

Wilfrid Sellars and Phenomenology



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Wilfrid Sellars and Phenomenology

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Intersections, Encounters, Oppositions

EDITED BY DANIELE DE SANTIS
AND DANILO MANCA

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ABBREVIATIONS

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Husserl's Works

- CM *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*. Translated by Dorion Cairns. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999.
- Crisis *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*. Translated by David Carr. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- EU *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*. Edited by Ludwig Landgrebe. Translated by James Spencer Churchill and Karl Ameriks. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973.
- FTL *Formal and Transcendental Logic*. Translated by Dorion Cairns. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969.
- Hua *Husserliana*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff 1950–84; Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers 1988–2005; Cham: Springer 2005–.

In particular, in this volume we consider the following volumes:

- Hua III/1 *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*. Edited by Karl Schuhmann. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976.
- Hua VII *Erste Philosophie (1923/24): Erster Teil; Kritische Ideengeschichte*. Edited by Rudolf Boehm. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1956.

- Hua VIII *Erste Philosophie (1923/24): Zweiter Teil; Theorie der phänomenologischen Reduktion.* Edited by Rudolf Boehm. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959.
- Hua XI *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis: Aus Vorlesungs- und Forschungsmanuskripten 1918–1926.* Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1966.
- Hua XIX *Logische Untersuchungen.* Edited by Ursula Panzer. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984.
- Hua XX/1 *Logische Untersuchungen: Ergänzungsband; Erster Teil. Entwürfe zur Umarbeitung der VI; Untersuchung und zur Vorrede für die Neuauflage der Logischen Untersuchungen (Sommer 1913).* Edited by Ulrich Melle. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Hua XXIX *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente: Phänomenologie. Ergänzungsband; Texte aus dem Nachlass 1934–1937.* Edited by Reinhold N. Smid. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993.
- Hua XXX *Logik und Allgemeine Wissenschaftstheorie: Vorlesungen 1917/18 mit Ergänzenden Texten aus der ersten Fassung von 1910/11.* Edited by Ursula Panzer. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996.
- Hua XXXVIII *Wahrnehmung und Aufmerksamkeit: Texte aus dem Nachlass (1893–1912).* Dordrecht: Springer, 2004.
- Ideas I *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book, General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology.* Translated by Daniel O. Dahlstrom. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2014.
- Ideas I/K *Ideas Pertaining a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology.* Translated by Fred Kersten. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982.
- Ideas II *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution.* Translated by Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989.

- IdPh *The Idea of Phenomenology*. Translated by Lee Hardy. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999.
- ILTK *Introduction to Logic and Theory of Knowledge: Lectures 1906/07*. Translated by Claire Ortiz Hill. Dordrecht: Springer, 2008.
- LI [no.]/F *Logical Investigations*. 2 vols. Translated by John N. Findlay. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970.
- LI [no.]/M *Logical Investigations*. 2 vols. Translated by John N. Findlay. Edited with a new introduction by Dermot Moran and with a new preface by Michael Dummett. London: Routledge, 2001.
- PAS *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*. Translated by Anthony J. Steinbock. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001.
- PhCIT *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893–1917)*. Translated by John B. Brough. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991.
- PhICM *Phantasy, Image Consciousness, and Memory (1898–1925)*. Translated by J. B. Brough. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2005.
- Semiotik *Zur Logik der Zeichen (Semiotik)*. In *Hua XII: Philosophie der Arithmetik. Logische und psychologische Untersuchungen*. Edited by Lothar Eley, 340–74. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970.
- TS *Thing and Space*. Translated by Richard Rojcewicz. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997.

Kant's Work

- CPR *Critique of Pure Reason* (The work is cited in the standard mode, indicating the page number of the 1781 edition preceded by the abbreviation A, and the page number of the 1787 edition preceded by the abbreviation B). In the volume contributors indicate in the bibliography the translation they refer to followed by the number. Translated by N. K. Smith. New York: Macmillan.

LM *Lectures on Metaphysics*. Translated by Karl Ameriks and Steve Naragon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Sellars's Works

AR "Autobiographical Reflections: (February, 1973)." In *Action, Knowledge and Reality*. Edited by Hector-Neri Castañeda, 277–93. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975.

BD "Berkeley and Descartes: Reflections on the 'New Way of Ideas.'" In *Studies in Perception: Interpretations in the History of Philosophy and Science*, edited by P. K. Machamer and R. G. Turnbull, 259–311. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1977.

EPM "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind." In *Science, Perception and Reality*. Edited by Wilfrid Sellars, 127–97. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963.

EPMH *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*. With an introduction by Richard Rory and a study guide by Robert B. Brandom. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

EPMM "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind." In *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, vol. 1, 253–329. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956.

FMPP "Foundations for a Metaphysics of Pure Process." *The Monist* 64 (1981): 3–90.

KPT *Kant and Pre-Kantian Themes: Lectures by Wilfrid Sellars*. Edited by Pedro Amaral. Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview, 2002.

KTE "Some Remarks on Kant's Theory of Experience." In *Kant's Transcendental Metaphysics: Sellars' Cassirer Lectures Notes and Other Essays*, edited by Jeffrey F. Sicha, 269–82. Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview, 2002.

KTI "Kant's Transcendental Idealism." In *Kant's Transcendental Metaphysics: Sellars' Cassirer Lectures*

- Notes and Other Essays*, edited by Jeffrey F. Sicha, 403–18. Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview, 2002.
- LA “The Lever of Archimedes.” In *In the Space of Reasons: Selected Essays of Wilfrid Sellars*, edited by Kevin Scharp and Robert B. Brandom, 229–57. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.
- LCP “On the Logic of Complex Particulars.” In *Mind* 58 (1949): 306–38.
- LT “The Language of Theories.” In *Science, Perception, and Reality*, 108–28. Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview, 1963.
- MCP “Metaphysics and the Concept of a Person.” In *The Logical Way of Doing Things*, edited by Karel Lambert, 219–52. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1969.
- MEV “Mental Events.” In *In the Space of Reasons*, edited by Kevin Scharp and Robert B. Brandom, 282–302. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.
- P “Particulars.” In *Science, Perception and Reality*, edited by Wilfrid Sellars, 282–97. Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview, 1963.
- PH “Phenomenalism.” In *Science, Perception and Reality*, edited by Wilfrid Sellars, 60–105. Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview, 1963.
- PMA “Perceiving and Mental Acts.” In *Wilfrid Sellars Notre Dame Lectures (1969–1986)*, edited by Pedro Amaral, 295–322. Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview, 2015.
- PSIM “Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man.” In *Science, Perception, and Reality*, 1–40. Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview, 1963.
- RIKTE “The Role of Imagination in Kant’s Theory of Experience.” In *In the Space of Reasons*, edited by Kevin Scharp and Robert B. Brandom, 454–66. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.
- SM *Science and Metaphysics: Variations on Kantian Themes; The John Locke Lectures for 1965–66*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968.

- SPR *Science, Perception, and Reality*. Edited by Wilfrid Sellars. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963.
- SRKTE “Some Remarks on Kant’s Theory of Experience.” In *In the Space of Reasons*, edited by Kevin Scharp and Robert B. Brandom, 437–53. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.
- SRP “Scientific Reason and Perception.” In *Wilfrid Sellars Notre Dame Lectures (1969–1986)*, edited by Pedro Amaral, 323–46. Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview, 2015. Published online in 2009 by A. Chrucky, <http://www.ditext.com/amaral/wsndl.pdf>.
- SRPC “Some Reflections on Perceptual Consciousness.” In *Kant’s Transcendental Metaphysics: Sellars’ Cassirer Lectures Notes and Other Essays*, edited by Jeffrey F. Sicha, 431–42. Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview, 2002.
- SRPCPh “Some Reflections on Perceptual Consciousness.” In *Crosscurrents in Phenomenology*, edited by Ronald Bruzina and Bruce Wilshire, 169–85. Dordrecht: Springer, 1978.
- WSNDL *Wilfrid Sellars Notre Dame Lectures (1969–1986)*. Edited by Pedro Amaral. Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview, 2015.

CHAPTER 4



BEYOND THE MANIFEST IMAGE

The Myth of the Given across Determination and Disposition

Roberta Lanfredini

There are two main theoretical dimensions in which phenomenology and Sellars's approach critically confront each other: the so-called Myth of the Given and the supposed clash between scientific image and manifest image. My contribution aims to show that this contrast is, at least in part, more apparent than real. This is due to the fact that, although there are many relevant differences between Husserl and Sellars, the two thinkers do share a certain image of the relation between theory and experience, and especially of the relation between language and experience—that is, what we could call a certain basic phenomenology from which the two authors' positions effectively diverge.

As is well known, Sellars's approach is a particular brand of naturalism (Christias 2018) that combines nominalism and scientific realism, expressed in the famous Sellarsian *scientia mensura* principle, according to which “in the dimension of describing and explaining the world, science is the measure of

all things, of what it is that it is, and of what it is not that it is not" (EPM, § 41). Sellars regarded phenomenology as a strategy for clarifying the manifest image.

This is certainly true. As Husserl acknowledges, phenomenology aims at providing a description (and not an explanation, whether causal or of any other kind) of what manifests itself exactly as it manifests itself. For Husserl, describing means making explicit what is actually contained in the phenomenon in order to investigate its internal structure.

As has been noted (Soffer 2003), we can advance doubts about how phenomenology falls into the "framework of givenness" based on Husserl's and Sellars's fundamentally different conceptions of givenness itself.

For Sellars, the given corresponds to the immediate (or unlearned): that is, a type of awareness that does not presuppose language or inferences. The essence of the Myth of the Given resides in the belief in a nonlinguistic, nonconceptual, and noninferential awareness (deVries and Triplett 2000).

To show this, Sellars proposes a thought experiment. John is a salesman working in a tie shop. After electric lighting has been installed in the shop, John notices a tie that appears green under the lamp is blue when exposed to natural light. However, with the passing of time, he learns to recognize the color of the tie inside the shop by saying that it is blue, although it appears green. The predicates "seem" and "appear" are meaningful in relation to assertions within a linguistic practice. Thus we cannot speak of the recognition of properties except by referring to the observational statements through which this recognition is expressed, and the concept of sensory impression, or given, is justified by this linguistic practice.

Sellars's psychological nominalism, then, holds that the recognition of observational properties (such as being colored, having a certain shape, etc.) is possible only if we refer to observational statements by means of which this recognition is expressed. In this sense, any perceptual observation, as well as any recognition of similarities (i.e., in Sellars's terminology, any

way of categorizing stimuli), has epistemic connotations and depends on theoretical acquisitions (Leher and Stern 2000).

To be able to say that something is blue, for example, it is necessary to know: (1) the correct circumstances for the attribution of a property (e.g., the fact that colors are correctly observed in the sunlight); (2) the fact of being in the right circumstances for the attribution of that property (e.g., the fact of being in the natural light and not in an artificial light).

The second point is what distinguishes true linguistic ability from the disposition to produce appropriate but automatic verbal reactions in response to certain stimuli, as is the case with a parrot that says “blue” on the basis of mere repetition or a sensor that emits a signal when it picks up a frequency that corresponds to blue.

What corresponds to the myth of data in this perspective is not so much the existence of immediate contents; rather, it is the idea that this type of awareness can serve as evidence for the recognition of the given, for such recognition implies a linguistic, conceptual, and inferential dimension.

The phenomenological framework of data recognition, however, does not seem to correspond to Sellars’s “mythical” model of data. Indeed, none of the phenomenological meanings of data reflect the character of immediacy in the crude and naive sense of being utterly without structure.

First of all, the given for Husserl is what is experienced as it experienced. The idea is that the notion of the given (or phenomenon) should not be reduced to the notion of appearance (*Schein*), understood as an illusory appearance—that is, as something that is opposed to reality. The phenomenon (*Erscheinung*), or manifestation, enjoys a full effectiveness and positivity that cannot be reduced to a deceptive dimension, a mere shadow of the actual reality of things. The datum has stability, autonomy, and nonemendability. The relationship between data and concepts must be interpreted not as a normative difference but as a difference in function and destination.

Moreover, there is an important distinction in phenomenology between the discrimination and the identification of the given. If by recognition of the data we mean its identification, then the conceptual, linguistic, and even inferential dimension is decisive.

If, however, by recognition of the datum we mean the discrimination of something (e.g., with respect to a background), then the conceptual dimension is greatly reduced. In phenomenology as in the Gestalt tradition, perception has its own laws (such as the law of contrast, or the law of sufficient stability and differentiation) that are impermeable to the conceptual and linguistic dimension.

Thus immediacy does not denote simplicity or even ineffability (as in Schlick 1938): on the contrary, the given is immediate and at the same time structured (i.e., endowed with its own and autonomous internal lawfulness), articulated, and even, as we shall see, partly signitive or empty.

1. DISCRIMINATION, IDENTIFICATION, AND MOTIVATION

The phenomenological notion of the given refers to three fundamental notions.

The first notion corresponds to essence (*Wesen*), understood as invariance in variation. Invariants are incorporated into increasingly general fields of variation. For instance, crimson red does not correspond to any mere individuality but to an eidetic singularity capable of unifying a certain spectrum of perceptual variations (including purple red and vermilion red, for example).

Such a singularity fits into a broader spectrum of variation that corresponds to the species red and then into an even broader spectrum of variation that corresponds to the genus color. Colors, as John's example shows, transform as they pass from one shade to another. The singularity of crimson red can change into the hue of carmine red or purple red and still be within the spectrum of variation of red; crimson red or

carmine red can change (e.g., due to a change in lighting conditions) into blue or green in accordance with the possibility of variation corresponding to the color genus.

However, it is impossible for a color to be transformed into a violin sound (see *Ideas I*), because this would violate the ontic structure relating to the region of color. To return to Sellars's example, John can see the tie first as blue and then as green, but he cannot see green or blue transforming into a high or low sound.

The second notion corresponds to the material a priori, understood as the foundational relation between nonindependent parts of a whole. That the color spreads across the extension is a law proper to the given as it presents itself, independently of any theoretical inference. In other words, the foundational relation does not imply any further principle with respect to the direct relation between the parts, or to any unifying function of a conceptual or intellectual kind, for it is the very components of the given that—in a completely intrinsic way—mutually establish each other, giving rise to perceptually independent wholes.

Only in some cases (e.g., when a succession of sounds is united in a melody) is it possible to abstract an independent and autonomous sensible form (the melody). In such cases, however, the relations of connection between the “pieces” or independent parts of a whole are factual and nonessential relations, unlike the foundational relations between nonindependent parts (as in the case of sound and pitch).

The third notion corresponds to the concept of adumbration (*Abschattungen*).

The phenomenological given is divided into a visible dimension and an invisible dimension that is an integral part of the given itself. The datum therefore involves a necessary integration between fullness and emptiness, as well as an incessant transfer between these two dimensions.

For Husserl, perception is tending-toward (*tendenziös*; *Hua XI*), which implies not only the character of openness but also

the character of indeterminacy and provisionality that the given contains—that is, the fact that it is itself not only what does the verification but also what is verified, an object of verification. Thus elementary utterances like “I see a red surface” or the even more minimalist report “Red here now” also contain an implicit dimension that remains unfulfilled.

The phenomenological given further makes the distinction (also proposed by Gibson 1979) between the visual field and the visual world—between our optical point of view and what is beyond our point of view—entirely legitimate. If we look at the landscape outside the window while the rain forms rivulets and drops on the glass, we do not perceive the visible deformations caused by the water as deformations of the things that make up the landscape. And when we put a newspaper in our coat pocket, we do not see the newspaper gradually disappearing into the coat. What we actually see is the newspaper slipping into the coat, and the hidden part is as real as the visible part.

In conclusion, the immediacy of the datum does not imply its ineffability but an autonomous structural complexity. Singularity as invariant (e.g., red), the foundational relations between nonindependent parts (e.g., color and extension), the integration between the intuitive or full dimension and the empty or signitive dimension, the distinction between field and visual world—each of these steps is immediate and internal to experience. No concept is needed to grasp red as an invariant; no concept is needed to see its connection to the extensional dimension; no concept is needed to see drops as attributes of the glass and not of things beyond it; no concept is needed to incorporate the “hidden side” of things into perception.

Thus the structural complexity of the phenomenological given is not inferential, unless one interprets the recognition of the datum not as perceptual discrimination, but as identification (as when I claim, for example, to see a detector of particles such as the Higgs boson). This type of recognition does in fact require the natural inclusion of the object in a categorial,

conceptual, and linguistic apparatus that goes beyond mere perceptual discrimination.

Identification, however, is based on discrimination and not vice versa (*Ideas I/K*, 117).¹ In phenomenology, which here advocates a radical form of empiricism, there is a motivational link between the two modalities. What is currently given motivates further appearances of the thing, from the sensuous (the unseen side of the thing) to the more abstract and conceptual. The notion of motivation makes it possible to interpret the relations between the manifest thing of experience and the scientific thing of physics in a way that is diametrically opposed to Sellars's argument. The thing of physics is motivated by the thing of experience, not vice versa.

Moreover, the notion of motivation finally provides an indirect answer to John's example. For Sellars, the hypothesis of the different sensations especially explains illusions, as when someone reports that they see a green object while looking at a blue one. But in the phenomenological perspective, the constitution of the object is an infinite process synthesizing its alternative ways of giving itself, each of which is valid and adequate in itself (*LI 2/F*, 470).

The oasis that appears to me in a mirage, the stretch of water that appears to me on part of the asphalt, the stick in the water that appears broken to me—in subsequent experience, all of these can turn out to be illusory, just as happens to John when he realizes that the tie he has been perceiving as green is actually blue. But for a phenomenologist, even in the case of “healthy” or “normal” (i.e., not illusory or hallucinatory) experiences, the object depends on certain modalities, and the constitution of the datum is in any case based on the cohesion and systematicity of the appearances.

Discrimination, identification, and motivation are therefore the three functions of sense-bestowing (*Sinngebung*) that make explicit the phenomenological notion of the given, an explication that can hardly be seen to correspond to a “mythical” conception of the given. The notion of *das Wie des Gegebenheit*

is crucially connected to this explication in all its various exemplifications: invariance in the eidetic reduction; the foundation in the material a priori; partial views and their syntheses; the identification of the object; and the motivational bond that links data discrimination to its categorical, theoretical, and linguistic recognition.

2. THE LINGUISTIC RECOGNITION OF THE GIVEN

Sellars's formulation of the Myth of the Given implies two orders of problem: the first relates to the justification of beliefs, and the second to the justification that a perception can provide for using a certain word on a certain occasion. With regard to the first problem—the epistemological one concerning the justification of the given—Sellars's antifoundationalist thesis is that there are no entities of which we have immediate, direct, transparent, and infallible awareness; there are no explicit beliefs expressed in observational judgments that do not presuppose other beliefs.²

While Husserl is not committed to the Myth of the Given in its basic and naive form, it is nevertheless unquestionable that “for Husserl the category of the given serves to thematize the subjective elements of experience (the immanent) and to show how what is taken by us to be knowledge presupposes and emerges out of these subjective elements” (Soffer 2003, 310).

With regard to the second problem, the semantic one concerning the linguistic recognition of the datum, Sellars's thesis is that this recognition involves the association of a predicate with a set of details that are similar to each other through an epistemic act that takes place within language.

There is accordingly no structured logical space whose access is prelinguistic; that is, there is no awareness of types and similarities that precedes (or is independent of) the acquisition of a language. Compared to Wittgenstein—who, like Schlick, denies the knowability of sensory impressions (and more generally of private episodes) by emphasizing the public nature

of language—Sellars emphasizes the linguistic and therefore intersubjective nature of sensory impressions. Thus Sellars's thesis does not affirm the inexpressibility of sensory impressions because of their private character, but it does affirm the expressibility of sensory impressions on the basis of their intersubjective nature. Linguistic statements about sensory impressions (such as "X appears to F at time T") are the result of inferences.

On both sides of the issue, the epistemological and the semantic, the phenomenological and Sellarsian traditions seem to diverge radically. In the former case, the distinction between discrimination and perceptual identification allows phenomenology to focus on the complexity of the datum regardless of its inclusion in a conceptual categorization. In the latter case, for Husserl a sign acquires meaning when it expresses a signifying experience (i.e., expresses a thought). For Sellars, on the contrary, a sign has meaning when a rule governs its use.

For Husserl, if something is a conscious state, it must have a first-person experiential aspect—there must be something that it is "like" to be in this state—and it is precisely this aspect that distinguishes mental states from physical ones.³ For Sellars, a spot of color can only be seen by linguistically and conceptually mature persons. Seeing a spot of color is the result of a combination of sensation, language, and concepts. This is because the right model to account for the feeling of a patch of color is not seeing the patch of color but the colored surface itself.

Here it is essential to note that the analogy is between sense impressions and physical objects and not between sense impressions and *perceptions* of physical objects. Failure to appreciate this fact reinforces the temptation to construe impressions as *cognitive* and *conceptual* which arises from the assimilation of the "of-ness" of sensation to the "of-ness" of thought. It is also essential to note that the analogy is a trans-category analogy,

for it is analogy between a state and a physical thing.
(Sellars 1963, 93)

The analogy proposed by Sellars excludes all consideration about *what it is like* to have a sensation. But in phenomenology, the question of *what it is like* is essential to define the concept of sensation: it is its most important distinguishing feature. Sellars argues that the sense impression “green” is not itself green but is a property formally analogous to a physical thing. Many interpreters have emphasized the profound divergence between Husserl and Sellars on this point, and some (e.g., Soffer 2003, 322) have pointed out that the main problem with Sellars’s thesis is that it does not account for the attentive perception of individual objects that is present in prelinguistic children and intelligent animals.

My attempt will not be to underline the profound divergences between the two authors but rather to thematize the scenario they share beyond these divergences. This scenario can be found in a certain explication of experience in terms of manifestation. To show this, I will mainly focus on one of the two aspects of the Myth of the Given: namely the one concerning linguistic expression.

For Husserl, in contrast to Sellars, language is not the precondition for the basic form of the perceptual awareness of objects. As we have seen, Sellars’s psychological nominalism holds that it makes sense to speak of property recognition only by referring to the statements through which such recognition is expressed. Any ability to categorize stimuli has epistemic connotations and depends on language acquisition. Seeing is cognitive, and cognition requires concepts and language.

The reflection on language in phenomenology refers to two distinct orders of problems: that relating to the nature of the sign, and that relating to the nature of linguistic expression (see Husserl 1970). For Husserl, the sign of a thing is everything that characterizes it, distinguishes it, and makes it recognizable to others. The phenomenological structure of the sign,

in its extreme generality, therefore resides in the concept of referral—that is, in its referring to something else. In other words, the sign fulfills an indicative function and does so according to an extremely wide range of modes. In this regard, in the *First Logical Investigation* we read:

Of the two concepts connected with the word “sign,” we shall first deal with that of *indication*. The relation that here obtains we shall call the *indicative relation*. In this sense a brand is the sign of a slave, a flag the sign of a nation. Here all marks belong, as characteristic qualities suited to help us in recognizing the objects to which they attach. But the concept of an indication extends more widely than that of a mark. We say the Martian canals are signs of the existence of intelligent beings on Mars, that fossil vertebrae are signs of the existence of prediluvian animals etc. . . . If suitable things, events or their properties are deliberately produced to serve as such indications, one calls them “signs” whether they exercise this function or not. Only in the case of indications deliberately and artificially brought about, does one speak of standing for, and that both in respect of the action which produces the marking (the branding or chalking etc.), and in the sense of the indication itself, i.e. taken in its relation to the object it stands for or that it is to signify. (*LI I/E*, 183–84)

The expression, unlike the sign, is not characterized by an indexical or referential function: while through its function of indicating, the sign has an external (and therefore in many cases conventional and arbitrary) relationship with the indicated object, the expression has an internal, constitutional relationship with the expressed object.

The link between sign and thing (or fact, or event) expresses a merely associative link, and in most cases (though not all, as we shall shortly see), a conventional and arbitrary one. The

case of a word is different: it is not a conventional sign in the sense in which, for example, a flag is the sign of the nation, but neither is it a conventional sign in the more "natural" sense in which fossil bones are the sign of antediluvian animals or smoke is the sign of fire or the mark is the sign of slaves or, finally, the volcanic phenomenon is the sign of the magmatic state of the earth's interior.

The link between linguistic sign and meaning is not in fact a link between two externalities: the sign *has a meaning*, and its expressive power lies in this meaning. The expressive word does not merely *indicate* its meaning but *expresses it*. And it does so by activating an *Erlebnis*, that is, an experience of consciousness with respect to which the word is not an arbitrary instrument but an original attribution of meaning.

The basis of expression is therefore the experience of consciousness. And it is on the basis of the return to the original ground of expression, to what we might call the gesture of speech, that the phenomenological distinction between expression and communication is played out.

3. THE PARADOX OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPRESSION

Index and expression, communication and signification, are essentially (in the sense of eidetically) distinct functions. The task of phenomenology is therefore to describe not so much the conventional and arbitrary dimension proper to semiotics as the essential and expressive dimension of semantics.

The structure of expression is composed of two elements: the physical aspect (the sign on the paper, the articulated phonetic complex, etc.) and a certain complex of psychic experiences, which, associated with the signs, make them intentionally directed toward something. What characterizes expression is therefore the intentionality that the sign conveys through the activation of an intentional experience.

As is well known, one of the main characteristics of intentionality is its perspectival character: every object manifests

itself only in perspectives and never in its entirety (Berghofer 2020). Moreover, understanding an object, in the sense of intentionality, means conceiving of it in certain ways rather than others. The perspectival character is realized in a certain cluster of determinations (characteristics, distinguishing marks), which is how the notion of perspective can be made explicit phenomenologically: when we change perspectives, the cluster of features changes and reorients itself, offering a new arrangement.

If the essential dimension of expression is intentionality; if intentionality is in turn defined by the indefinite perspectives through which it is expressed; and finally, if perspective is only realized through a cluster of characteristics, it follows that it is the characteristics (*Merkmale*) that are the defining element of expression.

However, we have seen how the category of the sign understood as a signal includes, for Husserl himself, the concept of a characteristic. The concept of signal is in fact broader than, but inclusive of, the concept of distinguishing marks, understood as a set of characteristics “suited to help us in recognizing the objects to which they attach.” If this is true, the concept of expression contains within it, as an essential characteristic, precisely the dimension of indication, or signal.

The expressive phenomenon, as intentional, thereby attributes sense through the notion of determination. Determination, however, may be considered not as original experience but as a sign of experience itself.

If analyzed from this point of view, the Husserlian theory of expression comes very close to Sellars’s perspective: anchoring expression in intentionality means reading experience in a certain sense in linguistic terms.

The reason for this unexpected proximity lies in the shared starting point from which the paths of Husserl and Sellars diverge. Here I am referring to a *certain* interpretation of experience in terms of a datum or manifestation. For both Husserl and Sellars, the starting point is the manifest image,

and it is precisely the interpretation of experience in terms of manifestation that—once translated into the notion of the given—introduces the centrality of the notion of *Merkmale* and consequently of the notion of the sign. Sense-bestowing is not as alien to language as Husserl believes.

Determination (*Bestimmung*) is perhaps the most pervasive concept in phenomenology. Husserl's whole approach actually revolves around this notion. From it derive practically all the concepts that allow us to describe experience phenomenologically: datum, phenomenon, manifestation, evidence, distinction, perspective, part, ideation.

The point of intersection between Husserl and Sellars thus lies in the idea that experience is made explicit in terms of manifestation, and that therefore the manifest image constitutes an essential starting point.

4. MANIFESTATION AND DISPOSITION

We have seen how the principle of manifestation reintroduces (through the notion of intentionality and the subordinate notion of distinguishing mark) the linguistic dimension of reference into the phenomenological explication of perceptual experience.

The phenomenological description of experiencing, conveyed by the concept of intentionality, determines the object that manifests itself through the identification of distinguishing marks. It is possible to interpret distinguishing marks not as real parts of the thing of experience but rather as symbols in which the thing itself is expressed.

In order to return to the things themselves, and thus restore due distance between Husserl and Sellars, it would be necessary to provide an alternative phenomenological explication of experience to that conditioned by the concept of distinguishing mark. This alternative seems to be found in the replacement of the concept of determination by the concept of disposition.

To understand this, it will be useful to return to the notion of intentionality. Essential features of this concept include

grasping something and grasping something in certain ways. In this regard Husserl makes an important distinction between *the object in the How of its determinations*, or *Sinn*, “including undeterminednesses which for the time being ‘remain open’ and, in the mode, are co-meant”; and *the object in the How of its modes of givenness* or “the sense in the mode belonging to its fullness” (*Ideas I/K*, 314, 316). In the former case, what we consider are the attributes, or the properties, or even the known characteristics of the object (e.g., its being red, or smooth, or sounding); in the latter case, what we consider are the ways in which those attributes offer themselves in experience (with greater or lesser clarity, intensity, etc.).

This important phenomenological distinction has recently been reposed in terms of the distinction between intentional content and phenomenal content. The relationship between these two types of content, between what it is and *what it is like* (or how it is with me), is the focus of much of the contemporary phenomenological debate (Kriegel 2007, 2013).

Intentional content is what guarantees the two definitions of intentionality—namely, directionality and aspectuality. We have seen how a state of consciousness can be said to be intentional when it is directed toward something—and it is always directed toward something according to certain aspects or points of view. Phenomenal content is what gives a qualitative character to the intentional act, the *what it is like to be* in a certain state of consciousness. The former directs and determines; the latter fills and qualifies.

With regard to the relations between intentional content and phenomenal content, it is also usual to distinguish between strong and weak intentionalism. With strong intentionalism, the phenomenal character of an intentional experience is entirely determined by the manifest content. With weak intentionalism, the phenomenal character of intentional experience is determined both by its manifest content and by nonintentional content, which means that the phenomenal character is not entirely reducible to the manifest character.

Suppose we compare two visual experiences of the same object changing color every thirty seconds. In the first case, we have a visual experience of the object as red, and thirty seconds later as green. The first experience, E_1 (at t_1), has the manifest content $\langle O \text{ as red} \rangle$; the second, E_2 (at t_2), $\langle O \text{ as green} \rangle$. The two visual experiences present the same object according to different aspects, that is, different observable properties, and thus with a different manifest content. The change in manifest content determines the consequent change in phenomenal content: having a visual experience of a red object is different from having a visual experience of a green object (in the sense that it has a different effect). The manifest content fully determines, in this case, the phenomenal character of the experience.

This theory offers the possibility (in the view of both Husserl and Stein) of reading experience, if not in terms of quantitative (numerical, measurable) determinations, then at least in terms of qualitative (phenomenological) determinations.

Thus in the natural continuum of experience, a color may pass into another color (as in John's case), or it may lose or acquire brightness or intensity, but it cannot transform itself into a sound or a noise or a smell.

Both strong intentionalism (according to which the manifest content fully determines the phenomenal content) and weak intentionalism imply the same theoretical hypothesis, which we intend to discuss here. This is the thesis that states the absolute primacy, in the phenomenological explication of experience, of the notion of determination, or characteristic distinguishing mark, and the consequent secondary role (or residuality) of the properly intensive and qualitative dimension (the phenomenal content).

In this sense, Husserl's distinction between the object in the how of its determinations and the object in the how of its modes of givenness marks the difference between *extensive qualities* (objective determinations, even if essentially qualified) and *intensive qualities* (such as intensity, clarity, or darkness). For Husserl, the latter depend, by virtue of an essential law, on the former.

Indeed, intensity always refers to something: we can talk about a bright color, a sharp sound, a smooth surface, thus taking it for granted that this color, this sound, and this surface maintain their identity when varying, for example, the degree of intensity with which they are experienced.⁴

We have seen how the concepts of determination, characteristic distinguishing mark, appearance, perspective, synthesis, and essence can be regarded on closer inspection not as parts of experience but as parts of the symbolic translation of experience. It is in this distinction between pure description and symbolic transcription that the standard approach to the relations between manifest content and phenomenal content is superseded.

The problem is that if we consider that the determinations of the thing of experience are not effectively parts of it but parts of signs that stand for experience, what then is experience as such composed of? The hypothesis we intend to uphold here is that these actual parts are not determinations, but dispositions.⁵

There are two ways of understanding the concept of disposition. According to the first, dispositional properties are ones that express the disposition to behave in a certain way, such as fragility, rigidity, malleability, ductility, and elasticity. These are properties that we cannot experience directly: we can perceive the breaking of glass but not its fragility.⁶ In this case, the disposition has a functional character, being connected both to the variation and intrinsic fluctuation of experience and to the settling of this variation into invariants, so that experience and not chaos is given.

The second way of understanding the concept of disposition refers not to the static concept of invariance in variation, but to the dynamic concept of power or force, thereby emphasizing not the concept of determination (the qualitative/categorical dimension) but the concept of force (forceful qualities) (Banks 2014; Molnar 2003; Mumford 1998).⁷

Dispositions thus understood are in turn interpreted as “power or capacity” (Heil 2005, 343) and satisfy the following theses (Heil 2005, 2010, 2013):

- (1) They are real conditions of objects. What is merely potential is the manifestation of the disposition (e.g., the breaking of the glass), and not the disposition itself.
- (2) They are intrinsic properties of the objects that possess them. Most dispositions could never be manifested.
- (3) Their nature is not entirely reducible to conditional analysis. The glass would be fragile even if the conditional “the glass is fragile if it breaks when struck by something solid” were false.
- (4) They are not contingent but essential characteristics of the world.

Every property is dispositional and qualitative at the same time.

In this profound transformation of phenomenological description (found in Merleau-Ponty in the wake of Bergson and Whitehead), quality as *what-it-is-like* (or *how it is with me*) is no longer residual but primary, and sensation is no longer amorphous hyletic material but more properly action, movement (i.e., power). In this perspective, the relation to determination is reversed: intensive determination is not primary but secondary to the *tension* that characterizes sensation understood as forceful quality. And tension is in turn ascribable to intensity, that is, to those modes of the given conceived not as secondary but as the real material of which experience is made.

* * *

Husserl and Sellars undoubtedly differ with regard to many essential points on which the debate is still open. But these profound differences are not as radical as they might seem at first. Indeed, the two thinkers share an important starting point: a certain clarification of experience in terms of manifest image that in turn can be related to the concepts of determination and characteristic distinguishing mark. From this common starting point the two paths move in very different directions.

But the common starting point remains an insufficiently problematized scenario shared by both. It could be argued that the clarification of experience in terms of determinations does in fact constitute an excellent basis for making the further transition (so significant for Sellars) from manifest image to scientific image—or perhaps it would be better to say to *a certain* scientific image, ultimately that of the Cartesian and Galilean matrix in which the notion of extension (which founds the concept of manifestation) plays a crucial role.

This is the essential point that brings Husserl closer to Sellars's perspective. Once the sensation is connected to the determination, the sensory impression can hardly be separated from the linguistic enunciation that expresses its recognition. This is what we have called the paradox of phenomenological expression, which reintroduces, through the notion of characteristic, the signitive dimension that Husserl considers inessential.

The scenario changes if we consider the concept of the distinguishing mark not as primary, but as derivative. The determinations and the resulting points of view are different in nature from the thing itself, and the synthesis of perspectives (which can be realized in a cluster of different determinations) becomes not a description of actual experience but rather a transcription of it by means of signs.

We have identified a further phenomenological clarification of the concept of experience centered on the concept of disposition (or force). In such a perspective, primary properties are also qualities, and the qualities, in turn, are powers. To adopt this perspective is to call into question precisely the common premise that Husserl and Sellars seem to share, namely, the idea that experience is represented by manifestations—that is, through distinguishing marks, and ultimately, through signs.

On this new ground, Sellars's relationship with phenomenology opens up further challenges that concern not just the legitimacy of the manifest image but also the legitimacy of a certain way of conceiving of the scientific image.

NOTES

1. In this sense, the genetic-motivational link is opposed to the causal link: “It is therefore contradictory to connect the things of the senses and those of physics causally” (*Ideas I/K*, 132). For the relationship between phenomenology and realism see Sparrow (2014).
2. This thesis can be traced back to Peirce’s criticism of intuition. For Peirce, as later for Sellars, it is not possible to distinguish intuitively between an intuition and a cognition determined by other cognitions; to put it another way, the determination of a cognition as intuitive is not part of the immediate content of that cognition. The conclusion, for Peirce as much as for Sellars, is that if all knowledge results from inference, there is no need to suppose intuitive knowledge (Peirce 1868). See also Sachs (2004).
3. This makes it possible to state that even preverbal children and animals really have intentionality. See Brandom (1994), who unfortunately forgets to mention Husserl’s analysis of pre-predicative judgment. See also Brandom (2000), and for a critique of the so-called Pittsburgh school, Rockmore (2012).
4. This distinction follows, albeit in a modified form, that between primary and secondary qualities.
5. This ontological transformation can be found, albeit with different meanings, in both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty (1968, 2002, 2003, 2004). But Bergson (1921, 1946) is the author outside of phenomenology who has especially supported this transformation.
6. Dispositional concepts are present in the phenomenology of passive syntheses. An extreme example of the functional character of dispositions can be found in Ryle’s so-called conditional analysis, in which dispositions are entirely reducible to relations between events. Solubility, for example, is reduced to the fact that if a given substance (e.g., salt) is immersed in a liquid, it dissolves; fragility is reduced to the fact that if a given substance (e.g., glass) is struck, it breaks. In this case, ascribing a dispositional property amounts to nothing more than asserting the truth of a conditional.
7. See in particular Mumford’s apparently almost oxymoronic concept of physical intentionality in Mumford 1998.

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