and imagine the color of the other sides (be it still red or otherwise). One could finally (III) abstract from the initial given contents, and vary this individual die into other several individual dice having different sizes, shapes, and colors.

Such a stratified process of variation, however, is not yet to be regarded as an eidetic variation in the strict sense of the term. Why not? For two reasons: first, because the process is still committed to the same individual form (the die); second, because, according to Husserl, even though we step beyond the boundaries of the starting individual, the variation—“pursued in conformity with all the horizons of sense”—is not yet able to overcome the “risk” of taking all the variants as still “*related to our world of fact* and bound to this universal fact.” In other words: the “eidetic variation” in the strict sense of the term is reached exclusively when we “become conscious of this bond, *putting it consciously out of play*.”<sup>11</sup> The only solution, Husserl claims, is to overcome the *individual* form itself. How? What would “dropping the individuality” really mean and amount to?

Let us hold the question in abeyance for the moment, and recall the four phases of variation:

(I) Actual unfolding of the object’s internal and external horizons →

(II) Bound variation on the basis of what is actually given (i.e., we retain the individual form and the initial contents) →

(III) Boundless variation pursued in conformity with the horizon of sense (i.e., we drop the initial contents but still retain the individual form) →

(IV) Eidetic variation in the strict sense as an arbitrary variation (i.e., the individual form is finally dropped).

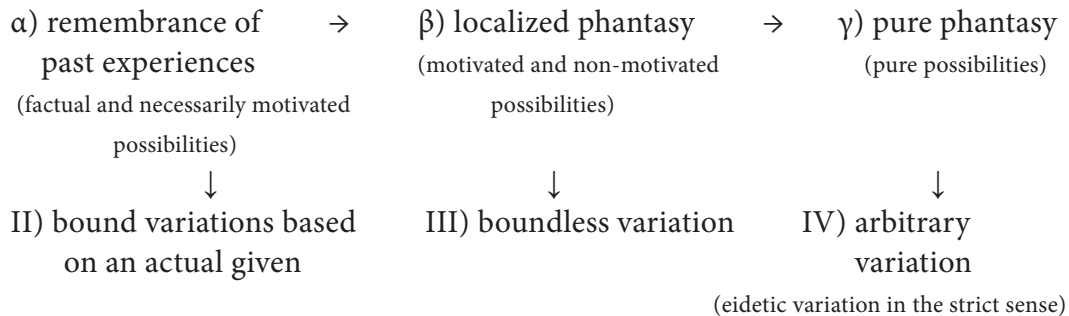
In an earlier essay<sup>12</sup>, we tried to establish that the “performance” of eidetic variation is understood by Husserl as articulated in three distinct phases, corresponding to three different relevant acts: (α) remembrance of past experiences (based upon factual and necessarily motivated possibilities); (β) localized phantasy (real possibilities), and (γ) pure phantasy (pure possibilities).

11 E. Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil*, ed. cit., pp. 423-424; English trans., pp. 350-351.

12 D. De Santis, “Phenomenological Kaleidoscope: Remarks on the Husserlian Method of Eidetic Variation,” *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 2011, pp. 17-42: p. 37.



Let us now make clear the relations between the three acts just recalled and the four phases of variation cited above:



The methodological sequence of the general method of eidetic variation is the following:

$$(I) \rightarrow (\alpha II) \rightarrow (\beta III) \rightarrow (\gamma IV)$$

The performance of eidetic variation starts with the experience (I) of an object, whose internal and external horizons are directly unfolded; then, based on my own past experience of it (α), I perform a bound variation (II) that retains the initial contents. What Fink calls localized phantasy<sup>13</sup> (β) makes then possible a boundless variation (III), which drops the initial contents but still retains the so-called individual form; finally, by means of pure phantasy (γ), an arbitrary variation (IV), that is to say, the eidetic variation in the strict sense of the term is performed, and the individual form itself is eventually dropped.

In (I) the experience amounts to unfolding all the factual and necessarily motivated possibilities of the object in question; in (II) I remember such a set of possibilities, and vary the object within the framework of that individual form and its contents; in (III) the variation itself is boundless, that is, free from all the necessarily motivated possibilities bound to the former experience, and is thus able to vary the content freely; in (IV) the arbitrary variation operates with “free” possibilities and, by dropping the individual form itself, provides mutually nullifying individuals, i.e., *conflicts*.

From now on we will focus our attention on (γIV).

The peculiar character of eidetic variation, and thus of essential seeing, will become clearer if we directly contrast them with what Husserl calls “intuitive experience of individual objects:” “Over against the specific *freedom* of variation, there

13 “[...] all localized phantasies are in a certain way reshaping of the given and factual world: they modify single determinations by holding the remaining whole,” E. Fink, “Vergegenwärtigung und Bild. Beiträge zur Phänomenologie der Unwirklichkeit”, in E. Fink, *Studien zur Phänomenologie* (Den Haag: M. Nijhoff, 1966), p. 46.

is still in all experience of the individual a wholly determined *commitment*.”<sup>14</sup>  
 What does the “specific freedom of variation” amount to?

[...] in the free production of the multiplicity of variations, in the progress from variant to variant, we are not bound by the *conditions of concordance* [Einstimmigkeit] in the same way as in the progress of experience from one individual object to another on the ground of the *unity of experience* [Einheit der Erfahrung]. If, for example, we envisage to ourselves an individual house now painted yellow, we can just as well think that it could be painted blue or think that it could have a slate instead of a little roof or, instead of this shape, another one. [...] This house, the same, is thinkable as a and as non-a but, naturally, if as a, then not at the same time as non-a. [...] *However, what is seen as unity of conflict* [Einheit des Widerstreits] *is not an individual but a concrete androgynous unity of individuals mutually nullifying and co-existentially exclusive: a unique consciousness with a unique content, whose correlate signifies concrete unity in contrast, in incompatibility* [Einheit im Widerstreit, in der Unverträglichkeit] [our emphasis].<sup>15</sup>

On the one hand: unity of experience (*Einheit der Erfahrung*) and concordance (*Einstimmigkeit*); on the other hand: unity of conflict (*Einheit des Widerstreits*).

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The passage makes it clear that eidetic variation does not just provide variations—or, better, that the true sense of such “variations” is to be “conflicts.” We are now in a position to appreciate why Husserl, at the beginning of § 89 of *Experience and Judgment*, remarks that it might be thought that “our description of essential seeing makes the task appear too difficult and that it is unnecessary to operate with the multiplicities of variation [...]. Would it not be enough to claim that any arbitrary red here and red there, any arbitrary, pre-given plurality of red things [...] furnishes the possibility of an essential seeing of the *eidōs* red?” Husserl answers of course in the negative: the reason is that in such case we could not avoid the risk of taking the generality just as a blunt empirical generality.

Now, what does the peculiar *Beliebigkeit* of eidetic variation mean? In a nutshell: it consists of a production of a manifold of “conflicts” between mutually nullifying individuals.

Jede individuelle Möglichkeit ist eine freie, beliebige, sie kann Belieben angesetzt werden. Jedem Ansatz steht gegenüber der nicht minder beliebige Gegensatz, jede Möglichkeit hat Gegenmöglichkeiten, die mit ihr unverträglich sind. Das heißt, die Ansetzung einer Möglichkeit bedingt die Durchstreichung jeder mit ihr in dem Verhältnis der Verdrängung stehenden Gegenmöglichkeit. Das Sein von A (Hypothese) hat das Nichtsein von B zur Folge. Das Unverträgliche ist im Sein unverträglich. (Hua XLI, 193-194)

14 E. Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil*, ed. cit., pp. 414-415; English trans., pp. 343-344.

15 Ibid., p. 416; English trans., pp. 344-345.

The conflict itself is that by means of which the individuality is set aside in favor of the emergence of what Husserl refers to as a “unity of conflict.” The link between eidetic variation and conflicts helps us understand why, though performed by phantasy, eidetic variation is not to be confused with the phantasy of “a quasi-world as a unified world of imagination” (*Einheit einer Phantasie*). Here in fact, Husserl adds, “is repeated all that has already been said about actual experience.” What has been said about actual experience?

[...] when we receptively experience an individual on the basis of a passive pre-giveness, when we turn toward it in order to apprehend it, when we take it as existing, we thereby take our stand, so to speak, on the ground of this apperception. By it, horizons are prescribed for further possible experiences which will take place on this ground, pre-given from the first step. Everything which we further experience must be brought into a connection of concordance [in einem Zusammenhang der Einstimmigkeit] if it is to count as an object for us; failing this, it is cancelled, nullified, is not taken receptively as actual; concordance [Einstimmigkeit] must prevail on the ground of a unity of experience [Einheit der Erfahrung], a ground already prescribed for each individual object of experience; every conflict [Widerstreit] is excluded or, rather, leads to a cancellation.<sup>16</sup>

Abstractly speaking, three features characterize the *Einheit der Erfahrung*:

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- (a) The exclusion (or cancellation) of conflicts;
- (b) A universal connection of concordance (*Zusammenhang der Einstimmigkeit*), grounded in
- (c) The prescription of horizons, which is in turn based on a passive pre-given ground.

Or, to put it otherwise, these three traits correspond to what have been characterized as the “three orders of synthesis” (*les trois registres de la synthèse*<sup>17</sup>), namely, to the synthesis

- (a') Of the unity of a thing (as an exclusion of conflicts);
- (b') Of the unity of an intuitive field (as a connection of concordances);
- (c') Of the unity of a chain of motivations (as a prescription of horizons).

This leads to a new account of the idea of object. Husserl himself speaks of the pregnant concept of object,<sup>18</sup> which he characterizes as a combination of “unity of

16 Ibid., p. 415; English trans., p. 344.

17 C. Majolino, “La partition du réel: Remarques sur l'eidos, la phantasia, l'effondrement du monde et l'être absolu de la conscience,” in C. Ierna, H. Jacobs, F. Mattens, *Philosophy, Phenomenology, Sciences*, pp. 573-660: p. 628.

18 E. Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil*, ed. cit., p. 64; English trans., p. 62.

identity” (*Einheit der Identität*) and “unity of continuity” (*Einheit der Kontinuität*<sup>19</sup>). Within what Husserl refers to as the domain of “actual experience” all conflicts are cancelled (a-a’) because the concordances, that is to say, all the possible harmonious concatenations of appearances (b-b’), are already prescribed based upon a pre-given “ground” (c-c’), and thereby give us the possibility of going back to the object in order to confirm and reconfirm it over and over again: “all connections not given intuitively in the unity of a perception refer back to enchainments of connections of actual intuition, that is, to the possibility of continuous recollections which reproduce the enchainment intuitively.”<sup>20</sup> This network (a + b + c) is what makes up the unity of experience (*Einheit der Erfahrung*): “the *idea* of a complete synthesis of possible harmonious experiences, as whose synthetic product the object in question would be intentional as itself absolutely given and absolutely verified” (Hua XVII, 254/247).

It follows that *Einheit der Erfahrung* and *Einheit der Identität* refer to each other as two strictly correlative concepts: while the former makes the latter possible; the latter makes the former evident.

This being acknowledged, we are now in a position to appreciate—even if still in a preliminary and negative way—the mode of working of eidetic variation. Indeed, the latter:

(A) Operates by means of a methodological production of conflicts (*Widerstreite*).

(B) In so doing, it dismantles the connections of concordance (as Husserl remarks, it brings out “a realm of disconnection [*ein Reich der Zusammenhanglosigkeit*]” (Hua XLI, 146)), and thereby

(C) Steps beyond the “boundaries” of any possible horizon (it is in fact described as *geschichtlos und geschehenlos*” (Hua XLI, 189))<sup>21</sup>.

26

19 E. Husserl, *Einführung in die Phänomenologie der Erkenntnis. Vorlesung 1909*, Dordrecht, Boston, London, Springer, 2005, ed. E. Schumann, Husserliana-Materialien VII, p. 183, where we come across expressions such as *Einheit der Kontinuität*, *Einheit des Bewusstseins* and *Einheit der Auffassung*.

20 E. Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil*, ed. cit., p. 193; English trans., p. 166. “Nevertheless, in all these cases memory seems to play its role and everywhere in the same way. In the case of *lasting memory*, that S was p, memory plays a double role. This lasting memory is constituted in distinct experimental acts, at the head of which stands the act of the earlier perception as primordial instauration. At the least, I see in a chain of such acts that memory is actually one. (The *unity of ‘experience’* is almost the same: I see now that A is, and thereby the experience is ‘instaured’). From then on it is my experiential possession, my experience, that A was at this peculiar point of time,” E. Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und Phänomenologische Philosophie. Zweites Buch: Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution*, Den Haag, Martin Nijhoff, 1952, ed. M. Biemel, Husserliana IV, p. 117; English trans. by R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989, pp. 124-125. Henceforth cited as Hua IV with page reference.

21 “La phantasia peut, en effet: 1) présentifier des quasi-objets, avec leurs quasi-champs intuitifs ainsi qu’avec des quasi-liens de motivations. Soumis aux trois registres de la syn-

If this is the case, then the true question turns out to be: what is, exactly, a “conflict”? As Husserl himself argues, already in experience we come across: (i) “the possibility of thoroughly concordant [*Einstimmig*] experiences;” (ii) “the possibility of partly concordant, partly discordant [*unstimmg*], experiences;” (iii) “the possibility, finally, of irreconcilable discrepancies” (Hua IV, 44-45/48).

*If eidetic variation is concerned with conflicts, i.e., if it consists in a methodological production of conflicts, and if the notion of conflict itself arises from a system of passive experiences, then we will have to turn to such experiences to see what the phenomenon of *Widerstreit* is about: “everything which is constituted as unity in an intentional concordance has its ‘it is in accord’ [...] and when this concordance is broken, we have discrepancy [*Unstimmigkeit*] and modalization of belief.”<sup>22</sup>*

### § 3. VARIATION AND MODALIZATIONS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The idea of turning our attention to Husserl’s account of three distinct “passive modalizations” of consciousness is due to the necessity of clearing up the notion of *Widerstreit*: what is a “conflict” if it is to be concerned with that method? Husserl’s own descriptions, contained in § 21 of *Experience and Judgment* (dedicated to: *The Obstruction of Tendencies and the Origin of the Modalizations of Certainty*), are what we need. Here the account is divided into three distinct sections on the origin of the notion of logical negation in the passive phenomenon of conflict (a), on the consciousness of doubt and “possibility” (b), and on the distinction between “problematic” and “open possibility” (c).

*Conflict and Passive Negation.* Suppose we observe a uniformly red ball; for a time, the course of our perception continues in such a way that “this apprehension is harmoniously fulfilled”. But now, during the process of perception, “a part of the back side, not seen at first, is gradually revealed, and, in opposition to the original prescription, which runs ‘uniformly red, uniformly spherical,’ there emerges a consciousness of otherness which disappoints the anticipation: ‘not red,

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thèse, de tels objets fictionnels sont de plein droit des objets de perceptions *possibles*. [...] 2) La phantasia peut également présenter des quasi-objets avec des quasi-champs intuitifs mais *sans* liens de motivation. Cette fois-ça nous avons deux registres sur trois. [...] 3) Mais la phantasia peut aussi présenter des quasi-objets sans champ intuitif (et à fortiori sans liens de motivation) [...]. La phantasia husserlienne peut en effet 4) présenter des moins-qu’objets ou des sous-objets ou des figures aléatoires d’objets intermédiaires. Dans de tels cas, aucun registre de la synthèse n’est en jeu [...],” C. Majolino, “La partition du réel: Remarques sur l’eidos, la phantasia, l’effondrement du monde et l’être absolu de la conscience,” pp. 634-635.

22 E. Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil*, ed. cit., pp. 63-63; English trans., p. 62.

but green,' 'not spherical, but dented.'"<sup>23</sup> As Husserl goes on to say, "a conflict [*Widerstreit*] arises between the still living intentions and the content of sense which appears in the originality which has just been established." The new sense *green* has "a certitude of original power which overcomes the certitude of the prior anticipation of 'being red.' But the certitude which has been overcome is still present to consciousness, although with the character of the 'null [*nichtig*].'"<sup>24</sup> In such a "conflict", however, "the change of sense which goes hand in hand with the cancellation produces a perception having a sense which is uniform and completely harmonious," namely, still "embedded" in the concordance of a new connection of horizons within the unity of experience (*Einheit der Erfahrung*).

On the basis of the passive phenomenon of negation, eidetic variation raises conflicts. Unlike the phenomenon of "passive conflict," where the individual form (*Einheit der Identität*) holds onto a "new concordance,"<sup>25</sup> the variation provides mutually nullifying individuals. This means that the operation of bringing out *eide* is based on "*Widerstreite*" that, by stepping beyond the prescription of horizons, do not establish (or re-establish) any "unity of sense." In other words, *eidetic variation is the methodological dissolution of what goes under the heading of Einheit der Erfahrung*. "Also in der systematischen Folge der Apperzeption und ihres einheitlichen Sinns ist eine antizipierende Bindung da. *Aber diese können wir, wie gesagt, missachten* [our emphasis]" (Hua XLI, 306). For this reason, the relevant act of phantasy is said to be "world destroyer" as well as "world builder."<sup>26</sup>

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*Problematic Possibility*. In the case of a perceptual conflict, the negation is the expression of a newly arisen *Einstimmigkeit* that imposes itself and, so to speak, recalibrates the sense: "Whatever kinds of objectivities are in question, the superposition of a new sense on one already constituted is always essential for negation."<sup>27</sup> What Husserl refers to as problematic possibility, on the contrary, describes a phenomenon in which our consciousness holds the unity of experience momentarily in abeyance. As is known, we speak of "problematic possibility" when "one and the same complex of sense data is the common foundation of two apprehensions superimposed on each other."<sup>28</sup> As a consequence, we have "a *bi-*

23 Ibid., pp. 94-95; English trans., p. 88.

24 Ibid., p. 95; English trans., p. 89.

25 "[...] immer wieder eine höhere korrigierende Einstimmigkeit zu gewinnen ist," E. Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass. Dritter Teil: 1929-1935*, Den Haag, M. Nijhoff, 1973, ed. I. Kern, Husserliana XV, p. 614.

26 E. Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologische Philosophie. Drittes Buch: Die Phänomenologie und die Fundamente der Wissenschaften*, Den Haag, Martin Nijhoff, 1953, ed. M. Biemel, Husserliana V, p. 32; English trans. by T. Klein and W. Pohl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. Book Three*, The Hague, Martin Nijhoff, 1980, p. 28. Henceforth cited as Hua V with page reference.

27 E. Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil*, ed. cit., p. 97; English trans., p. 90.

28 Ibid., p. 100; English trans., pp. 92.



*furcation of the original normal perception*—which in concordance constituted just *one* sense—into a *double perception*.”<sup>29</sup> According to Husserl’s own example, I see something “that might be a mannequin as well as a human being;”<sup>30</sup> each one is *Einstimmig*, thereby prescribing a different “line” or “pattern of concordance [*Linie der Einstimmigkeit*]” (Hua XLI, 220).<sup>31</sup> What we are confronted with is a dis-junction, i.e., two “possible” and mutually nullifying *junctions* (*Einstimmigkeiten*) of experience. As Husserl points out: “They stand in mutual conflict; each one has in a certain way its force, each is motivated, almost summoned, by the preceding perceptual situation and its intentional content.”<sup>32</sup> Yet, the disjunction is in itself the promise of future unity; as I get closer to the object, in fact, one of the two bifurcations and concordances turns out to be unfounded, and thereby “cancelled” in favour of the other one (the problematic possibility being traced back to negation: “it might have been a human being, but it is just a mannequin”).

*Open Possibility.* On the basis of the two previous phenomena, we are aware that the experience might have been and run otherwise, that the *Einheit der Erfahrung* might have displayed different concordances (*Einstimmigkeiten*). The so-called “open possibility”—the third and final step toward a full understanding of eidetic variation—is to be described as an exploitation of such an awareness: “[...] what is intentionally prescribed in the apperceptive horizon of a perception is not possible but certain. And yet possibilities are always included in such

29 Ibid., English trans., pp. 92-93.

30 “The percept of the waxfigure as a thing does not therefore underlie our awareness of the same figure as representing the lady. The lady, rather, makes her appearances together with the waxfigure and in union with it. Two perceptual interpretations, or two appearances of a thing, interpenetrate, coinciding as it were in part in their perceptual content. And they interpenetrate in conflicting fashion, so that our observation wanders from one to another of the apparent objects each barring the other from existence,” E. Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen. Zweiter Band. Erster Teil: Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis*, The Hague, Martin Nijhoff, 1984, ed. U. Panzer, Husserliana XIX/1, p. 458; English trans. by J. N. Findlay, *Logical Investigations. Volume I*, New York, Routledge, 2001, p. 138. (Henceforth cited as Hua XIX/1 with page reference). Also E. Husserl, *Analysen zur Passiven Synthese. Aus Vorlesungs- und Forschungsmanuskripten (1918-1926)*, Den Haag, Martin Nijhoff, 1966, ed. M. Fleischer, Husserliana XI, p. 350; English trans. by A. Steinbeck, *Analysis Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis. Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001, p. 431; see also Id., *Logische Untersuchungen. Ergänzungsband. Erster Teil*, p. 222. Henceforth cited as Hua XX/1 with page reference.

31 “Here the hybrid overlappings and reciprocal transformations of appearances in the conflict [*im Streite*] of different apprehensions, and similar occurrences, comes into question,” E. Husserl, *Phänomenologische Psychologie. Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1925*, Den Haag, Martin Nijhoff, 1962, ed. R. Boehm, Husserliana IX, p. 195; English trans. by J. Scanlon, *Phenomenological Psychology. Lectures, Summer Semester, 1925*, The Hague, Martin Nijhoff, 1977, p. 149. Henceforth cited as Hua IX with page reference.

32 E. Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil*, ed. cit., p. 100 ; English trans., p. 92.

prescriptions, in fact, whole series of multifarious possibilities.”<sup>33</sup> For example, if a thing is familiar to us, but we have not yet looked at it from the other side, then the color of the back side is not prescribed as a “determinate” color. But “a color” in general is prescribed anyway. Given this, two possibilities open up. On the one hand, we could “freely form intuitive presentifications of what is not seen; for example by imagining that we go around the object. If we do this, then intuitions embodying completely determinate colors appear.”<sup>34</sup> In this case, we imagine the possible color of the back side based on the experience of the front side. On the other hand, we also have the possibility of varying “*these colors freely within the frame of indeterminacy* [our emphasis];” accordingly, “the color contingently given in it is precisely one that is contingent, for which nothing chosen arbitrarily can be substituted, but only some color or other.”<sup>35</sup> As Husserl himself points out, “the general indeterminacy has a field of *free variability*; what falls within it is in the same way implicitly included but still not motivated, not positively prescribed [our emphasis].”<sup>36</sup> The so-called open possibility works with free variability, say, of all the possible colors within the genus itself “color”. In contrast to “problematic possibility”—where each possibility is itself motivated—we are confronted with non-motivated possibilities here.

Let us sum up the results of our analyses in the following diagram, with the left column showing the different modalizations of consciousness, and the right one mentioning the former’s function in the method of eidetic variation.

30

MODALIZATIONS OF CONSCIOUSNESS	EIDETIC VARIATION
<i>Passive Negation</i> (“It might have been a human being, but it is a mannequin”)	<i>Conflicts</i>
<i>Problematic Possibility</i> (“It might be either a mannequin or a human being”)	<i>Suspension of the Unity of Experience</i>
<i>Open Possibility</i> (“... A color whatsoever”)	<i>Free and Non-Motivated Possibilities</i>

33 Ibid., p. 105; English trans., p. 96.

34 Idem.

35 Idem.

36 Ibid., p. 107; English trans., p. 98.

In the case of passive negation, the “conflict” itself is only *nachträglich* experienced as already cancelled and thus replaced by a newly arisen concordance.<sup>37</sup> Eidetic variation (like problematic possibility) holds the unity of experience in abeyance and multiplies the bifurcations, so that (unlike passive negation and problematic possibility) the “*Widerstreite*” that it yields can never be traced back to any previously constituted horizon. Without prescription of horizons, it works with free possibilities and what is given right-now, such an individual color, turns out to be just something “contingent”: “All its material content, however, is in our sphere of realities something ‘contingent’ that is bound to something ‘necessary’, a necessary form” (Hua V, 34/30).

#### § 4. VARIATION, CONFLICT, AND UNITY THROUGH CONFLICT

Thus far we have treated, cited, discussed, and used the term “conflict”. But do we know what a *Widerstreit* really is? What phenomenologically happens in the case of a “conflict”? We know that “conflict” somehow means “differentiation” and that, as such, this notion is involved in the method of eidetic variation. We have also shown how the latter is grounded, based, and founded (or whatever other word one wants to employ) in three “passive modalizations of consciousness”. Let us see what a direct analysis can add to the previous account. The peculiarity of Husserl’s own approach to the problem of conflict consists in showing that the experience of “conflicts” entails a *disunity* as well as a *unity*: it is the very puzzling phenomenon called “unity through conflict” that comes to the fore by means of an act of reflection on the consciousness itself of conflict.

Let us try to clarify this latter aspect, which will turn out to be crucial to complete our account.

Let us start out with a passage on conflict from *Experience and Judgment*: “a part of the back side, not seen at first, is gradually revealed; and, in opposition to the original prescription, which runs ‘uniformly red, uniformly spherical’, there emerges a consciousness of otherness which disappoints the anticipation: ‘not red, but green’, ‘not spherical, but dented’”<sup>38</sup> As is evident, the conflict occurs with respect to a certain form of incompatibility between contents. For instance, colors conflict with one another, not in general, but in specific contexts: several moments

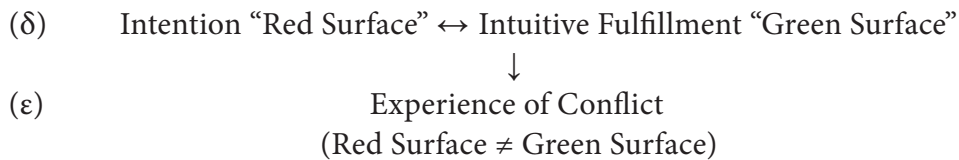
37 “Unstimmigwerden, das aber immer wieder durch nachkommende ‘Korrektur’ eine universelle Einstimmigkeit herstellt” (Hua XLI, 307). See Husserl on the waxlady: “Wandering about in the Panopticum Waxworks we meet on the stairs a charming lady whom we do not know and who seems to know us, and who is in fact the well-known joke of the place: we have for a moment been tricked by a waxwork figure. As long as we *are* tricked, we experience a perfectly good percept: we see a lady and not a waxwork figure. When the illusion vanishes, we see exactly the opposite, a waxwork figure that only *represents* a lady” (Hua XIX/1, 458/138).

38 E. Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil*, ed. cit., pp. 94-95; English trans., p. 88.

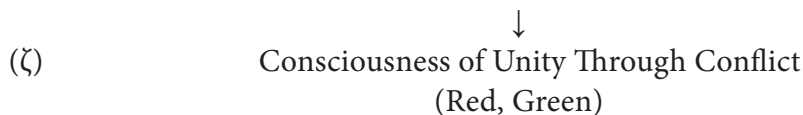
of color are incompatible as simultaneous overlays of one and the same extension, while they are quite compatible if set side by side within a single extension. Consider the case in which two colors are incompatible in one and the same surface: the talk of incompatibility and contrast refers here to the relation color-surface, where only one color can occur at a time. Put formally: a color  $c$  is never *simply incompatible* with a second color  $c'$ . Their possible incompatibility always relates to a definite sort of combination of contents  $(c, s)$  which includes  $c$  and should now include  $c'$  as well. Be  $c$  and  $c'$ , say, *red* and *green*, the whole including  $c$  will be incompatible with the same whole as including  $c'$ , and the “red surface” cannot be at the same time a “green surface”. A part of the back side for example, not seen at first, is gradually revealed and, in opposition to the original prescription, which runs “uniformly red,” “uniformly spherical,” there arises a consciousness of otherness that disappoints the intention: “uniformly spherical,” yet “uniformly green”. As regards the colors, the consciousness of conflict entails disunity, separation. We could say: differentiation (or, to use a different term: “bifurcation”).

When a conflict between two colors (*red* and *green*) occurs, we experience a bifurcation between, say, the “intended red” and the “intuited green.” According to Husserl, we can turn our attention to the *whole made up of the contents themselves in conflict*. Despite this latter, the separation provides a new unity, the “unity”—to recall Husserl—“in regard to the combination *conflict among sensuous qualities of a phenomenal object*. Conflict is now a unity between *red* and *green*, a unity in respect of the elements *conflict, red, green*.”<sup>39</sup> Let us represent the state of affairs as follows:

32



Despite the conflict between the intending (and frustrated) intention and the fulfilling intuition, we might turn our attention to the whole made up of the conflicting moments, and thereby give rise to what Husserl calls *Einigung durch Widerstreit*, i.e., a unity of the moments themselves in conflict:



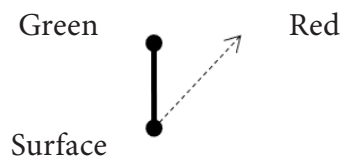
39 “For in the meaning of this talk of union through conflict it is implied that the form of conflict of a  $p, q...$  thought of as in certain combination  $W'$  shall count as a *unity*, which as unity re-establishes union and compatibility, and so corresponds to the  $W$  we mentioned above. But if unity obtains among  $p, q...$  in respect of the combination  $W'$ , then these  $p, q...$  will not permit themselves to be brought into a relationship of conflict in respect of *this* combination, since combination as such means unity” (Hua XIX/2, 640/255).

Thanks to (ζ) we acknowledge that *green* and *red* are two qualities that do not comply with each other because both are possible but only at the expense of the other: their *Un-Stimmigkeit* means two mutually exclusive *Ein-Stimmigkeiten*. Since “red surface” is an expression of what might have been real, “green surface” points to what might have been non-realized and that, as a consequence, turns out to be nothing else but a “possible” experience among others.

The extraordinary result is apparent. The phenomenon of “unity through conflict” makes evident not only that in a conflict the frustrated intention intends a possible bifurcation of experience (e.g., the possible “red surface”), but also that the “fulfilling” state of affairs (“green surface”) is nothing else but a possibility (albeit realized) among others. The former is a possibility that might have been real; the latter turns out to be a reality that might have not been. The one extension is shared by both the real (“green”) and the possible (“red”) color (and thus gives rise to what Husserl rightly calls “a double state of affairs”, “*ein Doppelsachverhalt*”

Von dem Identitätspunkt [...], von dem identischen Subjekt, woraufhin die gewisse und anmutende Setzung vollzogen ist, laufen die beiden Sätze aus und laufen parallel, durchgängig in ihrem Bau aufeinander bezogen und in diesem Sinn sich “deckend”. Es ist ein Doppelsatz, ein in verschiedenen Qualitäten vermeinter Doppelsachverhalt, aber im Modus des Widerstreits zur Einheit gebracht [our emphasis] (Hua XX/1, 220).

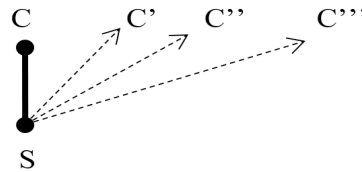
Let us represent our example as follows:



The conflict serves the emergence of consciousness of a (possible) disjunction (“red surface”) of an actual experience, as well as of an (actual) experience (“green surface”) as a possible disjunction.<sup>40</sup>

40 “Gehen wir von Beispielen aus! Ich sehe hier und jetzt dieses weiße Papier. Ich überzeuge mich, dass es nicht schwarz ist. In üblicher Rede heißt es geradezu: Ich sehe, dass *dieses* Papier nicht schwarz ist. Ich sehe auch ein, dass es nicht schwarz sein ‘kann’, das Schwarzsein dieses Papiers, und näher der ins Auge gefassten Papierfläche, ist mit dem Weißsein derselben Fläche ‘unverträglich.’ [...] Dasselbe Subjekt, das als weiß seiend in perceptiver Gewissheit gegeben ist, ‘soll’ auch schwarz sein. Das ‘soll’ drückt hier die Zumutung aus. Wir versuchen nun die ‘Veranschaulichung’ dieser Zumutung. Wir vollziehen eine Willensintention von dem phänomenologisch eigentümlichen Charakter der *Versuchintention*, deren Korrelat der ‘*Versuch*’ ist. Jeder Versuch setzt eine Stelle voraus, wo man (das versuchende reine Ich) ‘anfassen’ kann, wo irgend etwas ‘getan’ wird, was zu dem in den Versuchsintention intendierten Erfolg gehört. In unserem Fall hat die Versuchsintention ihre Ansatzstelle bei der Prädikatseite der Zumutung, bei dem ‘ist schwarz gefärbt.’ *Der Erfolg des Versuchs ist, dass das ‘ist schwarz’ zwar anschaulich wird an dem Papier, dass sich das Papier aber*

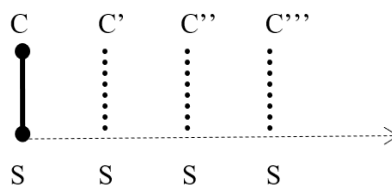
As we should remember, Husserl construes “eidetic variation” as a methodological production of conflicts. Now, since “conflicts” are in general nothing else but the expressions of “bifurcations” of experience, it follows that *eidetic variation, as a methodological production of bifurcations beyond any possible horizons, is nothing but a methodological production of disjunctions.*



This diagram, however, might erroneously suggest that during the process of eidetic variation the phenomenologist would preserve “S” as *the same individual* surface: as if he/she contrived different colorations of *this* surface. Even though the process focuses attention, as it were, only on the manifold of “colors” (for this reason the superscripts appear only above “c”), each variation touches “s” as well. If the variation were here assumed to be contriving different moments “c” of the one surface, then it should be represented as follows: V’ (c’, s). Instead, Husserl would write V’ (c’, s)’, for according to him the variation is meant to provide a disjunction of the whole itself (c, s).

This being remarked, Husserl’s view is more accurately represented as follows:

34



### § 5. CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A COMPOUND METHOD

Let us summarize the outcomes in order to move towards the conclusion.

We started out this analysis claiming that there is a peculiar relation between the method known as “eidetic variation” and the notion of “conflict;” indeed, as we started exploring such a relation, we immediately realized that Husserl describes eidetic variation as a methodological “production” of conflicts. We then tried to characterize this latter aspect, and what Husserl also calls “unity of conflict,” by comparing it to the “unity of experience.” Our question became then what a “conflict” exactly is and how Husserl phenomenologically accounts for it; now, in order to find a satisfactory answer, we turned to the analysis of three passive

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*sozusagen umfärbt in ein schwarzes, dass das ‘weiß’ durch Überdeckung beseitigt wird. Aber beseitigt nur im Modus des ‘gleichsam’, des ‘als ob.’ [...] Die erstere fungiert als aufhebende, durchstreichende, die letztere als aufgehobene, durchstrichene [our emphasis]” (Hua XX/1, 217-219).*



modalizations of consciousness, thereby arguing that the so-called method of eidetic variation hinges on three specific phenomena: passive negation, problematic, and open possibility. Once this passive rootedness was worked out, the account of the phenomenon called “unity through conflict” helped us shed more light on the idea of conflict as a “disjunction,” and therefore of eidetic variation as a production thereof.

The starting point of the present paper was the claim that the method of eidetic variation entails a two-fold meaning. On the one hand, it is taken to mean conceptual clarification and explanation, i.e., an attempt to proceed “from firm exemplars to firm *counterexamples* of the thematic universal and from there to *limit-cases* in which the application of the concept becomes dubitable.”<sup>41</sup> Yet, as we firmly believe, it also refers to the methodological account of the constitution of *eide* based upon a series of modalizations of experience. Accordingly, one might argue that the former stands to the latter as static phenomenology to genetic: it presupposes the constitution of the *eide* in order that conceptual clarification and explanation be performed.

Now, the question that immediately arises is how the two different senses of the so-called “eidetic variation” relate to each other: in the following, we will propose what needs to be regarded only as a preliminary account of how those two variations are to be joined into a compound method.

“Genetically” speaking, the very beginning is represented by a series of passive modalizations of consciousness where we are progressively concerned with “conflicts,” disjunctions of “problematic possibility,” and so-called “open possibilities.” Given these steps, the method of eidetic variation presents us with three distinct phases performed by three acts: “remembrances of past experiences,” “localized phantasy,” and “pure phantasy.” So far, so good. Assuming, as Husserl contends, that the so-called *eidōs* (and the corresponding “intuition of essence”) stands out as the result of the method under scrutiny, then the question turns out to be: phenomenology being a rigorous eidetic science, that is to say, a science formulating “eidetic judgments” presenting an unconditioned universality, how are such alleged eidetic judgments to be formulated and fulfilled in order to make that science possible? To recall a Claudio Majolino’s own formulation: “*C’est le moment, disons, symbolique où les concepts qui se réfèrent à des essences préalablement intuitionnées s’agent en jugements*”, so that “*la vérité de tels jugements sera finalement soumise à l’autorité d’une intuition [...] censée présenter des exemples intuitifs ou des contre-exemples de la loi formulée par le jugement en question* [our emphasis].”<sup>42</sup> In other words: given that the “intuition of essences” is obtained as a result of the performance of eidetic variation as a methodological production of conflicts (B), the phenomenologist is meant to carry on the process by formu-

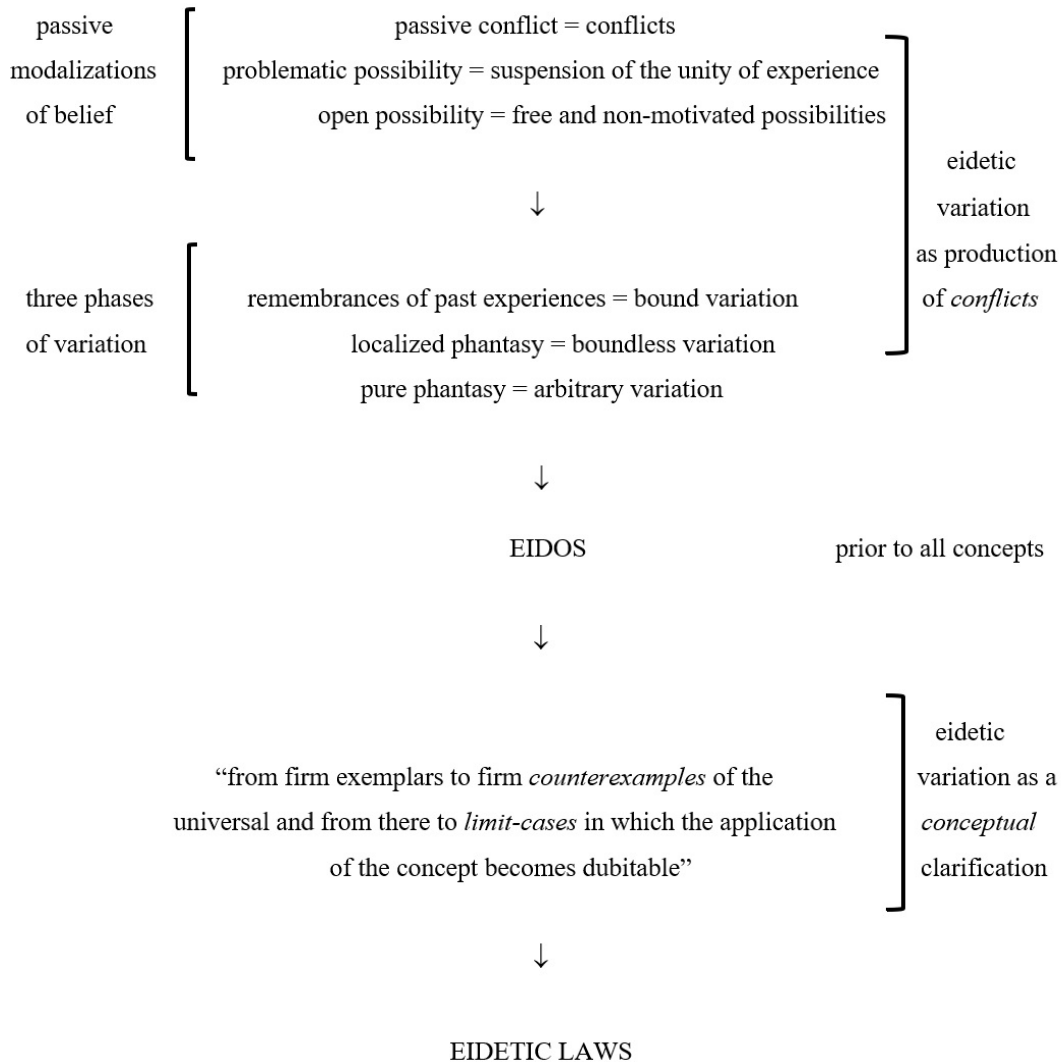
41 R. Sowa, “The Universal as ‘What is in Common’”, ed. cit., pp. 547-548.

42 C. Majolino, “La partition du réel: Remarques sur l’eidōs, la phantasia, l’effondrement du monde et l’être absolu de la conscience”, ed. cit., p. 604.

lating judgments wherein those *eide* occur as concepts. The intuition expected to fulfill these judgments is nothing but the result of the eidetic variation as a method to examine a “presumed descriptive eidetic law” by proceeding “from firm exemplars to firm *counterexamples* of the thematic universal and from there to *limit-cases* in which the application of the concept becomes dubitable” (A).<sup>43</sup>

The former exploits passive genesis to account for the intuitive constitution of *eide*, yet it is not to be regarded as a final stage; the latter can be described as a kind of conceptual clarification and explanation, which brings about the scientific character of the phenomenological enterprise (as claimed by Sowa), yet without being able to account for the constitution of *eide*.

Let us attempt to sum up the methodological state of affairs as follows:



43 R. Sowa, “The Universal as ‘What is in Common’”, ed. cit., pp. 547-548.

The diagram is meant to present what might be referred to as the “compound method of eidetic variation,” made up of what we referred to as B (= the upper section) and A (= the lower section).

Now, in this paper we have been concerned with B more than with A, in order to make sense of Husserl’s conception of eidetic variation as a production of conflicts. Yet, as we have seen, this is only half of the story. Our main aim has been to disentangle the enigma of eidetic variation, as it were, and therewith to understand why, despite the chronologically early introduction of that term, Husserl—as noticed by Ingarden—came to unfold its operation only later, within the framework of “genetic phenomenology.” In conclusion, one could maintain that the method of “eidetic variation,” rather than being an ambiguous notion, points to a compound method.

Many things have been left out of our investigation: first of all, the relation between the method of eidetic variation, the intuition of essence as the end goal of the method of “ideation” and the very notion of *eidōs* (which has been appealed to and mentioned on several occasions, yet never directly tackled) given to it. Because—and the reader should never lose sight of this specific aspect—if the method of eidetic variation proceeds by means of a “production” of conflicts (as we have learned over the course of this text), the result or outcome of such a production, namely, the *eidōs*, is an objectuality of “higher order” with its own internal synthetic structure and “ontological” status that would deserve a specific investigation. Accordingly, the present essay should be considered only as a part of a larger project dedicated to the method of ideation as a whole, and of Husserl’s notion of eidetic science.