

Intuitive Cognition in Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology

Abstract

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The study is an attempt at a systematic and critical analysis of the theory of intuitive cognition that emerges from the works of Edmund Husserl. The presentation of Husserl's understanding of intuition, based on the main works of pre-transcendental and transcendental (both static and genetic) phenomenology, is designed with two primary aims in mind: the systematisation of the complex and often ambiguous theory and an attempt to point out its certain moments that the author finds interesting and significant in the context of contemporary discussion of intuitive cognition. The critical analysis of the theory is focused on four fundamental questions: what is intuition according to Husserl's phenomenology?; how do the acts of Husserlian intuition occur and what do they consist in?; what kinds of objects can they be directed at?; what is the epistemic value of Husserlian intuition, in particular: can intuitive acts provide adequate cognition? The work consists of four chapters, an introduction and a conclusion.

The first chapter contains a short systematisation of the notion, or rather multiple diverse notions, of intuitive cognition that are present in the philosophical tradition, in cognitive psychology and in contemporary analytic philosophy. The first part of the chapter presents brief characterisations of the theories of intuition in the philosophies of: Plato, Aristotle, William of Ockham, Descartes, Kant and Bergson. The second part deals with some principal contemporary psychological theories of intuition: the Gestalt theory of the moment of insight; the theory of the "intuitive statistician" attributed to Egon Brunswik; Daniel Kahneman's and Amos Tversky's program of heuristics and biases; Daniel E. Berlyne's account of the role of intuition in creative processes. The third part is a concise characterisation of the understanding of intuition in contemporary analytic philosophy. The extensive discussion of intuitive cognition conducted by contemporary analytic philosophers is described with a focus on the nature and properties that are ascribed to intuition; its epistemic status (in particular: the problem of its unreliability that was raised in "experimental philosophy") and its possible role in philosophical research. Each of the three parts is concluded with a summary in which the described theories are examined in terms of four questions corresponding to the ones mentioned above. This leads to the identification of some basic properties that are ascribed to intuition in the selected theories. The brief characterisations devised in the first chapter are thus supposed to provide a frame of reference for the systematic analysis of Husserl's theory conducted in the chapters that follow.

Chapter two is devoted to a general answer to the first of the four questions mentioned above: what is intuition according to Husserl's phenomenology? The attempt to find this answer is preceded by an analysis of two terms whose meanings in the philosophical tradition are close: *Intuition* and *Anschauung* and the contexts in which they can be found in Husserl's works. The analysis leads to the conclusion that Husserl uses these two terms interchangeably, only sometimes attaching to them subtle differences in meaning. This conclusion is followed by an account of the theory of intentionality (formulated by Husserl in his *Logical Investigations*) which adumbrates the fundamental role of intuition in the act of cognition. The act is explicated here from a teleological perspective as an act of striving to the presence of the object, to grasping it as it stands before us „in person". The growing complexity of Husserl's theory of this act is reflected in a more detailed characterisation of intuition as the key moment of the act. The presentation of intuition is thus augmented by an account of the problems of the gradation of fulfilment, the temporality and horizonedness of cognition, finally the relation of intuition to the notion of evidence (*Evidenz*) that dominates in Husserl's late works. The systematic reconstruction is complemented by an investigation into the way in which Husserl's theory works with respect to an example of a relatively complex proposition. The conclusion of the analyses, conducted throughout with the teleological perspective on the cognitive act in mind, constitutes one of the main theses of the work: the thesis that intuition in Husserlian phenomenology has a functional character.

The third chapter is an attempt to elucidate the way in which intuition, described in the second chapter, functions in different cognitive acts. Having – according to the conclusion of the previous chapter – a functional character, intuition as it were takes different shapes depending on the kind of object whose presence we are oriented towards. In the chapter, four kinds of objects, and – in consequence – four kinds of intuitive cognition are isolated. The first part of the chapter is devoted to sensory intuition. This kind of intuition makes cognition of individual objects of sensory perception possible. Categorical intuition, discussed in the second part, enables predicative grasping of objects: it allows us to grasp the perceived objects as having certain properties, belonging to types and categories, as well as standing in relation to other objects. The topic of the third part is eidetic intuition which provides fulfilment for acts directed towards general objects, predominantly essences (the terms "essence" and "εἶδος" have multiple and often vague meanings in Husserl's works; separate detailed analyses of this matter are presented in this part of the chapter). The fourth part contains an analysis of transcendental intuition. This kind of intuition provides us with cognitive access to pure consciousness after transcendental reduction and is a cognitive function that is fundamental for the mature project of phenomenology. The four parts of the chapter, devoted to the four kinds of intuition, have a similar structure which conforms to the last three of the questions formulated above. The subjects of the systematic analyses are thus: the properties of the act of intuition of a given kind, the type and nature of the possible objects of this act and the adequacy of the cognition that it can provide. The characterisations are supported by analyses of the functioning of intuition with regard to the example

proposition (from the previous chapter) whose fulfilment requires several kinds of intuition. This allows to highlight several general and specific flaws in Husserl's theory, as well as to juxtapose it with certain commonsensical and contemporary, naturalistic claims regarding intuitive cognition.

In the fourth chapter, the findings of the research described in the two previous chapters are systematised through an identification of Husserlian intuition's most important properties and their epistemological consequences. The main properties of Husserl's intuition are placed in two areas: the area of functional characterisation and the area of phenomenological characterisation. The area of functional characterisation consists of properties that determine the way intuition is executed as a cognitive function. Husserlian intuition is analysed here in (among others) the aspects of the noninferentiality and nonpropositionality of intuitive cognition, its dependency on other acts, the holistic presentation of the object and the communicability of the result of cognition. The second area consists of properties that are phenomenological in a general sense of the term, not the one specific to Husserl's philosophy. Among them are, e.g., the spontaneity of the intuitive act, its peculiar mysteriousness and opaqueness to the subject and its phenomenological resemblance to an act of seeing. The properties from both areas are juxtaposed with the findings of chapter one: the properties ascribed to intuition in the philosophical tradition and in contemporary philosophical and psychological research. In the second part of the chapter, the properties identified in the first part are examined in terms of their consequences with regard to four fundamental problems of epistemology: the theory of truth, the problem of immediate cognition, the theory of justification and the question of foundationalism. The conclusions drawn from this analysis stand in contrast to the common and still widely presented account of phenomenology as a theory of immediate, absolute and infallible cognition. A detailed analysis of Husserlian intuition reveals that its properties and epistemological consequences, despite the distinctiveness and originality of Husserl's philosophy, are, to a much greater extent than is often presumed, the same properties and problems that are the subject of contemporary discussion and analysis.

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