

# Apperception and Experience

Some Ontological Perspectives

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**ABSTRACT:** The modern era is profoundly marked by the idea of a subjective consciousness. This idea remains fundamental, not only in Descartes, but in all currents of thought using the distinction between the subjective and the objective — even if it is not always recognized as such. There is, however, a difference between perception and apperception which remained unclear in the Cartesian conception of consciousness, but which was articulated by Leibniz and became a major theme of philosophical psychology in the 18th and 19th century. From the beginning of the 19th century the discussion was also complicated by the concept of the unconscious, which in a way means a rediscovery of the Aristotelian *psyche*.

What should we understand by apperception: a self-consciousness, a consciousness of second degree, a retroactive awareness or reflection, a stream of consciousness or perhaps something rather like insight? Which is the relation between sensation, perception and apperception and in which sense are these irreducibly psychic functions? The article suggests some possibilities for describing the ontological status of experience.

**KEYWORDS:** Apperception; pattern; quality; presence; appearance.

## 1. Definitions (in progress)

Stipulating definitions at the beginning of a text can seem quite artificial, especially if one adheres to the conception of language as a medium of thought, which has to be respected as a source of often unexpected insights. While I still wish to begin in this way, it should be stressed that the definitions below are at the same time preliminary and resultative; preliminary insofar as they allow modifications and results to the extent that they express the current state of a philosophical interrogation. Thus they articulate central issues in my own struggles with the problem of apperception and experience in order to render the following text more accessible.

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- *Quality* (ontological quality) = qualified content which can appear as (*qua*) something (even when it does not appear). From an ontological point of view qualities are *not properties of objects*, but conditions of experience, i.e. of our *exposition* in and to reality.
- *Pattern* (ontological pattern) = dynamic determinate structure; relatively stable organisation, which exists even if not always actual.
- *Presence* = the actuality of what happens.
- *Feeling* = presence in experience.
- *Sensation* = feeling through sensually exposed qualities.
- *Perception* = intentional qualification of experience through variation of contents in order to deal with patterns (stressing orientation through discernment of the distinct).
- *Intention* = meaningful direction of experience.
- *Apperception* = awareness of own experience; experience with strong qualitative resonance.
- *Qualitative resonance* = felt presence of qualities.
- *Experience* = process lived as potentially or actually important.

## 2. Initial Remark

Apperception is not only an issue in philosophy, but in psychology, psychiatry and several other fields as well. One aspect often seems to create problems in interdisciplinary contexts: reality. It is difficult to conceive a philosophy without questions of reality, knowledge and experience. These areas of so called theoretical philosophy also imply statements concerning the role and scope of sciences, which is sometimes regarded almost as an intrusion. Philosophy, however, rarely has the ambition to give advice of how to practice different sciences. Its major concern is to point out something quite specific to its own approach, and if this is relevant to other sciences, it is for them to integrate it, exactly as philosophy necessarily must be acquainted with different fields of human culture, science included, in order to have something to reflect upon. When it comes to questions of what is real, and what is not, how something is real and how it is not, to questions of being, experience and knowledge, it is obvious that no other area of research would gain anything at all if philosophy would give up its ontological ambition — and I add, this ambition necessarily involves claims about fundamental dimensions of reality.

Philosophy has a perspective of its own. One should for example not expect a physicalist cosmology from a philosophical theory of being. Neither should one take an ontological hierarchy of perspectives for granted, as is often the case in more or less ideological popularizations of science, which

tend to reduce reality to a scientific object. Reality shows itself in many ways and the tension between different approaches is, one could say, precisely the *primum movens* of interdisciplinary discussions. For a philosopher it is natural to refer to several major figures of the history of philosophy and presume that they still have something important to tell us. He treats the classics as thematically relevant voices in contemporary discussions. Due to the cumulative and future-oriented character of modern experimental science, ancient research does not have the same status in this domain. Philosophy, on the contrary, is heavily concerned with presuppositions, and it is thus no coincidence that the older tradition maintains a central position in philosophical research. Conceptual, logical, philological and etymological questions also belong to this reflective strategy. Nothing is thus more natural than to begin with a linguistic remark, closely related to central questions in the philosophy of mind.

### 3. Choosing Words

A problem for every researcher using language, especially when the language is not artificial, is to find the most adequate expressions. In contemporary theory of perception, the English term “representation” is common and it suggests something like a second presentation of what has already once been presented. In order to evince this sense, one sometimes uses the simple expression “presentation” to indicate an activity which shows something in a particularly perceptible way. In German the word *Vorstellung* directly bears this sense of something being “put forth” and “presentation” could be a good English translation — if it would not stress the aspect of *rendering present* too much and neglect the *ideal content* of the *Vorstellung*. The third possible translation of this notion would be precisely *idea*. As the quite autonomous and dynamic sphere of imagery and ideal contents will be important in what follows, I hesitate which word to use. There would be some good reasons for “idea”, even if a semantic tradition in the 20th century has often wanted to disqualify ideas, especially in the form they had in early modern philosophy. No need to mention that the concept is older and has a different meaning in Plato. This does not bother me as I have no problem with the platonic assumption that there exist both innate and acquired ideal contents. What I want to stress is however a *qualitative* dimension which is important when *something appears*. As the platonic ideas, these *qualities* are not pure presentations, but express a dimension, which exists in its own right and plays a decisive role in every appearance and experience. They are not, however, models for things in the platonic sense. On the contrary, I would like to stress the difference between *qualitative*

*contents* on the one hand and *models or patterns* on the other — and accord a fundamental importance to the modifications the original dimension of qualities can acquire through experience when it is confronted with patterns. I will also be careful not to follow the subjective interpretation Descartes gave to ideas. The purpose is instead to describe experience as an essential mode of reality and suggest what this could mean for apperception and its hermeneutic corollary (understanding, *Verstehen*).

#### 4. Apperception, Consciousness, Subjectivity

Descartes' ambition was to find a new starting point for scientific methodology through a reinterpretation of the soul as consciousness. This new *cogito* differs from the Aristotelian *psyche*, which is a principle of life with strong sentient components. As Cartesian consciousness, the soul loses its disturbing natural and historical incarnation and takes the shape of an “archimedic point”<sup>1</sup> outside the natural and historical world, gets rid of prejudices and confuse ideas and thus — so is the intention — renders truly objective science possible. Kant later spoke of a *pure* consciousness as “the condition of possibility” of experience and knowledge and in this way drew the “critical” consequences of Descartes' methodological turn. Where Descartes struggled to establish a new method of research, Kant already took the new scientific approach for a settled matter and only wanted to find out *how* it could be the case that such a successful research strategy was possible. In the same vein Kant explicitly stresses that the epistemologically important self-consciousness is not a contingent self-awareness, not an “empirical apperception”, but a *transcendental apperception*, i.e. a necessary condition, which conveys unity to experience. Without the transcendental apperception we would not be able to combine experiences and perceive unity in the world.<sup>2</sup>

I will not speak about this Kantian solution that presupposes what Descartes meant to have shown: the existence of a pure I beyond natural and historical influence which is able to regard nature as a completely external world and thus to objectify this nature, to which the subject does not

1. AT VII, 24. French version: AT IX, 19.

2. For Kant there is no conflict between perceptive and apperceptive consciousness and a certain kind of apperception is a direct condition of perception. It is in order to stress the necessary character of this condition that Kant distinguishes between empirical and transcendental apperception. Empirical apperception stands for passing awareness (there is “no standing and staying Ego”, “kein stehendes oder bleibendes Selbst”) and is close to imagination, whereas transcendental apperception means “the ‘I think’, which must be able to accompany all my representations”, the “‘ich denke’, daß alle meine Vorstellungen muß begleiten können” and is thus a principle of unity, which must be presupposed in every experience. Kant 1990, A107 & B131–2.

belong anymore (as the Aristotelian thinking animal, the *zôon logon echon* did). Descartes himself was not quite clear about how the cogito should be understood and his descriptions vary: when it comes to undeniable evidence of existence he seems to mean a self-consciousness, but when he defends a new scientific paradigm, he rather stresses something like consciousness of objects. Leibniz was quite aware of this and explicitly introduced the distinction between perception and apperception, which Kant later differentiated. I quote from Leibniz' *Principles Concerning Nature and Grace*: "It is good to make the distinction between *Perception*, i.e. the internal state of the Monad representing external things, and the *Apperception*, i.e. the *Consciousness* or the reflective knowledge of this internal state, which is not given to all Souls, and not given to the same Soul all the time."<sup>3</sup> The monad as the unified essence of a being can thus perceive things and it can perceive itself, but not all monads (or souls) are capable of perceiving themselves and even a monad capable of this, cannot apperceive all the time. Apperception is only occasional. This was exactly the reason for Kant to make the distinction between an empirical and a transcendental apperception. A purely occasional awareness can hardly be a condition of possibility of experience (*Bedingung der Möglichkeit der Erfahrung*). Leibniz' view is not the Kantian. This must not necessarily mean that Leibniz lacks a differentiation, which Kant later offered. Like Aristotle and the Scholastics, Leibniz refuses to accord a foundational role to self-consciousness and strongly defends what he calls *les petites perceptions*, the small perceptions, of which we are not aware and which are closely related to appetites, drives. Despite the metaphysical idea of a pre-established harmony and the rationalist tendency to link apperception to reason, the description of elementary "small" perceptions remains interesting, and it suggests an influence from the Aristotelian theory of *aisthesis* and *orexis* (striving) — even if Leibniz has a peculiar idea of a fundamental correspondence between particular experience and the totality of what exists.

It is difficult to settle the meaning of *apperception*, awareness of one's own experience, without deciding how to understand imagination, perception, sensation and intellection (which is a kind of conceptual perception) in relation to one another. Sensation is often understood as a direct perception in which the senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell, possibly others) are involved, but it is not quite clear that we should call sensation perception at all as perceiving seems to imply that we perceive *something* quite distinct, whereas sensation alone furnishes little of such a determinate character.

3. "Ainsi il est bon de faire la distinction entre la *Perception* qui est l'état intérieur de la Monade representant les choses externes, et l'*Apperception* qui est la *Conscience*, ou la connoissance reflexive de cet état intérieur, laquelle n'est point donnée à toute les Ames, ny toujours à la même Ame." Leibniz 2013, *Principes de la nature et de la grace* 4.

Much has been written on the problematic idea of *sense data* and many philosophers tend to agree, that pure sensation cannot furnish any basis for how the world is perceived. Perception involves meaning and meaning is not constituted out of sense data. Sensation seems to be an aspect of perception, but not its basis.<sup>4</sup> What is then exactly the contribution of sensation? Taking into account that *datum* means the given, could one perhaps understand the sense datum without any positivist assumptions of a sensitive and at the same time informational foundation of knowledge?

### 5. Sensation, Perception, Apperception

The relation between sensation and perception became a major theme of philosophical psychology in the aftermath of Cartesian philosophy of mind. In 18th century France, not least through the discovery and translation of the writings of John Locke, empiricism became increasingly popular and even turned into a radical sensualism, represented mainly by Condillac, who in his well-known book, *Traité des sensations*, wanted to extract all ideas from sensual impressions.<sup>5</sup> This provocation gave rise to the movement of the so called ideologists (*les idéologues*), whose main concern was to understand the essence and especially the genesis of *ideas*. From this current of thought springs one of the major figures of early 19th century theory of apperception, Maine de Biran. In his important book on the problematic triad sensation, perception and apperception and in other earlier texts,<sup>6</sup> Maine de Biran describes sensations as purely receptive and incapable of acquiring greater distinction in the course of an experiential act (even if they can create needs through habituation). Perceptions on the other hand demand an activity of the perceiver, a capacity which can evolve to a more distinct grasp of phenomena. Biran speaks of a double and contrary influence of habit on sensations and perceptions. In the case of purely receptive sensations, there is no active capacity and thus no experiential skill to improve. What happens through continuous or repeated sensations is that the sensation becomes increasingly *dull*. In the case of perception on the other hand, repetition and ongoing experience has a contrary influence which renders perceptions particularly valuable from an epistemological point of view: through habituation we acquire *skills to discern*.

4. Concerning sense data, a good survey is still: *Perceiving, Sensing and Knowing*, Swartz 1965. See especially the contribution "Sensation" by Gilbert Ryle.

5. Condillac 1984. An extremely good overview of the empiricist influence in France before Condillac is found in Ross Hutchisons book *Locke in France 1688–1734*, Hutchison 1991.

6. Maine de Biran 1995 and also Maine de Biran 1987.

It is almost as if sensation would diminish when perception increases. How then should one understand apperception: as a passive faculty (which risks to become dull like repeated sensation) or as an activity with the same benefit for knowledge as perception?

Maine de Biran preferred the second answer, but was unable to solve the inherent problem concerning apperception. If we perceive the world through a capacity to discern more or less distinct objects, it seems that the capacities — and we as agents behind these capacities — are not what the perception is focusing on. When we see something in the world, we don't see our own seeing. In the case of reflection this is evident. Reflection is not the same thing as perception and it seems that apperception — if it is reflective in character — is primarily a matter neither of discerning nor of objectifying something. But regardless of the reflective character, apperception suggests a particular kind of experiential presence which seems to be something else than perception. What does this mean?

Could it be that apperception — like Damasio and Friedrich Schleiermacher long before him have suggested — is more like a feeling of what happens?<sup>7</sup> Two questions then arise. There is the just mentioned one, if apperception — like sensation — follows the logic of becoming increasingly *dull* through the lapse of time and there is the question about qualities in apperception. How much content is implied if apperception is understood as a feeling? If apperception would be *only* such a presence, it is not clear how apperception would differ from affection. If we are not to regard self-awareness only as an affective state, apperception must be something more specific than presence as such. I will propose a version in which apperception is something instantaneously happening, but rich in content, because of a relatively strong *qualitative resonance*, which does not, like in the case of sensation, *assume* influence, and not, like in perception, *deal* with patterns, but *interrogates* the qualitative content involved.

## 6. Presence, Patterns and Contents

By pattern I mean, as one can see from the definitions, a dynamic determinate structure, which exists even if it is not always actual. It is natural for us to think that patterns exist, even when they have no manifestation. We are able to do many things without actually executing them. In fact, such behavioural dispositions are embedded in deeper organized layers and reflect ontological patterns which play an important role in the discovery of regularities in nature. A behavioural pattern exists even if it is not manifest at

7. Damasio 1999.

every moment. We should not think differently, when it comes to qualities. There is an ideal dimension of qualities, somehow linked to memory, which can come into play occasionally — like patterns can occasionally produce ordered processes.

Experience manifests the different aspects of interplay between patterns, presence and qualities. Patterns would be doomed to eternal latency without (potentially modifying) moments and they would lack experiential value without qualitative importance. In a similar way qualities need present actualization and patterns in order to impose themselves. One can also suppose that presence is somehow stimulated by the dynamics created by qualities and patterns. If qualitative contents deepen presence in apperception, perception on the contrary aims rather at a successful insertion in and mastering of patterns. This perceptual tendency cannot however be isolated into a purely epistemological relation. No distinct aspect of things would be perceived, if only determinate characters were there. A distinct thing is perceived if and only if it is *presented* in its distinction. Presence is thus a necessary condition of every perception and time is involved, because the present happens right now. This is what conducted thinkers like Saint Augustine to stress the ontological primacy of presence. Even Descartes retained this, when he gave his own interpretation to the Augustinian *si fallor, sum* (if I err, I exist). Evidence of existence springs from the cogito only *as long as* the cogito is *actually* thinking or doubting.<sup>8</sup> Not only perception, but apperception, too, is instantaneous, and the Cartesian case is interesting, because it shows how presence is something extremely important even when the project is to create a rationalist methodology for modern sciences.

What presence is remains enigmatic though. The Greek word *parousia* is directly linked to being and can be understood as being which appears (*phainesthai*). Appearance was however already in ancient philosophy understood in different ways, Plato often stressing the illusory character of experience and Aristotle on the contrary insisting on the necessary role of *phantasmata* in all thinking. An ontology of experience must take this seriously. Illusion is then one aspect of appearance, which as such is quite real. (Nobody would contest that illusions exist.) The point of view of Augustine is different. In his famous theory of time — which is in fact also a theory of consciousness — presence (*praesentia*) has a central onto–theological role. The non–being of the past (which *is not anymore*) and of the forthcoming (which *is not yet*) is saved by the presence, by *acts* of remembering and foresight, which of course do not *occur* in the past and in the future even if they concern the past and the future. For the finite human being this

8. AT VII, 25. French version: AT IX, 19. Augustine has several versions of the argument: the mentioned “si [...] fallor sum” figures in *De civitate dei* XI.26.



presence is decisive as it represents an internal access to divine omnipresence. As for Augustine, God remains omnipresent also in the medieval tradition and Aquinas defines God as pure actuality (*actus purus*).<sup>9</sup> It is not necessary, however, to argue in this *onto-theological* way in order to point out the crucial *ontological* role of presence. Without presence nothing could happen and as Kierkegaard, Heidegger and others have pointed out, the now can also be a decisive moment, an *øjeblikk*.<sup>10</sup> Any instant can become decisive, and it can be decisive, even if it is not recognized as such. Plato had similar thoughts about *kairos*. When the instant appears in its importance, we become troubled, we have to decide, choose our way, take responsibility of how the past is going to influence the future. The moment then becomes particularly intense. For many existential philosophers the intensity is however not so much apperceptive as rather decisive and Heidegger has — rightly, as it seems to me — even been accused of a certain “decisionism”.<sup>11</sup> In this way the conflict between active orientation towards the future on the one hand and apperceptive awareness of how the past is actually working towards something determinate on the other hand risks being forgotten. I would here prefer to defend the tradition of *Reflexionsphilosophie* and its roots in Greek conceptions of *theoria*, contemplation.

## 7. Appearing Reality

How is it, that there can be appearances? Pure presence is not sufficient and neither is the organizing capacity of patterns. One could suggest: through qualitative contents with specific relations to patterns the present moment becomes important and demands reactions through behaviour. If this is appearance, it does not imply any behaviouristic reduction of the *psyche*. On the contrary, it would show how intimate the relationship is between qualitative experience and behaviour — and how both depend on felt presence. I summarize: we would have three fundamental aspects of experience, closely working together: 1) ontological *patterns*, which are particularly familiar to us as dispositions, 2) qualitative *contents* which render appearances important and finally 3) the *presence*, necessary for the actualization of both patterns and qualities. An actual situation — the here and now — is somehow what can stimulate both patterns and qualitative contents.

9. Concerning Augustine's theory of time, see *Confessiones* XI. For more references, see Lindén 2011–2012.

10. Concerning the *Augenblick* in Heidegger; the notion appears in several contexts, but of course also in the descriptions of temporality in *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger 1967. Concerning Kierkegaard, see *Begrebet Angst*, in English Kierkegaard 1980.

11. I here refer to Löwith 1984, especially p. 61–71.

Appearance is what turns reality into experience, gives it situational importance. The qualitative contents in the appearances seem to be relatively independent and consist of thematic variations around a primordial dimension. I have chosen to say quality instead of idea or meaning for this dimension in order not to overstress intentionality that has often been taken as a criterion of the mental. Intending something is closely connected with a teleological directedness and it would be all too hasty to conceive all qualitative contents as something teleological. End-oriented meanings without doubt exist in perception and even hold an important position, but they seem to presuppose the kind of contents I have preferred to call qualities.

Imagination is probably still a helpful concept, if one remembers its philosophical history, often attributing to it a fundamental role not only in fantasies and illusions, but in actual sense perception, too. For Aristotle all activity of the sensitive psychic function (the *aisthetikon*) and even of the more intellectual *noetikon* involves such “images” (*phantasmata*).<sup>12</sup> *Imaginatio* remains a central term in the medieval and in the later Latin tradition. Kant speaks of a productive imagination (*produktive Einbildungskraft*), fundamental to experience, which constitutes phenomena.<sup>13</sup> Henri Bergson and other philosophers of a similar bent describe perception as an interested selection of *images*, which Bergson understands as essential aspects of reality itself.<sup>14</sup> In all these cases there is the enigmatic question of how something can *appear* and the above mentioned philosophers in their own way want to give interpretations, which do not reduce appearance to the contrary term it is in the conceptual couple appearance and reality. The tendency is rather to stress that appearance is the way of reality *to show itself*.<sup>15</sup>

## 8. Empirical Exposition

How should we then relate qualitative contents to sensations? Taking into account that sensations presuppose *exposition* of the senses, one possibility is to attribute an exposing capacity to the qualities. Through these contents we become receptive for those aspects of the world, which have some bearing in a certain actual situation. (It would then be no coincidence that among the several meanings of the world *sense* we count both sensual faculty and meaning.) When we expose contents the world imposes ways to react

12. *De anima* III 431a – 432a.

13. Kant 1990, B 152.

14. Bergson 2008, chapter 1, for example p. 12.

15. Since perceptual experience seems to be heavily dependent on imagination — which is thus presupposed in experience —, it would also be difficult to regard ideal contents of experience only as reproductions of former perceptions.

through specific senses, whose major *raison d'être* is their aptness to *feel* the world in relation to certain qualities — and different senses are stimulated in different ways just as different organisms with their different organs are differently disposed for the stimuli. In this way qualitative significance contributes to the exposition of the senses. This *ekthetic*<sup>16</sup> character of experience has been blurred by a long history of regarding the senses as purely receiving functions: passive and not active, receptive and not spontaneous, in short, as impressions without corresponding expressivity. The position I here have tried to sketch, would ascribe a crucial role to expression as a means of exposing contents and sensual experience would be more like assuming the tension through exposition, not like receiving pure impressions.

## 9. Apperception and Understanding

What then about apperception? The distinction between empirical and transcendental apperception, which in a certain sense saves the Cartesian conception of a pure consciousness in charge of experience and knowledge, loses its importance in this context. There is something convincing in the older idea that awareness only occurs occasionally, quite often so, but without being a continuous stream of thought, grounding all experience.<sup>17</sup> From this point of view apperception is occasional and dependent on a felt presence, which stands in a certain conflict with the discerning ambitions of perception. Our interested focus on the world of phenomena necessitates precision and active determination (— both in the differentiating and the voluntarist sense —), but cannot simultaneously deepen its apperceptive resources, which are closely related to a certain indeterminacy. Bergson even tried to understand consciousness as something happening in a “zone of indeterminacy” (*zone d'indétermination*) and he claimed that dreams would be good examples of such apperceptive states.<sup>18</sup> This certainly is an

16. *ekthesis*, i.e. exposition.

17. Consciousness would then be something momentaneous and discontinuous of the kind the physicist and philosopher Palágyi proposed. Palágyi 1924, especially the second lecture. Palágyi does not however distinguish clearly between consciousness and epistemic acts and accordingly does not see any tension between consciousness and conceptual perception. His view is in this respect contrary to the Bergsonian. Cf. Palágyi's discussion of dreams, p. 34–37.

18. Bergson 2008, p. 29–30. Indeterminacy is for Bergson also something enabling freedom of will, but he does not identify indeterminacy and freedom in the way often criticized by philosophers influenced by Kant and Hegel. A mnemonic dimension announces its presence in the indeterminate state and it is exactly this which leads Bergson to stress the close relationship between dreams, “pure recollection” (*souvenir pur*) and consciousness. Without the mnemonic component voluntary actions would not be possible.

interesting point and is supported by the fact that imagination can intensify experience without being particularly distinct. It does not however explain the relation between apperception and reflection.

Intense apperception does not of course imply a corresponding reflective *understanding* — but neither does it exclude or impede understanding. In fact, understanding can be seen as a reflective state which occurs in consciousness, when there was a sufficiently convincing preparation by qualitative contents and conceptual patterns. As in the case of other perceptive differentiation, however, conceptual differentiation alone cannot offer any reflexive understanding. Understanding *happens in apperception*, even if it certainly allows different strategies and processes *to bring it about*. Experience is constituted by an interplay of patterns, qualities and presence. Depending on our orientation, different aspects of the qualitative contents are brought into play: in formal enterprises semiotically less connotated ideas, in understanding something rather connotated, which is apt to suggest as much inherent meaning as possible in the specific context.

The traditional difference between explanatory and understanding experiential strategies could then be seen as the difference between *dealing* with and *understanding* phenomena — even if every form of human knowledge certainly contains aspects of both. However, the emphasis is different in the two cases: dealing with phenomena means adjustment to or mastering of real patterns, not deepening the apperceptive belonging to or dependence on qualitative reality. Who deals with reality is attentive and interested in new results, whereas the understanding stance has only a very moderate interest in results and prefers to contemplate what is. In fact, this was exactly how Aristotle conceived the contemplative life, the *bios theoretikos*.

I close with a general question about the suggested tripartite scheme and the corresponding defence of a strong ontological concept of experience. What are its implications for the main tenor of transcendental philosophy, i.e. the idea that everything known is known on the basis of different conditions of possibility? As far as I can see, the legacy of transcendental arguments remains, but has to be separated from a long modern tradition of mentalist philosophy (*Bewußtseinsphilosophie*). In a certain sense, the intention has been to offer an alternative conception of conditions of possibility, with ingredients both of Aristotelian and Augustinian psychology. Such a suggestion, it seems to me, has the advantage of surmounting all too dualist distinctions between the purely physical and the mental. With regard to the initial remarks on interdisciplinary challenges, this conception also suggests that the human sciences, the *Geisteswissenschaften*, are not confined to a narrow field of human culture, but offer a perspective on reality *as it shows itself* — and has shown itself in history — and on the crucial role of quality in the life of every *incarnated* being.

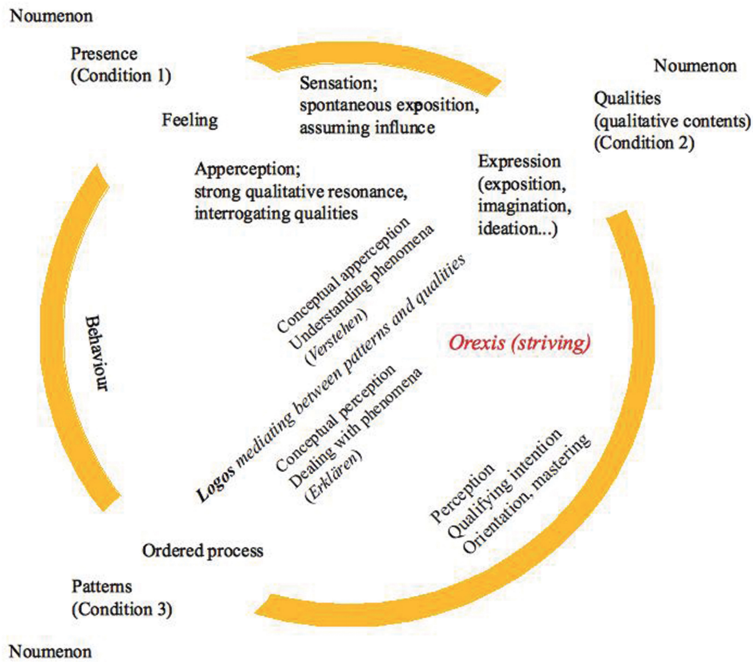


Figure 1: Non-ecological scheme of experience.

## 10. Conclusion

As this text began with somewhat schematic definitions, I conclude in a similar way with some claims:

- a) How something appears *as* something depends on qualities expressed.
- b) Ontological *qualities* must be distinguished from ontological *patterns*.
- c) The term “sensation” is ambiguous as it refers to both qualitative aspects and only presenting ones. In the case of qualities there is always a *qua*, i.e. an *as*, which stands for content. In order to distinguish between these aspects, I propose the notion of *feeling* for the presenting function and *sensation* for a feeling with qualities exposed through senses. Sensation is understood as the feeling of what happens when expressed qualities are in a certain tension with the patterns they confront at a specific moment.

- d) Without qualitative expressions experience has no content.
- e) As every experience, perception, too, needs expressed qualities and it even insists on these in order to *deal* with patterns. As intentional experience perception “tests” identical meanings and thus qualifies experience for better discernment and orientation.
- f) Focusing on something through perception is in conflict with simultaneous awareness of the qualitative implication in one’s own activity.
- g) As in the case of sensation and perception, apperception, too, is dependent on expressed qualitative contents, but it does not, like perception, aim at better *dealing* with patterns and neither does it, like sensation, only *assume* influence. Apperception contains an *interrogation* concerning qualities involved in an instantaneous experience (which can be both of a more sensual and of a more perceptive kind). It tends to a *qualitative resonance*, which only indirectly can improve orientation.
- h) Not only patterns, but also qualities and presence manifest reality.
- i) Illusions are real and illuminating.
- j) What is real, must not be correct in epistemic contexts.
- k) Through concepts (*logoi*) we have access to the interaction between patterns and qualified contents.
- l) Reflection is a conceptually guided apperception with the aim of better *understanding* what happens. It differs from imagination in being conceptual and from differentiating perception through its backwards oriented and critical stance. (*Re-flexio* means to be bent backwards.)
- m) What has already happened, is given and lives forth in patterns, qualities and intermediary concepts.
- n) The given has a crucial status, when we want to *understand* reality.
- o) Foresight and discerning of relevant aspects are decisive in *dealing* with reality.
- p) The distinction of an ontological pattern alone can never render the pattern important. Importance presupposes the actuality of what happens and qualitative implication.

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