

LIMIT AND HORIZONS OF LINGUISTIC EXPRESSION

LÍMITE Y HORIZONTES DE LA EXPRESIÓN LINGÜÍSTICA

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Abstract: In the first part, a first exploration is made on the issue of sayability and unsayability using conceptual and investigative resources taken from the phenomenological descriptions made by Husserl in *Ideas I*. A first and still broad result is reached, namely, that any *Erlebnis* (lived experience), taken in its fullness and plenitude, is ineffable, and therefore, life itself, because it is only a stream of lived experiences, as it is lived at each and every moment, is unsayable, ineffable. The limit of linguistic expression referred to in the title is, thus, its impossibility to express a full *Erlebnis*. Then, linguistic expression is examined against the background of the plenitude of this life that it cannot express but from which and in which it emerges, and this inspection brings to light in a preliminary way the several horizons that encircle it.

Key Words: Expression, Language, Ineffability, Unsayability, Life, Lived Experience, Horizon, Intricacy.

Resumen: En la primera parte, se hace una primera exploraci6n del tema de la decibilidad y la indecibilidad empleando recursos metodol6gicos y conceptuales tomados de las descripciones fenomenol6gicas hechas por Husserl en *Ideas I*. Con ello se alcanza un primer resultado todavfa muy amplio, a saber, que toda vivencia (*Erlebnis*), tomada en su integridad y plenitud, es inefable, y por tanto, la vida misma, puesto que consiste en una corriente de vivencias, tal como es vivida en todos y cada uno de sus instantes, es precisamente inefable, indecible. El lfmite de la expresi6n lingüística a que el tftulo se refiere es, pues, su imposibilidad para expresar una vivencia plena. Luego, se examina la expresi6n lingüística contra el fondo de la plenitud de la vida que no puede expresar pero de la cual y en la cual emerge, y esta inspecci6n trae a luz de manera preliminar los diversos horizontes que la circundan.

Palabras clave: Expresi6n, lenguaje, inefabilidad, indecibilidad, vida, vivencia, horizonte, intrincamiento.

In an unpublished manuscript, Jos6 Gaos, who was among other things the translator into Spanish of Husserl's *Ideas I* and Heidegger's *Being and Time*, among many other works, posed the following challenge: "All philosophy requires a theory of what is sayable and of the ways to say it. This theory must admit that not all is definable, not even sayable; that not all can be stated with

precision. That many things cannot but be narrated, suggested narratively"¹. It is not sure, although it is highly probable, that this challenge was posed precisely to Phenomenology. In any case, I think Phenomenology is not only able to respond to it, but that it has already given a response to certain parts of the challenge. I will start my communication with a reflection on the very first part of the challenge, which, as far as I know, is still unanswered. Then, perhaps moved by the peculiar dialectical relationship between limit and horizon, I attempt to view, from the limit of linguistic expression, into the horizon that it itself makes visible. Of course, not all details in Gaos's challenge will be responded or even dealt with. But it will be clear, at least, that if an essential unsayability (inexpressibility or ineffability) can be ascertained, it cannot be overcome by any narration or narrative suggestions.

I

Husserl wrote, in effect: "Actually man does not 'express' *all* his psychic life in language; nor is he ever able to do so"². But he left these words unexplained. Now, the obvious verification of the fact that we cannot express all our inner life in language is not of much interest here. It is the impossibility to do that, but only if it is an essential impossibility, what may define an essential unsayability or ineffability. Our first goal will be to bring out this essential impossibility to express all of our *Seelenleben* in language.

We don't need to go further than *Ideas I*, at least for a first approach. Here we read: "anything meant in the noematic sense (and, more particularly, as the noematic core) pertaining to any act, no matter which, is *expressible by means of 'significations'*"³.

¹ The manuscript, from about 1938, is in page 36277, folder 37 (2nd. Fund) of José Gaos Archives in the Instituto de Investigaciones Filosóficas, UNAM, Mexico.

² "Nicht *alles* Seelenleben 'drückt' der Mensch wirklich in der Sprache aus und kann er je durch sie ausdrücken" (*Formale und transzendente Logik. Versuch einer Kritik der logischen Vernunft, Husserliana – Edmund Husserl Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. XVII, edited by Paul Janssen, Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1874; § 3, p. 26. I will refer to this series as "*Hua*", followed by the volume number. The translation is from *Formal and Transcendental Logic*. Translated by Dorion Cairns, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969, p. 22).

³ *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book*. Translated by Fred Kersten. Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, p. 295. (German original: *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie (Hua III/1)*. Edited by Karl Schuhmann. Den Haag, Martinus Nijhoff, 1976, § 124, p. 286.)

Over the basic stratum of acts (acts which of course, as well as “all intensive mental processes”, have already a sense, a more or less explicated sense), the stratum of signification (or of expression, since “*Logical signification is an expression*”)⁴ —a stratum of two sides, the sensuous or corporeal side (the verbal sound) and the “mental” side (the signification proper)— has as its property that it makes the sense of the basic act, or its “noematic core”, together with its reference to an objectivity, adopt the peculiar form of “conceptuality”, of “universality”.

Husserl comments how little justice has been done “in the current literature” to the “major problems” concerning “how expressive mental processes are related to the non-expressive ones, and what the latter undergo in supervining expressing”⁵. We all can easily notice the space, or we could call it the hiatus, that lies between the sense of the singular perception of a flying blackbird and the signification or meaning confined in the expression “There flies a blackbird!”, as in the well-known example of the 6th Logical Investigation. It is in this space where an essential unsayability can be uncovered.

It is noteworthy that it is defined as an “incompleteness”: an incompleteness “which belongs to the essence of expression as expression, that is, to its *universality*”⁶. All lived experiences or mental processes, all acts, are individual, singular, and all expression is universal. But why or how this renders the expression incomplete? In a key passage, Husserl tries to clarify the situation:

It is inherent in the sense of the universality belonging to the essence of expressing that all the particulars of the expressed can never be reflected in the expression. The stratum of signifying is not, and of essential necessity cannot be, a kind of reduplication of the substratum. Whole dimensions of variability in the substratum do not enter at all into the expressive signifying; they, or their correlates, do not indeed ‘express themselves’ at all: thus the modifications of relative clarity and distinctness, the attentional modifications, and so forth.⁷

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 296. (*Hua* III/1, p. 287.)

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 299-300. (*Hua* III/1, p. 291.)

⁷ *Ibid.*

The expressed (the substratum) is, of course, the lived experience or "intentional mental process" (in German, the *intentionales Erlebnis*), as for instance the perception of the blackbird in its flight. And now we are taken to understand that not all parts or particulars of the *Erlebnis* can be expressed while it is expressed, or that it is not expressed in its completeness; that what is "really" expressed is only a part of it, however important it may be. This part is called, in the quotation above, the "noematic sense", or, "more particularly", the "noematic core". Husserl characterizes it as "the object in the How of its determinations" —so, it is the object as it is precisely determined while being meant⁸. I will not enter here into the discussion about the nature and composition of this "noematic core" (or of the noema itself), or specifically about its concreteness or abstractness⁹. In any case, this part of the *Erlebnis* is the only one to which the expression adapts itself "and raises [...] to the realm of 'Logos', of the *conceptual* and, on that account, the '*universal*'"¹⁰. Besides this "noematic core", there remains in the *Erlebnis* functioning as substratum what we can call an unexpressed residuum. The examples of parts belonging to this residuum that Husserl mentions ("the modifications of relative clarity and distinctness, the attentional modifications, and so forth") are all noetic parts or features, but they, or some of them, include of course hyletic content also. All these ingredients in the unexpressed residuum, and many others still not mentioned, remain all along the expressing process exactly what they were without it: temporal, individual, real ingredients (*reell*) of the *Erlebnis*. But it is important to stress that Husserl explicitly mentions also "their correlates". The noesis, or the nuclear noesis (the noetic core of the *Erlebnis*), is always accompanied by other noetic elements or parts, and correspondingly, the nuclear noema, the noematic core (and, respectively, in the last instance, also the object to which it refers or which it "contains") is always accompanied by other noematic features (and the object, respectively, by objective or ontic ones), too many to be easily recounted, and also all of them, or most of them at least, individual.

⁸ *Ibid.*, § 131, p. 314. (*Hua* III/1, p. 303.)

⁹ I think this question has been settled once and for all by Roberto Walton in "El noema como entidad abstracta" (*Análisis filosófico* IX, No. 2, 1989, pp. 119-137).

¹⁰ *Ideas*, p. 295.

If we remain in the sphere of reality (*Realität*) —which is the sphere in which Husserl also remains in the first place, at least according to the examples he uses—, the noematic core, or the object it includes, is always something individual, and this individuality can be easily and clearly put in contrast with the universality of the expression to which Husserl refers. But we must keep in mind that it is first and foremost the individuality, or better, the singularity, of the *Erlebnis* itself what is at stake in the contrast with the universality of expression. The individuation of the real object is a secondary individuation derived from consciousness¹¹. Furthermore, the real or mundane object is an intentional (and in this sense “ideal”) unity against the multiplicity of the *Erlebnisse* in which it is constituted. This allows us to see that what Husserl is saying about the incompleteness of the expression, and the elevation of the noematic sense to the conceptual and the universal, is valid also for *Erlebnisse* which are directed to ideal or universal objects, and not only for *Erlebnisse* directed to what is real. Also in the expression of a mathematical theorem there is an unexpressed residuum.

Thus, in the case of *Erlebnisse* directed to real objects, not only the individuality of the *Erlebnis*, but also that of the object is not fetched in the expression, and it can never be. It is also not altered or distorted; the elevation to the universality leaves it untouched. Individuality can even be recognized, as in an occasional expression which may say, for instance, “That blackbird is now flying around[...]” etc. An individual blackbird is there for the perception, but its individuality —and precisely as the individuality it has for this very perception, not as a presumed objective individuality— embraces much more than the fact that it is a blackbird flying around with such and such features, and therefore the expression we just forged could be used to refer to many other individual and different blackbirds. The expression of the perception “respects” only the noematic core or the objective sense of the perception in which a certain determination of the object, a “core” determination, so to say, is enclosed. But

¹¹ “Absolute individuation enters into the *personal* Ego. The surrounding world of the Ego acquires its individuation essentially by way of its relation to the Ego that has experience of it and that exchanges its experience with other individuals. For each Ego, any thing has the here and now as correlate of intuition.” (Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Second Book* (known as *Ideas II*). Translated by R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer, *Edmund Husserl Collected Works*, Vol. III, Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989, § 64, p. 315. German original: *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, Zweites Buch: Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution* (Hua IV). Edited by Marly Biemel. Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1952, p. 301).

for consciousness, for the subject of this consciousness, the objects, or its individuality or its individual situation, is always determined, over its mere core determination, by countless other features and elements which compose what Husserl calls the "full noema"¹². This is the correlate of a "full noesis", or, as we can also say, of a "full *Erlebnis*" (a full lived experience). Therefore, *it is this full noema what is, as such, inexpressible*. Or, if we rather refer the expression to the *Erlebnis*, not to the noematic object, we would then say that it is the full *Erlebnis*, with its full noesis, what is, as such, inexpressible.

This restriction of the expression to the noematic core of an *Erlebnis* goes hand in hand with another, perhaps more drastic, restriction. This second restriction will help to round up the thesis of the unsayability, or ineffability or inexpressibility (I take these three terms as synonyms, since I restrict myself in this essay to linguistic expression) of the *Erlebnisse* as they are lived, or, as we can already say, of life as it is concretely lived. When discussing expression, Husserl refers explicitly only to *acts*, and not to all intensive lived experiences, not to all *intentionale Erlebnisse*. This is clear in the quotation above: "anything meant in the noematic sense (and, more particularly, as the noematic core) pertaining to any act, no matter which, is *expressible by means of 'significations'* [...]"¹³. Expression itself, or expressing, is also an act, or "a particular act-stratum", to which "all other acts are to conform"¹⁴. Acts, as we know, are actual *Erlebnisse*, that is, those that are *executed* by the I (or the ego), those in which the I is, in a rather literal sense, "present". Not all acts are expressed (and sometimes they even cannot be expressed, like those lived by non-human animals), but every expression is expression of an act... Now, as far as the realm of inactuality or, as Kersten translates, non-actionality, is also a realm of potentiality, all non-actional mental processes are also expressible given their previous conversion into acts. But as far as they remain non-actional, they remain outside the reach of expression. And it turns out that every act, every actional *Erlebnis*, is "surrounded by a 'halo' of non-actional mental processes; the *stream of mental processes can never consist of just*

¹² See for instance, in the same work, the brief characterization of the full noema in § 90. In Kersten translation, pp. 217-218.

¹³ Other passages corroborate this claim: see the first line of § 124 of *Ideas I*: "Interwoven with all the acts considered before are the expressive act-strata..." (*ibid.*, p. 294; *Hua III/1*, p. 284.). See also the quotation that follows immediately in the text.

¹⁴ *Ideas I*, p. 295; *Hua III/1*, p. 286.

actionalities"¹⁵. Thus, in the very moment of expressing, this halo of non-actional mental processes, which surrounds the expressed act, is not and cannot be expressed. This halo, which is also called the horizon of the act, can of course be considered, in a certain sense, as a part of the act which is expressed, a part which lies, as is clear, outside its noematic core, thus in the full noema —or belong to the full combination of noemas of all noesis present in a single *Erlebnis* in the living present of the I.

As long as during our entire life we never live only in noetic cores or in nuclear *Erlebnisse* (if this notion has a sense at all), with only a noematic core as noema, but always in full *Erlebnisse*, with full noesis and full noemas, then it is clear that life, just as we live it at every moment of our lives, is inexpressible. The answer that Phenomenology can give to Gaos's question, an answer that derives in a very simple way from Husserl's exposition of expression in *Ideas I*, is that it is life what is unsayable, just life as it is concretely lived by an individual subject in its living present, and together with it its correlate, just as it is its correlate, individualized in a certain sense by it and with its own correlative horizons: be it a blackbird, a tree in a meadow, a crowded street, the theorem of Pitagoras, the center of the Sun or whatever¹⁶.

Perhaps I should try to make you see all this with much more accuracy, and, above all, to give you a better insight into what a full *Erlebnis* really is —as seen from a Phenomenological point of view—, and how it involves, or implies, or carries with it, the whole stream of *Erlebnisse* from which it is only a part or a stretch, or, as Husserl says, how "every singular *Erlebnis* 'reflects' the whole nexus of *Erlebnisse*"¹⁷. But there is no time to follow here this path. I assume every one of us can easily evoke the pertinent Husserlian analyses and have a good inkling of the way in which the myriad of intentional lines, rays, dimensions, horizons, habitualities, passivities, inactualities, motivations, associations, genesis, implications, attitudes, etcetera, etcetera, gather all in a single *Erlebnis* or in a single stretch of a life, to make it concretely and uniquely what it is. I have taken from the writings of Eugene T. Gendlin the word

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 72; *Hua* III/1, p. 73.

¹⁶ It remains to be examined if the ineffability I am expounding here is the only ineffability that Phenomenology can ascertain, or if there are other kinds of ineffabilities that cannot be subsumed under this one or reduced to this one, as I conjecture. This is a matter for further research.

¹⁷ *Erster Philosophie (1923/24), Zweiter Teil: Theorie der phänomenologischen Reduktion (Hua VIII)*. Edited by Rudolf Boehm. Haag: Nijhoff, 1959, p. 318.

“intricacy” to refer to the fact that a *Erlebnis* of whatever kind and type, found in a stream of intentional consciousness, is situated in an infinitely or indefinitely complex intertwinement and interplay of an indefinite, if not infinite, number of lived moments, elements, features and factors of many kinds. Husserl uses in many places the word “*Erlebniszusammenhang*” (as in the quotation just made), not always in the holistic sense I am hinting at, but he also uses, in a much more similar sense, “*Verflechtung*” (“entanglement” or “interlacing”), and in one place also “*Getriebe*” (“gearing”)¹⁸. Although he undoubtedly recognizes this intricacy of every act, at every moment, in or within a formidable nexus of non-actual *Erlebnisse*, it is clear in his writings that he is much more interested in emphasizing the individuality and personality of the I of the acts, of the active life, as a unity that can be expressed and known and explored according to its type, against all his non-actual or non-active life of his habitualities and passivities, or against the very stream of *Erlebnisse*. To take a simple example, he writes in *Ideas II*:

Everything indeed has its effects, though not in all respects. On the streets, people meet me, cars pass, etc. This has its apperceptive type, within which the bustle of the street is contained, whereas the individual event, instead of occurring in this way, can always also occur differently. All this singularities, which I hardly notice but which predelineate the horizon of my lived experience, do not in the least alter my moral character or my aesthetic character. As regards these spheres, no motivations flow from there.¹⁹

He stresses also that the I “has its peculiarity not in the sense of the *Einmaligkeit* (the irrepeatability)”, as if it were “individualized” only because of the flux of his *Erlebnisse* (or the *Verflechtung*). On the contrary, this I has an “individual peculiarity”, the product of a peculiar genesis that gives him unity, seclusiveness, personal character, freedom, etc.²⁰. Nevertheless, he (the I) is non-independent with respect to a stream of *Erlebnisse*, as this stream is also non-independent with respect to him. And in this stream every *Erlebnis* that can be delimited have a “background”, a “horizon”, and also a “hidden life”, and

¹⁸ *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass, Erster Teil: 1905-1920* (Hua XIII). Edited by Iso Kern, Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973; p. 467: “...rein phänomenologischen noetischen-noematischen Verflechtungen...”; “...das ‘innere’ Getriebe...”.

¹⁹ *Ideas II*, p. 284; *Hua IV*, p. 271.

²⁰ See *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass, Zweiter Teil: 1921-1928* (Hua XIV). Edited by Iso Kern, Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973, pp. 22-23, and 34.

what is "hidden, 'unconscious', is a proper mode for monadic latencies"²¹. Even if the I, being unique, cannot be properly called *einmalig*, the stream of his *Erlebnisse*, and also each and every one of them, undoubtedly are. This *Einmaligkeit* is a sort of uniqueness, a uniqueness due to the intricacy, and it is this uniqueness what makes the inexpressibility unavoidable.

Now, even if the individuality of the I of the monad is not the same (and does not pertain to the same category) as the individuality or uniqueness of its life and, above all, of every one of his *Erlebnisse*, I think nothing talks against the application to both or all of them of the classic dictum *Individuum est ineffabile*, whose precise phenomenological meaning we would be uncovering. But, on the other hand, the ineffability revealed here is surely not what Philosophy, or Literature or the theory of Literature or of Art in general, or the philosophical considerations of mysticism, have had in view along the centuries. It is also not *that* ineffability (and I cannot say much more about it) that constantly awakes the suspicions of the philosophers of language or the philosophers of anthropology or the theoreticians of the human sciences, because of its links with skepticism, or subjectivism, relativism, or with a cultural or social or, worst, ethical, narcissism, of all of which we are still in a desperate need of liberation. It is just the sober —and, indeed, not at all surprising— verification that the idea of raising to a universal, and thus intersubjective, concept any full *Erlebnis* (or, simplifying, any full noema) is *nonsense*.

Even if this ineffability is, so to say, in the palm of the hand, in a certain sense "present" in every living present of a life, as a latent "character" of every single *Erlebnis*, be it otherwise expressed or not, it does not make itself apparent or visible, at least in normal situations. And together with this invisibility or inadvertency, and even perhaps linked with it in a way still to be examined, there is the fact that it, also at least in normal situations, makes not itself felt by an opposing or pressing will or urge to express (or to say or to speak)... In the normal or regular linguistic interchange among individuals, we cannot find a wish or a will to express, and therefore to communicate, the whole plentiful abundance of our full *Erlebnisse*, even if, due to a sort of miraculous reflection, we could have a truly insight into the full intricacy of our

²¹ *Ibid.*

life. We do not need to appeal, for the time being, to the extraordinary, the exceptional, the abnormal personalities, even if they are called the poet, the saint, the mystic, the genius, or the mad. Be what it may with the richness of their lives, and, on the other hand, with their capabilities of reflection or introspection, of inner insight or illumination, none of them would be in a better position than the ordinary man (the man in the street) regarding the possibility of rendering any one of their full *Erlebnisse* to linguistic expression. We can remember here the words of Adolf Reinach: "Even the poorest conscious life is too rich to be fully grasped by his subject".

I do not deny, of course, that it is not at all an uncommon experience to feel a sort of despair or anger at the impossibility to put in words the vital situation in which we find ourselves at the moment, or the particular mixture of feelings that we are entertaining, or other similar, usually strongly felt verifications of the limit of linguistic expression; and of course I think that many of these experiences of ineffability are just crude manifestations of the ineffability that I am trying to show here. But it is important to distinguish between a certain, also more or less common, difficulty to talk about some particular feeling, emotion, mood, mental state, be it natural or provoked by some drug, or any other kind of particular *Erlebnis* that we might have, no matter how rare, or strange, or exceptional we might find it, because we cannot find a name for it, because we are lacking in words, and, on the other hand, the true ineffability of life or of a single full *Erlebnis* in a life. The key of the distinction is always this question: is what is looking for expression in language some feature or some part or side of the *Erlebnis*, however dense, or hard, or weighty it is or it seems, or it is the full *Erlebnis*? What I said above is only that, in normal situations, full *Erlebnisse* just don't look for expression in language. Tacitly, we all (normally) "know" that language is not "made" for them. But to discriminate precisely what it is and what it is not a full *Erlebnis*, a certain phenomenological eye is useful.

As for the linguistic expression of partial *Erlebnisse*, of partial moments or features or phenomena of our life —feelings, pains, aches ("moral" or "physical"), aspirations, remorse, nostalgias, joys, rages, enthusiasms,

melancholies, spleens, boredoms, loathings, etc. [...]—²², I am convinced it is always possible to submit them to linguistic expression, just because its intersubjective identification is always possible, and in many cases with the help of language. Here the question is if it is conceivable that others undergo or live the same kind of experience (even if it is only a thought-experience or a thought-experiment).

But, alas, we all live our partial *Erlebnisse*, or partial moments of *Erlebnisse*, those that I just deemed as expressible, in the middle of our intricacy, of our inexpressible life. The question arises as to how is this possible, that is, how can we express something at all, if everything is lived (as an *Erlebnis* or as a correlate of an *Erlebnis*) within an inexpressible life. The answer, in its most succinct (and superficial) form, is already given: conceptualizing, raising in expressive acts to the realm of the *logos* and the universal the noematic cores of other certain acts; we all learn to do this without any reflection when we learn to speak. But this very quick answer hides in fact the real complexity of this process. The problem of the conditions of possibility of linguistic expression implies the whole problematic of the structure of subjectivity or, in other words, the multidimensional and multilayered problem of the self-constitution of a transcendental monad in Husserl's sense. It involves —to mention the most obvious, as a brief recount of what I will not study in this paper— the issue of prepredicative (prelinguistic) experience²³, where the genesis of language starts, and then the whole theme of intersubjectivity, and in connection with it, what has been called the communicative intention²⁴. But, in my view, the main issue presupposed by the emergence of linguistic expression in the life of a consciousness, is the splitting of this life into a passive/non-actual and an active/actual levels; this is, in other

²² There is perhaps a certain inadequacy in this way of talking about partial *Erlebnisse*. Husserl wrote: "[Stream of *Erlebnisse* or of consciousness] is an essential referentiality of succession [*Aufeinanderbezogenheit*] or a belongingness-together, it is not a whole made of parts, it is an absolute unity..." (*Hua* XIV, p. 46). But with "partial *Erlebnisse*" I do not refer to single *Erlebnisse* detached from its place in the temporal flux, but to moments that give an *Erlebnis* its main character (as pain, etc.), even though they are not the complete or full *Erlebnis* (they are lived together with perception, feelings, and all kind of horizons, habitualities, etc.).

²³ As has been brought to light by Roberto Walton in "El lenguaje y lo trascendental" (in *Husserl. Mundo, conciencia y temporalidad*, Buenos Aires: Editorial Almagesto, 1993, pp. 171-193; cf. specially section 3, "La estética trascendental", pp. 184-191).

²⁴ Cf. César Moreno Márquez, *La intención comunicativa. Ontología e intersubjetividad en la fenomenología de Husserl*, Sevilla: Thémata. Suplementos, Serie Mayor 1, 1989, a study of whose main intention I feel particularly close, as I try to show later. See also section 4. "Apofántica e intersubjetividad" in the book of Walton mentioned in the previous note.

words, the issue of the role of the I as the I of its acts. Linguistic expression is a dimension of active life; but it occurs in the middle of a stream of passive life... How the I engages in expression is a facet of the issue of how it engages in its own life... Finally, in the subsoil of this issue is (as we already saw above in passing) also the triple issue of the individuation of the I, the individuation of its life (active or passive), and the individuation of its world: in one word, the issue of the individuation of the monad.

II

From the consideration of the fact that all expression occurs in the middle of, or better, within an inexpressible stream of conscious life whose ineffability means an effective *limit* to language, we can move to the consideration of this very inexpressible life, in all its intricacy, as a *horizon* for linguistic expression, and a specific horizon of its own, that is, *the* linguistic horizon —but with complex intertwinements with many other horizons... I'll try to show that this idea of an ineffable life being the horizon of linguistic expression is not only a game of concepts.

The first thing that must be said is that this consideration of life in its intricacy as the horizon *of*, and *for*, the linguistic expression, can be developed in two aspects or trends (underlined here by the use of the two different propositions) that were defined in one of the early texts of Roberto Walton about the notion of horizon²⁵: “On the one hand —Walton writes—, horizon implies merely an *a priori* frame of anticipation [...] On the other hand, horizon presents itself as a totality [...]”.

Living intricacy is a *totality* of living sense (“transcendental subjectivity is the universe of possible sense”, to remember Husserl’s words)²⁶, and as such it is the only possible field of and for possible meanings (or significations) of expressions²⁷. This means that I can only transpose or “convert” into meanings of expressions (raise them to the sphere of the conceptual) senses of my own

²⁵ “Las dos vertientes de la noción fenomenológica de horizonte”, in *Cuadernos de Filosofía*, XVIII, 28-29 (Buenos Aires, 1978), pp. 117-129. The following quotation in page 117.

²⁶ *Hua* I, § 41, p. 117.

²⁷ I adopt the distinction Husserl establishes in *Ideas* I (§ 124) between *Sinn* (translated as “sense”) and *Bedeutung* (translated as “signification”, like Kersten does, or as “meaning”, as is usual), and apply the first “to the whole noetic-noematic sphere” and the second “only to the linguistic sphere, that of ‘expressing’” (p. 294; *Hua* III/1, p. 285).

living experiences or *Erlebnisse*. This should not be disregarded as a triviality. It is a consequence of the exclusive accessibility that I have to my own *Erlebnisse*, but first of all without any kind of reflection, or at least any active reflection²⁸. But it opens, therefore, the possibility of a reflection, that is, of a reflective way of expressing. To my view, Gadamer's thesis that "no individual, when he speaks, has a true consciousness of his language"²⁹ can only refer to an active self-consciousness, to an active reflection. It is undeniable that every true, active speaker, has a passive consciousness of his speaking, and this consciousness not only allows him to refer reflectively, at any moment, to his own speaking and the words he has just said, but also to execute an active reflection that can work before and along his speaking, or in general, along his (linguistic) expressing.

In a still previous level of considerations, living intricacy, life (my life) as a totality or a total unity, is also the horizon of the acts of expression considered as one of the possibilities, among multiple others, that I have to act, to behave, to exercise my capacities and my freedom. Although the possibility, and respectively, the decision, to express linguistically (to speak, to write, etc.) at all, goes usually hand in hand with the "contents" of the expression—in "that" I express is already included "what" I express—, the possibility that it does not, the possibility of a breach among the two (as it happened, for instance, when I decided to speak in this conference without having any determinate idea of what I was going to say) makes clear that we have in fact, always, a double horizon of potentialities. Both horizons are present, in an almost indistinguishable way, whenever we actually express: "I can keep on speaking (or writing, etc.)", and "I can say (or write, etc.) this or that...". But in fact, those different potentialities are in both cases potentialities of a single horizon: it is the horizon of the whole concrete situation in which I find myself, and it is formed or determined precisely by the actual living intricacy. This horizon of *my situation* includes in itself (and is not included by) the horizon that Husserl calls "*situational horizon*" which is "common to all" and implies a reference to a "typical similarity of situations"³⁰.

²⁸ All questions concerning the "linguistic competence" fall exactly in this terrain.

²⁹ *Verdad y método* II. Trad. de Manuel Olasagasti, Salamanca: Sígueme, 1992, p. 149.

³⁰ Husserl writes (*Hua* XVII, p. 207): "all daily life of the individual and of community is referred to a *typical similarity of situations*, in such a way that everybody that puts itself in a certain situation has, as a normal man, the corresponding *situational horizon*, common to all. We can later explicate these hori-

The horizon that is always working at this level of the “pre-reflective” expression reveals its anticipatory character in certain situations in which it, or something “from it”, invites or provokes reflection (and here also, possibly, in the double aspect of the “that” and of the “what”, but most frequently in the last one). Sometimes, it happens that I don’t know what to tell (or what to write) because I don’t know exactly what I think or what I feel, and I look for it in myself before speaking (or writing). Something from the intricacy makes itself felt, in a fleeting and blurry way, but with clear anticipatory evidence, as pertinent, or clarifying, or revealing, or deep... I make a stop in my discourse or talk and for an instant I dig in myself to find out, to see it better³¹. This experience, and the kind of incidental reflection that it provokes, is anything unusual in daily use of language. It occurs frequently in (almost) all linguistic communication. Its interest lies in that it reveals at the same time the participation or the hidden presence of the non-actual intricacy in actual life, as an implicit and, so to say, “vigilant” horizon, and the reflexivity of subjective life—in Husserl’s sense, which is not at all restricted to active reflection. Husserl writes:

[...][T]he decisive step is not really performed, [...] when the “reflexivity” of the life of consciousness that lies in the essence of intentionality, which grows in countless configurations, in levels, and continuously iterating itself, is not understood. It lies already in every continual retentive modification, in higher level already in the protentional horizon-formation that goes hand in hand with it. It lies in every recollection and anticipation and in plurality in every apperception, in almost vertiginous multiplicity of intentional implications and reciprocal references of these implications in the unity of an effectuation in the universal apperception of the world.³²

zons, but *constitutive intentionality referred to the horizon*, thanks to which the surrounding world of daily life is a *world of experience*, exists always before it is exposed by the subject of reflection; this intentionality determines essentially the sense of occasional judgments, surpassing always what, in each case, words themselves say and can say expressly and with precision”. Gadamer has also referred to a “situational horizon” for all enunciations; cf. *Verdad y método II*, pp. 59-60.

³¹ Gendlin calls this a “felt sense”, a “felt meaning”, or an “experienced meaning”. This notion has a key role in the development both of the theory and practice of “Focusing” and a peculiar research on language. See mainly Gendlin’s *Experience and the Creation of Meaning. A Philosophical and Psychological Approach to the Subjective* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997; 1st. ed. 1962, The Free Press of Glencoe), and *Focusing* (New York/Toronto/London/Sydney/Auckland: Bantam Books, 1981; 1st ed. 1978, Everest House). See also David Michael Levin, ed., *Language Beyond Postmodernism, Saying and Thinking in Gendlin’s Philosophy*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997.

³² *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass, Dritter Teil: 1929-1935 (Hua XV)*. Edited by Iso Kern, Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973, p. 543-544.

Reflexivity, then, is passively operating within the intricacy. Even if it is always there, it is not at all strange that it manifests itself in actual life more clearly or frequently during the process of linguistic expression, when life is precisely *seeking expression*³³. But it lies in the freedom of a subject to give to active reflection, which usually has only a cursory or incidental intervention in linguistic expression, a more frequent, sustained, and oriented participation. Of course, it is not something to be recommended for all linguistic praxis, because linguistic praxis has, regularly, a certain rhythm and a certain cadency that there is no reason to alter. Active reflection is not normally performed aloud, and it always needs some time. The *pauses* in which it is carried through may mean intolerable fractures in most linguistic situations. On the contrary, in other situations they are not only desirable for general or common sense reasons, as for instance while writing a theoretical essay —where reflective pauses are more than desirable even if they go against the rush of our contemporary academic life—, but may mean a truly enrichment of the situation itself and, therefore, of the lives of those engaged in them (their language included). Perhaps the main instances are those cases where the theme of the linguistic expression (of a conversation or any other dialogical situation) is the very life of those involved in it (what they themselves think, feel, hope, wish, fear, etc., etc.). The assured ineffability of both lives in a so-called “intimate” conversation, even in the extremely rare cases in which it is felt, is not a real obstacle for the adoption of a reflective attitude directed each one towards his/her own respective living intricacy, which is, effectively, the horizon of the conversation and the only possible source of any possible sense that it can raise to language. Pauses allow, as Gendlin puts it, to speak from the intricacy, and, thanks to it, to carry it, and the conversation, forward, which, in other terms, would mean to have a better fulfillment of the communicative intention, which involves, of course, the intentions of both partners directed to a mutual understanding³⁴.

³³ I think that Husserl’s descriptions allow to say even that there is at work in linguistic expression a kind of reflexivity, just because in it conscious life must come to itself (to the senses of the *Erlebnisse* in the substratum “to be expressed”) and modify itself in a peculiar way. This claim, however, must be very carefully sustained in analytic and descriptive evidences before putting it in the arena against well-known thesis of hermeneutics or postmodernism.

³⁴ In the development of his notion of a “dialogical praxis”, César Moreno alludes to certain notions like “listening” or the “patience of listening” from Blanchot and Levinas that, if they were given a solid phenomenological background, would certainly be in line with my intentions. See Moreno, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

In the context of communicative praxis, or in any form of linguistic expression, another horizon, or perhaps I should say, another family of horizons can be noted, which form in an interesting way the reverse of the horizon of the living intricacy just exposed. It is the language of the speaker or the user himself that forms a horizon for him in its institutionalization as a *langue* (in the sense of Saussure)³⁵, but only as far as it is known or can be deemed by the user himself as accessible for him. In this respect, a writer surrounded by all sorts of dictionaries has a much more ample and varied horizon than an average speaker in a coffee shop. A peculiar interplay of both horizons, the horizon of the intricacy and the horizon of language, is established, where the coming of the senses to be expressed and the coming of the words that will express them usually fuse in one and the same coming; but there are times, not at all infrequent, where a more or less detained reflection is needed. We referred to this situation in relation with the first horizon. Harry P. Reeder has referred³⁶ to the same situation regarding mainly the second horizon (but also to the interplay of both of them) in the experience of *seeking a word* (or other sorts of expressions) from a lived, or experienced signitive intention (thus, a gendlinian “felt meaning”). In his exploration, he proposes and makes use of the notion of semantic texture as an ontological property of our linguistic life, of which horizon and anticipation are key features. But, in spite of their interest, here I cannot do to these contributions by Reeder the justice they deserve³⁷.

But the horizon of issues that must remain pending is really huge. Of course it was not my task here to deal with the most universal problems of

³⁵ “Furthermore, subject is conscious—in the way of a horizon— of his own language while speaking.” (Harry Reeder and Germán Vargas Guillén, *Ser y sentido. Hacia una fenomenología hermenéutica*, Bogotá: San Pablo, 2009, p. 106).

³⁶ See Reeder, “Signitive Intention and Semantic Texture”, in *Husserl Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (2004), pp. 183-206, and “Living Words and Concepts: Semantic Space and Semantic Texture”, in *Phenomenology 2005: Selected Essays from North America* (Bucharest: ZetaBooks, 2007, electronic publication), pp. 535-559. See also Reeder and Vargas, *op. cit.*

³⁷ In Reeder and Vargas, *op. cit.*, p. 126, they also remember some hermeneutical theses that are pertinent in this context: that it is experience itself who searches and finds the words that express it; that linguistic horizons that surrounds us do not confine us or bind us, but the horizons of a living language are always open; that, even if every subject is embedded culturally in a language, the linguistic competence deployed while speaking allows its modification. (See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd. ed. New York: Continuum, 1993, pp. 261-262, 302-304, 357, 457.) Gadamer has also highlighted the importance of conversation for philosophical thought, and even if he denies explicitly an sphere of the unsayable juxtaposed to the sphere of the sayable (“nothing” —he writes— “can be subtracted radically to the act of ‘saying’ because even a simple allusion alludes to something”), he allows, in a more Husserlian, monadological vein, for experiences of dialogue where the different individual and nontransferable points of view, each one reflecting the entire world, gather in the same and identical world. (Gadamer, *Verdad y método II*, pp. 115 and 206.)

horizonticity as something that affects or inheres in every *Erlebnis*. But perhaps there are interesting considerations to make about the way in which the horizon or series or horizons of the expressed *Erlebnisse* are “communicated”, as it were, to its linguistic expression, as a non-productive stratum that preserves the position-taking of the expressed stratum. I think in the horizons related to the process of evidencing, or, to use Walton’s terms, of “rational legitimation”³⁸. We mention first, in connection with perception, the linguistic horizon offered, so to say, by its perceptive background, by the “halo” of background-intuitions or background seeings, to use Husserl words³⁹. It is perhaps this horizon the one Husserl has in mind when he says: “Everything determined more precisely in the unity of expression is itself again expressed universally”⁴⁰, a remark that closes any hope of reaching the entire individuality of the object through new expressions, but that opens the very possibility, which lies in the horizon that I am recalling, of a more precise determination of the object, be it in more detailed expressions of the same perception and its horizons or in expressions of new perceptions. In a certain relation with it, we also have as another linguistic horizon the one formed by the mere possibility of expressing those modifications of the perception-substratum, like its relative clarity and distinctness, that cannot be expressed while it is expressed. Nothing prevents, I guess, that they be converted into noematic cores of new *Erlebnisse* and thereby be expressed. *I can* talk about the blurriness of my perception of the blackbird, etc.

On other hand, the horizon which brings with it the possibility of a more precise determination of the object, extends as typical horizon of rationality to all practical life: in countless situations we need to see better, or to see more, in order to be able to tell something more precise about the perceived. This horizon of evidencing can also be directly seen in the sphere of expression, as represented by the words: “I can say again what I said”, with the two main variations: “I can repeat what I said” (“I can say it again with the same words”) and “I can say in a different manner what I said”. The intentionality of linguistic expression is directed to its proper fulfillment, quite apart the fulfillment of the

³⁸ See his article “Conciencia de horizonte y legitimación racional”, in *Revista Venezolana de Filosofía*, No. 20, 1985, pp. 87-110.

³⁹ *Ideas I*, § 35, p. 70.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, § 126, p. 300.

substratum, and it has its own rational teleology: "I can say (or write, etc.) what I said *better*", etc.

Of course, to see the full interest of talking about the horizons of linguistic expression, we must leave perception and consider the full range of the life of consciousness. And it is also indispensable not to see expression as a dead stratum that only reflects what happens in the basic strata of that life. Or, better said, I hope, the basic strata do not remain unaffected by what happens in the stratum of expression. Expression is itself an *Erlebnis*, an act, and it is part of the same stream of *Erlebnisse* than the ones that are expressed. It responds to intentions, purposes, position-takings, that are carried in the basic strata, and it affects and have repercussions on this basic strata and in the whole stream. Therefore, for instance, a failure in expression, or, with the more technical term, a deception of a expression, gives rise, or may give rise, to a whole tumult of *Erlebnisse*, and a very intricate indeed (with elements of reflection, memory, anger, remorse, fantasy, expectation, wishing, thinking, etc.), but all this according to the peculiar intricacy of the living situation. The horizons of expression, thus, intermingle with the horizons of the rest of the life of consciousness. In this light, "I can say better what I said" is just a core that could be surrounded by something like "I can find better words to say again what I tried to say", but also, at the same time, "I can and I must think better what I am going to say", and also, "I can and must see better into the things before I dare to say again something to correct what I said", and in both cases we could add the note "... so next time I won't disappoint Tom, Dick or Harry, and I won't feel again this shame in front of them and in front of myself...", etcetera, etcetera.