

On the so-called *Reduction to the Real Component*

1. Introduction

In two important articles, Dieter Lohmar (2002, 2012) has claimed that, in the *Logical Investigations*, we can find a kind of ancestor to the so-called phenomenological-transcendental reduction: the "reduction to the real component"¹ (*Reduktion auf den reellen Bestand*). According to Lohmar, "the result, that is, the residue, of such a reduction is a flow of real component in all sensory fields" (Lohmar 2002, p. 775).² According to Lohmar, in this kind of reduction, even sensory impressions that are normally, and perhaps inevitably, considered with a representational function, i.e., as relating to properties of "external" objects, are considered without such an objectual reference. What is more, if Lohmar's view is correct, we would even lack any kind of organization of impressional contents as a whole. In a nutshell, one can say that the residue of the reduction to the real component corresponds to what is called *hyle* in *Ideas I*, i.e. the purely sensory component of an intentional experience, deprived of any *morphé*.

Aside from arguing for the presence of this reduction in the *Logical Investigations*, Lohmar has also argued for its inefficiency. Assuming that phenomenological reductions aim to offer the testing ground, or the testbed, of our positional attitudes, he has claimed that the reduction to the real component would not allow us to test any intention directed towards objects or states-of-affairs.

I believe Lohmar is right in claiming that we can find this kind of reduction in the *Logical Investigation*. However, I believe he is wrong in claiming it gives only sensory impressions as its result. To the contrary, the real component of experience also contains the apprehension, or interpretation (*Auffassung*),³ of sensory impressions. To be certain, Husserl is not unambiguous on this point, and it is also unclear how we should understand this other part of the real component. With that said, if we include apprehensions, though not apprehensional senses,⁴ into the

¹ The German word "Bestand", especially in the meaning it assumes within the context under examination, is not easy to translate into English.

² All translations of Lohmar's texts are mine.

³ The English translation of the *Logical Investigations* has mostly translated *Auffassung* and *auffassen* as interpretation and interpreting. The translation, though not incorrect, can be at times misleading, because it seems mainly to hint at acts that refer to some sphere of "linguistic" or, more broadly, "symbolic" meanings. For this reason, I prefer to use the term "apprehension" and cognates.

⁴ The clarification of the difference between apprehension and apprehensional sense is one of the tasks I will try to carry out during the following paragraphs. Tentatively, we can point out that *Auffassungssinn* is just another expression for what Husserl calls *Aktmaterie*, i.e. the way that an object is given in an intentional

testbed of our positional attitudes, we become able to track in the *Logical Investigation* a quite interesting form of “legal examination” of our positional acts, that also goes hand-in-hand with a view of Husserl’s *Werk des Durchbruchs* that is possibly less “static” than is normally assumed. In turn, this can pave the way to a view of later versions of the phenomenological reduction that are much less subjectivist than they are often claimed to be.

2. The main problems of the reduction to the real component

At first glance, the reduction to the real component is certainly destined to raise some perplexities. To begin, one may ask whether it is too demanding or if it is even possible at all. Does it really make sense to demand the phenomenologist to reduce his field of experience to merely sensory components, to get rid of any “sense” and objectual reference? This line of criticism, however, misses the heart of the matter, since it is based on a contingent argument, centered on the fact of the subjective impossibility of making such a reduction, i.e., to reduce one’s consciousness to purely sensory components devoid of any form and organization. The reduction proposed by Husserl, however, does not concern the actual reduction of one’s experience to purely sensory impressions, but rather its a priori possibility or thinkability. The ‘subjective’ difficulty and impossibility of fully reducing one’s experience to raw sensory impressions, indeed, does not in principle exclude the possibility of a purely hyletic consciousness, as it were.⁵ Moreover, said criticism fails to grasp the epistemological core of the matter, namely that the proof of the validity of what is intended in a representation must be based on the availability of a corresponding real component. The reduction to the real component should, indeed, aim to exhibit such a basis for validity. In other words, it ought to aim for a basis of validity that which can work as a verifier or truth-maker of an intention - in particular, of a belief or of a judgment. The reductive method does not urge the phenomenologist to fully coincide with that part of experience one identifies as the testbed of one’s positional attitudes. As a matter of fact, Husserl acknowledges that such an analysis based on the real component of experience results from an abstraction. Indeed, we necessarily learn about this kind of component only through the descriptive analysis of acts,

experience, while the *Auffassung* is the moment of an intentional experience which articulates sensory contents so that they are “seen” as pertaining to an object.

⁵ One could, for instance, think of the *Weltvernichtung* addressed in the *Ideas*, and understand it as corresponding to some kind of meditative state, or to an experience of vertigo. We will come back to this possibility in a moment.

which contain more than just sensations, or sense contents. What is important, however, is that "intentional experiences contain distinguishable parts and sides" (Lohmar 2002, p. 760), and that, through phenomenological description, they are distinguished and evaluated for their function in cognitive dynamics, i.e., as supporting or not judgements and beliefs. It is precisely the distinction between the different elements of an overall intentional state that makes it possible to identify which elements have the capacity to establish and measure the truthfulness of the states as a whole, and, more specifically, of their intentional content.

According to Lohmar (2012, pp. 10-11), the effective problem that the reduction to the real component presents is different. He claims that if one eliminates the apprehensive character (*Auffassungscharakter*), that which gives an object-representative status to sensations, and organizes their contents as attributable to one object or another, from the testing ground of representations, one finds oneself able to confirm only non-objectual representations such as "there is yellow", "there is an acrid smell", "there is sound", etc. Hence, it becomes impossible to confirm or deny - i.e., to verify or falsify - representations that also contain references to objects, such as "the dog is fat", "the curtain is red", or "the vase is on the windowsill" - nor even representations such as "white paper" or "bright sun". It is also not possible to confirm or deny representations related to more general and vague expressions such as "round thing" or "blue thing", which do not imply any typologisation of objects, i.e., any specific object category, and limit themselves to signifying what Husserl calls "materia prima" (Husserl 1997, pp. 55ff.).⁶ Indeed, even in these cases, we would see sense contents as representing (*darstellen*) parts (namely properties) of a whole (namely an object). One could, therefore, speak only of qualities - or of qualitative contents -, while substrates would disappear. As a matter of fact, according to the way Lohmar presents the situation we find ourselves in as a consequence of the reduction to the real components, we seem unable to even see sense contents as parts of one or more wholes.

Before any metaphysical, or ontological, considerations concerning the properly transcendent existence of perceptual objects, and the ontological meaning of our idea of substance, this means that it would not be possible to *see* phenomenal complexes in which the different data are contained. Sense contents would be scattered across a directionless space, as it were. In such a situation, there would no longer be any trace of intentional

⁶ What I mean here is that we should reduce our analyses of "purely" perceptual contents to a layer that excludes their classification from belonging to not only artificial kinds, but also to natural kinds which stretch beyond "purely" gestaltic or geometrico-morphological features.

apprehension of the sensory data, and even their distribution in a somehow ordered space would be impossible. There would be a real *Gewühl von Empfindungen*, such as the one that Husserl, especially after the so-called transcendental turn, seems to consider as a real possibility – indeed a possibility that would basically correspond with the *Weltvernichtung* hypothesized in the *Ideas* (Husserl 2014, §49).⁷ On the contrary, should this be fully realized, rather than being *in* total chaos, one would *be*, i.e. *coincide with*, chaos, because one would have nothing else “in the world” but the flow of formless sensations, and one would even lack the distinction between one’s own body and the external world. In such a situation, there would be no ground for judgments or beliefs about the “outer” world. In such a state, no representations of objects and states-of-affairs could be confirmed or disconfirmed.

Husserl’s text seems to suggest that such a conscious state is, at the very least, conceivable without contradiction. That said, if one were to imagine oneself in such a state, as Lohmar aptly points out, no properly cognitive role of sensations would be possible, because sensations alone would not allow us to verify any act directed towards objects or states-of-affairs.

As a matter of fact, the way Lohmar describes and discusses the state in which we end up following the reduction to the real component seems to make the latter basically coincide with the chaotic state experienced in the annihilation of the world. Consequently, on the basis of the critical analyses of the reduction to the real component carried out by Lohmar, we can say that:

- a) The real component of experience, i.e. that which is taken as the ground for the legal examination of what is posited by a tetic act (i.e. a perception, a judgment, a recollection, etc.), consists solely of sensory contents, or hyletic data, i.e. sensations and phantasms, while the forms which keep such data together, and organize them into a whole, are excluded.
- b) What we would have if only sense impressions remained would be chaos, without form or order.
- c) Every objectual perception contains more than mere raw sensory data.

⁷ On this passage and the “empiriocritical” origins of such ideas, see (Sommer 1985), particularly pp. 239ff. See also (Summa 2009), especially Section I, Chapter II. It should be noted that, if conceived in its strictest form, by denying the apriority of the spatial form, the hypothesis of the nullification of the world correspond with an absolute lack of orientation, because it should no longer be possible even to differentiate, or at least order, places and positions. One would be in a situation quite similar to the whirlpool Descartes asserts to find himself in at the beginning of the second meditation: see Descartes 1996, p. 16.

- d) The reduction to the real component is essentially unable to account for any positing of objects or states-of-affairs.
- e) Some other element is needed that can account for intentional states directed towards objects or states-of-affairs.

As we can easily see, e) follows from c) and d), and what is stated in c) and d) is a consequence of what is stated in a) and b).

If Husserl, as Lohmar suggests, really believed in the *Logical Investigations* that the testing ground for intentions are only sensations and sensory phantasms, Husserl would fall into a blatant inconsistency. On the one hand, in fact, Husserl repeatedly shows how perception cannot be explained in terms of sensualist empiricism, and how, therefore, the empirical theory of the reducibility of representations to simple impressions is not tenable even with respect to simple, minimal forms of perception - such as the one relative to the aforementioned *materia prima*. If understood as an *intentional* experience, perception is always a perception *of* something. The reduction to mere sensory contents would not allow any “ofness”, or “aboutness”, though. On the other hand, according to Lohmar, Husserl would take mere impressions as the ground for verifying theses about objects. In other words, he would ask sensations to account for what he himself has shown them to be incapable of doing.

Given that Husserl shows no doubt about c), and indeed affirms this thesis on several occasions throughout the *Logical Investigations*, and that also b) seems to be part of his view, as the experiment of the annihilation of the world suggests, it remains to be understood why he comes to propose a type of reduction that is as good as epistemologically nonsensical, or, at the very least, ineffective. In order to understand whether such an inconsistency can be found in the *Logical Investigations*, we must ask ourselves whether if Husserl is truly proposing a reduction in which only sensory impressions are to be considered as the testing ground for what is posited in tetic acts.

3. A Critical Assessment of Lohmar’s View of the Real Component

Undoubtedly, the problem highlighted by Lohmar is present in the *Logical Investigations*, particularly in the first edition of the work. However, as I will try to show, the problem mainly and fundamentally depends on the ambiguity with which Husserl defines the field of pure immanence in this work, and on his failure appropriately and univocally to clarify the terms “act character” and “apprehension”. Indeed, it is quite reasonable to maintain that the *reeller Bestand* basically coincides with the sphere that

Husserl calls of *reelle Immanenz*, which is exactly that part of an intentional experience that lies this side of its properly intentional component:

By the real [*reell*] phenomenological content of an act we mean the sum total of its concrete or abstract parts, in other words, the sum total of the partial experiences that really [*reell*] constitute it. (Husserl 2001b, p. 112)

In this sphere of immanence, which Husserl also calls the “descriptive content” of acts, only what “we inwardly experience as it in itself is, and as it is really (*reell*) given in experience, without regard either to genetic connections, or to extrinsic meaning and valid application”, is included. He also excludes from the ranks of descriptive contents the “ideal sense that makes the sound-pattern to be a name” (Husserl 2001b, p. 112). We will come back to the more specific meaning of “ideal sense” in §3.2, where we will see how one could erroneously conflate apprehensional sense *in general* and ideal sense. As for now, we can simply point out that, since, apparently, no apprehensional element is listed among the descriptive contents, apprehension should be considered as belonging to the side of intentional contents. As a matter of fact, if we follow Lohmar’s interpretation, Husserl’s assertion would then imply that it is the apprehensional *sense* that gives form to the sensible data and that, therefore, without it there would be no organization of the latter, at least no organization that gives them object-representative value. According to Lohmar, the only remnant of the reduction to the real component would be the mere sensuous contents, without any form, i.e., without any organization that makes them able to refer to an object.⁸ The exclusion of the sense, or, more technically of the act-matter, from the sphere of real immanence would therefore go hand in hand with the exclusion of any apprehensional moment *tout-court*.

If this interpretation were correct, one would find oneself in the situation described very clearly by Lohmar, i.e., being unable to receive any more proof of legitimacy regarding intentions relating to objects - not only those that contain references to objects as belonging to a category or another (e.g., “This is a goldfinch”), but also those relating to the perception, for example, of a “simple” billiard ball merely understood as a coloured solid. This is, as is well known, a Lockean example that Husserl (2001a, pp. 294-297; 2001b, p. 81) takes up in the *Logical Investigations*, and to which

⁸ And, according to Lohmar, also to an object instead of another: see Lohmar 2012, pp. 10-11, 14.

Lohmar also draws attention. In perceiving a billiard ball, not only does one "see" it as composed of parts that go beyond one's field of vision (i.e., the backside and the inner side); rather, even limiting oneself to the part of the surface that actually appears, that is given "in the flesh", or, as Husserl will say in later works, *properly* (Husserl 1997, pp. 43-44), one must recognise that it is understood as uniformly red, although the contents of sensation are not homogeneous. The surface appears darker in some places and lighter in others, depending on the lighting conditions. Some spots might not even look red at all. Nevertheless, the entire surface of the ball, including those parts that appear lighter or darker, is apprehended as being uniformly red. What guarantees or legitimizes this going beyond the mere sensuous material as such? Indeed, even against it, as it were? Once the apprehensional sense (*Auffassungssinn*) is removed, there seems to be nothing left to understand this 'excess' (*Überschuss*) of intentional experiences. Lohmar writes:

Now, if one takes the real component in such a narrow sense as the "literal criterion" of the right of an object-positing (matter) practically no object will subsist before this criterion.⁹

Together with what he suggests a few paragraphs below, Lohmar's interpretation shows some problems, though:

One [must] say [...] that the exclusive recourse to the real component is too radical, i.e. that after the exclusion of matter, a comparative analysis of the legitimacy of contentful object positing is no longer possible. An exclusive restriction to the real component brackets the matter and the quality, so to speak. However, the exclusion of matter would be nonsensical for the reasons mentioned.¹⁰

⁹ "Wenn man nun die reellen Bestände in so enger Weise als "buchstabliches Kriterium" des Rechtes einer Gegenstandssetzung (Materie) nimmt, dann wird kaum ein gegenstand vor diesem Kriterium bestehen können" (Lohmar 2002, p. 758).

¹⁰ "[M]an [muss] sagen [...], daß der ausschließliche Ansatz bei den reellen Beständen zu radikal ist, d.h. daß nach der Ausklammerung der Materie eine vergleichende Analyse des Rechtes der inhaltlichen Gegenstandssetzung nicht mehr möglich ist. Eine ausschließliche Beschränkung auf die reellen Bestände klammert sozusagen die Materie und die Qualität ein. Die Ausklammerung der Materie wäre aber aus den genannten Gründen unsinnig." (Lohmar 2002, p. 761)

To understand the sense Lohmar's in which interpretation of the reduction to the real component is problematic, we should observe that it seems to make two fundamental assumptions:

1. In the *Logical Investigations*, the intentional matter is not simply bracketed, but practically eliminated from the phenomenological ground of analysis.
2. "Apprehensional sense" (*Auffassungssinn*) and "apprehension" (*Auffassung*) are considered as synonyms, and, thus, as denoting the same element of (intentional) experience. As a consequence, if the apprehensional sense is not a real component, neither is the apprehension. This clearly means that no ordering moment is present anymore.

Let us now consider them one by one.

3.1. The exclusion of the act-matter from the testbed of doxastic attitudes is unavoidable, but it does not equate with its deletion from the phenomenological sphere

Lohmar writes that the reduction to the real component is "too radical", and that "[i]t reduces too much, indeed, because we need the [act-]matter, i.e., representation of what we intend, at least as guide of the legitimizing critique [we carry out] on the ground of the real components." (Lohmar 2012, p. 11). I have to say that I find this statement very confusing for at least two reasons:

1. to bracket the act-matter does not mean to delete it;
2. what is left to legitimize if we take the act-matter as a part of the legitimization process?

To 1. - If we look at the situation we have as a result of the reduction to the real component of experience, we should recognise that the act-matter is not eliminated, but rather beheld with the index of doubtfulness. It is an intentional content to which, in principle, no "real" object could correspond. As Lohmar (2012, p. 6) himself aptly points out, the act-matter is precisely that whose veracity needs to be verified. This does not mean that within the reduction to the real component one loses sight of it. To the contrary, it serves as the guiding thread of the legal examination itself.

What the bracketing is intended to enable is a legal examination of whether or not – and how – the matter of a belief, or of a judgment, is legitimately posited. To do this, obviously, one must somehow keep the

act-matter in view. In other words, the reduction should allow one to recognize whether the act-matter of a doxastic state corresponds with something that is “truly experienced”, and whether what lies within the real (*reell*) part of a (more or less complex and temporally extended) experience legitimizes or delegitimizes the positional pretense of the act under consideration. The validity of the act-matter is what must be justified. To be true, Lohmar himself recognises the testing of what is “posited” in an intention as the task of Husserl’s reductive method in general. This is, as was already mentioned, the fundamental and indispensable sense of every reductive method developed by Husserl: to put something into brackets in order to understand how it can be legitimately sustained. If this is the case, it is evidently inappropriate to include the act-matter into the “testing” field of judgements and beliefs. This, however, does not imply that the act-matter is excluded from the verifying process *in toto*. It is rather that with which we check whether and which real (*reell*) elements support its positing.

To 2. - If Lohmar’s worry were simply that in bracketing the act-matter we lose sight of it, thus making it so that we no longer know what we need to legitimize, we could simply conclude that his worry is comprehensible, but, as we just saw, not really justified. The main problem with Lohmar’s position, however, is that he also writes that “[t]he bracketing of [act-]matter is therefore nonsensical, because it makes impossible the attainment of the goal of a legal examination [*Rechtsprüfung*] on the basis of the real components. A conclusion arises: the only thing I can bracket in such a search for a legal ground of experience is the positional quality [*Setzungsqualität*].” (Lohmar 2012, p. 11). This statement shows that Lohmar’s worry leads him overreact in a sense. The exclusion of the act-matter of a doxastic state whose legitimacy one tries to verify from the testbed of our cognitive presumptions is, indeed, unavoidable. Otherwise, we would clearly have a flagrant *petitio principii*: one would ask the matter of one’s doxastic state to certify its own validity.

With that said, it is clear that Lohmar’s statement (that the bracketing of the act-matter is nonsensical) does not really mean that he is endorsing a kind of vicious circle. He seems to propose a kind of coherentist view of the phenomenological legal examination of our doxastic states.

To support his view on the issue, Lohmar quotes several passages from *Ideas I*, and from the second edition of the *Logical Investigations* (Lohmar 2012, pp. 12-13). I think, however, that he conflates the need, indeed explicitly stated by Husserl, to carry out more detailed and extensive analyses of the noematic side of intentional acts, also by considering the

entanglement of each noema with other noemata around, as it were, a noematic core, and the enrollment of the noema/act-matter into the legitimation field of our doxastic attitudes.

We should not forget that one of the main features of Husserlian phenomenology is the suspension of our natural attitude. This means, in brief, that we suspend our natural, or spontaneous, belief in the existence of the world in order to understand what within experience motivates us to believe in the existence of the world as such and such - or, more precisely, in the existence of worldly items made such and such. So, if I believe that there is an apple in front of me, I need to put the thesis concerning the existence of the apple aside and check what in this experience sustains my belief. Obviously, the object "itself" is excluded from the phenomenological field. We cannot step out of our intentional experiences to see whether the object "really" corresponds to them or not.¹¹

What happens once we endorse the phenomenological attitude is that we realize that the apple always appears *in a certain way* within a given experience, i.e. from a certain perspective: it is meant as coloured in a way or another, with different shades that we consider as adumbrations of an homogeneous color, as being made of parts that do not appear, like the back and the inner side, etc. The word "act-matter" is intended as a term to catch the overall way in which an object is intended, i.e. a way of referring to all its parts and features, though with greater or lower degrees of completeness and precision. As Lohmar rightly points out, the act-matter clearly stretches beyond any presently given sense data. There is no doubt about this. Therefore, within the phenomenological attitude, the act-matter seems to be *all* we have at our disposal once we leave the bare existence of the object aside. Within a phenomenological framework, the existence of the object is somehow acknowledged only according to its way of appearing - i.e., according to its way of givenness, or of presentation. Now, if we take the way an object appears, in all its complexity, as a testbed for the legitimacy of our object-positing, it is difficult to see how we could

¹¹ "Für die reell phänomenologische Betrachtung ist die Gegenständlichkeit selbst nichts." (Hua XIX, 427). This passage is quoted also by Lohmar (2012, p. 13), and he points out that it is equally present in the first and in the second edition of the work. However, Lohmar then adds: "Auch in dieser Hinsicht ist die 1. Auflage ‚einseitig noetisch‘ (vgl. Hua III/1, 217, 298)." As I will argue in the next paragraphs, I do not think we should consider this kind of self-criticism by Husserl as a decision to enlarge the field of the real components, but rather as a suggestion to consider more carefully the noematic side of acts, both by paying attention to its spatio-temporal horizon, and by distinguishing its inner articulation around a noematic core. As a matter of fact, since in the *Logical Investigation* this articulation is basically absent, and we only have the act-matter as a kind of monolithic whole, it is difficult to have a *Rechtsprüfung* that is really able to account for its internal complexity. Still, even in the *Logical Investigations* the brief discussion of sensuous perceptual acts as monothetic, but with an internal sequence of partial acts, allows for a less rigid and monotonic account.

ever be wrong, i.e. how an object-positing could ever be, either partially or totally, wrong. In a way, if all we have as a result of the phenomenological reduction are the real components *and* the act-matter, then everything is already something legally believed in - i.e. there is nothing left whose legitimacy needs to be verified.

As seen, Lohmar asserts that we should reduce our legal examination to the *Setzungsqualität* of our intentional states. I do not think this overcomes the problem, though. Even within a coherentist view, we should check whether *parts* of the act-matters match with one another or not. This, however, implies that we are able to tell apart such parts - and, specifically, that we can tell apart their abstract parts, namely phenomenal properties and the forms according to which they are connected.

I will try to express my point in another way. Within the phenomenological attitude we want to understand what sustains, or legitimates, our object-positings. The act-matter is our way to refer to objects, or, correspondingly, the way that an object appears, or is given, to us.¹² We cannot compare objects “in themselves” with our way of apprehending them, i.e. with our apprehensional senses. We cannot know if our way of apprehending objects matches with them or not. This being the situation, Lohmar (2012, pp. 8-10) suggests that the *Rechtsprüfung* of an object-positing should consider the spatio-temporal horizon that characterizes any concrete manifestation of an object. Does this mean that we should test the legitimacy of our object-positings by means of a consideration of the concordance between different appearances? Obviously, it all depends on what we mean by the word “appearance”. We could use it as a synonym of act-matter, i.e. as meaning the way of being given of an object as a whole, i.e., including the present as well as the non-present parts, or we could use it to mark out the part of the object we properly have in view from time to time. Therefore, we can rephrase our question as follows: Can we use our ways of apprehending objects to verify whether our ways to posit objects are legitimate? Of course, we could, if we were to endorse a quite “coherentist” view of phenomenological verificationism. But even in this case, full act-matters would be too much to evaluate the legitimacy of our object-positings. Suppose I undergo a perceptual episode of what is, apparently, one and the same object. Then

¹² Also in this regard, the switch from act-matter to noema and noematic core is in the first place of fundamental importance to adequately account for the fact that the givenness of the object occurs through a plurality of adumbrations.

say that I form the belief “That is a round red thing.”¹³ The content of this belief clearly stretches beyond the given sense data. In order to test if it is appropriate to the “thing itself”, I should look for other appearances that confirm or disconfirm my belief content. My object-positing consists in the assumption, as it were, that the appearances of that object would be such and such, and that the object’s appearances are more than what I am properly given from time to time. These further appearances are tacitly assumed as giving other *parts* of the object as a whole, and this implies a consciousness of the given appearance as corresponding with just *one part* of the object. If further appearances are in line with the first belief-content, then I have proved, as it were, the truthfulness of my belief. Otherwise, I need to discard or revise it. So far, so good.

Now, what would properly confirm or disconfirm my belief content? Another act-matter, or rather some specific part of the appearance of the object, something that does not *fully* fit with the initial act-matter, and is now present in the new appearance of what I consider as the same object? Let’s suppose I start with the perceptual belief: “That is a round red thing”. Then, either because I move, or because the object moves, a new side of the object appears, and I am led to form the belief “That is a round orange thing”. I need to be aware of the continuity between the two act-matters, in order to replace one with the other. In other words, I need to be aware of their contrast *in as much as they pertain to the same object*. The reference keeping identical, the clash I see is either between the expected and the presented sense contents, *aka* phenomenal properties, or between their ways of being arranged, *aka* the forms according to which they get apprehended. In other words, even within a coherentist picture, the elements that we need to use in order to perform the legal examination of our positional claims, at least within the field of perceptual judgements, are the *hyle* and the *morphé* our perceptual states contain and allow, this side of their being envisioned in an act-matter proper. Alternatively, to keep within the framework of the *Logical Investigations, sensations and their forms of apprehension* are the fundamental elements to put to test all our perceptual claims.¹⁴

3.2. The ambiguities of the act-character, and the inclusion of the *Auffassung* in the real component of experience

¹³ This is clearly a very rough way to portray perceptual episodes their relationships with perceptual beliefs. A much finer analysis of each state, and of their relationships cannot be provided here. For our aims, it is enough to understand which component of one state would be required on the

¹⁴ We should consider that the distinction between real and intentional components is still present in *Ideas I*, and that it is indeed able to [...]

The actual structure of consciousness and of the acts that fall within it corresponds to what Rizzoli has effectively called the "sphere of phenomenological immanence", noting that it derives substantially from the "operational application of the principle of phenomenological evidence":

Orienting oneself according to this principle implies that the descriptive analyses of phenomenology can only concern those moments of experiences whose meaning can be "clarified and ascertained only on the basis of the experience itself". In this regard, we are dealing with immediately experienced contents of consciousness, to which Husserl ascribes two essentially different moments of experience (*Erlebnismomente*): on the one hand, the sensory act constituents, i.e. sensations and phantasms, which, so to speak, represent the material from which the conscious experience is constituted; on the other hand, the apperceptions or act characters, which confer a representative function on the sensory material and thus make it representative (*Repräsentanten*) of an objective sense. (Rizzoli 2008, p. 41)

As Rizzoli herself rightly notes, the "choice" of these moments of experience as the ground for the analysis of phenomenology is linked to the fact that the type of datitude they possess corresponds to the model of perfect datitude, hence of evidence *par excellence*.¹⁵

With that said, Rizzoli uses the term act-character to refer to the other kind of stuff we find in the field of the real components of experience. The term act-character is quite ambiguous, though. According to the interpretation of the reduction to the real components that Lohmar proposes, even act-characters should be excluded from the field of real immanence. The divergence between Rizzoli's and Lohmar's position is actually due to a notable ambiguity of the very expression "act-character".

Lohmar (2002, p. 757) points out that Husserl's framework includes the possibility of understanding the same sensory data in different ways, and Lohmar calls these different ways "mode[s] of apprehension" (*Art der Auffassung*). Although this term is not present in the *Logical Investigations*, it can reasonably be assumed that what Lohmar has in mind corresponds to what in this work Husserl calls "act-character" (*Aktcharakter*) of experiences.

¹⁵ Cf. (Rizzoli 2008), p.42. Melle also recognises that the *Auffassungsleistungen* are *reelle* parts of the experiences: cf. (Melle 1983), p.43.

As a matter of fact, Husserl employs this term in a manner, which could motivate Lohmar's understanding of the reduction to the real component as limited to sense impressions. Let us see how this happens, and how to assess this result.

One of the main aims of the *Logical Investigations* is to clarify the (apriori) relationships between signitive and fulfilling acts. It is mainly for this reason that Husserl holds that one must exclude "the ideal sense" from the field of experience that is considered as responsible for verifying intentions. The ideal sense is what emerges, as it were, from a specific way of interpreting (*auffassen*) a given sensory material. In the passage we quoted above (*supra*, p. 5; Husserl 2001b, p. 211), the ideal sense should be considered as that which makes some spots on a wall apprehended as an expression of a meaning, i.e., as a writing, instead of as a squiggle, or as a mere heap of scratches on the wall. When the ideal sense is at work, what is intended clearly goes beyond what is intuitively sensuously present. This notwithstanding, bracketing the ideal sense would not necessarily correspond to removing any form of apprehension of sensory contents, and thus to organize them into a sensible unity. In the example proposed by Husserl, by removing the ideal sense we would have the simple phonetic formation, regardless of the way it is understood or interpreted as the expression of a meaning.

If this were the kind of reduction to the real component discussed by Lohmar, we would not need to worry about the total exclusion of any kind of act-matter from the testbed of our doxastic attitudes. We would rather have a reduction to *perceptual* act-contents. This is, however, not the case. As a matter of fact, Lohmar is right in claiming that the reduction to the real component excludes any apprehensional sense whatsoever, including perceptual examples. In this regard, the reduction to the real component excludes, or brackets, any act-character, including the intuitive one, i.e., the one at work when sensory material is seen as manifesting an object, or, more precisely, as presenting the sides and properties of an object. This could lead us to believe that the *Auffassung* moment of an act is also excluded. To understand if this is the case, we need to understand more precisely the connection between act-character and apprehension.

The following passage can help us to understand the meaning of act-character, and its exclusion from the field of real component, more precisely:

Joy, e.g., concerning some happy event, is certainly an act. But this act, which is not merely an intentional character, but a

concrete and therefore complex experience, does not merely hold in its unity an idea of the happy event and an act-character of liking which relates to it: a sensation of pleasure attaches to the idea, a sensation at once seen and located as an emotional excitement in the psycho-physical feeling-subject, and also as an objective property - the event seems as if bathed in a rosy gleam. (Husserl 2001b, p. 110)

This is a passage from §15b of the Fifth Investigation, where Husserl is trying to distinguish feeling-sensations and acts of feeling. First, it should be noted that Husserl expresses himself in a somewhat strange way: what does it mean to say that an act *is not* an intentional character? It would probably be more correct to say that it does *not have* a merely intentional character, i.e. that, beside its intentional side, i.e. its being directed towards the happy event, there are the feelings and sensations that really (*reell*) inhabit, as it were, the experience itself, that the real fabric experience is made of. Moreover, by saying that this act, i.e. joy, is not, or does not have, a merely intentional character, Husserl creates some confusion. One might wonder, following the distinction between act and experience he himself made only a couple of sections before (Husserl 2001b, pp.), what sense it makes to speak of an act that is not intentional. “Act” is the name of intentional experiences. One can certainly speak of non-intentional experiences, and, thus, of experiences that are not acts, but a non-intentional act is an oxymoron. It seems obvious, therefore, that here Husserl is using the term “act” not according to the definitions given earlier, but more generally as a synonym for lived experience generally understood. In fact, a few lines later, he continues:

The same unpleasing sensations which the empirical ego refers to and locates in itself - the pang in the heart - are referred in one's emotional conception to the thing itself. *These* relations are purely presentational: we first have an essentially new type of intention in hostile repugnance, in active dislike etc. Sensations of pleasure and pain may continue, though the act-characters built upon them may lapse. When the facts which provoke pleasure sink into the background, are no longer apperceived as emotionally coloured, and perhaps cease to be intentional objects at all, the pleasurable excitement may linger on for a while: it may itself be felt as agreeable. Instead of representing a pleasant property of the object, it is referred merely to the

feeling-subject, or is itself presented and pleases. (Husserl 2001b, p. 111, underlining mine)

Let us now leave aside the long-standing question about the sphere of feelings and emotions, their intentionality and their relation to representational, and to objectifying acts. For us, it is important to note that Husserl is here clearly using “act-character” as a term to indicate that some sensory stuff, in this case feeling-sensations, can be experienced, in the sense that is simply lived-through, without being referred to “outer” objects. In other words, Husserl is here affirming that, at least some kinds of sensations are possible without intentionality, that is, not projected onto something “external” to the flow of consciousness or, more generally, to the experiences themselves.

Although in the passages just quoted we are dealing with a particular kind of sensation, namely sensations relating to the emotional-sentimental sphere, while there is no mention of sensations that unavoidably seem to lead to an intentional apprehension of objects, such as colors, sounds, figures, etc., it is nevertheless clear that even sensations belonging to this second kind can be considered without any “apprehension”, i.e. an animation that makes them relative to objects - or, more precisely, to object properties. This, however, does not yet mean, as Lohmar purports, that when we are dealing with the clarification of the legitimacy of an intention one should limit the field of proof only to the impressional components of experiences.

The question is, indeed, whether in passages such as the one cited previously Husserl really wants, as Lohmar claims, to eliminate any mode of apprehension from the testing ground of intentions or if he rather merely wants to limit everything to the intuitive way of apprehending sense contents. Indeed, as we have already mentioned speaking of the bracketing of the ideal sense, what Husserl wants to eliminate, or at least put into brackets, are first and foremost those modes of apprehension that see in what is presented considerably more than what is actually given “in the flesh.” - or, if you prefer, on the sensory level. In a passage of §23 of the Sixth Investigation, a paragraph devoted to the question of what can serve as an intuitive filling of cognitive intentions, Husserl writes:

By intuitively *presentative* or *intuitively representative contents* (*Inhalten*) we understand those contents of intuitive acts which, owing to the purely imaginative or perceptual interpretations [*Auffassungen*] that they sustain, point unambiguously to

definitely corresponding contents in the object, represent these in imagined or perceived perspectival slantings. The act-aspects which characterize them in this manner, we ignore. (Husserl 2001b, p. 235)

On the basis of what is asserted here, Lohmar would seem to be right in recognising that, in the framework of the *Logical Investigations*, only the sensory components of the act, apart from the apprehensional activity, can serve as legitimate confirmation of a representation. However, we need to pay attention to what Husserl precisely affirms: that the representative or intuitively representative contents *sustain* imaginative or perceptual interpretations, or, as I would prefer to say, apprehensions. Such apprehensions are what, in a way, make the intuitive contents correspond with contents in the object. Consider some of the examples proposed by Husserl himself: a mannequin that is initially perceived as a "real" woman (Husserl 2001a, p. 280), or an arabesque that turns out to be a hieroglyphic, and therefore an expressive sign (Husserl 2001b, p. 105). These are cases in which the given "sensuous material" remains (mostly) unchanged but receives a different form of apprehension each time. Let us leave aside how it can reasonably be possible to get only this raw sensuous material in view. As a matter of fact, it is clear that such a view is an abstract one and that it focuses on those some elements of one's intentional experience which do not depend on the intentional content in order to be in view, or that survive, as it were, the suppression of the intentional moment. Sure enough, as Lohmar points out, we would then have an array of sense data. Would we have only that, though? I do not think so. We also have those interpretations/apprehensions that the given sense data *allow*.

Indeed, against Lohmar's interpretation, we need to point out that not only does Husserl never explicitly exclude apprehensions from the field of real component, but also that at least two times he explicitly includes apprehensions in the latter:

The intuitively presentative or intuitively representative contents in and with the interpretation [Auffassung] put upon them, we call the intuitive substance (*Gehalt*) of the act: in this we still ignore the quality of the act (whether assertive or not), as being indifferent to the distinctions in question. On the above, all signitive components of an act are excluded from its intuitive 'substance'. (Husserl 2001b, p. 235 - underlining mine)

Sensations, and the acts 'interpreting' [auffassend] them or apperceiving them, are alike experienced, *but they do not appear as objects*: they are not seen, heard or *perceived* by any sense. (Husserl 2001b, p. 105 - underlining mine)

To be appropriately appreciated, this latter passage should be read in conjunction with another paragraph that came a couple of pages later:

These so-called immanent contents are therefore merely intended or intentional, while truly *immanent contents*, which belong to the real make-up (*reellen Bestände*) of the intentional experiences, are *not intentional*: they constitute the act, provide necessary *points d'appui* which render possible an intention, but are not themselves intended, not the objects presented in the act. I do not see colour-sensations but coloured things, I do not hear tone-sensations but the singer's song, etc. etc. (Husserl 2001b, p. 99)

Although Husserl does not explicitly mention apperceptions here, it is clear from the passage we mentioned before that what applies to sensations also applies to the apperceptions. In both cases, we are dealing with elements of experience that are not *intended*, but that a subject undergoes, and that, in their combination, make something appear, i.e., give rise to an intentional content.

So, if there is no doubt that within the frameworks of the *Logical Investigations* the act-matter, or the *Auffassungssinn* does not belong to the “real component” of experience, the inclusion of the “*auffassender Akt*”, or simply the “*Auffassung*”, in the latter, vouches for a difference between the two. This difference seems to be neglected by Lohmar. That said, once we recognize the membership of the apprehensions to the club of the real component, we need to understand what such an *Auffassung* can properly mean in isolation from its sense. Only after that will we be able also to understand how to avoid the circularity we would have if we were to accept the apprehensional *sense* in the testbed of our intentions, while preserving a kind of structural moment within the testbed, that allows us to support objectual claims.

In other words, after we have recognized the presence of apprehensions within the field of real contents, we need to understand what

apprehensions properly are, how they properly “appear” - or, even better, what they look like. In the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl has little to say about how to grasp *Auffassungen* and how they look if one abstracts them from their sense. More importantly, though, what he does say on this topic is not particularly satisfying. That is the reason why we can easily end up with conflating *Auffassungen* into *Auffassungssinne* - as Lohmar, indeed, seems to do. As we have seen, though, this is a mistake, - and we should simply acknowledge that a positive characterization of *Auffassungen* is missing in the *Logical Investigations*, and that their clarification is an unsettled *desideratum*.

Still, by going beyond the text of the *Logical Investigations* while keeping it as the starting point, we can sketch a view of apprehensions, which could work as a benchmark for an overall understanding of phenomenological reductions in general, as well as for tackling the issue of phenomenological “idealism”.

4. The reduction to the real components as prototype

In the *Logical Investigation*, Husserl still does not put much weight on the “subjective operations” (*subjektive Leistungen*) which are necessary in order properly to get objects into view. Lohmar focuses on this shortcoming and claims that, without giving the right importance to such subjective operations, there is no way to get an appropriate understanding of how cognitive experience works.

In a way, what I argued for above is partially in line with this idea. As a matter of fact, the introduction of the apprehensions into the field of real components could be seen as satisfying exactly the need put forward by Lohmar. However, one could then wonder whether or not taking subjective operations as part of the testbed of our doxastic contents would lead us to subjectivism, if not full-fledged circularity. So, in the end, the perplexities surrounding Husserl’s “transcendental turn” from its very beginning, would be quite understandable. In the end, the transcendental turn, and, possibly even more, the genetic turn in Husserl’s thought, including the import it put on to the so-called *passive Synthesen*, would lead to, or even equate with, a new form of psychologism.

I do not think that this outcome is necessary or unavoidable. However, it would be if we do not propose an adequate account of how the *subjektive Leistungen* work. In this regard, it is precisely the reduction to the real components of the *Logical Investigations* that can offer us a fundamental contribution for finding an alternative way out.

Let us assume that the *Auffassungen* at work in the *Logical Investigations* are the ancestors of the passive syntheses of over a decade later. A full argument in support of this filiation would clearly go beyond the scope of this article. For my aims, it is enough to accept the plausibility of this idea. As a matter of fact, my argument is about the framework of the *Logical Investigations*, and I will only add a more dynamic element that is normally connected with Husserl's later production.

The word "synthesis" is present already in the *Logical Investigations*. What we find in this work, however, are only *active* syntheses, which are somehow relative to intellectual operations, and are basically syntheses between *acts*, and not within the content of an act.

On the other hand, in the *Logical Investigations* it is explicitly recognized that the act-matter of a perceptual experience is something complex and internally articulated. In this regard, Husserl speaks of "monoradial acts" (Husserl...). To this we should add that apprehensions are at work also in the case of perceptual contents. As we have seen above, there is an animating activity also when a sensuous intention gets constituted, i.e. when the perceptual consciousness *of* an object arises.

We can now embrace Lohmar's suggestion that the reduction to the real components amounts to a kind of "(de-syntheticizing) disbandment of the synthetic operations of apperception" which basically amounts to a "return to the primary material" (Lohmar 2012, pp. 9-10). For Lohmar, this is what happens in the transcendental reduction. In my view, as should be clear by now, this is exactly what happens with the reduction to the real components. In this early form of the reduction, this de-syntheticizing operation leads us to "see" a raw sensory material and the apprehension we have applied to it in order to obtain, as it were, a certain content, and, accordingly, to have an object "in view".

If in the case of experiences of "higher" level, we can easily hold that the forms of apprehension at work are some kinds of syntactic forms, and of logical forms - basically what Husserl was almost exclusively interested in within the framework of the *Logical Investigations* -, for the layer of perceptual experiences and contents corresponding with physical, as it were, objectualities, one could wonder what kind of forms we have here.

The answer could actually be found in some manuscripts of Husserl (1983) that precede the publication of the *Logical Investigations*, and which were later developed in the famous 1907 course *Ding und Raum*, as well as in manuscripts classified as *D-Manuskripte*, which are going to be edited by Lohmar himself. In all of these writings, Husserl puts forward the idea that the forms of our bodily movements, starting already with ocular

movements, correspond with specific structures of the surrounding space, and, within it, with specific forms of objects. I believe that, to a great extent, this idea, and the resulting analyses, which Husserl started to carry out from the last decade of the 19th century, are an anticipation of what would later be developed as the investigation of systems of *Ich-kann*, which is mentioned by Lohmar (2012, p. 9) as an important element that needs to be considered in order to overcome the inefficacy of the reduction to the real component.

Lohmar also points out the importance of the phenomenological inquiries concerning the constitution of the spatial world for an appropriate understanding of phenomenological reduction in general. He writes:

Here, Husserl thinks constitution strictly within the framework of the model of intentional apprehension of real givennesses. The intuitive manifestation of movement (and naturally also of space) must therefore show itself in a change of these absolutely given real contents. They are the intuition-giving basis of the objectifying intentional apprehension as movement. (Lohmar 2002, p. 20)

Contrary to what Lohmar seems to hold, though, in my view, this is exactly what is already proposed in the reduction to the real content of the *Logical Investigations*. As I have said, in this work, Husserl was not particularly interested in perception as such. However, even at this stage he already recognizes the fundamental importance of perceptual contents as a kind of ground stone of our cognitive relationship with (outer) reality.

Because of a lack of detailed analyses of perceptual experience and perceptual content, the reader could get the impression that, in the *Logical Investigations*, all *Auffassungssinne* are modeled on the case of ideal senses. In this regard, the English translation of *Auffassung* as “interpretation” does not help, because it induces us to think of quite intellectualistic operations. However, we should remember that *Auffassungen* can also simply be bodily operations that go through sense contents and that paths through sense content can always be identified with a specific order with some specific *form*. If we do so, then we can understand that *Auffassungsformen* can also refer to ordered series of movements that correspond to specific objectual forms - which include not only the external shape of an object, but also the relationship between outer and inner parts, etc. If we accept this view of apprehensions as corresponding with sensuous movements through sense contents, and if we are willing to consider the *Auffassungen* of the *Logical Investigations* as roughly tantamount to the *subjektive Leistungen* of the later

works, including the much appreciated passive syntheses, then we can also see that the reduction to the real component is not only an anticipation of the later transcendental reduction, but that the predominance it ascribes at face-value to sense contents can also teach us something with regard how to avoid the pitfalls of idealism, namely the risk of reducing it to a form of subjectivism.

5. Conclusions. The reduction to the real components as a regulative model

There are certainly good reasons to modify, at least in part, the framework offered by the *Logical Investigations*. However, such reasons cannot go so far as to make the fundamental division between the real and intentional components of acts disappear. The proof of the 'reality' (*Wirklichkeit*) of what is meant from time to time is, as Rizzoli (2008) has aptly shown, at the heart of the elaboration of the transcendental reduction and, to a large extent, it is its fundamental motive. Such a motive lies already at the core of the first edition of the *Logical Investigations*.

Lohmar's excavation work allows us to identify an ancestor of the phenomenologico-transcendental reduction that can shed light on the latter. What we are able to see in the latter, however, strictly depends on what we have been able to observe in the former.

If we recognize only sense data as real components of experience, then we probably cannot avoid the view proposed by Lohmar, and somehow consider the later forms of the reduction as ascribing the role of legal examiner, and not solely of examinandum, to the noematic side of experience, i.e. to the descendants of act-matter. To the contrary, though, if we realize that the real component of experience includes also our apprehensions, and we 1) interpret the apprehensions as non-intellectual forms of synthesis, and roughly as the kinaesthetic orders that correspond with orders of sense contents understood as manifestations of objectual properties, and we 2) appreciate the fact that the apprehensions localizable in the real component are only those that sense contents allow from time to time, while those that stretch beyond the given adumbration of the object will have to be tested according to the respective sense contents they imply, we then only need to de-subjectify the sense contents in order to get a version of the phenomenological reduction that keeps a strongly realistic and objectivistic core.

Sense data are "given", in the sense of "imposed" onto the subject. There is no need to "subjectivize" them. Sense data are either there or they are

not. Apprehensions are *allowed* by the sense data. Therefore, even if they can be considered as something subjective, in the sense that they “lie” in the mind, or are part of the very fabric of consciousness, if you prefer, there is something in the world that either allows for their application or not. To this extent, they can vindicate an objective value. The legitimacy of this claim, however, goes hand in hand with our willingness to recognize sense data as the keystone of our relationship with reality. Only if we admit that sense data are, in a way, reality presenting itself to us, and are thus the most objective, as it were, component of our experience, can we also lay claim to our forms of apprehension of them, and, thus, of our apprehensional senses.

The extent to which this core can be ascribed to, or regained in, later forms of the phenomenological reduction, including the transcendental reduction, is a matter for further discussion. To be sure, the recognition of sense contents as the most objective part of our experience is not uncontroversial. One thing can be said, though: the reduction to the real components of experience, if understood and developed along the lines I have proposed in this article, could allow us to understand when and whether we are “cutting nature at its joints”, and how to avoid being “incompetent butchers” (Plato, *Phaedrus*, 265e).

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