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HUSSERL'S CONTEXTUALIST THEORY OF TRUTH*

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This article draws attention to certain features of Edmund Husserl's theory of evidence and truth which, on closer look, reveal how his thoughts on the nature of experience and cognition are current and relevant even in the early 21st century. Many of his contemporaries and subsequent authors considered Husserl to be a late representative of traditional, modernist metaphysics—an idealist, a foundationalist, and an intellectualist, etc. The publication of his vast unpublished manuscripts has evidently dispelled such charges, and a thorough and attentive perusal of his published works (or works prepared for publication) clearly shows how highly problematic such charges were. In the article I aim to highlight the contextualist character of Husserl's understanding of evidence and truth, of knowledge and Being. Every insight and every entity in his thought fits into a wider context of further experiences, insights, and entities. This conception is manifest at every level of his experience and knowledge: (1) everyday experiences, (2) scientific and (3) philosophical cognition. The evidence at every level is fundamentally open and contextual, and their correlation constitutes an essentially organic reality. With such formulations Husserl says something quite similar to what is now found under the label 'epistemic contextualism' in contemporary analytic philosophy. Next to the contextual character of evidence, the second main thesis of my essay is that Husserl's stance in this question might serve as a fruitful field of dialogue between phenomenology and analytic philosophy.

Key words: Edmund Husserl, non-foundationalism, contextualism, evidence, apodicticity, truth, phenomenological metaphysics.

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КОНТЕКСТУАЛИСТСКАЯ ТЕОРИЯ ИСТИНЫ ГУССЕРЛЯ*

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Данная статья акцентирует определенные характерные черты теории очевидности и истины Эдмунда Гуссерля, которые, при ближайшем рассмотрении, подтверждают актуальность его воззрений на природу опыта и познания даже в начале 21-го столетия. Многие современники и последователи считали Гуссерля поздним представителем традиционной модернистской метафизики — идеалистом, эпистемологическим фундаменталистом, интеллектуалистом и т. д. Издание его обширных неопубликованных рукописей развеяло эти заблуждения, а внимательное прочтение его опубликованных трудов (или работ, подготовленных к публикации) наглядно демонстрирует обоснованность подобных упреков. Данная статья стремится подчеркнуть контекстуалистский характер гуссерлевского понимания очевидности и истины, познания и бытия. Любая мысль и любая сущность в его философии вписывается в более широкий контекст других опытов, мыслей и сущностей. Эта концепция проявляется на любом уровне опыта и познания: в повседневном опыте, в научном опыте и в философском познании. На каждом уровне очевидность имеет принципиально открытый и контекстуальный характер, а корреляция между ними, по существу, представляет собой органическую реальность. Тем самым Гуссерль утверждает нечто подобное тому, что можно обнаружить в так называемом «эпистемическом контекстуализме» в современной аналитической философии. Наряду с контекстуальным характером очевидности, второй тезис данной работы заключается в том, что позиция Гуссерля по данному вопросу может открыть поле для диалога между феноменологией и аналитической философией.

Ключевые слова: Эдмунд Гуссерль, нефундаментализм, контекстуализм, очевидность, аподиктичность, истина, феноменологическая метафизика.

INTRODUCTION

It would be hard to deny that the problem of evidence and truth was of central importance for the philosophy of Edmund Husserl. Perhaps the most important aim of his entire life-career was to offer a strictly scientific basis for philosophical researches; and to clarify the conditions of absolutely grounded, indubitable philosophical insights. He aimed to reach the realm of ultimate philosophical evidence and truth. His final aim was to secure an ultimate foundation (*Letztbegründung*) for scientific and

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particularly philosophical cognition (*Erkenntnis*). In his view the genuine, ultimately founded philosophical insight (and theory) should be *apodictic* (in the philosophical sense of the word); that is to say, the evidence which accompanies those insights must be *absolute, indubitable and incorrigible*. According to him apodictic evidence should be the ultimate foundation for every form of cognition and knowledge¹.

Husserl thought he finally managed to fulfil the dream of Kant, and he set the philosophy on the road of becoming a strict, rigorous science (e.g. Husserl, 1971, 159–160; Husserl, 1989, 427). He laid down the proper attitude, method and principles of phenomenological philosophy, which were supposed to yield universally valid, objective, unquestionable results. He believed philosophy was soon to start its steady, unbound, linear and infinite progress as a normal and ultimately grounding science, with endless accumulation of strictly scientific theses. He never gave up this idea of philosophy as a “rigorous science” (Husserl, 1976b, 508; Husserl, 1970b, 389 ff.)². The first, superficial look on the history of phenomenological movement during and after Husserl’s life-time should make it evident that things happened in a radically different way than Husserl had originally imagined.

The phenomenological movement looks like a jungle. Almost every major figure of this movement has her or his own phenomenological philosophy, with its own peculiar vocabulary, problem-field, way of approach, treatment of things, etc. All phenomenologies look very different. There are only a few common points in them: such as “intentionality” and “philosophical analysis of experience” (cf. Gondek & Tengelyi, 2011, 9–40). From a certain point of view Ricœur was right to say that “the history of phenomenology is the history of Husserlian heresies” (Ricœur, 1987, 9). Husserl himself had to witness—with an ever-greater disappointment—that his most talented followers (as Max Scheler, then Martin Heidegger) chose a radically different

¹ Marco Cavallaro’s remark to this sentence: “Actually, he revised this idea in the last period, arguing that apodictic evidence is still the principle of philosophical knowledge, meaning absolute knowledge, but not for every form of knowledge. Life-worldly knowledge is relative, and it is good being so. It would make no sense to try to give an absolute foundation to relative, life-worldly knowledge.”

² As the remaining part of the first paragraph of Beilage XVII of *Husserliana* 6 makes it clear, the famous first words (“*Philosophy as science*, as serious, rigorous, indeed apodictically rigorous, science—the dream is over”) do not express Husserl’s own opinion, but some of his contemporaries: “But these times are over—such is the generally reigning opinion of such people.”

Marco Cavallaro: “Carr says in his Translator’s Introduction: ‘It is clear from the context that Husserl was attributing this view to his age, not asserting it himself’ (Carr, 1970). Translator’s Introduction. In *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, XV–XLIII. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, p. XXXI, n. 21).”

understanding of phenomenology than he originally had in mind. He expressed his grief concerning the “desertion” of his earlier fellow-phenomenologists in such phrases: “I am a leader without followers” (Husserl, 1994a, 182), and: I am the greatest enemy of the famous “phenomenological movement” (Husserl, 1994c, 79) (cf. Moran, 2002, 2).

There are nearly as many phenomenologies as are phenomenologists: this does not really sound as a properly functioning normal science. What can we say after all the Husserlian idea of phenomenology with a uniform, coherent methodology, reaching the ultimate truth, yielding absolutely firm, unquestionable, infallible, apodictic insights? Does not such an idea remain a mere dream? How Husserl exactly understood this dream, this idea? This is the main topic of this study.

* * *

According to the classical interpretation, Edmund Husserl was one of the last great representatives of a bygone great epoch: that of modernity, and particularly of the Enlightenment. This was the approach many of Husserl’s students and followers took to their master (most prominently Scheler and Heidegger)—and several generations of phenomenologists and philosophers long after Husserl’s death. They appreciated Husserl’s concrete treatment of things (the famous slogan: “Back to the things themselves!”)³, his earlier realist commitment (in *Logical Investigations*), his conception of intentionality, the categorical analysis of experience, etc. But they considered him (and his philosophy) to be intellectualist (Scheler, Heidegger, etc.), after his “transcendental turn”: idealist (the Munich School of phenomenology, Scheler, Heidegger, etc.), one-sidedly, naively rationalist (Scheler, Heidegger, etc.), foundationalist (Richard Rorty); who propagated the epistemic and ontological precedence of consciousness over Being or real existence (Heidegger, etc.) and who believed in an uncritical manner in linear progress in history (Derrida).

This has been a classical interpretation by many of Husserl’s contemporaries, students, followers, colleagues, and many phenomenologists and philosophers after Husserl, including some professional researchers of his philosophy and philosophical legacy. In the last few decades this picture has slowly started to change: most importantly amongst Husserl researchers, and bit by bit representatives of a wider philosopher audience have also begun to read and conceive of Husserl’s thought in a different way. Slowly we commence to realize how radically contemporaneous Husserl is, how

³ See: (Husserl, 1984, 10; Husserl, 2001b, 168).

far he was ahead of his own age. This change was due first of all to the publication of his manuscripts; but the release of these earlier unpublished texts inevitably confirmed that even those works which were published or were prepared for publication in Husserl's life (such as *Logical Investigations, Ideas...*⁴, *Formal and Transcendental Logic, Cartesian Meditations, Crisis...*⁵ and *Experience and Judgement*) did not fit into this picture. According to the altered interpretative context, Husserl was no intellectualist (Nam-In Lee), no idealist (Tengelyi), no foundationalist (Drummond, Steinbock); he was not a naïve philosopher of consciousness in the traditional sense of the word (Lee), he did not believe uncritically in the linear progress of history (Varga). He was rather a *hermeneutic* philosopher, especially in his later period (Luft, Heffernan, Reeder, Hermberg, etc.). We begin to recognize that *openness, non-linearity, circularity*⁶, *retroactivity, diachrony, existentialist motifs*⁷, *contextuality* are essential characteristics of his mature philosophy.

We are now beginning to see how topical Husserl's phenomenology is in our present day; as Heffernan phrased it how "phenomenological philosophy is fully in step with the *Zeitgeist*" (Heffernan, 2009, 31). In my interpretation the classical terminology and classical articulation of classical problems hid much of the real depth of the radical novelty of Husserl's thought for many of his students and followers, and also for many representatives of the later generations. We begin to see how flexible Husserl's phenomenological philosophy is, how easily and fruitfully it can adapt and integrate modern scientific results from both the human and the natural sciences, and how creatively it can utilize them in a philosophical way. In this paper I aim to contribute to the unfolding of the philosophical potentialities of Husserl's thoughts and legacy.

I divided this study to four main parts. In the first section I aim to treat some fundamental features of epistemic contextualism. The topic of the second section is the main types and levels of evidence in Husserl; in the third section I analyse the relationship of apodictic evidence and corrigibility. In the final part I take a closer look at the effects of Husserl's contextualist conception of evidence on his idea of phenomenological metaphysics.

⁴ Reference is made to *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy, first book: general introduction to a pure phenomenology* (Husserl, 1976a; Husserl, 1983).

⁵ Reference is made to *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology. An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy* (Husserl, 1976b; Husserl, 1970b).

⁶ See: (Varga, 2011, 105).

⁷ Cf. (Loidolt, 2011). See also: (Cavallaro, 2019; Cavallaro & Heffernan, 2020).

1. EPISTEMIC CONTEXTUALISM AS A POSSIBLE POINT OF
DIALOGUE BETWEEN PHENOMENOLOGY AND
ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY

Many interpreters and researchers have already realized that Husserl had enough philosophical potential even to mediate in the greatest schism of our present-day philosophy: namely, in the opposition of continental and analytic philosophy. Some thought that Husserl's notion of "noema" could be such a mediatory concept (Drummond, 1990). Others highlighted the close connection between the phenomenological approach of mind and analytic philosophy of mind (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2008). I choose Husserl's notion and theory of evidence and truth (as a possible source of mediation between continental and analytic philosophy), which show strong resemblances to the analytic position of *epistemic contextualism* (e.g. Black, 2003; DeRose, 2009; Rysiew, 2016). There is at least one precedence of interpreting Husserl's philosophy as a sort of contextualism (Thompson, 2014)⁸. In my opinion, however, there is still a lot to tell in this regard. It is also a way of approach that could highlight some essential features of Husserl's conception of evidence and truth.

The aim of this essay is not to make a systematic comparison of Husserl and epistemic contextualism, but to show a possibly fruitful field of communication between phenomenology and analytic philosophy. Thus here we will treat only some basic elements of epistemic contextualism. "Epistemic contextualism is a recent and hotly debated position" in analytic philosophy (Rysiew, 2016). According to this viewpoint, every piece of knowledge, every judgement is relative to a context, and gains its meaning and proper truth-value within the frames of a wider web of (also social and practical) relationships. Some authors (Annis, 1978; Williams, 1991) regard such philosophers as Austin, Dewey, Pierce, Popper and Wittgenstein as the most important predecessors of contextualism (even though it can be traced back to Hegel in an explicit form). As an explicit, well-articulated philosophical stance it emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s, in authors such as David Annis, David Lewis, Gail Stine and Stuart Cohen. It became an influential, wide-spread standpoint during the 1990s.

Contextualist theory of knowledge was partly elaborated in order to answer sceptical challenges to the conditions of knowledge and cognition. It serves to secure the claims of knowledge and cognition under certain conditions. The paradigmatic example of sceptic arguments (against which contextualist authors attempt to secure knowledge) is the "Brains in a Vat" argument, according to which we are bodiless

⁸ In the book by Dan Zahavi and Shaun Gallagher the contextualist character of Husserl's philosophy is also a very emphatic motif.

brains in a vat, experiencing a virtual reality, generated by a computer (or computers). (We can also think of Descartes' "Evil Demon" argument. In many texts dealing with contextualism, this type of argument is formally referred to as "Sceptic Argument" [SA]). Take the following syllogism: P1: "I don't know whether I am not a brain in a vat," P2: "If I don't know whether I am a brain in a vat, then I don't know whether I have hands or not," C: "I don't know whether I have hands." Contextualism—amongst others—tries to answer such extreme forms of scepticism (represented by the "Brains in a Vat" or "Evil Demon" arguments). Contextualism attempts to do so in several different ways.

According to contextualism "know" is an indexical term—like "here" or "I." Its semantic content (or meaning) therefore "depends on the context in which it is used" (Black, 2003). If its semantic content is dependent on the content, then the sceptical argument "Brain in a Vat" (or something similar) cannot rule out that I legitimately say "I know that I have hands," because these two sentences imply drastically different contexts; the second one is the context of ordinary praxis of everyday life, the first one the context of speculative philosophical theory. Those two contexts have radically different sets of epistemic standards: the second one has *low*, while the first one very *high* standards. The means and methods of justification are also dependent on the particular practical and epistemic (semantic) context.

Michael Williams in a paper argues that sceptical argument is *unnatural*; nothing motivates in our everyday praxis and epistemic context to support the hypothetical constructions of extreme scepticism (Williams, 1999). According to him it is the duty of scepticism to prove its sceptical claims; but it fails to do so; thus we have no reason to take scepticism seriously. This argument is compatible with *evidentialism* (according to which one is justified to believe something if one has evidence to support his or her belief), which could be also a version of contextualism⁹. Such a concept of evidence (and the contextual nature of evidence as such) shows a strong similarity to the way how Husserl was thinking of evidence. In Husserl's opinion we have no reason to doubt an evidence based belief or judgment, till we receive some other information, which make our earlier belief problematic (cf. Reeder, 1990; Drummond, 1990, 245–247; Hermberg, 2006, 30 ff.).

The closer analysis shows that Husserl's own position could be characterized also as a kind of contextualism—from *Logical Investigations* (1900/01) to his latest works (it appears also in earlier manuscripts). In his approach every experience, insight and judgement takes place within a context, in the context of other experiences, insights

⁹ Stewart Cohen presents a contextualist form of evidentialism. See, e.g. (Cohen, 1988).

and judgements, and has to be interpreted with regard to this context. The context of experiences, evidences and judgements mirrors the inherent contextuality of Being; its organic, dynamic, ever forming, processual character. There are no separate elements—neither in experience and cognition (*Erkenntnis*), nor in Being.

In Husserl's thought, every level of experience and evidence should be described as essentially contextual. On the level of sensuous experience, the new sensual data always shed a new light on the concrete individual thing and case of affair. On the level of categorical intuitions and vision of essences (*Wesensschau*), the essences turn out to be in an essential, mutual, network-like relationship with each other, and, eventually, all essences are proven to be principally *open*. Evidence and truth, on the individual as well as on the general level (on the level of essences), is always open and contextual. In this essay I intend to elaborate some consequences of this view.

2. LEVELS AND TYPES OF EVIDENCE

2.1. General notion of evidence in Husserl

Despite his anti-metaphysical point of departure (Husserl, 1968, 253) Husserl's final aim with phenomenology is metaphysical: he wants to answer, or at least to elaborate, the “ultimate and highest” or “supreme and final” questions of philosophy and of life in general (e.g. Husserl, 1973c, 165; Husserl, 1960, 138; Husserl, 1968, 299; Husserl, 1997, 177). He would like to find answer, or at least to find the right pathway to the answer, to questions concerning God, an apodictic ethics, the meaning and direction of history, the fate of soul before the birth and after death, and questions like that. But Husserl starts from the bottom level: from the level of practical, natural attitude, with its unreflected, naïve life and experiences. As a starting-point he begins with concrete, simple experiences of objects and everyday situations (the experience of a cube, a tree, a car on the street, the voice of a violin, etc.). In Husserl's opinion there are several, well separable levels of experience, cognition (*Erkenntnis*) and reflection—but there is always a well reconstructable linearity between those levels. The question is: how do we get from the perception of a cube to the problem of existence of God and immortality of the soul?

In Husserl's view there are three major, principal levels of experience and cognition: natural, scientific and philosophical level (The two latter belong to the sphere of theoretical attitude, however, Husserl considers the philosophical position to be more radical than the positive scientific). They are based upon each other, and they represent an increasingly radical form of reflexivity. The genesis of a higher level

from the lower could be interpreted as a process of radicalization of reflexivity. There are rudimentary, seminal forms (proto-forms) of reflection even on the level of natural attitude, and the radicalization of such reflections necessarily leads to higher levels and forms of reflection. There is almost an unbroken, continuous, linear order and hierarchy of reflections in Husserl's philosophy. The highest form of reflection (and reflective attitude) is the phenomenological (e.g. Husserl, 1976a, 133; Husserl, 1983, 142; Husserl, 1976b, 502 ff.). As Husserl told it: "Phenomenology was the secret desire [*Sehnsucht*] of all modern philosophy" (e.g. Husserl, 1976a, 133; Husserl, 1983, 142; trans. mod.).

Evidence is a form of seeing (or experiencing—in the wide sense of the word). In Husserl's interpretation, reflection is also a sort of seeing or experiencing (phenomenological reflection is also a kind of seeing or experiencing things). Seeing and experiencing (especially in their reflexive form) are the universal medium of cognition on every level. Seeing and experiencing are striving after *to be evident*, in order to be a reliable source and foundation of knowledge. Evidence, in Husserl's view, is not a feeling of truth or reliability, not a mystical "index veri"—as opposed to the psychologist interpretation of evidence in Husserl's age, and also in contrast with some Kantian explanations (cf. Heffernan, 1999)—, *but an act-character of intentional fulfilment*, of fulfilling empty presentations with intuition. Truth belongs to the objective side of evident experience, as the evidently experienced object or situation in its bodily presence. *Evidence belongs to the noetic side of experience, truth to the noematic*. In Husserl's description, every single noesis and noema is surrounded by sophisticated context (an open horizon) of other noeses and noemas.

An important characteristic of evidence is that it could be *crossed out*. An evident perception may turn out to be false or at least one-sided, in the light of newer perceptions. A well-known, oft-cited example in Husserl's work to such a case is found in the *Fifth Logical Investigation*:

Let us discuss the matter more closely in the light of a concrete example. Wandering about in the Panopticum Waxworks we meet on the stairs a charming lady whom we do not know and who seems to know us, and who is in fact the well-known joke of the place: we have for a moment been tricked by a waxwork figure. As long as we are tricked, we experience a perfectly good percept: we see a lady and not a waxwork figure. When the illusion vanishes, we see exactly the opposite, a waxwork figure that only *represents* a lady. (Husserl, 1984, 458–459; Husserl, 2001b, 137–138)

The question arises: is there an evidence that cannot be crossed out? One that counts as ultimately valid, absolutely founded, which is infallible and incorrigible¹⁰?

¹⁰ Marco Cavallaro's remark to this question. "I would also add that for Husserl the existence of an absolute evidence is the condition of possibility of philosophical knowledge, since he identifies

According to Husserl such evidence is *apodictic*. But later (in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*) he said that even apodictic evidence is corrigible and fallible (Husserl, 1974, 164; cf. Heffernan, 2009). What can be told about the relationship of evidence and corrigibility (and absoluteness, infallibility)? Is there an ultimately incorrigible evidence? Does that not imply dogmatism?

2.2. Main types of evidence and their relationship

In *Ideas* (1913), Husserl mentions four basic types of evidence: apodictic and assertoric, adequate and inadequate (Husserl, 1976a, §§ 137–138). *Assertoric* is hypothetical, conditional and could be crossed out; *apodictic* is unconditional and infallible. *Inadequate* evidence could be completed, it is *open*, partial and one-sided; adequate evidence is entirely complete, *closed*, full and cannot receive further completion. From the publication of *Philosophy of Arithmetic* (1891) till the *Crisis* (1936) and the last manuscripts Husserl's overall theory of evidence went through a complicated and nuanced development. But—at least in my interpretation—there are two fundamental questions of Husserl's conception: 1) could *apodictic evidence* somehow be *corrected or overwritten*? 2) could adequate evidence really reached and realized—*in actu*?

Evidence, in Husserl's view, is strongly intertwined with his theory of experience and intuition. According to the “principle of all principles,” the ultimate and only legitimizing source of every possible cognition is the “*originary presentive intuition*” („originär gebende Anschauung“) (Husserl, 1976a, 51; Husserl, 1983, 44). In his opinion there are two levels of intuition: individual and general. We are capable of intuiting essences, not only individual things. Husserl calls this general intuition the *intuition of essences or eidetic vision*¹¹. The intuition of individual things is accompanied by *assertoric evidence*. It is open, fallible, and corrigible. And there is always more to learn about an individual thing or case: the latter has inner and outer horizons. It is always *inadequate*. The intuition of essences is apodictic, it is infallible. The more interesting question is whether it is *adequate or inadequate*. There are two major sorts of essences: *material or regional and formal essences* (Husserl, 1976a, §§ 1–17). Material essences refer to great realms of things in the real world with regard to their

philosophy with the Kantian idea of absolute, apodictic knowledge. In other terms, he's not asking whether there is such a thing like apodictic evidence, but he deduces the existence of apodictic evidence from the philosophical ideal of absolute knowledge.”

¹¹ Its earlier form in the *Logical Investigations* is “categorical intuition”, more precisely, “abstractive categorical intuition.” On this, see: (Lohmar, 2008).

species: such as human beings, animals, plants, merely physical things, etc. There are three such general realms of the real world: the physical, biological and spiritual-cultural level of reality (*Ideas II*) (Husserl, 1952)¹². Formal essences refer to logical categories and relationships—*they concern a thing merely as a thing*. The intuition of material essences turns out to be inadequate. There are always more things to learn about material essences, with scientific discoveries, *they could always be completed* (cf. Smith, 2007, 143–144). For Husserl the intuition of formal essences seems to be *adequate*.

There is also a further, more important distinction in this context: the difference between *immanent and transcendent perception*¹³. *Transcendent perception* is directed to concrete transcendent things or states of affairs. *Immanent perception* is a sort of reflection: it is related to live experiences and to its moments, such as sensations. For the first instance: transcendent perception is characterized by inadequacy, immanent perception by adequacy. But a closer look at Husserl's own words reveal that the situation is somehow more complicated. Yes, transcendent perception is always inadequate. In *Logical Investigations* he said that inner perception is adequate. But in *Ideas* he writes: "It is the case also of mental process [*Erlebnis*] that it is never perceived completely, that it cannot be adequately seized upon in its full unity" (Husserl, 1976a, 93; Husserl, 1983, 97). It seems so that Husserl's position after the *Logical Investigations*, in *Lectures on the Phenomenology of Consciousness of Internal Time* (1904/05) has changed. Thus, it looks like that even the object of immanent perception cannot be given adequately either. But the situation is not so simple: after *Ideas*, there are textual places in *Bernau Manuscripts* (1917/18) and *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis* (1918–1926) according to which we can grasp *the sensation, the hyletic data* adequately in reflection. Consequently, Husserl seems to hesitate. But from 1929 the situation became quite unambiguous: even sensations cannot be given adequately. Such was the approach of texts like *Cartesian Meditations, Formal and Transcendental Logic, Crisis, Experience and Judgement* and *C-Manuscripts*.

And what is about intuition of essences? After 1925 it is firm and evident for Husserl that the evidence of *material essences* is *inadequate*, the essence of the world as such is something *infinitely open* (texts of Husserliana 41, fifth editorial division). He allows the possibility that some very simple *formal essences* can be grasped adequately

¹² Marco Cavallaro's comment: "This is Stein's interpretation. In Husserl there are but two universal regions: nature and spirit."

¹³ The terminology of *Ideas*. Earlier, in *Logical Investigations*, Husserl used the terms (following Brentano) internal and external perception, which he felt less accurate in *Ideas*.

(in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*)¹⁴; but from 1929 onwards, adequate evidence became a governing idea which “lies in infinity” (*Cartesian Meditations, Experience and Judgement*, etc.). Not even the proper themes of transcendental reflection—the *structures of constituting transcendental subjectivity*—can be given adequately, they are topics of an infinitely open research project. They are transcendental, yet *material* essences. Essences, both formal and material, are in *a universal nexus* with each other, they make up *an infinitely open context*; both on the horizon of mundane, positive sciences and on the field of transcendental phenomenology.

3. APODICTICITY AND CORRIGIBILITY

3.1. The possibility to reinterpret apodicticity

In Husserl’s view one of the most important features of phenomenology is criticism and self-criticism. One must always be open to criticism of other fellow philosophers (fellow phenomenologists), and be ready to correct earlier judgements and insights, if one later recognizes them to be false or one-sided. The scientific attitude, and more precisely: the phenomenological position is inherently critical. What does the correction of an evident experience mean? We can think of the example of the waxwork figure in the *Logical Investigations*: we see a charming, young lady, then, a minute later, we realize it is a mannequin made of waxwork. But what is the case with apodictic evidences, whose essential feature is incorrigibility? What can we mean with a correction of such an absolute evidence? Husserl defines such an evidence in the following way:

An *apodictic* evidence, however, is not merely certainty of the affairs or affair complexes (states of affairs) evident in it: rather it discloses itself, to a critical reflection, as having the signal peculiarity of being *at the same time* the absolute *unimaginableness* (inconceivability) of their *non-being*, and thus excluding in advance every doubt as “objectless,” empty. (Husserl, 1973c; Husserl, 1960, 15 ff.)

¹⁴ Husserl, in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, on the field of mathematics and logics, supports the project of complete axiomatization of mathematics of David Hilbert. He—Husserl—thought that every true mathematical judgement could be derived from a closed, finite set of axioms. This view was obviously at odds with the conception of open contextuality, and was later refuted by Kurt Gödel’s incompleteness theorem. Husserl in this regard was wrong, but phenomenology could be corrected due to its intrinsic character of self-criticism and self-correction.

Hence, what is the point of self-criticism, or of intersubjective revision in the case of such an evidence, which is defined from the very beginning as infallible and incorrigible? Husserl attributes such apodictic evidence to phenomenological reflection. What are the concrete examples of this evidence? “I am,” “I think,” “ego sum,” “ego cogito.” Apodictically evident is the existence of the concrete lived experience (*Erlebnis*), e.g.: “I am seeing an apple.” Perhaps I am wrong claiming that there is an apple in real, outside of experience, independent from my consciousness. It can be a dream, a hallucination, or the apple is not a real fruit, it is actually a piece of art, a painted porcelain. But I cannot be wrong that “I am seeing an apple,” about the existence of the concrete lived experience as such—only concerning its transcendent correlate. How could such apodictic evidences be corrected or modified? What does correction or modification mean in this case?

The duty of philosophy in this case would be nothing else than an infinite gathering of such apodictic insights; it would be an infinite, plain linear and cumulative project. There was not be any retroactivity, non-linearity—it would be an infinite, ceaseless enterprise in the manner of 18th century Enlightenment¹⁵. But phenomenology in Husserl’s thought is, eventually, no such a project. His own vision on phenomenological movement as a historical scientific enterprise is quite different from the classical views on scientific development which we could find in the age of Enlightenment (e.g. in Condorcet). Namely, Husserl leaves open the possibility of *retroactive reinterpretation of apodictic insights and judgement, the possibility of their further completion*. In this respect the relationship between adequacy and apodicticity is extremely important. Every new apodictic insight sheds new light on earlier insights. We are speaking about a synchronically and diachronically organizing, dynamic network of apodictic insights, which evoke the picture of a living organism, rather than a mechanically and monotonously growing list of scientific theses.

3.2. Interpretations on Husserl’s notion of apodicticity

Among Husserl interpreters there is a long tradition of treating the problem of the absoluteness of apodicticity, in order to avoid dogmatism (in order to avoid interpreting Husserl as a dogmatic philosopher). Drummond, for example, speaks about “limited apodicticity” in this context. According to him, an insight is apodictic when there is no reason to doubt (Drummond, 1990, 245). But this does not mean that

¹⁵ Like in Marquis de Condorcet, who in his work *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind* (1794) expressed the general intellectual attitude of the mainstream of Enlightenment in a very illustrative way.

apodicticity is absolutely infallible and incorrigible. Following José Huertas-Jourda, Reeder and Hermberg, in the same manner, speak about *de jure* and *de facto* apodicticity (Huertas-Jourda, 1983; Reeder, 1990; Hermberg, 2006). *De jure* apodicticity means the evidence of original intuitive givenness, *de facto* apodicticity signifies the derived evidence of judgement, based upon the evidence of intuitive givenness. According to these philosophers *de jure* apodicticity is corrigible and potential theme of future criticism. Walter Hopp speaks about *agent-fallibility* and *method-fallibility*, implying that the method could be completely reliable, and we—notwithstanding—fallible, being finite beings (Hopp, 2009). Heffernan claims that Hopp's analyses are one-sidedly *noetic*, and he draws the attention on the *noematic* aspect of the problem, and speaks about *object indeterminacy* and *evidence-fallibility*, which two are rooted in the radical openness of every experience concerning the objects that surround us (Heffernan, 2009). Following these initiations, I would like to highlight the *open* and ultimately *indeterminate* character of apodictic evidence; namely, its original and inevitable *contextuality*. In this context I attribute special importance to the apodictic feature of *intuition of essences*, and the *inherent inadequacy* of the latter. Researches about essences are thus also infinite and open enterprises.

In this regard, concerning the contextual and open nature of evidence (and especially apodicticity), I would like to draw the attention to the book of Saulius Geniusas *The Origins of the Horizon in Husserl's Phenomenology* (2012), which is—in my opinion—of key importance with respect to this question. Geniusas analyses this problem from the point of view of Husserl's conception of horizon; which the author treats as a peculiar structure of intentionality that has two, inseparably connected aspects: the horizon of constituting subjectivity and world-horizon (Genusas, 2012, 9). We could consider his book as a systematic attempt to reconcile apodictic evidence with the horizon structure of experience. According to Geniusas, there is a fundamental transformation of Husserl's notion of apodicticity, around the time of the 1923/24 winter semester lecture *First Philosophy*. Earlier apodicticity was the idea of absolute evidence, which should be attained by the very *beginning* of philosophical reflection, through the implementation of phenomenological reduction. Geniusas emphasizes that Husserl never gave up the idea of apodictic grounding of knowledge (Genusas, 2012, 133), but this sense of apodicticity changed by the time of *First Philosophy*. Apodicticity became a *governingidea* of philosophical researches that never could be fully realized (Genusas, 2012, 119, 133). Apodicticity, in Geniusas' interpretation, in the late Husserl is necessarily open, and embedded into a historical process; it is a part and ineliminable structural element of the transcendental and apriori history of constituting (inter)subjectivity.

3.3. Apodicticity and historicity

As already indicated: in regard of Husserl's "final" theory of evidence and truth, I think the central position of the problem of history in his late philosophy (in the 1930s) has a special importance¹⁶. The process of experience and cognition (and thus, also evidence and truth) is embedded into history, intersubjectivity, practice and bodily existence. It is part of the life-world (*Lebenswelt*). According to Husserl's late work, every evidence, including scientific and philosophic, is based upon the direct, familiar, relative evidences and truths of the life-world (*Crisis*, texts of Husserl (1973b, 1992, 2008)). Scientific and philosophic evidence has its roots in the praxis of the life-world. Furthermore, there is a *circularity* of evidences in the entire socio-historical world. Scientific and philosophic insights and results emerge from life-world practice which, during the course of history, slowly sink down into the soil of everyday, common world experience and caring.

The levels of cultural world (pre-theoretical, practical world, world of theoretical attitude, of science and philosophy) and their histories are strongly intertwined. Their evidences determine each other. *Communication* is a universal and fundamental medium of cultural world, of pre-theoretical world as well as of scientific world¹⁷. Communication plays an essential role in constituting science as a cultural and historical process. We articulate insights and evidences in intersubjective communication. Insights and evidences gain their strictly, rigorously scientific form in *scientific discourse* (cf. Sokolowski, 2008). Intersubjective criticism and possibility of critics is a constitutive feature of objective science, including philosophy. What can we tell about the possibility of criticizing apodictic evidence in scientific discourse?

¹⁶ At once, we must add that the problem of history was important for him since 1907/08 at the latest; since manuscripts like B II 2 (partly published in (Husserl, 1973a, 2014)) and B I 4 (unpublished). From 1907/08 the question of history and historicity was of peculiar importance for him, (a pre-eminent example of this importance are his lectures on *First Philosophy* (Husserl, 1956, 1959)). "History is the great fact of absolute Being" (Husserl, 1959, 506).

In this context one should also cite his famous letter to Georg Misch (27 November 1930): „Es wird sich, so denke ich, dann offenbaren, daß der ‚ahistorische Husserl‘ nur zeitweise Distanz von der Historie nehmen mußte (die er doch stets im Blicke hatte), gerade um in der Methode soweit kommen zu können, an sie wissenschaftliche Fragen zu stellen“ [“I think it will be then obvious that the ‘ahistorical Husserl’ had to distance himself from the history (which he always still had in mind) only at times, just to be able to reach the proper level of development in method, in order to raise scientific questions concerning it”] (Husserl, 1994b, 283 ff.).

¹⁷ On this, see: (Mezei, 1995, 57–59).

We see the world only from a finite, limited perspective. Thus, our insights and judgements concerning the world (and also concerning ourselves) will be necessarily finite, limited and one-sided. There are moments of the world we do not see from our perspective, but other people, other scientists do. As scientists, as philosophers, we study facts and essences. But both have infinite internal and external implications, which could only be grasped inadequately. In the scientific and philosophic theoretical praxis, apodictic evidence could relate to the examined facts and essences. This apodicticity is, however, necessarily incomplete and inadequate, and thus open to further (but never ultimate) completion. *Apodicticity is always one-sided, and every single apodictic insight and registration is embedded into the open context of infinitely many further apodictic insights and registration.* Every new apodictic insight could complete and reinterpret the nexus of the earlier ones.

In every apodictic insight and experience there is a *core meaning*, which is infallible and incorrigible, yet also indeterminate and one-sided. The intersubjective criticism of apodicticity reveals the limited and one-sided nature of earlier results and insights. During the communicative, historical cognizing (*Erkennen*) the scientists and philosophers disclose subjectivity and world in a more and more concrete way, in an ever richer manner. The basis of this cognizing and cognition is a communicative, dynamic and open apodicticity, which mirrors the infinite complexity and openness of ourselves and the world.

4. CONTEXTUALISM IN METAPHYSICS. THE “ULTIMATE AND HIGHEST QUESTIONS” OF PHILOSOPHY

Husserl analysed the inherent contextuality of experience and cognition on at least three different, main levels: (1) everyday experiences, (2) scientific knowledge and research of essences (*Wesensforschung*) and (3) philosophical knowledge and cognition. On each level every piece of experience and knowledge shows a necessary, ineluctable interrelatedness and a radical openness. Every horizon of experience and knowledge is essentially open. This openness means (among others) that later information could always reinterpret the earlier. Now we can answer the question (at least partially) we have raised earlier: “How do we get from the perception of a cube to the problem of existence of God and immortality of the soul?” How do we get from the level of perception of a cube to the “ultimate and highest questions,” to questions of traditional metaphysics—reinterpreted in a phenomenological manner?

From about 1905 onwards to the end of his life, Husserl’s aim was to create a phenomenologically grounded metaphysics (as represented e.g. in the manuscript B

II 2 from 1907–1910)¹⁸. In *Cartesian Meditations* (1929) Husserl writes the following words:

Finally, lest any misunderstanding arise, I would point out that, as already stated, phenomenology indeed *excludes every naive metaphysics* that operates with absurd things in themselves, but *does not exclude metaphysics as such*. [...] [W]ithin the de facto monadic sphere and (as an ideal possibility) within every conceivable monadic sphere, occur *all the problems of accidental factualness, of death, of fate*, of the possibility of a “genuine” human life demanded as “meaningful” in a particular sense among them, therefore, the problem of the “meaning” of history, and all the further and still higher problems. We can say that they are the *ethico-religious problems*, but stated in the realm where everything that can have a possible sense for us must be stated. (Husserl, 1973c, 182; Husserl, 1960, 156)

Husserl always kept in mind the task of phenomenological re-grounding (*Neubegründung*) of traditional metaphysics, which is capable of giving apodictically evident answers to the “ultimate and highest questions” of the latter, and of philosophy as such. In the earlier parts of this essay we characterized Husserl’s philosophy as essentially contextualist. Now we should raise the question: what consequences this philosophical (and epistemological) stance has on his metaphysical considerations?

According to Husserl, as we have seen, the ultimate source and basis of every legitimate knowledge is “*originary presentive intuition*” (Husserl, 1976a, § 24; Husserl, 1983, § 24). This holds to everyday, scientific and philosophical knowledge (in its ultimately grounded form yielded by the phenomenological reflection) too. Husserl is also aware of the fact that the visible (what is originally present) is always surrounded by a halo of invisible, of what is not seen immediately. Those moments however, which are not seen directly, could be made visible in different ways. The problem is, in order to answer the classical metaphysical questions (or, at least, to elaborate those questions properly), at certain points we must inevitably transgress the boundaries of *possible intuition*. How then we are supposed to make a phenomenologically grounded, evidence-based metaphysics? Husserl’s solution is: *phenomenological construction*.

As it is well-known, Husserl’s assistant, Eugen Fink spoke in the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* about a “constructive phenomenology”; which aims at the “ultimate and highest questions” of metaphysics in a phenomenologically legitimate manner (Fink,

¹⁸ See, e.g. *Crisis* [1936]: “To bring latent reason to the understanding of its own possibilities and thus to bring to insight the possibility of metaphysics as a true possibility—this is the only way to put metaphysics or universal philosophy on the strenuous road to realization” (Husserl, 1976b, 13; Husserl, 1970b, 15).

1988, § 7). “Construction,” within the context of phenomenology, means normally a phenomenologically illegitimate, ungrounded methodological operation. Despite this, there is also the idea of a phenomenologically founded, authentic way of construction. Fink emphasizes that the phenomenological construction cannot be arbitrary (Fink, 1988, 70), it must be founded by evident intuitive givenness. Phenomenological constructions must be motivated by earlier, apodictic findings of phenomenology (Fink, 1988, 66–70). But much earlier than Fink (Husserl met Fink in 1927) Husserl developed and applied the thought and method of phenomenological construction—as early as the second half of the first decade of the 20th century, during his Göttingen years. We can find the conception in the manuscript B II 2 (1907–1910) (Husserl, 1973a), and in his *Lectures on ethics and value theory, 1908–1914* (Husserl, 1988, 170–185).

Thus, according to Husserl (as well as, later, according to Fink) an apodictically evident, intuitive basis could be articulated for phenomenological constructions. Such a foundation could motivate those constructions and determine their direction and manner in a similarly evident (though, in this case, non-intuitive) way. Due to the intuitive grounding we can construct the *non-intuitive context of the absolute Being*; a context whose apodictic description could yield answers to the traditional metaphysical questions in a phenomenologically justified fashion. Constructing the invisible, non-intuitive context beyond the limits of possibly visible, Husserl attempts to give phenomenologically grounded answers (or at least: to elaborate the questions in a strictly phenomenological manner) to the basic problems of classical metaphysics: such as the immortality (or mortality) of the soul, the existence of God, the ultimate and highest ethical norms and values.

The construction finally aims at the entire Being: the Absolute, which, in Husserl’s description, is an open totality, (cf. Husserl, 1973b, 378–386) (especially: 386). The Absolute is an essentially processual and historical reality, whose most essential aspect is its originally *divine (göttliche) nature*, or God itself. According to Husserl, God is the motor of every development, and an idea of absolute knowledge and good (Husserl, 1988). Husserl characterizes the individual, finite souls as “transcendental substances” (C-Manuscripts, Husserl, 2006, 176–177); which (who) are finite and concrete modes of access of Absolute to itself; which (who) are finite and fixed points of view of the Absolute, within the open totality of Being. The particular, finite transcendental substances, the individual monads (and their relationships, communities) make God’s existence and functioning concrete. God, in Husserl’s view, is an absolute ideal of perfection, but not just that; on the other hand, S/He is a very concrete person too, Who is working and living through the single monads and the universal community

of monads¹⁹. God has a first person's access to all individual experiences of every single monad (cf. Husserl, 2014, 168)²⁰.

The exact and detailed reconstruction of Husserl's phenomenological metaphysics, with regard to his contextualist theory of truth, would exceed the limits of this paper. Here I only wanted to present some of its most important results. But every insight concerning the nature of soul and God takes place within the ultimate, all-embracing context of the Absolute; whose unfolding is an infinite process (and which is itself an infinite process too), and regarding whom every new insight and discovery recontextualize and reinterpret the earlier ones.

SUMMARY

This paper has two main, strongly connected theses. Firstly, Husserl's epistemology (and also his ontology and metaphysics) could be interpreted in a *contextualist* way. Secondly, this point of his philosophy offers a possibly fruitful field of dialogue with contemporary analytic philosophy, in particular with epistemological contextualism. The main parts of the essay deal with a contextualist interpretation of Husserl's ideas.

In Husserl's philosophy every perception, experience, scientific and philosophical insight involves an open manifold of internal and external horizons (contexts). We see to newer and newer horizons and contexts, which—in turn—do not relativise entirely the earlier experiences and evident judgements, only limit their meaning and validity. Husserl rejected relativism to the end of his life, but in my interpretation, he successfully managed to find a middle way between dogmatism and radical relativism, due to his contextualist theory of knowledge and being.

¹⁹ On this problematic I highly recommend the book of Lee Chun Lo (Lo, 2008).

²⁰ „Natürlich kann das *All-Ich*, das alle Ichs in sich und alle Wirklichkeit in sich und nichts außer sich hat, nicht wie ein empirisches Ich gedacht werden. Es ist *unendliches Leben*, *unendliche Liebe*, *unendlicher Wille*; sein unendliches Leben ist *eine einzige Tätigkeit*; und da es *unendliche Erfüllung* ist, <ist es>*unendliches Glück*. Alles Leid, alles Unglück, allen Irrtum lebt Gott in sich nach; und nur dadurch, dass er es im strengsten Sinne mitlebt, mitfühlt, kann er seine Endlichkeit, sein Nichtseinsollen überwinden in der unendlichen Harmonie, *zu der es da ist. Gott ist überall, Gottes Leben lebt in allem Leben.*“ [“Of course we should not think of this *universal I*—who embraces every I-s and reality in himself—as an empirical I. He is *infinite life*, *infinite love and infinite will*. His infinite life is *the only activity*; and because *he is infinite fulfilment*, *he is also infinite happiness*. God himself also experiences every suffering, every misfortune, every mistake; and only because he lives in others, and he feels with others, can he overcome his finitude, his not-necessary-being in the infinite harmony, *for which he exists. God is everywhere, God's life lives in every life*”] (Husserl, 2014, 168).

In this way the philosophical Absolute proves to be the ultimate context, thus also the context of the “ultimate and highest questions.” This philosophical Absolute is nothing else but an organic, dynamic process (of knowing and Being), and an infinitely open horizon, which we explore only in an inadequate way. We experience and know only some of its finite and limited parts and moments. Nevertheless, in this inadequacy we experience and know it (the Absolute) in an apodictic manner. This Absolute is the context of the final questions of metaphysics also.

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