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Phenomenological Evidentialism

Abstract

In this article I argue for a position I call evidentialism, which is mainly Husserlian. Evidentialism should be stationed in a middle road between foundationalism and coherentism. It differs from foundationalism in that it does not take evidences to be "infallible premises"; evidences are insights that might turn out to be wrong in the course of experience. But evidentialism cannot be a version of coherentism either. For the mere coherence among beliefs, rather than justifying them perfectly, needs to be constrained by experience. In first section my concern is with what we are to understand from "conceptuality"; there I try to situate evidentialism in terms of a moderate conceptualism. Yet the conceptuality I argue for is minimal, that is, taken in a narrower sense. It is not something we construct, but something we immediately *see*. Seeing what is meaningful reveals the constitutive conceptuality of our experience. The rest of the paper deals with Husserl and envisage him as a genuine evidentialist.

Key Words

Edmund Husserl, Conceptualism, Nonconceptual Content, Evidentialism, John McDowell

Fenomenolojik Apaçıklıkçılık

Özet

Bu makalede kaynağını Husserl'in düşüncesinde bulan ve "apaçıklıkçılık" adını verdiğim bir konumu savunuyorum. Apaçıklıkçılık ne "temelci" ne de "bağdaşımcı" bir yaklaşımdır; apaçık olanı "yanlışlanamaz bir öncül" biçiminde ele almamasından ötürü temelcilikten ayrılır. Çünkü apaçık olan, deneyimin seyri içinde pekâlâ yanlışlanabilir. Ama apaçıklıkçılık bir çeşit bağdaşımcılık da olamaz. Çünkü inançlarımızın birbirleriyle bağdaşması onları tam anlamıyla gerekçelendirmeye yetmez. Meşru bir gerekçelendirme için birbiriyle bağdaşan inançların deneyim tarafından sınırlandırılması gerekir. Yazının ilk kesiminde "kavramsallık" denince bundan ne anlamamız gerektiği üstünde duruyorum ve apaçıklıkçılığın ılımlı bir kavramsalcılık olduğunu ileri sürüyorum. Fakat burada savunduğum, asgari, yani sözcüğün dar anlamında bir kavramsallık. Asgari kavramlarımızı bizim kurgulamadığımızı, bundan ziyade onları dolaysızca *gördüğümüzü* ileri sürüyorum. Anlamlı olanın görülmesi deneyimimizin kurucu kavramsallığını oluşturuyor. Yazının kalanı Husserl'e odaklanıp onu örnek bir apaçıklıkçı olarak ele alıyor.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Edmund Husserl, Kavramsalcılık, Kavramsal-olmayan İçerik, Apaçıklıkçılık, John McDowell

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Clearly, there is a vast literature on Husserl's conception of evidence. Many of these works generally seek to elaborate on a literal reading of Husserl's texts at the cost of losing sight of systematic profundity. In this article I will argue for a position I call evidentialism, which is mainly Husserlian, though I borrowed the general idea, with slight modifications, from Conee and Feldman's work (2004). Clarifying this position entails more than just an exposition of Husserl's thought. I wish to warn, in the first place, the rather phenomenologically oriented reader that here my approach will be dominantly epistemological. I hope this warning will be enough to let me be excused for my provisional confinement of experiential contents to those assimilated into a doxastic (that is, belief-forming) attitude which I deem to be an indispensable dimension of knowledge. In what follows, it will be argued that evidentialism is neither foundationalist nor coherentist. In first section my concern will be with what we are to understand from "conceptuality"; there I will try to situate evidentialism in terms of a moderate conceptualism. The rest of the paper will deal with Husserl and envisage him as a genuine evidentialist.

I

Before starting to delineate what evidentialism is, some preliminary remarks are in place: Throughout the first section of the article I make use of Kantian, McDowellian and seldom Sellarsian terms, despite the fact that I'm not in total agreement with their position. I shall content here with mentioning only one point of disagreement, the one which, I think, is the most important: As far as I can see, concepts do not have to correspond to verbally achieved, exactly defined, complex patterns of thought emerging out from a high level of intellection. Of course, this is not a denial of the fact that we have such concepts, too. Still, in the complete absence of such concepts, there exist cognitively structured, meaning-conferring mental acts, at work during even the most simple course of conscious action such as an infant's reaching out for something in order to grasp it or her pre-verbally discriminating someone standing near in perception as her mother. It may even be assumed that these cognitively structured acts are not properly human, so there may probably be other developed mammals sharing this ability with us. I therefore take the basic conceptual character of meaning-conferring mental acts to be different from that of speech acts with propositional content. In other words, thinking does not have to be an *explicit* act of judging[1]. Nevertheless what is

[1] An explicit act of judging is, I take it, so shaped that it always carries a propositional content. A propositional content is syntacticaly structured in just the same way as a linguistic sentence does. In contrast, an implicit act of judging does not have to be shaped in this way. For instance, if I decide to go downtown, but before bringing my decision to life, look out of the window to forecast how the weather going to be, and then, when I leave the house I take my umbrella with me, a curious neighbor might guess that I took my umbrella, because I thought it is going to rain. But it is very likely that such a proposition is never expressed by me, even in a silent conversation with myself. I just enact such a thought implicitly in a casual situation I am in. In that sense, a thought is not something I have in front of my mind's eye, but something I simply do. Though it is possible to condence after the fact what I've just thought into a proposition, my thinking process does not always begin with my having such a propositional content in view.

implicitly thought of may be expressed afterwards in the form of a valid proposition by adopting a reflective attitude. If that is true, the conclusion can be drawn that conceptual capacities, if not properly human, can only be a matter of concern for an active human endeavor to clarify in reflection the issues of when one's believing is also a knowing, or what one is really doing when one is knowing.[2]

In this paper I suggest that we need to differentiate between '*concept' in the broadest sense* and '*concept' in a narrower sense*.[3] By a concept in the broadest sense I mean a *discursive* concept that is used in complex, theory-based explanations, since it singles out the contribution of a *constructive* understanding that springs indirectly and non-evidentially from experience – For instance, concepts involved in scientific laws, theoretical notions such as sense datum, quark, energy etc. By a concept in a narrower sense, on the other hand, I mean a *minimal* concept that is phenomenally basic, since it marks off the contribution of a *constitutive* understanding that is directly and evidentially operative in sense experience – For instance, spatio-temporal object, color of an extension, timber of a sound, etc. In the paper I will only be concerned with the second type of concept, that is, concept in a narrower sense. For it is my contention that all discursive concepts must be developed on the basis of and in analogy with our minimal concepts. The conceptual attitude embodied in experience of real things and the one adopted for a theoretical (hypotetico-deductive) explanation of reality have one and the same correlate (the real world), but work with different views concerning what a real thing is. Yet, whatever the distance there is between these views, it is not altogether insurmountable. I defend that varying discursive conceptions of reality must depend on or at least be compatible with reality as experienced through unvarying minimal concepts.

That the sense experience is conceptually structured in a minimal way can be maintained on the ground that what we "take in" through our senses is never devoid of meaning. In perception, it is just when they appear as meaningful to us that we become "answerable" to how things are.[4] Answerability to how things are will not begin to be correctly understood, unless from an evidentialist perspective. Evidence might roughly be defined as an epistemic situation, in which something is evident to the person who is in that situation; it is "the experience of truth", as Husserl famously formulated[5]. A belief is apt to be taken to be true, to the extent that there is evidence speaking for it, in

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[2] By saying that, I do not mean to deny that we (and also other animals with conceptual capacities) are capable of knowing something even though we do not reflectively know that we know. Yet it should be added that simply knowing is one thing, epistemically justified knowing is another.

[3] Kant, McDowell and Sellars do not make such a differentiation. My position, as opposed to many conceptualists, is much more akin to non-conceptualists in that what I call concept in a narrower sense is conceptual only in a minimal sense. A minimal conceptuality, I argue, is pre-verbal, indefinite, non-focal and non-reflective.

[4] McDowell calls intuitions "bits of experiential intake" (1996: 4). He uses the verb form "taking in" to refer to intuitive acts of consciousness. "Answerability" is also a McDowellian term. To be answerable to something means to be capable of justifying it in a way in which the course of justification is responsibly undertaken by the justifier.

[5] Prolegomena to Pure Logic, §51 (Husserl 2001a: 121)

a way in which another person's belief cannot conflict with that person's insofar as both are *perfectly* evident. But since the maximum perfection of evidence is pinned down as an epistemic ideal, it may in fact be more or less attained, due to changing degrees in perfection.

According to evidentialism defended in this paper, conditions under which a person is epistemically justified in having some beliefs are determined by the same person's evidence. It maintains, however, that the scope of "responsibility" for our epistemically justified beliefs reaches far beyond our voluntary control.[6] If that is true, it follows that we have responsibility for what we involuntarily believe to be such and so. Of course, a justified belief can be true for reasons other than being established by an evidential procedure. And that obviously makes one fall short of knowledge, though her belief is true. But the point I wish to make is that the genuine reasons for *believing that p*, cannot be thought to be in principle deprived of being justified by the dynamics of an evidential procedure.

The evidentialist view is neither committed to "coherentism" nor to "foundationalism". First, I wish to give *a very rough* definition of these doctrines.[7] Coherentism holds that "each belief is epistemically supported by its coherence with others" in a system (Conee and Feldman 2004: 38). Nothing outside of this system "is needed for coherence to this role as a justifying factor"(ibid., 38). Hence "cohering beliefs are justified without any sort of foundation"(ibid., 44). Foundationalism holds the contrary, namely that the coherence among beliefs is not "necessary for experience to constrain which beliefs are justified" (ibid., 45). On one hand, most foundationalists privilege some of our beliefs to be basic, i.e. non-inferential, but also "autonomously justified" and infallible; they oppose them to our other (non-basic) beliefs, all of which they usually contend to be inferred from the basic ones. But these inferences are made so loosely that there remains no secure way to rely on empirical beliefs which are, as a foundationalist would say, non-basic in character[8]. Another brand of foundationalism puts special emphasis on "sense experience", holding that what makes our "autonomously justified" beliefs infallibly reliable is that they are substantiated by an experiential constraint which does not necessitate the coherence among those beliefs. Onthe other hand, coherentists, such as Donald Davidson, insist that "nothing can count

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6 Employing the term "responsibility" in a non-ethical context, I wish to draw attention to the fact that epistemic justification is a process of legitimation where the justifier must be accountable for, viz. be answerable to every phase of it. The scope of our non-ethical responsibility depends on how far our exercise of spontaneity reaches. Here what I am simply saying is that this exercise can very well take place involuntarily.

7 It is not the intention of this article to discuss these doctrines in detail. As I emphasize, I formulate them all too roughly, just to make more accessible what I mean by evidentialism. So I'm well aware that there may be highly refined versions of coherentist and foundationalist doctrines which can challenge what I'm saying here. But this does not change the main evidentialist objections raised against the positions I named here respectively as "coherentism" and "foundationalism".

8 Since Descartes has usually been considered the most prominent figure of this type of foundationalism, it has been a common attitude to call this version of the doctrine "Cartesian foundationalism".

as a reason for holding a belief except another belief"(2009: 141)[9]. However, this very insistence brings about the depressing conviction that we are entrapped in our inner prison of beliefs.

Both doctrines are, I think, one-sided, and therefore they are far from being entirely correct. The evidentialist view can capture all that is right about these doctrines without siding with either one of them. Evidentialism argues for the following two theses: 1- There are beliefs we take to be basic with regard to their self-justificatory role. At least certain types of beliefs can be said to be self-justified, in so far as their rational limit be set by experience. But self-justifiability of basic experiential beliefs here does not imply their autonomous justifiability 2- Coherence among our basic experiential beliefs essentially contributes to their justification. It may be asked what an evidentialist wishes to mean when she says that a basic belief is to be self-justificatory and yet this self-justification is also to involve coherence among our beliefs. Isn't there a problem in demanding both (self-justifiability and coherence) at the same time? By these words, an evidentialist simply means that the self-justificatory function of a basic belief does not consist in belief's having an isolated legitimacy in the form of absolutely secured knowledge. From the affirmation that there are beliefs that justify themselves, it does not follow that they are autonomously justified and thereby put an end to any need of further justification. Rather, the self-justifiability of what is evident can be considered to be the fundamental character of a mental act that states its object *in person*[10]. A belief that is informed by such mental act is not basic in the sense that it provides us with "an infallible premise" from which we inferentially derive the rest of our beliefs. Quite to the contrary, a belief is said to be basic if it gives expression to a non-inferentially warranted cognition, that is, a direct grasp whose epistemic credibility does not depend on its being inferred from a previous knowledge. Note that a non-inferential immediate *believing that p* may turn out to be false. But this happens only because the previous basic belief is replaced by a new one, more strongly evidenced so as to invalidate the former.[11] We can see clearly that all that there is to consider here is an open-ended process of justification, each moment of which is equally deserved to be called both self-justified and coherent with other moments - and here coherence means, beliefs' being tied to one other within the nexus of evidential justifications.[12]

From what has been said so far, it must be apparent that evidentialism offers a way out of the oscillation between coherentism and foundationalism. Crucial to a proper

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9 In *Mind and World* McDowell alludes frequently to this passage from Davidson to let the readers see what is so problematic in coherentism (1996: 14).

10 As Husserl would agree, it belongs to the essence of this mental act that it be intentional. Cf. "*Evidence signifies […] the intentional achievement of the giving of things themselves*. To speak more precisely, evidence is the general form par excellence of 'intentionality', of the consciousness of something." (1969: 157-158)

11 Cf. "Even an evidence which presents itself as apodictic can reveal itself to be a deception. However, this presupposes a similar evidence on which the initial 'breaks up'" (Husserl 1969: 156).

12 (See Husserl 1969: 285) ; Cf. " …evidences are functions which operate only in their intentional contexts"; or "True being builds itself out of moments of truth, each lying in infinity"(Husserl 1959: 386)

take on the evidentialism is a clarification of the ambiguities concerning what a concept is. If, as said above, in order for a correct judgment to be a knowing, it has to involve evidence, there ought to be a criterion for distinguishing an evident statement from a non-evident one. I pointed out that it is distinctive of an evident statement that it be *justified by itself*. But what accounts precisely for this self-justification that we suppose to cope successfully with the threat of "epistemic circularity"[13]? One thing is clear that coherentism is not even a candidate for it. For coherentism seems to imply that there is no limit to our conceptual capacities. If there is no "constraint" on our thinking, then it appears that all that matters is consistency and coherence of our self-appointed beliefs. Stated in this way, an unconstrained coherentism threatens to disconnect thought from reality, because of its naïve confidence on a "frictionless spontaneity", as McDowell rightly points out (1996: 14). In contrast, I assume that some of our beliefs draw support from our direct confrontation with the objects that they are about. However, the realm of direct confrontation is *not* free from concepts. If what reaches our senses were only a brute causal effect of the external world, it would never be sufficient to determine what we actually experience.

Having said that, a question is remained to be tackled: What precisely is a concept? The answer is not easy to give. Yet I think we will be on the right track if we try to define conceptuality by our ability to *see* what is *meaningful*. At this point let me clarify in advance a possible misunderstanding. I'm *not* saying here that seeing what is meaningful is apt to be explained by recourse to a prior conceptual mechanism that conducts the emergence of meaning from an invisible background. Such an account entails no *seeing* at all. It is hardly deniable that as long as we see something as being of a certain kind, having certain properties that make it distinguishable from others, we "put in use" concepts. But in addition to this truism, I believe we will get a more appropriate grip on concepts when we view them as basic patterns of consciousness, at work during it constitutes the experiential meaning of objects given in intuition. This approach may also throw light on what the obscure expression "putting in use concepts" corresponds to. If what I offer is correct, it follows that not only does perceptuality and conceptuality interpenetrate one another, they also surface simultaneously[14].

More importantly, it is not as though concepts (minimal concepts in particular) are optical lenses mediating between the given and the mind, with a view to filter intuition to arrive at experienced objects. Minimal concepts are not mental entities that

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[13] A clear formulation of "epistemic circularity" is made by Roderick Chisholm as follows: " To know whether things really are as they seem to be, we must have a *procedure* for distinguishing appearances that are true from appearances that are false. But to know whether our procedure is a good procedure, we have to know whether it really succeeds in distinguishing appearances that are true from appearances that are false. And we cannot know whether it really does succeed unless we already know which appearances are *true* and which ones are *false*. And so we are caught in a circle."(1973: 3)

[14] Here I do not say that conceptuality must always be bound up with perceptuality. It is not. Rather, I say that there is no *justifiable* perceptual experience which is not pervaded by concepts — those are not any concepts, but minimal ones. Nevertheless, I also think that our discursive concepts, while unbounded, become intelligible solely on the ground of our minimal concepts.

we "impose" on the given, but are instead functions that, by structuring mental acts, let them reveal the objects we experience. Far from blurring an authentic presentation of *things themselves*, they are conducive to such a presentation. In spite of their being able to be idealized in the form of higher-order, categorial objects that can only be given through a reflective insight, minimal concepts' originary participation to experience does not imply their idealized givenness as mediatory vehicles to discriminating objects. On the contrary, each minimal concept might be reformulated into functioning of *eidetic acts of consciousness –ideations–* that *signifies* the meaning of what is given in intuitive fulfillments (I use here Husserlian terms which will be elucidated in the subsequent sections of the article). As this reformulation possibly shows, we better off seeing concepts as mental acts and, thereby, as intrinsic norms that govern the functioning of these acts, rather than as mental objects or as construction tools of a non-mental mechanism. A minimal concept does not refer to a mediatory *conceptum* (that which is understood), set apart from the thing one aims to conceive of, but to a *conceptare* (act of understanding) which is immediately directed to the thing. [15] In other words, I do not understand a certain thing by understanding something else instead, viz. a *conceptum*. If that was the case, that would mean that to understand an object, say, an object given in perception, is to inevitably understand a second categorial object which is not perceptually given, but again, to avoid the threat of infinite regress, we would still have to look for an account of how this can occur without the intervention of another *conceptum* enabling it, which has necessarily recourse to yet another *conceptum* in return, and this goes *ad infinitum*. A better option would be to accept that every *conceptare*, i.e. every ideation (eidetic intuition), intends its object in person, that is, there are no intermediaries in perception, neither pictorial representations, nor a mysterious conceptual mechanism waiting to be applied to the equally mysterious given. But, thanks to eidetic acts, whenever we intend a perceptual object, we, rather than receiving just weak echoes of a bare particularity, see it as already endowed with essential-conceptual features.

That our experiences have, from the start, a conceptual dimension is what is argued here to be true. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that arguing for this position does not suffice to lend support to the additional claim that we can only know what we ourselves *construct*. Proponents of such a claim hold that what grants a belief epistemic stability and knowledge status is its belonging to a conceptual scheme and theoretical framework adopted as a *coherent* whole of beliefs, according to which every part of it is reasonably justified by reference to other parts that cohere with it. Admittedly, the assumption lying behind this claim is that all knowledge is discursive and thus mediated by rationally constructed narratives of various scientific or non-scientific theories. It

[15] Contrary to what some may suppose, this line of thinking does not have to culminate in giving credit to a sort of psychologism that reduces ideal norms to psychical acts. Rather, it may help to make more comprehensible that even ideal norms (idealities) are manifested through certain acts of understanding which indispensably take part in the intentional constitution of these norms as correlates of consciousness. But note that applying to "correlates of consciousness" language does not force us to take these correlates to be equivalents to higher-order objects, viz. *concepta (*plural form of *conceptum),* though it is always possible to objectify them in that way by means of reflection.

seems to me that this assumption is flawed.[16]And the view that concepts are inductively or deductively inferred "thing-like" mental entities interposed between the mental act and the object that it is about stands at the origin of many widely spread philosophical errors. Central to this erroneous view is the presupposition that concepts' role is to "shape" a non-conceptual given. Thus understood, the given is surely a myth[17]. But, as Hopp rightly points out, "it is not a myth because there is no given" (2005: 17)

Here we come to the fervent debate over whether the content of experience is conceptual or not. The advocates of non-conceptual content generally subscribe to a kind of dualism that considers what is non-conceptually given to be sharply opposed to what is conceptually added to it. However, if that is what they believe to be the case, the view they argue for hinges on a great mistake. Let me explain why they are so mistaken as to how our experience is constituted. To do that, I now retrace John McDowell's original meditations on Kantian way of thinking.

"Rational relations" that make up the conceptual sphere are set in by the understanding. And, as Kant sees it, understanding is the faculty of spontaneity and it is also constitutive of our responsible freedom so much so that every enactment of spontaneity makes the agent accountable for the resulting claims. However, insofar as the concern of empirical thinking is to attain the knowledge of the world, freedom in empirical thinking *must not* be total.[18] The reason is clear: An empirical belief can be taken to be knowledge, only when a constraint is imposed by the givenness of the world itself that grounds the way in which thought's bearing on reality takes place. But how does the world constrain thought? One way to respond to this question is as follows: The causal impact of the world on our senses, "brute impingements" from the exterior seems to operate outside our spontaneity, that is, outside the realm of our "responsibility".[19] Thus, the exercise of our understanding seems to be constrained by

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16 The main reason I think this assumption is flawed is its presumption that there is no *intuitive evidence*, no *essential givenness* of the outside world, and consequently, that the given can never serve as a *rational constraint* on our thinking. It would not be a surprise to hear from someone who holds on to this presumption the following words: "Even if it were true that 'the given' should constrain us, it would nonetheless be trivial to have it for acquiring scientific knowledge, for it makes no remarkable contribution to our intellectual ability to construct coherent systems of knowledge; the given can never constrain us *rationally* and *insightfully*, but only *causally* and *blindly*. Just as as a painter uses an empty canvas to project her imagination onto it, the given is only a material which will be coloured when dressed up by our intellectual constructions." One of the purposes of this article is to show how implausible these words are.

17 An exemplary description of "the myth of the given", as formulated by Wilfrid Sellars, can be found in C.I. Lewis. For instance, he writes that "in our knowledge of the external world, concepts represent what thought itself brings to experience. The other element is "the given". It represents that part or aspect which is not affected by thought, the "buzzing, blooming confusion", as James called it, on which the infant first opens its eyes."(Lewis 1970: 248)

18 For a detailed discussion of this point see McDowell's first lecture printed in *Mind and World*, which is entitled " Concepts and Intuitions". (1996: 1-23)

19 If so, then there is no way to *justify* the causal impact of the world on our senses. Remember what I said earlier about the non-ethical responsibility we have which extends beyond our voluntary control.

what stands external to it. If that is the case, however, it would become a great mystery for us to consider the external constraint, the extra-conceptual given as a constitutive condition of empirical knowledge, since this constraint is construed here as something that we are not in a position to be responsive to or to take charge of.

One might argue that when we point to a bit of the given, this pointing serves us to justify the use of a concept. But in order for this justificatory relation between the given and the use of a concept to be established, it is required that the given be already *understood*. Unless it *means* something to us, what is pointed to, cannot justify our use of a concept. But it is precisely the involvement of conceptual capacities in the "deliverances of sensibility" that reveals the world as given in a meaningful way. Of course empirical thinking does not proceed in an absolute freedom, but the constraint imposed on it does not come from outside either. Indeed, there really exist a constraint, that is, there is a reason why spontaneity provides us with a presentation of *this* world, rather than an arbitrary representation of any possible world thinkable and that reason really has to do with our experiencing the world. To quote McDowell, "it is not that we could first make sense of the fact that the world is thinkable in abstraction from experience, and proceed from there to make sense of experience" (1996: 33). Nevertheless, the constraint in question must not fall outside the reach of our spontaneity either, if it should have a function as a regulative principle in assessing the correctness of our epistemic beliefs. To quote McDowell again, "the constraint comes from outside *thinking*, but not from outside what is *thinkable*. When we trace justifications back, the last thing we come to is still a thinkable content; not something more ultimate than that, a bare pointing to a bit of the given."(ibid., 28-29)[20].

From this background, it appears obvious that the extra-conceptual given, the causal effects on our senses of the external reality is a myth, as Wilfrid Sellars puts it (1991: 140). On the other hand, a detailed phenomenological analysis can easily show that such a conception of the given is misleading. The phenomenological sphere of givenness embraces more than what the "myth of the given" implies. To the extent that *that things are thus and so* is immediately given in experience, the sphere of givenness has to include more than "bare impingements" from the world on sensibility (McDowell 1996: 9, 26). In experience, one takes in *how things are*. And for that reason, as McDowell argues, "one's conceptual capacities have already been brought into play in the contents being available to one, before one has any choice in the matter"(ibid., 10)

So all possible justificatory procedures that examine the correctness of our use of concepts in empirical judgments, should be grounded on the contact between our mental

[20] At this point it is advisable to distinguish in the McDowell quotes, two senses of the *thinkable*; one negative, the other positive. "Thinkable" in the negative sense refers to a *merely logical possibility*, whereas "thinkable" in the positive sense refers to *a real possibility.* What these terms amount to might be explained on the basis of Husserl's thought. In Husserl's view, both merely logical possibilities and real possibilities are "ideal". But whereas merely logical possibilities are "empty", real possibilities are "motivated". A real possibility which is not empty is the one prescribed by actual experience as being possible to be actually experienced, it is motivated by experiential concatenations. (see Husserl 1983: 106)

life and the world. And it is not that the empirical contents are first delivered through receptivity and only after that, conceptual capacities are exercised on them. Yet the term "the given" has been rightly made use of to set a limit to the freedom of spontaneity, with a view to attain warranted empirical knowledge. Accordingly, the question of what makes a believing a knowing has many times been replied on the basis of the so-called "external" constraint imposed by the given. At the same time, however, it has constantly been forgotten that "active empirical thinking takes place under a standing obligation to reflect about the credentials of the putatively rational linkages that govern it"(ibid., 12). What that means is that the carrying out the process of epistemic justification is *normatively structured* and, to that extent, it necessitates the continuously critical adjustments of a free epistemic agent on empirical judgments. Empirical inquiry is an everlasting progress that we can responsibly take charge of in every step.

From what has been discussed up until now, it seems best to conclude that giving experiences a justificatory role in attaining empirical knowledge is only possible if in experience one can take in *how things are.* And this is allowed for only as a result of a co-operation of receptivity and spontaneity. The joint involvement of sensibility and understanding shows itself in passivity as well as in activity. Even the most passive mental state one is in involves active operations. Hence the talk of an active passivity does not harbor a *contradictio in adjecto*. Sensibility always and necessarily brings into play certain actualizations of conceptual capacities and this relation between understanding and sensibility is not that of mediation. Furthermore, because the conceptualization of experiential contents does not begin with an attentive and elaborate conceptual grasping process, the corresponding minimal concepts do not have to be focal and definite. This point becomes extremely important the moment we try to conceive why opting for the view that content is to be conceptual in a minimal way does not run the risk of failing to accommodate the richness of experience. In reply to one critique, McDowell clarifies that he does not connect actualizations of conceptual capacities with bringing things into focus, and adds, "why should we stipulate that conceptual capacities are operative only where there is 'conceptual grasping' in that sense?"(2002: 299-300)

II

In this section of the article I shall try to lay out some elements of Husserl's phenomenology which merit attention from the angle of the previous section in which an attempt is made to defend what I call evidentialism. To prepare the reader to Husserlian ideas I'm interested to incorporate into evidentialism, I think it is useful to begin with a sketchy outline of what Kant aimed at in his *Refutation of Idealism* (2000: 326-330). In this short sub-section of *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant famously criticized Descartes' idealism for holding that existence of objects outside us is merely doubtful and indemonstrable. Kant was right in pointing out that Cartesian account of causal interaction between mind and external world ends up with an acknowledgement of our "incapacity for proving an existence outside us from our own by means of immediate experience" (B275). The sort of idealism Descartes endorses, Kant says, assumes that "the only immediate experience is inner experience, and that from that outer things could only be *inferred*, but, as in any case in which one infers from given

effects to *determinate* causes, only unreliably, since the cause of the representations that we perhaps falsely ascribe to outer things can also lie in us" (B 276). What is more, the Cartesian picture of sensations is corollary to this false metaphysical theory of physical causality, according to which a sensation is merely a state of the self-enclosed subject whose only contact with what is outside it, is made indirectly by an act of inference from the sensory effects being imprisoned *within* mind. Cartesian sensations do not even bear the status of accidental qualities, assignable to the physical things that cause them. Given that all that real objects can do is just to exert a causal effect on senses which then transmit it to the mind, sensations are nothing but intra-mental entities that do not have to resemble to their causes.[21] Every attempt to infer from a series of mental traces the real object that leaves them on the mind results in failure. The problem may be posed in the following way: How can I reach beyond the appearances to their non-appearing cause, the physical thing, as it stands behind them, being entirely inaccessible to me? This problem seemed to some (to Hume in particular) to be so insoluble that they are led to the subsequent conclusion: What we call objects are mere fictions that come out of our habit of regularly combining ideas with one another. Hence the skepticism concerning the external world took the forefront.

In order to overcome skepticism Kant argued that outer experience is *immediate*. Thanks to intuition, we are opened to the world in such a way that we take in not only the *appearances*, but also, and with the same immediacy, the *objects* these appearances refer to. When we turn to Husserl, we discern that he follows the same route with similar incentives; he puts forward, for instance, in *the Idea of Phenomenology* that "*appearance* and *that which appears* stand in contrast, and this in the midst of pure givenness, hence in the midst of true immanence…"(1990: 8)[22]. Since, in Husserl's view, both are evidently accessible in a single grasp, we are given not only the immanent phenomena, but also the transcendent things these phenomena disclose. As he puts it, "the relating-itself-to-something-transcendent, to refer to it in one way or another, is an inner characteristic of the phenomenon." (ibid., 36)

But Husserl moves one step further than Kant, when he attempts to show that the categorial structures themselves are also non-inferentially given.[23] There is no need to presuppose a mysterious "table of categories" to give an account of experience. Thanks to "categorial intuition", when we experience objects, their categorial-essential features are also immediately experienced. Categoriality of what is experienced is evidently grasped, with so unique a "universal" aspect to it that no deduced or induced generality can ever compete with.[24] As a matter of fact, deduced or induced generalities

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[21] I set aside the guarantee given by *veracitas dei* to the resemblance between the idea and its cause, for it has a theological relevance, rather than a philosophical one.

[22] The emphasis is added. I shall deal with the signification of "true immanence", i.e. "phenomenological immanence" in the third section of this article.

[23] "Categorial structures" are used here exclusively to denote "material essences". As is known, Husserl draws a sharp distinction between material essences (synthetic a priori insights) and formal essences (analytic a priori insights). Material necessities are investigated by transcendental logic, viz. the logic of experience, whereas formal necessities by general logic (see Husserl 1983: 26).

[24] Here "universality" must be understood in terms of 'a priori necessity'.

have no right to claim universality at all.[25] In a deductive inference, particular statements are justified by their appropriateness to general statements. For instance, from the fact that "all men are mortal" it is deductively inferred that "Socrates is mortal." On the other hand, in an inductive inference, general statements are justified by their validness on particular statements. For instance, from the fact that *most* swans are white it is inductively inferred that they are generally white, despite the factual existence of swans with different colors. But, having scrutinized it a while, it may come as a surprise how a quantifier gets sometimes so large an extent that it prove universality. Indeed, it really is surprising, because the purported universality that results from the extensional capacity of a general statement can never reach the desired soundness and warranty. To speak more precisely, it is commonly held that in the above statements the quantifier "all" is indicative of all-inclusiveness, while the quantifier "most" is indicative of partial-inclusiveness. On closer inspection, however, it seems there is but a difference of degree between "most" and "all" as regards generality. No matter how large the set of an all-inclusive generality can become, it is principally possible to think a particular case running against it. If from the fact that so far, all men surrendered, in one way or another, to death, it is inferred that there is no man on earth, and will never be, who is exempt from death, the inference made remains invalid in the sense that it is always possible to think a contrary case[26]. Note that the quantifier "all", when used in the statement "all bachelors are unmarried", has a different role to play than the one used in the statement "all men are mortal". Since the first statement is purely logical in character, its necessity does not depend on the extensional capacity of the set "all bachelors". But in the latter statement it is precisely the all-inclusiveness of the extension that matters. For that reason, its claim to universality is doomed to be unsound and unwarranted.

The gist of the problem is that all- and partial-inclusiveness are set properties. Here it must be kept in mind that a set may be a sub-set of another, and that this, despite its innocuous look, creates a great confusion regarding the existential status of a set, due to the absence of a principal ontological distinction between a set and a member of a set. It is well-known that there is a deep rooted philosophical tradition that treats concepts as if they are sets. For instance, in the eyes of many empiricist philosophers the concept "triangle" was a name given to "the set of all triangles", that is, the set "triangle" was

[25] If it is true that Husserl thinks universal concepts are, in a sense, intuitively "given" in the form of essential necessities that normatively regulate the series of experiences, it is also true that he sees their nature to be entirely different from induced or deduced generalities. Cf. "To bring knowledge to evident self-givenness and to seek to view the nature of its accomplishment does not mean to deduce, to make inductions, to calculate, etc. It is not the same as eliciting, with reasons, novel things from things already given or purportedly given" (Husserl 1990: 5).

[26] Likewise, even if it is accepted that, since most of the time swans are happened to be white, that is, their being white has empirical regularity, the generalization can legitimately be made that swans are white, the legitimacy in question, far from depending on an a priori necessity, is only a contingent one.

taken to be an ideal particular, representative of all empirical triangles[27]. In this way, concepts were reified in the image of a cage to coop up the pigeons in. It is, I suggest, highly probable that all the "subsumption" language that dominates Kantian philosophy still reflects a somewhat modified version of this image.

When it comes to Husserl, however, we see him pointing out repeatedly that essential concepts cannot be abstracted from single percepts of bare particulars, since one cannot see a particular *as that particular thing,* without putting in use these essential concepts. Consequently, perceiving something as A does not amount to subsuming a bare particular under the set A, or more properly, the set "all A's". On the contrary, if such a subsumption is conceived to be possible, it is just because one is already susceptible to perceive that thing as A, before the subsumption is done. Thus general-eidetic features that immediately appear when one perceives a particular *qua* what that particular is, cannot be accounted for by applying to generalities which are deductively or inductively inferred. Take, again, the geometrical concept "triangle". Phenomenologically considered, it is nonsensical to think that one conceives a triangular figure only if a bare particular is subsumed under the geometrical concept "triangle". This line of thinking is implausible for the simple reason that there needs to exist a more fundamental ground that substantiates one's carrying out the "subsumption" in a way that excludes other geometrical possibilities, given that it is not really up to one's frictionless spontaneity to determine whether the particular is triangular or in another shape. Husserl believes that this alleged difficulty results from a failure in being sensible to a principal requirement of perception, namely that the figure in question *must* be non-inferentially given to one as *morphologically triangle-like*[28].

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[27] I have especially in mind here Locke's and, despite his objection to Locke, Berkeley's accounts of "general ideas". For instance, by way of abstraction, Locke writes, " ideas taken from particular things become general representatives of all the same kind" (2004: 155); " the general idea of a triangle […] must be neither oblique, nor rectangle, neither equilateral, equicrural nor scalenon, but all and non of these at once" (2004: 527) ; " [Universality[…] consists only in this, that the particular ideas about which it [knowledge] is are such, as more than one particular thing can correspond with, and represented by" (2004: 601). While Locke no doubt denied the empirical existence of a general idea, his account ended up with a deep confusion regarding what is general, as distinguished from what is particular. Husserl criticizes this tendency towards confusing generality with particularity, by calling it in the second of *Logical Investigations* "psychologically hypostatizing the universals" (2001a: 249-257). A similar "hypostatizing" can be found in the "third man" argument which arises from taking the universal as a "this" (*tode ti*).

[28] The expression "morphologically triangle-like" is not arbitrarily chosen. In *Ideas* Husserl differentiates morphological (inexact) eidetic concepts from those which are idealized (exact) in a mathematical fashion. Applying to this distinction, he wishes to show that our perception is not geometrically structured, that is, a geometrical system (for example, Euclidean geometry) is only a possible idealized version of the perceptual realm, rather than an account given for it. A morphological concept is a basic perceptual "type" (*Typus*), a nonfocal and indefinite meaning pattern that need not be exactly defined like a geometrical concept. For Husserl, geometry is an axiomatic discipline that investigates exact visual forms and pure possibilities pertaining to these. While it is clear that the most familiar geometrical concepts are all founded on certain perceptual types, geometry, not unlike other sciences, runs the risk of getting more *constructive,* and more *counter-intuitive,* as it moves away from the

Thus, the more fundamental motive that leads one to carry out the subsumption is first brought into view, the moment this requirement is appreciated. For it is only on the ground of a "direct insight" into the *eide* that one's subsuming particulars under exact concepts can be legitimated.[29]

According to Husserl, universal objects (such as species, formal and material essences and categorially articulated "state of affairs", for instance, *believing that things are thus and so*) are tacitly pre-conceived in experience, because these are riveted to the very heart of things perceived (imagined, remembered and so forth) in their particularity. The process of ideation, i.e. the intuition of essences, starting from an immediate *pure seeing*, brings the universal objects into the explicit consciousness of their universality. As Husserl clearly indicates, "for those who can place themselves in the position of pure seeing and can stay clear of all natural prejudices, it is easier to conceive of knowledge that can not only bring particulars, but also universals, universal objects, and universal states of affairs to absolute givenness"(1990: 41).[30] If so, then it is

perceptual realm and from the justificatory credentials established by morphological concepts. The famous passage where Husserl introduced this distinction reads like this: "The geometer is not interested in *de facto* sensuously intuitable shapes, as the descriptive natural scientist is. He does not, like the latter, fashion *morphological concepts* of vague configurational types which are directly seized upon on the basis of sensuous intuition and which, in their vagueness, become conceptually and terminologically fixed. The *vagueness* of such concepts, the circumstances that their application are fluid, does not make them defective; for in the spheres of knowledge where they are used they are absolutely indispensable, or in those spheres they are the only legitimate concepts. If the aim is to give appropriate conceptual expression to the intuitionally given essential characteristics of intuitionally given physical things, that means precisely that the latter must be taken as they are given. And they are given precisely as fluid; and typical essences can become seized upon as exemplified in them only in immediately analytic eidetic intuition. The most perfect geometry and the most perfect practical mastery of it cannot enable the descriptive natural scientist to express (in exact geometrical concepts) what he expresses in such a simple, understandable, and completely appropriate manner by words 'notched', 'scalloped', 'lens-shaped', 'umbelliform', and the like – all to them concepts which are *essentially, rather than accidentally, inexact* and consequently also non-mathemetical" (1983: 166).

29 It is not hard to tell that "the myth of the given" is inextricably linked to a second myth, "the myth of subsumption". This second myth seeks to persuade us to grant that meanings arise the moment when the "buzzing, blooming confusion" of the given is subsumed under clear-cut concepts. I suggest that this is not true. Subsumption is done, where there is already a vague meaning-content speaking for it, and this content is also conceptual, but in a narrower sense.

30 We owe such a gain in "pure seeing" to a mental operation Husserl calls *eidetic reduction*, by means of which all that we have taken so far to have a mind-independent existence is suspended. Hypotheses, validities derived from axioms, inductions and deductions are excluded, insofar as they are assumed to be completely mind-independent entities that would go on to exist, were there no consciousness at all. The complete mind-independence is what characterizes the transcendence in natural, uncritical sense. After the eidetic reduction, only the phenomenological sense of transcendence, that is to say, "transcendence in immanence" remains intact. Beginning with the eidetic reduction, something is entitled to be called transcendent only if it appears to consciousness as transcendent; thus, rather than transcending consciousness, it ought to be *given* to it *as* transcendent.

essential to an immediate perception of a particular that in it the particular be given as of a certain kind, i.e. as *what* that particular is, and also as significantly differentiated, namely, as *how* it is. Likewise, the talk of single percepts of bare particulars, stripped from any essential feature proves to be nonsense (ibid., 5-6). The efficacy of such an essential grasp (upon whatness and howness of objects), already operative in perception, "is guaranteed by its absolute *self-givenness* in *pure evidence",* and Husserl adds, "whenever we have pure evidence, pure seeing and grasping of an objectivity directly and in person, we have the same rights, the same certainties."(ibid., 6)[31]

Implicit in the "absolute self-givenness" are what Husserl calls "material synthetic" relations as well as "formal analytic" ones. For example, an intuition of color *in specie* shows us in an eidetic grasp the principal impossibility of a color without an extension. Such an eidetic grasp counts as an intuitive demonstration of an a priori norm stating that color cannot be perceived without extension. The norm in question is an essential law which, while brought about by a subjective synthesis, is apt to be evidenced by a *pure seeing* of what is self-given in experience.[32] Put another way, it is not enough to have the mere discursive concept of color to *see* the eidetic necessity that color must essentially be extended. Only someone who has the ability to see *for herself*, who is not blind to the phenomena, is allowed to possess this essential insight. In Husserl's view, synthetic a priori features of objects reveal a unique type of conceptuality which can only be in play where meanings are inextricably implied in intuitions.[33] Similar to the "extension-color" relation, it is essential to a perception of a spatio-temporal object that it be given in a partial, perspectival view, and that the entire object cannot be seen adequately in a single perception. These sorts of normative prescriptions regulate our experiences in such a profound way that they condition all empirical judgments we make.

As we said in the first section, the process of epistemic justification is *normatively structured*, and part of what we place here under the heading "normativity" can be clarified by looking at the effective validity of the eidetic features belonging to what is self-given in experience. A priori essences present us with ideal possibilities and impossibilities, constitutive of our experience, and Husserlian phenomenology deals particularly with these a priori essences in "the sphere of absolute givenness, with species that can be grasped in a general seeing, and with the a priori states of affairs that constitute themselves on the basis of these species in a way that can be immediately seen"(Husserl 1990: 41-42). We still call them *ideal*, because their necessity is grasped as being neither deduced from purely formal analytic relations, nor induced from purely empirical acquaintances.

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[31] Husserl uses the term "self-given" to characterize the given as *insightful*. What is self-given is *given in person*, so that it should not be regarded as a disordered multiplicity of atomic sense data, on which we can arbitrarily project a variety of conceptual schemes. Rather, the given directly instructs us about *what* object appears and *how* that object looks in its appearance.

[32] Investigation 3 , §11 (Husserl 2001b: 19).

[33] Cf. "Not only is everything that is intuitively presented also meant – so much is analytically true – but whatever is meant is also intuitively presented" Investigation 6, §23 (ibid., 236).

III

In light of the previous two sections, one synoptic observation is permitted to be made; what I call "minimal conceptuality" seems to coincide with the *absolutely given* "meanings" as conceived by Husserl. Here, in the third section of the article my goal shall be; firstly, to elucidate the term "sphere of absolute givenness" which Husserl also calls "*sphere of immanence*"; secondly, to focus on the joint interaction of "meaning-conferring" and "meaning-fulfilling" intentions, with a view to show that they are phenomenologically rehabilitated renderings of Kantian spontaneity and receptivity[34].

What exactly is immanence? In the foreword to *the Idea of Phenomenology* Husserl discerns at least three senses of immanence (1950: 5): 1- *Psycho-physical immanence* (*reale Immanenz*): Here the mind's physical existence is taken for granted and thereby reified as a transcendent object whose nature is principally open to be explained by psychology, the natural science of *psyche*. 2- *Mental immanence (reelle Immanenz)*: This type of immanence comprises the non-intentional components of a mental process[35]. To give an example, pain is such a component of intending an objet in a certain mode. In the case of bodily sensations, one does not feel pain simply, but as located somewhere on one's body. If one says that "my leg hurts", this signifies, one is aware of one's leg as painful. Here the intentional object is, to be sure, one's leg and the way in which one feels one's body is the intentional mode "painful" which has a certain part of one's body as intentional object. Pain is neither the intentional object, nor a property that qualifies the object. If I now have a toothache, it is not my tooth that is actually aching, but me. In other words, the real subject the ache is attributed to is not my "objective" tooth but my being subjectively aware of my tooth in a corresponding mode of consciousness. Consequently, in Husserl's view, and especially on the basis of what he writes in the fifth of *Logical Investigations*, pain can be considered to be a non-intentional component of the mental process itself[36]. 3-*Phenomenological immanence* (*Immanenz im echten Sinn*): As distinguished from the other two senses of the word, phenomenologically revised immanence signifies a delimited sphere of "self-givenness as constituted in evidence" (Husserl 1990: 3) . It is this last type of immanence Husserl wishes to bring to the fore and calls *absolute datum* (ibid., 5). As stated above, the sphere of immanence in Husserlian sense corresponds to the sphere of self-givenness. For Husserl, "this givenness, which excludes any meaningful doubt, consists of an immediate act of seeing and apprehending the meant objectivity itself as it is. It constitutes the precise concept of evidence, understood as immediate evidence"(ibid., 28)[37].

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[34] Cf. "Each individual perception is a mixture of fulfilled and unfulfilled intentions", Investigation, 6, §14b (Husserl 2001b: 221) ; "Every momentary phase of perception is in itself a network of partially full and partially empty intentions." (Husserl 2001c: 44)

[35] Every act in a stream of consciousness might be named as a mental process which is principally distinct from the object intended through the various phases of that stream.

[36] Investigation 5, §2-4 (2001b: 82-86).

[37] As is clear from the passage, Husserl sometimes uses the terms "evidence" and "self-givenness" as equivalents and this equivalence is rooted in the intentional character of consciousness. (see Husserl 1969: 157-158)

Many early receptions of Husserl commonly share the view that the sphere of immanence is identical with consciousness. However, a careful reading of Husserl reveals how groundless it is to identify immanence with consciousness. Though consciousness is a necessary condition for accessing into the phenomenological immanence, they are not identical. Moreover, immanence-transcendence distinction is not only not symmetrical to inner-outer dichotomy, but also leads to a decisive destruction of it. Since what is phenomenologically immanent is not "really" but "intentionally" contained in consciousness, it is more appropriate to consider immanence as a realm that *transcends* the mental process itself. Because this transcendence has only a negative character, its whole purpose is to tell us that what is given is *not* an intrinsic (*reell*) component of the mental act. In addition to such a negative account of transcendence, Husserl also develops a positive one: When we posit in experience an object which is not entirely seen, which is not adequately evidenced and whose givenness does not exclude doubt, it is called transcendent in positive sense. But as Husserl takes immanence and transcendence to be mutually dependent, it must be recognized that immanent "perceptions" build up the very experiential moments through which a transcendent "perception" temporally occurs. For instance, the seen side of a spatial object reveals itself to be immanently given, but through this immanence, something transcendent is also given, – the spatial object itself. The intended spatial object is figured out to be "transcendent", because intending it always exceeds the immanently given. The givenness of transcendence is not added from outside to the givenness of immanence. Accordingly, the domain of givenness, instead of being divided into two separate sub-domains of what is transcendent and of what is immanent, maintains its phenomenal integrity. We may rather say that immanence and transcendence spell out two different perspectives on the same experiential content[38]. Or a better formulation would be that immanent phenomena might be conceived of as if they are synthetically integrated according to norms. And transcendent objects of perceptual experience let themselves to be regarded as the cardinal norms that regulate the meaning-formation of immanence.[39] Therefore, what is immanently given, say, in perception, to the extent that mind is responsive to norms, is given as already meaning-laden in an immediate encounter with the surrounding world which is nothing but the horizon of what is transcendently given.

Let me describe how this happens with the help of a well-known phenomenological analysis of perception: We regard the side of the spatial object we have in front of us as a side of a physical thing possessing other sides and features co-intended. Moreover, the thing intended makes up a referential center, being always invested with an actual meaning at a given time. Assertion "I see a tree" amounts to saying that "I see *that* as a tree". Certainly, a grasped meaning prefigures and anticipates

[38] It is precisely because of the inseparability of immanence and transcendence as to their content that Husserl criticizes the view that "…the immanent is in me, the transcendent outside me" (1990: 3). When the immanent is construed as what is internal to mind, the transcendent is placed almost inevitably under the title " what is external to mind". Since Husserl seeks to break this deep-seated prejudice of modern philosophy, he offers a phenomenological re-thinking of the pair immanence-transcendence, to which the way is first opened particularly through a radical critique of "immanence". (see Husserl 1959: 378)

[39] In this, I follow Crowell's remark that "what is distinctive about phenomenological immanence is that it is normatively structured" (Crowell 2008: 336).

the future possibilities concerning the object perceived. When something is immanently given to me as a tree, the possibility of resting under its shadow in a hot summer day is also given as an expectation implicated by the perception of the tree. Yet even when a sudden change of meaning is dictated by the on-going experience, the center of reference remains untouched, in the sense that both the new meaning and the previous one are bestowed on the same identical x which is, to use Husserl's phrase, the "noematic core" (1983: 309) or the "determinable indeterminacy"(2001c: 42). In this way, not only the meaning, but also the change of meaning can be *seen*, and consequently, not only the determination of meaning, but also its determinability can be *grasped* – both falls within reach of conscious experience.[40] The thing I have seen so far as a tree may turn out to be illusory, so that when I get closer to it I may realize it is a billboard with a tree picture on it. However destructive it may look, having a new grasp on *that thing* permits us to distinguish referring act from meaning-conferring one, both of which must again be distinguished from meaning-fulfilling act (receiving the intuitive fullness). Though they are distinct, there is in fact no such thing as three sorts of mental acts, existing independently of one another. The aim of making distinctions among them is to sort out three principally different functions of a unitary objet-directedness of consciousness. According to Husserl, all these functions are intrinsically connected *via* intuition, so long as they take part constitutively in a *direct seeing.* Thus, whenever there is intuition, there is meaning-conferring, meaning-fulfilling and referring all at the same time. It is important to note, however, that Husserl himself does not drive a clear wedge between meaning-conferring and referring acts, for he sees the latter as a natural result of the passage from a previous disappointed meaning to a newly motivated one, without the referent being doubled. If the change of meaning proceeds by fixing the reference as the identical core, so does referring not solely rest on a particular experience of a meaningful object, but also on the possible experiences of the same object (formally considered as x), as entirely changed in meaning. Rather than being separate entities, meaning and referent are intermingled so that the former instantiates the latter at each time, in the manner of an action that instantiates the *norm* it is subjected to. In so far as intentional mental states are responsive to norms, every meaning ought to fix a reference.

As we tried to sketch above, Husserl contrasts "meaning-conferring intention" (*Bedeutung*) with "fulfilling meaning (*erfüllende Sinn*)" and adds that "[i]n fulfillment the object is 'given' intuitively in the same way in which the mere meaning means it"[41]. This is where a "unity of coincidence" (*Deckungseinheit*) is observed between two different act-functions, one is signitive, the other intuitive: "A signitive intention merely points to its object, an intuitive intention renders it present (*vorstellig*) in the strict sense of the term, […] it [intuitive intention] imports something of the fullness (*Fülle*) of the object itself."[42]. Through the coincidence of *Bedeutung* with *erfüllende Sinn*, the mere signitive intention gets related to an intuitively accessible, actual object. And it is by virtue of this relatedness of an empty "act of thinking" to an intuitively accessible,

[40] Cf. "…[E]ven what is already seen is laden with an anticipatory intention. It – what is already seen– is constantly there as a framework of prefiguring something new; it is an x to be determined more closely."(ibid., 43)

[41] Investigation 6, §28 (2001b: 245; 1984: 625).

[42] Translation is slightly altered. Investigation 6, §21 (2001b: 233; 1984: 607).

actual object that the scope of the term "given" is determined: "whenever a meaning-intention is fulfilled in a corresponding intention, […] there the object is constituted as one 'given' in certain acts…"[43] Something is entitled to be called *given* when what is meant and what is intuited are evidently confirmed to be identical. And Husserl thinks that in order for this identity to be instituted, no additional, higher-order conscious intention directed to the identity itself is needed.[44]

To get a more vivid picture of what Husserl has in mind here it is useful to make a comparison between remembering the rose I have seen yesterday and perceiving the same rose in person. Admittedly, remembering the rose colored with a particular shade of red and actually perceiving it differ in that the latter requires more than an empty intention where the object is absent from view, that is, intended as *merely remembered*. Perceiving a rose requires that the intentional act is satisfied by a linkage to the actual presence of the rose. Note, however, that whenever intuitive intentions are separated off from signitive intentions, they lose altogether their ability to render objects intuitively present. In other words, the intuitive fullness does not stand beyond the reach of, or external to demonstrative concepts such as "*that* rose", "with *that* shade of red". Having this in mind, Husserl writes that "what we do not mean, is simply not there for our presentation (*Vorstellung*)"[45] Here Husserl seems inclined to share McDowell's conceptualist view that "a bare presence cannot supply a justificatory input into a conceptual repertoire from outside it" (1996: 20)[46]

One might object to this, however, by saying that a person can obviously see something without classifying it, and on the ground of her ignorance concerning the object seen, can ask herself what it is that she sees. Nonetheless, I think, with regard to such a situation there is no plausibility in supposing that the ignorance concerning the object seen is absolute. Even to single out in perception an object that is unknown to us, the object must be pre-intended, or better, pre-understood as a spatio-temporal object, having certain sensory qualities, such as a certain shade of a certain color. It is clear that functioning of these minimal concepts occurs without any knowledge of what exactly these concepts are; it does not even entail a cognitive capacity to ascend to recognizing them as concepts as such.

Conclusion

As I have argued in the first section of this paper, phenomenological evidentialism should be stationed in a middle road between foundationalism and

43 Investigation 1, § 14 (Husserl 2001a: 199).

44 Investigation 6, §8 (Husserl 2001b: 208).

45 Investigation, 6, §23, (Husserl 2001b: 235-236; 1984: 610).

46 A more persuasive textual basis for Husserl's conceptualism can be found in *Experience and Judgment* : "That receptivity precedes predicative spontaneity does not mean that the former is something independent, as if it was always necessary first to run through a chain of receptive experiences before there could be any awakening of genuine interest in cognition. On the contrary, from the first we can already thematize a pre-given object in the interest of cognition, not only to examine it carefully but in enduring cognitions 'to confirm how it is'. In this situation, predicative forming and cognizing go hand in hand with receptive apprehension…"(1973: 203-204)

coherentism. It differs from foundationalism in that it does not take evidences to be "infallible premises"; evidences are insights that might turn out to be wrong in the course of experience. But on this view the possibility of misperception must strictly be based on a new evident perception which demonstrates the erroneous aspect of the previous insight. What this signifies is that our perceptions are inherently connected with each other, and it must be so in order for our perceptions to be true. However, evidentialism cannot be a version of coherentism either. For the mere coherence among perceptual beliefs, rather than justifying them perfectly, needs to be *constrained by experience.*

In trying to get to the meaning of the experiential constraint, I discussed the term "the given". Conceptualists attacked to a certain notion of the given; following Wilfrid Sellars, they called it "the myth of the given", because such notion was otiose. In fact, the mythic notion of the given can be part of a coherentist doctrine of truth without giving any compromise to the experiential constraint. As a coherentist would say, we know what we *construct* and this is done by processing the given through the filter of a conceptual scheme. However, if it is true that the conceptual schemes are variable, this means that each one of us may be considered to construct the experience of the outer world differently by adopting diverse theoretical explanations to account for this construction.

I defended too that our experience of the outer world is conceptual from the beginning. But the conceptuality I argued for is minimal, that is, taken in a narrower sense. It is not something we *construct*, but something we *immediately see*. Seeing what is meaningful reveals the *constitutive* conceptuality of our experience. For sure, both *constructive* and *constitutive* accounts of meaning may be said to refer to subjective syntheses. However, in constitutive account there is no mysterious, non-mental conceptual mechanism presupposed to explain the norms governing the synthesis. As I tried to show, instead of such an option, evidentialism rather prefers to let our unvarying, minimal concepts be justified by what is evidently *given*. So I emphasized that we need to extend our comprehension of the given beyond the "myth of the given".

Ultimately, in the last two sections of the paper, I concentrated on showing that Husserlian phenomenology is evidentialist *par excellence.*

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