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**PHILOSOPHIA SEMPER REFORMANDA:
HUSSERLIAN THESES ON CONSTITUTION**

To Donn Welton

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Starting from the sensuous perception of what is seen, an attempt is made at recasting a Husserlian theory of constitution of the object of intuition, as one leaves the natural attitude through a transcendental method, by positing several theses so as to avoid the aporias of philosophical binary oppositions such as rationalism and empiricism, realism and idealism, logicism and psychologism, subjectivism and objectivism, transcendentalism and ontologism, metaphysics and positivism. Throughout fifty-five theses on constitution, the Husserlian proposal of continuously reforming philosophizing by transcendental reduction is revisited, leaving the latter incomplete as new conversions are required by noetic-noematic correlations between world and consciousness.

Die europäischen Nationen sind krank, Europa selbst ist, sagt man, in einer Krisis. An so etwas wie Naturbeilkundigen fehlt es hier durchaus nicht. Wir werden ja geradezu überschwemmt von einer Flut naiver und überschwenglicher Reformvorschlage. Aber warum versagen die so reich entwickelten Geisteswissenschaften hier den Dienst, den die Naturwissenschaften in ihrer Sphare vortrefflich uben? (E. Husserl, Krisis)

The purpose of the present article is to discuss Edmund Husserl's correlative conceptions of intentionality, intersubjectivity, and normativity

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through fifty-five theses on a transcendental-phenomenological theory of constitution, so as to reconstitute not only its phenomenological method but also to present an experiential account of “Husserl’s way into transcendental phenomenology”, especially as he undertakes a shift from the static account of the *Logical Investigations* towards a genetic account in *Ideas I* and the *Cartesian Meditations*, and anticipating the generative turn of the later period (cf. Steinbock (1995)). I have decided to take “a dirty tennis ball” as a starting point for the outlining of fifty-five theses that elucidate and illustrate the epistemological motivations constituting the phenomenological experience of seeing, so as to carry out the exclusion of the natural thesis of the world. Although claiming to be grounding the present arguments on Husserl’s texts (or, at least, on my understanding of those texts), I am concerned not so much with a textual *exposé* of Husserl’s phenomenology as with the recasting of the latter. That is why I have strategically chosen the phenomenological motif of “experience” so as to highlight my personal involvement in this meditative thought-experiment of attaining to transcendental subjectivity. I shall limit myself to the following texts by Husserl and their abbreviations:

C = *The Crisis of the European Sciences*

CM = *Cartesian Meditations*

I = *Ideas I*

II = *Ideas II*

LI = *Logical Investigations*

P = *Philosophy as Rigorous Science*

SW = *Shorter Writings*

1. *The Natural Attitude*: Let us imagine, for the sake of the current investigation, our first look at a thing, whenever we first perceive a thing, say, whatever appears to me as a tennis ball, as simply being out there. A dirty, worn-out tennis ball is sitting just before my eyes. I see it just as I see everything else in my messy room. There is nothing special about it. Until

I start problematizing the very act of “seeing” that ball, as if I could have ever taken for granted the presence of this ball, its presencing to me as a ball and not as anything else, despite and besides its dirty, worn-out appearance. And even if the ball were not here, I could always imagine its presentation, its being a ball – even if it were only an ideal ball, I could still “see” that ball. Insofar as it has been defined as a science of essences and as a theory of intuition, Husserl’s phenomenology may indeed be fairly described as an experiential invitation to seeing the things as they are to be seen, in their essential constitution as such. In order to fully understand the phenomenological experience of seeing, say, the tennis ball in question, I must undergo several stages (and detours) in this constitutive process of knowledge, exploring all the different aspects and nuances of what might seem to be one of the most trivial experiences of all, namely, the experience of seeing. For there is nothing more obvious, at first sight, than seeing what is right there, in front of us, say, like this ball or that tree over there – to take the Husserlian illustrative object *par excellence*. And yet, Husserl calls into question this very attitude of naive belief in the world, as if the fact that a tennis ball is simply there for me, at hand, were enough to explain my seeing it, knowingly, in a conscious way, as “this” tennis ball. Interestingly, the shift from “that” to “this” ball seems to betray already such an appropriative consciousness *vis-à-vis* an object which tends to get closer to the focus of my attention. Seeing implies at once a seer (subjectivity) and the seen (objectivity) in the very act of seeing as such. In order to reconstitute this process of perception I must go beyond the natural positing of that/this ball, even (and especially) if such an attitude is dressed in a theoretical or scientific fashion. This natural attitude must be excluded, bracketed, in order to really see the ball in its essential constitution as what has been meant by invoking the object known to be a ball, no longer an object out there (an *Objekt* to be opposed to the *Subjekt*), but the object intended by my consciousness (*Gegenstand*) (I 51-60). To overcome the natural attitude is to overcome the inadequacies and shortcomings of psychologism, formalism, idealism, and rationalism to explain what makes

my experience of seeing possible. That is why Husserl's phenomenology is epistemologically motivated by the foundational question of "science" (in the sense of *Wissenschaft*): How is it possible to know? And how do I know that I know anything after all?

2. *Overcoming Rationalism*: It is not sufficient to doubt the existence of the ball, so as to rationally affirm it with the certainty of my thinking ego. I may well start my epistemological investigation by simply doubting the existence of this ball which I set out to know. Maybe what I see is not the ball itself but something else. Nevertheless, in the Cartesian attitude of doubting the world, there remains a residue of a belief, even on the very level of existence (*cogito ergo sum*), which is established by a pure *ratio*, beyond all doubt and relativity. For such a triumphant *cogito*, the objective *extensio* of the dirty, worn-out ball is still at the mercy of my subjective *cogitationes*, which alone reflect the divine certainty of absolute truths. That is why Husserl sees in Descartes the real precursor of modern philosophical anthropologies, of which Dilthey's *Lebensphilosophie* and existentialism are the most prominent ones (SW 315ff). While he criticizes Descartes for his rationalist subjectivism, Husserl is indebted to the transcendental opening of his meditative *cogitationes*. For it is in the very exercise of thinking (*cogitare*) my relationship to this ball that I discover it as *cogitatum*, in a transcendental experience of knowledge that surpasses the problematic of existence as such. What is ultimately at stake, after all, is not dubiety but the transcendality which makes human knowledge possible. The overcoming of Cartesian rationalism leads us to the universality of a transcendental idealism.

3. *Overcoming Idealism*: Resorting to the "thing-in-itself" and its phenomenal appearance as "that dirty, worn-out tennis ball" cannot provide me with a real knowledge of the ball. The rationalist argument opens up the field of universal validity, which is explored by Kant's theory of knowledge: How do I know that my knowing about the tennis ball is objectively valid? For Husserl, it is precisely because of its presuppositions that Kant's critical

philosophy fails to become a “universal science,” which is not to be presupposed (as Newton’s physics was, in Husserl’s view, appropriated by Kant) but rather “founded” by phenomenal experience (C 112). Thus when I see the ball and presuppose, from the outset, that this ball is phenomenally given in space and time, I am already assuming too much, for even “space” and “time” cannot be invoked here as *a priori* intuitions. In order to go beyond empiricism, it is necessary to investigate the archeology of intuitiveness, the origins of transcendental constitution. Husserl rightly remarks that Kant, certainly under the influence of Hume’s skepticism, fears the recourse to psychology and never clarifies the epistemological validity of phenomenal knowledge *vis-à-vis* its noumenal foundation. What is at issue, once again, is not a certain appearance of the ball, whose noumenal “thing-in-itself” cannot be grasped: beyond the Kantian dichotomy, Husserl’s phenomenology operates a radical return to the thing itself, without the noumenal rupture. Phenomenology, at once a “rigorous science” and a “theory of science” (*Wissenschaftslehre*), makes thus every other “science” possible.

4. *Overcoming Historicism*. It would be tempting to reconstruct the very appearance of the ball in terms of its historical, cultural formation, but this also begs the question as to the essential constitution of the ball. Husserl welcomes Dilthey’s “hermeneutic” approach to the *Geisteswissenschaften* at the same time that he denounces the historicist fallacies of *Weltanschauungen* which cannot logically found a theoretical attitude, precisely because of their metaphysical presuppositions (SW 205-7; P 122-47). The solution to the epistemological crisis must not be sought, as it were, away from the ideal of science but at the very constitution of genuine science, a science of *rigorata panton*. As will be seen, the opposition between *Natur* and *Geist* guides Husserl’s phenomenology of constitution through and through.

5. *Overcoming Psychologism*. My next attempt at affirming that I have come to see and know this ball consists in reducing such knowledge to the explain-

ing of my cognition in psychological terms. If I see this ball and get to know it as such it is only because I have been psychologically constituted so as to see, reason, and know according to natural laws of thought. However, by affirming a psychological constitution of what is true and false (the ball is truly round, etc.) I am already presupposing what I set out to discover in the founding of a theory of science. I realize then that the psychological temptation, together with formalism, turns out to be the most complex, subtle one – and even Husserl came under attack for his refutation of both (SW 152ff.) Therefore, in order to overcome psychologism, I must investigate the epistemological structuration of meaning (i.e., what I mean when I “see” the ball) in its “pure logic”, ideally prior to any psychological determination and conditioning (LI 90-7; 179-96).

6. *Overcoming Formalism*: Now, I may well deny all materiality in this act of cognition by reducing the “seeing” of the ball to a formal correspondence between its concept (as object) and the concept-words expressing this cognition. And yet I have just conceded that I cannot do away with the mental activities (which tend to monopolize the psychologist approach): there must be some real description in the act of seeing this ball, just as there must be facts that my signifying claims refer to.

7. *The Ideal Unity of Meaning*: At this point I must conclude that each separate, regional “logic” has failed to give a satisfactory account of how to overcome the “natural attitude” in the grounding of a wholistic science, but I have become convinced that I need an ideal unity of meaning which accounts for the mediation of knowledge. This is a crucial, decisive point in Husserl’s way into transcendental phenomenology. Meaning is precisely what unites my frustrated attempts to express my experience of seeing and the clarifications that theoretically follow it. Too many things are about to take place as I anticipate the exclusion of the natural attitude, in order to really see the ball. Husserl thinks it would be a mistaken precipitation to identify meaning with being a sign for something, as if my seeing the ball

were in itself an interpretation of some given indication (LI 269 ff). I still have a long way to go in the present investigations.

8. *Presentation*: Because of its phenomenological unity, the act of expressing my seeing is revealing for the description of this experience through presentation. “Tennis ball.” “There is a tennis ball out there.” “I see a dirty, worn-out tennis ball.” All these phrases convey the idea of a tennis ball, but only the last two are actual sentences, expressing the presentation of the ball to be an act of meaning (verbal). Because meanings are “act-meanings” my seeing the ball refers to the meant object, as it were, in a unity of meaning (LI 282 ff).

9. *Ideality of Meaning*: There must be some universality in my associating the idea of a “tennis ball” with the actual dirty ball I see before my eyes, otherwise knowledge would not be attainable, nor would language be efficient. For Husserl, the foundational character of a transcendental logic makes both science and language possible. That is why I can pass from the ball simpliciter to the “state of affairs” which reveals the object as an intended, meant entity, knowing that I am still referring to essentially the selfsame ball (LI 322ff).

10. *The Meaning of Experience and the Experience of Meaning*: The unity of meaning implies, furthermore, that a veritable “unity in multiplicity” must be accounted for manifold act-experiences, as many as the meaning-intentions. As I move from the presentation of the ball as a thing towards its appearance as an object of my individual experience, the transcendental field of my investigations expands in a phenomenological direction, so that my experience of seeing may fulfill all its intentions (LI 327ff).

11. *The Primacy of Perception*: To say that I “see” the ball is already to partially fulfill a perceptual intention *vis-à-vis* that object. Although Husserl does not affirm an absolute primacy of perception (in contrast with con-

sciousness and meaning) he articulates the role of perception with the foundational motif of intentionality which is thus gradually fulfilled in the act-experience. To perceive the ball, in an experiential mode, is not to reduce it to an “object”, but to let it present itself to me, even before focusing upon it.

12. *Perception implies Perspectival Knowledge*: I had started with my naive perception of a dirty, worn-out ball, which I claimed to see right before my eyes. As I tried to explain the meaning of such an experience, I have grown more and more aware of my finite standpoint, in that I must focus on some ideal unity of meaning in order to give a descriptive account of my “seeing” the ball. What I perceive as a tennis ball is immanently present to me as an object, among others, which however was already there (transcendent) even before I started thinking about it. There is thus an amazing excess of presence of many other beings which I did not intend, and yet it is only against this exceeding background that I have come to see that dirty tennis ball.

13. *Attentional Changes*: As I departed from a doxic, natural thesis, my attention has been turning toward the tennis ball, toward an appearance that is still in the process of full realization (I 222 f.) Perception is not an interpretative procedure, and yet it was through the perceptual turn that I have been motivated to seek an ideal field of phenomenological possibilities. By the wandering of my “regard”, my attention can be altered so as to modify my “mental process” (*Erlebnis*) toward “higher spheres” of consciousness. I am turned toward that tennis ball, I seize upon it, within the experiential background (the *Umwelt*) of my bedroom, and this “attentive perceiving” leads to more particular focuses in my “seeing”.

14. *Excluding the Natural Attitude*: I cannot see the ball, in an “originally presentive consciousness” as the ball is to be seen, in its essence, unless I suspend my judgments on the world, in which the ball exists. Every natu-

ral science is naive, in that it fails to neutralize its presuppositions, which cannot account for their *raison d'être* since they are already assumed as pre-givens. In order to really see this ball I must thus exclude the natural thesis of the world. That's why I have been constrained to overcome some of the most typical naturalist temptations, before proceeding to reconstitute the experience of seeing in terms of constitutive consciousness.

15. *Transcendental Consciousness*: After the suspension of my positing of the world, once my empirical notion of "reality" is bracketed, all I am left with is "pure consciousness", to whom the "world" remains in its essence (*Eidos*). A new field has been opened up before my eyes, the phenomenological field which will guide me in the "questioning back" of the experience of seeing. The reality of that original experience, starting from the perception of a tennis ball, is once again, called into question. After all, what is natural reality? What is consciousness? In order to deal with these questions, I must get out of the natural attitude.

16. *Intentionality*: Consciousness is always already "consciousness of something". I cannot get to see the ball without intending it as an object. I discover now that my modified *cogitatio* is a function of the *Erlebnis*, the I lived flux of consciousness of which "seeing" is one intentive process. To see is to intend something as Object for the Ego-Subject of consciousness. In our case, the "seeing" is directed to something transcendent (the ball as a thing), though immanent to the *Erlebnis* in my spatiotemporal apprehensions.

17. *Adumbrations make Perception Possible*: Because no object can be perceived in its entirety, perception itself is made possible through adumbrations which determine the perceptual continuum (I 86-8). I don't see the entire ball, its back is hidden from my sight, and yet it is co-present to me. Furthermore, I imagine that the same greenish, yellowish surface is to be found not only "behind" the visible side of the ball, but also under the

dirty spots. I can even imagine it new, what this tennis ball looked like before someone ever used it. The part-whole correlation serves here to introduce some of the most important features of Husserl's phenomenology, dealing with the problem of constitution.

18. *The Noetic-Noematic Correlation:* The structure of intentionality, in my perception of the ball, is what accounts for my apprehension of its adumbrations and the sensations of hyletic-data (noetic moment) and for the constitution of both sense and appearance (noematic moment) in their multiplicity-unity correlation. While the noesis points to the multiplicity that I am constituting as perspectival *cogitata* of the "ball" by construing the perception/apperception of its object/profile, the noema points to the unity of the *Gegenstand* meant as "the" ball. The constituting/constituted correlation accounts for the entire experience of coming to see that tennis ball as such, from the natural attitude of perceiving it through protention and retention, all the way up to its sense in my acts.

19. *Hyletic Data:* There is something of a stufflike content in my sensation *vis-à-vis* the presentation of the ball. For instance, the noetic moment where the noematic "color" of the ball is adumbrated and comes to my senses as this "greenish, yellowish" color that belongs, in my perception, to my seeing of the ball, constituting the ball as I see it.

20. *Appearance:* This is indeed a fulfilled stage in the noematic moment, when the ball has been finally constituted in all its unity of multiplicity as the *Gegenstand* of phenomenal perception. "Appearance" is not to be opposed to the thing in itself, but it constitutes the very *phainesthai* of the tennis ball. The ball comes into being an object overall (*Gegenstand*), in a general way, just as an Object (*Objekt*) – as will be seen later on – intersubjectively, for a constituting Subject (cf. theses 27-31).

21. *Theory of Constitution*: Starting from the ball as “physical thing” I may proceed into different ontological regions which ultimately bring me back to a constituted Physical Thing, uniting an infinite multiplicity of appearances and its noematic correlates (cf. thesis 51).

22. *Fulfillment and Intention*: The ball I intended in my phenomenological experiment was also meant in an intuitive sense, besides the original sense of “seeing the ball”: not so much the fullness of the sense but its “How” in the positing of the ball for my seeing.

23. *Evidence and Apodicticity*: The phenomenological “seeing” (apodictic seeing) can no longer be confused with the seeing of the ball as something individual (“attentive seeing”).

24. *Categorial Intuition*: As opposed to sensuous seeing in the natural sphere of cognition, “immediate seeing” is no longer reduced to the perceptual mediation of “natural experience” but appears as “pure essence” (*Eidos*), which in fact makes empirical seeing possible. To see the ball as I perceived it in an experiential mode was not sufficient to allow for its essence to be apprehended to conceptualize it in a legitimate, universal validity. Not even the ball existent in the real world would suffice for the grounding of knowledge about it: many other possible “worlds” could have produced such a ball, but it was necessary to bracket the world so that the *Umwelt* which determined the constitution of that ball let it appear as true phenomenon in the world.

25. *Transcendental Subjectivity*: The constitutive, prepersonal subjectivity which results from this exercise of phenomenological “seeing” is transcendental, in that my relation to the *Umwelt* is found in the direct givenness of experience. As I sought to overcome the “natural attitude” through the phenomenological reduction, “a transcendental-phenomenological method” was used in the founding of the sciences by

the science of beginnings, by questioning back their presuppositions of knowledge. What was then taken for granted by my “scientific” ego, as if I could see that dirty, worn-out tennis ball “outside” my own self, is now present to the transcendental Ego in a co-presentation for the world.

26. *Shift of Focus from Categorial Synthesis toward Aesthetic Synthesis*: A description which characterized the categorial synthesis in a static account of constitution gives way to another account which deals with a different kind of synthesis, no longer a spontaneous act but a passive synthesis which Husserl calls “aesthetic synthesis” (II 6-9, 19f.). After starting from a “dirty tennis ball” in the natural attitude and concluding with the pre-giveness of that object in a transcendental subjectivity, now I recognize that there must be another way in which those theses could have articulated the same object in its constitution, i.e., in such a way that its constitutive generation would come to the foreground. In contrast with the intentional structure of consciousness, I must seek to highlight now the very genesis of such a constitution. After all, the constitution of the tennis ball presupposed a passive synthesis, which must be accounted for in genetic phenomenology.

27. *The Lived Body (Leib)*: The static method carried out by an ahistorical Ego must unveil now the primordially of its being-in-the-world not as another object but as a decisive medium which indeed accounts for the perceptual constitution of objects. The aesthetic Body plays now a genetic role in my new inquiry back into the origins of constitution. The lived Body (*Leib*) is to be distinguished from the more general conception of a body (*Körper*) precisely because of the peculiar, animated intersubjectivity of the former. The Body appears thus as a “between-place” that explains the correlative perception of objects, both real and ideal. My Body is the limiting “place” where the tennis ball is perceived through horizontal syntheses. No wonder Husserl accords it a central place in the Second Book of *Ideas*:

The Body is, in the first place, the medium of all perception; it is the organ of perception and is necessarily involved in all perception (II 61).

28. *Bodily Synthesis versus Categorial Synthesis*: This key contrast follows directly from theses 26 and 27, and marks a radical turn in Husserlian experimentation with phenomenology.

29. *The Primacy of Perception*: What thesis 11 asserted in terms of the fulfillment of intentionality in the act-experience, is now explored in its deeper structuration, i.e., how the perceptual structure itself provides a “historical” account of the constitution of the object. My eyes see the dirty tennis ball, as another description of the same experience that I see the ball, the meant object, through my eyes, in a living, Bodily experience of perception. I am no longer conceptualizing it, or theorizing about it, in a thetic attitude. I am rather expressing a perceptual, experiential “appropriation” – in my field of vision – of an object, a thing, as if I were about to get back into what is already constituted pretheoretically.

30. *Shift from Meaning to Sense*: The ideal unity of meaning which governed the logistic-like approach (cf. theses 7-11) gives way to a perceptual sense, which the early Husserl’s analysis of perception already anticipated in the interchangeability of *Bedeutung* and *Sinn*. The perceptual sense is the perceptual schemata that accounts for the object’s appearance as fulfilled senses, as it describes the transition from one appearance to another, accounting for the organization of a given appearance (II 40f). In Husserl’s words:

Perception has its perceptual sense, its meant just as it is meant, and lying in that sense are directives, unfulfilled anticipatory and retrospective indications, which we only have to follow up (II 38).

31. *Shift from Perceptual Noemata to Sense-Things*: Husserl’s analysis of intentionality in Ideas I, complementing the transcendental-logical project of

the *Investigations*, asserted the fulfillment of meaning in terms of its mode and determination (cf. theses 8 and 18). It was only in the fulfillment of meaning (its “realization”, as Tugendhat ((1992), p. 423) so felicitously translated *Erfüllung*, alluding to intuition vis-à-vis its correlate intention) that I could assert that I saw the ball, as it became an object (cf. LI VI). In Husserlian terms, one speaks of the synthesis of fulfillment between the “dirty tennis ball” (meant object) and actually seeing it or imagining it (intuition). Now, in order to “follow up the perceptually meant in a perceiving and experiencing”, I must grasp the essence (hence the “mental eye” metaphor) of the tennis ball in its givenness, “a givenness in which the thing exhibits its actual reality” (II 61). This is to say that, following thesis 30, the aestheta of the tennis ball refer back to myself, the subject-Body who is passive or is affected (French *subir*), as it were, by the coming into being of the object, its being out there for me, its appearing. Thus the correlation between *cogitatio* and *cogitatum*, expressed in terms of noesis (thetic quality) and noema (thetic character), refers us to hyletic data (cf. thesis 20) of the static account by the passive syntheses (cf. theses 32, 33, and 34).

32. *Temporal Synthesis*: According to the synchronic analysis of my static experiment, consciousness was thus defined in function of the *Erlebnis*, transcending both temporality and the unified ego (thesis 16). The intended object, the dirty tennis ball, certainly turned out to be immanent to the *Erlebnis* of my spatiotemporal apprehensions. However, since the given was simply presupposed in the constitution of meaning, the origin of its intentional structuration was not yet problematized, thematized in my phenomenological reconstruction. It is only now, in a veritable archaeology of meaning¹, that the flux of becoming (I 179) can find its perceptual analysis in terms of succession and simultaneity (cf. II 21-23, 170

¹ One cannot overstate here Michel Foucault’s reappropriation of a Husserlian procedure. Cf. II 427.

ff.; C 168 f.)². A genetic, nondialectical interplay of “already” and “not yet” serves as well to characterize the diachronic nature of the aesthetic account: senses that have been fulfilled necessarily unfold the incompleteness of the whole, i.e. they point beyond to other senses which have not yet been fulfilled, as my perception of the tennis ball is temporarily determined by given appearances.

33. *Kinaesthetic Synthesis*: The Body as perceptual medium always already implies a Bodily sensing that affects and effects the experiencing of the object (II 61f, 152 ff.; C 106f). Thus my seeing – i.e. perceiving within the visual field – the front and back or any other side of the tennis ball, thanks to the movement of my eyes and to the free motion of my body, allows me to localize this very Body, myself, in terms of right and left, front and back, top and bottom, and to perceive this other body itself in spatiotemporal terms. All relationships of distance and nearness, like all these living Bodily sensations partially account for an “originary” perception.

34. *Associative synthesis*: To complement this synthetic constitution of the object, the experience of sense-data also implies associations of sensuous connections of “similarity” and sensuous “contrast”, “sameness” and “alteration” – later on, “strangeness” (*Fremdvelt*) and “familiarity” (*Heimwelt*), abnormality and normalcy – *esse* and *percipi* (C 157f). The continuous process of seeing, as I contrast what I first saw on the surface of the tennis ball, say, with the perceiving of its different colorations and nuances, and synthesize these moments together into an ontic unity of sameness, all these different exhibitings and appearances lead me to a developing synthesis of unification proper to the perceiving. The three syntheses together account for the originary perception.

² I am indebted to Anthony Steinbock’s translation of Husserl’s *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Syntheses: Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, partially reproduced in Donn Welton ((1999), pp. 316-321).

35. *Truth in Perception*: There is a normality in the experience of perceiving an object that accounts for what it is. “I see a tennis ball” means that what I see is indeed a tennis ball – in analytical philosophical terms, the trivial assertion that “snow is white”. The changing aspects in my perception of the tennis ball betray my seeking after an optimum, e.g. to see the ball in the sunlight, on a sunny, bright day, is much better (more normal at least) than seeing the same ball at night or on a cloudy day. This is especially true in the case of the color-appearance of the ball, which is decisively affected by different luminosity, wavelengths, and so forth. Different media produce different appearances of the ball to the extent that an abnormal change in my organs of perception (e.g. every time I tried to see the ball without my glasses on) does affect what would be a “true” perception (in this sense one might say that a theory of truth is to be associated rather with metaphysics and not at all with epistemology) of the ball, in a supposedly normal experience. After all, the real is an orthoaesthetic appearance for an orthoaesthetic Body.

36. *Causality*: The optimal mode of givenness of the preceding thesis reveals an important relation between the Body as medium and the media of perceptual constitution, a relation which is causally determined. The change of color-appearances, for instance, is caused by a change of media (different degrees of luminosity) or even by a change within the medium of my Body (if I ingest santonin, the ball will look more yellowish than greenish). Causal relations cannot be reduced to either physical or psychological conditionalities but are interwoven with both in spatiotemporal reality. According to Husserl:

There is the one normally constituted world as the true world, as a “norm” of truth, and there are multiple semblances, deviations of the modes of givenness, which find their “explanation” in the experience of the psychophysical conditionality (II 78).

37. *The physicalistic Thing*: The intuitively given thing is constituted in terms of its geometrical determinations and its specifically sensuous qualities, both taken as optimal features. Only the former, however, belong to the physicalistic object itself. Husserl elaborates on the classical distinction between primary and secondary qualities in order to oppose the thing itself to its different modes of givenness, on the level of its constitution and by avoiding the Kantian dichotomy. Thus the normativity of my optimal perception of the ball requires a genetic account of its geometrical properties that make it a spherical object with certain properties of elasticity (affecting the very ideal sphere), bouncing, and so forth. Nevertheless, geometric properties obtain only for a “scientific object”, what Husserl contrasts to an original, perceived object.

38. *The Primacy of Intersubjective Experience*: The genetic method concludes that the experiencing subject is in fact one among many. Furthermore, the perceived thing as an object (that tennis ball) entails a perceiving other (any Ego among many). Thus the solipsistic subject of a transcendental-logical analysis must give way to an intersubjective level which accounts both for the empirical subject and for the community of Bodies that compose the human *Umwelt*. To be sure, the tennis ball can be determined in logical, mathematical terms as a physicalistic thing, it can be constituted either solipsistically or intersubjectively. In effect, logical objectivity can be known by different subjects in the community as the selfsame object (II 83ff). But it is only through intersubjectivity that a foundational principle of universality (such as the universal grammar) can be communicated and even appropriated by the cognizing subject.

39. *Empathy*: It follows therefore that subjects stand in a relation of empathy *via-à-vis* other cognizing subjects, sharing the same Corporeality and the same world (II 170-80). Empathy leads not only to the intersubjective constitution of an object (e.g., the tennis ball my friend is talking about)

but also the constitution of human Body (my friend who has a Body – or rather is a Body – like myself).

40. *Spatiality*: Every Body-subject has her own sense of space of orientation, which are translated in ordinary language as a “here” or “there,” “right” or “left,” “above” or “below,” “front” or “back,” and so forth. Bodily sensings are indeed what distinguishes my Body from all other material bodies, so that the spatiality assigned to the tennis ball is already derivative *vis-à-vis* the zero-point of my Body (II 61 ff., 153 ff.). For it is thanks to the correlative articulation of my kinaesthetic sensations (“motivating”) and sensations of feature (“motivated”) that the spatial world is constructed. Thus I cannot say that I see the ball in a place “out there” without having admitted the sensuous continuum between my eyes and the spherical surface of the ball. It would be misleading to localize the seeing-sensings in function of space and extension: they are already co-constitutive with my Body, as much as the touching which actually complements and makes my seeing optimal.

41. *Unified Nature*: Nature is an intersubjective reality not only at a given moment when two or more people constitute an object, but as a genetic rule which can be reconstituted at any time. The tennis ball occupies space not in “my own space” but it exists in “objective space”, which Husserl defines as the condition of “formal unity of identification in the midst of the changing qualities” (II 92). Primary qualities imply thus objectively determinations in Nature. According to such a conception of Nature, every other quality will refer to some primordial sense of foundation established in spatiotemporality.

42. *The Lifeworld (Lebenswelt)*: As against the objectivism that produced the crisis of modern science – the European crisis, as well as our ongoing, *fin-de-siècle* crisis – Husserl’s genetic phenomenology seeks to recover the significance of science for life itself. The *Lebenswelt* is hence defined as a

culminated fullness of intersubjective constitution (CM 135f.). Living subjectivity appears thus as an alternative to the theoretical attitude toward nature, the worlds of the natural and the human sciences being correlative and not at all incompatible (II 384).

43. *Personal Freedom*: Passivity does not preclude activity but in fact makes it possible. Husserl recognizes thus a genetic phenomenology of activity, not just passivity, opening up the underlying question of language. The human person, human being, always exceeds localized determinations (II 147 ff.). Husserl speaks of the ego of freedom which is certainly active as it takes a position but is “always passive at the same time whenever it is active” (II 225). Such is indeed a striking, peculiar feature of the genetic method: I chose to see the tennis ball, to use it as a phenomenological motif for this article. It is also in a personalistic attitude that human beings not only receive and respond but also creatively interact with objectivation such as legal institutions, morals, and religious prescriptions.

44. *Objectivity and Totality*: Accounting for the progressive determination of objectivity and the totality of its constitution underlines the guiding ideas of Husserl’s genetic phenomenology. For instance, consciousness appears now as a process which reveals the constitutive experience of objectivity as being real and concrete, contrary to mentalistic and existentialistic versions of phenomenology – which take the real for mere constructs. Likewise, intersubjectivity turns out to be grounded in objectivity. Thus if another person must be there for the experiencing subject to express objectivity, a unitary totality of expressions must be presupposed.

45. *Culture*: In order to overcome the crisis following the destruction of the metaphysical presuppositions which failed to provide the foundations for the *Geisteswissenschaften* (SW 205-7; cf. thesis 4), phenomenology emerged as the only science capable of accounting for both natural and human sciences. “The Constitution of the Spiritual World” (Section III of

Ideas II) and the *Crisis* extensively deal with this problematic. Cultural things are distinguished from natural things precisely because of the personal, spiritual expressions of the former. When I set out to reconstruct Husserl's way into transcendental phenomenology in a static account, I did not have to mention the role that my cultural formation plays in the constitutive experience of seeing a dirty tennis ball. In a genetic-phenomenological approach, however, the cultural world cannot be excluded from the Bodily *Umwelt* which motivates my aesthetic apprehensions: e.g., I immediately associated the tennis ball with "clay" and not with "lawn" or "concrete," making it probably dirtier and more worn out than a ball used in other courts.

46. *Sedimentation*: The "traditionalization" of constant presuppositions, especially in writing (C 361), must be undone so as to renew contact with the sense buried under sedimentation. To a certain extent, Husserl's genetic phenomenology is already carrying out an archaeological deconstruction of meaning-formations that strive for originary, genuine meaning (truth-meaning).

47. *Reversibility and Irreversibility*: The reversibility of layers of meaning in writing (the tradition to be reread, reappropriated, and deconstructed) contrasts with the irreversibility of time (historicity), making the course of sedimentation in reverse. New correlations point thus to the horizons that vary together with nature and spirit, consciousness and world, subjectivity and otherness, lifeworld and temporality (I 67-69; II 386-402).

48. *Origins and Teleology*: There must be objectivity in the origin of an ideality for this ideality to be recognizable, since objectivity is a correlate of intentionality. What had been understood in a structural fulfillment of meaning, is now historically retrieved in the teleological constitution of the object. Both *arche* and *telos* are thus correlatively tied up with original language and meaning-formation (C 356 ff.).

49. *The Earth*: Like the Body, the Earth appears as an irreducible medium, the “between-place” binding intersubjectivity and lifeworld. In phenomenological terms, however, the Earth does not move and precedes the Body, in that it provides an aesthetic zero-point for the encounter of my Body with the Other’s Body.

50. *Historicity*: One of the diachronic features of genetic phenomenology is that it unveils a “history” of consciousness, as it deals with the origins and transmissions (handing-down) of ideal objects, through intersubjective developments of objectivities. Following the genetic shift from intentional noemata to perceptual senses, we have seen that the Body-subject is always already participating in the constitution of objectivities. Thus a radical critique of knowledge from a lifeworld standpoint would unmask the subtlest, hidden presuppositions of scientific dogmatism, such as objectivism and positivism. The genetic method proves to be effective even on a macro-level, such as the “questioning back” into the development of a mathematizing ideal of science. What is at stake in the *Crisis* is not a psychological account of Galileo’s undertakings or a historicist counter-interpretation of scientific undertakings but the very nature of the movement of an Idea which prevails throughout spiritual-cultural ages.

51. *Tradition*: The genetic account also attempts to answer the question: How does human knowledge appropriate its objects? These are not in a *topos ouranios*, in some heavenly place, but they are “traditional objects”, and we can only get at the origin of these objects as we grasp their idealities through the sedimentations in their transmission and delivery to us. We come thus full circle in the Husserlian phenomenology of constitution, as we follow his own division of the *Ideas* project into the constitution of material nature, animal nature, and the spiritual world. As expected, Husserl goes on to assert the ontological priority of the spiritual world over the naturalistic (II 281 ff.).

52. *Language*: The ideality of language, intimately attached to the unity of meaning developed in the *Investigations*, is eclipsed somehow by the dominant importance accorded to interpretation in the genetic account. Language is defined now in intersubjective terms, within a historical community. Because geology (*qua* science of the Earth) could not found an objective science of transcendental subjectivity, Husserl saw in geometry the best gateway to articulate historicity and meaning in commensurable terms. To be sure, the relationship between language and perception seems to remain problematic. If an inquiry back into the origin of geometry succeeds in unveiling a sense-history of geometrical ideal objectivities, it leaves unanswered why perceptual senses turn out to be pre-linguistic. Perhaps the limits of genetic phenomenology remain to be set up in a theory of language.

53. *Expression versus Communication*: Genetic phenomenology comes full circle as it radicalizes the original program outlined in the First *Investigation*, opposing the expressive meaning of a sign to the indicative function of a signal, and rethematized in the Sixth, with the theory of fulfillment between signification and intuition.

54. *The Transcendental Reduction*: It is precisely the transcendental reduction that makes the Husserlian phenomenology of constitution akin to what he earlier identified with a descriptive psychology, with the proviso that its transcendental thrust remains irreducible to any empirical feature of description. The transcendental reduction remains indeed the best clue and the most important thesis guiding all the other phenomenological theses, insofar as it accomplishes the bracketing of the general thesis of the natural attitude.

55. *Return to the Things Themselves!*: The Husserlian *motto* serves now to translate not so much the return *ad fontes* of religious reformers such as the Renaissance humanist revival of Plato as over against Aristotle, but a call

back to the givenness of things, to their *Sinngebung*, the object *par excellence* of theoretical reason. But now it has become impossible to go back to a forever-lost “first belief”. Such is the metaphysical, epistemic predicament of our crisis of subjectivity identified as “modernity” (*die Moderne*): one can no longer abstract from the theoretical shifts accomplished by Descartes or Kant, as a transcendental rupture has definitely taken place. The reduction is never completed, one never ceases to undertake a new beginning, and this is after all the *semper reformanda* thrust of all phenomenological turns. By taking turns, by undertaking thought revolutions and new *Kehren*, neither hermeneutical nor deconstructionist moves can avoid echoing the Husserlian call back to the essence of things. The natural attitude is therefore always revisited, just as the self-displacement of the *cogito* brings us always back to square one. If meaning refers us back to intuition, intuition in its turn realizes and fulfills the intended signification, the meant object, as one sees what one means and one knows what someone else is saying. Is this a return to belief? To a certain extent, yes, as we are always coming back to the common world of basic beliefs, where tennis balls and the like still make a lot of sense. If one still seeks to avoid the “torrent of naïve and extravagant suggestions for reform (*Reformvorschläge*)” that haunt us at the turn of this century, just as it did in Husserl’s own time, philosophy must always begin anew by thinking the world in its inexhaustibility and irreducibility.

Resumo: Partindo da percepção sensível de algo que é visto, propomo-nos rever a teoria husserliana da constituição do objeto intuído, deixando a atitude natural em busca de uma argumentação transcendental que evite as aporias das contraposições filosóficas entre racionalismo e empirismo, realismo e idealismo, logicismo e psicologismo, subjetivismo e objetivismo, transcendentalismo e ontologismo, metafísica e positivismo. Através de cinquenta e cinco teses sobre a constituição, revisitamos a proposta husserliana de continuamente reformar o filosofar mediante uma redução transcendental que não se deixe completar, na medida em que novas conversões são exigidas pela correlação noético-noemática entre mundo e consciência.

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