

THE QUESTION OF CATEGORIALITY IN HUSSERL'S ANALYSIS OF PERCEPTION AND HEIDEGGER'S RECEPTION OF IT

*"We must make explicit the dispute between Husserl and Heidegger, which, even if it never took place actually, it still bothers us. It is one of the most burning, unsolved issues in current philosophy."*¹

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1. Introduction

In his *Prolegomena to the History of the Concept of Time* (*PHCT*, 1925),² Heidegger develops what, at first sight, could be seen as a masterful presentation of the "three fundamental discoveries" of Husserlian Phenomenology: *intentionality*, *categorial intuition*, and the *new conception of the a priori*. Nevertheless, closer examination of the text discloses a series of subtle problems. Of special interest is Heidegger's presentation of his understanding of the intentionality of perception and of Husserl's discovery of categorial intuition (§6.a).

On page 48/64 (§6) we read that the discovery of categorial intuition means two things. First, it means that there is an experience of objectities in which we have also a simple apprehension of *categorial* constituents, i.e., of the elements which tradition, in a "crude" fashion,³ called "categories". Second, it means that this apprehension is already present in *every* experience. And, as Heidegger explains a few lines later, according to what he has "already suggested"⁴ in his precedent analyses of the fundamental discovery of intentionality (§5), categorial intuition is found even in every *perception*. Heidegger insists on this claim and, at several points of this presentation (see, e.g., §6.a.β.β), he repeats the idea that the intentional act of perception is, after all, permeated by categorial elements; permeated by "categorial intuition."

Now, how we should understand this idea? And, first of all, is this remark a hidden criticism of Husserl's views on perception or is it a serious misreading of it? Here, I plan to cast some light on the details of this unnoticed episode in the Husserl-Heidegger philosophical relation. I will seek the exact central meaning of the "categoriality" of perception as Heidegger sees it and then I will examine whether this meaning is Husserlian or not.

2. Heidegger's analysis of perception and of categorial intuition

The analyses of §6 of the *PHCT* are dedicated mostly to the elucidation of the idea of categorial intuition. In order to accomplish this task, Heidegger has to bring to the fore the difference between simple perceptual intuition and categorial intuition. Which is this difference actually, as Heidegger sees it? The text there is really perplexed.

On the one hand, we read that:

all of our [intentional] comportments [i.e., even simple perception] are in actual fact pervaded through and through by assertions; they are always performed in some form of expressness. It is also a matter of fact that our simplest perceptions and constitutive states

are already *expressed*, even more, are *interpreted* in a certain way. ... [W]e do not say what we see, but rather the reverse: we see what one says about the matter [über die Sache]. ... [It belongs to] the character of the world ... [that its] apprehension and comprehension [Auffassung und Erfassung] [is always already mediated] by expressness [Ausdrücklichkeit], by already having been *spoken and talked over* [Schon-gesprochen-und-durchgesprochen-sein]. (56/75; third and fourth emphasis added)

On the other hand, though, we read that our assertions are always made “within” or “in a *concrete* and *actual* perception” (56/75). That is, our perceptual assertions ‘breathe,’ as it were, within the environment of these “concrete” perceptions. In more Husserlian terms, we read that perceptual assertions are *founded* upon such concrete and actual perceptions. Hence, we may assume there exists, after all, a considerable *difference* between perceptual assertions and perceptions themselves.

More particularly, when Heidegger says that perceptual assertions are performed “within concrete perceptions,” he mainly means that these assertions

make certain relations stand out from the [perceived] matter, which is at first apprehended directly and simply in its *unarticulated* totality [hebt aus der zunächst schlicht und einfältig in *unabgehobener* Ganzheit erfaßten Sache bestimmte Verhalte heraus]. It draws these relations out of the originally given [perceptually] intuitive content.⁵ (57/76-7; emphases added)

Now, let us see what is this directly apprehended “perceptual matter” that is “given originally” in concrete perception as an, at first, “unarticulated” totality.

As we read in the relevant lines, what simple concrete perception gives us is “the complete content [vollen Sachgehalt] of the real subject matter [Sache] ([e.g., of this] chair) found before us,” (57/77). In order to understand what is meant by this purely perceptual “complete content of the real subject matter before us” we must find its difference from what the assertion itself asserts *with regard to* that very same subject matter (i.e., its difference from the ‘assertive’ state of affairs corresponding to the assertion).

Such a corresponding assertion may say, e.g., “this chair is yellow and upholstered.” If we are to locate the sought for difference, then, with regard to the possibility of truth connected to that assertion, we must ask: are the “this,” the “is,” the “and,” of that assertion demonstrable on the face of the strictly perceptual subject matter? As Heidegger—and, *mutatis mutandis*, Husserl himself—sees it, in the context of a concrete perception I can see its being-upholstered and its being-yellow, but not also the “this,” the “is,” and the “and.”⁶ And, if we are to be more careful, Heidegger adds right away, we will realize that, in a simple concrete perception, perceptually given in a *strict* sense is not the *being-yellow* but the *colour yellow*; “*being-yellow*” “cannot be perceived” (58/78). The reason is that, as we know even from the time of Kant, the existential “being” is not a real predicate; it is not a “real moment in the chair,” like its colour, hardness, etc.; and the same holds for the “being” in the sense of the copula.⁷

Now, the original sense of the Husserlian discovery of the categorial intuition is exactly this: even though ‘elements’ like the “this,” the “is,” the “and,” etc., do not belong to the sphere of the real content of a being about which an assertion asserts this or that, the assertion *can* be found to be true with reference to the judged state of affairs. This judged state of affairs stands, then, as the corresponding ‘object’ of the

judgement and amounts to a *new* kind of intentional objectivity. The latter is intuited not in the context of a mere sense perception but in the context of a *categorial* perception or, better, categorial *intuition*.

‘Elements’ like the “this,” the “is,” the “and,” are categorial—not sensory.⁸ Nevertheless, such elements seem to constitute *parts of the objectual state of affairs*, the objective correlate of meaning-acts. It is tautological, then, that the objects of *categorial* intuition that fulfils directly the judgemental intention are *categorially* formed, that they are “pervaded by categoriality.”

On what grounds, then, can one, like Heidegger, claim that simple perception is pervaded by categorial formation and, at the same time, insist that the categorially formed assertions *cannot* be fulfilled on the basis of simple perception?

Immediately after having said that the assertive empty intentions *cannot*, indeed, get their fulfilment in simple concrete perception, Heidegger undertakes the task of explicating in what consists the ‘simplicity’ of the simple perceptual acts (§6.b.β.β).⁹

In simple perception, we read, the object is given in its self-same totality in the sense that already co-given as being there in it are its parts, moments, portions, features, etc.¹⁰ This, however, does not mean that all these elements are given there as such *explicitly* and *distinctly*.

[In simple perception t]he totality of [this] object is *explicitly* given through the bodily sameness of the thing ... [in the sense that] the parts, moments, and portions of what is at first simply perceived ... are there *implicitly*, unshoued [sind dagegen unabgehoben, implizit da]—but still given so that they can be made explicit. (61-2/83; emphases added).

In the simply perceived thing, these parts, moments, and portions “do not stand out in relief [sind unabgehoben]” (63/85).

Thus, in the analysis of linguistic thematization of the simply perceived (§6.c), we finally come to read that in our *predicative* judgment “the *S* (chair) is *q* (yellow)” we simply “draw out [herausfassen] the color as a specific property in the chair ... and make the ‘yellow’ present as a moment [in a way] which was not present before in the simple perception of the thing.” At the same time, “accentuation [Hebung] of *S* is involved as a whole containing the *q* within itself” (see 63/85). What now “becomes *visible* through the [predicative] articulation [of the state of affairs ‘*S* is *p*’] is “[t]he previously [invisible, we must now say,¹¹] unarticulated [simply perceived] thing [die vordem ungegliederte Sache].” (63/85; emphasis added). Before this thematization, “the chair does not contain its *being*-yellow as a real property. What was real was [merely, e.g.,] the yellow” (63/86).

In the same context,¹² we are led to understand that in simple perception the parts, moments, and portions that constitute the *Realität* (*Sachheit*) of the perceived object are given there *together* with their *real relations*. A real relation is a relation “given [together] with the intuitive presentation” (65/88) of the real relata. For example, a real relation is the one holding between, say, two patches of green, with the one being brighter than the other.¹³ Thus, Heidegger now says, in an assertion “a real relation is [just] thematically asserted” (65/87). “[The real relation ‘brighter-than’ is already there at the ground level of [simple concrete] perception as a content of the real subject matter.” (65/88). “*Being*-brighter-than,’ however, is accessible only in a

new act, namely, in the first founded act of [the assertoric-]predicative relating.” (65/88).

This *accentuated* state of affairs, i.e., in the end, this *assertive-predicative* structuring of the state of affairs, is neither a real part of the concretely perceived subject matter nor a real relation among the parts of such a subject matter. It is an *ideal*—but still as objective as the real—relation. As we know, this ideal relation is called “*categorial form*.”¹⁴

3. What Heidegger means by his idea under discussion

From all the above we understand that, according to Heidegger, in Husserl’s phenomenology the *appearing* perceptual (“visible”) object is already formed in the manner of the assertive-predicative form “S is p.”¹⁵ The content of its *appearing* total-ity is already formed according to a corresponding predicative assertion.

Nevertheless, as it was indicated above here, this seems to create a serious problem. On the one hand, Heidegger repeatedly stresses that the complete assertive intention “This S is p and q” does *not* find its complete fulfilment in the domain of a simple perception.¹⁶ On the other hand, though, he argues that simple perception is always already permeated by categorial formation. If both of these ideas are to be accepted as true, i.e., if we are to apply here the “principle of charity,” then we cannot but arrive at the conclusion that Heidegger (a) obviously confuses two different senses of “simple perception”: (i) “mere sense perception” and (ii) “full-fledged intentional simple perception,” and (b) accepts the following theses.

(1) Mere sense perception does not amount to anything more than a mere having of the real subject matter, that is, of a mere sensory manifold (perhaps already arrayed in particular compounds of similar sensations—in the respective *Gestalten*).¹⁷

(2) This “having” of sensations amounts merely to a living-through, to a *feeling* of, these sensations and not to a complete intentional *seeing*, i.e., at that level of the mere having of the sensations we do not actually live in a *complete* intentional act in which we intuit an appearing intentional object.¹⁸

(3) We have a complete intentional experience of things in perception only when a *predicative*-judgemental synthesis has at first implicitly or silently structured the sensory manifold.

(4) An actual judgement should, then, be considered as the *explicit mirroring*¹⁹ of the structure responsible for the constitution of the perceptual object, whereas the relevant judgemental meaning-intention seeks and finds fulfilment in correlation with facets of the implicitly judgementally-structured perceptual object.

4. Evidence and reasons underpinning Heidegger’s reading

What is interesting here, I think, is that when Heidegger says that simple full-fledged intentional perception is permeated by categorial intuition he aims neither at an overt nor at a covered criticism of Husserl’s theory of perception. He only thinks that he brings to the fore what is already meant or, curiously enough, even said, in the 6th *LI*, where Husserl analyses his views regarding intentionality and categorial intuition.

We must recognize that in his *LI*, and in particular in the sections of the 6th *LI* that Heidegger seems to have especially in mind, Husserl himself is not as clear as he would try to become only later on the problem of the differences between simple perception and its possible linguistic thematizations. An examination of the 6th *LI* shows that Husserl offers Heidegger certain direct and indirect interpretative grips.

It is true that, at least with regard to part-whole relations, in §48 of the 6th *LI* Husserl treats linguistic thematization of a perceptual object almost in the terms described by Heidegger. In our straightforward (*schlichte*) perception, Husserl says, the perceptual object simply stands before us; its parts and features are indeed in it, but are not yet made our explicit (*expliziten*) objects. However, “the same object can be grasped by us in explicating (*explizierenden*) fashion: acts of articulation can put its parts ‘into relief’ [in gliedernden Akten ‘heben’ wir die Teile ‘heraus.’” (*LI*, 792/152-3).

And, when the issue comes to our thinking and its relation with perception, we read the following. Our synthetic thought or our intellectual function (*intellektive Funktion*) shapes (*formt*) the objects given at first in simple perception in a categorical fashion, in a way that leaves *unaltered the object appearing before us*. “Its fitting into its categorial context [die Einordnung in den kategorialen Zusammenhang] gives it a certain place and role in this context, the role of a relatum, and in particular of a subject- or object- [and a predicate or property-] member.” (*LI*, 796/157).

Passages like these may be considered as direct evidence for Heidegger’s reading under discussion. There is, in addition, one, at least, serious indirect evidence.

In §6.d.α, Heidegger insists that in Phenomenology properly understood we must avoid understanding categoriality in the traditional terms of form in contradistinction to an independently available matter. We should also avoid understanding categoriality in terms of an intellect that acts as the spontaneous formative principle of a receptive matter already offered as such qua sense data to an inert sensuousness. This, it is said, sustains the old mythology of an intellect, which, with its own forms, glues and rigs together the world’s matter. If we are to take into our account the meaning of “intentionality,” Heidegger continues, we will understand that the categorial forms “are not constructs of acts but *objects* [Gegenstände] which manifest themselves in these acts. They are not something made by the subject and even less something added to the real objects, such that the real entity is itself modified by this forming. Rather, they actually present the entity *more truly* in its ‘*being-in-itself*.’” (70/96; emphases added). The categorial forms are a special constituent on the side of the objects and any thematization just highlights, as it were, these constituents. “‘*Constituting*’ [and, more particularly, Husserl’s “categorial constituting”] does not mean producing in the sense of making and fabricating; it means ‘*letting the entity be seen in its objectivity*.’” (71/97).²⁰

This, of course, is how Heidegger interprets Husserl’s notorious remark of his *LI*: “It is not in the reflection upon judgments nor even upon fulfillments of judgments but rather in these fulfillments themselves that we find the true source of the concepts ‘state of affairs’ and ‘being’ (in the copulative sense).²¹ It is not in these acts as objects but in the objects of these acts that we find the abstractive basis for the realization of the concepts in question.” (*LI*, pp. 783-4/141).

Heidegger seems to draw two important conclusions from his reading of this famous passage.

First, he seems to think here that if categorial forms are not subjective constructs, and if they are the abstractive basis for universal-objective concepts like ‘state of affairs,’ ‘being,’ etc., then, in Husserl’s phenomenology, they—or at least a portion of them—have to be present by themselves already on the object-side of the most *elementary* kind of experience, that of simple intentional perception.²²

Second, this subject-independent categorial formation, even if it is proven to be involved in a historical dynamics, i.e., even if the objectual formation is subject to a potential change in time, it has always to retain the character of a linguistic formation—in Husserl’s phenomenology: it retains always the character of a *categorial-predicative* linguistic formation.

The latter point is crucial. To put it dramatically, it is connected with the nature and the possibility of phenomenology and of phenomenologizing. As Heidegger conceives of the meaning of phenomenology (both in §9 of *PHCT* and in §7 of *BT*), phenomenology is the way in which philosophy can, at last, be faithful to the things themselves (and not speculate as in traditional metaphysics). In other words, phenomenology is the way philosophy discovered, after so many centuries of unsuccessful efforts, to put in words the miraculous happening of the appearing of the beings in the world. Thus, if phenomenology is to be consistent with its very motto “to the things themselves!”, it has to have the possibility of *saying* the things *as they themselves are*; it has to be developed as a discourse capable of disclosing the things *as they show themselves by themselves*.

This means that phenomenology, even if it has to deal with the most primordial phenomena, *cannot* claim that they elude the articulative possibilities of language. It means that phenomenology has to be able to *make explicit* the happening of the constitution and of the appearing of beings belonging to *all* the levels of being-givenness; that is, applied to Husserl, even at the ultimate threshold-givenness of perception. Phenomenology has to be able to express its corresponding discoveries in an *intelligible linguistic manner without altering* the content and identity of the discovered things themselves.

Thus, Heidegger, placing Husserl in the context of traditional philosophy, thinks that the only way Husserl has to secure the fate of his phenomenology is to recognize that even perceptual intentionality is through and through predicatively-categorially structured.

5. Something like a ‘standard’ Husserlian response and some further remarks

We must stress the fact that, despite appearances, even in *LI* there are passages indicating a considerable difference between perceptual and categorial intuition. “[I]n the case of structured [geformter] expressions, the notion of a more or less mirror-like [bildartigen] mode of expression ... [is] quite unavailing in describing the relation which obtains between meanings to be expressed, on the one hand, and expressed intuitions, on the other.” (*LI*, 778/134-5). Also, as it becomes evident after the development of his new views regarding the phenomenology of intuition and expression, in the context of his full *correlative* intentional analyses, Husserl remarks, in his

Ideas I, that whereas in expressional intentionality the objectivity under thematization gets ‘conceptually’ *ex-pressed* (‘begrifflich’ sich ausprägt) or *mirrored* (widerspiegelt) according to form and content in the noematic sense of the correlative state of affairs, “these locutions of *mirroring* or *depicturing* [Spiegeln oder Abbilden] ... are to be taken with care since their metaphorical use can easily lead to error.” (*Ideas I*, p. 295/286; emphases added). And this, since, as he explains in §124 of the same work, “expression ... is a mental [geistige] formation exercising *new intentional functions*” (*Ideas I*, 297/288; trns. slightly altered; emphasis added) on the expressed theme originally given in perception.

Nevertheless, if, as we saw, the possibility of such a “careless” mirror-like conception of the relation between expression and perception is so easy to be made, then it appears that Husserl’s analyses never managed to become as clear as we would like them to be.²³ Whether this is at all possible or not, though, is a separate issue.

For example, as we know, a phenomenological description of the manner in which the perceptual object is *articulated* in its *sensuous* dependent and independent parts at the level of perception *cannot* be equated with cognitive-determinative judgments that *re-articulate* the perceptual object in the *logico-syntactical subject-* and *predicate-*members. Even from the time of the *LI* Husserl suggests that perceptual objects are constituted on the basis of structurings that fuse together dependent and independent parts in appearing totalities. This concerns parts like the colour and its surface, this or that coloured patch with other such patches, but also this or that adumbration with other adumbrations of the same thing. Thus, failure to take into account this fold of Husserl’s phenomenology prejudices failure in our understanding of its real content and possibilities. And, as it is plain from Heidegger’s analyses of perceptual intentionality in §5 of *PHCT*, when he lists the kinds of content of the perceived thing he mentions parts, moments, portions, features, etc., but not also—at least not in a definite way—the *adumbrations* of the perceptual thing.²⁴

In Husserl’s phenomenology, the synthesizing possibilities in perception mean totalizing functions in the context of *passive* intentionality. And this totalizing function is not a matter of taking a predicative thematising attitude towards an objectivity in terms of a “subsuming of representations under other representations” or, correlatively, of predicating properties of a subject. It means a unification of elements in terms of a (pre-logico-categorical) intuitional arrangement within the context of the streaming time-consciousness with its retentions and protentions. This is a binding-together function that develops itself on the basis of the *back-and-forth quasi intentional references* of the time-phases of our internal time-consciousness, which contain the sense-material. Husserl’s phenomenology undertook exactly the task of elucidating all these being-constituting events and of making them explicit in its peculiar and *hitherto unheard-of* philosophical language. When it turned to perception, it set as its task to discover the language that could *say what we see before we have said anything thematic about the intuitively seen*. Nevertheless, as we witnessed here, the systematic exploration of the limits of this *adequate phenomenological* language and of its *appropriate grammar* has been and still is, I think, a difficult and open issue.

¹ (J. Patočka: *Body, Community, Language, World*, (trns. E. Kohák, ed. J. Dodd), Open Court Publishing Company, 1998, p. 109).

² Title of Heidegger's lecture course during the Summer Semester of 1925 at the University of Marburg; published under this title as vol. 20 of Heidegger's *GA*.

³ 48/64.

⁴ 48/64.

⁵ Note that with "Unabgehobenheit" we should not mean the "unarticulatedness" but exactly the "articulatedness that its articles are not yet emphasized or highlighted (have not yet been made to stand out)." And Heidegger has already told us that this at first un-highlighted totality of the perceived thing is comprised out of the constituents that we met before in the context of §5.

⁶ 57/77.

⁷ 58/77-8.

⁸ With regard to "being" see also 70/95. Among such non-sensory elements, Heidegger mentions also "thisness," "unity," "plurality," "or," etc. (see 58/78).

⁹ On this occasion, he repeats the enigmatic idea we have already seen: "even simple perception, which is usually called sense-perception, is [in its simplicity] already intrinsically pervaded by categorial intuition." (60/81).

¹⁰ An idea already presented by Heidegger, in §5 of *PHCT*, where his analysis of intentionality and perception are to be found.

¹¹ In the way Heidegger presents the purely sensuously perceived thing, this thing must be *invisible*. It becomes visible only on the basis of its *articulation*; an articulation, though, which is *categorial* (in the sense that it is the form that a predicative assertion imposes upon the—invisible—sensuous 'material'). We already saw him saying that we see what we *say*.

¹² See §6.c, and especially pp. 63/85-6, 64-5/87-8.

¹³ For this thematic see also Husserl's 6th *Logical Investigation*, §50.

¹⁴ 64/87.

¹⁵ In fact, by the categoriality claim Heidegger also means that in the constitution and givenness of the perceptual thing there also function "identity," "unity," and "reality" considered as categories (see pp. 49/66-7, 60-1/81-2, 61/83, 59/80, 61/82-3). The examination of these aspects of Heidegger's claim—which, in any case, get only a marginal treatment in the context of his presentation of the discovery of categorial intuition—exceeds the scope of this presentation.

¹⁶ See, e.g., 68/92.

¹⁷ "Sensuousness is therefore the title for the totality of the constituents of the beings [Gesamtbestand des Seinden] which are given beforehand in their material content [Sachhaltigkeit]. Materiality in general, spatiality in general are sensory concepts... This broad concept of sensuousness is really at the bottom of the distinction of sense and categorial intuition." (70/96; translation slightly altered).

¹⁸ At several points, however, Heidegger calls this merely sensorial perception "sensory intuition" (see, e.g., 92/68). If it is an intuition, though, it has to give its object. But if it gives its objects, it cannot consist in the mere having of a sensory manifold.

¹⁹ For this see, e.g., 48/65, 57/76-7, 56/75, 62/84, 63/85, 64/87, 65/87.

²⁰ Phrases, which, once again, confirm our reading here, that, according to Heidegger, in Husserl there is no perceptual intuition proper (appearing of transcendent objects) independently from categorial intuition. What is purely sensational in sense perception is, according to Heidegger, something that can be found only 'reflectively', that is, abstractively in an artificial way. In this way only we can arrive at pure sensational perception, which, for Heidegger, is constituted by mere sense parts, which cannot fulfil our assertive intentions.

²¹ Heidegger adds here also the concepts "being" (as a category), "this," "and," "or," "one," "several," "aggregate," etc. See 59/79.

²² If they weren't, the corresponding concepts would lose the objective status they are normally attributed; they would acquire instead a time-dependent content (which, at least in Husserl and the tradition, is not the case). This appropriation of Husserl's view regarding the origin of categorial concepts and categorial forms accords with Heidegger's understanding of Dasein and Being in *BT*. Being may be the result of a projection on the side of Dasein. However, it is not the case that this Being is a construct of the Dasein. On the contrary, Dasein finds itself in the respective correlational projection only because of its being always already *thrown* (*geworfen*) within this correlation. In a way, the projected Being is something 'chosen' by the beings themselves (i.e., on the side of the objects).

²³ In this direction, it is very important that later Husserl recognized explicitly this problem. In an important footnote of his *FTL* he admits that in the 6th *LI* the concept of the *syntactical* was in fact treated as identical with that of the *categorial*. In principle, however, his phenomenology makes a distinction between the syntactical that "makes its appearance already in the pre-predicative sphere and, moreover, has its analogues in the spheres of emotion and volition, and, on the other hand, the syntactical that belongs to the specific sphere comprising judgments." (*FTL*, 212 n. 2/ 220 n. 2).

²⁴ On the one hand, according to Heidegger, the adumbrative structure belongs merely to the *perceivedness* of the thing, i.e., to the *qualitative* character of the act and of the appearing of the perceptual thing. It does not, that is, belong to the very ontological constitution of the perceptual thing. On the other hand, Heidegger considers the actual and possible adumbrations of the perceived thing as belonging to- and comprising the content of the total intended thing in perception; these adumbrations are considered as the *Wahrnehmungsgehalt* of the total perceived thing. But this treatment of the adumbrations in the concept of perceptual constitution remains reluctant and marginal. (For this, see 43/58.) At the beginning of §6.b.α.β also, Heidegger gives us an account of the perceptual thing's constitution, in which this thing is considered as the identical totality of an adumbration series accomplished in an one-level act. Soon after this, however, the scene changes towards the implicit/explicit scheme.