Identity in Manifolds:  
Commentary on Sokolowski's Interpretation

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Professor Sokolowski's presentation of the identity-manifold relation as a recurrent pattern in Husserl's thought bears ample evidence of the fact that in phenomenology "the singular is always the Apeiron."¹ By way of comment on Professor Sokolowski's paper, I shall present what appears to be a parallel pattern of thought in Husserl's phenomenology of reason: the object of knowledge as an idea in the Kantian sense. Whereas in Formal and Transcendental Logic and in Experience and Judgment the object of knowledge as an idea in the Kantian sense provides the foundational framework for the judgment's form of reiterational "infinity" (the ideality of the "and so forth"),² in the Ideas, Volume I, the theme is developed within the context of object of perceptual experience as the continuum of its actual and possible presentations.³

The development of this theme is guided by Husserl's fundamental


conviction that phenomenology, as a theory of knowledge, consists of the constantly renewed effort to show that our discourse about things can coincide with the Logos of the things themselves and therefore that the problem of the object of perceptual experience is coextensive with the problem of reason.

The fundamental law of perceptual reality is its inadequacy. Husserl's account of this is unambiguous; the object of perceptual consciousness is congenitally inadequate, its perceivability inexhaustible in principle. Each presentation of the object refers beyond itself by pointing towards a completion never to be attained. While experience of the object as self-given claims absolute priority with respect to other modes of experience, plenitude of the object's self-givenness is inhibited by the double indeterminacy of the object's inner and outer horizons. Both of these horizons, however, constitute the necessary realm of possibilities within which the object must appear in order to be an object of perception at all. In Professor Sokolowski's words, "The field of possibilities is an essential moment in the experience of identity in manifold and thus has to be grasped phenomenologically and not to be reduced to a pseudo-reality."

Apprehension of perceptual reality as an identity within a manifold therefore involves a necessary distinction between two modes of self-givenness: the perceived and the perceivable, the actual and the possible, the immediately given and the potentially given, the finite and the infinite. It is "in sensing this distinction," as Professor Sokolowski says, "that we are aware of the object's transcendence ... there is transcendence when there is a difference between an identity and the profiles in which [the object] is presented. The transcendence of the given object means that the object itself is more than this presentation of it, and that it can be itself again in another appearance." Expressed in the most concise form, we may say that "transcendence" signifies simultaneity (or co-givenness) of actuality and possibility, of perceived and perceivable. As Professor Sokolowski also said, the object "is transcendent to the whole manifold; it is not their sum. It is the identity within the manifold."

Furthermore, in transcending the actual presentation through which it becomes disclosed, as well as the open-ended continuum of the possible presentations through which it can become further disclosed, the object persists in its unity, that is to say, it persists as the same object. In this connection, it is important to keep in focus a fundamental phenomenological feature of perceptual experience. The sense in which the object persists as the same object within the changing perceptions of that object is inseparable from its primordial self-givenness. Indeed, the primacy of