
Husserl and Sellars on the problem of epistemic and categorial givenness¹²

Husserl e Sellars sobre o problema da doação epistêmica e categorial

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the conditions of possibility of a thematic comparison between Husserl's concept of givenness and Sellars's critique of the "entire framework of givenness". Our aim is to suggest that Husserl's framework of givenness is not encompassed by Sellars's critique of the Myth of the Given. After introducing the state of the art of the debate concerning Husserl and the contemporary problem of the given, we analyse whether the Husserlian notion of givenness would be an instance of either the "epistemic given" or the "categorial given" criticized by Sellars. We argue that this is not the case. Concerning the categorial given, we face the challenging argument put forward by O'Shea that however phenomenologically rich our concept of given may be, it would fall prey of the Myth of the Categorial Given. We argue that this objection does not apply to Husserl's theory of categorial givenness.

Keywords: Edmund Husserl. Wilfrid Sellars. Myth of the Given. Givenness.

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RESUMO

Este artigo explora as condições de possibilidade de uma comparação temática entre o conceito de “doação” em Husserl e a crítica de Sellars a “todo o quadro da doação”. Nosso objetivo é sugerir que o quadro da doação de Husserl não é englobado pela crítica de Sellars. Após introduzir o estado da arte do debate sobre Husserl e o problema contemporâneo do dado, analisamos se o conceito husserliano de “dado” seria uma instância do “dado epistêmico” ou do “dado categorial” criticado por Sellars. Argumentamos que não é esse o caso. Com relação ao dado categorial, enfrentamos o argumento desafiador apresentado por O’Shea de que por mais fenomenologicamente rico que nosso conceito de dado seja, ele seria vítima do Mito do Dado Categorial. Argumentamos que esta objeção não se aplica à teoria de Husserl sobre a doação categorial.

Palavras-chave: Edmund Husserl. Wilfrid Sellars. Mito do Dado. Doação.

Status quaestionis

“Thoughts without content [*Inhalt*] are empty [*leer*], intuitions without concepts are blind” (KANT, 1998, p. 130). The famous Kantian *dictum* is at the basis of the contemporary conceptualism-debate concerning the nature of perception. This debate has achieved a dominant role in current epistemological discussions due to McDowell’s influential conceptualist reading of Kant in *Mind and World*. In a nutshell, what is here at stake is whether perceptual experience can play a justificatory role in beliefs, and McDowell’s conceptualist thesis can be roughly stated as follows: if openness to the world is to be possible, then perceptual experience must lie within the “logical space of reasons”⁴, *i.e.* it must be, as Brandom puts it (2002, p. 92), a “conceptual achievement”.⁵ McDowell’s thesis has its roots in Sellars’s seminal critique of the

⁴ The “logical space of reasons” is the the Sellarsian idea that knowledge has an unavoidably normative character. In other words, it is the rejection of “the idea that epistemic facts can be analysed without remainder – even ‘in principle’ – into non-epistemic facts” (SELLARS, 1991, p. 131). More on this notion in section 2 below.

⁵ As suggested by De Gaynesford (2004, p. 110), we can distinguish between three different claims about experiential content in McDowell: (i) the intentional one (“the content of experience is conceptual”); (ii) the epistemological one (“the content of an experience can also be the content of a judgment”); and (iii) the ontological one (“the content of an experience can also be a state of the world”). For the sake of

sense-datum theories in his ground-breaking essay *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* [henceforth, EPM]. In Sellars's view, these theories fail to recognize that *sensing* does not imply *knowing*, since we sense *particulars*, and not *facts*. As Sellars puts it:

[...] we may well experience a feeling of surprise on noting that according to sense-datum theorists, it is *particulars* that are sensed. For what is *known*, even in non-inferential knowledge, is *facts* rather than particulars, items of the form *something's being thus-and-so or something's standing in a certain relation to something else* (SELLARS, 1991, p. 128).

In this scenario, if the sense-datum theorist would still be willing to claim that sensing is a form of knowing, the only alternative would be to assume that it is not *particulars* (or, as the contemporaries could say, *non-conceptual contents*) that are sensed, but *facts* (ibidem, p. 129). This epistemological confusion presented by the sense-datum theories gave rise to the so-called *Myth of the Given*: the idea that particulars imply knowledge by their mere *givenness* to the senses. Sellars's critique of the sense-datum theories, however, is to be understood "only as a first step in a general critique on the *entire framework of givenness*" (ibidem, p. 128). In other words: the critique of the "sensible given" of sense-datum theories is only an instance, or an illustration, of the critique of the idea of knowledge being based on "the given" in general, that is, on *any given whatsoever*.⁶

As stated by Gunther (2003, p. 4), "the genus to which the conceptual and non-conceptual belong [is] intentionality". This statement supports the fact that the contemporary's contestants of the conceptualism-debate, irrespective of their *position* within the debate (*i.e.*, whether they are conceptualists or non-conceptualists), consider themselves to be debating the *nature of intentionality*. Now, it is well known that the problematic of intentionality is a key tenet of Husserl's phenomenology. As we read in the §146 of *Ideas I*, "the problem title that encompasses the whole phenomenology is called intentionality" (HUSSERL, 1976, p. 337)⁷. Additionally, we see that Husserl, as early as in the *Logical Investigations*, considers the clarification [*Aufklärung*] of the

simplicity, and also following De Gaynesford's opinion that "these three claims are closely interrelated" (ibidem), we summed up them all under the label "McDowell's conceptualist thesis".

⁶ As other examples of "givens", Sellars speaks, for instance, of "sense contents, material objects, universals, propositions, real connections, first principles, even givenness itself" (ibidem, p. 127). For an analysis of how the critique of the sensible given could be enlarged to encompass the "entire framework of givenness", see De Santis (2019).

⁷ We will always quote Husserl's passages from the German text of the *Husserliana* Series, but we will use the English translations (see Bibliography). It will be indicated whenever a translation is modified.

relation between intuition and conceptual thought to be the main task of the phenomenology of knowledge. At the beginning of the Sixth Logical Investigation, we read that the main task is to clarify “*the relation between meaning-intention [Bedeutungsintention] and meaning-fulfillment [Bedeutungserfüllung]*, or to speak traditionally, and in fact ambiguously, the relation between ‘concept’ [*Begriff*] or ‘thought’ [...] and ‘corresponding intuition’” (idem, 1984, p. 539).

However orthodox an Husserlian might be in arguing that the concept of intentionality in Husserl is more fine-grained than the mere idea of an intentional purport of consciousness (as in fact it is), the point is that this generic affinity allowed an approximation between Husserlian phenomenology and the contemporary conceptualism-debate. One year after McDowell’s *Mind and World*, Mulligan famously stated that “to see particulars is not to mean, is not to exercise a concept, neither an individual nor a general concept” (MULLIGAN, 1995, p. 170). Mulligan’s analysis has been received in the literature as a *non-conceptualist reading* of Husserl’s account of perception, and it is generally contrasted to Cobb-Stevens, who advanced the thesis that the “categorial intuition of the formal surplus is a condition for the straightforward perception of the particular feature or object” (COBB-STEVENSON, 1990, p. 152), which is generally interpreted as a *conceptualist reading*.⁸ The way is paved for the debate on *conceptualism* or *non-conceptualism* with respect to Husserl’s phenomenology. The number of publications that follows from this controversy is immense.⁹

In addition to the current debate regarding Husserl’s phenomenology in light of McDowell’s conceptualism, we also have a number of publications confronting Husserl and the father of the critique of the given: Sellars. Huemer’s complaint that the relations between Husserl and Sellars are rarely explored in the literature (2004, p. 83, note 3)

⁸ Note that Cobb-Stevens’ analysis is prior to McDowell’s *Mind and World*, which is from 1994. For the contrast between Mulligan’s “non-conceptualist” reading and Cobb-Stevens’ “conceptualist” one, see Mooney (2009). For the exploitation of how this contrast unlocked a recent trend in Husserl scholarship which “takes the *Logische Untersuchungen (LU)* as advancing an irredeemably confused conception of perceptual experience” see Kidd (2019, p. 407 ff.).

⁹ To mention a few: Kjosavik (2003), Shim (2005), De Warren (2006), Dahlstrom (2007), Barber (2008) (2011), Hopp (2008, 2010, 2011, 2020a, 2020b), Mooney (2010), Leung (2011), Doyon (2011), Christensen (2013), Brisart (2013), Van Mazijk (2014, 2017, 2020), Madary (2016), Kidd (2019), Zheng (2019). See also the entire topical collection of *Synthese* titled *Demystifying the Given* (2021).

seems to be finally losing its *raison d'être* in recent times. This is certainly due to McDowell's influence, since before him very little was said about this relationship.¹⁰

The vast majority of these works boil down to an attempt at fitting Husserl's phenomenology to one of the parties at issue: either Husserl is a conceptualist or a non-conceptualist (or some third alternative that emerges from this opposition¹¹). The terms of the debate are, therefore, unquestioned, and the road which is usually taken comes down to fitting Husserl into the debate, either by trying to rescue him from the critique of the Myth of the Given¹², or simply by assuming that his phenomenology is, to a certain extent, givennist in the Sellarsian sense.¹³

At first sight, it would indeed seem out of question that Husserl's phenomenology is an exemplary model of the Myth. Consider, for instance, Fink's description of Husserl's phenomenological method: "a simplicity of a conceptlessness [*Begriffslosigkeit*] reflected in a maxim: *a dull aversion against the concept* [*eine dumpfe Aversion gegen den Begriff*]" (FINK, 2020, p. 515, my emphasis)¹⁴. Still, Fink states that Husserl inherited from Positivism "the idol of the givenness" [*das Idol der Gegebenheit*] (ibidem, p. 511), and that "a blatant prejudice of the phenomenological description is the idea of a pure and straightforward givenness [*schlichten Gegebenheit*] before all thinking judgments as a pre-predicative basis [*vorprädikative Grundlage*] of expressive judgments" (ibidem, p. 515). Finally, here is how Fink interprets the *motto* of the *Logical Investigations* "to the things themselves" [*Zu den Sachen selbst*]: "not a turn [*Wendung*] to the existent [*seiend*], but only to *the object in its given givenness* [*zum Objekt in seiner gegebenen Gegebenheit*] [...]; thus, a renunciation of metaphysics which interprets itself as a hunger for effectiveness [*Wirklichkeit*], for fullness of reality [*Realitätsfülle*]" (ibidem, p. 516).

¹⁰ The pioneering work in this respect is Hartjes' 1974 thesis *The Critique of The Given in Wilfrid Sellars and Edmund Husserl*. Some other works with respect to Sellars and Husserl are worth mentioning, such as Mohanty (1978), Sukale (1978), Soffer (2003b), De Santis (2015, 2019), Williams (2021), De Palma (2021), and the Forthcoming *Wilfrid Sellars and Phenomenology – Intersections, Encounters, Oppositions*, also edited by De Santis & Manca.

¹¹ For example, Doyon (2011), who claims that, with respect to Husserl, the opposition should be between the conceptual and the *pre*-conceptual, instead of the conceptual and the *non*-conceptual.

¹² For example, Zheng (2019) and Williams (2021).

¹³ Brisart and Huemer, for instance, seem to advocate this thesis at least regarding the early Husserl. See, for instance, Brisart (2013, p. 46): "Toutefois, c'est aussi le point à propos duquel se lève la question de savoir si, par là, cette phénoménologie ne s'abandonne pas à un mythe qui, très précisément, s'apparente à ce qu'on appelle 'le mythe du donné'; and Huemer (2004, p. 45): "In this phase of his work [before 1907] he clearly appeals to the *Myth of the Given*".

¹⁴ The translation of all texts whose original language is not English is our responsibility.

Given this picture, it seems pretty much the case that Husserl's phenomenology is committed to the Kantian "blind intuitions", to stay with the *dictum*. More specifically, it seems that its basic principle is exactly that Sellarsian "mythic Given", since Husserl speaks of the thing given "in the flesh" [*leibhaftig*] and "immediately" [*unmittelbar*], or "in one blow" [*in einem Schlage*] and *straightforwardly* [*schlicht*]¹⁵. Husserl's attempt to "return [*Rückkehr*] to the immediacy [*Unmittelbarkeit*] and to its rehabilitation" (FINK, 2020, p. 514) seems to be exactly that kind of Cartesianism to be overcome by the "Hegelian Renaissance" in contemporary analytic philosophy brought by Sellars' critique of the Given. In fact, as Rorty stated, when Sellars speaks of his "*Meditations Hegéliennes*" (SELLARS, 1991, p. 148), he is alluding to Husserl's Cartesian Meditations (RORTY, 1997, p. 9, note 12). The question comes up immediately: is Husserl's phenomenology an instance of that commitment to "the Given" or, more generally, to "the Givenness"?

Our aim here is to show that this question is not as straightforward as it sounds. As we believe, bringing Husserl to this contemporary debate is not a matter of *securing* his concept of givenness from the Sellarsian attack. Or better: *before* we can address the question of whether Husserl falls prey of the Myth of the Given, we should clarify *what exactly Husserl means by givenness*. This will give us the opportunity to assess whether Husserl's concept of givenness is encompassed by the "entire framework of givenness" targeted by Sellars. Of course, we are not the first ones to bring this question to the fore. Most of the works listed above try precisely to state that Husserl's concepts of the given [*das Gegebene*] and of givenness [*die Gegebenheit*] don't match the ones Sellars is attacking. But most of these works *assume*, so to speak, the Sellarsian "framework of givenness", for instance by trying to put forward a Husserlian notion of non-conceptual content which would be able to justify non-inferential beliefs – e.g. in Hopp (HOPP, 2011, p. 224) –, or by claiming that Husserl is a "weak conceptualist", in the sense of providing us with a kind of conceptual account of the contents of perception – e.g. in Van Mazijk (2020, p. 118). These attempts are all sound and worth pursuing, but they

¹⁵ See, for instance: "The 'external' thing appears 'in one blow' [*in einem Schlage*], as soon as our glance falls upon it. The manner in which it makes the thing appear present [*als gegenwärtiges erscheinen zu lassen*] is *straightforward* [*schlicht*]" [...] "The unity of perception comes into being [...] *as an immediate fusion of part-intentions*" (HUSSERL, 1984, p. 676-7). Also: "Any perceiving consciousness has the peculiarity of being a consciousness of the *own presence 'in person'* [*leibhaftigen Selbstgegenwart*] of an individual Object" (idem, 1976, p. 81).

are somehow different from what we will try to do here. We will try, namely, *to question* to what extent it makes sense to compare Husserl's "givenism" with the "givenists" attacked by Sellars. If it does, then we should keep looking for a party to which Husserl would fit among this debate (conceptualist, non-conceptualist etc.); if it doesn't, then the only alternative seems to be to *displace* Husserl's phenomenology – which is the philosophy of givenness *par excellence*, as one could say¹⁶ – from the very Sellarsian "framework of givenness". We will argue for this latter option, although in a very introductory way – that is, without any claim to exhaust the matter. It will be a kind of *prolegomenon* for future research concerning the conditions of possibility of a thematic comparison between Husserl's concept of givenness and Sellars' critique of the framework of givenness.

The paper is divided into two main sections. The first focuses on the *epistemic givenness*; the second, on the *categorial givenness*. The difference between these two kinds of givenness will be clarified in these sections.

1. Epistemic givenness

"The 'problem of evidence' (Hua XXIV, 153–6) is a 'problem of givenness' (*Gegebenheit*) – 'the myth of the given' notwithstanding" (HEFFERNAN, 2020, p. 412). These words from Heffernan deserve closer consideration. It can be interpreted in the exact sense that we are trying to call attention here: It is not as if Husserl's problem of givenness did not care, so to speak, about falling prey of the Myth of the Given; rather, Husserl's problem of givenness stands *outside the framework* within which the problem of the Myth of the Given is set. But how can it be so? Is Husserl's problem not a gnoseological¹⁷ one? To go with the jargon, is his aim not to reach *the things*

¹⁶ After all, as Husserl himself puts it, "givenness is givenness" (HUSSERL, 1973, p. 344).

¹⁷ A brief clarification of the use of the term *gnoseological* instead of *epistemological* is required here. Sellars (and the ones following him) uses the term "epistemic" and its derivations to refer to the problem of the theory of knowledge in general (thus, "theory of knowledge" = "epistemology"). Husserl's term for this is *Erkenntnistheorie*, which is literally "theory of knowledge". *Episteme*, however, refers to the *scientific* knowledge, and therefore "epistemology" would literally mean a "science" (*logos*) of the scientific knowledge. However, we believe that what Sellars has in mind in his critique of the Given is knowledge *in general*, and not the knowledge provided by the sciences in particular. Thus, "gnoseology" would fit better than "epistemology". Also De Santis and Manca agree with this (2021, p. 8). This difference is already made clear by some of the Neo-Kantians. See, for example, Ernildo Stein's explanation of how Heidegger's ontological difference could emerge from the *gnoseological* problematic, but not from the narrower *epistemological* one, and how he (Stein) resorts to the Neo-Kantian Lask to

themselves? Already in the Introduction to the *Logical Investigations* Husserl states that the “motives for phenomenological analysis” have their origins on the “most general *fundamental questions of theory of knowledge* [*erkenntnistheoretischen Grundfragen*]”, one of these questions being the following: “how are we to understand the fact that the ‘in-itself’ [*an sich*] of objectivity becomes ‘presented’, ‘apprehended’ in knowledge, and so ends up by becoming subjective? What does it mean to say that the object is ‘in-itself’ and is ‘given’ in knowledge?” (HUSSERL, 1984, p. 12, translation modified). Now, if we turn to Sellars, we see that the concept of epistemic given is the one which emerges from this very same “classical” epistemological problem. We’re following Bandini in calling it a “classical problem”. As she explains, “le problème abordé par Sellars dans cet article séminal est, somme toute, classique: il s’agit de celui de l’objectivité de nos représentations, et partant, de la validité et de la justification de la connaissance” (BANDINI, 2012, p. 10). Now, how could Husserl’s problem of Evidence¹⁸, which seems to fit the description of this “classical problem”, be the “problem of givenness – the myth of the given notwithstanding”? To clarify this, let us try to understand Sellars’ critique of the epistemic given.

The concept of “the given” which figures in the myth of the epistemic given is the one at the center of the debate of the “Kantian strand in Sellars’s thought” (O’SHEA, 2021, p. 10547).¹⁹ The epistemic given contains the following properties²⁰:

- (i) Epistemic independency
- (ii) Epistemic efficaciousness
- (iii) Epistemic autonomy

make this point (Stein, 1983, p. 141). Having said that, we will use, from now on, the English “epistemology” and its derivatives, since this is the one Sellars uses, to avoid confusion.

¹⁸ *Evidence* in the Husserlian sense of the term (the German word is *Evidenz*) is to be understood, as Heffernan explains (2020, p. 412), as an “‘experience’ (*Erlebnis*: Hua XXIV, 316) of ‘givenness’ (*Gegebenheit*) involving ‘insightfulness’, not ‘blindness’ (Hua XXIV, 155)”. It is to be distinguished from the English word *evidence*, which would correspond to the German *Beweismittel*, whose epistemic meaning “reflects its legal sense as what enables someone to see that something is the case” (ibidem).

¹⁹ This strand unites thinkers like Rosenberg, Brandom and McDowell, and the core idea somewhat shared by them is that “not only epistemic justification but more fundamentally the very possibility of having any conceptually contentful empirical thought or intentionality about a world of at all requires a background of conceptual capacities” (O’SHEA, 2021, p. 10547). In O’Shea’s opinion, the problem of the “epistemic given” that most concerns this strand does not represent the most crucial aspect of Sellars’s critique of the given, this latter being rather the problem of the “categorial given” (ibidem, p. 10545), which will be our focus on the next section.

²⁰ For a more in-depth analysis of these properties, see Bandini (2012, p. 18), and the “The Master Argument against the Given” put forward by Tripplet & DeVries (2000, p. 98-9, 104-5).

The epistemic given is (i) *independent* because it is not inferred from anything else, but is immediately given; it is (ii) *efficacious*, because it is able to act as a premise for other knowledges (it is able to *justify* other knowledges); and it is (iii) *autonomous*, because its awareness implies its *knowledge* (I *know* the thing given by the mere fact that I am *aware* of it being given).

The conjunction of these three properties leads to absurdity; therefore, the epistemic given is a myth. Concerning the first two points, Sellars is clear:

One of the forms taken by the Myth of the Given is the idea that there is, indeed *must be*, a structure of particular matter of fact such that (a) each fact can not only be non-inferentially known to be the case, but presupposes no other knowledge either of particular matter of fact, or of general truths; and (b) such that the noninferential knowledge of facts belonging to this structure constitutes the ultimate court of appeals for all factual claims – particular and general – about the world (SELLARS, 1991, p. 164).

It is impossible for a *fact* belonging to this *structure* of particular matter of fact to be, at the same time, *independent* of any other fact and *efficacious* with respect to some other fact. How would it be possible for a fact to belong to a structure within which it is not inferred from any other fact while being able to act as a premise for another fact of this very same structure? Therefore, the conjunction of (i) and (ii) already shows that the concept of epistemic given is inconsistent.

With respect to the epistemic autonomy of the given, Sellars admits that it brings out “the heart of the Myth of the Given” (ibidem, p. 169). It represents “the traditional empiricist idea that observational knowledge ‘stands on its own feet’” (ibidem, p. 168). This brings up what McDowell labeled “Sellars’s master thought” (MCDOWELL, 2009, p. 4), which is the idea of the *logical space of reasons*. This is how Sellars introduces this idea: “in characterizing an episode or a state as that of *knowing*, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says” (SELLARS, 1991, p. 169). To characterize an episode of knowing in terms of the logical space of reasons basically means to reject the idea that “epistemic facts can be analysed without remainder – even ‘in principle’ – into non-epistemic facts” (ibidem, p. 131). To use a Husserlian jargon, it is the idea of avoiding a *metabasis eis állo genos*. If we admit, with the traditional empiricists, that the mere awareness of a bare particular would lead us to its knowledge, we would be assuming the possibility of *confusing* the realm of the mere *goings-on* (which is the realm of natural facts) with the realm of the

normative (which is the realm of knowledge, of justification). To sum up, from a simple awareness of a bare particular no knowledge (which is always general) is to be possible. Therefore, the given cannot be *autonomous*.²¹

Having showed that the epistemic given is a myth, one should expect us to *defend* Husserl's concept of given from it. This is indeed possible, and it has been done in many different and efficient ways.²² But our aim here is different. We intend to show that Husserl's concept of given stands *outside* the Sellarsian "framework of givenness". If Fink is right in saying that Husserlian phenomenology inherited "the idol of the givenness", a claim that could side Husserl together with the "traditional empiricists" attacked by Sellars, it is nonetheless true that if phenomenology "revives old trends and theories, still [it] substantially transvaluates [*umwertet*] them" (HUSSERL, 2002, p. 272). This "transvaluation" is fundamentally based on the fact that phenomenological analysis abstracts from all "matter of knowledge" [*Erkenntnismaterie*] (idem, 1984, p. 12); that is, it will not try to offer us an *answer* to the classical question of the "objectivity of presentations"; rather, it will take this question as *material for analysis* and will seek to *clarify its concepts*. And here is where the phenomenological concept of *the given* enters the stage: this clarification [*Aufklärung*] of knowledge has as its specific method the *returning to what is given in intuition*, as opposed to the *theorizing* about a "question" that is allegedly already clarified and is only waiting for an *explanation* [*Erklärung*] – that is, waiting for an *answer*. In Husserl's words, the phenomenological method appeals to the "'things themselves' here under discussion [*die hier fraglichen 'Sachen selbst'*], i.e., to the cognition 'itself' (precisely to its direct, intuitive givenness)" (idem, 2002, p. 281, translation modified).²³ To sum up, if there is a "return to the givenness" in Husserl's phenomenology, it must be read in light of this *Umwertung* of the old tendencies of theories of knowledge: the phenomenological method of starting with the "giving intuition" is to be contrasted with the idea of starting

²¹ The non-autonomous character of the given can also be seen in what Sellars calls the *inconsistent triad*: "A. *X senses red sense content s* entails *x non-inferentially knows that s is red*.

B. The ability to sense sense contents is unacquired.

C. The ability to know facts of the form *x is ϕ* is acquired.

A and B together entail not-C; B and C entail not-A; A and C

entail not-B." (SELLARS, 1991, p. 132).

²² One possibility, *e.g.*, would be to show how "there is more common ground between Husserl and Sellars than is usually thought", since Husserl too "makes very similar points about the mediacy of empirical knowledge" (SOFFER, 2003b, p. 302), and so on.

²³ As well stated by Moura (1989, p. 22), "*o zu den Sachen selbst* significa *zu der Erkenntnis selbst*, nem mais nem menos".

with “ready-made theories of knowledge”. Those questions of theory of knowledge “can, it is plain, not be separated from the [...] questions regarding the clarification of pure logic, since the task of clarifying [*Klärung*] such logical Ideas as Concept and Object, Truth and Proposition, Fact and Law etc., inevitably leads on to these same questions” (idem, 1984, p. 13). That is, to assess the “basic questions [*Grundfragen*] of the theories of knowledge” (1984, p. 12), or the “classical problems”, as Bandini says with respect to Sellars, we must phenomenologically clarify the givenness of the concepts of pure logic²⁴, instead of starting with those classical problems right away.

This is clear from the viewpoint of the phenomenological *Betrachtungsweise* [mode of consideration], that one must not lose sight of. Take, for instance, this passage from the *Logical Investigations*:

[...] that all objects and relations among objects are what they are for us, through acts of thought essentially different from them, in which they become present to us, in which they stand before us as unitary item that we *mean*. For the purely phenomenological mode of consideration [*Betrachtungsweise*] there is nothing but a network [*Gewebe*] of such intentional acts (ibidem, p. 48).²⁵

Schuhmann called attention to this passage, explaining how already in the *Logical Investigations* the “enigma of knowledge [*Rätsel der Erkenntnis*]” is to be understood not as the “joining [*Zusammenfügung*] of two elements” (SCHUHMAN, 1971, p. 60-1). On the contrary, the “originally given or naturally experienced is the unity, and only through the reflection upon it (executed here) it becomes a problem and threatens to fall apart” (ibidem). All in all, if, for the phenomenological mode of consideration, there’s nothing but a “*Gewebe* of intentional acts”, the “return to the things themselves” cannot mean a return to the epistemic given as characterized above, but the return to that specific “*Gewebe*” which we call knowledge. As Husserl puts it, the aim of the phenomenological theory of knowledge “is not to *explain* [*erklären*] knowledge in the psychological or psychophysical sense as a *factual* occurrence in objective nature, but to

²⁴ The concepts of pure logics are “ideal objects” (whose distinguishing feature is its “timeless” character [*unzeitlich*], which is to be distinguished from the “real objects”, which are *temporal* [*zeitlich*] (HUSSERL, 1984, p. 129). This brings up Husserl’s definition of object in general: Objects are “substrata of valid predications” (idem, 2002, p. 300). Therefore, the “phenomenological clarification” which is the first task of a rigorous theory of knowledge does not encompass only the ideal objects of pure logic, but is to be “taken in a very broadened sense” (ibidem), that is, it “does not, of course, preclude the fact that some of the investigations concern at the same time the problems of cognition of reality” (ibidem, p. 208).

²⁵ This last (and crucial) sentence is strangely absent in Findlay’s translation (HUSSERL, 2001, p. 194).

clarify [aufklären] the *Idea* of knowledge in its constitutive elements and laws” (HUSSERL, 1984, p. 27, translation modified). The result would be, or at least this is the goal, the *dismantling* of the assumptions on which the traditional problem of knowledge rest, which are formulated in a dogmatic way (reading: not yet phenomenologically clarified). Examples of these formulations are “questions concerning the justifiability of accepting ‘mental’ [psychische] and ‘physical’ realities which transcends consciousness” (ibidem, p. 26) etc.²⁶

To sum up our results of this first section: The concept of epistemic given criticized by Sellars is the one which emerges from the “classical epistemological question of the objectivity of presentations”. This problem is the common starting point both for Sellars’s critique of the Myth of the Given and for Husserl’s phenomenological clarification of knowledge. What distinguishes them, however, is the fact that Sellars takes up this “classical question” in its own terms to criticize the empiricist solution to it (and to offer his own, which does not concern us here), while Husserl uses the very same question to offer neither an *explanation* [Erklärung] nor a solution to it, but to use it as a *guiding-clue*, or as a *motive*, to *clarify* [aufklären] its terms *via* the return to the acts of consciousness to which the terms that make up this questions are given. By doing this, Husserl intends to show that it is precisely the lack of clarification of these very terms (with which the “classical question of the objectivity of presentations” are set up) that *allows* this question (and its solution *via* the appeal to the epistemic given) to emerge in the first place. To use a kind of slogan, if we clarify the given acts of knowledge, the problem of the epistemic given disappears.²⁷ Husserl’s approach that we are trying to present here is well illustrated by a passage from the *Draft* of a preface to the *Logical Investigations*, written in 1913, in which he explains his “demand for an

²⁶ Of course, only the mature transcendental phenomenology, with the tools of the transcendental reduction, will make possible a full-fledged overcoming of the traditional theories of knowledge. As put by Trizio, “transcendental idealism seals the fate of all these metaphysical positions” (2021, p. 83), thus turning these positions (such as idealism, realism etc.) meaningless. Our aim here, however, is not to present this how full-fledged overcoming of the traditional problem of knowledge is carried out by Husserl, but only to introduce the basic idea behind it and the role played by the concept of *giving intuition* in it.

²⁷ A similar point was made by John Wild, who said that the problem of the given shows up only “once the intentional structure of perception is [...] ignored”, and that the empiricist, “after locking himself up in the infallible prison cell of his immediate states, [...] also had a miraculous way [we could say now: a *Mythic* way] of escape”, but what the empiricists don’t show “is convincing phenomenological reasons for getting locked up in the first place (WILD, 1940, p. 77-8).

intuitive [*intuitiv*] method of philosophy in the return to intuition [*Anschauung*]” as follows:

Problems like those having to do with the sense and object of knowledge are resolved neither when one subjects them to supposedly pure thought nor when one enriches the traditional philosophical vocabulary with new, profound expressions but rather when one transposes these problems, which right from the outset are completely vague and ambiguous, into the light of intuition by means of the laborious task of clarification, when one exemplifies *in concreto* and finally transforms them into work problems which, at first narrow and limited, can actually be tackled *within the framework of originally giving intuition* [im Rahmen originär gebender Anschauung]” (idem, 2002, p. 280, translation modified).

This suggests that Sellars’s “entire framework of givenness” is not quite “entire”, since it does not encompass Husserl’s “framework of originally giving intuition”.

2 Categorial givenness

Once dismissed the problem of the epistemic given, it remains the problem of the *categorial given*. We need to be careful in addressing the Myth of the Categorial Given. Contrary to the strong words of EPM about the epistemic given, such as those referring to it as the “heart of the Myth of the Given”, we only have sparse remarks by Sellars himself with respect to the categorial given, such as the one stating that it is “perhaps the most basic form” of the myth (SELLARS, 1981, p. 11).²⁸ Nonetheless, it will be important to address this variety of the critique of the myth here, especially because it has recently been considered to be applicable to “phenomenologically ‘thick’ positions” which are “widely assumed to be immune to it” (O’SHEA, 2021, p. 10545).²⁹

This is how Sellars defines the Myth of the Categorial Given: “If a person is directly aware of an item which has categorial status C, then the person is aware of it as having categorial status C” (SELLARS, 1981, p. 11). What does this mean? In O’Shea’s interpretation, it means “the idea that there is some implicit categorization of whatever is under consideration that is assumed to be in principle *not* revisable or replaceable by a fundamentally different categorization in this way” (O’SHEA, 2021, p. 10554). That is, the

²⁸ O’Shea, who argues for the priority of the categorial given, admits that Sellars himself did not refer explicitly to it, but only implicitly (O’SHEA, 2021, p. 10545, note 4).

²⁹ As already stated, in our reconstruction of the “myth of the categorial given” we will follow O’Shea’s interpretation, which we consider to be a very thought-provoking one. Different interpretations of the myth of the categorial given can be found in Bandini (2012), Triplett (2014), and Hicks (2020). We hope to have the opportunity to confront these different interpretations in future works.

direct awareness of any *sort* of things by itself provides one with a cognition of that item *as the sort of item it ultimately is* – that is, as the sort of item it would be correctly revealed to be by whatever is or turns out to be the best overall explanatory account of whatever sorts or categories of things there really are in the world (ibidem, p. 10560).

The idea of the categorial given is the idea that we “*have a concept of something because we have noticed that sort of thing*” (SELLARS, 1991, p. 176). That is, the categorial structure of the world is *imposed*, so to speak, to the knowing subject. And, if we follow O’Shea’s interpretation, this would also imply that this categorial structure is *not* revisable, that is, that this categorially structured world which imposes itself upon us presents us the “ultimate being of reality”, or the world *as it really is*.

Husserl would not agree with any of those ideas. Firstly, because, for him, the categorial intuition of a state of affair is not a matter of “direct awareness” of the “categorial status” of something. Rather, it is an *articulated* and, therefore, a *mediated* process. Second, Husserl would not subscribe to the thesis that the world as it is categorially given to us is not revisable. Let us try to expand these two lines of reasoning in more detail below.

2.1 Husserl’s theory of categorial givenness

The explanation of the givenness of a categorially structured object is to be found in the §48 of the Sixth Logical Investigation. This givenness, instead of being *direct*, has a *triadic structure*.³⁰ We can sum up this structure as follows:

1. First, there is a straightforward intuition [*schlichte Anschauung*] of the state of affair, for instance “the paper is white”. This straightforward intuition is what Husserl calls total perception [*Gesamtwahrnehmung*] (HUSSERL, 1984, p. 682). I see the state of affair in one blow [*in einem Schlage*]: the *white paper* is seen, and nothing else. The moments that make up that state of affair are only *implicitly* aimed at. That is, I see the white paper, but I do not see the white as a “quality”. I see the state of affair in an *inarticulate* way, and not in a *categorial* way (in this case, I don’t see it as a *relation*³¹).

³⁰ For a full analysis of Husserl’s theory of categorial intuition, see Lohmar (1998, p. 169 ff.)

³¹ Husserl distinguishes between *sensuous concepts* (such as *colour, house, judgment, wish*), *categorial admixture concepts* (such as *colouredness, virtue, the axiom of parallels*), and *purely categorial concepts* (such as *unity, plurality, relation, concept*) (ibidem, p. 713). We will only deal with *purely categorial*

2. Then there is an intuition that is again *straightforward*, but which now refers to those moments that were previously only implicitly perceived. This intuition Husserl calls *particular perception* [*Sonderwahrnehmung*] (ibidem). The part-intentions [*Partialintentionen*] of the initial total perception are now highlighted. Now I not only see the initial white paper, but I notice specifically the *whiteness* of the paper: “an *independent* [*eigenen*] act will have α [in our example, the white] as its own perceptual object” (ibidem). This is not, however, the intuition of a new object: It is the white paper which is still intuited. The difference does not occur at the level of *the object intentionally aimed at*, but in *the way of intending it*: “In straightforward perception we say that the whole object is ‘*explicitly*’ given, while each of its parts (in the widest sense of parts) is ‘*implicitly* given’” (ibidem, p. 680). At this stage, therefore, we have *articulated and founded acts* [*gegliederten und fundierten Akten*] (ibidem, p. 683).
3. Finally, we have *the categorial givenness*, in which the previous two steps are *synthetically apprehended in a categorial act*. It is only here that the particular perception of the white part-intention is grasped *as* a predicate of a subject. That is, it is only at this third step, where a synthetic act of a categorial apprehension occurs, that the state of affair “the paper is white” can be seen in its syntactic-relational categorial structure. This third step is dependent on the previous ones, and it is only here that the “awareness of an item with a categorial status C”, to speak with Sellars, occurs. The categorial intuition is, therefore, a mediate process and, perhaps most importantly, a *synthesis of acts*, which Husserl calls *synthesis of identification* [*Deckungssynthesis*]: “forms of categorial combination [*Verknüpfung*] go with the manner in which acts are synthesized: they are objectively [*objektiv*] constituted as objects in the synthetic acts built upon our sensibility” (ibidem, p. 684).

To sum up: we have a straightforward intuition of the object pure and simple, which Husserl calls a “founding act” [*fundierende Akt*], and a categorial intuition of the state of affair, which Husserl calls “founded act” [*fundierte Akt*]. But let us not be misled by this talk of “foundation”. The straightforward act is at the basis of the categorial act (it is *founding* in this sense), but it does not *determine* its *nature*. With

concepts here, just as Husserl himself does in his treatment of this question in the Sixth Logical Investigation.

these *synthetic* types of categorial intuitions, which are the ones that are here at stake³², “the *synthetic intention* was *co-directed* [mitgerichtet] to the objects of these founding percepts, inasmuch as it [...] brought them to a relational unity” (ibidem, p. 690). That is, the categorial act is not an *intellectual intuition*, completely freed from sensibility, since it is *founded* upon it; rather, the founding object of sensibility is *co-intended* with the categorial founded object – hence *syn-thésis* (from the Greek *syn*, which refers to union) –, but it does not *determine* its categorial structure.

Therefore, succinctly how our exposition might have gone, we believe it to be sufficient to dismantle the first point, namely the Sellarsian idea that the categorial form of the world would be *imposed* to the knowing subject by direct awareness. On the contrary, the givenness of the categorial structure of the world is a very *complex* and *mediated* process of synthesis of acts. And this mediated process avoids the charge of “imposition” as long as the founding acts does not determine the nature of the founded (categorial) acts of synthesis.

Now, it remains a second point to be tackled: the one asserting that the categorial structure of the world is *ultimate*, meaning non-revisable. This is the point of our next and final section.

2.2 The non-revisability of the categorial given

So far, so good: the categorial object has its origin in the categorial act, that is, it can only be given in certain acts, and, more specifically, in the *execution* [Vollziehung] of the categorial synthesis. One cannot have a state of affair unless one executes the three steps of *Gesamtwahrnehmung*, *Sonderwahrnehmung* and *Deckungssynthesis*. But is the object which is categorially articulated given in this triadic structure the *ultimate* one? Is it *non-revisable*?

To address this question, we need to bring to the fore the Husserlian concept of *categorial law* [kategorialen Gesetzen] (ibidem, p. 718). The categorial law is responsible for fixing the limits for the categorial relational thinking. It is this categorial

³² The other type being the “abstractive” one, namely the *universal intuition* [Allgemeine Anschauung], in which the founding object operates only as an “illustration” for the universal intention (ibidem). In this case, the “objects of the founding acts do not *enter into* [miteintreten] the intention of the founded one” (ibidem). For more on the distinction between *synthetic* and *abstractive* types of categorial intuition, see the entire §52 of the Sixth Logical Investigations (1984, p. 690 ff.).

law that will *impose itself*, so to speak, on the categorial thinking. Are we finally meeting the “non-revisability”, the “ultimate character”, of the categorial structure of the world? Is Husserl’s “categorial law” Sellars’s “categorial given”?

Let us not be hasty about this. The constraining of the law on the categorial thinking operates at two levels: on the *material* [*stofflich*] and on the *analytic* ones. At the material level, it has to do with the mere possibility of any given material [*Stoff*] of accepting a certain form: if it is possible to conceive of a certain material embedded with a certain form, then we have what we may call a *material categorial possible truth*. At this level, we are dealing with the simple fact that a categorial form cannot impose itself on a material that refuses it. We cannot freely say that “color is the whole of a sound”, since the material itself prevents us from saying so. Here we have, then, the first level of the legal constraining on the categorial thinking, namely a *material constraining*.

Now, if any given material admits a certain categorial form – that is, if it is possible to think of such a material with such and such a form –, then it follows a series of *necessary* connections strictly prescribed by the purely formal categorial law. And this happens independently of the *particular* material in question. Once a certain material admits a certain form, then one abstracts from this particular material and fixes a chain of necessary analytic connections that follow from the very nature of the categorial form, this latter being *pure* (ibidem, p. 718). This is how Husserl explains this idea:

If, e.g., the statement ‘*w is a part of W*’ is valid, then a statement of the form ‘*W is a whole relatively to w*’ is also valid. If it is true that *there is an A which is B*, then it is also true that *a certain A is B, or that not all A’s are not B’s* etc. In such propositions, what is material is boundlessly variable; hence all material meanings are replaced by algebraical signs of indirect and wholly unfixed significance (ibidem, p. 724).

That is, if a determinate material admits a certain form (in this case, “*w is a part from W*”), then it follows a sequence of determinate propositions. These latter, however, are to be characterized as *analytic* (ibidem), which means that they represent the level of what we may call *analytic categorial possible truth*, once they are independent of the particular material to be put into relation.

Let us see how Husserl summarizes his theory of the material and analytic laws that command the categorial acts:

These pure laws can therefore not prescribe what forms a *given material* [*gegebener Stoff*] can assume, but can only tell us that, when it, and any material in general, assumes a certain form, or is capable of assuming it, a definitely limited circle of further forms remains open to the same material. There is, i.e., *an ideally closed circle of possible transformation of a functioning form, into ever new forms*. The ideal *possibility* of these new forms in relation to the same material, has its *a priori* guarantee in the before mentioned “analytic” laws which embody the presupposition in question (ibidem, translation modified, p. 719-20).

This “ideally closed circle of possible transformations” corresponds to the “laws of proper thinking” [*eigentlichen Denkens*] (ibidem, translation modified), and brings out the *limits* of, or the *constraints* on, the categorial thinking. That which will confirm or disappoint a certain categorial thinking is the subordination of that thinking to the analytic laws (which are *formal* and *pure*), and not the correspondence of this thinking to some “categorial given”.

This is how the scheme of “truth by correspondence” works with respect to the categorial givenness in Husserl’s theory. It is not as if a bare presence (an “item with a categorial status C”, to speak with Sellars) imposed itself on our thinking from the outside. As Husserl says, in the case of the intuition of categorial objects, “we are not concerned with laws which seek to assess the real being [*wahrhafte Sein*] of the objects presented at different levels” (ibidem, p. 710-11). What “*imposes itself*” (if we could still employ this manner of speaking) on the categorial thinking is the *analytic formal law*, which only “imposes” the limits for the actual execution [*wirklich vollziehen*] of the categorial relational thinking. The execution of such thinking in disregard of these formal laws is the *signitive* (i.e., the *empty*) mode of the categorial thinking (when I only entertain the object in my thinking). The *intuitive* mode (when I *confirm* my categorial relational thinking with the categorially structured object) comes down to *thinking according to the pure categorial formal laws*. It has nothing to do, therefore, with a categorial given constraining our thinking from the outside.

Husserl presents this distinction between the signitive and the intuitive categorial acts (or categorial acts *independent of analytic laws* and categorial acts *according to these laws*) in several passages: “Where, e.g., we *execute* a whole-part relationship *intuitively*, we can normally convert it, but not in such a manner that the part, with unchanged real content, can be looked on as the whole, and the whole as the part” (ibidem, p. 717, translation modified, emphasis added). That is, I can signitively think

that “g is part of G and G is part of g”, but I cannot *intuit* such a state of affair (because I cannot actually, effectively, articulate such a state of affair in my thinking):

We can no doubt ‘think’ any relation between any set of terms, and any form whatever on the basis of any material [*Stoff*] – think them, that is, in the sense of mere signification [*Signifikation*]. But we cannot *really execute* ‘foundings’ on every foundation [*Grundlage*]: we cannot *intuit* sensuous stuff in any categorial form we like, let alone *perceive* it thus, and above all not perceive it *adequately* (ibidem, translation modified).

This “being able to think” in the sense of “mere signification” is what Husserl calls *improper thinking* [*uneigentliches Denken*]. In this mode of thinking, “we are beyond all bounds of categorial laws” (ibidem, p. 723). Everything whatsoever can be put into relation, even in pure contradiction, as long as they conform to the limits set by the *purely logico-grammatical laws*, that is, as long as they have *meaning* [*Bedeutung*]. If it has meaning, an improper thinking is free to incur in contradiction. We cannot think “A and or” meaningfully, since this represents a transgression of the purely logico-grammatical laws that set the limits between the *meaningless* [*Unsinnig*] and the *nonsensical* [*Widersinnig*]³³; but we can freely think “A is B and is not B”. This last thought is meaningful – yet it is false, insofar as it transgresses the limits of the categorial laws.

The most important point for our purposes here is that the analytic categorial laws are, *in a very specific sense*, dependent on material categorial laws. This needs to be understood very carefully. The *ideal laws* belonging to the *categorial forms* “are of an entirely pure and *analytic* character, and *quite independent of the particularity of their material*” (ibidem, translation modified, p. 718). At this point, they are *independent* of the material. As already stated, we abstract from the particularity of the material and let the pure categorial laws do their job. However,

What categorial formations are in fact permitted by *pre-given materials* of perception or imagination, what categorial acts can *de facto* be really executed on the basis of their constitutive sensuous intuitions – on this point our *analytic laws*, which are here our ideal conditions, say nothing” (ibidem, 719, translation modified).

³³ The distinction between *Unsinn* and *Widersinn* is established in the §12 of the Fourth Logical Investigation. The English terms should not surprise us here, since in the *Logical Investigations* Husserl uses *Sinn* and *Bedeutung* as synonyms, both referring to *meaning* (ibidem, p. 58). Basically, a sentence has first to be *meaningful* to be evaluated as true or false. If it is not well formed, it is simply *meaningless* [*Unsinn*, or *Sinnlos*]. “g is part of G and G is part of g” is not *meaningless* (we can understand it and affirm that it is *false*), but “G or is between” is a *nonsense* [*Widersinn*, or *Absurd*], since it cannot even be assessed as true or false.

Otherwise stated: it is not under the analytic laws to determine which material admits which form, but only to determine a chain of legal connections that follows from a material's prior acceptance of the form. If material X accepts form Y, then a series of necessarily implications follows from it as a function of the analytic law. But the analytic law cannot tell us *whether material X accepts form Y*. This is why Tugendhat states that "for Husserl, then, the fundamental concept [*Grundbegriff*] for the *a priori* is that of possibility. Necessities and impossibilities are only conditionally valid, under the presupposition of certain possibilities, which are not necessary on their part" (TUGENDHAT, 1970, p. 134). In a nutshell, sensibility is not responsible for fixing the *analytic laws* of the acts of categorial givenness, and these analytic laws represent the *constraining side* of the categorial givenness. Therefore, it makes no sense to say that the categorial structure of the world, as it is displayed by our acts of categorial intuition, is *ultimate*, meaning non-revisable, since it is (in a very specific and important sense) *contingent*, that is, *dependent* (in the sense explained above) *on the sensible materials*. This means that the world could be otherwise, and that it cannot, therefore, *impose its categorial structure* upon the acts which will categorially articulate it.

Let us return Sellars's formulation to conclude this section. This is how Sellars defines the Myth of The Categorial Given: "To reject the Myth of the Given is to reject the idea that the categorial structure of the world – if it has a categorial structure – imposes itself on the mind as a seal imposes an image on melted wax" (SELLARS, 1981, p. 12). There's a textual Husserlian response to this:

Categorial forms do not glue, tie or put parts together, so that a real, sensuously perceivable whole emerges. They do not form in the sense in which the potter forms. [...] so that the thought of a straightforward percept of the founded object [*i.e.*, the categorial object] [...] is a piece of nonsense" (HUSSERL, 1984, p. 715-16, translation modified).³⁴

For Husserl, the "imposition" on these categorial acts of givenness does not equal the Sellarsian "imposition of the categorial structure of the *world*" on the mind, but refers rather to the *limits of the formal analytic law*. Therefore, the given world would be always "categorially revisable" in the Sellarsian *parlance*, because it does not "impose itself on the mind", and it is dependent on the contingent material to be categorially articulated according to the categorial analytic laws. Of course, if these analytic laws are

³⁴ Also: "With real contents none of the categorial forms which fit them is necessarily given" (ibidem, p. 716).

themselves revisable or not is a different problem, one which we believe that does not affect the Husserlian response to the Sellarsian-Oshea's charge of the non-revisability of the categorial structure of the *world*.³⁵ It would not be contradictory to assume that the analytic laws are non-revisable (that they are “eternal laws”) but that the world is revisable, since this latter is based upon contingent materials that can even – in the extreme case – not exist.³⁶

Conclusion

We hope to have shown that Husserl's notion of givenness falls outside the Sellarsian critique to the “entire framework of givenness”. With respect to the epistemic given, Husserl's phenomenological method to return to “the given” does not match Sellars's critique of the Myth of the Epistemic Given, since this Husserlian given is not the one that Sellars characterizes as being epistemic independent, efficacious, and autonomous. With respect to the categorial given, we hope to have shown that Husserl's theory of categorial intuition offers us a mediate process of givenness (thus avoiding the critique of the direct awareness of something *as* having a categorial status C) which does not imply that the categorial structure of the world represents the *ultimate* (in the sense of being non-revisable) categorial structure of reality (this remaining an open question for Husserl). This suggests that the “entire framework of givenness” criticized by Sellars may not encompass, after all, the “phenomenological framework of givenness” in the Husserlian sense.

³⁵ If this were the case, even Sellars would be a “givenist” in the categorial sense, since he assumes the unconditional validity of some of the so-called “intralinguistic moves” of the language game. See, for instance, the following passage: “let me make the same claim in still another way by pointing out that where 'x is B' can be validly inferred from 'x is A', the proposition 'All A is B' is unconditionally assertable on the basis of the rules of the language” (SELLARS, 1991, p. 317). It is interesting that O'Shea concludes his article by questioning whether Sellars's own view would be an instance of the Myth of the Categorial Given (O'SHEA, 2021, p. 10565).

³⁶ As it can be seen in De Santis (2021), it must be added that in the development of Husserlian phenomenology, Husserl will address the “Leibniz's metaphysical question of the existence of only one real world”, that is, the question concerning whether the world as displayed by our categorial acts of intuition is the *real, factual* world and the *only possible world*, and he will address this question “not metaphysically, but rather transcendently” (2021, p. 482). The problems we are addressing here (regarding the correlation between signification and thought) will be seen by Husserl, already in 1905, as pertaining to *formal metaphysics*. The problems regarding the *de facto* existing reality will be subsumed under the *material metaphysics* (TRIZIO, 2021, p. 58-9). See also De Santis (2018) and Majolino (2021) for the exploration of this topic, which we cannot address here.

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