



Citation: A. Lanza (2021) Husserl's *Teleologie der «tiefen» Assoziationen* as Foundation of the Theory of Judgment in comparison with Millikan's Teleosemantic Theory. *Aisthesis* 14(2): 65-78. doi: 10.36253/Aisthesis-13152

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Data Availability Statement: All relevant data are within the paper and its Supporting Information files.

Competing Interests: The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

Husserl's *Teleologie der «tiefen» Assoziationen* as Foundation of the Theory of Judgment in comparison with Millikan's Teleosemantic Theory

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Abstract. The paper inquires Husserl's immanent teleology of conscious life, conceived as a *Teleologie der «tiefen» Assoziationen*. The associative genesis entails synthetical processes in the primordial-associative field, driven by the general concept of interest. The resulting syntheses ground the various forms of judgments, both judgments on experience and predicative ones in general. Since the theory's foundation relies on pre-predicative experience, then it must encompass its teleological dimension and, in this sense, the concept of evidence – pivotal in the theory – mirrors the result of the synthesis of fulfilment. This latter, in turn, is driven in an asymptotic path towards a teleological idea of adequacy. This account expresses the complementary mirroring that characterizes the relationship between judging and teleology, without the need to separate teleology from reason. In order to highlight the significance of this framing, the paper is closed by a brief comparison with R. Millikan's teleosemantic theory, whose concept of teleology is shown as flawed by the general concerns proper to naturalism.

Keywords: Absolute cognition, Passive syntheses, Regulative function, Teleosemantics, Evolutionary conditions.

1. Edmund Husserl's phenomenology is significantly characterized by teleological concepts and especially by the idea of a teleological constitution of cognitive life (see Husserl [1950]: 12-13; Husserl [1950a]: 213; Husserl [1973]: 380; Bernet [1979]: 119-120). His theory of knowledge proceeds on the basis of a functional ideal of absolute cognition, playing a teleological role, without this implying the involvement of any outdated form of rationalism. By way of contrast, Husserl programmatically acknowledges the limits of human knowledge, emphasising the need to always take into account the possibility of delusion. This radical awareness of human finitude produces a significant tension between the research of absolute cognition and every ordinary practical attempt of gaining such *desideratum* (see

Miettinen [2014]: 6). Consequently, if, on one side, this leads to the constant frustration of the cognitive ambitions aiming at absolute knowledge of things in themselves, on the other hand, this is not meant to doom the meaning of the teleological dimension to irrelevance (see Aldea [2017]: 111).

We will illustrate how such apparent contradiction has been resolved by Husserl through his interpretation of the thing-in-itself as a mere «idea in the Kantian sense» (Husserl [1950a]: § 143). In fact, although Husserl considers absurd the idea of an *intuitus originarius* (Husserl [1973a]: §§ 33-34; 48-49; 51-53, 65; *Beilage V*), the striving toward an even more complete and detailed acquisition of knowledge assumes the function of a regulative principle. One of the most explicative dynamics, which could illustrate such tension between what can be cognitively sought after and what is cognitive attainable, calls into question the fundamental notion of *Abschattungen*. This notion is a classic concept of the Husserlian philosophical lexicon (see Husserl [1984]: § 3; Husserl [1950]: §§ 3, 41, 149; Husserl [1950a]: § 61) and translates the phenomenon of perspective involved in visual perception of spatial objects. We shall immediately point out that this shift onto visual perception does not contradict nor narrow-down the mainframe of the teleological structure of cognition. In fact, it is precisely on the concept of visual perception as the fundamental form of cognition that Husserl grounds his whole epistemology. It follows that to focus on this specific kind of perception is everything but a mean to downsize a broader issue. On the contrary, we would like to illustrate why Husserl's immanent teleology of conscious life should be primarily conceived as a *Teleologie der «tiefen» Assoziationen*¹, i.e., as a teleology applying to that multiplicity of correlated passive syntheses which

¹ We have chosen to borrow this label, partly modifying its form, from the expression Brudzińska used to illustrate the Freudian paradigm (Brudzińska [2019]: § 7.1.5). We believe that this choice is justified in relation to the author's own thesis that: «Ein Rückgriff auf Husserls Ergebnisse bietet m. E. den Freudschen Thesen zur Tiefenassoziation ein festes epistemologisches Fundament».

constitute the *genetic plot* of every perceptual knowledge.

Briefly, the phenomenological analysis of an usual perceptual experience provides that spatial objects would never be fully given in intuition with respect to all their sides and aspects: visual perception only grasps the front of an object, whereas the back and the other sides of the item fall entirely outside of the visual field, producing adumbrations (i.e., *Abschattungen*)².

The essentially perspective nature of the visual perception entails that an adequate cognition of an entirely determined object is an unobtainable goal, since even a continuous examination of the object will never yield a complete perception of all sides simultaneously. This means that the ideal to which the knowledge of what is transcendent refers, is transformed into a conception of an endless progress of cognition itself (see Bernet [1997]: 120).

We will show later that, incidentally, this dynamic translates into an *ethics* of theoretical praxis, requalifying the philosophical task as potentially endless. Meanwhile, however, it should also be borne in mind that the phenomenological reduction excludes every reference to real objects as they are conceived in a natural attitude. Therefore, the ideal of adequate cognition becomes an ideal of adequate representation.

The term «representation», at least as it is addressed in the *Logische Untersuchungen*, broadly designates the connection between the appearance and what appears: the represented object is the intentional object and an adequate representation of it can be reached for Husserl only when the intuitive intention is completely fulfilled. In other words, we have an adequate representation when the appearance brings the fully determined object to absolute self-givenness. Conversely, a representation is inadequate when it is not purely intuitively given, for example, when we perceive just an

² See also Husserl (1966): *Einleitung*, §1 (*Originalbewusstsein und perspektivische Abschattung der Raumgegenstände*). The relationship between this kind of analysis of perception and *Gestaltpsychologie* is a recurrent topic: see, for example, Heinämaa (2009).

adumbration of a three-dimensional object. This partial self-givenness is always accompanied by an empty co-intentional content, which, essentially, belongs to the perception itself as an anticipatory consciousness of further possible self-givennesses.

In fact, according to Husserl, we always intend to see the entire thing and, also in reflection, the side properly seen refers to the as-yet-unseen sides and to the thing as a whole (see Bernet, Kern, Marbach [1993]: 116). Husserl defines «authentic (*eigentliche*) appearance» what is actually seen, whereas he calls «inauthentic (*uneigentlich*) appearance» the apperceptive surplus, or the empty co-intention (see Husserl [1973a]: §16 *et passim*). The authentic character of the perceptual act derives from its original self-givenness in intuition, «in its physical (*leibhaft*) presence» and not by means of an image or of a conventional sign representing the object. This intuitiveness comes from the complex of sensuous data interwoven with the apperceptive act (see Bernet, Kern, Marbach [1993]: 117-118). The apperceptive surplus, instead, lacks sensuous data and the determination of its possible fulfilment depends, indeed, on the kinaesthetic course. Therefore, the partiality of the authentic appearance implies the necessity of a supplement, thanks to which a dynamization of the process of constitution through kinaesthetics is produced, according to a co-implied horizon pointing to diverse possibilities.

Thus, since every appearance always refers to other possible co-implied appearances of the same object, the chance to yield an adequate knowledge of the object must be excluded. This applies even with respect to a single side, since there is always the possibility for a new, different determination to be added. Consequently, the only result seemingly obtainable is a set of multiple appearances, progressively constituted in an infinite experiential process. In other words, the essentially incomplete nature of this cognitive process seems to make it impossible to reach adequacy, hence the teleological meaning of such principle seems to lose its sense.

As we have already anticipated, Husserl provides a solution to this apparent paradox, high-

lighting the regulative function of the aforementioned teleological principle (see Husserl [1950a]: §§ 143, 149; Kant [1781/1787]: B672/A644; Cottingham, Stoothoff, Murdoch [1995]: 27-30). In fact, although transcendent objects cannot be adequately perceived in a *closed appearance*³, Husserl maintains that:

als «Idee» (im Kantischen Sinn) ist gleichwohl die vollkommene Gegebenheit vorgezeichnet - als ein in seinem Wesenstypus absolut bestimmtes System endloser Prozesse kontinuierlichen Erscheinens, bzw. als Feld dieser Prozesse ein a priori bestimmtes Kontinuum von Erscheinungen mit verschiedenen aber bestimmten Dimensionen, durchherrscht von fester Wesensgesetzlichkeit. (Husserl [1950a]: 331)⁴

In other words, the *idea* of perfect givenness as *telos* predesignates the continuum of appearances. This *idea* is presented in intellectual seeing and corresponds by essence to an infinity, but:

[d]ie Idee einer wesensmäßig motivierten Unendlichkeit ist nicht selbst eine Unendlichkeit; die Einsicht, daß diese Unendlichkeit prinzipiell nicht gegeben sein kann, schließt nicht aus, sondern fordert vielmehr die einsichtige Gegebenheit der Idee dieser Unendlichkeit. (Husserl [1950a]: 331)⁵

³ «Prinzipiell kann ein Dingreales, ein Sein solchen Sinnes in *einer abgeschlossenen Erscheinung* nur “inadäquat” erscheinen. Damit hängt wesensmäßig zusammen, daß keine auf solch einer inadäquat gebenden Erscheinung beruhende Vernunftsetzung “endgültig”, keine “unüberwindlich” sein kann» (Husserl [1950a]: 319; *our italics*).

⁴ See also Husserl (1983): 342: «[...] *perfect givenness is nevertheless predesignates as «Idea»* (in the Kantian sense) – as a system which, in its eidetic type, is an absolutely determined system of endless processes of continuous appearances, or as a field of these processes, an a priori determined continuum of appearances with different, but determined, dimensions, and governed throughout by a fixed set of eidetic laws».

⁵ See also Husserl (1983): 342: «[T]he idea of an infinity motivated in conformity with its essence is not itself an infinity; seeing intellectually that this infinity of necessity cannot be given does not exclude, but rather requires, the intellectually seen givenness of the *idea* of this infinity».

Therefore, on one hand, there is the teleological function of this ideal of adequateness, while, on the other, there is the objective unity progressively constituted by the continuous synthesis of appearances. The form of unification that allows to constitute the perceived thing as a unity of multiple appearances is mainly, according to Husserl, the temporal form of the flow of consciousness, which is provided through syntheses of coexistence and succession.

In the *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins* (1928), focused precisely on the temporal constitution of pure sense-data (but also on the self-constitution of phenomenological time), Husserl argues that every perception of enduring objects consists of three moments necessarily interconnected one to another: the «primal impression (*Urimpression*)» or a series of primordial sensations occurring in a «momentary simultaneity (*Momentanzugleich*)»; the *retention*, «a continuity of primary memories» as consciousness that simultaneously holds back; a last moment consisting in an expectation or *protention*, i.e., a projection in the immediately approaching of the moment just passed (see Bernet Kern, Marbach [1993]: 102). Together, they describe the process of apprehension of a temporal object, which continues to take place as a progressive flow of impressions, retentions and protentions⁶. Nevertheless, the continuous synthetic coordination of appearances with the same appearing object also requires a continuous synthesis of identification, which is performed by means of association.

Association is the basic law of the immanent genesis and operates according to a paradigm of similarity that can be basically expressed with the formula «this recalls that». It functions as a purely immanent connection with regard to the content and can be described phenomenologically as a genesis, where one of the elements is, in relation to consciousness, that which evokes, while the other is that which is evoked. Originally, associa-

tion determines the most general synthesis of sensuous data connected in immanence: for example, given a homogenous perceptual field, an individual datum raises into prominence since it contrasts with something else, for instance, its background. But contrast goes hand in hand with similarity, producing the coming into prominence of the unlike from the basis of the common. Homogeneity and heterogeneity are, in fact, the criteria according to which syntheses of identification are performed, differing in degrees until the limit-case of a complete likeness. In the case of enduring objects, thanks to retention, the present content is unified with a non-present (prior or subsequent) one: passing from likeness to likeness, the content of the new alike comes to a perfect coincidence with that of the first, realizing what Husserl defines as blending (*Verschmelzung*) (See Husserl [1985]: 78).

The ever-new, synthetic and continuous identification of the changing content is necessarily maintained in the progressive constitution of immanence and, at the same time, forms the system of coexistence ordered according to a succession (See Kant [1780/1781]: B233). The uniqueness of the temporal position is, therefore, none other than the correlate of the form of identification, hence consciousness can re-awaken the object and grasp it again as the same recognizable item.

If the subject wants to reactivate a past experience of the same object, then a repetition occurs; but if a new apprehension/explication of the same object takes place, then it will be experienced with a familiar horizon of «acquired cognitions» (see Husserl [1985]: 128). In other words, every new possible appearance has an horizon made up of possible appearances, each assuming the form of determinate but empty intentions, a characterization which allows to maintain both the validity of past experiences and the openness to new contents. These pre-cognitions are not arbitrary, but rather more or less pre-determined or «motivated»⁷. They

⁶ This structure is rooted in Augustinian's reflections on time; see, for example, Book XI of *Confessions*.

⁷ The concept of motivation plays a central role in the analysis of time consciousness and passive synthesis, since the «hanging together» of data reflects the motiva-

do not push the same way for their actualization. Their motivational force can depend on relations of compatibility and contiguity between either the inauthentic appearance and the related authentic one or with the retained, elapsed past continuum of appearances. On the other hand, the motivational force can also be driven by the specific interest of the perceiving subject.

The role of the concept of interest (*Interesse*) is particularly relevant in Husserlian genetic analyses. Incidentally, Husserl argues that every act of perception has to be accompanied by an interest of some sort, more precisely, by a perceptual one (see Husserl [2004]: 103). Together with the so-called notion of «focused intentionality», that is, attention, interest is involved as a fundamental pre-condition within the general domain of objectifying experiences⁸. Indeed, interest and attention are deeply intertwined and their role is especially significant for objectifying acts of perception.

At the level of the active sphere, we recognize egoic motivations of interest, conceived as active tendencies to aims or voluntary actions; while, at the level of perceptual experience, this same cognitive interest expresses itself as a striving toward an adequate knowledge of the thing. This striving towards the perceived object expresses the core of the epistemic process in its concreteness: the tension between actual intentions and their potential

tional character of experience and implies its subjective structure.

⁸ The notion of perceptual interest was originally referred to the act of «attending», described by Husserl, using Carl Stumpf's words, as *Lust am Bemerken* (see Husserl [2004]: 108). In early manuscripts from 1898 on *Attention as Interest*, the introduction of the notion of *spezielle Meinung* (or *Sonderwahrnehmung*) describes the specificity of the act of singling out an object as the target from a general objective context. But this act corresponds to the formal condition of attention, whereas the full phenomenon must also involve a concrete interest, motivated by or referring to an intended object. This striving towards the perceived object expresses the core of the epistemic process in its concreteness and thus the core of intentionality itself, since the achievement of an adequate perception of the object demands for a certain tension involving the subject.

fulfilment in ongoing perceptions, describable as a general perceptual drive, can suggest, for example, the inspection of different appearances of the same object from different perspectives. Here, *kinaestheses* come into play, since also kinaesthetic paths depend on this specific interest which actively motivates the kinaesthetic course and, correlatively, the further perceptual course.

A sort of genetic impulse initiates, therefore, the active process of perceiving and then lets it keep going towards further objectifying processes. The intensity of the involvement, of the interest, influences the process of noticing: the perceiving subject prefers one object or certain parts of it, structuring, unseen, the field of perception according to focus and horizon, foreground, and background of consciousness.

The ultimate goal remains the achievement of the most adequate perception of the object, as close as possible to an ideal completeness. For this reason, the performance of the synthesis of continuous appearances, driven by the cognitive interest, is primarily a synthesis of fulfilment, which incorporates the attempt to obtain such goal.

In this sense, the idea of the teleological anticipation of absolute cognition, as the unity of present and possible appearances, constitutes the general principle of reference. It is «embodied» in the perceptual cognitive drive and, therefore, guides the process of synthesis of fulfilment, which, we may say, has an «asymptotic» path with respect to its ideal of adequacy. For this reason, Husserl himself, on occasions, speaks of the satisfaction of the cognitive interest through *optimal* givenness rather than a complete/adequate one (See Husserl [1973a]: § 32, 36f; also see Doyon [2018]).

But it is equally true that every incomplete process of cognition structurally implies the idea of adequate cognition as *telos*, although, this way, the perceptual process ends up being unfeasible. This teleological structure, characterizing perception, can be applied to theoretical activity in general, since «the teleological aspiration for absolute cognition of objective being becomes a pursuit of the infinite advancement of the process of cognition» (Bernet [1979]: 130).

2. The assumption that the perceptual consciousness constantly strives to reach its object while plainly aware to fail such task, expresses and reflects Husserl's general teleological conception about human life. According to Husserl, human life is «latent auf Vernunft ausgerichtet» (Husserl [1954]: 13) and this implies an «existential involvement», which requires bringing the latent rationality of *Lebenswelt* into manifestation (see Huang [2021]: § 3).

According to Husserl, in fact, the history of western philosophy itself, since its infancy, has adopted this same commitment to a certain primacy of reason, striving after knowledge for its own sake. This history can be read as the constant attempt to approximate such goal and, for Husserl, phenomenology, thanks to its special scientific procedures, is the most serious effort to continue in this direction (see Bernet [1978]).

Within this frame, the role of the ideal of adequate cognition results clearer: it is not only the necessary theoretical extreme of a dyadic adequate-inadequate/complete-incomplete structure: it is a goal, which in turn implies and at the same time motivates a voluntary activity of the ego as an authentic, general interest-in-knowledge (*Erkenntnisinteresse*). In other words, the infinite nature of theoretical task does not deter but rather encourages the philosophical inquiry and, according to Bernet, it is exactly this practical dimension, as a motivating impulse, that make the teleological function of the ideal of absolute cognition intelligible (see Bernet [1979]: 131).

Moreover, the fact that the subject accepts to undertake this path of infinite research takes on an ethical dimension for Husserl, insofar as the acceptance of this commitment translates into a form of responsibility. Such responsibility does not only extend itself to the theoretical investigation but to human life as a whole, assuming the form of an absolute self-responsibility (see Bernet [1979]: 131)⁹. According to Husserl, reason is the

specific element characterizing human beings and a humanity that conceives itself as rational – that is, a humanity understanding it is rational precisely because of its will to target apodictic reason – understands that this means a life dedicated to rationality and to the efforts to achieve it.

Human existence assumes, therefore, a specific sense, i.e., the sense of an ultimate self-understanding of human beings as responsible beings:

ein Selbstverständnis als Sein im Berufen sein zu einem Leben in der Apodiktizität – nicht nur abstrakt und in gemeinem Sinne apodiktische Wissenschaft treibend – sondern eine ihr gesamtes konkretes Sein in apodiktischer Freiheit zu einer apodiktischen, zu einer in allem tätigen Leben ihrer Vernunft – in der sie Menschheit ist – verwirklichende. (Husserl [1954]: 275)¹⁰

Hence, once established that apodictic reason is the ultimate goal of man as such, this implies that being a man means to embody this teleological dimension, this ought-to-be, since this teleology dominates every action and every egological project (see Husserl [1954]: 290).

Finally, this recognition by reason of an apodictic *telos* in everything, this self-understanding according to a-priori principles, can only be brought forward by the philosophical practice (see Husserl [1954]: 290). Philosophy sheds light on the horizon of reference shared by all humans, grounded on the concept of validity, which, in turn, proves essential to human living. It follows that, for Husserl, reason brings to revelation the communitarian sharing of the same human spirit thanks to which the overcoming of the differences in modes of apprehension, bond to single cultures, becomes possible, thus leading to a humanity joint and in harmony.

¹⁰ See also Husserl [1970]: 340: «(a) *self-understanding as being in being called to a life of apodicticity*, not only in abstractly practicing apodictic science in the usual sense but [as being mankind] which realizes its whole concrete being in apodictic freedom by becoming apodictic mankind in the whole active life of its reason —through which it is human».

⁹ Husserl refers to Descartes' project of radical intellectual honesty with regard to the demand for self-responsibility (see Husserl [1950]: § 2).

In fact, this principle of reason equates to a supra-national spirit pushing every culture towards goals apparently proper to each one though, actually, relative since, all in all, they express the adherence to a broader existential aim. By showing the unity of a same human spirit, this universal *telos* both spans through history and «shapes» it in each of its manifestations, subtending its own meaning in an «intentional co-implication» (see Ghigi [2017]: 94). This harmonic unity is defined, by Husserl, *Einstimmigkeit* (agreement and unity) of mankind: it crosses every time of history and repeats itself in every age within the ever-different *Weltanschauungen*. This builds the core of Husserl's philosophy of history understood as interpretation and reconstruction of the very *telos* of history itself¹¹.

According to Husserl, only the gaze of a philosopher can catch a glimpse at this universal sense – at this *historische Besinnung* (see Ghigi [2017]: 96). Phenomenology in particular, by addressing not only ideal and a priori structures but, above all, the act of theorizing in itself and what it can offer to us, incorporates an awareness of the teleological idea (that aforementioned *telos* produced by humanity) which acts, in a historical perspective, as co-author of its own historicity (70, note 29).

¹¹ Following many theorists of cultural relativism, this conception of human life in historicity would sound very controversial: as radical differences exist among cultures, the necessity of a relativistic assessment of value-systems and theoretical commitments seem to many unavoidable (see, for example, Herskovits [1955]). On the contrary, Husserl's position seems to embody an anti-relativist universalism, since he retains that, notwithstanding the different contexts in which a culture is formed, still there is one true world, from which all cultures are generated. It is Husserl's conviction, moreover, that all humanity has the same rational capacity, the full expression of which, however, depends on the degree of awareness of the people in question. This is the dimension of relativity that emerges, but we do not have neither the expertise nor the intention to analyse the possible resilience of Husserl's thesis in relation to a debate that is beyond the argumentative direction of the present work (see Husserl [2008]: 673ff.)

Moreover, the philosophical-theoretical attitude morphing into a phenomenological attitude, opens up to a supra-historical perspective removing those «occlusions of sense» (see Costa, Spinicci, Franzini [2002]: 232) that put philosophy under the crisis lamented by Husserl in his last work. In fact, phenomenology in virtue of its peculiar ability of critical re-evaluation of the conditions of validity at the base of scientific thought, is able to reform the history of mankind towards an acknowledgement – both individual and communitarian – of that sense handed down throughout history as eventual *telos* of its own living (see Husserl [1954]: 503).

To this extent, Husserl introduces the notions of *universale Zweckidee* (see Husserl [2014]: 256) and human-*Lebensinn* to point out the sense which hides «behind the curtains of rational behaviour» yet moves the intentionality of reason throughout history. In other words, this sense, as rational motivation, brings along an intention of higher level that is, one which is not individual but rather shared by the whole humanity, in turn, tending to realize itself into it.

Now, the phenomenologist shall ask: what does universal reason tend towards in its unfolding in history? Is there, perhaps, a *telos* of spirit from which we may derive not just a *telos* of history – revealed by the presence of reason – but also *in* history (as *Weltteleologie*; See Husserl [2014]: 254)? Husserl answers that the rational essence of the human being determines his acting in virtue of «die absolute Wahrheit, im vollen und ganzen Sinn als das *unum verum bonum*» (Husserl [2014]: 250)¹² which has a regulative function. This absolute *logos* works as norm for the action and is revealed by reason through its endless task of producing finite ideas addressing this absoluteness.

The proceeding of reason points, therefore, towards an idea of infinity that justifies the finite. Such an idea generates in history and it is only history itself that may let it re-emerge as product of the reason drawing on the absolute. This is how

¹² Author's translation: «the absolute Truth, in a full and total sense as the *unum verum bonum*».

the idea of an *absolute Teleologie* is outlined: as the sense underlying the historic explicitation of reason (see Husserl [2014]: 249).

3. The ideal of absolute truth pursued by reason at the historical level also grounds the Husserlian theory of judgement. In this section we will briefly illustrate how this founding relationship is structured with special reference to *Erfahrung und Urteil*.

Judgments, in general, appear as alleged knows but most of what is presented as knowledge is subjected to mistake. The need for a critique of judgments as to their truth stems from here. Generally, the study of logic has dealt with the laws of judgments' formation that is, the formal principles and rules as sufficient conditions of knowledge in general. These laws apply exclusively in virtue of their form, hence regardless of their material content. In this sense, they are characterized as prescriptive conditions aimed at reaching the truth: if a judgment infringes these formal conditions, it shall never achieve truth as result. On the other hand, following Husserl, even when the judgment satisfies such formal conditions, this is still not enough to fulfil its aim. Thus, Husserl poses the problem of what must be added to the formal conditions in order for truth – or evidence, so to put it in subjective terms – to be gained. These conditions concern «die subjektiven Charaktere der Einsichtigkeit, der Evidenz und die subjektiven Bedingungen ihrer Erzielung» (Husserl [1985]: 26; *Einleitung* §3)¹³.

In other words, the argument of the inquiry splits in two, here: on one end there is the problem of the forms of judgment and their validity; on the other end, we have the issue of the subjective conditions needed to reach the evidence. This latter theme considers judgment as subjective activity, for it addresses those operations of consciousness in which the judgmental formations pretending to be expressions of knowledge origi-

nate. In other terms, Husserl advances a phenomenological clarification about the origin of judgment and consequentially a phenomenological genealogy of logics in general. These themes have, as starting point, the problems bond to the definition of evidence, which, according to Husserl, were discarded by the scholars of traditional logics¹⁴.

To talk about «evidence» means nothing else, to Husserl, that to talk about self-giveness that is, the way an object might be designated as present «in flesh and blood (*leibhaft da*)». This characterization rivals the re-presentation – for example in remembrance or fantasy – as in the case of external perception when an object is given in an effective perception. Therefore, an act of consciousness results clear when it characterizes itself as what is giving the very object.

Actually, every thought implies that some objects must already be given, hence wherever a generic activity of thought might take place and, in particular, in the case of judgmental activity, there must be representable objects previously given. In fact, the judgment as activity directed towards knowledge, points necessarily at what exists, which must be given in advance in order to stand as the object of the judging itself. Yet, to the extent for judgments to be clear, the application of the formal rules of logics to these self-givenesses is not sufficient. The achievement of knowledge presupposes, in fact, that also the conditions for the modes of pre-giveness of the very objects as to their content must be given.

Every species of object has its own mode of self-giving, i.e., evidence; for example, as we have seen, spatial objects possess a kind of evidence, an originary self-giving of their own, that does not

¹³ Author's translation: «the subjective characteristics of intelligibility, of evidence, and the subjective conditions for achieving it».

¹⁴ Husserl links up this notion to the Cartesian tradition, hinged on the *methode* of *clare et distincte percipire/concevoir clairement et distinctement* (Descartes [1641]: 13-14). The criteria of clarity and distinction drawn up in the *Meditations* stay, for Descartes, as the only condition of true and exact knowledge, hence they become signs of evidence (Descartes [1641]: 27, 35). However, according to Husserl, Descartes was blind to the need to discover the level of certainty within the ego (Husserl [2002]: §15).

match cases of adequate givenness or apodictic intuition¹⁵. Anyway, whatever the kind of evidence might be at place, the givenness of an object does not include any predicative form: on the contrary, to get to a predicative judgment, the object must necessarily be given in evidence. Such assumption, that is the foundation of predicative evidence onto the pre-predicative one, seems absolutely obvious as to the judgments based on experience. Husserl, however, would demonstrate that any possible predicative judgment generally evident depends on the foundation on pre-predicative evidence.

Therefore, also the judgments usually called into play by logics, thus referring to a kind of apodictic evidence, do not have indeterminate truths in themselves as their content. They rather refer to a «world» of substrates and to the conditions of objective evidence with which these substrates are given. Hence, what grounds the pretence to knowledge is not something to be found in judgments: it is mandatory to trace up to the modes of pre-givenness of the objects of judgment.

The seeking for the character of objective evidence is the search for the evident givenness of individuals, and such evidence gives back, broadly, to the concept of experience. The theory of pre-predicative experience (namely that experience giving the most originary substrates sporting objective evidence) makes for the founding incipit of the phenomenological theory of judgment. For this reason, the search must begin from the consciousness of pre-predicative experience to follow, thereafter, the rise of evidences of higher level.

Starting from the one grounded on experience as the most elementary form of judgment, it is precisely on the basic, immediate kind of experience that we need to focus on: this is none other than the experience of the sensible substrates conceived as *concrete world*. Thus, the analysis is focused on judgments grounded on external perception and, moving from there, it identifies the structures of predicative judging in general and its self-construing on pre-predicative operations.

It is in order to get to this result, that the phenomenological analysis has devoted primarily to the study of pre-predicative experience and to the general structure of receptivity, distinguishing, as we have seen, several structures as the one of passive pre-givenness and that of interest along with different forms of synthesis.

Through the phenomenological analysis of the pre-predicative structures of consciousness, in the previous section we attempted at showing how the Husserlian theory of cognition and, in particular, his analysis of perception, depend on a teleological concept of absolute truth. We shall infer, therefore, that if the theory of judgment is grounded on pre-predicative experience, then it must encompass that teleological dimension. In this sense, the concept of evidence, on which the theory of judgments hinges, mirrors the result of the synthesis of fulfillment. This latter, as we have clarified, is driven in an asymptotic path towards an ideal of adequacy.

From this we derive, conclusively, that the teleological dimension affects the foundation of judgments in a circular movement's fashion, since it stems from nature (the concrete world) assumed as experience of sensible substrata to reach the originary structures of consciousness. This makes for a roundtrip, eventually getting to the deepest nature of mankind to be found in reason, which implies an ideal of absolute truth playing a regulative function within a teleological context.

4. In order to enhance the significance of this complementary relation between judgment and teleology, which, as we have presented, has the benefit of not amending reason, we believe it could be useful, at this point, to put it against the benchmark of a conception of teleology which is very different with regard to both its ontological and epistemological presuppositions.

We are referring to the so-called *teleological theories of semantics* or *teleosemantics*: a group of theories belonging to a more contemporary research context, focusing primarily on a quest for a place for mind in the realm of nature.

Such doctrines endorse a naturalistic framework aimed at portraying the dynamics of rep-

¹⁵ On the problem of givenness in Husserl, see Palette (2018).

representational states at play in nature. The general issue these theories tackle is the one of naturalizing mental intentionality, which, in turn, can be re-defined in terms of the so-called problem of «aboutness»: the fact that many mental states share the property of being about something. As Ruth Millikan recently pointed out, this is probably the most important unsolved issue at stake within a naturalistic theory of the mind: «[f]ailure to account for our capacity to represent individuals in language and thought has been, perhaps, the most serious failing common to contemporary naturalist theories of content» (Millikan [2004]: 43).

Briefly, if objects like contents, references and true conditions as semantic properties were to enter the physicalist framework, they would need to be unfolded according to non-semantic conditions, since only natural properties count for science.

Initially, a paradigm of causality seemed to fit the explanatory needs in the quest for a naturalistic account of intentional mental states, given that causal chains are already integrated into the mechanical framework. The interaction between the body and the environment have always been discussed in causal terms, by associating sense organs' stimulations with cerebrally located processes of electrical dissipation and kinaesthetic as well as behavioural outputs.

In 1981, Fred Dretske advanced one of the most relevant theories of causal representation hinged on the notion of intentional content as presupposing a counterfactual link between the stimuli and the conveyed information (see Dretske [1981]). Yet, his proposal (and in general all theories based on a similar model) has met several objections, linked for example to the solutions proposed in order to resolve the *Quinean* problem of indeterminacy or even the difficulties to account for instances of misrepresentation (see Fodor [1984]: 1987). This discussion cannot be summarised here without detracting from the complexity of the arguments¹⁶. We will there-

fore limit ourselves to illustrate a point crucial for understanding the point of moving from the causal to the teleological paradigm.

Dretske's theory impasse regarding the content ascription can be summarized saying that the potential information carried by a given signal results as the conjunction of all the possible contents associated with it. This makes it impossible to discriminate which one, among all the possible causal information that a vehicle might carry, properly explains an organism's behaviour (see Zipoli Caiani [2014]: chap. 5). Consequently, the problem of content ascription should be re-formulated introducing normative constraints, therefore asking how to pinpoint the *right* representational content from the complex environmental information flow.

Teleosemantic theories propose, as a solution, to ascribe to a representational system the purpose of carrying a specific informational content, precisely the relevant one among all the others involved. This means that such theories attribute to mental states the biological function of vehiculating contents pre-selected according to evolutionary criteria. Therefore, it is implied that the organism is endowed with a teleological perspective.

temnacy, affecting Dretske's theory but also the causal model in general, led to the need to devise new strategies for discriminating between equivalent content (as originating from the same causal source) that could be ascribed to the same representational vehicle. In order to avoid this ambiguity, Dretske introduced a correlation between ascribable contents and a limited period of causal stimulation, called «learning period» (Dretske [1981]: 194-195). This proposal met especially the objections of Fodor because it did not specify whether this learning period was supposed to last for a lifetime or restricted to a given period (Fodor [1984]: 241). Even after Dretske introduced the corrective function of a teacher to ensure that the learning process took place without errors (exchanges between similar contents), Fodor's objections did not cease: such an extrinsic interference did not fit at all with a naturalistic perspective such as the one they both shared (242). The other problem concerns the difficulties that causal theories encounter in explaining cases of mystification, i.e., those cases in which the mental state is tokened in a certain individual, but its typical external causal condition of truth is not. Fodor named this problem «the disjunction problem» (Fodor [1987]: 102).

¹⁶ For the sake of completeness, we shall briefly sketch some key-arguments: the Quinean problem of inde-

In particular, Ruth Millikan introduced, during the '80es, the notion of function, derived from the background of evolutionary biology, in order to address the normative aspects concerning content ascription¹⁷. This account of function sports the peculiar feature of explicating the conditions of truth of representational states by means of their evolutionary functions.¹⁸ An important mean to this extent was the concept of *proper functions*, corresponding to those particular traits motivating the survival and evolution of a given organism (be it biological or an artifact) in time. Put in other words, if a certain trait proves to have been maintained in the historic evolution of an organism, then it can be told having been selected because of the crucial role it played in the biological adaptation of that organism.

Now, since in this framework adaptation stands as teleologically connoted, the paradigm of teleosemantics assumed by Millikan sets the representation of the surrounding environment as primary adaptive function, since the ability to select and grasp relevant informative contents has enormous impact on the chances of survival and perpetration of a species.

Millikan addresses the task of defining what environmental information are by associating

them with mental representations in light of an inner modelling of the outside world. This cognitive capacity matches the evolutionary conditions because the cognitive system which actualizes it is integral to the organism and the organism itself is the result of an evolution. Reformulating all this according to Millikan, the cognitive system arranges that mental states are vehicles of content because such function of representation boosts the achievement of the biological purpose of the organism as a whole, increasing its chances to prosper (see Millikan [1989]).

Following this line, the proper function of mental states depends on the organism's evolutionary history since the criteria that pre-determine contents are established by evolutionary selection. For example, it could be told that the mechanism producing mental states as beliefs intends to contribute to the production of inferences that might turn useful in terms of adaptation. This way, following Millikan, it would be possible to avoid the aforementioned disjunction problem, highlighted by Fodor (Fodor [1987]: 102), affecting causal models and, at the same time, to leave room for cases of misrepresentation. Let it be added, as a side note, that Millikan has the ambition to account in a teleological frame not only the content of mental representations but also the meanings of linguistic expressions (see Millikan [1984]).

In any case, to proceed on the basis of a purposive criterion while keeping within naturalistic borders could be misleading: tracking an organism's evolutionary history, for example, saying that the actual exemplars are the best result after a natural selection, implies to attribute evaluation skills to a completely non-intentional process¹⁹. In fact,

¹⁷ The appeal to biology is an appeal to a conception of natural-scientific, and therefore implicitly causal, lawfulness. Millikan transfers explanatory priority to evolutionary theory, which functions not only as a theory but as an instantiation of the lawfulness of nature (see Millikan [1993]).

¹⁸ Accounts of biological function with reference to natural selection generally state that «a trait's functions causally explain the existence or maintenance of that trait in a given population via the mechanism of natural selection» (see Allen, Neal [2020]). Millikan, together with William Wimsatt and Karen Neander, believes that the excursus of natural selection corresponds to the selection process that legitimises the notion of biological function. This approach is considered a direct natural selection approach but others sustain an indirect one: for example, Norbert Wiener and colleagues argued in favour of an indirect account, aimed to provide a naturalized explanation for the goal-directed behaviour of biological systems through reference to their organization (see Rosenblueth, Wiener, Bigelow [1943]; also see Wimsatt [1972]; Neander [1991]).

¹⁹ In this sense, a naturalized teleology, as teleosemantics, should be called into play to offer an appropriate role to values: they should be considered, therefore, not just as effects that tend to bring about their own production, but good effects for their own production. This conception is the core of *value theories* or evaluationism, which Fulford synthetically has defined as follows: «the values-out counterpart of a value theorist is a fact theorist: the values-in counterpart of naturalism is evaluationism»

crediting the natural selection with the capacity to discern options on the basis of an ideal optimum, thus predicting future scenarios, results in the adoption of an axiological kind of reasoning which implies the presupposition of a «mindful caregiver» (see Bedeau [1991]). By the way, no naturalistic scientist could ever accept that the process of natural selection *cares* about something since, in the evolutionary history of an organism, only reproductive events count²⁰. Therefore, to discuss biological functions in teleological terms may only be a colloquialism, at the most, since to attribute purposiveness means to attribute intentionality (see Zipoli Caiani [2014]: §6.1). When we say something has an aim, we mean precisely that something is directed towards something else, hence the possibility of teleological accounts of mind would produce a vicious circle. To conclude, it seems eventually clear that the effort of integrating a teleological approach into a materialistic framework, even when the account of teleology used has been taken from a clearly scientific context (such as the concept of function belonging to evolutionary biology), rises some serious difficulties²¹.

Although both Millikan and Husserl recognised the importance of such a teleological approach in order to properly account for inten-

tionality, the deep divergency in their conceptions of the world impacts dramatically on the results of such accounting. While Husserl ascribes a teleological significance to the process of constituting lived experience, on which his theory of judgement is based, Millikan's teleological approach is conditioned by the general concerns of naturalism: by excluding the role of consciousness and the transcendental perspective, her attempts to integrate the mental dimension with rationality, and thus her hopes of illuminating the profound nature of human life, remain rather questionable.

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(Fulford [2000]: 78, note a). Briefly, the idea would be that a trait is for the sake of any effect by virtue of which it is naturally selected, i.e., by virtue of which one natural selection favors. There are different grades of teleology corresponding to different etiological roles for value: see Bedeau (1992). However, evaluationism seems to remain incompatible at least with narrow naturalism.

²⁰ It must be reported, however, that there are some voices within the contemporary debate seemingly arguing in the opposite direction, such as Andrea Gambarotto, who re-proposes Hegel's position on Romantic *Naturphilosophie*: in his reading, the Hegelian proposal results in «a theory of biological individuality in which teleology is understood as internal purposiveness, i.e., autonomous self-organization» (Gambarotto [2018]: XXII).

²¹ This general consideration does not imply that the contemporary debate has not offered interesting attempts to naturalize teleology: for example, see Nagel (1979): 276 ff., 298 ff.; Wright (2020): 26 ff., 56 ff. On this topic, see also Bedeau (1991) and Koutroufinis (2013).

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