

The Given

Kantian, Neo-Kantian and Phenomenological Perspectives

BEITRÄGE von Christian Beyer, Garrett Zantow Bredeson,
Maxime Doyon, Luigi Filieri, George Heffernan, Danilo Manca,
Virginie Palette und Daniele De Santis



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Herausgegeben von
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Introduction

The Given: Historical and Hermeneutical Category or Laziness and Perversion of Reason?¹

1. There is no doubt that during the last century (and still today), the attempt to denounce the mythological character of what for brevity's sake goes by the name "the given" (*das Gegebene* or *le donné* or *il dato* – were we to include additional linguistic and philosophical contexts) is what paradoxically raised awareness of it. "The Myth of the Given" is not only a rather attention-grabbing phrase that first appears in § 38 of *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (hereafter: EPM),² but is also the original and programmatic title of all three lectures held by Sellars in London in 1956. The condemnation of the myth, or rather its unmasking (and regardless of the question of whether the Given is mythological through and through or solely in some of its versions), has slowly yet quite systematically prompted scholars and philosophers to question its content, function (whether necessary or dispensable) and origin. For, if philosophy and philosophers are not expected to μῦθόν τινα διηγέισθαι, to tell any kind of story (*Sophist*, 242c), the questions of why, when and by whom the myth was first composed, narrated and then recounted over time impose themselves.

Accordingly, it seems to us that the lines of research that stemmed from Sellars' denunciation or that in any case followed the release of EPM can *prima facie* be divided into two main groups, each of which includes a sub-division (which do not coincide with the analytic-continental divide). Were we to rely on the distinction (of Anglo-Saxon origin) between the historical (H) and the systematic (S) approach, the first group would embrace the following two (ideal) lines of investigations:

(H-1): The reconstruction of the specifically "historical" background within which Sellars himself encountered the Given – and in relation to which he was first prompted to denounce its mythological nature or conception. This would include not only the neo-positivistic or neo-empiricist debate bearing on the so-called *Beobachtung-* or *Protokollsätze*³

¹ This work was supported by the European Regional Development Fund Project "Creativity and Adaptability as Conditions of the Success of Europe in an Interrelated World" (No. CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/16_019/0000734); and by the Czech Science Foundation, financing the project "Intentionality and Person in Medieval Philosophy and Phenomenology" (GAČR 21–08256S).

² Wilfrid Sellars: *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge 1997, 77.

³ See the texts of the debate, all of which are now published together in Michael Stöltzner,

Luigi Filieri

Sellars and Kant on Givenness and Intuition

Abstract

In this paper, I argue that Sellars's conceptualist reading of Kant, though less radical than more contemporary approaches (e.g., Brandom, McDowell),¹ relies on a controversial account of the relations between the givenness of intuitions, the productive imagination and the power of judgment. I will discuss: 1) how Sellars reconsidered Kant's account of intuition; and 2) the kind of conceptualism he argues for. I will raise two main claims. First, Sellars's conceptualist reading of intuition overlooks the role of space and time as givenness conditions. Second, Sellars's account of the productive imagination disregards the complementary significance of the power of judgment in a priori synthesis, the role of which is to grant synthetic unity. My aim is to reconstruct a consistent dialogue between Sellars and Kant by discussing Sellars's reading of a priori synthesis and comparing his views to Kant's original aims.

Keywords: Givenness, Intuition, Imagination, A Priori Synthesis, Synthetic Unity

Introduction

Sellars maintained a long-lasting relationship with Kant's philosophy. His 1968 *Science and Metaphysics: Variations on Kantian Themes* testifies to the extent to which he was involved in interpreting and making sense of Kant's philosophy while at the same time developing the core ideas of his own philosophical views. While it is true that *Science and Metaphysics* is primarily concerned with the latter task, other essays are more specifically interpretative in nature, focusing on Kant's themes and texts. This is true of *Kant's Views on Sensibility and Understanding* (KVSU, written in 1966, first published in *The Monist*² in 1967 and included in *Science and Metaphysics* in 1968), *Ontology, the A Priori and Kant* (OAPK, written in 1967, revised in 1970), *Some Remarks on Kant's Theory of Experience* (KTE, 1967), "...this I or he or it (the thing) which thinks..." (I, 1970), *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (KTI, 1974, first published in 1976), and

¹ See Luca Corti: "Crossing the Line: Sellars on Kant on Imagination." In: *Verifiche* XLI(1–3), 2012, 41–71, in particular: 57–60.

² Wilfrid Sellars: "Kant's Views on Sensibility and Understanding." In: *The Monist* 51(3), 1967, 463–491.

Garrett Zantow Bredeson

Natorp's Critique of Appeals to Givenness in Light of the Marburg Renewal of Idealism

Abstract

For Natorp, the most urgent task for turn-of-the-century philosophy consisted in recovering the meaning of idealism. Instead of simply appealing to given facts, idealists transform givennesses of all sorts into tasks for thinking under the guidance of laws which we ourselves have laid down and for which we ourselves are responsible. In this paper I will try to connect the dots between (a) the broader Marburg project of tethering philosophy to the achievements of modern science and (b) Natorp's critique of his contemporaries' appeals to givenness. Understanding this connection is, in my view, crucial for appreciating the sense and grounding of Natorp's idealism.

Keywords: Paul Natorp, Hermann Cohen, Idealism, Transcendental Method, The Given, Marburg Neokantianism

For Paul Natorp, the most urgent task for turn-of-the-century philosophy consisted in recovering the genuine meaning of idealism and renewing its force for the present day.¹ On the one hand, this meant reining in the pretensions of philosophy to be able to justify or ground human knowledge and culture prior to an engagement with the positive products of the latter. This represents the kind of deference to the “fact of science” for which the Marburg School is still famous, even if the precise nature of that deference has not always been well understood. On the other hand, for Natorp, idealism is just as much about recognizing the radically free, creative force which is at work in the production of science and culture. The real work of the idealist consists in – and, when idealism has understood itself, has always consisted in – transforming assumed *givennesses* of all sorts into *tasks* for our creative thinking under the guidance of laws which we ourselves have laid down and for which we ourselves are responsible. Instead of thinking that philosophical inquiry into science and culture can lay hold of the rules and standards for the latter and produce, say, a canon of their

¹ In general, I want to restrict my claims in this paper to Natorp's views around this period, though I will occasionally cite later work in a supporting fashion. I certainly am not trying to trace Natorp's quite different postwar work here.

Virginie Palette

The Resistance of the Given and its Demythologization in Husserl's Phenomenology

Abstract

The objective of this paper is to reconstruct Husserl's two-pronged approach of sensory givenness. On the one hand, the phenomenological focus on intentional consciousness implies a virulent criticism of the positivistic myth of the sensory given. On the other hand, there is also a positive appeal to sensory givenness in phenomenology, without which phenomenology would not be worthy of its name and would, ultimately, be nothing other than a form of neo-Kantianism. In the context of transcendental genetic phenomenology, Husserl manages to rehabilitate sensory givenness in a reduced, viz. demythologized form. This reconstruction of Husserl's ambivalent reference to the given can help phenomenology defend itself against some actual trends, which tend to reduce it to phenomenism or to conceptualism.

Keywords: The Given, Hylè, Sensation, Gestalt, Intentionality, Edmund Husserl

Husserl conserve une notion dont le message de l'intentionnalité devait, semble-t-il, libérer: la sensation. Les données hylétiques se trouvent à la base de l'intentionnalité. Loin de jouer dans le système le rôle d'un résidu dont l'évacuation progressive devait intervenir, la sensation occupe dans la méditation husserlienne une place de plus en plus grande.¹

There is an unfortunate tendency in certain circles of the philosophy of mind to confuse phenomenology with a form of positivism. Phenomenology is facing two hetero-stereotypings, i. e. stereotypings coming from other philosophical traditions, or even from other disciplines: The first one is present in the cognitive sciences, where phenomenology is usually understood reductively as a theory of phenomenal consciousness that focuses solely on *qualia*, on “what is it like to experience something”—to quote Farrell's expression, which has become, with Nagel, symptomatic of contemporary subjectivist phenomenism.² The

¹ Emmanuel Levinas: “La ruine de la représentation.” In: Idem, *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*. Paris 2001, 206.

² Cf. Thomas Nagel: “What is it like to be a bat?” In: *The Philosophical Review* 83(4), 1974, 435–450. Nagel's texts still have an important influence in current debates, as shown for example by some of the texts in the recent book of Montague called *Cognitive Phenomenology*. Michelle Montague herself and Michael Tye reduce phenomenology to a theory of phenomenal consciousness. Cf. Michelle Montague: “The Phenomenology of Particularity.” In:

Danilo Manca

Spontaneity and Givenness

Natorp, Husserl, and Sellars's Neo-Kantianism

Abstract

In this article, I propose a comparison between Natorp, Husserl, and Sellars that has a twofold aim. First, I ask to what extent Sellars's perspective can be considered to be Neo-Kantian. Second, I demonstrate that the point of divergence among these three thinkers does not have to do with the role they ascribe to givenness in knowledge, but with the way they conceive the activity of thinking. Focusing on Husserl's reading of Natorp's theses concerning the subjective and objective ground of knowledge, I show that both Natorp and Husserl agree with Sellars on the limits of a positivistic and empiricist perspective that relies on what is given in perception for the justification of one's epistemic beliefs. On the other hand, the differences between the three thinkers emerge as soon as we consider how they attempt to integrate the spontaneity of thinking into the sphere of intuition from a renewed Kantian perspective.

Keywords: Natorp, Sellars, Husserl, Myth of the Given, Theory of Knowledge

In recent years, there has been a revival of interest in Neo-Kantianism. This is mainly due to scholars coming from the phenomenological field, who find in the juxtaposition with neo-Kantian approaches the possibility to contribute from a transcendental standpoint to the debate on conceptualism and non-conceptualism, to the emergence of which Wilfrid Sellars and his epigones have significantly contributed.¹

¹ Just a few examples: according to Nicolas de Warren: "The Archeology of Perception: McDowell and Husserl on Passive Synthesis." In: Alfredo Ferrarin (ed.), *Passive Synthesis and Life-World*. Pisa 2006, 27–54, here: 54, unlike Husserl, McDowell "follows the route of Neo-Kantians, who seek to absorb the aesthetic in the analytic." See also Nicolas de Warren: "Reise um die Welt: Cassirer's Cosmological Phenomenology." In: Andrea Staiti, Nicolas de Warren (eds.), *New Approaches to Neo-Kantianism*. Cambridge 2015, 82–107, here: 90, where de Warren traces McDowell's thesis that receptivity is "saddled with conceptual function" back to Cohen's criticism of the given as an "'irrational remainder' within the function of knowledge," and to the Neo-Kantian *dictum* that "'the given' is not merely 'aufgehoben' but 'aufgegeben'." Still, Steven G. Crowell: "Transcendental Logic and Minimal Empiricism: Lask and McDowell on the Unboundedness of the Conceptual." In: Rudolf A. Makreel, Sebastian Luft (eds.), *Neo-Kantianism in Contemporary Philosophy*. Bloomington 2010, 150–174, here: 152, raises the question of "whether the Neo-Kantians may have something to contribute to the contemporary debate over empiricism in the shadow of Hegel." Finally, see Sebastian Luft: *The Space*

Daniele De Santis

Thought, Being, and the Given in Hans Vaihinger's
Die Philosophie des Als Ob
(with a Husserlian Conclusion)¹

Abstract

The goal of the present paper is to assess Hans Vaihinger's understanding of the notion of *the given* in *Die Philosophie des Als Ob*. The claim will be advanced that the overall framework of Vaihinger's theory of knowledge and, more specifically, his understanding of both the given and fictions should be sought for in the manner in which R. Hermann Lotze assesses the problem of knowledge, namely, the relation between thought and being in both his early and late *Logik*. As we will argue, the way in which Vaihinger recasts the opposition between what is given objectively (data of sensations) and what is added subjectively is to be deemed a direct radicalization of Lotze's own stance. As the conclusion will further add, what is at stake in Vaihinger's fictionalism is a quite specific understanding of the ideas of reason and transcendental philosophy.

Keywords: Hermann Lotze, Hans Vaihinger, Edmund Husserl, The Given, Fiction, Transcendental Philosophy

1. Positio quaestionis

The unique peculiarity of Hans Vaihinger's version of the Kantian criticism and, more generally, of transcendental philosophy, has unfortunately yet to be appreciated and deeply investigated. Even as a member of the Neo-Kantian tradition (no matter how loosely we understand such a label), his profile is quite idiosyncratic.² Regardless of whether the beginning of Neo-Kantianism is officially

¹ This work was supported by the European Regional Development Fund Project "Creativity and Adaptability as Conditions of the Success of Europe in an Interrelated World" (No. CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/16_019/0000734). I am very grateful to Francesco Pisano for his comments and suggestions, and to Thomas Vongehr and the Husserl Archive in Leuven for letting me quote from an unpublished manuscript.

² To make a telling example, in Frederick Beiser: *The Genesis of Neo-Kantianism 1896–1880*. Oxford 2014, Vaihinger is evoked only a few times, yet without any systematic discussion of his contributions ever being offered. His name was not even included in the list of neo-Kantians provided by Hans Ludwig Ollig: *Der Neukantianismus*. Stuttgart 1979, v. Recently the situation has slightly improved; see Matthias Neuber (ed.): *Fiktion und Fiktionalismus. Beiträge zu Hans Vaihingers Die Philosophie des Als Ob*. Würzburg 2014.

Husserls Verhältnis zu Lotze im Lichte seines Göttinger Seminars über „Lotzes Erkenntnistheorie“

Abstract

The present contribution elucidates Husserl's relationship to Lotze in the light of Winthrop Bell's notes on Husserl's 1912 seminar on Lotze's theory of knowledge. Once again, these notes make it clear that Husserl highly appreciated the chapter on Plato's theory of ideas from Lotze's 1874 *Logic* and his anti-psychologistic view of logic, as far as it goes. However, it also becomes clear that Husserl rejected both Lotze's account of the origins of objectivity in terms of the doctrine of "achievements of thinking (*Denkleistungen*)" and the discussion of skepticism in the 1874 *Logic* against the background of his own (Bolzano-inspired) conception of intentionality and his treatment of the epistemological "problem of transcendence" in the framework of the "phenomenological reduction".

Keywords: Lotze, Husserl, Frege, Bolzano, Theory of Ideas, Philosophy of Logic, Epistemology, Reflective Self-Awareness, Problem of Transcendence, Phenomenological Reduction

In diesem Beitrag möchte ich vor dem Hintergrund kürzlich aufgetauchter Seminarzusammenfassungen und Husserl'scher Seminarnotizen (sowie meiner eigenen Husserl-Interpretation) einige Aspekte des Verhältnisses Husserl-Lotze beleuchten.

Man hat Lotze eine „Schlüsselfigur der Philosophiegeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts“ genannt.¹ Der englische Neuhegelianismus (u. a. Bradley), der amerikanische Pragmatismus (Royce, James, Dewey) und die deutsche Wertphilosophie (Windelband, Rickert) gelten als von Lotze beeinflusst. Sein Einfluss auf Gottlob Frege und die analytische Philosophie ist umstritten. Frege hat sich zweifellos mit Lotzes großer *Logik* aus dem Jahre 1874² auseinandergesetzt. Den eindeutigsten Textbeleg hierfür bieten Freges „17 Kernsätze zur Logik“,³

¹ Herbert Schnädelbach: *Philosophie in Deutschland 1831–1933*. Frankfurt a.M. 1983, 206.

² Hermann Lotze: *Logik*. Buch I u. III neu hrsg. v. G. Gabriel. Hamburg 1989 (im Folgenden kurz: *Logik*).

³ Gottlob Frege: *Nachgelassene Schriften*. 2., rev. Aufl. Hamburg 1983, 189 f. Im 12. Kernsatz schreibt Frege z. B.: „Die Logik beginnt erst mit der Überzeugung, dass ein Unterschied zwischen Wahrheit und Falschheit bestehe“. Diese Formulierung hat Frege wörtlich aus Lotzes *Logik* übernommen, wo es heißt: „Vorausgesetzt [...], daß es alles dies gebe, Wahrneh-

George Heffernan

Existential Evidence

The Role of Self-Giving in Husserl's Phenomenology of Existence

Abstract

In this paper, I examine, in five parts, the nature and function of evidence in Husserl's phenomenology of existence. By "evidence" I understand *the intentional achievement of self-giving* in Husserl's sense, and by "phenomenology of existence" I understand the branch of his philosophy that addresses *the question concerning a meaningful life*. In Part One, I propose that Husserl's philosophy includes a phenomenology of existence. In Part Two, I employ a selection of texts from *Grenzprobleme der Phänomenologie* to sketch the basic outlines of his phenomenology of existence. In Part Three, I demonstrate that Husserl develops a concept of evidence rich enough to encompass the evidence appropriate to his phenomenology of existence. In Part Four, I investigate the way in which Husserl appeals to what one may describe as "existential evidence" to ground his manner of apprehending the world as he sees it. In Part Five, I expand the horizon of the investigation by situating "existential evidence" – the "given" that keeps on giving – in the context of other kinds of evidence more familiar to scholars and students of Husserl's phenomenology.

Keywords: Given, Givenness, Self-Giving, Phenomenology of Existence, Phenomenology of Evidence

1. Husserl's Phenomenology of Existence

Philosophy of existence (*Existenzphilosophie*) fascinated the academic world of a Europe in crisis during the 1920s and 1930s. In the Afterword to *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* (1930), however, Husserl criticized the notion that essentialist phenomenology, unlike "philosophy of 'existence'," neglected existential problems, "the problems of so-called 'existence'."¹ The controversy appeared to establish or to reinforce an opposition between transcendental phenomenology and existential philosophy. Ex-

¹ Edmund Husserl: *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Drittes Buch: Die Phänomenologie und die Fundamente der Wissenschaften*. Husserliana V, edited by Marly Biemel. Den Haag 1971, 138–162, here: 138, 140. See also Edmund Husserl: *Aufsätze und Vorträge (1922–1937)*. Husserliana XXVII, edited by Hans Rainer Sepp and Thomas Nenon. Dordrecht 1989, 164–181.

Maxime Doyon

La *Gestalt* d'autrui

Note sur l'étendue de l'influence de la *Gestaltpsychologie*
chez Merleau-Ponty

Abstract

The recognition of a meaningful sensory foundation of perception is central to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. If some commentators do not hesitate to see in the notion of perceptual *Gestalt* a notion applicable to all domains of being, it is not a priori easy to see how it must be conceived in the more specific context of the perception of others (*autrui*). However, Merleau-Ponty is very clear on this point: all perception manifests itself in the form of a *Gestalt*, including the perception of other people. The ambition of this short study is to spell out in rough strokes how this injunction should be heard and thus to explain how others manifest themselves as *Gestalts* to perceptual consciousness.

Keywords: Phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty, Perception, Other, Gestaltpsychologie

1. Problématisation et motivation

La reconnaissance d'un fondement sensible structuré de la perception est une idée centrale de la philosophie de Maurice Merleau-Ponty. C'est par l'entremise d'Aaron Gurwitsch, qui l'a introduit aux travaux du psychologue Adhémar Gelb et du neurologue Kurt Goldstein dans les années 1930,¹ qu'il en a hérité.² À

¹ Maria-Luz Pintos : « Gurwitsch, Goldstein and Merleau-Ponty : An Analysis of a Close Relationship ». Dans : Ion Copoeru, Hans Rainer Sepp (éds.), *Phenomenology 2005, Volume 3 : Selected Essays from Euro-Mediterranean Area, Part Two*. Bucharest 2007, pp. 499–540.

² Aron Gurwitsch : *The Collected Works of Aron Gurwitsch (1901–1973), Volume I : Constitutive Phenomenology in Historical Perspective*. Dordrecht 2010, p. 43. Dans une conférence de Gelb sur l'hypothèse de constance, Gurwitsch aurait été frappé par la parenté de son propos avec la réduction phénoménologique de Husserl, cf. Sara Heinämaa : « Phenomenological Response to Gestalt Theory ». Dans : Sara Heinämaa et Martina Reuter (éds.), *Psychology and Philosophy : Inquiries into the Soul from Late Scholasticism to Contemporary Thought*. Dordrecht 2009, pp. 263–284. Comme Gurwitsch raconta plus tard à Alfred Schütz dans une lettre datée du 4 septembre 1951, cette convergence de pensée, qu'il thématise dans ses cours à la Sorbonne entre 1933 et 1937, aurait grandement influencé le développement de la pensée de Merleau-Ponty voir Richard Grathoff (éd.) : *Philosophers in Exile : The Correspondence of Alfred Schutz and Aron Gurwitsch, 1939–1959*. Bloomington 1989, p. 143. Gurwitsch, dont les cours attiraient un vaste et jeune auditoire qui incluait Merleau-Ponty, raconte avoir repéré les