

Is Perception Essentially Perspectival?

Modality in Husserlian Phenomenology

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Abstract

Husserl famously argues that it is *essential* to perception to present the perceived object *in perspectives*. Hence, there is no—and there cannot be—perception without perspectival givenness. Yet, it seems that there are counterexamples to this essentialist claim, for we seem to be able to imagine beings that do not perceive in perspectives. Recently, there have been some accounts in the literature that critically discuss those counterexamples and assess to what extent they succeed in challenging Husserl's essentialist claim. In this paper I discuss three different answers to these counterexamples, all of them are found wanting. I offer a novel solution, taking into account some crucial findings of the contemporary debate about imagination and modality. I argue that this new solution is capable of fully vindicating Husserl's essentialist claim. Finally, I reconstruct Husserl's own way to treat such counterexamples, in order to showcase the notion of *modality* Husserlian phenomenology relies on. I argue for the hitherto widely underappreciated point that Husserl's transcendental phenomenology cannot appeal to strictly absolute modality but that the kind of modality in Husserlian phenomenology is *conditional* on the facticity that we have the transcendental structure we do in fact have.

Keywords

Husserl – Perception – Essence – Modality – Imagination

1. Introduction

Husserl's phenomenological philosophy is crucially eidetic. That is to say that his phenomenology is concerned with essentialist truths or laws, i.e. with what *essentially* belongs to specific entities or kinds of entities. This paper discusses one of these essentialist propositions that is at the heart of Husserl's philosophy. I am talking about Husserl's view that the perception of spatiotemporal objects is *essentially* perspectival. What does this mean? Our perceptual awareness of a spatiotemporal object like a table is such that we are actually presented with one aspect or, as Husserl calls it, one 'adumbration', of the table. According to Husserl, the already previously perceived and the soon to be perceived other aspects of the table are co-given with the aspect or adumbration that is currently given in the flesh. Husserl analyzes the temporal dimensions of the experience with his notions of 'retention' and 'protention'. While retention is the co-givenness of the immediately previous aspect of the perceived object, 'protention' designates the anticipation of its next adumbration or aspect (in a non-determinate manner).¹ What is important is that the table only gives itself in a successive sequence of aspects or adumbrations of it, corresponding to the *perspective* of the perceiving subject. So, the fact that spatiotemporal perception is perspectival just amounts to the fact that spatiotemporal objects are given in adumbrations.

For Husserl, the adumbrational givenness of spatiotemporal objects like the table is not due to the contingent limitation of our perceptual apparatus. Rather, it is an *essential* feature of all perception of spatiotemporal objects. In a famous passage in *Ideas I* he argues that even God is bound to perspectival, i.e. adumbrational perception of spatiotemporal objects (*Ideas I*, 92–93). I, hence, take it that Husserl advocates the following claim:

- (E) Adumbrational givenness is *essential* with respect to the perception of spatiotemporal objects.

However, (E) is somewhat ambiguous. It can be taken to express either of the two following propositions:

- (E.1) It is essential to *spatiotemporal objects* that they can only be given in adumbrations (i.e. perspectivaly).
(E.2) It is essential to *perception* (of spatiotemporal objects) that it can only give its objects in adumbrations (i.e. perspectivaly).

Is the claim that adumbrational givenness is essential to spatiotemporal *objects* or that *perception* of those is essentially such that it is perspectival? Are we talking about the essence of spatiotemporal objects or the essence of perception of them?

To decide on this question, it is important to note that Husserl's phenomenological philosophy is to be understood as strict *correlational analysis*. That is to say that

¹ See, e.g., Husserl's *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book*, 179 (henceforth, "*Ideas I*").

Husserlian phenomenology understands each and every object in relation or *correlation* to the act(s) with which (or in which) it is (or might be) given. According to this key feature of Husserlian phenomenology it does not make sense to consider objects apart from the acts with which they are (or might be) given. Objects and the acts with or in which they are (or might be) given must always be considered in correlation.² So, even though (E.1) and (E.2) are, strictly speaking, different propositions, phenomenologically speaking, they are but different sides of the same coin. Hence, from a Husserlian perspective, it makes sense to consider (E.1) and (E.2) together as one.³

In this paper I will discuss a specific line of criticism against (E) that has received some attention in the literature recently. This criticism appeals to a thought experiment, which—at first sight—seems to motivate a counterexample to (E). The thought experiment purports to show that we are indeed capable of imagining non-adumbrational, i.e. non-perspectival perception. The criticism holds that this imaginability yields the *possibility* of non-adumbrational perception, which is taken as a falsification of (E).

I will introduce the thought experiment in §2. In §3 I will discuss some existing responses to it from the recent literature. While they are all skeptical of the thought experiment to some extent, there is no agreement on what exactly is wrong with it or even on the extent to which it fails. I argue that with regard to the task of fully defending (E) from the thought experiment and the criticism it provokes, all of the hitherto proposed answers are found wanting. I turn to my own answer to the thought experiment in §4. The solution I am offering employs the notion of ‘relevant depth’ from current debates about imagination and modality. I argue that it is capable of fully defending (E) from the threat emanating from the thought experiment discussed, and arguably from any similar thought experiment one could concoct. Moreover, I show that the solution on offer is Husserlian in spirit. In §5 I argue that Husserl’s own position on thought experiments like the one discussed can be reconstructed from his work, making crucial use of Husserl’s notion of ‘empathy’. However, I show that this solution is dialectically ineffective as an *argument* against the challenge imposed by the thought experiment. Finally, in §6 I briefly investigate the kind of modality to which Husserl is committed if we take his thoughts about empathy and his transcendental and correlationist phenomenology seriously.

Thus, this paper has two aims. First, I wish to offer a novel response to the thought experiment and the criticism associated with it, thereby vindicating (E). Second, I will take Husserl’s own way of dealing with challenges like the one discussed in this paper to illustrate the notion of ‘modality’ on which Husserlian phenomenology is based. I argue for the hitherto widely underappreciated point that Husserl’s transcendental

² I will be coming back to Husserl’s correlationism in §5.

³ It is important to note that adumbrational givenness is essential with respect to the perception of *spatiotemporal objects*. In *Ideas I*, §44, Husserl speaks of non-adumbrational perception of mental processes. So we are not seeking the genus *perception* in this general and wide sense, according to which there might be two species, adumbrational and non-adumbrational perception. What is at stake here is the genus *perception of spatiotemporal objects*, of which Husserl claims that it is essentially adumbrational. In what follows, I will use ‘perception’ to refer to the perception of spatiotemporal objects, unless noted differently.

phenomenology cannot appeal to strictly absolute modality but that the kind of modality in Husserlian phenomenology is *conditional* on the facticity that we have the transcendental structure we do in fact have.⁴ Since, as will be shown, our understanding of ‘Husserlian modality’ crucially shapes our understanding of Husserl’s phenomenology and *vice versa*, the importance of a precise characterization of Husserlian modality can hardly be overestimated. Even though I cannot offer a complete account in this paper, I will take some steps towards a characterization of Husserlian modality. Finally, I will point to a challenge any investigation of Husserlian modality seems to face and subject it to future research.

2. A fogging being

Clearly, if perception is *essentially* adumbrational, it cannot be *possible* for a subject to perceive in a non-adumbrational manner. So, (E) would be refuted by establishing the *possibility* of non-adumbrational perception. The line of criticism to be discussed here assumes that the possibility of non-adumbrational perception can be established by *imagining* a subject perceiving in a non-adumbrational manner. If we can *imagine* such a subject, non-adumbrational perception is possible and (E) is falsified. At first sight, the following thought experiment does exactly that, inasmuch as it seems to establish that we can *imagine* a subject perceiving in a non-adumbrational manner.

Martin (2005, 210) introduces (all too briefly) the following thought experiment to cast doubt on (E):

Imagine some kind of conscious intelligence that is embodied in a kind of fog. We humans perceive an object from a single perspective, but the fogging consciousness simply fogs all around it, taking in all sides at once.

MARTIN 2005, 210

Let me try to develop this thought experiment in more detail and present it as neutrally as possible: Imagine a conscious and intelligent *fog* with perceptual sensors on every particle. Such a fogging being would be able to perfectly encompass and penetrate spatiotemporal objects, apprehending them at once in their entirety rather than by gradually becoming aware of a manifold of adumbrational aspects of the object. You might think that even if this fogger is indeed a collection of particles that all contain or even *are* perceptual sensors, still the fog cannot perceive objects at least without limitations and, therefore, without perspectives. However, you could refine the thought experiment and imagine the fog having *infinitely many* particles and, thus, infinitely many perceptual sensors, to dispel the worry about limitation. It seems that such a being would indeed be capable of non-adumbrational perception of spatiotemporal objects, i.e. of perceiving all the different aspects. Since it also seems that we can *imagine* such a being (we seem to just have done so), the critic takes this to be enough to establish

⁴ One notable exception here is Tengelyi (2014), who also emphasizes the importance of a conditional notion of modality for Husserl.

the *possibility* of non-adumbrational perception and concludes that (E) is already rendered false. So, this thought experiment seems to make it plausible that we can imagine a way in which a being could have non-adumbrational givenness of spatio-temporal objects.⁵

So, the criticism against Husserl's claim (E) that emanates from the fogger thought experiment takes the following form.

- (1) Non-adumbrational perception is imaginable.
- (2) If non-adumbrational perception is imaginable, then it is possible.
- (3) If non-adumbrational perception is possible, (E) is false.
- (4) Hence, (E) is false.

In the next section, I am going to discuss and criticize three different strategies to respond to the fogger thought experiment and to this criticism.

3. How to respond to the fogger thought experiment?

Madary directly responds to Martin:

I suggest that there is an important aspect of Husserl's insight that Martin misses here. Namely, the way that properties are given to us in adumbrations (perspectively) is such that their appearances change in a way that is sensitive to self-generated movement [...]. [...] In the case of the fogger, the appearance of the enfogged object ought to change in accordance with the movements of the fogger (or the movements of the object relative to the fogger). The object will appear differently to the fogger depending on its precise location within the fog, say whether it is partially immersed or totally immersed. Also imagine the fog turning itself relative to the stationary object. In that case, the fog would have access to changes in appearances relative to its own movements. Even sentient fogs, one might argue, should have perspectival connectedness to their objects.

MADARY 2017, 183-184

If I understand Madary correctly, his point is that even for a fogging being consisting of infinitely many perceptual sensors, perceiving, say, something red with one set of (its infinitely many) perceptual sensors might *feel* or *be* different than perceiving something red with another set of (its infinitely many) perceptual sensors. Hence, *even though the fogger might be given all the aspects of the object at once*, moving relative to the object such that the red parts of the object are perceived first by the one set of perceptual sensors, then by the other, should generate a change of appearance of the object for the

⁵ Still, you might wonder how we could ever have evidence that something like a fog could be intelligent and *perceive* objects at all, be it perspectively or non-perspectively. The proponent of the thought experiment could maintain that, regardless of the potential lack of *real evidence* for (the actuality of) such a being, the proposed scenario is one we can imagine.

fogger. In this sense it is possible even for the fogger to have different perspectives on the object.

I think that Madary raises an important point. However, it is not clear to what extent this is a refutation of the criticism surrounding the thought experiment and, hence, a vindication of (E). Note that Madary's answer is ready to concede that *the fogger might be given all the aspects of the object at once*. Hence, the fogger's changing perspectives on the perceived object are not due to the fact that some aspects of the object are eventually occluded to the fogger but only to the fact that moving in relation to the object might generate different perspectives *qua* different ways in which all aspects of the object are given at once. Thus, it seems that there is an *ambiguity* in the notion of 'perspective'. According to Madary, the fogger has perspectival givenness only in the sense that there might be different ways in which all aspects of the object are given at once, not in the sense in which some of the aspects *of the object* are essentially occluded to the fogger. It is clear, however, that (E), i.e. Husserl's claim that perception is essentially perspectival and adumbrational also includes that essentially the aspects of the perceived object are *only given in a successive sequence* and never all at once. Indeed, the fact that Husserl takes protention and retention to be essential dimensions of perceptual experience is evidence that Husserl endorses this stronger notion of perspectivity and adumbrationality. So, while Madary's answer would indeed vindicate the claim that perception is essentially perspectival on the *weaker* reading of this notion, it would not do so on the *stronger* reading, which is the one we have to assume interpreting (E). In sum, Madary's answer is not capable of *fully* vindicating (E), since on his notion of perspectivity the temporal dimensions of protention and retention seem to be rendered inessential to the fogger.

What is more, Madary concedes that he has

[...] only suggested that Martin's initial counterexample to Husserl's necessity of perceptual adumbrations may fall short. It remains open to revamp the counterexample in order to meet my concerns, which is, I suppose, Martin's original point.

MADARY 2017, 184

As I will show in §4, there is a response to the challenge imposed by the fogger counterexample that shows that neither the fogger nor any of its cognates are imaginable in the sense that would allow us to derive its appropriate possibility. This solution is likely able to deal with any modification of the counterexample.

An anonymous reviewer suggested a response to the fogger thought experiment that is somewhat similar to Madary's. According to this response, the fact that the fogger perceives all aspects of a certain object at once is not a counterexample to the fact that perception is essentially adumbrational and perspectival because the object in question is *still perceived with adumbrations, or perspectival appearances*, albeit with an infinitude of these. In slogan form: a view from "everywhere" remains perspectival, or so it

would seem, and cannot be equated with a view from “nowhere”. This interesting response is somewhat related to Madary’s for it trades on a very similar *ambiguity* in the notion of perspective. The present answer takes it as a sufficient condition for perception to be perspectival and adumbrational that it is *not a view from nowhere*. If this is all there is to being perspectival and adumbrational, the response does indeed succeed; a view from everywhere (fogger perception) is not a view from nowhere. However, as I have pointed out above, Husserl’s claim that perception is essentially perspectival and adumbrational also includes that, essentially, the aspects of the perceived object are *only given in a successive sequence* and never all at once. Again, in slogan form: (E) not only excludes a view from nowhere but also a view from everywhere. This means that while the present response would indeed vindicate the claim that perception is essentially perspectival and adumbrational on the *weaker* reading of these notions, it would not do so on the *stronger* reading, which, I take it, is intended in Husserl’s claim (E). I conclude that neither of the two responses discussed so far are capable of (fully) vindicating (E).

There might be another response strategy on the market. Wiltsche (2013) discusses a different but analogous thought experiment, according to which we imagine a subject equipped with, say, one hundred eyeballs arranged in a sphere that encompasses an object. Analogously to the fogger, the eyeball-sphere-being seems to perceive non-adumbrationally (all sides of the object are given at once) and it seems to be imaginable. Note, however, that the eyeball-sphere thought experiment is somewhat weaker than the one about the fogger. The fogger seems mightier since it is allegedly capable of *penetrating* the solid object, while eyeballs are presumably limited to the aspects or adumbrations of the surface of the object. However, nothing hinges on the specifics of Wiltsche’s thought experiments, for his point about the eyeball-sphere-being is applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to the fogger.

Wiltsche’s response strategy relies on the distinction between what he calls “first-person-imagination” and “third-person-imagination”, which he finds in Vendler (1984, 43-45). In order to get a grip on this distinction, Wiltsche asks us to consider the following scenario. Suppose you are standing on top of a cliff and you are imagining yourself swimming in the ocean below you. You “first-person-imagine” swimming in the ocean by imagining “the *experiences* that you would have if you were in the respective situation” (Wiltsche 2013, 429; emphasis added), e.g. “the cold, the salty taste, the rug of the current, and so forth” (Vendler 1984, 43). Contrary to that, you “third-person-imagine” swimming in the ocean by imagining yourself from a particular *external* perspective. This, however, as Wiltsche remarks, is not at all different from a representation of other persons. In sum,

[...] [w]hile first-person-imaginings are about the experiences one would have in a particular situation, third-person-imaginings merely give an external view on the respective situation.

WILTSCHKE 2013, 429

Applied to the fogger thought experiment, Wiltsche's idea is the following: when you imagine non-adumbrational perception or a subject with non-adumbrational perception, you do not imagine yourself (from the first-person perspective) having non-adumbrational perception and the correlating *experiences* but a subject (from the third-person perspective) that perceives this way.

According to Wiltsche (2013, 430), the thought experiment does not confront us with an *experience* of a spatiotemporal thing that is not given in adumbrations; i.e. we cannot "first-person-imagine" non-adumbrational perception. Conducting the thought experiment, the best we can do is to "third-person-imagine" non-adumbrational givenness. This is obvious for Wiltsche. And I think he is right about that. Try for yourself, imagine non-adumbrational fogger-perception! I submit that you will fall short of imagining the very *experience* the fogger would have. It seems we are stuck with third-person-imagination on this.

For Wiltsche, this is the reason why thought experiments like the fogger do *not* falsify "the claim that the law of givenness in adumbrations is *apodictically evident*" (Wiltsche 2013, 426; emphasis added). The *apodictic* evidence of the law of givenness in adumbrations consists in the fact that upon considering non-adumbrational perception, we have the "experience of strong unimagibility" (Wiltsche 2013, 431). Here Wiltsche seems to refer to the fact that we are incapable of "first-person-imagining" fogger-perception. Importantly, however, Wiltsche concedes that this does not rule out third-person-imagination of fogger-perception. Wiltsche indeed maintains that thought experiments such as the fogger do in fact succeed in establishing the *possibility* of non-adumbrational perception. With regard to his eyeball-sphere-being thought experiment, Wiltsche (2013, 431) concedes that "a fundamental change of our stream of experiences has to be regarded as a possibility". Applied to the fogger thought experiment, this would be the verdict that, even though it does not confront us with an *experience* of a spatiotemporal thing that is not given in adumbrations, it has to be conceded that the fogger thought experiment establishes the *possibility* of non-adumbrational perception.

Now that obviously creates a tension. How can the law of givenness in adumbrations, i.e. (E), be apodictically evident yet contingent? Wiltsche is very aware of this tension. He resolves it, appealing to a Husserlian notion of apodicticity that is crucially fallible. The details how Wiltsche construes fallible yet apodictic evidence do not matter for our purposes. What matters here is that Wiltsche's account concedes that thought experiments like the fogger establish the *possibility* of non-adumbrational perception. Given the way I have set up the dialectic before, this would clearly make the criticism surrounding the thought experiment successful. Remember: (E) entails that non-adumbrational perception is impossible, so if the possibility of the non-adumbrational perception can be established, (E) must be false. With his response to thought experiments like the fogger, Wiltsche does not intend to vindicate (E), but only to claim that (E), i.e. "the law of givenness in adumbrations" is apodictically evident and to showcase a Husserlian notion of apodictic evidence that is fallible. This is why we have to keep looking for a response to the fogger that fully vindicates (E) in the sense presented above. I believe that such an answer can be given. I turn to it in the next section.

4. Relevant depth

In this section I present a different response to the challenge of the fogger thought experiment, using some results of current debates about imagination and modality. I call it the ‘relevant depth solution’ (RDS).

I think the best way to counter the criticism against Husserl in §2 is to argue that the fogger thought experiment falls short of imagining non-adumbrational perception *in relevant depth*, such that we are not able to conclude from the fact that we seem to be able to imagine a fogging being that adumbrational givenness is inessential to perception of spatiotemporal objects. This strategy is inspired by discussions in contemporary debates about the limits of the epistemic power of imagination concerning essence and modality.⁶

The point is simple. The actually imagined situation in the fogger thought experiment *lacks relevant depth* to conclude from it the possibility of non-adumbrational perception.⁷ In other words: The situation I imagine when I think of an allegedly non-adumbrationally perceiving fogger is indistinguishable from a situation in which some quantity of fog wraps itself around an object but there is no such perception. If we focus on the actual imagined ‘data’ it becomes clear that the part about non-adumbrational perception is *added* to the data much like a tag. However, the same imagined ‘data’ can be given a different tag. Hence, the imaginative exercise involved in the fogger thought experiment does not justify rejecting (E), for the claim that a non-adumbrationally perceiving fogger is possible is not supported by the *actual imaginative data*. The point here is that for imagination to have epistemic power with regard to essence and modality, the imaginative exercises and the imagined scenarios have to have relevant depth.

One might ask the following: If the situation I imagine when I think of an allegedly non-adumbrationally perceiving fogger is indeed indistinguishable from a situation where there is fog around an object but no perception whatsoever, how could people like Martin (and, to an extent also Wiltsche) have thought that imagining the fogger gives us the possibility of non-adumbrational perception? What went wrong in these cases? My diagnosis is that the verdict that imagining the fogger gives us the possibility of non-adumbrational perception comes from mistakenly taking the part about non-adumbrational givenness to be part of the imaginative data, rather than the added ‘tag’ that it is. The mistake is the same as when we believe that we can imagine transparent iron. We imagine a transparent substance and *stipulate* that it is iron. Not realizing that the last part is a stipulation might make us conflate this additional ‘tag’ as part of the imaginative data.

Admittedly, it is very hard to tell exactly when an imagination is deep enough to warrant belief about modality or essence. Indeed, it is plausible that there might not be a general answer to this question but that the answer varies from case to case. However,

⁶ See, e.g., Berto & Schoonen (2018); Gregory (2010); Kung (2010); Vaidya & Wallner (2021), and van Inwagen (1998).

⁷ See van Inwagen (1998) for a discussion of what could be called the ‘relevant depth problem’ for imaginability accounts in the epistemology of modality.

for my purposes here, which are entirely negative, it suffices to show that the imaginative exercise and the imagined situation clearly lack relevant depth to draw substantive conclusions concerning the essence of perception of spatiotemporal objects.

Hence, RDS meets the threat ensuing from the fogger thought experiment by denying that the situation imagined in such a thought experiment has the relevant depth as to really justify the claim that non-adumbrational perception is possible. In what follows I am going to argue that RDS is Husserlian in spirit. This becomes clear if we look at a crucial distinction in Husserlian epistemology, i.e. that of ‘mere signitive’ and ‘intuitively fulfilling acts’: Take the following two judgements:

- (a) Suppose that after arriving at the office you suddenly wonder whether you have turned off your hotplate. You try to remember your last actions before leaving the house this morning and come to judge that the hotplate is off.
- (b) Suppose that you actually head back home to assure yourself of having turned off the hotplate. Looking at it, you come to judge that the hotplate is off.

For Husserl, there is no doubt that in both judgements, (a) and (b), you are intentionally directed towards your hotplate. However, there is an obvious epistemic difference between (a) and (b). The subject in (a) is in a much weaker epistemic position than the subject in (b). In Husserl’s terms, the crucial difference is that in (a) the hotplate is *not intuitively given*; it is not given *originarily*, as Husserl calls it. Rather it is *merely signitively*, or *emptily intended*. In contrast to that, in (b) you are actually perceiving the hotplate *in the flesh*. It is, hence, *originarily given*; in other words, the act in (b) is *intuitively fulfilling*, as opposed to *mere signitive*.⁸

This is arguably the most crucial distinction in Husserlian epistemology. On the Husserlian picture, intuitive fulfillment and originary givenness are the primary *epistemic* goal. Accordingly, the primary *epistemological* goal is to investigate and illuminate the conditions of possibility of intuitive fulfillment and originary givenness for different kinds of entities. It is important to note that this distinction between mere signitive and intuitively fulfilling acts does not only apply to the realm of perception. It equally applies to abstract objects and mathematical propositions. Mathematical principles can also be merely signitively intended and intuitively fulfilled. The same epistemic difference is at work if we are merely signitively intending Pythagoras’ theorem or if it is originarily given, like in the case when we fully understand and realize its truth, when it is given in the flesh. In a way this extends the realm of *intuition* to abstract objects.⁹ Notably, there is also intuitive fulfillment in imagination. Clearly, by merely *imagining* an object, *this very object* (viz. its actuality) is *not* originarily given. However, imaginations can provide us with intuitive, i.e. originary givenness of possibilities (cf. Husserl *Logische Untersuchungen. Ergänzungsband*, 191, 198).¹⁰

⁸ For a detailed discussion of this, see *Investigation VI* in Husserl’s *Logical Investigations*.

⁹ Smith (2007, 84) explains that “[w]hen I ‘see’ that $2+2=4$, my conceptualization ‘ $2+2=4$ ’ is supported or fulfilled intuitively. Such an ‘intuition’ is not a mysterious peering into the Platonic heaven of numbers; it is rather a familiar form of experience as we enumerate things around us”.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the epistemic role of imagination and phantasy in Husserl, see, e.g. Jansen (2005).

We now have everything we need to fully appreciate that RDS is Husserlian in spirit. According to RDS, the situation imagined in the fogger thought experiment lacks relevant depth as to really justify the claim that non-adumbrational perception is possible. In Husserlian terminology, RDS makes it clear that the part about non-adumbrational perception is *not originally given* but *merely signitively intended* in the imagined scenario. Hence, the imaginative exercise involved in the fogger thought experiment does not justify rejecting (E), for the possibility of a non-adumbrationally perceiving fogger is not *fulfilled* by the actual imaginative data. The epistemic position the thought experiment puts us in is not strong enough. In a certain way, RDS trades on two different meanings of the term ‘imagine’. While the fogger thought experiment might succeed to *suppose* that there is non-adumbrational perception, it fails to *intuitively imagine* such perception in relevant depth. Only the latter constitutes evidence for the possibility of non-adumbrational perception and, hence, only the latter would justify rejecting (E).¹¹

Casting the notion of relevant depth in these Husserlian terms should make it clear that RDS is Husserlian in nature. It takes the justificatory difference maker in imaginative exercises to be the originary (or mere signitive) givenness of the relevant imagined content.

We can now recapitulate by calling to mind the argument against (E) emanating from the fogger thought experiment:

- (1) Non-adumbrational perception is imaginable.
- (2) If non-adumbrational perception is imaginable, then it is possible.
- (3) If non-adumbrational perception is possible, (E) is false.
- (4) Hence, (E) is false.

Both, Madary’s answer and the response strategy suggested by a reviewer in §3 aimed at casting doubt on (1) by arguing that even if we imagine a fogger, we do not imagine a being with tive and non-adumbrational givenness. Yet, as I have argued, both these responses fall prey to an equivocation of the term ‘perspectival’ and fail to fully vindicate (E). Further, it turned out that Wiltsche’s intention concerning thought experiments like

¹¹ Note that Wiltsche (2013) also relates his distinction between first-person-imagination and third-person-imagination to Husserl’s notion of fulfillment. It is important, however, that first-person-imagination and third-person-imagination are fulfilled by different things. Wiltsche maintains that an act of first-person-imagination of the fogger cannot be fulfilled, for we would have to be given the *experiences* a fogger would have. Yet he seems to concede that an act of third-person-imagination of the fogger is fulfillable, for he takes such an act to be capable of establishing the possibility of non-adumbrational perception. That is to say, Wiltsche’s two notions of imagination differ with respect to *what* it takes to fulfill them. The lesson is that the distinction between first-person-imagination and third-person-imagination does not coincide, nor is it extensionally equivalent with the distinction between intuitively fulfilled and mere signitive imagination. In contrast to this, the distinction between two notions of imagination drawn in RDS just is the distinction between mere signitive and intuitively fulfilled imagination. So, RDS denies that there is a kind of imagination that presents the fogger in a way that would establish the possibility of non-adumbrational perception. Third-person-imagining the fogger does not establish the possibility of non-adumbrational perception, since the imagined scenario lacks the relevant depth—it is indistinguishable from a situation in which some quantity of fog wraps itself around an object but there is no such perception.

the fogger is not to vindicate (E) but to make a different assertion about apodictic evidence. As a consequence, Wiltsche does not take issue with any of (1)–(4). RDS, however, takes on (2) by arguing that the fogger and, hence, non-adumbrational perception is not imaginable in such a way that its possibility would follow. This strategy I submit, can block (4) and fully defend (E) (even on its stronger reading (see §3)) against the criticism associated with the fogger thought experiment. Since it is plausible that any variation of the fogger thought experiment would equally lack relevant depth, RDS likely works as an answer not only to the fogger but also to variations of it. I conclude that if the Husserlian is seeking a response to the challenge in the fogger thought experiment, she should go with RDS.

At this point we have to ask what Husserl’s own way would be to deal with the challenge revolving around the fogger. In the next section, I argue that one can reconstruct Husserl’s position concerning subjects like the fogger using his notion of ‘empathy’. However, I will argue that the empathy-strategy is insufficient as an argument against the criticism in (1)–(4), such that RDS is still the best way to go for the Husserlian if she is seeking to refute the criticism surrounding the fogger.

5. Empathy for the fogger?

How would Husserl deal with thought experiments like that revolving around the fogger? He would definitely concede that a fogging being is *logically possible*. After all it or its assumption involves no formal contradiction (*Ideas I*, 108).¹² To see that, for Husserl, the fogger is *impossible* in a crucial (more material) sense, it is important to be clear about the following important feature of his phenomenology. As mentioned, Husserlian phenomenology is *correlational analysis* in the sense that any object, thing or entity must be regarded in correlation to acts of its possible givenness. So, it is a principle of Husserlian phenomenology that any transcendent object or entity necessarily must (in principle) be experienceable by an Ego (*Ideas I*, 108). The position resulting from endorsing this principle has sometimes been called ‘ideal verificationism’.¹³ Husserl specifies the Ego for which any transcendent object needs to be experienceable in §48 of *Ideas I*:

[S]omething transcendent necessarily must be experienceable not merely by an Ego conceived as an empty logical possibility but by any *actual* Ego as a demonstrable unity relative to its concatenations of experience.

IDEAS I, 108

What does Husserl mean here by ‘*actual* Ego’? Does he mean that the *actual* Ego for which any transcendent object must be experienceable according to his ideal

¹² See also Husserl’s *Transzendentaler Idealismus*, 53–54.

¹³ In what follows, I will use the terms ‘correlationism’, ‘ideal verificationism’ and ‘transcendental idealism’ synonymously. Here is a pointed formulation of the position from one of Husserl’s lectures in 1913: “The sentence ‘*A* exists’ and the sentence ‘A way of possible givenness of *A*’s existence can be constructed’ [...] are equivalencies.” (*Transzendentaler Idealismus*, 73; translation mine).

verificationism must be an *occurrent* Ego that currently exists? Sometimes Husserl seems to be very clear that the existence of a thing is dependent on a *possible* consciousness,¹⁴ making it easy to accommodate the realist intuition that things exist even when no occurrent Ego is conscious of them. In other passages Husserl maintains that the existence of physical objects (in contrast to *eidetic* objects like mathematical ones) depends on its possible givenness for an occurrent, currently existing Ego.¹⁵ I agree with Zahavi on this point that Husserl conveys his thought that the possibility of experience must be related to the actuality of experience such that

[...] an object that isn't currently experienced but which could be experienced must belong to the horizon of an actual experience.

ZAHAVI 2017, 71

In this regard, Husserl states the following:

A nature is inconceivable without the co-existence of subjects who are able to experience it; the mere possibility of experiencing subjects is not enough.

TRANSZENDENTALER IDEALISMUS, 156; trans. Zahavi

Note, however, that this does not entail that all physical or transcendent objects must be *experienced* by an *actual* Ego. In the passage from *Ideas I* quoted above Husserl only holds that “something transcendent necessarily must be *experienceable* [...] by any *actual* Ego” (*Ideas I*, 108; emphasis added). It, hence, is precisely as Zahavi (2017, 71) puts it: something transcendent must belong to what Husserl calls the *horizon* of an *actual* experience, i.e. it must be *possible* for an *actual* Ego to experience it. This is important because, while it does not exclude all possible (i.e. non-occurrent) Egos from the realm of *actual* Egos, as long as they are *like* actual ones, it—as I will show shortly—crucially excludes the fogging being from the realm of *actual* Egos.

Husserl continues the passage in §48 of *Ideas I*:

But [...] what is cognizable by one Ego must, of *essential necessity*, be cognizable by *any* Ego. Even though it is not *in fact* the case that each stands, or can stand, in the relationship of “empathy,” of mutual understanding with each other, as, e.g., not having such relationship to mental lives living on the planets of the remotest stars, nevertheless there exist, eidetically regarded, *essential possibilities of effecting a mutual understanding* and therefore possibilities also that the worlds

¹⁴ See, e.g., *Ideas I*, 341 and *Transzendentaler Idealismus*, 11–12. See also Hardy (2013, 100) for an account of Husserl's correlation between truth and evidence along these lines.

¹⁵ See, e.g., *Transzendentaler Idealismus*, 73, 78 and 139–140). Note that there is a debate over the precise interpretation of Husserl's correlationism, which crucially affects the interpretation of these kinds of dependence claims. Unfortunately, I cannot discuss this in detail. For an overview of the debate, see, e.g. Zahavi (2010, 2017).

of experience separated in fact become joined by concatenation of actual experience to make up the one intersubjective world, the correlate of the unitary world of mental lives (the universal broadening of the community of human beings).¹⁶

IDEAS I, §48

In effect, this means that, *necessarily*, it must be *possible* to stand in the relationship of empathy to any other Ego. Even though I might never actually stand in the relationship of empathy to some being living on a remote planet, i.e. even if this is not a “real possibility”, as Husserl sometimes says, it is still essentially possible for me to do so, i.e. it is an “ideal possibility”.¹⁷ Most importantly, the possibility of two (or more) Egos standing in the relationship of empathy to each other is condition for sharing the same intersubjective world. This expresses the Husserlian thought that the world is the constitutional *correlate* of the intersubjective we-community.¹⁸

Let me elaborate a bit on the general importance of empathy for Husserl’s phenomenology. It is, as we have seen, the gist of Husserl’s correlationism that it strictly regards objects in correlation to acts of their possible givenness. Put differently, for Husserl all entities are *constituted* in mental acts of subjects which are conscious of these respective entities. While individual objects can be constituted by a single subject or Ego, Husserl holds that the constitution of the *objective* world as a whole requires a plurality of constituting subjects, i.e. the intersubjective we-community. It is crucial that all subjects *qua* members of this community can in principle stand in the relationship of empathy to each other.

Let’s apply all this to our fogger thought experiment. Even though a fogging being is logically possible it could not be given as a member of the intersubjective community of subjects with which we share a common world. In other words, we could not possibly stand in the relationship of empathy with the fogger. It is not possible for such a fogging being to be a partner in the constitution of the objective world. Since the objective world is the *universal horizon* within which the spatiotemporal objects appear, the fogging being does not falsify the claim that these very spatiotemporal objects are essentially

¹⁶ One might worry that, since Husserl talks about *human beings* here, this does not seem open to a serious consideration of non-human consciousnesses. However, there are two ways of reading “the universal broadening of the community of human beings”. First, as an expansion *within* the group of humans, second, as an (ideally possible) expansion across the boundaries of humanity. I concede that Husserl sometimes writes as if human beings were the only (transcendental) subjects. Yet, if the transcendental we-community would really be limited to members of the biological species human, phenomenology would face serious relativism-charges. Further evidence for the second reading here is that Husserl concedes that non-human animals are transcendental subjects. (See also Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, §22). This is why the fogger is not to be excluded from the intersubjective we-community *for not being human*, but, as I will show shortly, *for violating an essentialist law*, (E).

¹⁷ Note that ideal possibility does not coincide with merely logical possibility. Soffer (1991, 73–74) argues that, for Husserl, ideal possibility is tied to an ideal consciousness. By the time of *Ideas I*, Husserl’s discussion of ideal consciousness is formulated in terms of God. And we have already seen that in *Ideas I* Husserl crucially claims even God is bound to perspectival, i.e. adumbrational perception of spatiotemporal objects (*Ideas I*, 92–93). Hence, from the perspective of *Ideas I*, where the crucial passage discussed here is taken from, subjects like the fogger might be merely logically possible but they are not ideally possible.

¹⁸ See also Husserl’s *Transzendentaler Idealismus*, 58.

given in adumbrations. For Husserl, neither the fogger, nor the non-perspectively given spatiotemporal objects it purportedly perceives can belong to the horizon of an *actual* experience. What excludes the fogger from the intersubjective we-community is that it purportedly perceives objects that are impossible in as much as they could not be part of the horizon of *actual* experience.

This, I take it, is a very adequate illustration of Husserl's views on the matter. Put in slogan form: the fogger is not a counterexample to (E), for, despite its *logical* possibility, it is not a possible partner in the constitution of the objective world. So, whatever the fog does, it does not perceive (our) spatiotemporal objects.

This, of course, raises many questions. In order to clarify the most crucial of them, which concern the notion of empathy, we have to take note of an ambiguity in the claim that we cannot stand in the relationship of empathy to the fogger. There is an important distinction in Husserl's theory of empathy. Iso Kern (1973, xix–xx) was first alluding to this in his introduction to *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität III*. According to Kern, the term 'empathy' is ambiguous in the sense that it designates two quite different research agendas pursued by Husserl. On the one hand, there is the analysis of the foundation and motivation of *natural* acts of *worldly empathy*. This tackles questions concerning the actual goings-on in worldly interactions with others in as much as they are apprehended as others. On the other hand, there is the constitutional analysis of the foundation of transcendental intersubjectivity and the role of empathy in the *constitution of the objective world*.

How then should we interpret the claim that we cannot stand in the relationship of empathy to the fogger? Does this mean that even if foggers existed, we could not have actual attitudes of empathy directed towards them? One might doubt that the claim is true on this interpretation. It might be argued that we can imagine a fogger coming up to us, complaining about work and deeply sighing when expressing its regret for not having spent enough time with a recently deceased loved one. Surely, it seems as if we would be able to empathize in such a situation. Maybe we would have a hard time discerning the subject talking to us at first, but eventually we might be able to recognize the fogger as a subject and develop an empathic attitude towards it. On the other hand, though, according to Husserl, for actual attitudes of empathy to be possible, there needs to be sufficient similarity between the movements and the body of the other with my movements and my body, such that I am capable to perceive the other's body as a lived body ('Leib'). In his *Cartesian Meditations* (§51), Husserl calls this phenomenon, which is on the basis of worldly empathy "pairing". Might this be evidence, then, that we could indeed not have actual attitudes of empathy directed towards foggers, whose bodies and movements are significantly different? Now, it might be argued that pairing with the fogger is impossible, on account of its radically different organization of sensory organs. However, it strikes me that this radically different organization of sensory organs might not even be detectable for us. Consisting of fog, it seems that the fogger would be able to take human form, perfectly hide the fact that all its infinitely many particles are sensory nodes and perfectly mimic human movement, behavior, and speech. For all I

know, my neighbor could be a fogger. Yet, it seems that I can empathize with my neighbor as he is smiling across his face and waving to me. Admittedly, this discussion is fairly speculative and that is exactly the point. How can we be sure to rule out pairing, and, thus, worldly empathy with the fogger? I take it that interpreting the claim that we cannot stand in the relation of empathy to the fogger on this first, *worldly* sense of ‘empathy’ either casts serious doubts on its truth or renders the discussion speculative.

Insofar, I think that the claim that empathy with the fogger is impossible, way better captures what Husserl has in mind here, if we employ the second, more *transcendental* reading of ‘empathy’. The claim that it is impossible to empathize with foggers just amounts to the claim that those subjects cannot be partners in the transcendental constitution of the objective world. If we take ‘empathy’ in this second, less worldly and more transcendental and constitutive sense, Husserl’s point is that the fogger is not a possible subject *because* it is not a partner in the transcendental constitution of the objective world. It could not be co-constituting *our* world, for—given that spatiotemporal objects are essentially given in adumbrations—the fogger seems to “perceive” different things.

This, I take it, is a perfectly adequate *illustration* of Husserl’s views on this matter. However, the important question is whether this point succeeds as an *argument* against the objection raised by the fogger thought experiment, i.e. (1)–(4). Does the claim that empathy with the fogger is impossible suffice to reject the criticism? I think it clearly does not. In what follows I argue that the point about impossible empathy with the fogger suffers from severe dialectical problems if it is taken as an *argument* against the criticism in §2. Namely the empathy-response will appear as question-begging from the perspective of the opponent, i.e. the critic of (E).

The critic takes issue with (E), i.e. with the claim that adumbrational givenness is essential for the perception of spatiotemporal objects. The fogger seems to be a counterexample to (E). While Husserl concedes that the fogger is *logically* possible, the empathy-solution maintains that the fogger cannot be a partner in the constitution of the objective world. Since the objective world is the *universal horizon* within which the spatiotemporal objects appear, the fogger is not a counterexample to the claim that these very spatiotemporal objects are essentially given in adumbrations. This is because excluding the fogger from the intersubjective community and thus from the world entails that whatever it is doing, it is not perceiving spatiotemporal objects (at least not of the kind we know and love). What justifies this exclusion? Why hold that the fogger is no possible subject (in the crucial sense of ‘possible’)? Because it is impossible to empathize with the fogger. However, as we have seen, on the transcendental or constitutive meaning of ‘empathy’ at play here, this just means that the fogger is not a possible subject (in the relevant sense of ‘possible’). Hence, alluding to the impossibility of empathy with the fogger does not justify the exclusion of the fogger from the intersubjective community and thus from the objective world for the former is just tantamount to the latter. So why are we to exclude the fogger? Or, which is the same question, why is the fogger not a possible subject? The only reason available (on this strategy) is that because of the fogger perceiving in a non-adumbrational manner. However, in order for this to be

a reason to exclude the fogger we have to presuppose that perception is *essentially* adumbrational. The only ground on which we could exclude the fogger is if we hold fixed adumbrational perception as essential. Thus, it seems that this strategy presupposes the essentiality of adumbrational perception rather than justifying it. For Husserl to be able to block the conclusion in (4), i.e. the claim that (E) is false, he has to *presuppose* the truth of (E). In the eyes of the objector, the Husserlian is begging the question.

We can bring out this dialectical deficiency of the empathy-solution by comparing it to RDS. It is easy to show that RDS steers clear of the charge of question-begging. While the empathy-solution has to *presuppose* that adumbrational givenness is essential to the perception of spatiotemporal objects, all we need for RDS to work is the observation that the possibility of non-adumbrational perception is not originally given in the imagined situation. This gives RDS all the ammunition it needs to regard the epistemic situation the thought experiment puts us in as too weak to justify the (relevant kind of) possibility of non-adumbrational perception. Hence, if the Husserlian is seeking a way to refute the criticism in (1)–(4), RDS is still the best way to go.¹⁹

Now, what are we to make of Husserl’s point about impossible empathy with the fogger, i.e. of the verdict that the fogger is to be excluded from the intersubjective we-community and thus from the world? Even if it does not work as an *argument* against the criticism, it is, as I have mentioned, a perfectly adequate *illustration* of Husserl’s views on this matter and of the relevant consequences of his transcendental, correlationist and ideal verificationist approach. Importantly, Husserl’s story about fogger-empathy can shed light on the kind of *modality* Husserl’s phenomenology is committed to. I will now, in the last section of the paper, turn to this issue. I shall argue that Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology cannot appeal to strictly absolute modality but that the kind of modality in Husserlian phenomenology is *conditional* on the facticity that we have the transcendental structure we do in fact have.

6. Relativism and Husserlian modality

According to the Husserlian story just told, the fogger is to be excluded from the intersubjective we-community and thus from the world. The fogger is *not* in the relevant and crucial (material) sense a *possible* subject. However, the fogger is a possible subject in a *logical* sense. There is one sense in which Husserl actually excludes a (logically) possible subject from the scope of his phenomenology. Does this commit Husserlian phenomenology to some kind of relativism that delimits its universal validity? It seems to me that Husserl’s answer should be “no”. Even though the Husserlian might want to exclude the fogging subject, she does so on the assumption that it is impossible (in the relevant, material sense of possibility) anyway. The idea is that phenomenology is not

¹⁹ Note, however, that RDS, is *compatible* with Husserl’s empathy-story, i.e. the claim that empathy with the fogger is *impossible*, if the latter is taken as an *illustration* of Husserl’s (ideal verificationist and transcendental idealist) view.

relativistic in the sense of failing to be maximally inclusive, for the subjects it excludes are *impossible* and materially countersensical anyway.

It is the difference between ‘*mere logical possibility*’ and this specific kind of ‘*material possibility*’ that saves Husserlian phenomenology from the charge of relativism. This raises the question of what this difference consists in and what exactly this material kind of modality is. In this last section, I will unfortunately not be able to provide a satisfactory answer to these questions. However, I will briefly discuss some broad directions we could take trying to answer them and thereby provide an outlook for future research.

Compared to mere logical modality, Husserl’s material kind of modality seems to be somewhat *restricted*. In order to see this, consider, again, the question as to whether there might be a fogger-world. I have already indicated that Husserl’s answer is that in the *mere logical sense* of possibility such a fogger-world is possible. Here is a very illuminating passage from a posthumously published manuscript:

It is conceivable to have, in a *parallel* fashion, a multiplicity of equally possible worlds with separated groups of ego-subjects in them or absent in them.

ZUR PHÄNOMENOLOGIE DER INTERSUBJEKTIVITÄT II, 102; trans. Kern, modified

Since the groups of ego-subjects in these possible worlds are *separated* from each other, a fogger-world falls under such conceivable possible worlds. The fact that fogger-egos are strictly separated from us (no partners in the constitution of the world) does not keep them from forming a separate community in a different possible world, as Husserl concedes here. However, as becomes apparent a little later in said passage, these separated (fogger-)worlds are not possible in the crucial sense.

But *a priori*, such multiple worlds (or such pluralities of possibly coexistent subjects that are compossible in relation to a co-constituted world) are not compossible with one another. There can be only one world, only one time, only one space, with a nature and a multiplicity of animal beings.

ZUR PHÄNOMENOLOGIE DER INTERSUBJEKTIVITÄT II, 102; trans. Kern

I take it that the last sentence here shows that in the relevant sense of ‘can’, i.e. according to the relevant kind of modality, the parallel but separated (fogger-)worlds are impossible. So far, no surprises. This just repeats Husserl’s verdict that the fogger-world is logically possible but impossible in the more material and more relevant sense of *possible*. What is new, however, is that we get our first hint about the nature of this material kind of modality: The parallel possible worlds all have a community of subjects co-constituting the respective world. That is to say that the respective community of subjects is *compossible* in relation to the respective co-constituted world. However, the worlds are *not compossible with each other*. Most importantly, since, as Husserl says here, *there can only be one world* and since it is very likely that this is our actual world, the important criterion here for the relevant kind of possibility is that the parallel but separated (fogger-)worlds are impossible for they are *not compossible with our actual world*. So, as a first approximation to Husserlian modality we can record the following:

(HM) For a world w (or a plurality of possibly coexistent subjects, s , co-constituting w) to be *possible in the relevant Husserlian sense*, w (viz. s) must be *compossible* with the actual world, $w_@$ (viz. with the actual plurality of possible coexistent subjects, $s_@$, co-constituting $w_@$).

This, however, raises a number of questions. If we take Husserl literally, if there really only is one possible world, does not this imply strict necessitarianism, i.e. the (arguably implausible) view that nothing could have been different from what it actually is? In slogan form: can it be really true that there can be only one world?

To answer this, we have to take into consideration Husserl's notion of the actual *world* as the 'universal horizon of all possible intentional references'.²⁰ We can clarify this notion by alluding, again, to Husserl's account of adumbrational perception of spatiotemporal objects. Remember that in the perception of spatiotemporal objects like, say, a table we are actually given only one adumbration or aspect of the intended table. However, as Husserl has it, there is a co-given *horizon* of already previously perceived and the soon to be perceived other aspects of the table. In addition to that, the perceived table is also given with an unthematically apprehended *horizontal field* of other objects in the surrounding of the table. This latter (outer) horizon is "a sector 'of' the world, of the universe of things for possible perceptions" (Husserl 1970, 162). Hence, the limit case of this outer horizon is the whole world or universe taken as the *universal horizon*, i.e. the correlate of all possible intentional acts and references. This is precisely what Husserl takes the actual world to be. Rather than being the sum total of all facts, the set of all existing things or a maximally consistent proposition, Husserl takes the actual world to be the universal horizon of all possible intentional acts and references. Given Husserl's correlationism, it is clear that all actual and possible entities must be regarded in correlation to a possible intentional act or reference. Hence, all possible entities, scenarios or "worlds" are ultimately situated within the *universal horizon*, i.e. the actual world. In this sense, of course, there is only one world for there is only one universal horizon. However, there is still a way in which the concept of a *possible world* can make sense in phenomenology: if we regard possible worlds in an actualist way as not on a par with the actual world, e.g., as descriptions of how the actual world might be or as properties the actual world might have. From this perspective, in a sense, we can eat the cake and have it. While it is true that there is only one world (i.e. one universal horizon) we can have many possible worlds (i.e. many ways the world might actually be/have been).²¹

This nicely explains away the threat of strict necessitarianism, but does it explain in what sense Husserlian modality is crucially *restricted*? Note that everything that is possible in the Husserlian sense must be *compossible* with the actual world. That is to say that all possible worlds depend on the actual world *qua* universal horizon. The latter, however, is the correlate of all possible intentional acts and references, i.e. the correlate

²⁰ See, e.g., Husserl's *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, §38 and his *Experience and Judgment*, §8.

²¹ For a detailed discussion of this see Wallner (2014).

of the intersubjective we-community of all possible subjects. As we have seen, the fogger is crucially excluded from this community for it violates crucial essentialist truths. Put differently, the intersubjective we-community of all possible subjects is restricted by the *actual transcendental structure* the members of *our* community are exhibiting. Hence, Husserlian possibility is restricted in as much as it is *conditional* on the facticity that we have the transcendental structure we in fact have. This is in line with Tengelyi's (2014) verdict that the kind of modality Husserl is aiming at yields only *conditional necessity*. That is to say that the essentiality and, thus, the necessity of spatiotemporal perception being adumbrational is conditional on the *fact* that I (or we, the intersubjective we-community which is the correlate of the universal horizon) have the transcendental structures that I (or we) indeed have. The facticity of my and our transcendental makeup delimits the space of Husserlian possibility.

Does this make Husserl a relativist after all? To some extent this will depend on whether we are to regard the facticity of our transcendental makeup as contingent or necessary. Of course, regarding our transcendental structures as necessary in the Husserlian sense, which is conditional on our transcendental structures, is at best trivial and at worst question-begging. This means that this kind of necessity of the transcendental structures will not justify the use of a kind of modality that is conditional on exactly these transcendental structures.

Unfortunately, I cannot adequately discuss the precise characterization and the justification of Husserlian modality here. Much more work needs to be done on this.²² However, due to space-limitations, I need to defer this work to a different paper. In conclusion, I will suffice myself with suggesting a possible direction future research on this topic might take. Tengelyi (2014) rightly argues that unlike metaphysical enterprises more common in contemporary analytic philosophy, *phenomenological* metaphysics is not an investigation into the primal causes of being (as being) but rather *presupposes* and proceeds from some specific primordial facts (Urtatsachen), from the very beginning.²³ A philosophy, which considers itself as essentially an enquiry of the correlation between subject and world (i.e. a philosophy that subscribes to correlationism, ideal verificationism and transcendental idealism), has to presuppose the facticity of this very correlation. It is, hence, likely that such a philosophy will be operating with a notion of modality that is conditional on the facticity of that correlation. The upshot of this is that maybe the justification for working with such a Husserlian notion of modality is to be found in the *meta-philosophical decision* to engage in the enquiry of the correlation between subject and world. Yet, whatever this justification will be, philosophical or meta-philosophical, it is clear that the fate of Husserlian correlationism and transcendental idealism is intertwined with the fate of this Husserlian notion of modality; to adequately grasp the former, we need a thorough understanding of the latter.

²² Some important work has already been done by Mohanty (1984) and Zhok (2016).

²³ For further discussion of primordial facts (Urtatsachen) and their relation to modality see, e.g., Held (1966) and Kim (1976).

7. Conclusion

This paper has shown that the Husserlian has available a response to the challenge imposed by the fogger thought experiment (and its cognates) that fully vindicates (E), i.e. the claim that perception is essentially perspectival and adumbrational. The proposed solution, RDS, has the edge over three other solutions that have been discussed. I have also reconstructed Husserl's own position concerning subjects like the fogger using his notion of empathy. While the empathy-solution is ineffective as a strategy against the criticism surrounding the fogger thought experiment, it still sheds light on the notion of modality Husserl is committed to. I briefly argued that what we could call Husserlian modality needs to be crucially restricted by the *actual transcendental structure* the members of *our* community are exhibiting. This raises the question of the modal status of this transcendental structure. A very brief outlook of some of the problems in answering this question has at least yielded the conclusion that the way we understand this Husserlian modality will crucially shape our understanding of Husserl's phenomenology and *vice versa*.

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