



SYNTHETIC UNITY AS GESTALT: GURWITSCH'S READING OF GESTALT THEORY VIA KANT AND PHENOMENOLOGY

Unidade Sintética como Gestalt: Gurwitsch e a Teoria de Gestalt Via Kant e a Fenomenologia

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La Unidad Sintética como Gestalt: Gurwitsch y la Teoría Gestalt a Través de Kant y la Fenomenología

Abstract: The main goal of this essay is to suggest that both Gurwitsch's reinterpretation of phenomenology in Gestalt theory terms and his critical approach to Husserl are based on a fundamental rereading of two Kant doctrines developed in his Critique of Pure Reason: the doctrine of the synthetic unity of manifold and the doctrine of the synthetic unity of apperception. We propose that this indicates that the core concepts of Gestalt Psychology have been transcendently structured. Ultimately, it allows for a critical approximation of Gestalt Psychology and transcendental phenomenology. In this regard, we will first revisit Kant's Transcendental Deduction and develop its nuclear moments as they pertain to the issue of synthesis. Second, we will demonstrate how Gurwitsch employs Gestalt Psychology in an epistemological sense, placing and presenting its premises in a remarkable framework, far from the original aims of its precursors. Finally, we will present how his reinterpretation of Gestalt Psychology implies the structure of Kant's Transcendental Deduction and how it may be used to criticize idealistic assumptions found in diverse philosophical traditions, also including Kant and certain Husserl claims.

Keywords: Perception; Phenomenology; Phenomenological Psychology; Philosophy.

Resumo: O principal objetivo deste ensaio é sugerir que a reinterpretação proposta por Gurwitsch da fenomenologia em termos da Teoria da Gestalt, bem como a sua crítica a Husserl, baseiam-se em uma releitura substantiva de duas doutrinas desenvolvidas por Kant em sua Crítica da Razão Pura: a doutrina da unidade sintética do múltiplo sensível e aquela da unidade sintética da apercepção. Propõe-se que isto indica que os conceitos centrais da Psicologia da Gestalt tenham sido estruturados de forma transcendental. Em última instância, isto permite uma aproximação crítica de Psicologia da Gestalt e fenomenologia transcendental. A este respeito, começar-se-á com uma revisão da Dedução Transcendental de Kant e com o desdobramento de seus momentos nucleares relacionados com a questão da síntese. Em segundo lugar, procurar-se-á demonstrar como Gurwitsch emprega a Psicologia da Gestalt em um sentido epistemológico, colocando e apresentando as suas premissas em um quadro teórico singular, distante dos objetivos originais de seus precursores. Finalmente, apresentar-se-á como a sua interpretação da Psicologia da Gestalt implica a estrutura da Dedução Transcendental de Kant e como ela pode ser usada para uma crítica de pressupostos idealistas que podem ser encontrados em diferentes tradições filosóficas, que incluem, também, Kant e algumas teorias de Husserl.

Palavras-chave: Fenomenologia; Filosofia; Percepção; Psicologia fenomenológica.

Resumen: El objetivo principal de este ensayo es sugerir que tanto la reinterpretación propuesta por Gurwitsch de la fenomenología en términos de la teoría de la Gestalt, así como su crítica a Husserl, se basan en una relectura fundamental de dos doctrinas desarrolladas por Kant en su Crítica de la razón pura: la doctrina de la unidad sintética de la diversidad de lo múltiple de las intuiciones sensibles y la de la unidad sintética de apercepción. Se propone que esto indica que los conceptos centrales de la Psicología Gestalt han sido estructurados de forma transcendental. En última instancia, esto permite un enfoque crítico de la Psicología Gestalt y la fenomenología transcendental. En este sentido, comenzará con una revisión de la Deducción Transcendental de Kant y con el despliegue de sus momentos nucleares relacionados con el tema de la síntesis. En segundo lugar, intentará demostrar cómo Gurwitsch emplea la Psicología Gestalt en un sentido epistemológico, colocando y presentando sus premisas en un marco teórico singular, aunque lejos de los objetivos originales de sus precursores. Finalmente, presentará cómo su interpretación de la Psicología Gestalt implica la estructura de la Deducción Transcendental de Kant y cómo se puede utilizar para una crítica de los supuestos idealistas que se pueden encontrar en diferentes tradiciones filosóficas, que también incluyen a Kant y algunas de las teorías de Husserl.

Palabras-clave: Fenomenología; Filosofía; Percepción; Psicología fenomenológica.

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Introduction

The work of Lithuanian phenomenologist Aron Gurwitsch is somehow influential to twentieth century phenomenology and phenomenological psychology, though little recognized in these terms. His works covered a vast domain of philosophical and psychological problems, although he centered his interests in the examination of the structure of perception and of what he called, in his later works, as the field of consciousness (Gurwitsch, 2010). Particularly important is his interpretation of phenomenological concepts and methods in the light of Gestalt Theory. Early in his doctoral thesis of 1928, titled *Phenomenology of thematics and of the pure ego (Phänomenologie der thematik und des reinen Ich)* (Gurwitsch, 2009a), he defended a reinterpretation of Husserl's (1) theory of intentionality, based on an alleged dualism of *hylē-morphē*, and of his (2) theory of "pure" or transcendental Ego, claiming that Gestalt Psychology provides a sort of toolkit for questioning those two theories. In short, he defended that intentionality must be understood as giving a unitary phenomenon exhibiting meaning as an autochthonous feature, without the need for adding any extraneous or supervenient intellectual function: in proper terms, it presents a *Gestalt*. As a complement, he also defended that there is no room for assuming a structuring "Ego" that stands behind the acts of consciousness, or the *Erlebnisse*, and give them a unitary form. Experience itself exhibits this unitary and autochthonous structure, which does not require the appeal for a subjacent and unchanging foundation.

Given the history of both phenomenology and psychological research, his interpretation of Gestalt Psychology is particularly far-reaching. Two historical works on this topic should be mentioned: one which situates Gurwitsch's work in the history of phenomenology (Spiegelberg, 1972) and another which assesses the connection between phenomenology and Gestalt Psychology (Toccafondi, 2002). In his work, Spiegelberg (1972) comments Gurwitsch's interpretation of Gestalt Psychology, emphasizing his connection to the Berlin School of Psychology, but giving no more details on the reception and repercussions of his interpretation on ulterior phenomenologists' research. Toccafondi (2002; 2011; 2012), by her turn, studies the diverse discourses on the agreement between Gestalt Psychology and phenomenology. She mentions the rapprochement suggested by Merleau-Ponty between Husserl and Gestalt Psychology, pointing out that this approach is built on unfounded and generic premises. In particular, the author writes that "the nexus between the criticism of the constancy hypothesis developed by Gestaltpsychologie and Husserl's phenomenology is quite obscure" (Toccafondi, 2002, p. 204). However, her own account does not even mention Gurwitsch's work and its importance for laying the foundations for this bridging¹. In fact, such an insight is hinted firstly by Pintos (2005), who underscores the links between Gurwitsch and Merleau-Ponty and their exchanges on Gestalt Psychology and Goldstein's neurobiological thought.

This, we submit, is a first glance at the originality of Gurwitsch's work and of his historical relevance. However, as far as we can see, we can go deeper and regard his interpretation of Gestalt Psychology and phenomenology as a form of novelty if we evaluate it against the background of transcendental philosophy. In this essay, we are interested in how the framing of those two basilar questions of his phenomenology implies a subtle allusion to Kant's Transcendental Deduction in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant, 1996)². There are, in fact, some direct and indirect mentions of Kant in Gurwitsch's *Phenomenology of thematics and of the pure ego*. But, beyond the explicit references, we intend to suggest that Gurwitsch's work has a grounded architecture that assumes and reformulates Kant's Transcendental Deduction. And this implies that the way in which Gurwitsch interprets and applies Gestalt Psychology goes beyond its original epistemological and methodological ground and explicitly places transcendental problems and questions to its framework. And this makes the nexus between the dismissal of constancy hypothesis and Husserl's phenomenology more suitable. Also, this implies a specific ground of approximation between philosophical phenomenology and empirical psychology.

Our argument is that Gurwitsch's reinterpretation of phenomenology in Gestalt theory's terms, as well as his critique of Husserl, are founded on a fundamental rereading of two Kant's doctrines: the doctrine of the synthetic unity of manifold and the doctrine of the synthetic unity of apperception. This indicates that the core concepts of Gestalt Psychology have been transcendently structured. Ultimately, it allows for a critical approximation of Gestalt Psychology and transcendental phenomenology. In this regard, we will first revisit Kant's Transcendental Deduction in its nuclear moments as they pertain to the issue of synthesis. Second, we will demonstrate how Gurwitsch employs Gestalt Psychology in an epistemological sense, placing and presenting its premises in a remarkable framework, far from the original aims of its precursors. Finally, we will present how his reinterpretation of Gestalt Psychology implies the structure of Kant's Transcendental Deduction and how it may be used to criticize idealistic assumptions found in diverse philosophical traditions, also including Kant and certain Husserl claims.

¹ Gurwitsch is never referenced in any of her other publications on the subject (Toccafondi, 2011; 2012).

² The version of the *Critique of Pure Reason* used in this work is Kant (1996), which is a Unified Edition, with all variants from the 1781 and 1787 editions. Relevant citations of Kant's work will follow the usual format: abbreviation (CPR), followed by its edition (A or B) and the original page.



The Background of Kant's Transcendental Deduction and his Philosophy of Perception

We can begin with a comprehensive presentation of Transcendental Deduction as developed by Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason* and of its connection with general themes of philosophy of perception. The goal of Transcendental Deduction is to demonstrate and justify the possibility of objectively valid knowledge. More specifically, considering what was achieved in the “Transcendental Aesthetic”, all appearances, he claims, are regulated by pure forms of sensibility, namely: space and time. Then, in his investigations in the “Analytic of Concepts,” he is committed to demonstrating how the manifold of presentations receptively given in sensibility may be subjected to the categories of pure understanding, which, in a word, provides coherence and adequacy to that multiplicity. In summary, the question concerning the feasibility of knowledge is to know how I (as the subject of experience) can have a consistent and meaningful experience (in Cartesian terminology, “clear and distinct ideas”), although sensible intuition presents a multiplicity of presentations, somewhat chaotic or disordered. That’s the general idea of the Transcendental Deduction, which we will explore below in a more detailed way.

A first point to be understood in this context is that data of sensibility always comes from a sensible intuition, that is, from that faculty in which we are affected by objects, and therefore these data are given in merely passivity of consciousness. It is an idea that Kant inherits from Hume’s theory of perception (Gurwitsch, 2009b). The combination of multiple data in consciousness can only be, then, “an act of spontaneity by the power of presentation” (CPR, B 130), i.e., “an act of understanding” (CPR, B 130), which is named as *synthesis*. The faculty by which this act becomes possible is understanding. Understanding is the faculty of thinking, which gives the pure concepts or rules (the categories) to the raw data of intuition, making experience possible. These concepts, in turn, are *a priori* and then provide universality and necessity, thus differing from the contingency of all that is empirical. Thereby, we understand that the combination of multiplicity given in sensuous intuition is an act of the subject and cannot be provided by the objects themselves. This distinction made by Kant between a passive and an active faculty of consciousness is essential for the understanding of the idea behind Transcendental Deduction.

The question about how categories of understanding can be applied to objects given in intuition, which are independent of thought, refers to this distinction and guides us in reference to the mode of demonstration adopted by Kant. If, at first, Kant shows the objective validity of categories by demonstrating that objects of experience can only be thought from pure concepts of understanding, and not otherwise, in a second moment, called “the subjective part of transcendental deduction”, Kant asks how categories can be related to objects. For this, it is necessary to indicate the faculties that are responsible for it, and how, through these faculties, multiplicity comes to unity, how it comes to coherence. In other terms, it requests the synthesis that are responsible for this unity, which is itself a result of the activity of consciousness. Thus, Transcendental Deduction demonstrates the subjective sources of objective knowledge.

For Kant, subjective sources of objective knowledge would be found in the faculties of intuition, imagination and understanding. As we have shown, in intuition a multiplicity of presentations is provided; nonetheless, this multiplicity is distinguished by being a non-combined result of mere receptivity, and, consequently, a combination is still necessary. Through a proper synthesis, the multiplicity is constructed as a “synthetic unity of multiplicity” (CPR, B 131), which is the combination itself. Thus, it ensures the unity of the object for consciousness. However, because the formal unity of consciousness cannot be distinguished from the unity of intuition, Kant arrives at the proposition of the unity of apperception. Precisely, Kant’s goal is to verify how this unity can be maintained to the highest level, as it contains the foundation for the unity of different concepts in judgments and is a condition of possibility for understanding (CPR, § 15). This is the main point for our subsequent discussion.

For the Kantian project of Transcendental Deduction, it is necessary to demonstrate that the use of categories is necessary for all conscious experience that are part of our knowledge of the objective world. However, in order to do so, we must first address understanding and its unity, with the goal of demonstrating that the coherence and consistency of all objective presentations, as the condition of possibility of presentations themselves, cannot be given by objects alone, but must be provided by subjectivity. This unity of self-consciousness is therefore called by Kant as the *unity of apperception*. If, for sensibility, all the multiplicity of presentations must be submitted to the formal conditions of space and time, the equivalent supreme principle to understanding is that “everything manifold in intuition is subject to conditions of the original synthetic unity of apperception” (CPR, B 137). This principle states that all presentations must be able to be combined into a single consciousness, i.e., it states that consciousness has a unity in such a way that presentations can be known or thought. This unity is enunciated by Kant as follows: “The *I think* must be capable of accompanying all my presentations” (CPR, B 132).

The consciousness of the “*I think*” (that is, of the *cogito*) is called by Kant as *original apperception*, since this self-consciousness produces the *I think* presentation, which, then, should be able to follow all the presentations, owing to its identity and constancy in all consciousness. This is a simple awareness – which is not



complex, or a multiplicity – that refers to a multiplicity, such as that which gives the unity of all presentations via a proper synthesis. In short, the multiplicity of presentations belongs, in this sense, to the same thinking subject, whereby it is possible to assign them to the index “mine”. In order to have synthetic unity, sensible matter should be unified by a synthetic activity performed according to rules pertaining to understanding. Therefore, the original consciousness is a consciousness of synthesis of all phenomena that must be in conformity with concepts, or, to put it in another way, with rules (CPR, A 109). This synthesizing function is therefore a function of pure understanding itself and through it understanding and apperception could be placed on identity. The unity of intuition is only attainable through this original synthetic unity of apperception – a synthesis of understanding that is made up through categories (CPR, B 144). Consequently, it explains the proper function of understanding, namely, which is to combine and order the matter of knowledge provided by intuition, because understanding itself cannot effectively know nothing. That is to say, categories have the sole function of being applied to objects of experience. In addition to sensible intuition, however, pure concepts are empty, or “mere forms of thought” (CPR, B 148). To summarize, the unity of apperception and the synthesis that it entails constitute the basis for the possibility of *a priori* knowledge. This *a priori* synthesis, however, is entirely operated by understanding and simple categories, and thus becomes objective. This raises the question of how it can be related to sensible intuition and how it can submit all objects of our intuition to categories.

That question is answered by Kant through what he calls as *synthesis speciosa* or figurative synthesis: in contrast to the synthesis of the understanding, which is purely intellectual (*synthesis intellectualis*), it is a synthesis of the manifold of *a priori* sensible intuition, which, by its turn, is and relates solely to the manifold of intuition in general, conceived only in simple category (CPR, B 151). Being a form of transcendental synthesis, for substantiating the possibility of *a priori* knowledge, the *synthesis speciosa* is one that comes to link the two faculties that seemed to be in parallel, namely, sensibility and understanding. This synthesis is precisely the transcendental synthesis of imagination and refers to the original synthetic unity of apperception linking it to sensible intuition. This synthesis, however, determine *a priori* sensibility, synthesizing intuitions in accordance with the categories of understanding, once it is nothing more than an action (*Wirkung*) of understanding over sensibility (CPR, B 151). Furthermore, the imaginative synthesis, which Kant calls productive imagination (CPR, B 152), must be differentiated from reproductive imagination, by the fact that the former is spontaneity – viz., a form of activity –, whereas the latter, being subjected to purely empirical laws, is merely *associative* – viz., a form of passivity – and, therefore, a matter of empirical psychology. Accordingly, the transcendental synthesis of imagination ensures that sensibility and understanding must be in conformity with one another and that they produce objective knowledge, since it requires, on the one hand, the unity of intellectual synthesis and, on the other hand, the diversity of sensible apprehension. It is this synthesis that makes possible the experience of being thought and known. The synthesis is precisely necessary for human understanding because its function is thinking, without intuiting, that is, because it cannot provide itself with the multiplicity of intuition and, at the same time, be aware of itself; otherwise, it would not require a particular act of synthesis of the manifold for the unity of consciousness (CPR, B 138-139).

It is in the § 26 of CPR that Kant concludes the Transcendental Deduction with the demonstration that categories “hold *a priori* [...] for all objects of experience” (CPR, B 161). For there is demonstrated the possibility of knowing objects which can be given to sensuous intuition under the laws of their connection, and how these laws can be prescribed to nature and make it possible. Kant concludes by affirming that the synthesis of apprehension of presentations of space and time must be in accordance with the *a priori* forms of sensible intuition, but that synthesis must present a synthetic unity, which should therefore be subjected to an originating consciousness according to the categories of understanding, and then applied to sensory intuition. This means that any synthesis which makes perception possible must be subjected to categories (CPR, B 161), and, since “experience is cognition through connected perceptions” (CPR, B 161), the categories must be counted as a condition of its *a priori* validity to all objects of experience. By extension, Kant concludes that laws of nature must be consistent with understanding rules, just as phenomena should be in accordance with *a priori* forms of sensible intuition. After all, it is in relation to subjectivity that phenomenal regulation is possible – and this is the essence of Transcendental Deduction.

Anyway, maybe a convincing argument is still missing to lend more weight to the Kantian thesis that coherence of perception is afforded by the formal structure of consciousness, or, in another words, to the assumption that the manifold of intuition is subjected to categories. Perhaps in the “affinity of phenomena argument” (CPR, A 122) we may discover it more clearly. In this argument, whose goal is to establish that pure understanding determines the experience as its only possible determination, Kant explains how synthesis of imagination organizes presentations by means of rules, then ensuring consistency and preventing knowledge from being merely accidental. Through such organization, we may assume an objective principle of knowledge, wherein what is known takes place in a determinate manner, and never in a purely contingent one. This is the principle of affinity, or the principle of unity of apperception, which ensures that I have a single consciousness, and not a multiplicity of separate empirical consciousness according to the manifold of sensations – hence, an essential impossibility. In summary, this principle ensures that various perceptions are connected to each other by referring to a unitary consciousness, which demonstrates the fact that my world experience



is, in fact, coherent, rather than a chaotic flow of sensations (Hume's thesis). This immanent connection of perception in a consciousness is what speaks in favor of the possibility of applying categories to sensuous intuition, namely the fact that *my* experience is consistent and coherent. And this affinity implies, as its necessary condition, the synthesis of imagination, which is founded on *a priori* rules (CPR, A 123).

Let us see some examples about this conformation between coherent perception and categories of understanding. Kant gives two examples. Firstly, he mentions the perception of a house (CPR, B 162). By the apprehension of the manifold of the intuition of a house, an external intuition, the house is perceived as being in conformity with the synthetic unity of the manifold in space. So, this occurs on the background of the necessary synthetic unity of space and of sensible intuition, which is given *a priori*. Even if I abstract space, the *quantity* category continues to regulate perception, as it resides in the understanding. The second example is the perception of freezing water (CPR, B 162-163). In this example, I apprehend two different states of the water: first fluidity, then solidity, which succession I call "freezing water". These states are in temporal relation one to each other, the *succession itself*, which is given in internal intuition. This intuition, in turn, occurs on the background of a synthetic unity of manifold in which the relationship between the two events could be given in a determinate manner on intuition, namely in *temporal succession*. And this way the events are given is governed by the category of *causality*, which, even in the abstraction of "time", governs everything that happens in time in general according to their relationship when applied to sensibility. Perception is then validated by verifying the congruence between the manifold given in intuition and the rules of understanding.

As can be seen from these and other instances, the constitution of objects in general, and particularly of the objects of nature, is therefore the result of Transcendental Deduction, or the application of categories by the intellect on intuition; or, to put it another way, it is the result of the verification or conformity between multiplicity of intuitions and ordering of understanding. His statement is that phenomenal regularity and order are built by us, rather than by things themselves. The primary distinction between things in themselves and appearances is, then, crucial (CPR, A 101): appearances are simply what our faculty of sensibility presents to us, and, thus, what our mental faculties construct. This constitution can only occur because of the multifarious syntheses and the consequent unity of consciousness in its subjective and objective form, as detailed in Transcendental Deduction. The overall outcome is, therefore, the object (*Objekt*) as an *a priori* synthetic unity formed by subjective principles, but objectively valid insofar as it makes experience possible to be known. In short, it is by Transcendental Deduction that the unconditioned object (*Gegenstand*), the determinable "X", or the noumenon, "becomes" the conditioned object (*Objekt*), the transcendental object, circumscribed by the field of what is knowable within human experience.

To summarize, Kantian philosophy maintains the primacy of constituent subjectivity, which constitutes objectivity and unity of experience, as opposed to the empiricist idea according to which senses alone might provide us with the ultimate foundation of knowledge. He defended that the unity of perception must be accompanied by the unity of consciousness, or the Ego. The matrix of Kant's doctrine of perceptual organization should, therefore, be seen as a largely precursor of the studies of perception of nineteenth century, especially the studies of E. Mach (1838-1916) and Ch. von Ehrenfels (1859-1932) (and, maybe, W. Wundt, 1832-1920), who, in turn, influenced the subsequent studies of Gestalt Theory and of phenomenology.

The Epistemological Dimensions of Gestalt Psychology

A closer examination of Gestalt Psychology's principles and theoretical positions reveals, however, that its viewpoint in consideration of Kant's doctrines of perception is more a critique than a continuation (Ash, 1998; Guillaume, 1937; Toccafondi, 2002). The psychologists of the Berlin School advocated against mechanistic and empiricist traditions in physiology (e.g., Helmholtz) and against rationalist and idealistic traditions in intellectualistic psychology (e.g., Kant and also Husserl). Gestalt theory counters the presumption that sensations could only gain form and relation by the action of an extraneous factor, such as association of a bunch of other impressions, a natural mechanism of human mind, or the operation of superior and purely rational faculties of the mind (Ash, 1998; Guillaume, 1937; Katz, 1967). Gestalt psychologists, on the opposite, advocated for a non-atomistic theory of perception, arguing that mere sensations cannot be conceived as pure impressions dispossessed of forms and relations. In fact, they are also critics of the intellectualist tradition, of which Kant is a representative, insofar as, while Kantianism assumes that a productive operation of the mind is required by mere impressions, they argue that laws related to forms and relations arise not from the intellect, but perception itself with its autochthonous structure. Gestalt Psychology's premises and promises are also based on the expectation that modern physics may support a more systematic understanding of subjective presentations (Gurwitsch, 2009c). In this spirit, they argued for isomorphism (inspired by physical theory on magnetic fields) and, alongside their phenomenological guidance, a sort of naturalistic philosophy and science.

Isomorphism asserts that to every conscious process, which could be phenomenologically described, corresponds a physiological one that must be explained – not in a "molecular" form, but exclusively in "mo-



lar” terms (Koffka, 1936). This means that laws governing conscious phenomena (“Gestalt laws”) may apply to neurobiological and physical processes as well, without assuming that these laws governing psychological *Gestalten* are of an innate source³. According to the expression of Goethe, quoted by Köhler (1920), “Because the inside is outer” (*Denn was innen, das ist außen*) (p. 173). In that vision, *Gestalten* discovered through psychological research might be generalized and constated even in physical and physiological domains of facts. In his vision, there is a parallel between physical forms (*physische Gestalten*), which occur inside nervous system, and the forms of perceptive phenomena (*Gestalten der phänomenalen Wahrnehmung*). Therefore, after attributing a universal range for *Gestalten*, and asserting its existence in nature, the authors of Gestalt Psychology left aside the centrality of pure description of the phenomenal datum. They proceed to the task of explaining these organized structures that may be found in nervous system functioning, assuming the assumption that these structures are primary and external manifestations of the secondary occurrences in the phenomenal field. They accomplish it by employing not only “functional concepts”, but also by referring to a universally explicative theoretical framework of physics. Ultimately, Gestalt Psychology becomes a kind of physicalism in which psychological concepts should be validated by strictly physical concepts (Guillaume, 1937, pp. 24-25).

Despite the connections between Gestalt Psychology and modern psychology’s naturalistic program, Gurwitsch’s adoption of its tenets should not be viewed as a continuation of its naturalistic assumptions. As the author argues, a distinction must be made between a “descriptive” and a “explanatory phase” of psychological theories, with only the descriptive dimensions and characteristics of theoretical principles and empirical analyses being of paramount importance for him and phenomenological research. Although the psychologist, when discussing mental phenomena, is primarily interested in how to explain them, he is equally concerned with sense and meaning. Certainly, this does not apply to all psychological theories and research; rather, it only applies to those in which “the phenomenal data play an essential role and are given proper emphasis” (Gurwitsch, 2009d, p. xxii). Only then could they be integrated “into the context of phenomenology” and contribute “towards advancing phenomenological understanding” (Gurwitsch, 2009d, p. xxii). Psychological theories are therefore framed as “tools” rather than “objects” of Gurwitsch’s studies. As a result, the descriptive analyses of Gestalt Psychology are still of great relevance for the development of phenomenological investigations. However, its physiological and physical explanations, such as the isomorphism thesis (Koffka, 1936, p. 56 ff.; Guillaume, 1937, p. 23-25 ff.), must be set aside. The same holds to any other naturalistic assumption of Gestalt Theory.

Following this reasoning, Gurwitsch (2009a) highlights the importance of following Gestalt Theory in strictly epistemological dimensions, which point of departure could be found in the dismissal of the constancy hypothesis (*Konstanzannahme*). According to him, this hypothesis was maintained by most of all modern psychology and philosophy, from empiricism to production theory of the Graz School of Gestalt Psychology (Gurwitsch, 2009a; 2009d; Smith, 1988). Its premise is that every perceptual phenomenon must be in strict accordance with objective stimuli. The perceptual data are thought to be a bundle of single sensations that are considered atomistically (Gurwitsch, 2009a; 2009f; Toccafondi, 2002). Also, anomalous cases for this correspondence must be explained by an extraneous psychic function or factor, like unnoticed sensations, errors of judgement and the like. The main consequence of this formulation is that every perceptual process is assumed to be split into two distinct layers: on the one hand, the bare impressions, devoid of form and meaning, and, on the other, intellectual or mental functions that informs all impressions and give them their meaning. Every kind of perceptual *Gestalt* should be explained, from this perspective, as a product from the contribution of the powers of the mind – be it in a conscious or unconscious form – and as supposing the task division between sensibility and intellect. Nevertheless, as Koffka, Köhler and Wertheimer have shown, the majority of perceptual field manifestations does not strictly correspond to physical stimuli; rather, they exhibit a proper and then autonomous form of organization that is independent of any other factors than perception itself. Consequently, the key point for Berlin School of Gestalt Psychology is that the constancy hypothesis and the resulting two-layer theory of perception are incorrect. In this respect, Toccafondi (2002) correctly argues that this places this School at odds with the Brentano School’s legacy, which can be seen in the writings of Meinong, Ehrenfels, Benussi, and even Husserl.

For Gurwitsch, the dismissal of constancy hypothesis entails the disclosure of the domain of pure consciousness for an analytical and strictly descriptive approach. Following Gestalt Theory in this epistemological dimension entails suspending or bracketing not only the world of stimuli (of constancy hypothesis), but also the world of transcendent things. In short, the dismissal of constancy hypothesis might be compared with phenomenological reduction. Both have the same function in that they take the psychic in a purely descriptive manner, regardless of any theoretical and *ad hoc* constructs (Gurwitsch, 2009a, p. 214). However, the rejection of the constancy hypothesis by Gestalt Theory does not imply a complete refusal of any interpretation of the correlation between stimuli and sensory experience, or of the assumption about psychology as an empirical and positive discipline that emulates physics. Gestalt Psychology, at the stage of development it has achieved, should replace classical conceptions about the aforementioned correlation without changing the status of psychology in the system of sciences (Gurwitsch, 2009a; 2009c; 2009e).

³ Cf. Toccafondi (2002, p. 203): “[...] for Köhler physical and physiological Gestalten, on one hand, and phenomenal Gestalten on the other follow the same laws. As a matter of fact, it is precisely because of this conviction that he does not talk of innate hereditary structures: more properly, it is the spontaneous tendency of each natural system (physical, organic, perceptive) to take on the most regular and most stable possible configuration.”



In fact, such a research program does not abandon the ideal of positive science and continues to express psychological problems in physical language, although in relation to a new model of physics, namely quantum physics (Gurwitsch, 2009c). Nonetheless, Gestalt Psychology has a broader epistemological meaning that is particularly relevant for phenomenology. For Gurwitsch, it is the descriptive component, and not its other cognitive tasks and values, that is crucial for the investigation of the phenomenological region conceived as the pure consciousness. This is how he works with an innovative “psychological way”⁴ through phenomenological realm of investigations. And is through this way that the author tries to respond to transcendental problems and to formulate a new interpretation about of the unity of perception and of consciousness.

Transcendental Problems Via the Lenses of Gestalt Theory

Toccafondi (2002) is correct in pointing out that the referred criticism implies a schism between Gestalt Psychology and Husserl’s phenomenology, insofar as Husserl (1984) defended, particularly in his fifth *Logical Investigation*, the conception that perception is constituted by amorphous sensations and by a subjective act of meaning giving, i.e., an act of interpretation. On the one hand, there is a one-level perception theory according to which the stimulus is already structured, meaningful, and not a chaotic mass of sensations; and, on the other hand, there is a two-level theory of perception that depends on the subject as the structuring agent for stimuli (sensations). However, she ignores the fact that the assumption of a complementarity between phenomenology and Gestalt Psychology is not based on the confluence of their theory of perception (of which Gurwitsch assumes a critical stance), but on the mutual work on the descriptive sphere of research (albeit, as we have seen, a critical stance in regard of the explicative tendencies of Gestalt Psychology is also presupposed). What Gurwitsch demonstrates is that Gestalt Psychology and phenomenology share the task of best describing first person experience, and that the two must be examined and confronted with a critical approach to this same experience as it is regarded at face value. Starting from this unorthodox stance, he is also capable of refining Gestalt Theory in transcendental terms, as we shall see.

According to Guillaume (1937), Gestalt Psychology could be interpreted as reinstating the *a priori* synthesis of the intellect upon the manifold of sensibility in the measure as it asserts that this manifold is already structured devoid of the agency of any homunculus⁵. This is precisely the argument advanced by Gurwitsch. For his theory, the dismissal of the constancy hypothesis reconfigures the Transcendental Deduction and places Gestalt Psychology in relation with transcendental philosophy and problems. He even says of the dismissal of constancy hypothesis as “a fragmentary and incomplete phenomenological reduction” (Gurwitsch, 2009f, p. 143), whereas its point of departure is eminently psychological and the golden road for the access to the universal realm of absolute consciousness is paved by transcendental reduction. Therefore, transcendental reduction is the privileged methodological procedure for the rigorous analyses conducted by phenomenology aiming at the description of noetic-noematic correlations and structures, which responds to the transcendental problems about the possibility of objective knowledge of the world. For this reason, the epistemological dimensions of Gestalt Psychology must be radicalized and generalized in accordance with the radicality and universality of phenomenological reduction as Husserl had conceived it. Accordingly, the sort of transcendentalism defended by Gurwitsch is closer to Husserl than to Kant, even though the structure of his questions may be evocative of the *Critique* (Kant, 1996).

Based on what has been discussed thus far, we would like to emphasize the possibility of establishing a connection between Transcendental Deduction and Aron Gurwitsch’s essay, “*Phenomenology of thematics and of the pure ego*” (2009a), which emphasizes the importance of Kant for understanding contemporary efforts in the study of perceptual organization. In his essay, Gurwitsch presents this connection, even in a summary form, in saying that Gestalt Theory refers to the Kantian problem of the “unity in the multiplicity” (Gurwitsch, 2009a, p. 215), changing it and putting it in a new theoretical framework. Through Gestalt Theory, the author introduces the notion of “autochthonous organizational forms and processes” of perception, modifying Husserl’s phenomenological theory of perception. But what is most important here is that this notion is not just connected only with Husserlian phenomenology: there is also a similarity to Kant’s Transcendental Deduction in that the proposition is of a new interpretation of the problem of the unity of manifold, thereby substituting the “power of the synthesis of understanding” by the immanent perceptual organization. Accordingly, Gurwitsch uses Gestalt Psychology’s core arguments to revise phenomenological theory of knowledge and perception through Kantian lens, namely in the definition of its fundamental problems as (1) the problem of the unity of perception in its objective feature, and (2) the problem of the unity of consciousness in its subjective structure. Or, differently stated, he advances a sound revision on the presuppositions about perception theory and, in final analysis, states a new conception of its structure which additionally affects phenomenological noetic-noematic analysis and theory of knowledge.

After departing from the radicalization of Gestalt Psychology’s incipient phenomenological reduction, the question of how transcendental and constitutive problems are posed in relation to a psychological appro-

⁴ For the idea of a “psychological way” to reduction, see Husserl (1976b).

⁵ Of course, here we must also add and be aware that for Berlin School theorists Gestalt Psychology does not assert a Kantian *a priori* in a psychological form (see Toccafondi, 2002, p. 202). That is not the point here. The point is that their research could be interpreted in transcendental lenses and have transcendental implications, *malgré lui*.



ach remains. Gurwitsch believes that Gestalt Psychology, when properly developed, demonstrates a connection with transcendental issues, i.e., the question of how the world and its objects have meaning. As previously stated, this problem emerges for Kant (1996) as the question of the possibility of objective knowledge. For the German philosopher, the question is how sensible intuition can provide appropriate knowledge of the objective world and its forms. For him, the resource must be found in understanding and its productive synthetical function over the chaotic stuff of mere sensibility. Gurwitsch (2009a) retains the Kantian problem of the “unity of the manifold” to argue that transcendental questions are also presented for Gestalt Psychology, albeit in a modified perspective. Because, whereas Hume’s doctrine of unorganized and chaotic nature of senses is the basis for Kant’s theory of knowledge, the starting point for Gestalt Psychology must be, on the contrary, the “original orderedness, structuredness, and organization of the immediately given, the primal phenomenological material” (Gurwitsch, 2009a, p. 215). Kant’s “activistic and functionalistic” conception of consciousness (Gurwitsch, 2009b, p. 171) should be replaced by one founded on the concept of intentionality.

Thus, if phenomenologically understood, Gestalt Psychology might be seen as altering the objective aspect of Transcendental Deduction concerning the unity of sensible intuition. As a result, rather than being discarded, the transcendental principle is revised: the sensible manifold must be interpreted, then, as a material with autochthonous and immediate organization, i.e., as Gestalt. The concepts of deduction of categories (or of its “application” from understanding on sensibility) and of “synthetic unity of multiplicity” are, thus, substituted by the notions of Gestalt laws and of “Gestalt nexus” (*Gestaltverbindung*) (Gurwitsch, 2009a, p. 244). On the other hand, the notion of a synthesis linked to understanding, or more especially to productive imagination, has no parallel in Gestalt Psychology, since the very assumption of an intellectual activity and production is dropped out⁶. Accordingly, the autochthonous feature of perceptual experience also removes the requirement for any sort of synthesis extraneous to its immanent structure. In other words, there is no room for a dualism between senses and intellect in a theory of perception inspired by assumptions of Gestalt Theory.

At the same time, these suggestions for Gestalt Psychology’s transcendental implications in its descriptive contents may be radicalized even further. To achieve this, the reductive procedure must be (transcendentally) radicalized and confronted with the “phenomenology of reason” developed by Husserl in his *Ideas I* (Husserl, 1976a, §§135 e ss.). The questions concerning the *noema* and the correspondences between, on one hand, the multiplicity of consciousness’ acts and, on the other, the identical transcendent object come to the fore here. The transcendent entity, which had been thrown out of the loop by phenomenological reduction, now returns to the field of phenomenological investigations (Husserl, 1976a, p. 310). Then, the determinations by which the object appears as “truly existing” and from which the dividing line between its truly being and any illusory appearances could be drawn in a phenomenological perspective (Gurwitsch, 2009a, p. 214-215). In order to gain access to these determinations and to being, any judgement about existence, be it predicative or antepredicative, must be put into parenthesis. Accordingly, every being must be assumed as the correlative of consciousness. In a consequent observance of phenomenological methodology, this opens the descriptions of the eidetic structure of noetic-noematic correlations of consciousness and, therefore, the approach to the constitutive laws of objectivities for consciousness (Husserl, 1976a, pp. 311-312). Therefore, a phenomenological viewpoint should be used to address the transcendental question of the unity and identity of objectivity. This begs the issue, according to Gurwitsch (2009a), of how Gestalt theoretical ideas may contribute to this perspective.

For the problem of the unity of perception and identity, Gurwitsch’s concern is to demonstrate how Gestalt Theory entails an entirely new conception. We can argue that the initial step of a Gestalt theoretical development of the concept of perception is the emphasis on its immanent structure. It can be read as a new approach for its unity and identity which is obtained after removing the constancy hypothesis, as an incipient phenomenological reduction, and obtaining the *perceptum qua perceptum* or the “perceptual noema” (Gurwitsch, 2009e, p. 116). That is the main point of his doctoral thesis. In that essay, the author defends that the concept of “*Gestalt*” should replace the concept of sensations or impressions, which supported the classical atomistic theory of consciousness and its derivatives. In this vision, *noema* should be conceived as a totality with its immanent articulation and structure; also, as dwelling in an environment of other actual and possible objects, i.e., in a “context” or “field” of perception, structured in “figure” and “ground”. This interpretation avoids the image of consciousness as an isolated act of mind that presents the feature of being “consciousness of” against a background of hazy and fuzzy sensations or impressions, which are considered as the elements from which perceptions are mind-constructed. By the contrary, this approach should start with the inherently articulated structure (the *Gestalt*). Then, consciousness should be deemed as a structured field, as Gurwitsch writes: “The structure is anchored in the ‘center of gravity’ of *Gestalt* and, so to speak, ‘radiates’ out from that center, while the other constituents are placed within the framework of this structure, but only as *inserted* in it, *not as determining it*” (Gurwitsch, 2009a, p. 211-212).

Therefore, *perceptum* should be conceived as a structured whole without structuring acts. Based on the rejection of sensations as elements of perceptions strictly corresponding to stimuli (constancy hypothesis), Gurwitsch construes his idea according to which the theme – or the nucleus of the *noema* – must present

⁶ Cf. the rejection of the productive theories of the Graz School of Psychology by the Berlin Gestalt theorists. We see it as a good example of how the kind of Gestalt Theory embraced by Gurwitsch is unlike of intellectualistic tendencies in Psychology and Philosophy. Kant’s is just one case of this trend in Modern Philosophy.



an internal structure, or “Gestalt-coherence”, in which every part is always functionally connected with and sustained by the structure of the field, in a “Gestalt connection” (*Gestaltverbindung*) with it (Gurwitsch, 2009a, pp. 224 e ss.). For example, in perceiving that house mentioned by Kant (1996), we do not have the impression of its façade and then construct, by mental acts, the idea of the whole house with its clouded sides and rooms. Instead, every façade has its own indicative reference for the house as a whole, then composing its total configuration, or the total *noema*. Also, the very façade has its own internal structure with its formative and formed constituents. As Gurwitsch (2009a, p. 230) writes, this defines the theme as the “system of its constituents”, or, as he puts later, “the *perceptum as a whole* [...] should be interpreted as a complex unity of meaning” (Gurwitsch, 2010, p. 265). The appearances of phenomena should connect with each other, thus forming a system of appearances which denotes the *noema* as whole. Therefore, parts of the house that are not actually seen are dependent parts of the *perceptum*, thus referring to the object “house” with a sense unity that provides overall perception its proper meaning and reference.

If every component of a perception must exhibit a Gestalt connection, then what Husserl conceived of as *hyletic data* may, in fact, be a dependent part of the *Gestalt* structure of the *noema*; perception must therefore be seen as a system or global composition of dependent and independent parts with its accent and fringes. Noematic sense (*noematische Sinn*) should, therefore, be viewed as a “structured whole” (Gurwitsch, 2009a, p. 284) which does not presuppose a dualism between form and matter. In face of Kantian conception of consciousness, this implies that the distinction between intuition and understanding should be neutralized, and that both the limitation of intuition to space and time, and of understanding to nature laws of physics, should be reconsidered in order to include meaning and sense in the global structure of experience. In doing so, this argument not only outperforms the doctrine of *hylē-morphē* that appears in Husserl’s *Ideas I*, but also the entire traditional conception of intentionality and of *noesis* (or the acts of the mind). Consequently, “*noesis*” should not be seemed as the “organizing and apprehending function turning hyletic data into a vehicle of sense or meaning, a special and specific function to which consciousness owes its character of intentionality” (Gurwitsch, 2009a, p. 284). On the contrary, the term must correspond to “the experienced act of consciousness in its entirety” (Gurwitsch, 1929/2009a, p. 284), which function is to present the noematic sense. Accordingly, considering that the concept of intentionality refers to the noetic-noematic correlation, it should comprehend, at the same time, *noesis* and *noema* conceived through the lens of Gestalt Psychology.

In Gurwitsch’s essay, in addition to the topic of “synthetic unity of manifold”, the concept of “unity of apperception” (i.e., between the unity of the object and of the subject) is addressed. The last problem faced by the author is, precisely, that of the unity of the *I think (Ego)*, or, in phenomenological terms, the constitution of the pure Ego. The rejection of the possibility of a “pure Ego” conceived as an entity that would act and rest behind mental acts is implied by the fact that it cannot be accounted as a phenomenological datum, i.e., directly given by itself, according to the noematic phenomenology adopted in *Phenomenology of thematics and of the pure ego*. In this regard, the author contends that the “unity of consciousness” can only be defined as the “unity of the flow of mental events”, which is nothing more than *my field of consciousness* with its underlying intricately connected connection and structure. As one can see, in light of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Gurwitsch’s essay – and perhaps all his progress – can be better understood in clarity and depth. Thus, his critique of the “pure Ego” applies to the subjective aspect of Transcendental Deduction, namely the doctrine of “pure apperception”, which includes both the unity of consciousness and the awareness of self-identity (the “*I think*”) as required conditions and the roots for the constitution of objective knowledge.

Therefore, Gurwitsch’s non-egological conception of consciousness inverts Kant’s stance by maintaining that unity and coherence of experience do not require Ego unity. The correlation between every singular experience and unity of subjectivity must prefigure the experience of the “Ego”, which should be taken as a contextual reference for each mental state. For Gurwitsch, this is the only form by which the “*I think*” could accompany all my perceptions, what is in clear discordance with Kant (1996). In Gurwitsch’s view, the Ego “is not an additional or secondary theme which never disappears, but always persists through all thematic change” (Gurwitsch, 2009a, p. 310). For him, awareness of the Ego does not accompany consciousness of objects – or, in other terms, acts could only be directed to objects, and Ego, instead of being taken as the subject of acts, is just one more object among them. Hence, ego depends on the same objectifying consciousness that intends and means noematic objects. In this perspective, the ego only could be apprehended in a reflective act towards our own stream of consciousness. Thus, the existence of an Ego always identical to itself, immutable and permanent, as the nucleus of that stream, also opposed to its impermanence, cannot be proven at all. There is not any dualism between the pure Ego and the stream of appearances, but the contrary: they coincide.

In conceiving the Ego in this way, Gurwitsch’s position is close to that of Husserl in the first edition of his *Logical Investigations* (Husserl, 1984), although in contradiction with his *Ideas I* (1976a), where the pure Ego has the status of a “transcendence in immanence”. In Gurwitsch’s non-egological theory, the Ego is not an agent that operates on the stream of consciousness as if it is his field of freedom. By the contrary, the pure Ego is conceived as being identical with the unity of the stream of consciousness. Being his self-presentation connected only with reflection, any perception would only present an impersonal field of appearances before a reflexive glance. Here, the author is in accordance with Sartre (2003) in saying that phenomenological reduction gives to us a field of “a-personal” and “pre-personal” experiences. If we suppose the experience of the



house, we will pass from the subjective form “I’m conscious of this house” to the impersonal form “There is a consciousness of this house”. In saying this, he is positioning against the interpretation according to which the Ego would be the *terminus a quo* of intentionality and defending the statement that it could only be deemed as the *terminus ad quem* of noetic-noematic correlations. In another essay, Gurwitsch (2009g, p. 327) writes explicitly: “the ego in question is that of the grasped, not of the grasping act”.

For Gurwitsch’s non-egological theory, consequently, the subjective transcendental synthesis would have as result the fact that is not the “*I think*” that shapes the mind’s unity, but, on the contrary, the very reference of each experience to the context of lived experiences that surround thematic consciousness. The “*I think*” does not play any function in the described and analyzed structure. Albeit the descriptive differences between each experience, be it a perception, an imagination or a joy, their temporal arrangement as “members” of the temporal chain of the stream must be the same. The concatenation of this chain, as the eidetic law defining phenomenological time, and its entirety (as the mutual remission of every experience) and singularity (as the index of “mine”, or, more precisely, of pertaining to a unique concatenation of lived experiences) are what effectively shape the structure of the “*I think*” and, hence, of consciousness as such. In conclusion, for Gurwitsch, there are only two forms of unity that could be phenomenologically proven. Firstly, it is the consciousness of identity of the object. This unity does not require the correlative unity of consciousness but depends exclusively on intentionality. Additionally, it does not presume the split between appearance and thing-in-itself, as Kant does. Secondly, the unity comes from consciousness’ temporal order. Every act is interconnecting with all others already lived and that compose the stream of lived experiences, be they present or past. Ego therefore cannot be reduced to its momentaneous “now” (*hic*), as it must also refer to the totality of conscious life with its slippery nature. A “pure Ego” is not supposed to unify or synthesize anything in the stream of consciousness. On the contrary, the unity of consciousness as a unity is a necessary condition for the experience of the Ego as an apprehended experience of myself. Furthermore, a unity of consciousness and a sense of personal identity are not necessary for the unity and identity of objects themselves and even for the coherence of the world. As the author writes, “unity of consciousness is not consciousness of unity” (Gurwitsch, 2009a, p. 316). The two sides of Transcendental Deduction go apart for Gurwitsch and are not necessary for each other.

Final Comments

Our main argument was that Gurwitsch’s essay was founded on a rereading of Kant’s Transcendental Deduction via the lenses of Gestalt Theory and phenomenology. In fact, Kant is referenced towards the conclusion of the essay to reassemble his arguments on the identity and unity of perceptual experience. Kant’s idea of Transcendental Deduction is that no objective knowledge could be valid without its reference to pure apperception and its unitary structure. According to him, the unity of intuition must be based on the formal unity of consciousness. On the contrary, for Gurwitsch, these two types of unity of experience are distinct and refer to the problem of object identity and the role of the pure Ego, respectively. Following Gurwitsch, Gestalt Theory allowed for the replacement of the concept of synthesis, which touches on the problem of the unity of perception and consciousness. From this perspective, the subject cannot be seemed anymore as disconnected from the field with which every perception and cognition forms a totality – cannot be deemed in a merely formal perspective. In contrast to Kant’s active and functional synthesis of the intellect and Husserl’s act of meaning giving, Gurwitsch’s is a theory of an autochthonous synthesis of perception, or, as a conclusion, is of a synthesis without any subjective agent (or homunculus), of things that present themselves with meaning – that is what the word *Gestalt* may mean in this context. Other questions concerning the two forms of synthesis in phenomenology, namely passive and active synthesis, are addressed in Gurwitsch (2009b). The author’s attempt establishes Gestalt Theory as the antipode of all intellectualistic and empiricist explanations of perceptual phenomena, demonstrating its position in philosophy and psychology history.

At the same time, Gurwitsch’s interpretation of Gestalt Theory, like that of phenomenology, cannot be simply viewed as orthodoxy. In terms of Gestalt Psychology and phenomenology, his interpretation is not of continuity. He was exploring their mutual fecundity and bringing their fields together in a new way through a rigorous examination of first-person perspective and transcendental problems. In fact, Gurwitsch interprets and applies Gestalt Psychology beyond its original epistemological and methodological premises and explicitly poses transcendental problems and questions to its framework. In addition, in his development of phenomenological reduction as partial (starting from the rejection of constancy hypothesis), he paved the way for consistently using instances from empirical sciences as clear exemplars for philosophical eidetic inquiry. In fact, there is a common ground between transcendental phenomenology and empirical psychology that can be approached by specific logical and methodological procedures. For this reason, his work could be undoubtedly coined as interdisciplinary. With that, Gurwitsch may have established a new paradigm for phenomenological research. This stance is defined by the endeavor for the prevalence of things in themselves, showing their inner articulation and intricate complexity without the appeal for any extraneous factors or presumptions, as well as the critique of any constructs that go beyond the boundaries of pure description and risk reifying that which is directly given.



However, there is another point that should be brought up to our attention. Gurwitsch's approach to perception and cognition correspondingly raises new transcendental problems, which appear to be unresolved by the author himself. Can Gestalt principles account for the intuition of numbers, logical and arithmetical relations, and of being and language, as Husserl would say based on his *Logical Investigations*? This might be why Husserl sees Gestalt Psychology as a form of sensualism in his later works (cf. Husserl, 1986). His defense of a meaning giving act of consciousness is attached to his vision of how a new kind of synthesis – not sensible – is required for this kind of objects and for abstract entities in general. Is not this what Husserl himself makes notice in his passage from *Philosophy of Arithmetic* to *Logical Investigations*? Some of Gurwitsch's subsequent studies, such as his approach to Goldstein's works, are similarly influenced by these issues and questions. According to him (Gurwitsch, 2009d, pp. 53 e ss.; 2009f, pp. 142 e ss.), Berlin School of Gestalt Psychology does not exhaust the philosophical and phenomenological possibilities on the unity and identity of objectivity. Instead, he assumes that this psychological theory requires new developments concerning categorial unities and conceptual thinking (Guillaume, 1937, p. 213 s.; Gurwitsch, 2009c), for example. More must be done in this area, particularly in light of the expanding literature on embodied cognition and other areas of cognitive sciences.

We can conclude by saying that the gap noticed by Toccafondi (2002) between phenomenology and Gestalt Psychology, then the supposed lack of soundness in Merleau-Ponty's argument for bridging them, is correctly filled by the arguments developed by Gurwitsch. Although fundamental for Merleau-Ponty's *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Merleau-Ponty, 1996), these arguments are not however clearly and explicitly referred by the French phenomenologist⁷. Also in this regard, we may infer that Gurwitsch is less a representant of *Gestaltism*, as Spiegelberg (1972) suggests, than an original phenomenologist with particular interest in the development of sciences. This reinforces the interpretation of his work as pushing forward the mutual enlightenment between science and philosophy. We believe that it is only in this manner that the contemporary reader of Gurwitsch may make the most of his work and analyses. This, certainly, does not exempt Gurwitsch's viewpoint from a critique about the limits and constraints of its methodology and reasoning, which may be informed by a disguised case of rationalism, as Merleau-Ponty (2001) argues.

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⁷ We recommend reading Pintos (2005) for a more in-depth study of this subject.



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