

Daniele Nuccilli

The Philosophy of Hi/stories of Wilhelm Schapp

From Phenomenology to Narrative
Hermeneutics

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*To family and kinship, to Angela, my love,
and to Samuele, whose story has just begun.*

Preface

This monograph marks the culmination of a long journey that began almost a decade ago with the publication of *Reti di storie*, the first Italian edition of *In Geschichten verstrickt*. Since then, the path has been shaped by conferences, publications, collaborations, and, above all, by meaningful encounters and fruitful exchanges. Each of these moments has been special in its own way; yet some have proven decisive. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Daniele De Santis for his steadfast support and invaluable advice over the years. If Wilhelm Schapp can today also be internationally appreciated for his contribution to early phenomenology, much of the credit is due to him. I am also deeply grateful to Martin Leiner and Francesco Ferrari, whose encouragement and support made it possible for this project to take shape, and through whom I came to grasp the scope of Schapp's thought within socio-political studies and reconciliation research during my time at the Jena Center for Reconciliation Studies. A special word of thanks is also owed to Markus Pohlmeier, who has been a constant interlocutor and whose theoretical acumen has profoundly influenced this work. The same can be said of Gianfranco Pecchinenda, to whom, beyond personal inspiration, we owe the first genuine sociological engagement with Schapp's thought in Italy, as well as the impetus for the Italian translation of the *Beiträge zur Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmung*. In this regard, I am especially grateful to Jan Schapp for granting access to and guiding me through the vast unpublished material of his father. I will never forget the afternoons spent in his home in Aurich, filled with stories, but above all with an intense and rewarding philosophical exchange. I am likewise deeply indebted to a number of colleagues and friends who have accompanied me over the years: Federica Buongiorno, for the many fruitful and wide-ranging collaborations; Witold Plotka, Emiliano Trizio, Jaroslava Vydrova, Francesca De Vecchi, Paolo Di Lucia, Adolfo Fattori, Mino Degli Atti, Mauro Senatore, Alexis Gros, Michela Summa, Florian Bruckmann, Elin Fredsted, Dagmar Kusa, and Jon Stewart for the many stimulating conversations that have nourished and sustained this work. No less important have been the days and evenings of recent years spent discussing philosophy and much else with Leonardo Franchi, Emanuele Curcio, Aris Tsoullos, and Marco Stucchi. A final thought is due to Ferdinand Fellmann, whose incisive and too often underestimated

phenomenological insight first introduced me to some of the central concerns of contemporary thought, and whose time of collaboration, however brief, proved deeply formative.

Dresden, Germany

Daniele Nuccilli

Competing Interests The author has no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this manuscript.

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About the Author

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Part I

Introduction

Chapter 1

Sketches from a Philosophical Biography



Abstract Although Wilhelm Schapp remains a largely understudied and insufficiently recognized figure within twentieth-century philosophy, from the early stages of his academic career he found himself at the crossroads of several of the most influential intellectual movements shaping the cultural landscape of early twentieth-century Europe: the historicism of Dilthey, the neo-Kantianism of Rickert, and the phenomenology of Husserl, Pfänder, and Reinach, not to mention such prominent figures as Simmel, Theodor Lipps, and Scheler. His philosophy emerged from this rich and intricate constellation of ideas, charting an original path aimed at identifying new conceptual tools to address what was perceived as a universal crisis of knowledge, set against the backdrop of profound sociopolitical upheavals—those of the years preceding the First World War, the interwar period, the Second World War, and the far-reaching crisis that followed in its wake. His doctoral dissertation, defended under Husserl’s supervision in 1909 and published the following year under the title *Beiträge zur Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmung*, remains a classic of early phenomenology. The two volumes that make up *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht* remain foundational texts for the phenomenology of law and open the way to a historical-hermeneutical understanding of several fundamental elements of contemporary jurisprudence. Moreover, the three volumes that comprise his philosophy of hi/stories represent a pivotal moment in the narrative turn of the twentieth century, and even today Schapp’s theory of the entanglement of human beings in hi/stories continues to be examined and applied across various fields of the human sciences.

Keywords Early phenomenology · Edmund Husserl · Psychologism · Historicism · Wilhelm Schapp · Göttingen circle

Although Wilhelm Schapp remains a largely understudied and insufficiently recognized figure within twentieth-century philosophy, from the early stages of his academic career he found himself at the crossroads of several of the most influential

This first chapter of the introduction represents a revised and expanded version of the editors’ introduction to *The Philosophy of Wilhelm Schapp*, published by Bloomsbury Academic in 2025. See De Santis and Nuccilli (2025, pp. 1–8).

intellectual movements shaping the cultural landscape of early twentieth-century Europe: the historicism of Dilthey, the neo-Kantianism of Rickert, and the phenomenology of Husserl, Pfänder, and Reinach, not to mention such prominent figures as Simmel, Theodor Lipps, and Scheler. His philosophy emerged from this rich and intricate constellation of ideas, charting an original path aimed at identifying new conceptual tools to address what was perceived as a universal crisis of knowledge, set against the backdrop of profound sociopolitical upheavals—those of the years preceding the First World War, the interwar period, the Second World War, and the far-reaching crisis that followed in its wake. His doctoral dissertation, defended under Husserl’s supervision in 1909 and published the following year under the title *Beiträge zur Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmung*,¹ remains a classic of early phenomenology. The two volumes that make up *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht*² remain foundational texts for the phenomenology of law and open the way to a historical-hermeneutical understanding of several fundamental elements of contemporary jurisprudence. Moreover, the three volumes that comprise his philosophy of hi/stories³ represent a pivotal moment in the narrative turn of the twentieth century, and even today Schapp’s theory of the entanglement of human beings in hi/stories continues to be examined and applied across various fields of the human sciences.

In view of the complexity of his intellectual development and the range of influences that shaped it, it is appropriate here to offer a brief sketch of the main stages of his biography and philosophy. Heir to a family of East Frisian boatmen, ship-owners, and merchants, after receiving his diploma from the Gymnasium in Wilhelmshaven during Easter 1902, at the age of 17 he went to Freiburg im Breisgau. Beginning in the Winter Semester of 1902/1903, he studied philosophy and law⁴ and attended lectures by Rickert and Cohn, among others. Thanks to Rickert, he became familiar with Hegel’s philosophy of history and developed a fascination with Kant’s work, which he admits to having studied in such depth that he was able to memorize parts of the three critiques.⁵ After three semesters, he moved to Berlin, where he attended lectures by Dilthey, Simmel, Schmoller, Kohler, and Dernburg.⁶ It was at Dilthey’s house in 1904 that he had his first encounter with Husserl’s phenomenology. Dilthey understood from the very beginning the “epochal” importance that the recently released (1900–1901) two-volume work (the *Logical Investigations*) would have in the philosophical landscape of Germany at the time.⁷ The admiration that seeped from the Wiesbaden philosopher’s lectures stimulated Schapp. About to

¹ Schapp (2013).

² Schapp (1930, 1932).

³ Schapp (2009, 2012, 2015). Throughout the present work, Schapp’s *Geschichte* will be rendered as “hi/story” in order to honor his understanding of the intimate relation of “history” and “story.” For a more detailed discussion of the problem from a semantic point of view, see Nuccilli (2023).

⁴ See Schapp (1964, p. 54).

⁵ See Schapp (2015, p. 12).

⁶ See Schapp (1964, p. 54).

⁷ In a meeting of the *Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften* on March 2, 1905, Dilthey publicly expressed his esteem for Husserl and called the *Logical Investigations* literally *epochemachenden* (Dilthey, 1905, p. 329).

pass his first bar exam at the Court of Appeals in Berlin and move to the neighborhood of Göttingen for his practicum, he got in touch with Husserl to plan the continuation of his philosophical studies.

It is crucial to highlight that these formative years had a profound impact on Schapp's intellectual development, shaping a unique hermeneutical perspective that would inform both his reception of phenomenology and his subsequent critical reworking of it. In this regard, two aspects of the thought of Rickert and Dilthey would prove decisive for the mediation within Schapp's philosophy of hi/stories, between the logical a priori motives of Husserl's early phenomenology and the historicist-hermeneutical orientations of German historicism.⁸ The first aspect is related to Dilthey. In the 1900 work *Die Entstehung der Hermeneutik*, the latter challenges some of the assumptions of his own earlier works. His foundation of the sciences of spirit in the internal experience of the individual (*Erlebnis*), a recurring theme of his writings from the last two decades of the nineteenth century, gives way to an intersubjective view of "understanding" (*Verstehen*) mediated by a symbolic component, fundamentally related not only to linguistic expressions, but also to mimic expressions.⁹ This first attempt to shift from a psychological-descriptive and ego-centered view to a more purely hermeneutical one in Diltheyan historicist reflection directly merges with the recognition and theorization of an indissoluble link between history and individual life, and places the moment of understanding, especially historical understanding, at the center of his philosophical reformulation of the nexus between individuality and otherness, self, and world.¹⁰ The theoretical path briefly described, and the wide span given to the analysis of the link between individual psychic experience and the history of other individual and collective subjects in the past, cannot but be taken into consideration if one is to try to grasp the genesis and thematic background against which the concepts of entanglement (*Verstrickung*) and co-entanglement (*Mitverstrickung*) stand in Schapp's philosophy of hi/stories.¹¹ The second aspect is related to Rickert, and in particular, to the critique of "concept formation" in the natural sciences that he presents in *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung* (1896). Within his argument concerning how universality should be understood in the historical sciences as opposed to the natural sciences, Rickert identifies a definition of the concept of species (*Gattung*) as a "concrete multiplicity of individuals" and then specifies that "something that is part of the concrete species is not to be considered simply as an exemplification of the concept of species."¹² This Rickertian definition of the concept of species, which does not hinge on an ontological difference between the general and the particular but simply on a greater extension in numerical terms of a wholly historical and material reality, can be regarded, for all intents and purposes, as the

⁸ See Noack (1962, pp. 213–226).

⁹ See Dilthey (1996, p. 235ff.).

¹⁰ See Cristin (1999, pp. 23–24) and Nuccilli (2018, p. 32ff.).

¹¹ See Nuccilli (2018, p. 23).

¹² Rickert (1896, p. 394). Throughout the present work, published English translations will be cited where possible; all other translations are my own.

forerunner of Schapp's critique of the phenomenological concept of species. This aspect represents a fundamental moment in the development of this critique, because since the *Beiträge*, the concept of hi/story is regarded as an indispensable element for the understanding of things in their individuality.

Schapp moved to Göttingen for the Winter Semester of 1905/1906 and continued working as a lawyer while attending courses by Husserl, Müller, and Cohn. It is, however, the study of the *Logical Investigations* that catalyzes all his energies in those years, and in particular, the phenomenological method proposed therein.¹³ The phenomenological method was slowly drawing various scholars from Germany and the rest of Europe to gather around the figure of Husserl. Schapp's years in Göttingen were also the rising years of the phenomenological movement.¹⁴ In 1905, the arrival of Reinach and Daubert inaugurated an actual pilgrimage to Göttingen by some of the Munich scholars philosophically formed by Theodor Lipps; this is the famous "invasion from Munich."¹⁵ These Munich scholars came to Husserl's phenomenology, often criticizing the philosophical principles of their own training with Lipps, who was one of the leading exponents of psychologism at the time. The invasion culminated in 1907 with the arrival of Conrad and von Hildebrand and the foundation, by Conrad himself, together with von Sybel, of the *Philosophische Gesellschaft Göttingen*.¹⁶ This was the very beginning of the Göttingen Circle, of which Schapp was one of the founding members.¹⁷

It was within the *Philosophische Gesellschaft Göttingen* that Schapp matured and developed the phenomenological assumptions that would flow into his doctoral dissertation. In this dense period of encounters, the figures of reference for Schapp became Reinach and Conrad, who—like Daubert and Pfänder—had already been students of Lipps in Munich. All of them, in different ways, were taking a critical distance from the new direction of Husserl's phenomenology. The typical feature of the encounter between Husserl's early students in Göttingen, including Schapp, and Husserl's followers in Lipps's circle in Munich, is a different attitude toward phenomenology. Indeed, the Munich group was, on the one hand, less inclined to accept Husserl's theoretical proposal *in toto* and uncritically: on the other hand, it was strongly interested in the detection of proto-phenomenological roots in the history of philosophy, especially in Plato's philosophy. As Schapp attests, "their central focus was the Platonic theory of *methexis* (the theory of participation in concepts)"—"they no longer believed in sensation as a constituent of perception, and explained any statements claiming this as construction; however, they still believed in acts and psychology (the latter had not yet been placed in doubt)."¹⁸ In this open debate on several fronts, Reinach must have played a fundamental role. At the time, he was not

¹³ Schapp (2025, p. 234f.).

¹⁴ See Schuhmann (1977, p. 74) and Spiegelberg (1994, p. 167).

¹⁵ Schapp (2025, p. 240).

¹⁶ See Schuhmann (1977, p. 103).

¹⁷ See Conrad (2024, p. 111).

¹⁸ Schapp (2025, p. 234).

only establishing himself as an excellent teacher and a figure of reference for the first phenomenologists,¹⁹ but was also developing his own idea of phenomenology, often inspired by Plato. Both Schapp in the *Beiträge*²⁰ and Reinach later in his lecture *Über Phänomenologie*²¹ identify the Athenian philosopher as the one who first shifted philosophical attention from the discursive-linguistic sphere of Socratic research to the visual-intuitive one of the doctrine of ideas.²² Within this persistent reference to the figure of Plato, a strong interest in issues related to perception began to emerge for Schapp, an interest that would be consolidated in the nine months Schapp spent in Munich between 1907 and 1908. During those months he not only had fruitful exchanges with Pfänder and Daubert,²³ but also had the opportunity to attend the lectures by Geiger, Lipps, and Stumpf. While Pfänder's thought would be influential with regard to the acquisition of the phenomenological method, Schapp's original and innovative position concerning the occurrence of reality in the perceptual realm would benefit from the assimilation of some principles of Lipps's aesthetics. Indeed, from the Lippsian understanding of the perception of the external world, Schapp seems to inherit an interest in the materiality of things just as they manifest in everyday life, especially concerning human practical activities.²⁴

The thematic lines briefly sketched above characterize Schapp's formative philosophical period, the "academic" one. This formative period ended with the defense of his doctoral dissertation on June 16, 1909. Despite the immediate response to the publication of the *Beiträge*, Schapp decided to devote himself to the practice of law, for which he had qualified a few months after the dissertation was written, and thus he moved to Aurich, his hometown, where he started his own private law practice with some success.²⁵ From that moment on, his attendance at the activities of the early phenomenological circles became increasingly sporadic and occasional, even though he maintained a prolific correspondence with other phenomenologists of the time. In fact, his philosophical production had a long break until the publication in 1930 of the first volume of *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht*, which was followed by the second volume in 1932. Even though, as already mentioned, these two volumes follow in the footsteps of Reinach's phenomenology of law, they also offer an innovative phenomenological interpretation of foundational legal concepts such as contract and property, thereby paving the way for a hermeneutical-historicist approach to value theory. They were indeed intended initially to compose, together with *Zur Metaphysik des Muttertums* (almost ready in 1937, but released

¹⁹ Ingarden (1992, pp. 42–43).

²⁰ See Schapp (2013, pp. 7–8).

²¹ See Reinach (1969, p. 198).

²² See De Santis (2014, pp. 28–35).

²³ See Schapp (2025, pp. 234–235).

²⁴ In his *Ästhetik*, Lipps defines the individual's projecting of the will into the working of a thing and the subsequent recognition of aspects of the subject in the thing as the "character of the thing" itself (see Lipps, 1903, p. 201). See also Schapp (2013, p. 121ff.), where the very idea of a character of the thing plays a crucial role.

²⁵ See Joisten (2016, pp. 365–366).

posthumously in 1965), a trilogy devoted to “a new phenomenology of values.”²⁶ Although centered on entirely independent themes, these three texts set the stage for the turning point that was to take place in the final and most well-known phase of Schapp’s thought: the so-called philosophy of hi/stories. Overall, the 1930s passed peacefully for Schapp despite the political upheaval brought about by the rise of National Socialism in Germany and the gathering winds of war. Until 1939, he was active as a notary, mainly in the field of tax law, with no close involvement with the government. In 1940, after the outbreak of the Second World War, he was placed in the Civil Service Reserve of the Army High Command to serve as a judge in the Army Tribunal. He would not be called to serve until toward the end of the war in 1945, but was then immediately discharged because he fell ill with typhus.²⁷ Toward the end of 1945, Schapp rekindled his interest in philosophy and resumed reading some of the central writings of the phenomenological movement. By the end of the decade, these readings led to new reflections, which formed the basis for a series of private meetings organized in his home office with a philosophical association, which he himself had founded; its members debated the major themes of early phenomenology from a new perspective.²⁸ Hermann Lübke also attended these meetings with some regularity, and on a couple of occasions in 1954, Odo Marquard attended as well. At the time, both were part of Ritter’s school at the University of Münster.²⁹ In the first meetings, Schapp proposed to start afresh from the reading of his *Beiträge* in order to inaugurate a new philosophical beginning, made necessary by the devastating recent events of the Second World War.³⁰ The reworking of the meeting material provided the groundwork for his “philosophy of hi/stories,” a trilogy of works—*In Geschichten verstrickt. Zum Sein von Mensch und Ding* (1953); *Philosophie der Geschichten* (1959); and *Metaphysik der Naturwissenschaft* (1965)—in which he offers a new hermeneutical-ontological perspective on human being and on things by adopting a critical stance toward phenomenology through his theory of entanglement in hi/stories.

²⁶ During a private conversation that took place in Aurich on September 4th, 2021, Jan Schapp, the son of Wilhelm Schapp, explained to me that this trilogy was conceived by his father as “*eine Phänomenologie der Werte, der Schöpfung und der Liebe*” (a phenomenology of values, creation, and love).

²⁷ See Joisten (2016, p. 368).

²⁸ See Schapp, J. (2004, p. 18).

²⁹ See Marquard (2004, p. 45).

³⁰ See Schapp, J. (2004, pp. 16–17).

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Chapter 2

State of the Art: The Reception History and the Contemporary Landscape of Research on Wilhelm Schapp's Thought



Abstract A comprehensive view of the reception of Wilhelm Schapp's philosophy reveals a marked imbalance in the secondary literature. While the philosophy of hi/stories has been widely explored, especially within narrative-theoretical and interdisciplinary contexts, Schapp's early phenomenological work has received comparatively little attention. Consideration of both historical and contemporary scholarship brings into focus several areas of neglect, above all the lack of a systematic engagement with his phenomenology of perception and its connection to his later thought. Against this background, the need emerges for a more unified interpretation of Schapp's philosophy, one capable of integrating its phenomenological and narrative dimensions within a coherent narrative-hermeneutical framework.

Keywords Reception history · Phenomenological Platonism · Theory of perception · Narrative theory · Early phenomenology · Social ontology

In the landscape of the secondary literature, Schapp's name is immediately associated with the philosophy of hi/stories. This is due partly to editorial contingencies and partly to the chronological distance separating his phenomenological apprenticeship between 1905 and 1910 from the publication of *In Geschichten verstrickt* in 1953. A further factor concerns the difficulty with which one usually approaches phenomenological writings produced in the wake of the *Logical Investigations*, writings that at first glance often appear to add little that is genuinely new to the work of the master and are therefore frequently regarded as little more than commentaries or marginal elaborations. For this reason, such writings tend not to be investigated outside of the specific movement in which they emerged. In Schapp's case, this situation gives rise to a paradox: a relatively rich presence of references in narratological studies is not matched by any even remotely comparable interest within phenomenology. It should be noted, however, that the *Beiträge* themselves and their history of effects go well beyond the mere dissemination of the phenomenological method, and have in fact influenced other traditions of thought as well, even if not always in an evident manner. As Orringer clearly shows, for example, one subterranean trace of *Beiträge* is its influence on early twentieth-century ale-theological theories, that is, those theories that understand the unfolding of truth as

a revelation. A clear testimony to this can be found in the way in which the theory of truth articulated in the *Beiträge* influences, both individually and reciprocally, the theories of truth in Ortega y Gasset and Heidegger.¹ Another trace of the influence of Schapp as a phenomenologist can be found in those theories that approach the problem of perception in a manner partly akin to, yet not fully coincident with, the phenomenological method. In this sense, references to the *Beiträge* can be found in Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms, where, as Martell clearly shows, Cassirer draws on Schapp's own analyses to criticize Husserl's distinction between *hylē* and *morphē*.² The same argument, as I have shown elsewhere,³ is taken up by Blaustein (one of Husserl's many students associated with the Lvov-Warsaw school) in support of his psychologically descriptive interpretation of the phenomenological method.⁴ With regard to the problem of perception, and of color in particular, Schapp also influenced the thought of one of the leading figures of Gestalt psychology: David Katz.⁵ It is therefore no coincidence that Smith characterizes the reflections on the characteristics of secondary qualities found in the first section of the *Beiträge* as distinctly Gestaltist in orientation.⁶ A final indicator in the history of the work's effects, perhaps the most decisive one, is the almost initiatory role that the *Beiträge* play in the history of phenomenological Platonism.⁷ Their investigations on the role of the idea within perception remain a crucial point of reference for three canonical texts within phenomenological Platonism: Jean Hering's *Bemerkungen über das Wesen, die Wesenheit und die Idee*;⁸ Ingarden's *Essentiale Fragen. Ein Beitrag zum Wesensproblem*;⁹ and Spiegelberg's *Über das Wesen der Idee. Eine ontologische Untersuchung*.¹⁰ (All three texts were published in the *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* in 1921, 1925, and 1930, respectively.) Finally, with regard to contemporary scholarship, while it is true that in recent years a number of studies have addressed Schapp's phenomenology of perception and have begun to

¹ See Orringer (1977).

² See Cassirer (1957, p. 125ff.) and Martell (2015, p. 414ff.).

³ Nuccilli (2025b).

⁴ On this topic, see Plotka (2023, 2024). To understand the diffusion and reception of the *Beiträge* within the Lvov-Warsaw school, one can read what Ingarden wrote to Twardowski in a letter dated October 30, 1919: "I'm trying to expand the time placed at my disposition (2 hours for one class!) to the point that I can go down once a week with the boys and discuss certain issues with them on the basis of reading W. Schapp's book *Beiträge zur Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmung*. This has the advantage of being a serious contribution, while on the other hand it's very good for introducing the student to the method of psychological, i.e., cognitive, analysis." See Ingarden Digital Archive: <https://ingarden.archive.uj.edu.pl/en/archiwum/letter-to-kazimierz-twardowski-written-31-10-1919/>

⁵ See Katz (1925, p. 58f.); see also Johnson (2018, p. 172ff.).

⁶ See Smith (1996, p. 247f.).

⁷ See the introduction to the critical edition and Italian translation of the key texts of phenomenological Platonism (De Santis, 2014, especially 28–35). See also Nuccilli (2020).

⁸ See Hering (2021, pp. 81, 125–131).

⁹ See Ingarden (1925, p. 181).

¹⁰ See Spiegelberg (1930).

reassess his role as a phenomenologist,¹¹ it is equally true that on the one hand, a systematic study of his phenomenology of perception is still lacking, and on the other hand, his position has not yet been consolidated within the literature on the historical development of perceptual investigations over the past century, despite the fact that references to his work can be found even in one of the canonical texts of this field, Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*.¹²

A similar fate befell what I have referred to above as Schapp's "new phenomenology of values." The first volume of *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht* was immediately received with great interest in the Latin world, thanks in large part to the mediation of Ortega y Gasset, who actively encouraged and promoted its translation into Spanish,¹³ while in Italy, only a few years later, Bobbio criticized its underlying assumptions, and yet in doing so he effectively placed it among the key reference works of the phenomenology of law in the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁴ And indeed, the first volume of *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht* fully belongs among the foundational texts of phenomenological reflection on law.¹⁵ The secondary literature has addressed the relationship between the approach proposed there by Schapp and Reinach's eidetic-realist approach,¹⁶ as well as the importance that these approaches have for grounding the a priori of law and values within social ontology,¹⁷ along with the originality of Schapp's analyses themselves, particularly with regard to themes such as the theory of values,¹⁸ the theory of contract,¹⁹ and more generally, the investigation of how the pregivens of law (among them the contract itself) are constituted.²⁰ In contrast, the second volume of *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht* appears to have fallen largely into oblivion. With the exception of the fruitful reflections offered by Jan Schapp, who has emphasized the central role of this work both for the phenomenology of law (particularly with regard to the notion of property

¹¹ Summa (2025) has recently highlighted the fundamental contribution of Schapp to normativist approaches to perception. Laasik (2025), in contrast, has emphasized the relevance of Schapp's reflections on clear and distinct perception, as well as the critical yet productive aspects of his account of how colors are ordered in the perception of distant objects (Laasik, 2019). Taieb, for his part, has examined the originality of Schapp's theory of the presentation of sounds within early phenomenology (see Taieb, 2025). As for the relationship between Schapp's phenomenology of perception and that of Husserl, see Nuccilli (2025b) and Rolf (2004). On the relation between phenomenology and the philosophy of hi/stories, see Gottlöber (2020), Liebsch (2010), and Nuccilli (2025a).

¹² See Merleau-Ponty (1962, pp. 266n., 267n., 352n., 360n., 371n.). On the relationship between Schapp's phenomenology of perception and that of Merleau-Ponty, see Hahn (2013).

¹³ Schapp (1931).

¹⁴ Bobbio (2018, p. 76). For an account of the reception of Schapp's philosophy of law in Italy and of its fundamental achievements, see Di Lucia (1997, p. 150ff.).

¹⁵ See Loidolt (2010, pp. 123–128).

¹⁶ See Loidolt (2025) and Purnhagen (2009).

¹⁷ See De Vecchi (2016).

¹⁸ See De Vecchi (2025).

¹⁹ See Purnhagen (2013) and Salice (2022).

²⁰ See Schapp, J. (1968, p. 40f.).

and to creation understood in terms of the pregivenness of private property²¹) and for a hermeneutical-narrative reconfiguration of the philosophy of law,²² there has been little sustained engagement in the secondary literature with the text or with the themes it develops. This is hardly surprising, given the work's early critical stance toward the phenomenological method and thus its initial distance from the dominant tradition of the time. The same holds true for *Zur Metaphysik des Muttertums*. Apart from the introductory study by Joisten,²³ there is no established secondary literature on this text, nor does it appear to have left a lasting trace in philosophical discussions of motherhood. Nor is this lack of reception surprising, given the work's apparent (though, as will be argued later, only apparent) distance both from the phenomenological tradition and from the thematic and conceptual developments found in Schapp's earlier works.

However, it is a whole other matter when it comes to the philosophy of hi/stories, especially *In Geschichten verstrickt*.²⁴ As has already been emphasized,²⁵ Schapp can be considered one of the founders of narrative theory of the last century. This is not only because his philosophy of hi/stories provides an original and foundational contribution to the problem of narration, but also because his theory of entanglement in hi/stories occupies a central place in the classic texts of philosophical reflection on narration. In the first volume of *Time and Narrative*, Ricœur cites the concept of being-entangled to support his hypothesis that a narrative background of experience structures any type of narrative and understanding of the self. By reconnecting to Schapp, Ricœur says: "The story 'happens to' someone before anyone tells it," and he therefore states that entanglement is a sort of "a prehistory of the told story."²⁶ A few years earlier, in the second volume of his *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, Habermas also had referred to the concept of entanglement in his discussion of the relations between society and lifeworld in order to argue that the personal autonomy that we ascribe to the members of a given society is only a functional fiction proper to a culturalist conception of the lifeworld. Being already "entangled in their hi/stories," the members of a society "control neither the possibilities for mutual understanding and conflict, nor the consequences and side effects of their actions."²⁷ Ricœur provides a similar view in his *Oneself as Another*,²⁸ while in *Vita activa*, Arendt speaks of entanglement both as a form of resistance to the inevitability of death²⁹ and as an element of the coherence of life itself. In this regard, she

²¹ See Schapp, J. (1968, p. 60ff.).

²² See Schapp, J. (2010).

²³ See Joisten (2010).

²⁴ The work has been translated into three languages: French, Portuguese, and Italian. See Schapp (1992, 2007, 2017b).

²⁵ See Schmid (2010, p. 30) and Bruckmann (2025, p. 32f.).

²⁶ Ricœur (1984, p. 75).

²⁷ Habermas (1981, p. 224).

²⁸ Ricœur (1992, p. 107).

²⁹ Arendt (1967, p. 184). According to Gasché, Arendt shows greater attention to the concept of *Verstrickung* in the second German edition of 1967 than in both the original English version, *The*

states that we are entangled in our “true hi/story, shaped by life and inescapable as long as we live, that has no visible or invisible author because it is unwritten. It only reveals the hero of the hi/story, whose actions appear in what can be told, revealing a tangible and meaningful presence through actions and speech, unique and fleeting.”³⁰ The explicit coordination between hi/story and action in Schapp’s theory is recognized by Carr as well, and in this respect he identifies a similarity with MacIntyre’s narrativism: According to Carr, for both of them, the question of personal identity is resolvable into that of the coherence of a life-story.³¹ Indeed, one of the areas where Schapp’s approach resonates the most is the issue of narrative identity, especially in relation to the philosophy of Ricœur,³² but also in relation to the cognitivist approach and neuroscience.³³ This is not surprising, since the theory of entanglement actually occupies a boundary position between hermeneutical frameworks that continue to regard subjectivity as a central narrative pole and those perspectives that treat subjectivity as a construct held together only by decentralized narratives in which it is situated as a gravitational center.³⁴ Regarding the issue of subjectivity, a particularly distinctive position is held by those in Germany who were among the first to offer their own interpretation of Schapp’s thought, rather than merely citing his concepts. Three key figures to mention are undoubtedly Lübbe, Fellmann, and Marquard. In his *Bewußtsein in Geschichten*, Lübbe explores the relationship between Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology and Schapp’s theory of entanglement in hi/stories,³⁵ while also emphasizing the connection between the latter and Wittgenstein’s theory of games. Lübbe offers a deconstructive theory of the concept in relation to hi/stories,³⁶ which complements his interpretation of Schapp’s philosophy of hi/stories as a definitive rejection of phenomenological Platonism.³⁷ In contrast, Fellmann’s *Phänomenologie als ästhetische Theorie* provides an aesthetic-phenomenological interpretation of Schapp’s concept of hi/stories. He defines hi/stories as “forms of knowledge”³⁸ and explains how each type of knowledge can be traced back to “structures of fictional representation consisting of hi/stories,” adding that this representation “provides access to categories of lifeworld experience.”³⁹ According to Fellmann, hi/stories allow for a

Human Condition (1958), and the first German edition of 1960; this increased emphasis is due to her greater engagement with Schapp’s work, even though it is never explicitly cited. See Gasché (2018, p. 144).

³⁰ Arendt (1967, p. 178).

³¹ See Carr (1986, p. 74).

³² See D’Alessandris (2024), Gottlöber (2025), and Haas (2002).

³³ See Pecchinenda (2024).

³⁴ Dennett’s theory of subjectivity as a narrative center of gravity shares many points in common with Schapp’s theory of entanglement. See Dennett (1992).

³⁵ See Lübbe (1972, pp. 98–104).

³⁶ See Lübbe (1972, pp. 108–114).

³⁷ See Lübbe (1954, p. 660ff.).

³⁸ Fellmann (1989, p. 14).

³⁹ Fellmann (1989, p. 197).

connection between the abstraction and universality inherent in meanings, the ideal sphere, and the lifeworld and everyday experiences. He argues that we reach an aesthetic dimension of experience when we understand how the universal is revealed through the highly personal and historically situated perspective, and this happens through the hi/stories that articulate our spiritual attitude toward a specific situation in the lifeworld.⁴⁰ And reflecting on historical subjectivity in relation to the lifeworld, Marquard interprets Schapp's philosophy of hi/stories as a means of liberation from the identity monism of German idealistic historicism. He finds the usual historicist approaches perpetuate the most exemplary form of monomythical thinking, and—referring to Schapp—he argues that humanity must be polymythic, capable of embodying multiple hi/stories to avoid becoming enslaved to a single narrative, thus maintaining the freedom to choose which narrative to adopt based on the needs of the lifeworld.⁴¹ Moreover, the application of the theory of entanglement to questions concerning intersubjectivity and collective identities is also fruitful, both from a social-ontological point of view and also in theology. In the very recent *Being We: Phenomenological Contributions to Social Ontology*, Zahavi brings Schapp alongside Garfield, showing their relevance for developing a phenomenological-narrative approach in the interpretation of our identity as a reality that is first and foremost social.⁴² With regard to understanding collective religious identities, Pohlmeier's interpretation is particularly significant. He sees that when Schapp's concept of universal hi/story is applied to Christianity, it becomes a form of sublimation of the religion itself, one that renders its form performatively absolute—without, however, transcending its historical-terrestrial dimension. In this, Pohlmeier discerns a kind of meta-religion that is realized in the hermeneutics of hi/stories.⁴³ To trace in detail the numerous and varied occasions on which Schapp is cited even in areas not strictly philosophical is practically impossible; here I have limited myself to highlighting contexts of particular philosophical relevance.

Philosophie der Geschichten and *Metaphysik der Naturwissenschaft* have not had as pervasive a history of influence as the first work of the trilogy, but they have not been entirely forgotten, thanks in part to various editorial initiatives in recent years that have included contributions mainly concerning the first of the latter two works.⁴⁴ Turning finally to the aims of dissemination and to the contribution that the present volume seeks to make to current research on Schapp's philosophy, this book situates itself within, and intends to complement, the broader effort that has been undertaken in Germany over the past 20 years to recover and systematize both his published and his unpublished materials. This process began in 2004 with the fourth unchanged edition of the *Beiträge*, followed by the fifth edition in 2013. Around the

⁴⁰ See Fellmann (1989, p. 198ff.).

⁴¹ See Marquard (1989, p. 90ff.).

⁴² See Zahavi (2025, p. 58).

⁴³ See Pohlmeier (2010).

⁴⁴ See Fredsted (2025), Hütig (2020), Joisten (2025), Linkenbach (2020), Mičić (2024), Pohlmeier (2025), Thieme (2010), Schapp, J. (2004a, 2025), and Vigo (2025).

same time, the third edition of *Metaphysik der Naturwissenschaft* appeared in 2009, followed in turn by the fifth edition of *In Geschichten verstrickt* in 2012 and the third edition of *Philosophie der Geschichten* in 2015, all published by Vittorio Klostermann. Parallel with this editorial work on the published corpus, an editorial project focusing on the author's unpublished materials was undertaken between 2016 and 2019. During this period, Karl Alber Verlag, under the supervision of J. Schapp, K. Joisten, and N. Thiemer, published four volumes⁴⁵ containing selected materials from Schapp's *Nachlass*, which as a whole comprises more than 20,000 pages preserved at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich. As far as the secondary literature is concerned, over the past 20 years four collective volumes in German have been devoted to the thought of Wilhelm Schapp: *Geschichte und Geschichten. Studien zur Geschichtenphänomenologie Wilhelm Schapps* (2004a), edited by K.-H. Lembeck; *Das Denken Wilhelm Schapps*, edited by K. Joisten; *Die Rezeption der Geschichtenphilosophie Wilhelm Schapps. Kommentare und Fortsetzungen*, edited by J. Schapp, K. Joisten, and N. Thiemer; and *Geschichtenphilosophie von Wilhelm Schapp und ihre Rezeption*, edited by F. Bruckmann and M. Pohlmeier. In contrast, the first collective volumes in English appeared only much later in 2024 with the commemorative special section marking the seventieth anniversary of the publication of *In Geschichten verstrickt* in volume 22 of *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, edited by myself, and in 2025 with the publication of *The Philosophy of Wilhelm Schapp* with Bloomsbury Academic, co-edited by myself and De Santis. The present book inherits from these last two publications not only their philological attention to the different phases of the author's thought, but also their ambition to reconstruct its overall lines of development. At the same time, it seeks to fill several gaps that these collective works left open, addressing areas that have remained only partially explored. This applies in particular to the reflections on *Zur Metaphysik des Muttertums*, to the unpublished writings from the late 1940s, and to the linguistic theory of entanglement in *Philosophie der Geschichten*. Moreover, the sections devoted to the theory of *Darstellung*, to the theory of values, and to the theory of entanglement likewise contain arguments and perspectives that are entirely new.

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⁴⁵ Schapp (2016, 2017a, 2018, 2019).

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Chapter 3

Structure and Objectives of the Book



Abstract A clarification of the methodological framework brings into focus the central thesis concerning the continuity between Wilhelm Schapp's early phenomenology and his philosophy of hi/stories. What emerges is not a simple transition but a development that unfolds through the interplay of genetic analysis and systematic interpretation, allowing the internal coherence of his thought to come into view. Within this perspective, a narrative hermeneutical framework proves particularly suited to approaching both the genesis and the unity of Schapp's philosophy.

Keywords Methodology · Genetic analysis · Systematic interpretation · Continuity · From ideas to hi/stories · Narrative hermeneutics

By now it should be clear that the primary aim of this book is to fill a gap in the secondary literature by offering an account of the development of Schapp's thought, beginning with its phenomenological roots and with the rich hermeneutical horizon within which his early formation took place.¹ As was the case for other figures of the phenomenological movement, the experience of the two World Wars and the situation of Germany in their aftermath gave rise in Schapp to an almost therapeutic need to return to the philosophical ethos that had originally animated phenomenology. Through a renewed and critically reworked engagement with the themes addressed in the *Beiträge* reconsidered in light of the transformed philosophical and social context and through sustained dialogue with other key texts of the phenomenological tradition, Schapp brings together the various strands of his earlier thinking and orients them toward his philosophy of hi/stories. This philosophy is conceived as a genuine revolution in thought, following those inaugurated by Thales and Greek philosophy, by Bacon, and by Kant, grounded in the discovery of hi/stories and of the entanglement of human beings in hi/stories.² This continuity, which may be

¹The two German-language monographs *Husserl und Schapp* by Wälde (1985) and *Geschichten-Hermeneutik* by Pohlmeyer (2004) undoubtedly also have a philological, in addition to a theoretical, significance; however, for reasons related in part to the topics they address, they do not aspire to trace the developmental lines of the author's thought.

²See Schapp (2015, p. 24ff.).

described as both substantial and factual, has rarely been acknowledged in accounts of Schapp's thought and of the relationship between the different phases of his intellectual development.³ For this reason, I have chosen to begin with Schapp's earliest works, those that can be described as phenomenological, and to explore the points at which there emerge the presuppositions—or rather, the problems and tensions—that will later lead to the development of his philosophy of *hi/stories*. With this aim in mind, after some preliminary remarks (Part II, Chap. 4) in Part II, Chap. 5, I begin by examining Schapp's investigations into perception. The focus is not only on presenting the innovative aspects of his theory of *Darstellung* (presentation) and of his account of understanding in perception (both of which have already been thoroughly discussed in the specialized literature⁴), but also on identifying those lines of inquiry and moments of reflection that will later become the pathways through which the ontological-narrative turn and the critique of the fundamental principles of classical phenomenology will take shape. As I try to argue, it is in the theory of *Darstellung* that a conception of the experience of the external world emerges that already incorporates certain practical experiences of the lifeworld. Experiences such as the visual perception of iron being worked by a blacksmith, or the tactile experience of handling materials, function as the center from which the manifestation of the world unfolds through practical human activity. What is presupposed in this early account is that in order to allow reality to present itself in all its purity within perception, the forms of knowledge tied to such practical activity must be suspended and attention must be directed solely toward what reality offers to the senses at that moment. In this way, the most intimate character of things can already emerge from a single sensory experience, such as sight or touch, since through Schapp's synaesthetic approach, aspects of the thing that are ordinarily accessible only through other senses come to manifestation in sight or touch in their full richness (Part II, section "The Structure of Perceptual Reference in Relation to the Different Senses: Illusion, Reality, and Manifestative Order", Chap. 5). And it is in relation to the configuration of reality in perception as it unfolds across the different senses that we first encounter the issues that will become increasingly central in Schapp's work. One concerns the impossibility of subsuming reality under rigid linguistic definitions, that is, of gathering all phenomena belonging to a group of things or to analogous aspects of reality under a single conceptual category. A second concerns the impossibility of reducing the reality of a thing to its momentary givenness in perception. In response to the first issue, Schapp develops a theory of ideas that frees itself both from any intuitionism of universal genera and from any strict nominalism. Perception offers only the experience of the individual thing, and in grasping it one encounters a singular disclosure of its essence, which leads to nothing other than the individual idea corresponding to that singularity. But it is here that language in turn encounters its limits, since it possesses only general terms with which to designate things, whereas

³For a reconstruction of the different approaches present in the various phases of Schapp's thought, see Nuccilli (2025).

⁴See footnote 11 in the previous chapter "State of the art".

what would be required is a proper name for each individual thing (Part II, section “The Idea Within Perception: Species, Individual Ideas, and Understanding”, Chap. 5). As a response to the second issue, in his earliest work Schapp already introduces the concept of hi/story alongside his account of the character of the thing. Every individual thing bears within itself the traces of its trajectory in the world, and in doing so, tells a hi/story: through its perceptual appearance it conveys not only its material character, but also its chronicle, that is, the way in which it has interacted with the world and the way the world has acted upon it (Part II, section “The Character of Things: Observing Perception, Hi/story, and Individuality”, Chap. 5). Here the aim in general is accordingly to bring these theoretical trajectories to light within the framework of a general presentation of the fundamental structure of Schapp’s phenomenology of perception.

On the other hand, Part II, Chap. 6, is devoted to an analysis of the theory of values and of the “phenomenology of creation” (*Phänomenologie des Schaffens*) developed in the second volume of *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht*. In this work Schapp adopts a markedly different stance toward the experience of making and producing. No longer is this experience to be neutralized; rather, it becomes the very center of the experience of the thing. The thing is no longer understood merely in terms of its perceptual appearance, but as a work, that is, as something endowed with value by virtue of having been created. The act of creation thus becomes a form of the pregivenness of property and is intrinsically bound to the historical and spiritual dimension of human existence. Within the relationship between the self and the work, the theme of hi/stories re-emerges. Every work bears within itself its own hi/story, referring back to the events surrounding its coming into being and to the network of purposes within which it was produced. In this sense, the work does not merely present itself as an object, but as the bearer of a hi/story that unfolds through time and connects it to a broader horizon of meaning. In this way, the history of each work traces a sociocultural trajectory that for Schapp furnishes the a priori of every science of history (Part II, section “Phenomenology of Creation: The I-Work Relationship and the Historical a Priori”, Chap. 6). The act of creation thus links the work to the human being in a profound manner, allowing access to dimensions of human existence that extend beyond the individual life. The work becomes a medium through which the human soul expresses itself and endures over time. Finally, creation and the works it brings forth are embedded within a broader horizon of values, such as generosity, kindness, courage, loyalty, and love, which for Schapp form the ethical ground of human existence and are as ancient as humanity itself (Part II, section “Historicity of Values in Works, Ethical Values, and Hi/story of the I”, Chap. 6). These elements of the phenomenology of creation comprise a fundamental transitional moment toward the philosophy of hi/stories, and this not only because (as has been noted in the secondary literature⁵) the concept of the work functions as a precursor of the thing-for, but also because they serve as a connective link between the investigations into perception and the theory of entanglement,

⁵ See Schapp, J. (2010, pp. 68–69).

ultimately providing a coherent placement for a work such as *Zur Metaphysik des Muttertums*, a work that might otherwise appear completely detached from the rest of his output. As I argue in Part II, Chap. 7, in *Zur Metaphysik des Muttertums*, Schapp returns to the question of those values that are basic to the human condition, values whose foundation lies in parental relations. Maternal and paternal love for one's children unfold not only as affective bonds, but also in the specific form of creation, a form in which they find one of their highest expressions. The analysis of the mother-child and father-child relationships thus introduces an issue that will become central to Schapp's theory of co-entanglement (Part II, section "The Mother-Child and the Father-Child Relationship: Family, Kinship, and Creation", Chap. 7). At the same time, the analogy between maternal love and divine love, together with the figure of God as creator, provides the conceptual groundwork for the theory of positive worlds and the universal hi/stories that underlie them (Part II, section "The Currents of Mother-Child Love and the Relationship Between Maternal Love and God's Love", Chap. 7). Among other things, Part III of the book then leads up to the concept of co-entanglement, while Part IV addresses the theme of positive worlds and universal hi/stories.

In Part III, I aim to highlight, on the one hand, the intrinsic connection between the critique of the fundamental principles of phenomenology and the necessity of a narrative approach, and on the other hand, the innovative character of this approach as it emerges in *In Geschichten verstrickt*. In Part III, Chap. 8, I examine key moments in Schapp's reflections from the late 1940s up to 1953, drawing on preparatory materials, notes, and the second, unpublished edition of the *Beiträge*. Through this material, I show how several core concepts of the philosophy of hi/stories take shape indirectly through a critical engagement with some of the foundational assumptions of the phenomenological method. This analysis helps to clarify, first, why the opening part of *In Geschichten verstrickt* devotes such detailed attention to investigations of perception: these are intended to exhaust the perceptual approach from within and to prepare the ground for a new way of understanding things (i.e., as things-for), one that culminates in the theory of entanglement, as I argue in Part III, Chap. 9. At the same time, it sheds light on the relationship between the deconstruction of the phenomenological method and the construction of the hermeneutical-narrative approach that Schapp develops in the work, a relationship that I examine more closely in Part III, Chap. 10. In Part III, Chap. 11, I focus more specifically on Schapp's method of narrating and listening, examining its structure and outlining the fundamental features of his narrative approach. In Part III, Chap. 12, I then turn to the theory of co-entanglement, analyzing the relation between one's own hi/stories, the hi/stories of others, and universal hi/stories, both with regard to narrative practices and to the life-hi/stories that provide their horizon of meaning. At the end of Part III, and by way of conclusion, I highlight the foundational aspects of co-entanglement: on the one hand, the linguistic structure that underlies it, and on the other hand, the primordial relational configurations of human existence, such as the parent-child relationship, that are fundamental to the human condition and predispose individuals to become entangled in universal hi/stories, including those of religion and of the origin of the world. The aim of this part of the book is therefore

not to take a theoretical stance with respect to the philosophy of hi/stories or to engage directly with the most prominent debates in the secondary literature,⁶ but rather to present not only the motivations that lead Schapp to develop a new methodological approach, but also the central elements of this approach itself, thereby leading, through the discussion of universal hi/stories and the linguistic foundations of co-entanglement, to the introduction of themes that will receive further and more systematic development in *Philosophie der Geschichten*, where Schapp offers a more comprehensive account of the theory of entanglement.

I deal with *Philosophie der Geschichten* and this more comprehensive account in Part IV, beginning with the way in which Schapp himself situates his philosophy of hi/stories within the hi/story of philosophy—namely, as a fourth revolution (Part IV, Chap. 13). According to the Schapp of *Philosophie der Geschichten*, over the course of the last millennia Western philosophy has increasingly followed a trajectory oriented toward scientific and mathematically grounded forms of knowledge, thereby losing sight of the cultural ground from which it originally emerged, namely, the realm in which myths and hi/stories shaped human life and understanding. In this way, according to Schapp, Western human beings have gradually lost sight of the positive world in which they were originally embedded, together with its founding myths (such as the hi/stories of Homer and Hesiod or the biblical narratives of creation), and have instead withdrawn into what he calls the *Sonderwelt des Abendlandes* (the world of the Occident). In Part IV, Chap. 14, I therefore seek to clarify this dichotomy by examining both the structure of positive worlds in general and the manner in which this world of the Occident has taken shape and acquired its defining features. This latter world, according to Schapp, is rooted in conceptual frameworks that lie at the heart of some of the most influential traditions of Western philosophy. As I show in Part IV, Chap. 15, Schapp turns in particular to figures such as Plato, Descartes, and Kant, discussing paradigmatic examples of their respective modes of thought and philosophical systems, and showing how the philosophy of hi/stories can resolve the aporias that emerge within them. Chapters 16 and 17 are finally devoted to elucidating two fundamental themes that together constitute and bring to completion the theory of entanglement. The first concerns universal hi/stories in their relation to individual hi/story and to physicalist conceptions of the world; the second addresses the grammar of entanglement, that is, the way in which language, in its most basic structures, is bound to the essential human condition of being entangled in hi/stories. Universal hi/stories ground and shape entire world-views and possess a poetic and mythopoietic capacity to connect individual hi/stories with the great hi/stories of the past and with future horizons, uniting the living, those who are no longer, and those who are yet to come into a single hermeneutic-narrative fabric, as occurs in the great foundational hi/stories of the Western tradition, from Homer and Hesiod to the biblical narratives of creation. At the basis of this fabric lies an implicit ontological-semantic structure, namely that of the we, within which every I situates itself and understands itself as part of a collectivity

⁶See Part I, Chap. 2.

that populates both its horizon of world and its linguistic horizon. As I show in Chap. 17, through co-entanglement it becomes possible, according to Schapp, to explain the miracle of the word and of understanding. This develops along the line of entanglement in shared hi/stories: it is from here that one must begin if one wishes to explain how the basic components of grammar and the fundamental linguistic structures that characterize understanding are jointly organized. By calling into question, through the theory of entanglement, the Husserlian idea of a pure grammar and the categories of thought inherited from it, Schapp's project of a radical re-examination and hermeneutic-narrative reinterpretation of the categories of Western thought is fully accomplished, a project of which phenomenology represents at once the culmination and the limit. It is clear that *Metaphysik der Naturwissenschaft*, the final work of the trilogy of hi/stories, still opens the possibility for discussing some of the central conceptions that characterize twentieth-century science in comparison with the theory of human entanglement in hi/stories. Such a discussion, however, would require further and independent investigation, and would therefore be better suited to a separate book, and would in any case add nothing essential to the theoretical framework developed in the present volume.

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Part II

The Roots of the Philosophy of Hi/stories: From the Phenomenology of Perception to the Phenomenology of Values

Chapter 4

Preliminary Remarks



Abstract The secondary literature, with a few rare exceptions, tends to present the philosophy of hi/stories as a sudden turn in Wilhelm Schapp's thought, emerging only between the late 1940s and the early 1950s. This view, however, is misleading. Rather than marking an abrupt break, the philosophy of hi/stories develops out of Schapp's earlier work as a coherent and internally motivated transformation, one that unfolds along lines already implicit in his initial investigations. Certainly, the concept of entanglement appears explicitly in the three works that make up the philosophy of hi/stories, yet the entire conceptual apparatus that revolves around it is already prepared in the earlier works, starting with the *Beiträge zur Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmung*. With regard to the latter, two aspects in particular should not be overlooked. First, the discussion of individual ideas entails a specific singularity of understanding what is given in intuition, which, from the outset, excludes any form of hypostatization of the universal and instead turns the universal into a unique and situated experience rooted in the concrete givenness of the individual thing. Second, there is the reference to the historical dimension of the perceptual aspect of the thing: every trace we find on its surface describes its hi/story and its unique and singular destiny in the world. Both aspects find their place within an investigation of perception that takes everyday experience fully into account and that invites—and indeed, operates against the background of—a new understanding of the lifeworld and of the social sphere of the human being, an understanding that finds expression in the three works on the phenomenology of values.

Keywords Roots of the philosophy of hi/stories · Beyond the phenomenological circles · Phenomenology of perception · Phenomenology of values · Conceptual transition · Collective identities

As already noted in Part I, Chap. 2, the secondary literature, with a few rare exceptions, tends to present the philosophy of hi/stories as a sudden turn in Schapp's thought, emerging only between the late 1940s and the early 1950s. This view, however, is misleading. Rather than marking an abrupt break, the philosophy of hi/stories develops out of Schapp's earlier work as a coherent and internally motivated transformation, one that unfolds along lines already implicit in his initial

investigations. Certainly, the concept of entanglement appears explicitly in the three works that make up the philosophy of hi/stories, yet the entire conceptual apparatus that revolves around it is already prepared in the earlier works, starting with the *Beiträge zur Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmung*. With regard to the latter, two aspects in particular should not be overlooked. First, the discussion of individual ideas entails a specific singularity of understanding what is given in intuition, which, from the outset, excludes any form of hypostatization of the universal and instead turns the universal into a unique and situated experience that is embedded within the singular experience of the individual thing.¹ Second, there is the reference to the historical dimension of the perceptual aspect of the thing: every trace we find on its surface describes its hi/story and its unique and singular destiny in the world.² Both aspects find their place within an investigation of perception that takes everyday experience fully into account and that invites—and indeed, operates against the background of—a new understanding of the lifeworld and of the social sphere of the human being, an understanding that finds expression in the three works on the phenomenology of values. In the treatment of the world of values and of the concept of the work in the two volumes of *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht*, the urgency emerges to move beyond the investigation of perceptual experience in order not only to explore the world of the values of the everyday experience of things, but above all to bind these together in a single thread with human action and agency, thus granting things a historically and culturally situated grounding. Within the investigation of the constitution of “property” as a pregivenness of positive law, which Schapp sets up in the second volume of *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht*, the relationship between the creator and the work takes a prominent place, investigated from a peculiarly historicist perspective. Indeed, in a central passage of his analysis, he states: “The history of humankind is the hi/story of its works. The relations we have identified between self, work, value, and production are fundamental relations for history; they represent the a priori of historical science.”³ What may sound like a clear reference to the problems with which Rickert and Dilthey had confronted each other in the early 1900s also opens a moment of crisis for Schapp’s conception of the phenomenological method of intuition of essence, to the point that in his phenomenology of law, Schapp prefers to adopt the comparative method and what he calls a “phenomenology of creation.”⁴ And following his conceptual acquisition in the 1950s of the entanglement of humans in hi/stories, it is from these elements that Schapp takes the starting point for his analysis of the concept of thing-for that we later find in the first section of *In Geschichten verstrickt*.

Although *Zur Metaphysik des Muttertums* may initially seem to lack a direct thematic connection with the two volumes of *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht*, it

¹ See section “The Idea Within Perception: Species, Individual Ideas, and Understanding”, Chap. 5.

² See section “The Character of Things: Observing Perception, Hi/Story, and Individuality”, Chap. 5.

³ Schapp (1932, p. 67).

⁴ Schapp (1932, pp. 38–39).

nonetheless follows at least two lines of argument already present in the latter. The first, more peripheral one, concerns creation. Those who become parents do contribute to their own legacy by creating works and thereby establish an open and creative relation to their dynasty, but creation acquires an entirely different meaning when viewed in relation to kinship.⁵ The second line of argument concerns the treatment of certain values such as love, sacrifice, loyalty, and perseverance, which appear to be intrinsic to the human soul and do not seem to depend on the historical and cultural context in which one lives.⁶ The account of love as it unfolds within kinship, and in particular with reference to the mother-child and father-child relations in *Zur Metaphysik des Muttertums*, both continues and brings to completion this line of reflection on those affective and relational experiences that cut across the whole of humankind, operating both in the present and retrospectively into the past. This line of reflection is later taken up in *In Geschichten verstrickt* and developed within the analysis of co-entanglement (*Mitverstrickung*). Indeed, the mother-child and father-child relations are placed at the foundation of what Schapp will come to call we-hi/stories (*Wirgeschichten*)—namely, those hi/stories in which an ontological understanding of community and of entanglement in shared, foundational human hi/stories first becomes articulated.⁷ On this basis, when the account of a mother’s love for her child as the first experience of divine love is combined with the religious topos of God as father and creator that frames Schapp’s discussion of kinship,⁸ what emerges is the central element of the treatment both of universal hi/stories of religion and of the positive worlds in *Philosophie der Geschichten*.⁹ To examine these central thematic nodes in greater depth therefore means not only to highlight some innovative and still relevant theoretical loci in Schapp’s thought, but also to bring out the structural continuity of certain themes and their development both prior to and within the philosophy of hi/stories, thereby avoiding the recurring misunderstanding that the philosophy of hi/stories is merely a late and sudden discovery in the course of his intellectual trajectory.

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⁵See section “The Mother-Child and the Father-Child Relationship: Family, Kinship, and Creation”, Chap. 7.

⁶See section “Historicity of Values in Works, Ethical Values, and Hi/Story of the I”, Chap. 6.

⁷See Part III, Chap. 12.

⁸See Schapp (1965, p. 167ff.).

⁹See Part IV, Chaps. 14, 16.

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Chapter 5

Phenomenology of Perception: Things, Hi/stories, Ideas



Abstract In the *Beiträge zur Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmung*, Wilhelm Schapp develops a phenomenology of perception centered on how the world manifests itself to the senses. Building on and extending Husserl's account, the analysis shows how the thing of everyday experience appears as a unified object whose "character of reality" emerges through the interplay of the senses. This expansion concerns both the intuitive fullness of presentation and the synaesthetic breadth of perception, through which sensible features such as color, sound, and tactility disclose not only appearance but also the inner constitution and materiality of the thing. Perception thus unfolds within structures that exceed immediate presentation, bringing into view the individuality of what is given and, with it, the emergence of the individual idea. At the same time, things present themselves together with their destiny and the series of events they have undergone, so that the outlines of their hi/story begin to take shape within perception itself.

Keywords Phenomenology of perception · Phenomenological method · Darstellung · Synaesthesia · Hi/story · Individual ideas

In the preface to the *Beiträge zur Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmung*, one can read:

The work I present here stems from the circle of ideas of E. Husserl. It takes into account not only logical investigations,¹ but also the important stimuli I received during the three years in which I attended Husserl's lectures and seminars, and took part in several personal discussions with him and his circle of students. Moreover, in the writing of this work, he constantly stood by my side with his advice. I am not truly in a position to judge in detail

¹Written in lowercase in the original. The reference to the *Logical Investigations* is clear, though here it is probably understood as the center of Husserl's investigations into logic.

how much of my argumentation stems from these personal stimuli.² I only hope that I have written nothing that I have not seen for myself.³

This testimony captures the essence of Schapp's writing in a few lines. On the one hand, it is shaped by the new expository style that Husserl's phenomenology was developing in his lectures of those years, increasingly oriented toward the exploration of intuitive representations. On the other hand, it is enriched by insights arising from debates among early phenomenologists. Schapp's candid confession that he cannot clearly distinguish what in his work is original and what stems from the genius of Husserl and his colleagues also reveals his attempt to weave Husserl's ideas into a single methodological framework, one that also encompasses perspectives from the Munich school of early phenomenology.

The *Beiträge* are largely devoted to explaining how the world presents itself to the senses within perception. The work is divided into three parts. In the first and second parts, Schapp attempts to explain how the different senses are able to bring to manifestation the "character of reality" (*Realitätscharakter*)⁴ of the thing (*Ding*), understood as an object of the external world (including both objects of use and natural objects) that presents itself to perception as a unity—i.e., the thing of everyday experience as meant by Husserl in the lectures *Thing and Space*.⁵ In the third section, following the dichotomy between sense and understanding in the *Logical Investigations*,⁶ Schapp explains how it is through the appearance of the idea that the cognitive understanding of the thing that manifests itself through perception can take place.

What emerges from Schapp's discussion of how the thing presents itself through the different senses is an expansion of Husserl's account of the material constitution of the thing in perception.⁷ This expansion takes place both at the level of the intuitive fullness of the object's presentation (*Leibhaftigkeit*) and at the level of the intra-sensory presentative breadth of the thing through a synaesthetic approach.⁸ In Schapp, the problem of *Leibhaftigkeit* is not linked exclusively, as in Husserl, to the

²The interpretation of this sentence is fundamental for the entire interpretation of Schapp's text. If, as Ingarden believes, the *persönliche Anregungen* (personal stimuli) that Schapp mentions refer solely to Husserl (see Ingarden, 1992, p. 39), then the text tends to be read with an exclusively Husserlian focus—as is often the case in the scant secondary literature on the *Beiträge*. But if that proposition is connected not with the immediately preceding one, which speaks only of Husserl's support, but rather with the earlier one, which also includes interactions with other students, then a new hermeneutical horizon of understanding opens up, and one can discern, in contrast, the role that certain intra-circular positions played in Schapp's original development of the method. See for this De Santis and Nuccilli (2025).

³Schapp, Preface, in the *Beiträge*, page not indicated (the introduction of the *Beiträge* begins directly on page 1, while the page of the Preface is unnumbered).

⁴Schapp (2013, p. 54).

⁵Cf. Husserl (1997, p. 1ff.); see Rojcewicz (1997, p. xii).

⁶Husserl (2001, pp. 2, 269ff.).

⁷Cf. Husserl (1976, p. 386ff.); see also Claesges (1964, p. 40ff.).

⁸See Hahn (2013, pp. 71–79) and Summa (2025, p. 50).

essential dimension of the perceptual act (that is, to the claim accompanying every perceptual representation of an object, namely, that it is present then and there, “there in person”).⁹ Instead, it also extends to the very structure of the object itself, to its essential objectual characteristics as they are presented through the filter of their perceptual manifestation. The central issue of his phenomenology of perception is, in fact, to show how the sensible features of things, those immediately tied to the perceptual aspect, such as colors, tactile sensations, and sounds, are also able to bring to manifestation characteristics that concern the internal make-up, the intimate nature, and the materiality of the object, which he will define in the second section of the *Beiträge* as the “character of things.”¹⁰ This investigation of the manifestative complexity of the external world is realized through the articulation of the determinations of the thing itself into presenting and presented, which refers back to a fundamental distinction in Husserlian phenomenology concerning the thing, that between *materia prima* and *materia secunda*.¹¹ This continuity is clear both thematically and linguistically. Linguistically, Schapp refers to sensations as *Darstellenden* (presentative), echoing Husserl’s term *darstellende Inhalte* (presentative contents) from his analysis of *materia prima*.¹² Thematically, in the *Beiträge* Schapp aims to show that the reality of the thing, its material structure, manifests directly through sensations.¹³ By identifying two different levels along the manifestative chain, Schapp thus positions himself in continuity with Husserl’s distinction. However, although in the *Beiträge* the characteristics that compose the different layers of *materia prima* in Husserl are indeed arranged on two distinct planes of the manifestative order, Schapp’s synaesthetic approach allows them to be brought onto the same plane of intuitive saturation, which makes them immediately and authentically intuited in the flesh, even if they are not strictly coextensive with the perceptual sensation involved at any given moment.¹⁴

⁹ Cf. Husserl (1997, p. 147ff.). On the concept of *Leibhaftigkeit* in Husserl, see Soldati (2010).

¹⁰ See Schapp (2013, p. 78) and Summa (2025, p. 50f.).

¹¹ In *Thing and Space*, Husserl identifies two opposing aspects in the spatial extension of the manifestation of the thing, space and matter. Space is composed of the bodily form and the determinations of the thing (surfaces, angles, edges). Matter, in turn, is composed of the qualities that fill the space—the colorations that extend over the surfaces and the tactile determinations (smoothness, roughness, stickiness, and so on). The visual and tactile determinations that allow space to manifest itself correspond to *materia prima*. *Materia prima*, composed of the interpenetration of the tactile and visual layers, is a spatially filled unity and functions as the first perceptual basis for the constitution of the thing. On this perceptual basis, further determinations of the thing are then set up, such as, for example, sound, noise, or even weight and other empirical properties that do not lead back to particular primitive sensory contents. For Husserl these further determinations comprise *materia secunda*. See Husserl (1997, p. 56ff.).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ See Nuccilli (2025b, p. 173ff.).

¹⁴ See sections “Color and Visual Perception: The Perceptual Coherence of a Thing”, “Sounds and Auditory Perception: The Richness of Reality”, “Touch and Tactile Sensations: Theoretical and Practical Attitudes”, and “The Structure of Perceptual Reference in Relation to the Different Senses: Illusion, Reality, and Manifestative Order”.

The theoretical shift just highlighted is a direct consequence of Schapp's expansion of phenomenological inquiry to the world of everyday experience, and in particular, to the world of the production of objects, in order to show how certain physical characteristics of things already manifest themselves at the perceptual level. For Schapp, in fact, physical properties such as elasticity and hardness, which are later analyzed by the natural sciences, already present themselves directly to visual perception without the intervention of touch, scientific experiments, or further forms of manipulation of the object. In this respect, then, the central conceptual nexus around which these considerations concerning the *Leibhaftigkeit* of certain aspects of the external world revolve is that of *pregivenness* (*Vorgegebenheit*). Schapp even writes: "That a thing is there and presents itself bodily as this or that is nothing other than a title for the *pregivennesses* that must precede every theory of things and of the perceptions of things."¹⁵ Although this approach follows the trajectory outlined by Husserl in the Göttingen lectures on the concept of *pregivenness*, there are structural differences in the very conduct of their respective investigations. While Husserl's analyses of perception fully unfold through the suspension of all existential posits and claims of transcendence (both on the side of the perceiver and of the perceived) and thus remain within immanence, Schapp makes no reference either to reduction or to *cogitatio*, nor does he ever explicitly operate within the polarity of immanence and transcendence.¹⁶ It also seems that Schapp does not take up Husserl's demand to investigate the mode of subjective givenness of the intentional object, and instead appears to shift the focus toward the manifestation of those revelatory aspects of reality and of the thing that provide the background and epistemological foundation for the different cognitive approaches of the natural sciences and psychology. In doing so, he follows, in particular, one of the desiderata of Husserl's phenomenology of the thing, namely, the necessity of investigating the pre-scientific layer of experience. The theoretical outcome is an openness to those singular aspects of the thing that disclose not only its intrinsic characteristics, but also its path in the world and the particularities that make it unique and distinguishable from other things. The need to bind perceptual experience to the cognitive essence of the thing is joined to the aesthetic demand, derived from members of the circles coming from Munich, not to subordinate the complexity of reality to the definitional requirements of the intellect.¹⁷

This element is also reflected in the most well-known section of the *Beiträge*, the third section, in which Schapp presents a thoroughly personal version of phenomenological Platonism.¹⁸ In Schapp's position, one can detect a particular attention to the specific relationship between things, individual essences, and concepts in

¹⁵ Schapp (2013, p. 37). In his personal copy of the *Beiträge*, Husserl added the letter H at the end of this sentence, as if to claim authorship of that statement (see Vongehr & Giuliani, 2004, p. xlvii).

¹⁶ For the central role of these concepts in Husserl's Göttingen lectures of 1906 and 1907, see Claesges (1973, pp. xiii–xvi).

¹⁷ See Part I, Chap. 1.

¹⁸ Cf. Part I, Chap. 2 and Part II, section "The Idea Within Perception: Species, Individual Ideas, and Understanding", Chap. 5.

relation to the manifestation of the idea in perception—an approach that challenges certain foundational principles of phenomenology itself, such as the concept of species and that of eidetic intuition. In fact, the understanding and definition of things can never be attributed to pure intuition, but rather to a disclosure through the manifestation of the idea. In this sense, the idea is not something universal that offers itself to intellectual intuition, but rather a revelation that illuminates the manifestation of the thing precisely as that determinate thing. In this way, what is grasped in perception is not the essence of the thing as such; instead, the thing is understood in its individual essence. The signifying intention is directed toward the idea of the thing, and through it, the perceptual manifestation is channeled into a unified meaning. However, the idea does not descend “from above,” as though from a sort of Popperian World 3, to install itself subsequently in perception; rather, it is something singular and exceptional that belongs to the perceptual dynamic itself, and exists in a sort of “interregnum” between things and consciousness. As evidence of this, in the conclusion of the *Beiträge*, Schapp offers an operative conception of the idea as something that perceptually marks the boundaries of the thing and defines its form, even from a material-perceptual point of view, thus placing him in close proximity to the emerging Gestalt psychology of the time.¹⁹

In addition to outlining a new field of application for the phenomenological method, the *Beiträge* thus offer a dynamic picture of the problems Husserl was engaging with in those years, and in a way, seek to find their own response to the problem of the world’s appearing in perception. They aim to encompass, in all its depth, the question of how to understand, from an epistemological point of view, those cognitive aspects of the thing that cannot be reduced solely to what comes into material contact with the senses from the external world. In Schapp’s analyses, such a question is not confined to the formal level of intentionality, but also opens up to the lifeworld and to the experience we have of the environment around us in our daily lives—all aspects that in some way anticipate the developments of later phenomenology, as well as the further evolution of Schapp’s own thought.

Theory of *Darstellung*: How the External World Presents Itself in Perception

From a methodological standpoint, for his phenomenological investigations on perception Schapp draws inspiration from the attitude of the artist. He argues that the phenomenologist studying perception must adopt the mindset of a painter,²⁰ that is, one must have the ability to “immerse oneself [*Sich hineinversenken*] in the world of the senses as it is apprehended in perception, not allowing this world to be schemati-

¹⁹ After all, in addition to being one of the key figures of Gestalt psychology, David Katz was among the early members of the Göttingen Circle alongside Schapp (see Schapp, 2025, p. 239), and, as already noted, the *Beiträge* exerted a significant influence on his reflections on perception (see Katz, 1925, pp. 20, 94).

²⁰ For the methodological importance of this analogy, see Summa (2025, pp. 47–48).

cally reduced to formulas or shaped by prejudices, but rather letting it be presented in the originality of its mode of givenness, from beginning to end and at every stage of the investigation.”²¹ According to Schapp, phenomenologists must devote themselves unconditionally to this mode of givenness and to exploring the things themselves, not by reflecting on them, but as he writes, by “savoring the ‘things,’ where ‘thing’ is understood in the broadest possible sense, for one can immerse oneself not only in the world of things [*Dingwelt*], in colors and tones, but also in the spiritual attitude in which the world of things, colors, and tones become object-like.”²² One must therefore proceed with a “light hand” and allow the different layers of the world to unfold before us, leaving them as they are in their unfolding, just as a painter does when seeking to render on canvas the play of light and the manifestation of things as they appear to the eye.²³

As a direct and descriptive inquiry,²⁴ phenomenology highlights the connections and co-belonging of different perceptual layers. The phenomenologist must distinguish these layers without dissolving them, thereby enabling a deeper investigation into the senses and their interplay in the constitution of the perceived object. It is on these grounds that Schapp seeks to explore how the things of the external world manifest themselves to the senses as articulated and coherent wholes, showing how various sensory modalities interweave to produce a unified experience in which each object maintains its identity despite the multiplicity of partial impressions. Following this line of argument in its proper order, Schapp begins with each sense individually to show that although each has its own specific material content, every sensory content provides access first to determinations associated with the other senses, and ultimately to the thing itself in its wholeness. This argument can be understood as outlining a theory of *Darstellung* (presentation). In line with much of the phenomenological tradition, it culminates in a deeper reflection on the importance of the theoretical approach in perception, using the example of vision as a guide for understanding how the thing is grasped by the intellect through the manifestation of the idea, as we shall see in section “The Idea Within Perception: Species, Individual Ideas, and Understanding” of this chapter.

Color and Visual Perception: The Perceptual Coherence of a Thing

With a phenomenologically attuned gaze directed toward exploring the layers that provide the framework of the perceptual act, the initial focus of Schapp’s phenomenological inquiry is sight and its sensory content, namely, colors, or more

²¹ Schapp (2013, p. 12).

²² Schapp (2013, p. 13).

²³ See Ibid.

²⁴ See Nuccilli (2025b, p. 183) and Smith (1996, p. 247f.).

precisely, the study of how a world manifests itself to sight through the medium of color.²⁵ To characterize Schapp's analysis of the phenomenon of color in negative terms, one can state the following from the outset:

1. it is not a typological-ontological investigation of the chromatic universe, since it does not aim to explore the a priori intra-generic relations among colors on a horizontal level;
2. it is not a physiological study, since it is not concerned with describing the bodily elements that enable vision to grasp different chromatic nuances; and
3. it is not a kinaesthetic study, since it disregards all of the issues related to the positional relationship of the eyes to the surrounding world, and more generally, the position of the body in relation to its environment.²⁶

Instead, Schapp seeks to investigate the *presentational* aspect of color by following the structure of references that perception displays,²⁷ that is, he wants to inquire, through simple observation, what allows chromatic appearances to become transparent, as it were, with the reality of things.²⁸ Color, like tones and tactile sensations, is thus considered solely in its role as the first and indispensable perceptual precondition for the disclosure of the external world. As the investigation unfolds, Schapp will then show how beyond providing the occasion for the perception of the thing, these primitive sensory contents also comprise a fundamental moment in its understanding.

In the perceptual chain identified by Schapp, color is accordingly the first presentational element (*das erste Darstellende*). In order to prepare the ground for a phenomenological investigation of the sense of sight, he highlights five methodological aspects that must be taken into account:

1. The analysis concerns the normal conditions under which vision is capable of seeing and perceiving colors. Thus the focus will be on vision in a healthy adult individual, while the question of how infants perceive colors on the one hand and the question of the various forms of visual impairment on the other will be excluded;²⁹
2. an optimal situation of visibility will be assumed—namely, one in which appropriate lighting allows vision to have things clearly and distinctly in front of it;³⁰
3. the focus will be solely on colors, thus limiting the investigation to the realm of vision, while the other senses and the ways in which they provide us with a world will be set aside—at least for this initial stage;³¹

²⁵ The first chapter of the *Beiträge* is entitled “Durch welche Mittel sich die Dingwelt darstellt,” literally, “through which medium a world of things manifests itself” (Schapp, 2013, p. 9).

²⁶ Even in his 1907 lectures, Husserl already devotes considerable attention to the kinaesthetic problem in perception. See Husserl (1997, p. 131ff.).

²⁷ See Cassirer (1957, p. 125f.), Rolf (2004, p. 92ff.), and Taieb (2025, p. 73).

²⁸ See Schapp (2013, p. 17f.).

²⁹ Schapp (2013, p. 15).

³⁰ Schapp (2013, p. 16).

³¹ Schapp (2013, p. 15).

4. one must proceed with a “light touch,”³² considering only what is before the eyes, excluding from the investigation all knowledge and memories that accompany the understanding of things; and
5. the investigation will be limited to what presents itself as present “in the flesh” (*leibhaftig*) to perception—here Schapp draws on Husserl’s definition (although, as we have seen, he expands its semantic scope). This will highlight the distinctive aspect of perception in contrast to other “representative intuitions” such as phantasy representation, hallucination, illusion, and mere sensation.³³

Once the field of investigation has been clearly defined, the next step is to immerse oneself in the perception of a concrete situation and observe what already manifests itself within it through visual perception. What becomes evident through this initial phenomenological investigation is that we are not simply confronted with colored surfaces, but with things, and that these things are not merely intersecting planes and lines, but appear as coherently arranged in space, at a certain distance from us, which allows us to apprehend them in a particular way. A first indication of the immediate capacity of color to disclose the thing is offered by Schapp through a visual experiment. He invites the reader to imagine standing in front of a window with a crossbar grille, looking out onto a clear sky. After one looks at the window for a long time and then closes one’s eyes, the image of the window will immediately appear as if in negative: a rectangle with a cross in it, made of chiaroscuros that retain the shape of the window. Can this series of shapes still be considered a perception of the thing? According to Schapp, no, because in the image we see in such a case, the material make-up of the thing does not manifest itself, nor does its character of reality.³⁴ From the outset, we have a clear and distinct awareness that upon opening our eyes, this configuration of lines, shapes, and colors will once again be filled with qualities proper to the thing and with elements that go beyond mere sensation. “The perceived grille,” Schapp writes, “appears solid, rigid, heavy.”³⁵ These latter aspects indicate that the window’s grille is now given to us “in flesh and blood.” In contrast, the negative light and shadow image we experience with our eyes closed does not manifest this connection with the reality of the thing, and it is only a representation. With this assessment the author wants, on the one hand, to free himself from the physiologicistic interpretation that takes color and color contrast as the only distinctive sign of visible things,³⁶ while on the other hand, he also

³² Schapp (2013, p. 12).

³³ Schapp (2013, p. 16).

³⁴ Schapp (2013, p. 19).

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ A paradigmatic example of such an interpretation is Hering’s *Grundzüge der Lehre vom Lichtsinn*. In the opening paragraph, the author delineates the scope of his research as follows: “Colors as the matter of visual things. When we open our eyes in a lit room, we see before us a multiplicity of spatially extended formations, which distinguish themselves or stand out from one another by the difference of their color, where the word color must be taken in its broadest sense, and thus must include black, gray, white, and in general, every light and every dark. It is colors that fill the contours of those formations; they are the matter of which what appears to our eyes is com-

wants to criticize the reduction of perception to pure visual sensation. This element is precisely identified by Schapp in the giving of things “in flesh and blood” and in their offering layers that transcend the mere representational appearances given by color. In this regard Schapp writes, “we do not see a thing as mere color in space, but perceive it in the world of color as a thing with its own properties.”³⁷

According to the author of the *Beiträge*, in the act of seeing, from the very beginning things manifest properties that are by their very nature different from color and extension³⁸ and are usually attributable to the tactile perception of things. Let us imagine, for example, that we are sitting with our hands in our pockets, observing what lies before us on the table. We see how the coffee in the cup is liquid, while the cup itself is rigid; we notice how the wood of the table is rough compared to the metal base of the lamp in front of us, which is smooth. If we are not satisfied with what is given to us by the static appearance of these objects, it would be enough to set them in motion to see how the coffee, spilling onto the table, disperses across its surface, while, for example, the honey that fell from the slice of bread this morning remains sticky and, so to speak, cohesive on the table’s surface. Likewise, if we drop the cup, we would observe how quickly it reaches the ground compared to a sheet of paper, which would flutter through the air before gently settling on the carpet.³⁹ These properties are immediately given to sight. Now it is essential to note that this

posed; the world we see [*Sehwelt*] therefore consists only of colored forms, and of things as we see them, which means that the things seen [*Sehdinge*] are nothing other than colors of different shapes and kinds” (Hering, 1920, p. 1). As we shall see in the following discussions in this chapter, the entire Schappian argument moves against this type of reductionism. In his brief treatment of the thing and its properties in the third volume of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Cassirer highlights how Hering’s position already signals an evolution compared to sensory psychology, which tends instead to see the world of colors as a varied multiplicity of sensations, articulated according to certain differences, graduated according to the clarity of tone and color (Cassirer, 1957, p. 124). Although as Cassirer rightly notes, Hering surpasses the sensory model in the direction of understanding how the thing manifests itself to sight, he remains on the level of physiological optics. Indeed, a few passages later, he adduces precisely Schapp’s *Beiträge* as an example of “a closer phenomenological analysis” in which another order of intuition is reached, one in which “color serves only as a medium for perceiving the object that appears in it and is not considered in its own mode of manifestation” (Ibid.).

³⁷ Schapp (2013, p. 20). In emphasizing the manifestation of the bodily reality of the window, however, Schapp does not intend to suggest that the window with its grille is actually present, that it exists *hic et nunc*. It is always possible that we are mistaken. Yet this possibility does not exclude the fact that the phenomenon itself presents a perceptual configuration that conveys all of the characteristics typically associated with a genuinely existing window with a grille. The difference between the view of the window with closed eyes and the one with eyes open is therefore not reducible to the distinction between illusion and reality, since in both cases the questionability of the real remains, a hallmark of the phenomenological suspension of judgment. Cf. Schapp (2013, p. 6).

³⁸ Schapp (2013, p. 19).

³⁹ These examples are only loosely inspired by the examples found in the *Beiträge*, which involve objects that were in common use at the beginning of the twentieth century, but in some cases would be misleading today. Cf. Schapp (2013, pp. 30–31).

view contradicts any form of empiricist perceptual associationism.⁴⁰ For Schapp, the characteristics we perceive are not the result of an addition made by consciousness, such as when certain secondary qualities of things are derived from habitual perceptual associations, or when a vivid memory re-emerges while observing liquid, rigid, or heavy objects. Rather, it is in the very unfolding of manifestation itself that, alongside changes in movement, color, and shape, the intimate characteristics of the thing are revealed directly to the gaze. Schapp even says that one can literally “cast a glance inside the thing.”⁴¹

In perception, then, one does not simply transcend the visual stimuli produced by light projected from objects onto the retina, as if through an associative memory linking what is seen with past individual experience.⁴² Rather, it is within the lived experience itself that further levels of manifestation open up, where additional characteristics of the thing come into play. Each characteristic follows its own peculiar objective course of manifestation, which makes its most intimate features

⁴⁰ On the question of the relationship between empiricist associationism and phenomenology, see Cobb-Stevens (1988, p. 54ff.).

⁴¹ Schapp (2013, p. 20).

⁴² To understand the historical and cultural origins of Schapp's critique, one can refer once again to Hering. In his essay *Über das Gedächtnis als eine allgemeine Funktion der organisierten Materie*, based on a lecture he gave in Vienna on May 30, 1870, he writes: “It is known that sensory perceptions, if they occur without change for a long time or if they happen repeatedly one after another, are imprinted in the so-called sensory memory [*Sinnengedächtnis*] in such a way that even after hours, and after a hundred other things have occupied our attention, they suddenly re-enter our consciousness with the full sensory freshness of the original perception. There we see how an entire group of sensations, appropriately arranged in space and time, is reproduced with such vividness that it could be mistaken for [the presence of] something that has long ceased to be present. This shows us decisively that even though the sensation and conscious perception have long since disappeared, a material trace remains in our nervous system, a change in molecular or atomic structure, by which the nervous substance is enabled to reproduce those physical processes, along with which the corresponding psychic process, that is, sensation and perception, is also set in motion” (Hering, 1921, pp. 7–8). To clarify how this “sensory memory” functions in perception, a few pages later he further states: “Every perception of a spatial object is a very complex process. For example, a white sphere suddenly appears before me: not only must the sensation of white be brought to consciousness, but also the circular outline of the sphere, its curvature (recognizable from the subtle distribution of light and shadow), its distance from the eye, and the sphere's size must be correctly grasped. It seems to require an effort of sensations, imaginings, and deductions to accomplish all this. And yet the correct perception of the sphere is already at work within moments, and without my being conscious of the individual processes from which the whole is constructed; only the final result enters my consciousness. The nervous substance faithfully retains the memory of often-practiced actions. All the processes necessary to produce the correct perception, which previously took place slowly and with difficulty thanks to the continuous participation of consciousness, are now reproduced in abbreviated form, and with neither the duration nor the intensity required for any individual part to rise above the threshold of consciousness” (Hering, 1921, p. 10). As can be seen here, the processes that enable perception to recognize the spatial and formal characteristics of things are traced back to physiological processes as consequence of a kind of perceptual habit that settles in memory in a completely unconscious form. It is precisely in order to refute this type of conception of perception that Schapp insists on the intuitability and visibility of certain aspects of things, even formal ones, without cognitive mediation.

perceptible and thereby defines its “character.”⁴³ By observing how a given object reflects light, we are, for example, presented with the specific “glossiness” of that object, which in turn reveals its internal homogeneity. Similarly, seeing how a bow bends without breaking under a certain pressure immediately reveals the elasticity of the material it is made of.⁴⁴ Regarding this, Schapp tells us that “properties such as elasticity and glossiness become so highly representable (*vorstellig*) that we have them before us in flesh and blood [*leibhaftig vor uns haben*],” and in such a faithful manner that “it makes no sense to ask whether they can be perceived in a more immediate way.”⁴⁵

Throughout the *Beiträge*, this shift toward, so to speak, a “characterological” investigation of what is perceived⁴⁶ serves as a prelude to the identification of a pre-scientific plane of experience, accompanied by a peculiar interest in everydayness and the lifeworld. Such an aspect emerges through the critique of a physicalistic and mathematizing conception of reality. This is particularly evident in connection with two themes: the theme of movement and the theme of “form” (*Gestalt*), the latter already understood in a way that foreshadows theoretical intersections with the nascent Gestalt psychology.⁴⁷ In the physical sciences, movement is described only as accelerated motion. Schapp seeks to show in contrast that although this description serves the applied purposes of physics, it does not in the least capture the concept of movement as it appears to the eye in everyday reality.⁴⁸ According to the author, every single thing in the world has its own specific movement, which immediately reveals its most distinctive features. When observing, for example, a branch swaying under the weight of a bird, one can instantly read in that movement the branch’s elasticity and flexibility. But these characteristics—characteristics that, so to speak, announce themselves (*sich kundgeben*)⁴⁹ in perception—are related not only to the weight of the bird and the force it exerts in settling on the branch, but also to the thickness of the branch and the type of tree to which it belongs: some woods are more elastic, others less so; some branches are more flexible, others less flexible. It is on these elements that the different types of reaction to the same action depend. Thanks to the branch’s trembling, marks also emerge on the bark through which one can discern where it is more resistant and where it is likely to break first instead, “and all of this cannot be ignored, because it imposes itself on us. It is unthinkable that something merely colored could appear to us in this way.”⁵⁰

If we follow the unfolding of perception critically and without prejudice, we notice that color gives us direct access to such characteristics of things as flexibility,

⁴³ Schapp (2013, p. 126).

⁴⁴ Schapp (2013, p. 20).

⁴⁵ Schapp (2013, p. 21).

⁴⁶ See Rolf (2004, p. 90ff.) and Summa (2025, p. 46ff.).

⁴⁷ See Smith (1996, pp. 247–248).

⁴⁸ Schapp (2013, p. 21).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

rigidity, resistance, and strength, along with “other qualities for which we even lack the words.”⁵¹ According to Schapp, even the linguistic tools we normally have at our disposal are therefore insufficient to describe what reality presents to the eye.

This account of the way in which the reality of things is revealed becomes even clearer when we consider how things interact with human action. In this regard Schapp states:

And without referring to other senses [...], we see the properties of things more clearly when we see how they behave in different situations [...]; when we look at how red-hot iron twists, bends under the blacksmith’s hammer, and how it takes on different shapes, and at the same time we see that if the iron were dark [i.e., cold], it would break rather than allowing itself to be shaped; when we see how the hard, sharp iron of the planer makes the shavings fly away from the softer wood; in short, when we go to the various craftsmen and observe how things are worked.⁵²

The primacy of visual experience over the practical experience of things is a central element, one that we will encounter again in the discussion of the sense of touch. More generally, the example of craftsmanship and practical experience marks a turning point in Schapp’s intellectual development, particularly in his phenomenology of law and his philosophy of hi/stories. Similarly, the theme of the richness of reality in contrast to the limitations of language also resonates in his analysis of sounds and auditory perception. It is therefore worth exploring these aspects in what follows.

Sounds and Auditory Perception: The Richness of Reality

As we have seen, in the analysis of colors Schapp shows how the chromatic filter provided by visual sensations can reveal not only the outward appearance of things, but also deeper aspects of their internal structure. The guiding aim of his investigations is to move beyond physicalistic and mechanistic theories of perception. This same goal shapes his analyses of the sensory domains of hearing and touch. In both cases, he pursues two parallel lines of inquiry: one concerned with the problem of space and object-related spatiality, the other with the thing itself and the manner in which its properties are disclosed.

Having reiterated that he intends neither to investigate the universe of sounds in a horizontal manner (i.e., relating types of sounds to one another) nor to study the relationship between the intensity or pitch of the sounds with the air vibrations from which they arise,⁵³ the author begins his inquiry with an examination of the relationship between sound and space. He takes the example of the blacksmith working with iron: “When we are walking through the countryside, lost in thought, and hear

⁵¹ Schapp (2013, p. 21).

⁵² Schapp (2013, p. 25).

⁵³ Cf. Schapp (2013, pp. 26–27).

the blacksmith's hammer striking the iron," he explains, "a stretch of space suddenly unfolds before us, extending from our current position to the place where we seem able to locate the blacksmith at work."⁵⁴ He then adds that when the blacksmith pauses, that space vanishes. According to him, we are constantly surrounded by such spatial openings. However, and this is the perspective he seeks to deconstruct, such a space seems to be identifiable with the greatest precision only with the help of the sense of sight, which, so to speak, locates the source of a sound more accurately than even the most well-trained ear could. This suggests that the space we perceive through sound is just a mental image that copies visual space, an image later confirmed by seeing the place where the sound comes from. However, Schapp insists that we must strictly follow his method, which means focusing only on the current perception, in this case, hearing. By concentrating solely on the sound, we perceive a space, but if we take one step further in perception, we realize that the sound does not represent an empty space; instead, it is always connected to the thing it comes from. In this way it becomes the very place where the thing reveals itself together within the surrounding environment.⁵⁵ Obviously, in many cases it is impossible to avoid the step through association or imagination: when hearing a rooster's crow from afar, the way the "cock-a-doodle-doo" presents the rooster is not the same as the way in which colors present the rooster to the eye,⁵⁶ since there remains an unbridgeable structural difference in terms of givenness. Yet according to Schapp, there are many cases in which this hierarchy can even be reversed. From a phenomenological point of view, there are indeed situations in which things reveal their characteristics more clearly and evidently through sounds than through colors. This is the case, for example, when we hear a vehicle passing by on a paved road from a window. In this case, the author argues, the weight of the vehicle, the stiffness of its suspension, and the regularity (or lack thereof) of the pavement are already revealed simply by listening to the noise it makes, while these aspects are more difficult to discern by sight.⁵⁷

If we focus on the specific realms of the phenomenon of color on one hand and the phenomenon of sound on the other, we see that two separate domains unfold, domains that cannot communicate with each other in any way. Yet when both phenomenal domains are considered in terms of their presentational character, they can

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Cf. Schapp (2013, p. 28). In this respect as well Schapp aims to overcome any form of reduction to mere perceptual sensation, and in doing so, he seeks to break free from previous conceptions of auditory space. Stumpf, for instance, argues in his *Tonpsychologie* that the position of an object conveyed by a sound can be reconstructed only by comparing different sensations of sounds coming from various locations in space; see Stumpf (1883, p. 57ff.). For a survey of the theory of sound in authors of the Brentanian tradition such as Stumpf, as well as of early phenomenology such as Schapp, see Taieb (2025, p. 73ff.), who also discusses the presentational function of tones, sounds, and noises in the *Beiträge*.

⁵⁶ Cf. Schapp (2013, p. 28).

⁵⁷ See Schapp (2013, p. 39).

converge on the same thing and offer, so to speak, two different modes of presentation that jointly lead to the givenness of the thing presented.⁵⁸

However, according to the philosopher from Aurich, if we abstract from the habits with which we interpret the world around us and resist the temptation immediately to connect the noise or sounds to the things we see with our eyes, we can access a distinct perceptual world where nature reveals itself in all its richness. For example, when we hear a storm raging around our house, rustling through the branches of the garden trees and rattling the windows, we tend to reduce the auditory space to the visual representation of the things involved in the storm (the house, the windows, the trees), whereas by focusing solely on the sounds and what manifests within them, we open ourselves to the very “heart” of nature, the “forces that permeate it,” the “struggle between the elements”⁵⁹—a dimension, according to Schapp, that is closer to reality than the forms of things can ever convey to us, a world of representation that can only be partially conveyed to us through touch and sight.⁶⁰

Touch and Tactile Sensations: Theoretical and Practical Attitudes

In his analysis of sight and hearing, Schapp shows how features of things that are commonly attributed to touch are in fact also fully presented through seeing and hearing. When he explicitly addresses the problem of tactile perception, he remains consistent with his methodological principle of allowing perception itself to reveal what is given of things through touch. At the same time, just as he does for hearing, he seeks to bring into alignment the givenness of touch and that of sight at the level of the manifestation of the thing. In order to do so, he undertakes a phenomenological deconstruction of the commonsense view of touch, returning to the example of the craftsman—this time, however, beginning with the very core of the experience of working with materials in the context of production. According to him, when it comes to the sense of touch, one must distinguish between two different attitudes toward things: the attitude of the human being “at work” (*werktätiges Mensch*) and that of the “theoretical” human being (*theoretisches Mensch*).⁶¹ The first attitude is

⁵⁸ Cf. Schapp (2013, p. 32).

⁵⁹ Schapp (2013, p. 31).

⁶⁰ See *ibid.*

⁶¹ Although this dichotomy may recall Husserl’s distinction in the second volume of the *Ideas* between the “surrounding world” and the “theoretical surrounding world” (see Husserl, 1989, p. 230f.), the two perspectives have little in common. Husserl’s distinction already unfolds within a transcendental perspective, whereas here Schapp is merely attempting to discriminate between the practical attitude toward things and the cognitive one. In Schapp’s analyses, the world is not “reduced” to a correlate of consciousness and thus to a “noema”; rather, the investigation of things is firmly rooted in the fabric of the lifeworld.

that of a human being handling a given thing, engaging with it in order to fulfill specific purposes in everyday life. In contrast, the second attitude is that of a human being investigating the thing, setting aside its use and function in order to probe its properties.⁶² Only in this second case can one strictly speak of the “perception” of the object. Anticipating the reflections underlying Heidegger’s famous distinction between *Zuhandenheit* (readiness-to-hand) and *Vorhandenheit* (presence-at-hand),⁶³ Schapp provides several examples intended to show how the characteristics of things remain hidden during their use:⁶⁴

There is a difference between cutting a piece of bread and experiencing its hardness and softness while cutting it, and stretching a piece of cloth with one’s hands and experiencing its elasticity while stretching it. Seen from the outside, it appears to be the same thing; but if one reflects on the two attitudes, the one that begins with “perception” and the one that aims to accomplish a task, the difference between the two becomes evident.⁶⁵

When cutting bread, one usually does not focus on its brittleness or hardness, but rather on the goal of slicing it; in pursuing this goal, those characteristics are, so to speak, completely forgotten, or at most they are noticed as an obstacle if, for example, the bread is stale. On the other hand, if while cutting the bread one focuses precisely on those characteristics—if as the knife sinks into the bread, one tries to assess its texture, freshness, or brittleness—then in carrying out the same gesture, it is possible to take a kind of reflective step back within the action itself, thereby shifting from a practical attitude to a theoretical one.⁶⁶

From the outside, there may appear to be no difference, but in only one of the two attitudes do things truly reveal their characteristics: namely, the theoretical attitude. For Schapp, when we move from the practical attitude to the theoretical attitude, “it is not merely a difference of attention [*Aufmerksamkeit*]; rather, the scope of the intention [*Intentio*] that, in perception, is directed toward the object is entirely absent when we come into contact with things during work. Indeed, one can truly define what *intentio* is precisely on the basis of this contrast.”⁶⁷ In contrast, Schapp goes on to clarify that he understands perception as “the very same attitude taken toward the object in seeing, hearing, and touching, the being-directed [*Gerichtetsein*] toward an object [*Objekt*], an object-directed having”⁶⁸ as opposed to the mere level of sensations, which are limited to delivering the sensory content—the colors, sounds, and tactile sensations that present themselves to the senses when we use or handle things.⁶⁹ Thus at the heart of investigations into the sense of touch (and in

⁶² See Schapp (2013, p. 33).

⁶³ See Heidegger (2001, p. 69ff.).

⁶⁴ The Heideggerian example of the street is well known: although we walk on it, it goes more unnoticed than the passerby we glimpse from afar. See Heidegger (2001, p. 107).

⁶⁵ Schapp (2013, p. 33).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Schapp (2013, p. 34).

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

just a few lines), the first definition of the very essence of the perceptual attitude takes shape, which according to Schapp consists in having the thing before oneself as an object, that is, in directing one's intention toward sensory phenomena as sites of manifestation of the cognitive aspects of things and the thingly world. But how, then, is the thing configured through the various senses?

The Structure of Perceptual Reference in Relation to the Different Senses: Illusion, Reality, and Manifestative Order

To demonstrate how the manifestation of things is structured across the different senses—without deductive involvement from the intellect or associative activity from the senses themselves—Schapp explores the problem of illusion, considering it from the threefold perspective of sight, touch, and hearing. His first example of illusion concerns vision, and specifically the representation of things as images.⁷⁰ If we take an oil painting and analyze it from a material perspective, we find an object of the world situated among other things in an objective space and consisting of a piece of canvas covered by a thick layer of colored material. Yet what we see on the canvas is not merely spots of color, but images that immediately give us a glimpse of a world—for example, a green hill with trees and people.⁷¹ Moreover, if the painting is highly realistic, we can also see the represented characteristics of the depicted things: the softness of the meadow, the roughness of the tree trunks, the fluidity of a river or of any body of water. In such a situation, the temptation would be to attribute the representation of these characteristics to the mind's addition of sensory information derived from imaginative representations or empirical associations. This would even seem plausible, Schapp tells us, if it were not for the fact that the psychological theories underlying this perspective assume that every experience can be reduced to basic forms of direct contact with each aspect of the knowable: the roughness of the trunk I touched yesterday is recalled by the depiction of the represented tree in the oil painting I see before me today. However, this basic form of empiricism fails to account for the fact that even in touch, the qualities of things are never immediately given to us, but are always mediated through the presentational mechanism.⁷² Rather than following the claim (difficult to sustain logically) that there is a specific sense capable of directly perceiving the additional aspects of things and thus serving as a unifying link across the different senses, Schapp proposes instead not only to investigate the functioning of the presentational mechanism—the evidence with which a world is presented through the sense-specific presenting medium at any given moment—but also to defend it from the skepticism

⁷⁰ Cf. Schapp (2013, p. 38).

⁷¹ Cf. Schapp (2013, p. 39).

⁷² Ibid.

of illusion (and thus from phenomenalism) on the one hand and from the slide into naïve realism on the other.

A similar argument applies to auditory and tactile perception. As for hearing, one need only think of the example of a theatrical performance in which a thunderstorm or the noise of a crowd is simulated. What is represented by sound may initially be distant, then gradually approach, and finally fade away again. In this way an auditory section of the world is represented that does not actually exist in reality, just as happens visually in a painting.⁷³ Moreover, even though it might seem counterintuitive, the possibility of illusion also exists for the sense of touch. By stimulating the epithelial cells in a certain way, it is possible to make someone with closed eyes believe that he or she is holding an object, even though that object is not actually present. Magicians, for instance, base much of their craft on this form of illusion.⁷⁴ Through these examples, a distinctive conception of reality as a manifestative configuration begins to take shape in the *Beiträge*, culminating in the investigation of the thing itself. At this stage of his research, however, what concerns Schapp is to show that for the phenomenological analysis of perception, the real existence or material presence of the thing is irrelevant. What truly matters instead is to bring to manifestation the very articulation of the way in which reality presents itself within the perceptual phenomenon.⁷⁵ In fact, such articulation remains the same both in illusion and in the perception of a really existing object, and this holds true for all of the three senses he investigates.

Schapp introduces the question of the intuitability of certain manifestative aspects of the thing that cannot be reduced to the level of mere sensation by turning to an initial type of evidence that emerges in his phenomenological analysis of the perceptual layers carried out along the three dimensions of sight, hearing, and touch:

If we now consider that fluidity, rigidity, and other properties of things can be represented in the world of color, the world of sound, and the world of touch, and that furthermore these properties can be represented in an image-like manner solely through colors, sounds, or tactile sensations, it seems that a rift appears in the world as it presents itself to us, in that certain determinations—such as colors or sounds—bring along the representation of other determinations, such as fluidity or rigidity, in a certain order [...] bringing strictly the same to representation without having the slightest similarity with one another or with that of which they bring the representation. And yet this order of the world into two elements does not seem to be accidental or arbitrary. It does not seem to be without order.⁷⁶

Even though, considered in themselves, colors, sounds, and tactile sensations belong to different worlds of the sensory universe, and even though these worlds have no relation of similarity or continuity with one another, they nonetheless equally allow access to the manifestation of certain characteristics of things that function, so to speak, as the representational point of convergence of these different sensible

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Cf. Schapp (2013, p. 40).

⁷⁵ See Summa (2025, p. 51f).

⁷⁶ Schapp (2013, p. 41).

worlds.⁷⁷ Colors, sounds, and tactile sensations thus overlap in correspondence with the presentation of the thing, even though they have no structural affinity with what is manifested of it: sound and hardness, or color and hardness, are in themselves completely different phenomena. Despite this radical difference, however, the qualities maintain a relation to one another along the lines of a perceptual order that is neither accidental nor arbitrary. What Schapp defines as *presenting qualities*—colors, sounds/noises, and tactile-pressure sensations—appear to us as primary in perception with respect to qualities such as rigidity, hardness, and fluidity, which he defines as the *presented* ones and which appear to us as secondary. There is therefore an a priori lawfulness that prevents the first perceptual plane of the thing from mixing with the second.⁷⁸ Thus the first category of qualities structurally possesses the capacity to refer beyond itself, supplying a constant reference to the second manifestative plane of the thing. Indeed, it can in no way occur that colors or sounds might themselves be presented through other *presenting* qualities.⁷⁹ Color as an absolute content, as something that can be represented starting from a perceived color, exists only in imagination, never in reality. According to Schapp, one can paint a patch of blue on a canvas to represent a pool of water or a patch of red to represent a stain of rust, but one cannot paint color itself.⁸⁰ If we depict one red patch of color with another red patch in order to represent its immanent content, that is, that specific shade of red, we will only have two red patches of color, not the representation of one within the other: “each color is in the same way unique and original”⁸¹ he states, opening what, throughout the entirety of the *Beiträge*, will emerge as a precise questioning of the Husserlian concept of species.⁸² From his point of view, then, only those qualities that belong to the second level of the characteristics previously examined can be represented. And it is indeed legitimate to say that the green in the painting represents the green of the hill only on the basis of the representational role that the color plays in the painting, which corresponds to the presentational role that the color plays in reality.⁸³

The Character of Things: Observing Perception, Hi/story, and Individuality

The presented characteristics and the space in which the thing presents itself are the two fundamental components that configure the thing’s “character of reality” (*Realitätscharakter*)⁸⁴ beyond the manifestative filter given by colors, tactile sensations, and sounds. They represent, so to speak, *a parte obiecti*, the thing offering

⁷⁷ Cf. Cassirer (1957, p. 126f.).

⁷⁸ See Laasik (2025, p. 30) and Vigo (2025, p. 89).

⁷⁹ Cf. Schapp (2013, p. 41).

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Schapp (2013, p. 42).

⁸² See section “The Idea Within Perception: Species, Individual Ideas, and Understanding”.

⁸³ Schapp (2013, p. 42).

⁸⁴ Schapp (2013, p. 54).

itself to perception. For the full manifestation of the thing, however, there is a need for another fundamental element, *a parte subiecti*, which enables consciousness to channel and order the presenting of things in the external world into a unified pole of manifestation. Schapp calls this cognitive element “observing perception” (*beobachtende Wahrnehmung*).⁸⁵ “Observing perception” is “that peculiar kind of perception that seeks above all to overcome the impediments and obstacles placed before it [...], which is not satisfied with what is offered to it [*das Gebotenen*], with what shows itself, but wants to know how what is observed is in truth and not how it seems [...].”⁸⁶ Thus the observing perception actively operates within what is offered in perception to deliver the presented itself. This is done in the first instance by recognizing and isolating the presented in relation to the other elements present in the perceptual field, and in the second instance by moving beyond the mere presenting aspect of the thing to its more structural elements. It is only by distinguishing observing perception from perception in the broad sense, from being aware of something—i.e., from that particular type of visual perception that moves voluntarily in search of a focal point in the perceptual complex of elements offering themselves to view—that one can arrive at the actual manifestation of the thing, which is therefore configured in this sense as a “correlate” of a specific perceptual function of observing.⁸⁷ Such a perceptual procedure is accompanied by, and culminates in, a cognitive act that Schapp calls “picking out with intention” (*herausgreifend meinen*):

We see a series of tin plates placed in the cupboard [...] and notice that we are mainly occupied with one plate, observing it by picking it out with intention while the other objects remain to the side [*“daneben” stehen*]. In this “picking out with intention” [*herausgreifend meinen*], one must distinguish between grasping [*das Anpacken*] at one point, as when one grasps the plate from the side or center, and intending in a broad sense, which addresses the object as a whole. Since in grasping the whole object is brought to us even if it is grasped at only one point, we can always determine which object is in this privileged position with respect to us and from where we grasp it. The plates that are close to the one we privilege are co-intended [*mit gemeint*]; they too are highlighted from the background, but without our action.⁸⁸

The example of the plates in the cupboard forms the basis of a new conceptual reworking of mass-produced objects—one that prescribes the route we can trace between the critique of universals and the later formulation of the “thing-for” that we find in *In Geschichten verstrickt*. Nevertheless, here it serves to show the dual perceptual plane on which “observing perception” works. Indeed, Schapp specifies that “in observing perception, the thing stands before us as a whole” and that “the highlighted part of the thing is not highlighted as the thing [is highlighted] in relation to other things.”⁸⁹ The perceptual plane thus lies on a kind of ideal boundary represented by the thing, a

⁸⁵ Schapp (2013, p. 65).

⁸⁶ Schapp (2013, p. 66).

⁸⁷ See Schapp (2013, p. 70).

⁸⁸ Schapp (2013, p. 68).

⁸⁹ Schapp (2013, p. 69).

boundary beyond which there is the external world and within which there is the thing with its parts, and especially with its properties. The thing as the correlate of the cognitive act internal to the peculiar kind of perception here termed observing perception thus represents the ideal limit for knowledge of the world, and also represents a form of pregivenness in the Husserlian sense.⁹⁰ Indeed, it is that from which every further cognitive approach, from the practical experience of everyday life to the praxis of scientific research, takes its point of departure. This evaluation is very important to Schapp. He is convinced that every form of technical aid to scientific research has as its ultimate goal to bring the thing investigated to the same perceptual limit as the objects of everyday life. When microorganisms are investigated with the microscope, for example, they are brought by the lens to a perceptual level that makes them observable as if they were things, or at least as if they were living organisms of a size suitable to be seen with the naked eye like things we might encounter in everyday situations. After a certain number of enlargements, the amoeba, for example, appears under the microscope in much the same way as a jellyfish appears to the naked eye. Obviously, the starting point in the investigation of microorganisms is not everyday experience—it takes, in fact, a wealth of theoretical assumptions and technological developments to get to the point of discovering and visualizing them—but once they are brought into view, they are configured in perception as things. This means that the scientist inherits this form of perceptual conception from everyday life. Schapp calls this form of knowledge “clarity” (*Deutlichkeit*), i.e., the clear and distinct manifestation of the thing to observing perception.⁹¹ He can thus say that the manner of the thing’s giving itself can be ascribed precisely to this latter peculiar kind of perception, which traverses the phenomenon by aiming at the thing until it assumes a sharpness that prevents the gaze from going beyond it. It is because of this aiming at things and their clear and distinct presentation, then, that observing perception stands apart from other forms of intuition, especially from aesthetic perception, and is the only one that truly aims at theoretical knowledge of things.⁹²

The configuration of the thing facing consciousness as a unitary pole of manifestation—both of its most intrinsic characteristics and of its location in a context of relations given by the external world and the lifeworld—provides the preparatory thematic framework for the analysis in chapter VII of the second section titled *Das Ding selbst* (the thing itself). In this very dense chapter, Schapp ties up the threads of the examples that have emerged so far in his investigation and links them inextricably to one of the cornerstones of his present and future thought: the concept of hi/story.⁹³ Aiming to show how our knowledge of the material characteristics of things

⁹⁰ See section “Theory of *Darstellung*: How the External World Presents Itself in Perception”.

⁹¹ For a more in-depth discussion of the concept of clarity in the *Beiträge*, see Laasik (2025, p. 25f.).

⁹² Cf. Schapp (2013, pp. 75–76).

⁹³ As already mentioned in Part I, Chap. 1 the German term *Geschichte* that Schapp uses beginning with the *Beiträge* can refer either to a succession of events or to the narration of these events. For this reason, in some cases the English term “histories” should be preferred, in others the English term “stories.”

is not limited to the experience we have of them through manipulation (whether this takes place with productive or simply cognitive intentions), Schapp writes as follows in what is perhaps the most speculatively incisive passage of the *Beiträge*:

[...] it is as if everything has its own hi/story and this hi/story leaves traces behind it. These traces sometimes appear to us as scars that we can interpret; immediately we see what becomes of the thing. From the way wood is cut we see it “behaving” [*verhalten*] in relation to the knife; from the fine scratch on a gold watch we see the fineness of gold. Each thing in its contingent form [*Gestalt*] always shows what it has gone through, and with that, its history, its specific manner and the way in which it has survived its destiny. When we see things, they are certainly not as taken from the box, but they have their own destiny and carry with them the traces of this destiny. Even if they have just come from the factory, they show us the way in which they have been made.⁹⁴

The excerpt quoted above may seem entirely out of context, both with respect to the Platonizing tendency of the phenomenology of perception in the Munich and Göttingen circles and with respect to Schapp’s approach in the third section of the *Beiträge*. It is no coincidence, then, that the concept of hi/story provides the element on which the critique of the phenomenological Platonism of the philosophy of hi/stories will later be based.⁹⁵ In my view, this seeming dissonance can be explained through a cultural hybridization that takes place in the *Beiträge*. If we want to understand the relevance of this theoretical step in the treatment first of the concept of work and later of the concept of the thing-for, we have to refer to Theodor Lipps, and in particular, to the concept of work in his *Ästhetik*. The perceived thing, such as the work (of art or manufacture) in Lipps’s aesthetics, does not allow itself to be reduced to its barest materiality, yet its materiality does display traces of this particular object’s individual path in the world. There are perceptible aspects in the work that refer, on the one hand, to human action, and on the other, to the series of unique and unrepeatable events that have marked that work’s path in the world.⁹⁶ In this regard, Lipps speaks of “fangs of time” (*Zahn der Zeit*) to express the signs of wear on an object that allow us to understand the specificity of its composition.⁹⁷ In order to express the uniqueness and unrepeatability of an object’s perceptual appearance and the reference to its passage through the world, Schapp states that things “are certainly not as taken from the box”.⁹⁸ In fact, even a newly acquired thing does not emerge from its wrappings as if it were entirely untouched by destiny, entirely innocent of any hi/story whatever; instead, it testifies not only to how this object in particular was manufactured, but also to the habitual depths of how such an item has

⁹⁴ Schapp (2013, p. 117).

⁹⁵ However, as I have shown in Nuccilli (2020), the critique of the concept of species included in the *Beiträge* already contains *in nuce* an initial escape route from the phenomenology of Husserl and other members of the phenomenological circles.

⁹⁶ See Lipps (1903, p. 206f.) and Lipps (1920, pp. 483–585).

⁹⁷ Lipps (1920, p. 558). He also speaks of the *Alter* (age) of works of art (Lipps, 1920, p. 558), a recurring concept and terminology in *In Geschichten verstrickt* used to describe the perceptually primary characteristic of things-for.

⁹⁸ Schapp (2013, p. 117).

been produced and used before (perhaps for centuries). And here what is prominent is how the thing in question manifests itself, rather than how the thing can be understood as a correlate of various performances of consciousness.⁹⁹ Schapp's concept of hi/story is thus quite different from the concept of history that will soon make its appearance in Husserl. By the "destiny" of the thing, Schapp does not mean the "constitutive" history of the object, i.e., the intentional path it takes within consciousness, which can be traced back to the hyletic-immanent level and thus to its genesis in original time-consciousness.¹⁰⁰ Rather, what is meant is the unique perceptual aspect of the thing and the occurrence in it of traces of events (whether related to human action or not) that mark the fundamental moments of its existence, from its production to its encounter with our sight. Hi/story is thus always the manifestation in the thing of the world's eventuality and facticity. Through the concept of hi/story in the *Beiträge*, Schapp breaks free from a view of reality reduced to its merely mechanical phenomena and reverses the relationship between the thing and space/matter. The thing is not merely reduced to the space it occupies and to its matter, but "has its own character that shows us new aspects every day."¹⁰¹ In this way, then, the thing's priority over matter and space is also established ontologically, since the material form that a thing takes can certainly reveal something of the thing's character. But as Schapp points out, one should not confuse the presenting with the presented; on the side of the presented, "The thing retains only its individuality, not its space in relation to other things. It lives among the others according to its character."¹⁰² It is at the heart of the individualistic and historical conception of the thing that one finds the first hint of Schapp's possible escape from any form of abstract and schematic understanding of perceptual phenomena.

The Idea Within Perception: Species, Individual Ideas, and Understanding

This line of thought is continued and completed in the third and final section of the *Beiträge*, entitled *Die Idee in der Wahrnehmung* (the idea within perception). Here Schapp offers a very peculiar perspective on the transformation of the real into meaning within consciousness—one that involves a brief engagement with Husserl's theory of intentionality, albeit without a systematic development,¹⁰³ and moves toward his first hermeneutical interpretation, though still within a classical

⁹⁹ Here we might note Husserl's very different appeal to the metaphor of a box; see, e.g., Husserl (1964, p. 56), where he specifies that the immanent data of perception are not "in" consciousness in the same way that things are "in" a box—yet despite rejecting the container metaphor, he is still addressing the perceived world in terms of its givenness for the perceiver.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Husserl (1966, p. 345), and see Biceaga (2010, p. xv) and Zahavi (2003, p. 94).

¹⁰¹ Schapp (2013, p. 117).

¹⁰² Schapp (2013, p. 122).

¹⁰³ See Schapp (2013, p. 146).

phenomenological Platonism.¹⁰⁴ Since I cannot undertake a complete and exhaustive analysis of this in the present chapter, I will limit myself to a concise account of the development of those problematic junctures that will later serve as the starting point for Schapp's critical engagement with phenomenological method, first in his philosophy of law and subsequently in *In Geschichten verstrickt*.

The first critical issue concerns the relationship between sensibility and intellect, which in Schapp's argument is articulated through two fundamental moments within the perceptual act: intuition (*Anschauung*) and intending (*Meinen*). In the first two sections, the *Beiträge* focus on what can be given "in flesh and blood" in perception, following the distinction between what presents and what is presented. The presenting is that which materially offers itself to perception and enables the perceptual act to access other aspects of the thing that are not directly reducible to its sensible content, but are nonetheless revealed through it. Space, objects, and properties such as hardness and elasticity are perceived "indirectly" through the "direct" perception of color.¹⁰⁵ The gaze is, so to speak, immediately directed toward the intuition of these aspects, which reveal themselves in their full intuitive richness. It is precisely along this line of manifestative fullness that Schapp develops his notion of intuition. In this regard, he writes: "This being-intuited [*Angeschautsein*] is what we intend to consider as the precise determination of the givenness of the thing itself in flesh and blood, mediated by the sensible givenness of color."¹⁰⁶ Intuition is thus what allows the thing to constitute itself in the breadth of its givenness and in the complexity of its stratification as an objectual unity. However, the description of this perceptual process, which occurs as in a single blow (*Schlag*),¹⁰⁷ does not exhaust the complexity and richness of perception. According to Schapp, there is a further fundamental moment that characterizes it, one without which it is, to use Kant's word, blind.¹⁰⁸ Shifting the phenomenological gaze beyond the different layers of the material presented to perception, one can reach instead what represents its "light" (*Licht*),¹⁰⁹ the luminous element that allows the channeling of the givens structuring each level of reality into a rational unity of understanding. Schapp defines this light as "the idea within perception" and immediately clarifies that "by idea I mean what Plato meant" and that "instead of idea one can also speak of 'concept' [*Begriff*] or 'essence' [*Wesen*]."¹¹⁰ The conscious counterpart of what intuition is for the givenness of the thing is, for the idea, the *Meinen*, the spiritual attitude (*geistige Haltung*)¹¹¹ that can lead to the manifestation of the idea from the thing's givenness in intuition, thereby providing the other element present in the perceptual

¹⁰⁴ See Nuccilli (2020) and Vigo (2025, p. 88f.).

¹⁰⁵ Schapp (2013, p. 130).

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Schapp (2013, p. 131).

¹⁰⁸ Schapp (2013, p. 130).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Schapp (2013, p. 131).

act. According to Schapp, the moment of intending is coordinated with intuition, even though it is radically distinct from it.¹¹²

To explain this complex mechanism that binds together the thing and the idea in perception, he returns to the problem of illusion. Schapp describes the sight of a quadrangular, slightly curved, brownish object, lying on a stove in a garden, an object that at first glance appears to be a shard of terracotta. At the top, near the edge, this shard of terracotta has a small groove such as one often finds on terracotta pots to let water flow out for flowers. At this first glance, above and beyond its shape, all the structural features of a shard immediately present themselves: hardness, glaze, workmanship. Yet as the gaze shifts toward the left side, a sharp cut appears that does not match the curvature of the shard, and indeed, on closer inspection, one also notices a ruffled edge—an element that clearly reveals that it is not a shard at all, but rather a piece of bacon left there by a dog.¹¹³ All of a sudden, the illusion manifests itself.

But what do we find phenomenologically at the root of this illusion? If we consider the transformation of one thing into another within the flow of the same perceptual continuum, we see that on the one hand, there are the structural characteristics that refer first to the shard (its hardness and the opacity of its surface) and then to the piece of bacon (its softness and the glossiness of the rind's fat); on the other hand, there is the spiritual attitude that receives them. The coming together of givenness as a single manifestative field is experienced through intuition, but this form of experience would be blind if there did not exist a peculiar perceptual function that allows one to apprehend that phenomenal aggregate specifically as a shard or specifically as a piece of bacon, and this function is precisely intending (*Intention*). Although the passage from intuition to intention represents the central locus for the understanding of things in the external world, it is precisely here that the possibility of illusion originates. According to Schapp, this occurs because in intending we are not immediately bound to the thing itself; rather, we are directed toward the *being-something* of that thing—toward the “being bacon” or “being a shard” of what intuition presents to us. In a phenomenon such as revealed illusion, two types of intention manifest, each having a different relation to what is presented in perception. The first type of intention is what Schapp calls *sehend meinen*, the observing intending: “In observing intending we are simply directed toward the object. It stood before us as a shard. It is not as though something first stood before us and then we recognized it as a shard. Rather, the being-a-shard stands before us in one single stroke together with the object that is a shard.”¹¹⁴ The second type of intention, on the other hand, is what allows us to evaluate whether this immediate intention is correct, or whether it is a fallacious intention that misses the mark. This second type is defined by Schapp as *urteilend meinen* (judging intention). In the very same perceptual act, we may find ourselves in the condition of seeing an object

¹¹² See Laasik (2025, p. 27f.).

¹¹³ Schapp (2013, p. 98).

¹¹⁴ Schapp (2013, p. 131).

in a certain manifestative configuration, while at the same time knowing that behind this illusory vision another object is concealed, and this is precisely what occurs in the conversion of the shard into the piece of bacon.

From the perspective of perceptual dynamics, Schapp argues that this is possible because the “being-shard” and the “being-bacon” are not tied immediately to the sensuous givenness of the thing, but arise from the way in which what is offered by intuition is interpreted and endowed with meaning in consciousness through the further spiritual function of intending. The very fact that in the face of the same phenomenal presentation one may arrive at different opinions (*Meinungen*) is evidence that in intending, we are not bound in a constraining relation to the thing itself; rather, we turn to it “indirectly,” namely, to its being “as” this or that thing. This occurs thanks to the manifestation of the “idea” or the “concept”: “just as to intuition belongs what is sensibly given, so to intending [*Meinen*] belongs the intention [*Meinung*] one has of the thing, or more precisely, the idea, the concept of the thing. What is sensibly given is perceived through an idea; in this way the thing stands before us as perceived.”¹¹⁵

Through this two-tiered stratification of perception, Schapp seeks to show that the level of the thing and the level of the idea correspond to distinct cognitive functions, functions that are not entirely reducible to one another even though each necessarily presupposes the other. Just as in perception the thing is given in its phenomenal aspect, and just as in intuition the thing is given as constituted in a concrete unity, in the same way, the idea or concept of the thing is given in understanding. Without this latter distinction, it would be difficult to understand why the senses so often deceive us. It is in intention, then, that according to Schapp the perceptual act reaches its conclusion—not in sensation, and not yet in intuition, although all are links in the same presentative chain. In order to avoid logicist or metaphysical misunderstandings, however, it must be clarified that the sphere from which *Meinen* draws does not belong to a world separate from perception, nor is it detached from it; instead, the contribution of the idea takes place within perception and only from the perception of a thing in a completely peculiar way, one that Schapp describes in a famous passage later taken up also by Hering:¹¹⁶

The idea is no more in space than it is in the human soul [...]. Just like the object of perception, however, the idea too is apprehended; yet the idea is not where the perceived object is, but I have it, as it were, before me, before my consciousness. Therewith we have both loci where the idea comes into contact with the sensible: in the first place it comes into contact with the thing which embodies it, which partakes of it; and then it comes into contact with the consciousness that knows it [...]. The contact of the idea with consciousness thus depends upon the fact that the thing is sensibly given: without the thing one would have no consciousness of the idea of the thing.¹¹⁷

This convergence, so to speak, of the plane of the idea with that of the perception of the thing responds to the requirement of Schapp’s avoiding any hypostatized view

¹¹⁵ Schapp (2013, p. 132).

¹¹⁶ Hering (2021, p. 87).

¹¹⁷ Schapp (2013, p. 144).

of the ideal world. From the outset, he distances himself from the temptation to treat the idea as a kind of universal that is then particularized in each individual thing. He makes this point in clear and precise terms, stating that the “‘what’ with which [*das, ‘als was’*] a thing stands before us is not to be confused with the species under which the thing presents itself.”¹¹⁸ When we say that the “shard” stands before us as a “shard,” by “shard” we do not mean the *species* (*Gattung*) shard, of which this particular shard is a participant, since our intention is directed toward the “ultimate individuality” (*letzte Individualität*),¹¹⁹ the singular idea that allows us to frame this very thing before us—precisely this specific shard. Even the name we assign to the thing thus proves inadequate to convey its individual peculiarities, for it only captures, in a generic way, the singular idea corresponding to each individual thing. In order to achieve an exhaustive signification, Schapp tells us, there would have to exist a proper name, like Müller or Cologne, for each idea of a thing, a name that identifies the idea of every known thing.¹²⁰ It is only when the idea is no longer understood as a species but is singularized—that is, referred to a single ideal entity corresponding to each single real thing—and when language multiplies to reflect this singularity that we can truly grasp, in the particular, the process of ideation within perception, without resorting to generalizations that lead us away from the phenomenological ground where understanding takes place. What is expressed in this way is accordingly Schapp’s need to determine the exact point of insertion, within perception, of all those forms of theoretical elaboration that characterize the sciences. For it is precisely thanks to the single idea that, in his view, the application of scientific laws to the singularities of the real becomes possible:

[...] It is certain, in any case, that the single idea [*Einzelidee*] makes it possible to apply universal ideas to objects. With this we arrive at the fundamental function of the single idea. Since science follows laws, the single idea makes science possible; it constitutes the foundation for every scientific elaboration of the world of things. Without it, it would be impossible to arrive at laws concerning ultimate individualities.¹²¹

Thus Schapp does not deny the importance of the universal for the theory of knowledge; however, he posits single ideas as the basic particles necessary to enable the application of the universal to individual entities, without internal divisions within the intentional act. In Schapp, the idea appears as the point of suture between consciousness and the thing. In fact, rather than being a mere connective instrument, it represents the conceptual “heading” under which the thing is placed. Yet this conceptual heading is neither a mere psychic attribution of consciousness nor the result of a cognitive process that ultimately leads to a clear understanding of the thing before our eyes. Rather, the idea, like a form, suddenly stands forth before consciousness, and in so doing illuminates the entire perception of the thing like a light shining on it “from behind.” The idea is therefore not a component of consciousness

¹¹⁸ Schapp (2013, p. 133).

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ See *ibid.*

¹²¹ Schapp (2013, p. 136).

activated in response to the thing before me, but the very essence of the thing as it reveals itself to consciousness in perception. Likewise, the idea does not represent a universal—a species under which an indeterminate number of individuals with the same structural characteristics might be subsumed—but rather the conceptual and significative counterpart of what the thing is on the intuitive level. According to Schapp, one cannot properly speak of intuition in relation to the idea; instead, the idea already belongs to the sphere of the concept, and is linked to a specific function of perception that Schapp calls *Verstehen* (understanding), a function that is entirely distinct from *Anschaung*. “When I observe the thing,” Schapp writes, “I do not observe the idea. The idea cannot be observed at all as the thing can. Through the idea, the thing is apprehended, but while the thing is apprehended, the idea itself is not apprehended. The idea cannot stand before me in the way the thing does.”¹²² For Schapp, the idea marks the ultimate limit of intuitive possibility; it is like a beacon that allows us to see within perception, yet cannot itself be seen. It is precisely at this level that Schapp situates the description of the function of *Verstehen* as the mode of conceptual comprehension of the thing. According to the philosopher from Aurich, the idea is present in perception as something understood (*Verstandene*), and it is only by immersing oneself in this “understood” that one can come into relation with the idea; as long as one remains on the level of the thing, the idea cannot attain givenness. Following this account of the indirect relation that consciousness establishes with what is understood within perception, Schapp can thus state that “one understands the idea but not the thing that embodies the idea.”¹²³ This understanding does not occur, moreover, as a sensible intuition; in fact, in Schapp’s view, all interpretations that attempt to explain Plato’s theory of the vision of ideas by analogy with sensible perception fail to do justice to the true intentions of the Athenian philosopher.¹²⁴

The transcendence of the factual dimension of the thing in favor of the essence it embodies, typical of the eidetic reduction, does not, in Schapp, take place by phenomenologically extending the field of the intuitable to the idea. Rather, the point of contact between the idea and consciousness, and thus the experience of the idea, passes through the fundamental moment of the concept (*Begriff*): “Just as one cannot perceive the idea, one cannot ‘understand’ the thing. When we find an understanding within perception, this understanding cannot be directed toward the thing, but toward the concept, the idea of the thing.”¹²⁵ In relation to the connection between the thing and the idea, the concept assumes a mediating role in the process of giving meaning to perception, a process that occurs in the encounter between consciousness and the external world.¹²⁶ It is the possession of the concept by *Verstehen* that clarifies the distinction between “non-understanding” perception and

¹²² Schapp (2013, p. 144).

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Schapp (2013, p. 145).

¹²⁵ Schapp (2013, p. 146).

¹²⁶ Cf. Summa (2025, pp. 57–58).

“understanding” perception. Perception that reaches fulfillment is, as we have seen, “the perception in which something is understood.”¹²⁷ If what presents itself is not understood, then strictly speaking, it cannot even be called a perception. Moreover, this understanding does not take the form of a progressive process of integrating the information given by perception, but always occurs through an immediate illumination, all at once. Anticipating what will become a distinctive way of describing the relationship between intellect and sensibility in later phenomenological research,¹²⁸ he states: “Every act of learning is an illumination [*Erleuchtung*], a leap into the truth [...]. One does not understand until one perceives it as a revelation [*Offenbarung*].”¹²⁹ Such a revelation occurs when the function of understanding comes into contact with the idea, and it takes the form of a revelation precisely because it grants access to a world that has nothing to do with the sensible, although it exclusively concerns the thing.¹³⁰ Schapp tells us that this sudden opening onto a world of forms can be experienced in everyday life and in every domain of knowledge.¹³¹ However, a concrete example can be given by a figure in a painting that the artist has deliberately left ambiguous and that we initially fail to interpret—say, the figure of a “man.” We may spend hours observing it, and then, at a certain moment, it suddenly becomes clear; every part is illuminated, and the thing we were seeking reveals itself. In this process, it is not that the contours of the different parts gradually become clear, allowing us over time to arrive at a distinct image of the objective whole. Rather, perception is suddenly pierced by a light that clarifies a part—a hand, an arm, or a foot—and consequently it takes on meaning: the thing “man” stands before us as that to which the image refers. Understanding, then, does not manifest as a subjective process of knowing the thing, but as the eruption of an inescapable, binding force within perception that places before us something “absolute,” where by “absolute” one must understand “that this is no longer something [...] that holds only for human beings, but something that is truly as it is, something we cannot but recognize and comprehend.”¹³² Yet as we have already seen, this does not mean that the possibility of error does not exist, but rather that error itself always takes shape through the transition from one absolute to another, from something that (as in the example of the bacon and the shard) is first of all understood and that, once revealed, makes sense not only for us, but also in general. Even if what manifests in perception does not correspond to the thing actually present, this false apprehension

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Regarding another interpretation of understanding as *Erleuchtung*, see Scheler (2000, p. 17). Concerning the terms *Erleuchtung* and *Offenbarung* in Husserl and Heidegger, see Bernet (2019, p. 239f.). An indirect influence of the *Beiträge* on Heidegger’s thought via Ortega y Gasset—particularly with regard to the theme of the concept and truth as revelation—is discussed by Orringer, who reconstructs all of the Schapp-derived concepts that Ortega and Heidegger share. See Orringer (1979, pp. 166–167).

¹²⁹ Schapp (2013, p. 147).

¹³⁰ Cf. Ibid.

¹³¹ See Schapp (2013, p. 148).

¹³² Ibid.

always passes through contact with an idea, and therefore through a form of illumination that radiates across a section of the range of attributive possibilities opened up by intuition.

In the subsequent phases of Schapp's thought, the problematic nexus of ways of understanding the thing will undergo a series of shifts in meaning. The destabilization of eidetic intuition, already present in the *Beiträge*, will be reinforced in the second volume of *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht*, as we will see in the following chapter, while the questioning of Husserl's concept of species and the consequent need to identify, for each real entity, a separate linguistic referent will comprise one of the first stages of Schapp's critique of phenomenology *toto coelo*, which takes place in the philosophy of hi/stories. This passes through the challenge to the thematic nexus of the relationship between signification and perception in the reflections of the late 1940s, as well as the necessity of understanding naming as a summons to a hi/story, which I will address in the first chapter of Part III, Chap. 8. But let us now turn to some places in Schapp's philosophy of law in which the turn toward the philosophy of hi/stories of the 1950s is already being prepared.

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Chapter 6

Philosophy of Law: Values, Works, History



Abstract In the second volume of *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht*, Wilhelm Schapp's philosophy of law unfolds against a growing dissatisfaction with the model of eidetic intuition and moves toward a value oriented conception of the thing. Values no longer appear as invariant structures but take shape within concrete processes of production. Within what Schapp describes as a phenomenology of creation, the relation between the I and the work opens onto a historical dimension of value, articulated in configurations that can be understood as a form of historical a priori. Works come into view within their hi/stories, through which values are disclosed and acquire accessibility. A historical conception of value thus emerges together with a plurality of value worlds, intertwined and centered on subjectivities, forming the underlying structure from which the concept of entanglement in the philosophy of hi/stories is developed.

Keywords Historical a priori · Value and subjectivity · Phenomenology of creation · I–work relationship · Worlds of values · Ethical values

As previously discussed, the *Beiträge* is a phenomenological work that develops through a rather rigorous application of the principles Schapp had learned both from Husserl and from the debates within phenomenological circles. Yet it stands out for certain thematic deviations that will later shape the methodological and theoretical course of Schapp's philosophy. A first deviation lies in the emergence of a historical-narrative dimension within perception: things and their modifications tell us the hi/story of their path through the world. A second concerns the conception of the relation between idea and thing: the idea of a thing cannot be directly subsumed under a more universal idea or species, but requires the mediation of the concept and another form of knowledge, such as scientific knowledge, to connect the particular with the universal. Finally, a third deviation lies in Schapp's reinterpretation of how

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the idea is apprehended by consciousness: strictly speaking, it is not a matter of eidetic intuition, but of understanding and immersion in what the idea reveals of the thing. These three elements evolve further in the second volume of *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht*, especially within the “phenomenology of creation” (*Phänomenologie des Schaffens*) developed there.

In the two works composing his philosophy of law, Schapp follows in the footsteps of Reinach’s phenomenology of law, further developing aspects that are not present in Reinach. The general aim of the two works is, in fact, to place the legal concepts of contract, claim, and property in a larger pre-legal context of meaning and value. The first volume still maintains a strong connection with the methodological framework of phenomenological circles, largely relying on Reinach’s doctrine of social acts and his theory of the promise, as has been quite extensively addressed in the secondary literature.¹ On the other hand, the second volume already contains an initial questioning of the phenomenological method through a more historicist approach that—apart from a few rare exceptions—seems to have been overlooked in the secondary literature.² However, in the second volume, we do also find some interesting evaluations regarding the definition of central concepts in Schapp’s philosophy of law, concepts contributing to the core development of his subsequent philosophy. The contextualization of value within a world of values, with the subject at its center and with a structure of what he defines as the I-work relationship, not only represents a way of overcoming the theoretical model of the phenomenological method, but also provides the central axis upon which his theory of human entanglement in hi/stories is founded. Since it is impossible here to outline the entire argument concerning the transition from the philosophy of law to the philosophy of hi/stories, I will focus on how the historicist conception of the work substantiates and supports Schapp’s theory of value and his emerging critique of the phenomenological method. To this end, I will proceed in three steps in this chapter: (1) the world of values and the relation with the I; (2) the I-work relationship and the “phenomenology of creation”; and (3) a historical perspective on I-work-value.

Theory of Values and Subjectivity

In the first section of the second volume of *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht*, Schapp attempts a phenomenological definition of what the value of a thing is and seeks to display the difficulty of identifying its objective dimension. The starting point of this reflection is acknowledging the gap between the thing in its material-perceptual sphere and the thing considered in its value. According to him, the dimension of value is primarily linked to an “attitude of the soul” (*Haltung der Seele*) that unfolds in contact with the thing and allows it to be encountered. The

¹ See De Vecchi (2016, 2025), Loidolt (2010, 2025), and Salice (2022).

² Cf. Part I, Chap. 2.

thing's value reveals itself in "enjoying, tasting, sipping, feeling" (*Geniessen, Kosten, Schlurfen, Fühlen*). Through this contact between the thing and the soul, a dynamic circle is inaugurated that elevates the thing above its mere materiality.³ To help us understand how to approach value phenomenologically, Schapp refers to Goethe's critique of the Newtonian conception of color.⁴ For Goethe, color and light cannot be reduced to the physical forces and material components that characterize them, but must be understood as a complement to seeing.⁵ This seeing goes far beyond the simple perceptual and cognitive dimension, becoming an immersion, a joy in the color and the world it offers us.⁶ According to Schapp, it is in this way that things are seen in their contextual meaning within the world. Sitting, for example, on a Sunday afternoon in front of a field of tulips and clearing our minds of thoughts and worries for a moment, we immerse ourselves in the experience; we see how the soul gradually enters into relation with the tulips and how it begins to be touched and involved so that a direct relationship is established between the tulips and the soul. This relationship can be described in terms of "splendor, grace, power, loveliness" (*Pracht, Anmut, Kraft, Lieblichkeit*).⁷ These latter terms seem to be related to the sensation of color, light, shadow, space, and form as described by Goethe; however, they cannot be defined as genuinely objective or as belonging to the material world of things, since they cannot be isolated in themselves, but require the circle established with the subject to unfold. For Schapp, the relationship between the tulips and the subject has no vectorial dimension; it is not as if the value is transferred from the subject to the tulips or vice versa. Instead, in the contact of the soul with the tulips, a dynamic circle of values is established between the subject and the tulips, one that phenomenologically reveals what makes the tulips worthy of value in contact with our soul.⁸ This brings to light the centrality of the self in the constitution of a circle of values. Starting from the enjoyment of a specific value, a whole series of values unfold that are related to one another through the principles of harmony and disharmony. If, as Schapp invites us to do, one imagines having the same experience one had with tulips in a rose garden, it is not difficult to think that the experiences might be equivalent in terms of value, albeit with different ways of relating to the flowers. However, suppose one imagines being in a garden with both roses and tulips. In that case, it becomes clear that it is difficult to have a harmonious experience, because roses and tulips do not harmonize together in a circle of values but appear disharmonious, and we are led to be touched by the value of each only individually.⁹

³See Schapp (1932, pp. 4–5).

⁴See Goethe (1810, pp. 35, 355f.). For an in-depth look at the Goethe-Newton dispute, see Burwick (1986) and Sepper (1988).

⁵See Goethe (1810, p. 1f.).

⁶Goethe (1810, pp. x–xi).

⁷Schapp (1932, p. 6).

⁸Schapp (1932, p. 7).

⁹Cf. Ibid.

What has just been said confirms the principle that everything fits into and finds its place within a global context of values that Schapp calls the “world of values” (*Wertwelt*), where even positions and circumstances are fundamental. According to him, things do not present themselves to us with labels indicating their value. While certain things may be conventionally labeled as valuable, this value is not necessarily recognized by everyone. There are cases where what may have great value for one person does not hold the same value for another, or at least this value is expressed in different terms. Schapp recounts the example of going to a racetrack where many beautiful horses are paraded. As an animal lover, he feels pleasure, but for some reason, he cannot express it, and the pleasure is not very engaging. Then a horse enthusiast beside him looks at a young, powerful horse and says, “Ah, that is music.”¹⁰ To Schapp, these words seem appropriate, and he understands that they refer to figurative music, but he cannot relate them to his experience; he cannot access the same value that the horse lover does. Yet as he tells us, there is still a more concrete and compelling way to access that value, which is to imagine what the person riding the horse feels. While riding the horse, the rider hears “music,” entering into contact with the horse’s value much more fully than an external observer can. It is like a dancer who feels the music more intimately than someone watching the dancer perform.¹¹ At this point, Schapp definitively asserts the inadequacy of a phenomenology of perception for understanding value:

It may also be similar to exploring something object-like, where the same object fully reveals itself to the researcher only through a series of perceptual processes. Someone who does not dance or ride, who does not play music himself or herself, will not be able to follow the subtleties of the horse, the dancer, or a musical performance as closely as someone who practices these arts.¹²

This passage is very meaningful because it completely unfolds a new dimension of investigation that shifts the phenomenological focus from the perspective of the neutral observer to that of being involved in a situation belonging to the lifeworld,¹³ where we can have either privileged or limited access to what has value and to the world that unfolds with it. This embodied dimension of subjectivity is also fundamental in delineating the relationship between the self and the work, as we will see in the next section. Regarding this observation, it should be noted that Schapp’s approach avoids both perspectivism and the indiscriminate subjectivity of values. While there are numerous ways to access the world of values, each reveals a distinct set of values, originating from the specific relationship between the world and the self, marked by both harmony and disharmony. However, values also possess an objective dimension rooted in the interconnectedness of the world and the self. This objectivity exists independently of the subject’s tastes or opinions. Schapp illustrates this with the order of courses during a meal: when mocha coffee is served at

¹⁰ Schapp (1932, p. 8).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Schapp (1932, p. 9).

¹³ Cf. Nuccilli (2025, p. 106).

the end, it is appreciated in a particular way and holds the highest value. If served earlier, its enjoyment, and the value system it represents, change. The same applies to other courses.¹⁴ He also identifies a similar objectivity in art. Once the initial foreignness is overcome, engaging with any form of art—whether from advanced or primitive cultures—opens access to the values inherent in these works. However, this engagement does not replicate how these values are experienced within their original cultural context.¹⁵

While an objective dimension of value exists, the modes of access to it are contingent upon the subject's historical positioning as well as upon the situational context of both the valuing subject and the valued objects. Schapp emphasizes this with the example of an apple:

In terms of value, there is a difference if I pick the last apple from a tree or if I choose an apple from a tree laden with apples, even if the two apples I eventually eat are equally good. There is again a difference if the tree is part of a large garden or if it is a solitary tree, and there is yet another difference if this garden is part of my homeland or a country indifferent to me, and if this homeland is part of a strong and flourishing nation or if it is up in the air and in the hands of enemies.¹⁶

Thanks to this passage, we can see how the issue of values does not unfold solely on a horizontal level of worldly positioning, but also within a historical and temporal dimension. This historical-temporal dimension emerges from the interaction between the valued object and the soul, encompassing both the subject's historical position and the temporal reality of the object within the series of concatenations that characterize the so-called "world of values."

By integrating the aforementioned aspects, we can highlight three points regarding Schapp's formulation of the concept of value:

1. The value is beyond the perceptual reality of the thing: even if the taste of the apples is the same, the value and the way it is savored vary depending on the circumstances, and thus on the world of value in which the apple is embedded.
2. With respect to this world of values, the self has a peculiar position, functioning as its unequivocal center. Although there are subjects who share the same world of values, within this world there are things that have different values depending on the individual's position and experience of the lifeworld.
3. From the contact between the valued object and the soul, there radiates a historical-temporal dimension involving both the subject's position in hi/story and the historical-temporal reality of the object within the series of concatenations that characterize the so-called world of value.

¹⁴ Cf. Schapp (1932, p. 13).

¹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁶ Schapp (1932, p. 19).

Phenomenology of Creation: The I-Work Relationship and the Historical a Priori

The three points raised in the previous section regarding value theory comprise the central elements upon which Schapp builds his theory of the I-work relationship in the second volume of *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht*. However, with the introduction of the concept of work and its relation to production and the I, the discussion deepens and incorporates additional elements that lead to a historicist foundation of the concept of value. These developments can be summarized as follows. Regarding point (1), Schapp challenges the phenomenological method of intuition of essences, suggesting the use of a comparative method. Regarding point (2), and as a consequence of point (1), Schapp proposes a “phenomenology of creation” in which the productive dimension of the work and its placement within a broader context of meaning, such as its use, become central. Finally, regarding point (3), it is precisely the dimension of use, along with the sociocultural aspect that accompanies the production and use of the work, that allows access to its historical dimension, which is characterized by the development and use of that work. Through these points, Schapp phenomenologically articulates the I-work relationship as a central element of his phenomenology of law, on the one hand, and on the other hand, he deepens the problem of the historical dimension of value.

Let’s start from point (1). Schapp introduces the notion of work within his investigation of the constitution of property, understood as a pregivenness of positive law. He aims to highlight how property is rooted in a pre-legal dimension that precedes the formal institution of law and finds its origin in the act of production itself. Using a rudimentary example, Schapp argues that the core of this pre-legal dimension of property lies in the production of an object. He states, “In the situation in which someone produces a stone axe or carves a bow and arrows, property already finds its place.”¹⁷ From the perspective of the foundation of property, it makes no difference whether it is a simple axe being refined or a more complex object, like a car. What truly matters is the moment of production itself, which cannot be investigated in a static manner, as one might do with objects when they are considered in terms of their perceptual qualities. In fact, Schapp highlights just how difficult it is to apply the phenomenological method to such an investigation, stating:

If the reader now sets the book aside and tries to ascertain for himself or herself something essential about this simple process, he or she will understand the difficulty of the investigation that follows and the ambiguities necessarily connected with it [...]. If we now approach this process from the outside and try to imagine Stone Age man removing sliver by sliver and shaping the rough stone, this image still tells us nothing about the inner connections of the creation of the stone axe.¹⁸

Schapp emphasizes that focusing solely on external actions or perceptual qualities does not capture the more profound, dynamic connections in the process of

¹⁷ Schapp (1932, p. 34).

¹⁸ Ibid.

production, whether we are concerned with simple or complex objects. To understand this phenomenon, one must transpose oneself into the meaning-context in which the object is produced. The individuals involved in the production may be enslaved or free; they may create the object for a religious rite or for more profane purposes; and they may do so for themselves or for others. Such conditions are not secondary to understanding the object. On the contrary, Schapp argues that it is these very conditions that define the value of the object. These reflections not only open up the historical and temporal dimensions of production, but also raise critical methodological questions. If the investigation can no longer be a search for the essence of the material make-up of the object, given that the object, as a product of work, is now situated within a broader cultural meaning-context, what is the appropriate method to adopt? Schapp suggests the “comparative method,” which involves comparing the process of producing a work (the stone axe) with similar processes across different contexts.¹⁹ This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the different aspects that shape production, and consequently, the relationship between the self and the work. With reference to the general conception of value as something that transcends its merely perceptual dimension, one arrives, through the concept of work, not only at a complete questioning of the phenomenological method, but also at a new perspective that more deeply involves the sphere of the lifeworld. This brings us to point (2).

The situated relationship with producers and their positions in the lifeworld makes the work different from other objects not produced by humans. An object is only conceivable as a work when there is a creator (*Schöpfer*), someone “in flesh and blood”²⁰ who releases it from the stone, and in so doing, excludes it from the world of natural objects, inserting it instead into the world of human-made objects and then of objects with a specific value. Therefore, any cognitive evaluation of the thing and its composition must be immediately referred to the productive context and the human being who produced it.²¹ This approach shifts the focus of the investigation from the work itself to the physical relationship the work establishes with its producer. This is what Schapp calls the *Ich-Werk-Beziehung* (I-work relationship). Drawing on a theme already present in Lipps’s aesthetic theory, Schapp asserts that in every work, one can perceive its creator’s will (*Willen zum Werke*), especially the means and techniques used to shape that specific material.²² This is where the phenomenology of creation must begin: namely, from the ordering of the material work within a bodily activity and the cycle that is established in it. It must shift its analysis from the tool to the hand and to the traces that this hand and tool have left on the work. However, according to Schapp, this is only the first step. To truly understand the “work-character” (*Werkcharakter*), one must immerse oneself

¹⁹ See Schapp (1932, p. 35).

²⁰ See Schapp (1932, p. 37).

²¹ Cf. Schapp (1932, p. 36).

²² In his *Ästhetik*, Lipps defines the individual’s projecting of the will into the working of a thing and the subsequent recognition of aspects of the subject in the thing as the “character of the thing” itself (cf. Lipps, 1903, p. 201).

in the creator's intentions in bringing it into being. One must place the action, the plan of the producer, and the work itself in a context of reasonable meaning. To explain this, he takes the example of a pincer-shaped object on a smoking table. If we observe such an object, we immediately recognize that it is in some way a work and probably a tool. However, "we only understand the work in its fullest sense when the smoker uses it to bring the cigarette to his mouth, thus avoiding soiling his fingers with nicotine."²³ To understand each work, we must place it in a similar context, and this often goes beyond the simple context of use, as is the case with the cigarette clips and the cigarette, opening up a whole series of references that situate the work within a broader circle of ends and values. For example, coming back to the example of the stone axe, Schapp states: "If we want to understand the stone axe as a work we have to think about the fact that it serves to cut wood and that a house can be built with wood and that the house serves to shelter from the wind and rain and the heat of the sun during the day."²⁴ Beginning with the axe, then, a series of references radiates out, opening for us a window to the world that also involves a semiotic relation between some of its aspects, from stone to the sun. In order to understand any object of use, one must therefore already have in the background not only a plan that requires finding suitable materials along with an already developed technique, but also an awareness of the context of use and its placement within a chain of purposes of which it is only the means.

Building upon the latter "horizontal" dimension of the unfolding of meanings and the utility value of the work, Schapp goes on to incorporate a "vertical" dimension that leads not only to the individuals who produced that object in the past, but also to its development and to the historical conditions surrounding that development. This historical dimension is described in a paragraph where Schapp attempts to define the essence of the work. Once again, he employs a practical example—here, a shoe, which he analyzes in detail:

If we consider the shoe from the outside, we immediately recognize the single parts: the sole, the toe box, the upper, and the heel. In this subdivision, each part takes on its own meaning. The division between the sole and heel allows for greater support of the metatarsal; the division between the sole and upper facilitates repair. Each part of the shoe refers us back to someone who first discovered its meaning. It dissolves before our eyes into multiple paths, each of which can be traced back to a discovery. These discoveries have their temporal locus, that is, a place in historical time.²⁵

According to Schapp, each component of the shoe points back to the individual human who conceived it. Embedded in any assessment of the essence of the work is a projection back into the past, even hundreds of years, in search of the value- and meaning-context in which the idea or plan led that individual to perfect an object already in use or to create a new one. In relation to this search, what is important is to immerse oneself in the "idea"—in the spiritual attitude in which the different

²³ Schapp (1932, p. 38).

²⁴ Schapp (1932, p. 40).

²⁵ Schapp (1932, p. 47).

humans who contributed to the improvements of the thing “shoe” were situated. In this way, the person who observes the shoe and its components is somehow immersed in the same value-context as those different humans, and can thereby get in touch with a fragment of their spiritual history. Thus in assessing the essential predicates of the shoe as a work, one can no longer be satisfied with isolating the characteristic aspects that make it the thing we know as a shoe; instead, one must place it in an evolutionary dynamic of productions and discoveries that characterizes the micro-history of shoe production within the macro-history of humankind’s evolution. For this reason, in some very dense lines, Schapp writes:

The history of humankind is the hi/story of its works. The relations we have identified between self, work, value, and production are fundamental relations for history; they represent the a priori of historical science. In this sense, a bottle of Moselle wine, a shoe, a car, a horse, the color and smell of a rose all have their hi/stories.²⁶

Historicity of Values in Works, Ethical Values, and Hi/story of the I

Starting from the conception of the hi/stories of works as a priori for historical science, Schapp unfolds his reflection on the historicity of values and the historical dimension of the triad I-work-value. This is developed through three distinct aspects. The first concerns the relationship that the concept of creation maintains with that of labor within national economic theories. The second has a foundational character and concerns integrating a world of values that opens up with works and creation with those values that are intrinsic to and inherent in human hi/story and the human soul. Finally, the third pertains to a more individual conception of how the hi/story of works and the hi/story of the “I” intertwine following the act of creation. These three aspects introduce and describe the discourse on property as a pre-legal givenness. I will not pursue this latter aspect here, since it would require a separate discussion. However, I will explore in this section the three perspectives on the historicity of values before arriving at some concluding reflections.

When Schapp asserts that every work has its hi/story, he primarily means that each work is connected to a multitude of humans, both past and present, who contributed to its production and evolution. For Schapp, the value of works lies precisely in this connection: they engage in a creative, and therefore spiritual, relationship with humans. However, it is not always feasible to trace the hi/story of each work’s genesis and development in detail. Take, for example, a bottle of Moselle wine; it is not a straightforward task to reconstruct the hi/story of its origins or how it has differentiated itself from other wines over time, ultimately achieving its unique character. Nevertheless, it is certainly possible to outline the broader hi/story of viticulture, with its key milestones, and place Moselle wine within a more

²⁶ Schapp (1932, p. 67).

extensive historical framework. Such broader hi/stories create stable meanings within the larger hi/story of humankind, and these meanings correspond to values. Indeed, Schapp suggests that values are what allow works to be ordered within human hi/story, and through this ordering, hi/story is permeated with reason (*Vernunft*).²⁷ Schapp further argues that this ordering of values in hi/story becomes evident when we compare his concept of *Schaffen* (creation) with that of labor as commonly understood in national economic theories. In German economic theory, for instance, the concepts of labor and the production of economic goods are subordinate to the principle that the goal of economics is to minimize production costs to maximize output and income. If every use of goods in production requires labor, which is seen as a sacrifice, then this sacrifice is only justified if the final product holds equal or greater value than the resources and effort expended in its creation. According to Schapp, this economic perspective distorts the concept of the production of values, reducing it solely to an exchange of services where the ultimate objective is a balance between labor costs and the produced good.²⁸ For this reason, many small farmers or landowners, for example, are compelled to abandon their trade and instead work in factories where they might earn a higher salary. However, by relinquishing their traditional way of life, small farmers and their families enter a vastly different world of values—one shaped by modern influences, lacking historical continuity, and drawing them in with little chance of return. This new world, more than any other, is filled with shallow and deceptive values. By forsaking their way of life, farmers lose something profoundly meaningful: their personal hi/story, their family's legacy, and even the hi/stories of their ancestors. Moreover, they also sacrifice the joy of creation itself, since the act of creation is reduced to mere labor and compensation, severing the connection to their world of values. According to Schapp, then, every doctrine of national economy should begin with a conception of production that takes into account, above all, the relationship between the work and the world of values in which the individual at work is embedded.²⁹

The world of values is profoundly and inextricably bound to human existence in its entirety. On the one hand, it constitutes the hi/story of individuals regarding heritage, reflecting the past that continues to manifest in their works and actions. On the other hand, it forms the ethos—the spiritual frameworks and structures of pre-understanding that guide individuals in their way of being and acting within the world. For Schapp, every human being is essentially embedded in a world of values, which can be understood as the result of a “terrestrial eternity” (*irdische Ewigkeit*). This world of values is not a mere blind outcome; rather, it embodies a “reason” (*Wertvernunft*).³⁰ According to Schapp, this reason is not universal, but varies from family to family, lineage to lineage, community to community, region to region,

²⁷ See *ibid.*

²⁸ See Schapp (1932, p. 69).

²⁹ See Schapp (1932, pp. 70–71).

³⁰ Schapp (1932, p. 72).

country to country, and continent to continent.³¹ Nonetheless, the common thread among these diverse and intertwined value-universes³² is that they exhibit a historical growth and evolution that extends into the present day. A similar evolution can be observed in how the value of a rose transforms over the centuries. A glimpse of this evolution can be gleaned from the transition from the wild rose to the snow rose, and subsequently to the Maréchal Niel rose. Each of these roses is embedded in a hi/story of horticulture that spans a world of values, where what matters is not so much the intrinsic value of the rose itself, but a singular gesture—the decision of a person to take a rose from the woods and plant it in a home garden. This act confers a unique value upon the rose, situating it within human hi/story and the world of values. If it is evident that the world of values in which humanity is embedded is connected to human actions and the creation of works of value along a historical evolutionary line, then Schapp's question becomes one of understanding whether such historicity can be linked to a transcendental dimension of values inherent in the human soul. In other words the issue is whether it is possible to conduct a historical-evolutionary study of values that transcend the soul. According to him, such an endeavor is challenging because values like generosity, kindness, courage, loyalty, and love appear to be essential to humanity and to its ethos, and are “as ancient as humanity itself.”³³ For this reason, they comprise the foundation and generative space of a world of values, regardless of their kind. Anticipating what will become one of the fundamental themes of his philosophy of hi/stories, Schapp refers to the tale of Ulysses encountering the dog Argos after many years upon his return to Ithaca and being moved to compassion, as well as the story from the Norse tradition of Blundketil, a peasant who—despite his humble circumstances—is known even among the noblest for his generosity and kindness of heart. According to Schapp, these hi/stories reflect values that we can attribute to people we know or that we still find in contemporary narratives. They embody, thus, an ideal of humanity and value that remains constant throughout the ages, suggesting that despite historical and cultural changes, certain human qualities remain ever present. The Protagorean motto that “man is the measure of all things” should be reinterpreted by Schapp through a new value-oriented perspective, which states that “the inner qualities of humankind are the measure of all things.”³⁴ Viewed from this perspective, the value of works and inventions accordingly roots and grounds itself in an internal world of values. According to Schapp, the invention of the radio or cinema does not inaugurate a new world of values; rather, it merely facilitates access to values that already exist. Each new material or spiritual invention brings value, but only if there is a

³¹ See Schapp (1932, p. 70).

³² In the first volume of *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht*, Schapp describes the ordering of individual universes of value in reference to the empirical world as a *Verschmelzung von Wertwelten* (fusion of worlds of value); cf. Schapp (1930, p. 22f.).

³³ Schapp (1932, p. 71).

³⁴ Schapp (1932, p. 72).

point of connection and linkage with the ancient values inherent in the human soul, allowing it to be ordered into a hi/story with them.³⁵

The historical connection that constitutes the relationship between the I and the work is, however, not purely one-directional. It is not only a matter of how humans act upon a work and its value, but also of how the work acts upon them, capturing them within its own hi/story. To illustrate this, Schapp provides reasoning that partly recalls Heidegger's approach in *Being and Time*.³⁶ The binding relationship between the creator and the work becomes most apparent not when the work is complete, but when it remains unfinished. According to Schapp, if the work holds significant importance for the creator and is incomplete yet still capable of being finished, it exerts a force that compels the creator toward its completion. Otherwise, all the creator's efforts would be in vain. As Schapp writes, "The work is not merely a mirror of the I in the sense that the I reflects within it; rather, it is also a piece of the I."³⁷ The soul itself suffers a kind of wound when the work is left unfinished: "The fracture running through the work reflects itself, in some sense, within the soul. It is not so much where our treasure lies that our heart is found, but rather where our work lies."³⁸ Thus if a work is damaged or destroyed, the creator's soul suffers as well. It is precisely in this moment that the creator becomes fully aware of a bond that may have previously been taken for granted. Only in the destruction of the work does it become evident how the fate and the hi/story of the work are entwined with the hi/story of the human who created it. In this way, Schapp introduces what will become a defining feature of his "philosophy of hi/stories," using a historical example to emphasize the inseparable bond between work and I. To express how a human work can be identified with this person's hi/story, he refers to the example of Napoleon's trajectory, considering his entire political and military campaign as his work. According to Schapp, Napoleon on Elba is simply the other side of Napoleon at Austerlitz, except that in exile, all of Napoleon's spiritual energies, which were once directed toward his great imperialistic work and personal affirmation, now go to waste and no longer have any grounding in a world of values.³⁹ However, works do not "entangle" humans only when they are broken or incomplete, but also when they are finished. A work needs to be maintained, and occupies the soul of the human in the same way throughout his life. In fact, in this sense it also assumes a collective resonance, both social and historical. Even when the creator is long dead, a work—whether material, like a great cathedral, or intellectual, like a philosophy—is continued and preserved by successors. In this regard, using the example of

³⁵ See *ibid.*

³⁶ In *Being and Time*, the non-usability of a tool becomes the privileged moment of access for understanding its toward-which (*Wozu*), that is, what it is for, or better said, that toward which it is directed within the network of relations of ends and purposes that are established among intra-worldly entities; cf. Heidegger (2001, p. 102f.). For further analysis, see Dreyfus (1991, p. 66f.) and Mulhall (1996, p. 35f.).

³⁷ Schapp (1932, p. 75).

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

Napoleon, it could be said that he somehow collected and perpetuated the work of Alexander the Great, along with all the people he surrounded himself with, and for a period, the entire French people. In this way the hi/story of the human being and the hi/story of the work insert themselves into a new collective hi/story of a people or an era and anchor themselves in a value-order as an aspect of reason that penetrates hi/story. This value order is given not only by the circle that is established between the creator's intentions and the efforts to realize these intentions, but also by the context of meaning in which the work is inserted, following the usage made of it by contemporaries, and in a historical key, by the successors of that work.⁴⁰

The definition of the concept of value in Schapp's philosophy of law is inextricably linked to a meaning-contextual dimension. No value can be isolated and considered in itself; it must be placed within a totality of meaning. This totality is grounded in subjectivity. And this subjectivity can be conceived on two levels: (1) in the sense of a transcendental subjectivity made up of a world of values that intrinsically belong to humanity; and (2) as the I/self, an agent embedded in a world of cultural values that can be materially accessed primarily through production and the creative relationship of humans with their works. In this sense, the I-work relationship thus becomes the central relationship for defining the concept of value. A work essentially has value because it is situated within a hi/story that concerns humans and their aims. Every development of a work constitutes a rational explanatory line of historical processes, even allowing for the foundation of an a priori science of hi/story. The fact that every world of values centers on an "I" does not mean that everything assumes its value only in the experience and lifeworld of that I. It means that its world of values is interconnected with and tied to other worlds of values characterizing its family, culture, and state, ultimately encompassing all of humanity. Each of these worlds is anchored to pillars rooted in humankind's past. They are the hi/stories of great works and innovations that define each era, dating back to the birth of the first object produced by humans. This implies two main consequences: everything has value in relation to the hi/story of the subject who encounters it and in relation to the individual hi/story of the thing itself; and these hi/stories are not floating in the air, but are at the center of a more inclusive hi/story in which other hi/stories of other people and civilizations from the past emerge. When Schapp states that every work unveils a universe of values, he is always thinking of historical sedimentation and of an intertwining of worlds of values built upon individual and collective purposes and goals that have led to the specific value of that specific work. If in the narrower scope of his philosophy of law, these essential connotations lead to a pre-juridical foundation of the concept of property, in the broader scope of Schapp's work, the historical conception of value and the plurality of value worlds intertwined with one another, with subjectivities at the center, represent the fundamental structure upon which the concept of "entanglement" in his philosophy of hi/stories will be built. However, before turning to the analysis of the central elements of the theory of entanglement, it is worth briefly examining the final work that

⁴⁰ See Schapp (1932, p. 76).

completes the phenomenology of values, *Zur Metaphysik des Muttertums*, in which Schapp explores several themes that we will encounter again in the philosophy of hi/stories, especially with regard to the notion of the universal and collective hi/stories that are foundational to humankind.

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Chapter 7

Metaphysics of Motherhood: Kinship, Creation, and God's Love



Abstract Conceived as the completion of the phenomenology of values developed in *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht*, Wilhelm Schapp's *Zur Metaphysik des Muttertums* marks a shift from production to generativity. The family is grounded not in the man–woman relation but in the generative bonds between mother and child and father and child, from which kinship emerges as its primary structure. Creation acquires a differentiated meaning: in the maternal relation as shaping and nurturing within an original bond of love, in fatherhood as a temporal projection toward ancestors and future generations through works and legacy. Maternal love discloses a domain in which value is formed within lived relations, while its connection with divine love opens a continuity between everyday experience and the metaphysical dimension. Generativity, kinship, and love thus define a structure that grounds both interhuman understanding and inheritance, within which the conditions emerge for the later articulation of entanglement and co-entanglement in the philosophy of hi/stories.

Keywords Metaphysics of motherhood · Kinship · Generativity · Maternal love · Creation · God's love

As I have already pointed out, the text of *Zur Metaphysik des Muttertums* was already complete in 1937, even though it was published only in 1965.¹ Although Schapp himself describes it as a text not easily situated within his body of work,² it was in fact conceived as the completion of a trilogy on the phenomenology of values, the first two parts of which are the two volumes of *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht*. The third volume consists of three books. The first, *Familie und Verwandtschaft*

¹ See Part I, Chap. 1.

² “The book on motherhood occupies a special position. One cannot call it phenomenological, nor does it fall directly under the philosophy of hi/stories. It is written out of a certain mood—one might even say, out of a primal force to which the philosopher surrenders unconditionally. We might hint at this mood with the triad: God—motherhood—love.” These words appear on the inside flap of the book's cover in a blurb, written personally by the author, that summarizes the book's content.

(family and kinship), addresses the foundational elements and dynamics of the mother-child and father-child relationships within the family. The second, *Das Stromgebiet der Liebe, die Strömungen der Mutterliebe darin* (the river basin of love, the currents of motherly love within it), phenomenologically investigates the feelings and the affective and spiritual relations between mother and child. The third, *Die Zusammenhänge zwischen der Liebe Gottes und der Mutterliebe* (the connections between God's love and motherly love), explores motherly love as the purest moment of experience and as an access point to God's love.³ The thematic and philosophical continuity of *Zur Metaphysik des Muttertums* with the second volume of *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht* becomes evident from the way Schapp introduces the issue of the relationship between mother and child in the first book. About this he writes:

What we mean here are the living relations between the two souls of the mother and the child, as they develop over time in the course of human life, beginning with birth. [...] We are also inclined to assume that these stirrings within the mother-child relationship extend across the entire spectrum of humanity, and that in their basic structure they are and have been essentially the same among different peoples and races, and throughout various periods in human history or prehistory.⁴

It is therefore evident that the text aspires to investigate precisely that part of the soul which grounds and sustains the universe of ethical values proper to the "terrestrial eternity" Schapp speaks of in the second volume of *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht*, a sphere of values taking motherly love as its point of departure.⁵ According to Schapp, motherly love provides the foundation and support of this world of values and passes through the human soul all the way to love for God. In motherly love, the movements of love, gentleness, benevolence, goodness, and care that flow constantly from the mother to the child envelop the child like a warm shell, and they return from the child to the mother as counter-movements. In this experience, it becomes possible to apprehend the kind of unconditional love that God has for human beings and that human beings strive to return.⁶ In addition to structuring the world of values within which every human being grows vertically, from mother to child, there is also a transversal and interhuman dimension to this relationship. According to Schapp, the inner sympathy of mothers even for the mother-child relationships of others is of utmost importance for the development and existence of humankind. In his view, there is a particular connection between one happy mother and another happy mother that creates fertile ground for spiritual understanding among people. A true mother cannot help but feel compassion for a defenseless child, and this holds equally in a large twentieth-century city as in any nomadic

³For a more detailed summary of the structure of the book and a reconstruction of its problematic framework, see Joisten (2010).

⁴Schapp (1965, p. 7).

⁵See Part II, section "Historicity of Values in Works, Ethical Values, and Hi/story of the I", Chap. 6.

⁶Schapp (1965, p. 13).

village in Siberia or Africa.⁷ It is precisely the emotional structuring of an interhuman understanding (one that cuts across all cultures) that comprises one of the points of transition from the philosophy of values to the philosophy of hi/stories. The identification of a domain of experience such as the mother-child relationship—a domain that is shared across the whole of humankind—is in fact the soil in which the concepts of entanglement and co-entanglement grow theoretically. Additionally, within the investigation of the mother-child and father-child relationships, the theme of creation unfolds as a foundational moment for the world of values and for the shaping of the human legacy. Meanwhile, within the relationship between motherly love and divine love, the theme emerges of the foundational link, central to Western culture, between the lived experience of feelings tied to the everyday reality of family relations on the one hand and the metaphysical question of the relationship between human beings and God on the other. I will examine these aspects in more detail in what follows, since they hold considerable relevance for the last phase of Schapp's philosophy.⁸

The Mother-Child and the Father-Child Relationship: Family, Kinship, and Creation

Schapp's inquiry into family and kinship introduces a significant shift in perspective: rather than beginning with the man-woman relationship, traditionally regarded as foundational, he directs attention to the generative bonds between mother and child and father and child. It is within these original relations that the family discovers its structural core, since the family is not initially defined by the union of the couple, but by the emergence of kinship as its primary configuration. From a phenomenological standpoint, the relation between man and woman cannot be considered a kinship relation; we enter the sphere of kinship only when we consider the bonds that arise from generation.⁹ Beginning with the mother-child and father-child relations, both the vertical lines of kinship (such as those between grandparents and grandchildren) and the horizontal ones (such as those between siblings) unfold, along with further connections among the various branches of the family. The deepest meaning of kinship therefore lies in generative relations, which should serve as the starting point for any phenomenological analysis of the structure of the family.¹⁰

To analyze the mother-child and father-child relationship thus means, first of all, to understand how they relate to one another, especially with regard to the deepest and most original connection tied to birth itself, namely, the mother's care for her child immediately after birth and even before it, since the mother-child relationship

⁷ Schapp (1965, p. 15).

⁸ Cf. Schapp, J. (2010, p. 81ff.).

⁹ See Schapp (1965, p. 5).

¹⁰ See Schapp (1965, p. 6).

is grounded in an original union and in a direct and immediate relation of love and protection. Yet this does not seem to be the case for the father. One must therefore examine the origin and the configuration of the paternal bond in contrast with the maternal one, which appears to be more primordial and indispensable.¹¹ The central question then becomes whether both bonds possess the same depth and emotional richness, for from the Homeric poems onward, and in each of our own life experiences, we find testimony of an intensely strong and inseparable bond between father and child, one that appears at least comparable to that which exists with the mother.¹²

Now according to Schapp, the child comes to have a relationship with the father only through the mediation of the mother. It is the mother who spiritually leads the child to the father.¹³ For this to happen, however, Schapp holds that there must be a community (*Gemeinschaft*) between father and mother. From the child's point of view, a full father-child relationship is possible only if the child can apprehend father and mother as a unity, if they present themselves as a community. And within this community, the mother is the initial mediator with the child; full motherhood is in fact independent of this community, whereas the same cannot be said of full fatherhood. Of course, there are also cases of a father-child relationship without a mother, but in such situations the beginning is more complex, and it begins, as it were, from a more distant standpoint. The same applies when the mother is enslaved by the father or lives in a position of subordination that distorts the sense of community that the child needs. In such cases, anyone who does not approach the mother with love is a stranger to the child from the very first day, which excludes any response to the father's manifestations. And if such a response is lacking, fatherhood cannot develop in the full sense of the term.¹⁴

According to Schapp, the conception of the mother as mediator of the father-child relationship has led to a mistaken view of her role within the family, one that can be found both in literary works such as *Hermann and Dorothea*¹⁵ and in the religious conceptions that underpin Western culture. The God-human relationship, as Homer sees and feels it, is dominated by the idea that a Father God stands before humanity and before each individual person. The true God of Homer is the Father God, Zeus. Humanity and the world are contained within this fatherhood, and no corresponding motherhood exists. Zeus is indeed assigned a consort, yet in the Greek world she is in no sense perceived as the mother of humankind. According to Schapp, this has the consequence that Zeus, as Father God, is not a father in the

¹¹ See Schapp (1965, pp. 25–26).

¹² See Schapp (1965, p. 36).

¹³ See Schapp (1965, p. 41).

¹⁴ See Schapp (1965, p. 42).

¹⁵ *Hermann and Dorothea* is a poem by Goethe, published in 1797, that tells the story of Hermann, the son of a prosperous innkeeper, who falls in love with Dorothea, a courageous and hardworking refugee. Although his father hesitates because of her humble origins, his mother recognizes Dorothea's domestic virtues. When the family learns of her selfless conduct during her flight, they accept the union, and Dorothea is welcomed as the future wife who will ensure the household's continuity.

highest earthly sense. He is King, Sovereign, Lawgiver, but not a father in the way one can understand an earthly father within contemporary Western culture. This, Schapp argues, is precisely because the maternal element is absent from the God-human relation. However bold the Western impulse to conceive of God as standing in a paternal relation to human beings, the feeling from which this idea evidently springs never fully reaches completion; it does not succeed in establishing the ultimate intimate bond between God and humanity, precisely because it lacks the courage to incorporate the maternal element into the human-divine community. Thus, according to Schapp, a distance remains between God and human beings, one that still fails to do justice to the ultimate meaning of religion. This can also be said of the God of the Old Testament. There too, God is experienced as Father, without the maternal dimension truly being taken into account. As a result, a distance arises between God and human beings, one that is overcome only in the New Testament through the attempt to grasp God as personality.¹⁶

If, however, we begin, as Schapp does, from the assumption that the family consists of the triad father-mother-child, then we must also assume that the idea and the feeling of God as Father cannot have arisen from earthly fatherhood itself; rather, it must have developed from the child's side. And if God initially appeared, or at some point in human *hi/story* came to appear, in the form or guise of the Father, this can be explained, according to Schapp, only by the fact that the mother participated in the formation of this feeling: she directed the child's soul from herself toward the father, toward fatherhood, so that all that is ineffable might gather and turn toward the heavenly Father through the figure of the earthly one. In everyday life, the mother leads the child to experience the father as the final authority, as the last and highest refuge. And this is reflected in the religious figure of a Father God, which characterizes the Western *hi/story* of humanity's relation to the Divine from ancient Greece to the present day.¹⁷

Schapp's investigations on this point expand even further and include numerous passages from the Homeric works as well as from other fundamental texts of classical culture. What is important to note here is that within his inquiry into the foundations of kinship, certain reflections emerge whose later development will play a highly significant role in Schapp's philosophy of *hi/stories*. I am referring, on the one hand, to the mythical-religious topos of God the Father as the continuation of the earthly experience of fatherhood and as a founding narrative of Western culture, which will later form the central axis of the theory of the positive world, and on the other hand, to the relation between mother and child and father and child as an experience transversal to humankind and therefore paradigmatic for the understanding of the other and of others' *hi/stories*. Enclosed within this relation is the very core of the theory of the entanglement of human beings in *hi/stories* and of their co-entanglement in collective *hi/stories*. Both of these elements will find further development in the description of the relationship between maternal love and God's

¹⁶ See Schapp (1965, p. 45).

¹⁷ Cf. Schapp (1965, p. 46).

love, as we shall see in the next section. Before turning to this, however, I would like to address another element in the description of the father-child relation that Schapp takes up from his philosophy of law, one that will have a fundamental role in his philosophy of hi/stories: namely, the theme of creating/creation (*Schaffen*). As we have already seen,¹⁸ for Schapp creative activity represents the foundation of the world of values at whose center every human being stands. In *Zur Metaphysik des Muttertums*, he states that creative activity is “that on which the dignity of the human being, at the center of a world full of values, is founded.”¹⁹ But now in relation to the father-child relationship, creation takes on a completely different meaning. When an individual becomes a father, he no longer creates for his own brief and uncertain life, nor merely to enrich the present community; rather, he creates for future generations. He now feels himself an active member of, and participant in, the generations to come through his progeny. According to Schapp, it is only for the man as father that it makes sense to erect structures meant to last for generations or to plant oaks that will endure for centuries. In this way, the father seeks to exorcise the state of mind that powerfully inhabits him when he reflects on death and on the fact that he cannot be here forever.²⁰ With the expansion of man into fatherhood, life no longer encompasses only the brief span allotted to him as an individual. Rather, the individual projects himself into future generations, his descendants, and undertakes works and actions that previously must have seemed meaningless, for they did not fall within the horizon that now unfolds with fatherhood. Likewise, one who experiences the significance of being a father looks back on the past with a different gaze and takes into account the line of ancestors whose works and creative force live on in him through their legacy. It is in this way, according to Schapp, that the Homeric nobility experiences its lineage in a “joyful and festive feeling of life.”²¹ A form of fatherhood of this kind, Schapp argues, rises above motherhood while at the same time being influenced and permeated by it in its development, thereby extending and amplifying its reach to such an extent that the father-mother relationship becomes fused and intertwined at the very foundations of Western culture. It would in fact be mistaken to assume that in humanity at large or among all peoples of the earth, whether past or present, there exists a basis for the development of such forms of motherhood and fatherhood. Not all peoples and cultures attain the level of development of the family as he describes it, and where these forms do not emerge from within, they cannot be introduced from without, for they would not lead to the same consequences. In Western culture, however, they have found development and full expression, shaping not only the family unit, but also the relationship to the experience of the divine.

¹⁸ See Part II, section “Phenomenology of Creation: The I-Work Relationship and the Historical a Priori”, Chap. 6.

¹⁹ Schapp (1965, p. 67).

²⁰ See Schapp (1965, p. 68).

²¹ Schapp (1965, p. 69).

The Currents of Mother-Child Love and the Relationship Between Maternal Love and God's Love

The theme of creation is also central to the investigations into maternal love that Schapp conducts in the second book of *Zur Metaphysik des Muttertums*. In this work, Schapp first identifies three forms of love that he considers worth examining: the love expressed in the relation between mother and child, the love that concerns the man-woman relation, and the love that characterizes relations of friendship.²² As Schapp shows, there is an important respect in which the love between a man and a woman and the love between friends differ from motherly love at the outset. The love between a man and a woman and the love between friends arise and develop at particular moments in human life. Love between friends can already develop in childhood, whereas the love between a man and a woman usually develops at a later age, and both seem to be grounded in free choice. In the case of motherly love, however, the object of love is given from the very beginning: it is the child. There is no moment of hesitation and no earlier time in which love was not yet present. With the birth of the child, the stream of love pours itself out upon the child. It unfolds by following a feature of the child's face or personality and continues until it reaches love for the child's metaphysical self. In contrast, among lovers this form of the development of love often passes through harsh trials and is composed of moments of disappointment and fulfillment, for it rests on a reciprocal giving and receiving.²³ Thus motherly love seems to share very little with these other forms of love. Motherly love is not based on reciprocity in the same sense as the love between a man and a woman or between friends. If we were to imagine, for example, that a child were born fully grown from the first day, there would no longer be any room for motherly love in the truest sense. There is indeed motherly love for the adult child, but this love presupposes all the stages of the child's development, from infancy to adulthood. All these stages are preserved in the love for the adult child. The foundations are laid in childhood, at the age in which the stream of love flows initially and clearly in one direction, from mother to child, even though the mother desires from the very first day to feel an echo, however faint, a response to her love.²⁴ And for Schapp, the maternal dimension of creating is bound precisely to this unconditional character and to this one-directional current of love. The creation of the child is not, as in many cases of human creation, a creation out of nothing; rather, it is a shaping, a forming, and a nurturing of something that already exists. According to Schapp, it is comparable to the creation carried out by the gardener, the animal lover, or the cultivator of flowers.²⁵ Motherly love, however, flows back into creation in yet another way—one that Schapp also describes in his philosophy of law, though here it appears in its ultimate and deepest form. It remains alive in the

²² See Schapp (1965, p. 111).

²³ See Schapp (1965, p. 112).

²⁴ See Schapp (1965, p. 114).

²⁵ See Schapp (1965, p. 117).

child day after day until the child becomes an adult, and it shapes an essential bond with the mother's self and with her mode of creating and forming. She carries this task within her destiny as preserver and guardian. The child, who at birth appears to be her creation only in an external sense, becomes more truly her creation as he or she grows. In this regard Schapp writes: "In this creative activity directed toward the noblest object one can imagine within the human sphere, a joy, a sense of well-being and a deep satisfaction develop, feelings that strengthen and renew each day the stream of love flowing from the mother to the child."²⁶ This creative dimension within the development of the mother and child relationship, and within the growth of motherly love, is largely absent (though not entirely) from the relationship between friends and from that between a man and a woman. In these latter relationships, it is a matter of two finite individuals who need only draw near to one another, like two elements that are chemically compatible, so that love or friendship may develop on its own. The mother, in contrast, creates—or rather, brings into being for herself—the object of her affection and love, beginning from her vision and intention of what her child will one day be as an adult. And although the child will at times fulfill or disappoint these expectations, none of this alters the original character of this love or of this relationship.²⁷

But how does this maternal love relate to the divine, given that, as seen above, it seems to be either overlooked or even overridden in the major religious conceptions of Western culture? First of all, in the third book of *Zur Metaphysik des Muttertums*, Schapp points out that the question of whether Christianity has overridden the position of woman is posed incorrectly: Christianity spread primarily among peoples in whom the position of woman as mother and the practice of monogamy had already been established for centuries. This is significant if we consider that in the region where Jesus originated, monogamy was by no means consolidated; it coexisted with polygamy, and polygamy was common even in the earliest Christian communities, to the point that Paul requires at least bishops to be monogamous. For Schapp, the fact that the area in which Christianity spread roughly coincides with the area of monogamy is not accidental.

Woman, as mother, naturally tends to cultivate a religion of love. Wherever motherhood had already given rise to and shaped fatherhood, Christianity found fertile ground; wherever motherhood did not yet hold this social value, it encountered resistance precisely among the male population, which, by accepting polygamy, did not elevate woman to the maternal role and therefore could not aspire to fatherhood, since the man did not form a unity with the woman in which she is both mother and wife. It is precisely this aspect that should be examined in order to clarify the relationship between the human and the divine. Such an inquiry should clarify whether the relationship between heaven and earth can be understood only on the basis of motherhood, of the mother-child relation, and by asking in addition how the paternal figure then enters into the family—or again, by inquiring whether

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ See Schapp (1965, p. 119).

femininity and motherhood truly coincide, as well as by considering how fatherhood is distinguished from masculinity.²⁸

Here we reach a central point of Schapp's entire thought. He maintains that in human earthly experience, one can perceive traces of the heavenly world, taking the latter not as something external, but as something that permeates the human from within. In this we find the highest analogy between divine love and maternal love. Divine love is what sustains life from the very beginning, just as maternal love does. This analogy does not, however, have a merely comparative purpose, but also an experiential and paradigmatic significance, for wherever there is love, there is the divine. To show this, Schapp draws on verses from Paul's letter to the Corinthians. The apostle shows that all deeds—speaking the tongues of men and of angels, possessing prophecy, giving away one's goods, even offering one's own body—are nothing without love. According to Schapp, this call pulls believers away from the periphery of their spiritual pretensions and brings them back to the living source of Christianity. When Paul describes love as patient and kind—as that which does not envy, does not boast, does not seek its own interest, and “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things”²⁹—it is not an abstract definition, but rather a light that illuminates what was already present in our experience.³⁰ And it is precisely here, according to Schapp, that maternal love appears as the most tangible earthly anchor of Paul's words: no human love makes more visible the patience, the care, or the capacity to endure and to hope that he describes. Thus, for Schapp, Paul's hymn not only speaks of the Love of God, but shows how this divine Love shines forth in maternal love, which is its most immediately perceptible form in our lives.³¹ The divine therefore opens itself, according to Schapp, wherever maternal love is experienced, and it is in this and through this that maternal love can be equated with the love of God. The latter cannot be explained or grasped in a rational manner. Any conceptualization or theoretical framework concerning divine love would ultimately impoverish it and confine it to a sphere in which it cannot unfold. The only way in which divine love can be experienced and can unfold is through the lived love that is given to us by the mother, and conversely, through the love one feels for the mother.³²

This theme of the priority of lived experience over theoretical explication, and the question of the lived love of familial bonds as the earthly anchor for the unfolding of divine love, represents one of the most quietly foundational elements of the concept of entanglement. If it is true, then, that Schapp's treatment of maternal love remains an exception within the corpus of his writings, it is nonetheless an important theoretical step with respect to issues that are central to his entire philosophy of *hi/stories*. This applies both to the foundational way in which the development of

²⁸ See Schapp (1965, p. 167).

²⁹ 1 Cor. 13: 7.

³⁰ See Schapp (1965, p. 163).

³¹ See Schapp (1965, p. 164).

³² Cf. Schapp (1965, pp. 168–169).

values and sentiments within the family nucleus is considered, i.e., as a horizontal experience shared across humankind, and to the vertical way in which legacy is understood as the legacy we inherit from our ancestors at birth. With regard to this legacy, the moment of creating, of bringing works into being, assumes an even more central role when one considers the inheritance one leaves to one's descendants. In this way, the theme of work and of value—a theme developed in the two books on the philosophy of law—finds in *Zur Metaphysik des Muttertums* its culmination and its sublimation. The theme of love and legacy also opens the metaphysical question concerning our relation to the divine. The relation to God proves essential for the ultimate grounding of the human being's entanglement; it unfolds in the hi/stories of the world through divine creation as experienced through maternal formation, and in universal hi/story through the hi/stories of the father's creative force, which generates works for his progeny and in which the founding myth of the religions of the paternal creator God shines forth.

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Part III
The Theory of Entanglement in Hi/stories:
Critique of Classical Phenomenology and
Hermeneutics of Hi/stories

Chapter 8

Toward a Philosophy of Hi/stories: Deconstruction of the Main Concepts of the Phenomenological Method



Abstract The development of Wilhelm Schapp's philosophy of hi/stories emerges from a sustained and critical engagement with classical phenomenology, whose methodological assumptions are progressively reworked from within. Rather than marking a rupture, *In Geschichten verstrickt* brings to completion a transformation already prepared in the writings of the 1930s and further developed in the late 1940s and early 1950s. A decisive testimony to this development is provided by the unpublished manuscript *Beiträge zur Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmung*, Vol. 1 and 2 (1949), together with the notes from the early 1950s, which reveal the extent to which this transformation is rooted in a renewed phenomenological investigation. At the center of this reworking lies a reconfiguration of the role of perception: no longer understood as access to a static given, it becomes the site in which subjectivity, temporality, and world-context intersect. Within this framework, the individuality of what is given is no longer grounded in the notion of the individual idea, but is reinterpreted through the temporal unfolding of the thing, which appears together with its hi/story. The relation between intuition and concept is thereby transformed, and naming comes to refer not to a fixed essence but to the historical development of the thing. At the same time, the critique of the concept of *Sachverhalt* reveals the limits of a model based on isolated propositions and universal objects, leading to an initial redefinition of hi/story as a nexus of sense. Yet this reconfiguration remains insufficient as long as it does not account for the material and practical embeddedness of things in the lifeworld. It is from this further step that the notion of *thing-for* emerges, anticipating the conceptual shift that will become central in the philosophy of hi/stories inaugurated a few years later.

Keywords Classical phenomenology · Perception · State of affairs · Nexus of meaning · Lifeworld · Practical embeddedness

Schapp's works from the 1930s comprise a theoretical landscape that still operates within a phenomenological dimension, yet begins to undermine from within the very methodological assumptions that he had inherited from Husserl and the other members of the circles. This questioning of the most structural aspects of phenomenology culminates with the publication of *In Geschichten verstrickt*, which marks

the birth of the philosophy of hi/stories. “If we start from hi/stories and hi/story, our starting point is diametrically opposed to that of Husserl,”¹ Schapp asserts emphatically in his manifesto work. However, the new radical dimension found in *In Geschichten verstrickt* cannot be said to distance itself from phenomenology definitively; rather, it is configured as an attempt to found phenomenology anew based on the theory of human entanglement in hi/stories.² In fact, the very conceptual foundations of entanglement emerge from the author’s close engagement with what he calls “classical phenomenology” and as a response to the aporias he identifies in the method it proposes. As I have already mentioned in “Sketches from a Philosophical Biography” (see Part I above), immediately after the end of the Second World War, Schapp revives his interest in philosophy and in some key phenomenological texts. He resumes studying *Die Seele des Menschen* by Pfänder and reads *Erfahrung und Urteil* by Husserl, while the following year, he dedicates himself to reading the works of Ranke.³ In addition to these, during those years Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit* and Husserl’s *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie* also remain texts of continuous study and engagement.⁴ These new reflections lead to a thorough reworking of all his previous writings. A testament to this is the 282-page manuscript written in 1949, kept in a folder of the *Nachlass* held at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich and never published, bearing the title *Beiträge zur Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmung*, Vol. 1 and Vol. 2.⁵ This work reveals a marked continuity in its aims with his doctoral dissertation and his experience of the phenomenological circles, embodying an effort to reinvigorate and breathe new life into the primarily “ethical” promise of early phenomenology.⁶ Both the 1949 manuscript and the notes from the early 1950s represent Schapp’s true intellectual engagement with phenomenology—one in which, against the backdrop of classical phenomenological conceptual tools, the terminology and hermeneutical approach that would culminate in the philosophy of hi/stories begin to take shape. Concepts such as “thing-for” and “hi/story” as a nexus of meaning emerge as responses to the static conception of the thing as given in perception and to the essentialist view of states of affairs. The decisive turning point marked by the

¹ Schapp (2012, p. 171).

² See Lübke (1954, p. 654ff.), De Santis (2025, pp. 65–66), and Nuccilli (2024, p. 37ff.).

³ See Greisch (2010) and Schapp, J. (2004, p. 17).

⁴ This can be seen from the annotations present in the *Nachlass* (Schapp, 2017, p. 125ff.).

⁵ Ana 627, W. Schapp, *Beiträge zur Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmung (Fortsetzung)*, Bd. 1, Bd. 2, copied by Jan Schapp. From now on, this continuation of Schapp’s project [cited as Schapp (1949) in the notes] will be referred to in the text as *Beiträge II*, while the original 1910 publication (Schapp, 2013) will still be referred to as “the *Beiträge*.”

⁶ Cf. Joisten (2016, p. 370ff.). A most precious testimony of this ethos is provided by Schapp in “Recollections of Husserl.” In this writing, Schapp not only offers his own interpretation of the phenomenological method, but also describes the commitment and intensity with which the members of the circles gathered and discussed philosophy with Husserl and among themselves during the Göttingen years (see Schapp, 2025, pp. 233–244). In the seminars he held in his office after the end of the Second World War, Schapp sought to recreate precisely that atmosphere (Lübke, 2004, pp. 25–44).

concept of “entanglement” is still absent until 1953; however, many elements characterizing the philosophy of hi/stories are already present in these earlier writings. Thus, one can truly understand the issues that define the emergence of Schapp’s narrative approach only by analyzing its interdependence with the critique of the method and concepts of phenomenology, a task for which *Beiträge II* and the notes from the 1950s provide crucial insight. Otherwise, one risks failing to understand why Schapp’s narrative turn begins with a seemingly distant problem concerning the relationship with everyday objects, and why the first section of *In Geschichten verstrickt* devotes so many pages to highly technical problems related to perception, making large parts of it appear like foreign bodies within the central argumentative axis of the work. Only through the recovery of this unpublished text can one glimpse that for Schapp, the central problematic core remains, until the beginning of the 1950s, the manifestation of the real in perception. Rethinking and moving beyond this static model of the phenomenology of perception can open the way to a new vision of humanity, and consequently, to the perspective of entanglement.

Beiträge II accordingly testifies how the central pivot of Schapp’s philosophical turn lies in the changed conception of the role of perception in the knowledge of the world and the things that inhabit it. In the introduction to the work, two fundamental aims are outlined: (1) to construct a morphology of perception, that is, “to consider the totality of the processes [*Vorgänge*] in which something is given to us sensibly [*uns etwas sinnlich gegeben ist*]”;⁷ and (2) to focus on the relationship that ideal objects, species, and genera have with the perception of concrete objects. In addition to these two aims, Schapp further clarifies that although his interest is primarily directed toward the perception of the given, the concrete (*der Gegebene, Konkretum*), this can only take place once the modalities in which genera and species can be considered perceptible, or are somehow related to individual perception, are clarified.⁸

In this regard the chapter of *Beiträge II* titled “Das Wissen in der Wahrnehmung” (knowledge within perception) is of great interest for the evolution of Schapp’s thought. The title evokes “Die Idee in der Wahrnehmung” (the idea within perception), the title of the third section of *Beiträge*, and its content anticipates the discussion of the relationship between “hi/story and knowledge” (*Kenntnis*) that is found in Chap. 1 of the second section of *In Geschichten verstrickt*.⁹ In “Das Wissen in der Wahrnehmung,” Schapp addresses the relationship between the perception of things and the domain of the categorial, examining the issue of the connection that perceptually establishes itself between the individual thing and the concept. For Schapp, no conceptual apprehension can be detached from the situatedness of the self in a particular context. He even states: “In conceptual apprehension, there is a relation to a fixed point [*Festpunkt*]. As a fixed point, I consider the core of the thing [*Dingkern*] and the soul or the nuclear self [*Ich-kern*] of the knowing self. Between these two

⁷ Schapp (1949, p. 1).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Schapp (2012, p. 85ff.).

poles lies all that can be intuited.”¹⁰ The inclusion of the empirical subject and its position in relation to the thing shifts the focus of the perceptual investigation beyond the Platonic conception of the first edition of the *Beiträge*. Regarding the problem of perception, this shift occurs through two decisive steps that are key for the subsequent configuration of the concepts of hi/story and entanglement. The first step is the recognition of a subjective component in the intuition of the thing. In this regard, Schapp writes: “In perception, it seems to me that it is not the case that in some phantom process, the soul acquires the concept from perception; rather, the soul brings the concept, which in itself is not empty.”¹¹ This point begins to outline a different stance compared to the assumption of the phenomenological method according to which cognitive acts do not influence the ideality of propositions.¹² And the second step concerns Schapp’s recognition of the inescapable system of spatiotemporal coordinates within which the subjective experience of the thing is situated. In this regard, he writes:

For every full concretization of a name, there corresponds the object standing before us, that is, the object’s becoming present. This means that concretization also entails a position for the perceiving self. If, for example, I want to bring to intuition a moment from the past, such as the construction of the Theater of Dionysus, this intuition inherently includes a position of the self. In every memory, in every mnemonic intuition, there is a place for the self.¹³

Thus, it is within this reassessment of subjectivity as the center from which a temporal opening toward the past radiates that Schapp situates the intrinsic temporality of the thing perceived and the world in which it is situated. For Schapp, every individual thing arises from the context of the world constructed around the subject, and in this context each thing that is currently present carries with it a context that fades into its past. Concerning this, Schapp literally states: “The hi/story of the thing is present in the present thing.”¹⁴ From the perspective of the intentional constitution of the perceptual act, Schapp argues that this historical conception requires a new

¹⁰ Schapp (1949, p. 65).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² In his “Recollections of Husserl” Schapp recognizes five interrelated levels of phenomenological investigation. The first level is constituted by the *objective*: “the objects, the matters [*Sachen*], or the world of objects and their relation to each other”; the second level is that of the “states of affairs” (*Sachverhalt*); the third level is that of the propositions corresponding to the states of affairs; the fourth level consists of “the judgments and acts of judgment corresponding to the propositions”; and the fifth and final level concerns “the sphere of cognitive acts in which a world is presented: representing, perceiving, intuiting, empty representation, questioning, doubting.” Regarding the last point, Schapp further states that the cognitive acts do not affect the ideality of the proposition (Schapp, 2025, p. 234ff.). For a more in-depth discussion of the relationship between specific concepts of classical phenomenology and Schapp’s hi/stories, see De Santis (2025). In *Beiträge II*, we also find a different approach compared to the phenomenological Platonism of the *Beiträge*, where the evidence of the thing manifests itself through the concept or essence of the thing. When the concept or essence reveals itself to consciousness, it cannot but be recognized. See Schapp (2013, p. 144f.); cf. Nuccilli (2020, pp. 70–71).

¹³ Schapp (1949, p. 66b).

¹⁴ Schapp (1949, p. 66c).

consideration of the relationship between the intuition of the object and its designation. This relationship can be understood in two ways: (1) the name can refer to the object as it is concretely presented at a specific moment in time, capturing its immediate appearance; or (2) the name can refer to the object in the course of its hi/story, tracing its development from its origin to the present. Schapp favors the second option, and believes that the usual meaning of the proper name lies precisely in the fact that it encapsulates the historical development of the object named.¹⁵ This consideration is highly relevant for the translation of the Platonic conception of proper names present in the *Beiträge* into a more radical historical-narrative framework. In the *Beiträge*, Schapp expresses the necessity of having a proper name for each thing, since each thing corresponds to a single idea. He then argues that language and names fail to capture the specificity of each individual idea associated with each thing. But as a way to address this issue in *Beiträge II*, the concept of hi/story appears in relation to the name. The name carries with it the hi/story of the named object, thus qualifying it in a much more specific way than the idea does.¹⁶

The unpublished work of 1949 thus helps to clarify the emergence of a historical and hermeneutical dimension in Schapp's interpretation of the phenomenological relationship between intuition and denomination: it is historical because with the name, the entire historical evolution of the thing is grasped; it is hermeneutical because the subject does not neutrally receive the thing in intuition, but adds something to the intuition of it. However, for further clarification of how Schapp develops the concept of hi/story by deconstructing the key concepts of the phenomenological method, one must turn to some notes from 1951. In these notes, Schapp highlights the aporias inherent in the phenomenological concept of a state of affairs (*Sachverhalt*). Two fundamental aporias regarding the concept of *Sachverhalt* can be identified, one dependent on the other: (1) the concept of a state of affairs aims to grasp universal objects and their corresponding concepts in themselves, without taking into account the world-context from which they emerge; and (2) the world is not made up of concepts and propositions, but of things with their own materiality and contexts of use. To solve the first aporia, Schapp offers an initial definition of hi/story understood in a narrative and not a merely historicist sense. To address the second aporia, Schapp begins to outline the concept of *Wozuding* (thing-for), which would later find its fullest expression in *In Geschichten verstrickt*.

On June 7, 1951, Schapp notes: "What the state of affairs is can only be determined with the help of the universal object, and conversely, what the universal object is can only be determined within the state of affairs. However, one may question whether the universal object and its corresponding concept can be grasped in themselves. In our view, words and their corresponding concepts are only fragments

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ A clear indication of the thematic continuity between the two perspectives lies in the fact that Schapp refers to the city of Cologne in both the *Beiträge* and *Beiträge II*, in the former as an example of a proper name corresponding to a single idea (see Schapp, 2013, p. 133) and in the latter as a proper name to which a hi/story can be attributed (see Schapp, 1949, p. 66c).

or unclear formations [*Gebilde*].”¹⁷ To solve the problem of fragmentation caused by the state of affairs–theory, Schapp proposes a definition of hi/story as a *Sinnzusammenhang* (nexus of sense). For Schapp, hi/story is a semantic and syntactic structure that provides the background for understanding the state of affairs expressed by a proposition. Only within this structure does each proposition take on its specific sense in relation to the others. In this regard, he writes: “In every hi/story, each proposition is in an inseparable relationship. One might still think that the hi/story is made up of propositions representing ultimate elements. However, we wonder whether in doing so we truly grasp the state of affairs and are not making the same mistake as when we fail to consider propositions as being constructed solely from concepts.”¹⁸ Propositions can never be isolated from the context in which they emerge, just as concepts can never be isolated from the proposition in which they appear.¹⁹

Schapp’s critical concern is primarily the way in which phenomenology understands the relationship between the state of affairs and the world. If the state of affairs has to maintain its connection to the world, the world cannot be understood as a mere sum of individual states of affairs, but rather as an organic nexus of states of affairs. Such an organic totality can only find its correct articulation in a hi/story that emerges in turn from a broader horizon of hi/stories. According to Schapp, however, even this would not solve the second aporia he identifies. Even if we attempt to transform states of affairs into a semantic unity like hi/story, we are still far from the world in its materiality and its reality-character. Hi/story must somehow be rooted in the lifeworld. And it is precisely due to the need to address this issue that Schapp introduces the concept of things-for. In this regard, still in the 1951 notes, he writes:

If we try to proceed from the world, beginning with what seemed to represent a fixed point in the world—namely, the concept of thing, of a rigid thing—we realize that this concept slips from our grasp. We started with the things around us, the cup, the table, the chair, and discovered that these things do not represent things in “general” [*überhaupt*], but are already things with a purpose, they are already things-for [*Wozudinge*]. Nonetheless, all these things had one thing in common: they were made from something, let’s say from a material [*Stoff*] or from multiple materials.²⁰

Besides the linguistic-expressive dimension, the phenomenological model of the state of affairs and its objective correspondence can no longer be sustained because

¹⁷ Ana 627, 7.VI.1951. It is worth noting that here Schapp is already using the term *Gebilde*, which will later become the formal technical term with which he defines the things-for and the hi/stories, and which—due to this new context—will from that moment on serve as a sort of substitute for the previous concept of *Sachverhalt*. See, for example, Schapp (2012, p. 3).

¹⁸ Ana 627, 7.VI.1951.

¹⁹ What is being invoked here is Husserl’s conception of phenomenology as “pure grammar.” Schapp will systematically challenge this in a very important chapter of *Philosophie der Geschichten*, applying the theory of entanglement (see Schapp, 2015, p. 313f.). Cf. below Part IV, Chap. 17.

²⁰ Ana 627, 18.VII.1951.

there is already an aspect of the thing that is only comprehensible in terms of the embodied experience of the world. The most intimate character of the thing is understood primarily through its use and its purpose. Schapp defines this as the *Wozu-charakter* (character-for), which refers to the positioning of things within a world made up of human purposes and ends. These purposes form the hermeneutical background and thus the pre-understanding of things. For this reason, one can no longer be satisfied with perception as a basic form of knowledge. According to Schapp, the concept of the *Sosein* (being-thus) of the thing must therefore also be called into question. Even though in perception, we encounter the material thing in terms of the characteristics most proper to it, we can no longer find its essence in theoretical-cognitive experience, but must take as our point of departure its more essential character of a thing's being a thing-for inserted in a constantly changing context made up of different purposes and intentions. The theory of the entanglement of humans in hi/stories, which primarily unfolds from 1953 on with *In Geschichten verstrickt*, originates from the need to describe this form of the pre-understanding and situatedness of humans in the world.²¹

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Chapter 9

Entanglement and the External World: Hi/stories, Embodiment, and Things-for



Abstract The philosophy of Wilhelm Schapp is grounded in the idea that human beings are always entangled in hi/stories, such that no clear separation can be drawn between the individual and the hi/stories in which they participate. From this perspective, experience is no longer neutral or centered on an autonomous subject, but is always already shaped by the narrative horizons of one's own hi/stories. Within this framework, the external world does not appear as an independent domain but as something that occurs within hi/stories, while remaining distinct from the dimension of entanglement. The connection between these two domains is established through the notion of the thing-for, which links human activity, purpose, and the world. As a product of human action, the thing-for embodies both a practical and a historical dimension, opening a horizon in which the world, human beings, and their hi/stories are intertwined. In this way, perception itself is reinterpreted as rooted in embodied and productive experience, and the understanding of things shifts from static properties to their role within contexts of use and meaning.

Keywords Entanglement · External world · Thing-for · Embodiment · Original body · Narrative perception

Already in the opening lines of the introduction to *In Geschichten verstrickt*, Schapp presents the foundational premise of the concept of entanglement: “We humans are always entangled [*verstrickt*] in hi/stories [*Geschichten*]. To every hi/story there belongs someone who is entangled [*Verstrickter*]. Hi/story and being-entangled-in-hi/stories [*In-Geschichten-verstrickt-sein*] belong together so closely that they cannot be separated from each other, probably even in thought.”¹ In these lines, we find the hermeneutical and epistemological cornerstone of the philosophy of hi/stories: it is impossible to distinguish between the hi/story and the humans participating in the hi/story.²

¹ Schapp (2012, p. 1).

² Cf. Schapp (2012, p. 85).

As can be seen, the situation has completely changed with respect to the hermeneutical paradigm of human understanding. The human being is now no longer an “observer” (phenomenology of perception), nor a “creator” (philosophy of law), but simply someone “entangled in hi/stories.”³ This implies that each human being’s lived experience is no longer centered on a strong and autonomous ego-structure such as that of Husserl’s intentional theory, but is structurally hetero-constituted, since each of us is immersed not only in our own hi/story, but also in the history of humanity and in the hi/stories of others. In this regard, Schapp explicitly states: “We do not intend to claim that world history [...] or the history of any nation or era consists solely of hi/stories, or is merely a sequence of hi/stories, but in any case, individual hi/stories are in the closest connection with world hi/story. A world hi/story that did not have hi/stories as its essential point of departure is hardly conceivable.”⁴ Being entangled in hi/stories is thus the most essential core of human identity; the essence of each individual lies in participating in hi/stories. This paradigm shift also entails a reorientation in the perspective to be taken on the knowledge of the world and of the self.⁵ The starting point for any form of knowledge is no longer a type of experience that is as neutral as possible—one that hides behind the phenomenon and the manifesting of things.⁶ Rather, it is a kind of experience that on the one hand is already narratively informed,⁷ and on the other hand is bound to an inescapable and already embedded perspective on the world, namely, the perspective of the individual hi/stories in which each person is entangled, which Schapp defines as *Eigengeschichten* (own hi/stories).⁸ Every aspect of the world and of the self thus appears to us within the experiential framework and the hermeneutical filter of our own hi/stories.⁹

Hi/story is accordingly the privileged domain for the emergence of every aspect of reality. Within it appear other human beings, animals, plants, and also the external world, along with everything that belongs to the realm of abstraction and imagination.¹⁰ And it is precisely in relation to the issue of how the external world appears within hi/stories that Schapp introduces a first decisive ontological/narratological distinction: “In hi/stories, the inexhaustible so-called external world appears—from the Earth to the most distant stars: the world of the inanimate. With this, something new comes to light, for we can say with certainty of what belongs to this world—that is, houses, rivers, mountains, valleys, stars, the sun and the moon—that it occurs [*vorkommt*] in hi/stories, but we can no longer say in any sense that it is entangled

³ See Schapp, J. (2010, p. 73f.).

⁴ Schapp (2012, p. 1).

⁵ See Haas (2002, pp. 98–103).

⁶ See Lübke (2006, p. 108ff.).

⁷ See Marquard (2004, p. 57).

⁸ See Schapp (2012, p. 120ff.).

⁹ See Nuccilli (2018, p. 38ff.).

¹⁰ See Schapp (2012, p. 1).

in hi/stories.”¹¹ The dimension of entanglement and of hi/story must therefore be distinguished from the dimension of what merely occurs in hi/stories, that is, from everything that does not present itself as being entangled-in-hi/stories, but rather emerges within the hi/story of another entangled being.¹²

How, then, does the external world relate to entanglement in hi/story? How are these two dimensions connected? It is precisely in response to this theoretical need that Schapp introduces the concept of the “thing-for”: “Here there seems to be a subtle thread that establishes an intimate relationship and reveals an internal connection between the hi/stories and the external world. We see the juncture between hi/stories and the external world in the formations [*Gebilde*] that we name ‘things-for.’”¹³ At the problematic intersection between thing, hi/story, and the external world, the instances that emerged in the analysis on the “work” of the phenomenology of law are incorporated into the new argumentative framework given by the concept of entanglement. After identifying among things-for “things created by humans: tables, chairs, cups, houses, palaces (the works of humans),” Schapp specifies that the relationship to the hi/story can be attributed to the fact that each thing-for “is planned by a single person with a purpose, in a context of meaning.” Therefore when Schapp asserts that a thing-for has a hi/story, this means, first and foremost, that he is channeling onto the analysis of the thing-for the discourse he had already undertaken in the *Beiträge* and deepened in *Die neue Wissenschaft II*, namely, “that it is embedded in the hi/story of a single human being.”¹⁴ The thing-for thus represents, on the one hand, the visual angle from which one can phenomenologically frame the entangled human being, and on the other hand, the place where a whole series of horizons opens that allow for the emergence both of the hi/story, from its planning, and of the world, from its production. With respect to this cornerstone function, it can be said that the production of the thing-for opens a horizon of the external world that is already encapsulated in the plans and purposes of the producers and consequently in their hi/story. It is in this sense that Schapp asserts the primacy of hi/stories over the external world, and it is in this way that he encloses the experiential horizon of the world within the experiential horizon of hi/story.

The thing-for stands out as a center from which horizons unfold¹⁵—horizons that concern the world, the human beings, and their hi/stories. It is precisely this role that sets it apart from natural objects. In addition to those characters concerning use and production, which harken back to the sociocultural dimension of the thing and its “destiny” in the world (and thus its hi/story), what distinguishes a thing-for from a natural object, according to Schapp, is also having a “from-what” (*Auswas*). By “from-what” he means that every “thing-for recalls a matter of which it is

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² See below Part III, Chap. 12.

¹³ Schapp (2012, p. 3).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ See Sepp (2010, p. 50).

composed.”¹⁶ However, the relationship between thing-for and matter is not to be understood simply as a static relationship between matter and form; rather, matter itself receives its own specific position in what Schapp calls the “overall image of the world” (*ganze Weltbild*)¹⁷ through the thing-for, or rather, through the production of the thing-for. In contrast to the account presented in the *Beiträge*, the character of the thing can no longer be understood solely in terms of its intrinsic materiality or of the physical properties that enable its interaction with the external world. Rather, it already refers to a broader horizon of meaning and a network of contextual relations. According to Schapp, this becomes evident in the fact that things-for can be made of different materials (for instance, a glass may be made of wood, iron, gold, or porcelain) without this in any way affecting its position in the world, that is, its purpose and function. For this reason, Schapp maintains that there exists a distinction between material and thing-for not only at the conceptual level, but also at the level of the objectual domain. From a phenomenological perspective, when one focuses on the “as-what” of an object of use, whether it be a cup, a table, or a chair, what appears to the spiritual gaze is the concept that grasps both the meaning of the thing-for and the broader context of sense in which it is embedded, irrespective of the material of which it is composed. The same, however, does not apply to materials. When one reflects on the thingliness of a particular material such as gold, silver, or wood, what reveals itself to the spiritual gaze is the material itself—or at least a piece of it: a nugget of gold or silver, or a tree trunk fallen in the forest.¹⁸ The account offered in the *Beiträge*¹⁹ of the relationship between the perceptual corporeality of the thing and the ideality of the concept applied to it is articulated here around the manifestative pole of the “character-for” (*Wozucharakter*) of the thing and the hi/story of its production, which allows the matter to take on a specific meaning and a precise position within the hi/story of the thing and thus of the humans who were dealing with it.²⁰ Language itself serves as the primary touchstone for the close dependence of our understanding of material on the understanding of the thing-for. It is no coincidence, according to Schapp, that it makes sense to say a cup is made of gold or a chair is made of gold, whereas saying a piece of gold is made of gold strikes us as merely tautological. The thing-for is distinguished from the natural object precisely by its “being made of” (*bestehen-aus*),²¹ and this “being made of” provides an initial gateway to the world’s manifestation within the horizon of hi/story.

What has just been said connects, in the opening paragraphs of *In Geschichten verstrickt*, to the discussion of the presentation in perception of certain structural characteristics of things, such as rigidity, hardness, and elasticity, properties that

¹⁶ Schapp (2012, p. 11). See Nuccilli (2025b, p. 120f.) and Thiemer (2025, p. 199f.).

¹⁷ Schapp (2012, p. 11).

¹⁸ See Schapp (2012, p. 16).

¹⁹ See Schapp (2013, p. 122ff.).

²⁰ See Schapp (2012, p. 17).

²¹ Schapp (2012, p. 18).

according to the *Beiträge* already achieve full givenness through sight alone, simply by observing the craftsman at work. However, Schapp explains—without explicitly referencing his 1910 writing, but evidently reworking some passages therein—that this mode of the material “emerging” (*auftauchen*)²² through colors is nothing but a secondary mode of emergence, which is closely connected to another mode that is primary, and concerns

[...] the workmanship of things, the craftsman’s commitment to things and their material, the sawing, the drilling, the hammering [...] the dragging, the pulling, the pushing, and everything else that goes in that direction. While in the face of the chromatic world the sensation may prevail that it is a matter of inspecting, of contemplating, here we are faced with the man at work [*tätige Mensch*]. One has at first the impression that the man at work is working a found material, a matter already found. We think, however [...] that matter emerges primarily in and with activity and that the determinations of matter become comprehensible only from this activity.²³

In *In Geschichten verstrickt*, as far as the manifestative horizon of the external world is concerned, an inversion between *theōrēsis* and *poiēsis* takes place.²⁴ This inversion is undoubtedly a result of the Heideggerian hermeneutical turn as it takes shape in *Being and Time*,²⁵ yet it nonetheless aligns with the trajectories already established in the *Beiträge* and their openness to the lifeworld.²⁶ Here, however, it is not simply a matter of reversing the direction of what had been sketched out in the *Beiträge* and thus returning from the phenomenological breakthrough achieved through intuitive contemplation of things to a more ordinary commerce with them. Rather, it is a matter of projecting oneself into the circle that envelops humans, not

²² The verb *auftauchen* holds a central place in *In Geschichten verstrickt*, describing how different dimensions of reality reveal themselves on multiple levels, from objects in the perceptible world, to sensible qualities accessible through *things-for* and production, to the hi/stories unfolding within the horizon, and finally to the humans who exist within these hi/stories. It serves the same epistemological function as *darstellen* in its dual form of *Darstellende* and *Dargestellte*—a thesis developed by Schapp in the *Beiträge*. However, although—as Rolf (2004, p. 108) notes—a certain representational aspect of what emerges remains, here what is established is a primarily epistemological perspective of *Offenbarung*, understood as the unveiling of ever-expanding horizons, beginning with the horizon of the thing-for or the hi/story that concerns it.

²³ Schapp (2012, p. 20).

²⁴ See for this Nuccilli (2025c, p. 64ff.).

²⁵ A description of the decisive rupture brought about by *Being and Time* with the phenomenological tradition is given by Lübke, who maintains that through Heidegger’s incorporation into phenomenological inquiry of Dilthey’s perspective on the historicity of *Dasein* in its totality, a break occurs with the purely theoretical attitude of classical phenomenology, while at the same time its primary objective is fulfilled: namely, to provide a radical interpretation of the phenomenon of “world” starting from its original unity with the subject (see Lübke, 1954, pp. 642–643). For an analysis of the similarities and differences between Schapp’s approach and the better-known one of Heidegger in *Being and Time*, particularly regarding the importance of practical experience and objects of use, see Johnson (2022) and Nuccilli (2025b, pp. 114–115).

²⁶ Opinions on the direct influence of Heidegger on Schapp are divided. Lübke (2012, p. ix), Schapp, J. (2004, p. 19), and Schollenberger (2004, p. 242) have argued against a direct influence. In favor, however, are Fellmann (2006, pp. 166–168), Greisch (2010, p. 193), Marquard (1989, p. 48), and Rolf (2004, p. 107).

only when they test the qualities of the material, but in their “being at work,” when they are dynamic centers of a series of actions and reactions in which the “will” to produce encounters the properties of matter.²⁷ It is only starting from the circle of relations that is generated around the human working on the thing-for that qualities such as rigidity, heaviness, and other properties of matter come to primary manifestation. Upon this primary form of manifestation is then founded the secondary mode of emergence, the perceptual one.²⁸

The new perspective that Schapp develops concerning the knowledge of the external world is accordingly grounded in an embodied conception of experience. Central to understanding the theory of entanglement is, in fact, Schapp’s conception of the “living body” (*Leib*).²⁹ To lead readers toward an understanding of what he means by living body, Schapp invites them to place themselves in the position of a person at work—an artisan engaged in hammering, sawing, or splitting something—and to immerse themselves in the lived experience of the task through the phenomenological gaze. In this situation, one discovers that what is first perceived, through the resonance of the tool, is one’s own hand and the grip holding it; then the arm, the torso, and gradually the entire living body come into awareness as engaged in the activity.³⁰ This perception, according to Schapp, cannot be fully reduced to visual perception. The “visible body” (*visueller Leib*)³¹ is only distantly related to the body as it reveals itself in action.³² The “body at work” (*tätige Leib*), on the other hand, emerges, “so to speak, from within and in the activity forms a dynamic unity with the work tools, with the hammer, with the axe, and once again, with the ground beneath it and with the material it is working on.”³³ What is particularly noteworthy here is that although the world always emerges on the background of the living body, it is nevertheless the case that since production is always directed toward a purpose, the prerequisite for the world to emerge is precisely the body at work. Indeed, the body must adjust its movements according to the goal and modulate its strength based on the resistance of the material. For example, when splitting wood, one must have the feet firmly rooted to the ground and lean backward to give more force to the blow. The circular interplay between tool and action thereby enables the emergence of the world—such as the earth beneath one’s feet, the wood, or the iron of the axe—while simultaneously allowing what Schapp calls the “original body” (*ursprüngliche Leib*)³⁴ to co-emerge. The original body is the fundamental, generative way in which the body situates itself in the world, anticipating and grounding

²⁷ See Schapp (2012, p. 21).

²⁸ Cf. Schapp (2012, pp. 22–23).

²⁹ For an in-depth discussion of the question of the body in Schapp and its importance for a narratological turn, see Nuccilli (2025a).

³⁰ Cf. Schapp (2012, pp. 21–22).

³¹ Schapp (2012, p. 22).

³² See Sepp (2010, p. 63).

³³ Schapp (2012, p. 22).

³⁴ Ibid.

all other modes of experiencing and understanding the body. By “original body,” Schapp does not mean the individual’s physicality, appearance, or mere presence; rather, he refers to the indivisible unity between the human being and the cycle of production, with the body being the active core and the source from which the world emerges through a process that is both proprioceptive and dynamically engaged. Thus, focusing on the body not only provides the foundation and key entry point for a more narrowly perceptual investigation, but also enables Schapp to pinpoint the perspective necessary to grasp the figure of the “entangled” person. By repositioning the human being within the world, Schapp decisively breaks with any lingering ties to Husserlian phenomenology³⁵ and paves the way for a more focused exploration of human entanglement in hi/stories. A crucial step in this process is Schapp’s analysis of the horizon of hi/stories in which the thing-for is embedded.

In addition to the material character that links it to production (and from there unveils a worldly horizon), the thing-for has a whole other set of characteristics that open its historical-narrative horizon instead. Such characteristics are beyond the scope of any consideration of the thing that does not already contemplate it as being embedded in a context of use marked by a series of cross-references that leads both backward—toward the creator’s design and plan, in the direction of the *archē*, so to speak—and forward, toward it being a means prepared for a purpose, having a telos, an aim, and a destiny in human hi/story. Schapp claims that the thing-for is presented to us first and foremost with an age (*Alter*)³⁶ that is more or less determined and determinable, i.e., it may have just been made or it may have been produced a long time ago. This peculiar character harks back to production and thus to the creator’s plan. Regarding this plan, the thing-for can be realized or unfulfilled, that is, the creator’s intentions may either have been carried out or were left pending for some reason. The thing-for may also be in an unusable condition, but this does not in any way downgrade it from its status as a thing-for, since the very fact that it is not functional for the purpose(s) for which it was intended places it in the series of objects that can be used by humans for a certain purpose, along with the other “fulfilled” things-for of the same kind. In addition to this, things-for may have a whole multiplicity of characteristics related to time and wear and tear (“the knife and the plow may be rusty; the wooden cabinet moth-eaten, broken, have a crack, or be missing parts”³⁷) and characteristics that define its state (“expressions such as: dirty, neglected, painted, stained, sanded, glazed, planed, exposed, solid, carved, patinated, modern, antiquated, old, new, used”³⁸). All these adjectives denote the thing-for and make sense only as determinations of the thing-for. For this reason, the thing-for cannot be reduced to its punctual manifestation, to the Husserlian *hier und jetzt*, since with each of its determinations a glimpse of its past also emerges. Such determinations are variously related to the historical and cultural situatedness of the

³⁵ Cf. Liebsch (2010, p. 27f.) and Schapp (2016, pp. 62–65).

³⁶ See Schapp (2012, p. 13).

³⁷ Schapp (2012, p. 13).

³⁸ Ibid.

thing-for—its use, its functionality, and its being immersed in a context of present and already past relations. In other words, far more is at stake than its presence here and now, for along with each of its determinations a horizon is articulated that reveals a part or the entirety of the thing-for's hi/story.

The description of the determinations related to the hi/story of the thing-for therefore comprises the fulcrum of Schapp's shift from analyses of perception to analyses of entanglement. Indeed, at the very center of this description, we find an example that shows us how the focus on the manifestative aspect of the thing must now be placed in the broader context of meaning provided by the thing-for. At the end of the paragraph devoted to the horizons of the thing-for, Schapp writes: "The cup from which I drink daily has a crack in it. Yesterday this crack was not yet there. On the horizon now appears the question of how this crack was caused, forming an island, as it were, in the always available horizon."³⁹ Thus, within the immersive perceptual experience of the thing, a window is opened to the concatenation of events that led to the modification of the thing. And for Schapp, such a window represents an overview of the concept of entanglement. It is from there that the horizon of the hi/story of the thing-for is unveiled back to its origins, at the depths of which we find the producers with their plans and the sociohistorical contexts in which they lived: "With that, even if only remotely for the moment, through the thing-for we already encounter something of the 'human essence,' to which all our efforts are ultimately directed,"⁴⁰ Schapp states in a crucial passage of *In Geschichten verstrickt*.

As Schapp demonstrates, then, it is precisely because things are situated on a broader hermeneutical horizon that the hi/story of the thing-for is not reduced to the perceptual traces we find on it that indicate past events concerning it; rather, the perception itself is modulated and directed from within by the hi/story. To support this thesis, Schapp goes through the problem of the relative size of things. Things-for of the same size appear smaller to perception as distance from the observer increases. This, however, does not mean that qualities such as big and small are solely perceptual functions of distance.⁴¹ Rather, big and small are also intrinsic properties of the character-for of the thing. If we think of the "cup," it can have different sizes depending on its purpose: it can be an espresso cup or a coffee cup; however, "if it becomes smaller than an espresso cup, it is no longer a cup, and similarly, it is no longer a cup even in the case that it becomes as big as the room."⁴² The discussion of size makes sense, then, only in reference to the context in which the thing-for is found and the uses to which it is devoted. A huge cup outside a coffee shop, for example, loses its function as an object that one can easily bring to one's mouth to drink from, and changes its character as a thing-for: "from an

³⁹ Schapp (2012, p. 17).

⁴⁰ Schapp (2012, p. 17).

⁴¹ Cf. Schapp (2012, p. 34).

⁴² Ibid.

object-of-use ‘cup’ becomes a showpiece, the thing-for ‘cup for advertising.’”⁴³ Concepts such as “big and small” are thus to be understood, according to Schapp, only from the context, or if one prefers, from the hi/story of the thing-for. Moreover, by such concepts he no longer means matters of corporeal size, but determinations of the thing-for itself: “The cup is big and small or too big or too small in the same sense that it is dirty, clean, split, without a handle, with a handle, and perhaps even too empty or too full. These are all determinations of the same level, determinations of the thing-for that are not attributable [...] without any ‘character-for.’”⁴⁴ It is the character-for, then, that allows the thing to maintain its size even as distance extends. Taking the example of the house at the end of the valley in the *Beiträge*,⁴⁵ he says that it “maintains itself of a constant size as long as we see it or recognize it as a house, as long as it emerges as such. As soon as, at a great distance, it becomes something whose meaning can no longer be discerned, this something loses with that its determination of size as well.”⁴⁶ Thus when considerations concerning the relative size of a thing take place, there is a translation to the plane of the context of meaning given by the hi/story of the *deutlich-undeutlich* (clear-unclear) dichotomy of the phenomenology of perception. Indeed, a certain phenomenon can be said to bring the thing-for to givenness only as long as is intelligible in the context in which it is situated and thus in terms of its hi/story.

The importance of this perceptual turn—both conceptually and argumentatively—becomes even more clear when we consider how Schapp analyzes the way in which the thing-for emerges within the chromatic world (*farbigen Welt*).⁴⁷ He resumes the analysis exactly where he had left off in the *Beiträge*, namely, through the examination of the sense of sight and its relationship to the sense of touch. To justify this methodological choice, he explains that “it is simply because here, above all, one must grasp the thing-for in its totality with the greatest ease, surrounded as it is.”⁴⁸ He then emphasizes that “not only must this perspective be supplemented by how the thing-for emerges through touching, grasping, and probably also producing, but also that, probably, only this manner of emerging forms the basis for its appearance in the chromatic world.”⁴⁹ The new phenomenological investigation accordingly begins with the emergence of the thing in the chromatic world, rather than from color’s presentation of the thing. This is because the aim is no longer to trace back the sensible perception of the thing to its structural features, but rather to descend from the thing’s chromatic appearance to its emergence within hi/stories, and consequently, to its connection with production. The observation that the world

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Schapp (2012, p. 35).

⁴⁵ See Schapp (2013, p. 67).

⁴⁶ Schapp (2012, p. 37).

⁴⁷ Schapp (2012, p. 12).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

emerging through colors is not just “a world full of colored spectra or backgrounds,”⁵⁰ but that qualities such as rigidity, elasticity, and heaviness also emerge alongside it—and moreover, that inquiry into the existence of a specific perceptual mode in order to grasp these qualities no longer makes sense—must now be understood within a completely different framework. Schapp now identifies the presentational function of color as the primary means to determine the distance separating the observer from the thing-for and to bring to manifestation the phenomenon of emptiness, that is, the perceptual function that enables orientation in the world of spatial things.⁵¹ The relationship between color and the depth of the thing is thus completely dissolved; he clearly states that color “[...] relates only to surface extension. It has no relation to depth and is not material.”⁵² The connection that held together color and the structure of the thing in the *Beiträge* now falls away, since the structure of the thing primarily manifests itself when the human being is at work, which means in the process of working on the thing. Schapp also carries out a similar deconstruction of the presentative properties of perceptual material with regard to the sense of touch, which now assumes a new centrality precisely in light of this shift from *theōrēsis* to *poiēsis*. In the course of his investigations into the moment of production, he deliberately avoids the term “*tasten*” (to feel or to grope), the same word he used in the *Beiträge* to indicate the cognitive experience of the thing through touch. He considers that this term gives the impression of a “present-at-hand thing” (*vorhandene Dinge*)⁵³ in the Heideggerian sense, that is, something grasped in isolation and encountered as simply present and available. For Schapp, however, what must be avoided is precisely the kind of cognitive approach to the thing that is exemplified by Descartes with the piece of wax,⁵⁴ an approach that dissects the thing and uproots it from its determinations as a thing-for. Trying to highlight the inseparable and subordinate relationship of the perceptual moment of touching to the productive circle, he therefore states:

It could be interpreted that touching is an abbreviation of sawing, drilling, hammering, and all the other activities we have described. In a certain sense, touching can be based on these activities. [...] Touching does not even consist in simply putting one's hand on the thing, but contains within itself pressing, albeit cautiously, sliding, grasping, and taking. One could even attempt to break down touching again into components corresponding to hammering, planing, pulling, and handling.⁵⁵

The perceptual moment of touching thus belongs to that original openness given by the original body, by the human being's mode of working. Every perceptual characteristic is calibrated and experienced within the meaningful context of productive experience. According to Schapp, when we touch something, we are not simply in

⁵⁰ Schapp (2012, p. 19).

⁵¹ See Schapp (2012, pp. 24f., 68f.).

⁵² Schapp (2012, p. 27).

⁵³ Schapp (2012, p. 24).

⁵⁴ Schapp (2012, p. 11).

⁵⁵ Schapp (2012, p. 24).

contact with a surface, but with the surface of a thing—and by extension, with the ground that supports us as we handle that thing. In this way, we are already within a circle of relations very similar to that of the human being at work. This kind of reflection also entails a reversal of the hierarchical relationship between sight and touch compared to the *Beiträge*. In the *Beiträge*, the argumentative line was based on the presence of certain “tactile” qualities even in visual perception, allowing sight to provide knowledge of the intrinsic properties of things, which then formed the foundational basis for subsequent theoretical evaluations. In *In Geschichten verstrickt*, however, it is the productive experience of the thing that provides the horizon of the pre-understanding of reality from which the sensible qualities of things emerge, first and foremost those determined through touching, and only secondarily the chromatic qualities. To demonstrate this claim empirically, Schapp gives the example of a person getting out of bed and moving around in a dark room. One initially orients oneself by touching the various things nearby, tactually following the order in which these things are arranged according to their purposes and functions within the context of a bedroom. Once one reaches the light switch and turns on the light, a chromatic world will appear before one’s eyes in the same order in which a tangible world had previously emerged, “[...] and of course not as internally empty color phenomena, but rather as things with the determinations that, in our view, primarily emerge through touching, and if we take a step back, through working and producing.”⁵⁶ The determinations of the thing-for thus “anticipate” and predispose the emergence of the world of colors. What applies to sight and touch also holds true for hearing. Sounds and noises, according to Schapp, emerge from a form of pre-understanding of the world that arises from our orientation within the “thing-space,” grounded in productive experience. Taking another example from the *Beiträge*, the author considers the experience we have when walking down the street at night, listening to the noises around us. “These noises,” Schapp tells us, “seem to come from the darkness. However, [...] the noises let things emerge, albeit indeterminately, and these things present themselves [...] in a precise direction within the ‘thing-space,’ which constitutes a continuation of the space constantly given together with our body and our ground.”⁵⁷ Even regarding sounds and noises, then, the starting point for every manifestation of the thing is therefore that original relationship of the body with the world that derives from the production and use of things-for.

Building on these assumptions, Schapp undertakes a thorough rethinking of his earlier perceptual investigations, now appealing to the conceptual framework of hi/stories and the thing-for. Once the plane of things-for—which function as “cores”⁵⁸ from which the emergence of the external world radiates—has been established, the focus shifts from the spatial-material aspects of the surrounding environment to the

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Schapp (2012, p. 41).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

determinations of things-for and their horizons, to their being steeped in hi/stories (*Geschichtenhafte*),⁵⁹ as Schapp explains.

How then can the investigation of perception of the *Beiträge* be reconciled with the new horizon unveiled in *In Geschichten verstrickt*? In Schapp's view, it all depends on how the relationship between the perceptual qualities of the thing and the thing itself is understood. When we analyze the perceptual content that presents a thing to us, this sensible content is regarded as a "property of something" (*Eigenschaft von Etwas*).⁶⁰ However, one should first ask what it means to be a "property of something" and proceed with some distinctions. According to Schapp, one should ask: "Is a material such as glass transparent in the same way that another material, such as sulfur, is yellow? Is red glass or a red liquid like red wine red in the same sense that sulfur is yellow? And is red ink red in the same sense as red wine? Is milk white in the same way that porcelain or chalk is white? Is a cloud white in the same sense as chalk?"⁶¹ According to Schapp, every material has its irreducible specificities that resist any form of schematization; moreover, each individual thing also has its own most specific and individual determinations: "A cup with a crack sounds different from the same cup without cracks."⁶² Each individual thing is like an island on an emerging horizon. Every perceptual phenomenon can therefore only be understood in terms of this unique and unrepeatable horizon, comprising both the hi/story and the determinations of the thing-for (and thus the dimension of entanglement), and a radiating series of references concerning human purposes and goals.⁶³ These aspects encompass and ground perception and provide the prerequisites for any understanding of perceptual phenomena. A clear example in this respect is how Schapp considers the problem of how reality is represented through images. According to him, the characteristics of a house painted in a picture are not conveyed to us by the colors; rather, it "stands before us with all the features that express what is authentic about the thing-for. It is old or new, dilapidated, a shack or a palace, crooked; it stands before us with its hi/story and its historical horizons."⁶⁴ The element that unites the painting and reality is therefore not the presentation of things and their structural characteristics, nor perception's ability to bring to givenness the relations that configure a real or depicted state of affairs, but rather the hi/story that permeates the depicted object and the horizon of world-understanding within which it is placed, alongside the hermeneutical horizon of the observer. Here we do not find an intentional relation between the knower and the object, but rather the observer's immersion in the hi/stories that the object conveys, resonating with the observers' own hi/stories.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Schapp (2012, p. 72).

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Schapp (2012, p. 73).

⁶³ Schapp (2012, p. 13f.).

⁶⁴ Schapp (2012, p. 80).

In this way the concept of hi/story and the concept of the thing-for are co-articulated and mutually sustained in Schapp's critique of phenomenology. The functional character of the thing is what roots it in the sociocultural life of human beings and renders it a collective phenomenon, capable of establishing connections among multiple individuals whose biographical trajectories intersect with the process of the thing's production and use. These connections establish the context of meaning within which knowledge becomes possible through a process of immersion in the hi/stories that concern us and that intertwine with the hi/stories evoked by encountering the thing-for in everyday practice.⁶⁵ This shifts the question of the normativity of perception to a secondary position compared to the hermeneutical question. Likewise, the idea of identifying an essence that could define the thing intersubjectively—both in its individuality and in its belonging to a species—collapses in the face of the evidence that each individual thing has its own hi/story, and that each person who engages with the thing maintains a unique relationship to it, situated within different hi/stories through which this relationship is channeled. It can therefore be said that the axis around which Schapp's shift in thought revolves is constituted by the chiasm thing—idea—hi/story—thing-for. In the investigations on perception in the *Beiträge*, the intuition of the thing can be channeled toward a process of understanding through the intention directed to the idea corresponding to it. In the “philosophy of hi/stories,” however, the thing-for is instead understood through its own hi/story, which then becomes interwoven with the hi/story of one or more human beings. From a theoretical standpoint, it is only thanks to the acquisition of the *for*-character of the thing that Schapp is able to place human beings and the external world within a relational nexus, which is substantiated each time through one or more hi/stories. And it is only by moving into the dimension of use of the thing that one can free the understanding of the thing from the mere relation of perception and signification,⁶⁶ on the one hand, and on the other hand, render it both a historical phenomenon in the usual sense and narratable in the sense of narration and of the emergence of the hi/stories in which it appears, hi/stories in which other human beings are entangled. Precisely for this reason, the thing-for also functions as the conceptual filter that allows for a reinterpretation of fundamental phenomenological themes, such as the presentation of the world as a whole, the unity of the thing beyond its different manifestations, and the problem of the relation between the individual and the species. In the next chapter, we will see how all these elements come together in Schapp's systematic critique of classical phenomenology.

⁶⁵ See D'Alessandris (2024, p. 60) and Nuccilli (2018, p. 35).

⁶⁶ Cf. Raimondi (2010, pp. 160–161).

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Chapter 10

Phenomenological Method and the Theory of Human Entanglement in Hi/stories



Abstract The analysis of entanglement in Wilhelm Schapp's philosophy of hi/stories leads to a radical critique of the basic assumptions of classical phenomenology. Since human beings are always already entangled in hi/stories, no neutral standpoint is possible, and knowledge cannot be grounded in the intuition of essences or in the correspondence between propositions and states of affairs. Hi/stories do not appear as isolated objects, but as dynamic formations always embedded in broader horizons, shaped by pre-hi/stories and open to further developments. Within this framework, things-for and elements of the external world can only be understood in relation to the contexts of meaning and use in which they are situated, and to the hi/stories in which they emerge. This perspective also undermines the notions of universal object and species, replacing them with a view of things as historically and contextually determined. Knowledge itself is thus rooted in a prior hermeneutical horizon, in which understanding arises through participation in hi/stories rather than through detached observation.

Keywords Entanglement · Hi/story horizons · Critique of phenomenological method · Universal objects · Species · Anti-essentialism

The discussion of the thing-for opens the field and prepares the ground for a deeper analysis of the condition of entanglement in hi/stories, an analysis that calls into question some of the basic elements of phenomenology, beginning with the question of perception and the knowledge of things and of the external world. As I highlighted in the introduction to the previous chapter, the fundamental presupposition of entanglement is the coalescence of the entangled individual and the hi/stories in which he/she is entangled, to the point that there is no entangled being without a hi/story, and no hi/story without an entangled being. The thing-for, insofar as it carries hi/stories, is also, by extension, situated within the existential condition of entanglement, though in the form of an emergent aspect in the hi/stories, and not as itself entangled within a hi/story. Although all these assumptions are given as a premise from the outset, their epistemological and ontological implications become clearer throughout *In Geschichten verstrickt* in contrast to the phenomenological theory of the intuition of essences. According to Schapp, the phenomenological method of

intuition of essences presupposes two elements: (1) the identification of an identity-component of the object investigated; and (2) the perspective of a neutral observer.¹ Thanks to the theoretical attitude, which involves a form of abstraction from daily habits, perception allows the thing to manifest itself in its characteristics and essence through the manifestation of the idea.² Yet since it is impossible to distinguish between the hi/story and the humans participating in the hi/story, it also becomes impossible, according to Schapp, to adopt a neutral perspective on the hi/story, and consequently, on what emerges within the hi/story itself. Even when the hi/story is theoretically investigated as an object or nexus of meaning, it already presupposes the hermeneutical background of the entangled. The hi/story can never formally constitute itself as an object, because with it we are already in an original relationship, a relationship that is given to us by being-entangled-in-hi/stories (*In-Geschichten-verstrickt-sein*).³ This entanglement already involves a background of hi/stories, a background that prevents us from isolating a hi/story that presents itself to us as something objective and detached from our lived experience.⁴ Knowledge of the hi/story itself thus coincides with entanglement in the hi/story, that is, our being prepared (*Vorbereitetsein*) for the hi/story.⁵

Beyond the impossibility of separating the cognitive moment from the way in which we “participate” in the hi/story, the hi/story is also irreducible to the actuality of its emergence, to Husserl’s *hier und jetzt*. Every hi/story, in fact, has a pre-hi/story (*Vorgeschichte*) and a post-hi/story (*Nachgeschichte*),⁶ meaning that it always refers to a background. This background is the horizon of hi/stories that precede it, and already anticipates a series of developments that open up new possible future horizons.⁷ In this regard Schapp states:

If we look closely, one hi/story does not intertwine with another, nor is it, so to speak, just a drop in a sea of hi/stories. Rather, every hi/story exists alongside of other hi/stories, and perhaps even alongside of all hi/stories, within this dynamic nexus of which we have sought to provide a first impression. One might also say, perhaps, that every hi/story is situated within the horizon of every other hi/story, or that the horizon of every hi/story always holds space for other hi/stories.⁸

¹ See Nuccilli (2025b, p. 106).

² See Schapp (2013, p. 130ff.) and Nuccilli (2020, p. 70ff.).

³ This formulation with hyphens evokes Heidegger’s concept of being-in-the-world, and thus it too reveals a certain influence of Heidegger. For an in-depth analysis of the relationship between humans’ being-entangled-in-hi/stories and Heidegger’s being-in-the-world, see Nuccilli (2018, pp. 36–37) and Greisch (1990, p. 48).

⁴ Fellmann refers to the impossibility, according to the model proposed by Schapp, of reaching the phenomenological position of the *uninteressierter Zuschauer* (disinterested spectator). See Fellmann (1973, pp. 137–138).

⁵ See Schapp (2012, p. 92).

⁶ Schapp (2012, p. 95).

⁷ See Schapp (2012, p. 88ff.).

⁸ Schapp (2012, p. 94).

The “formation” (*Gebilde*) of hi/story is therefore not a formation with definable boundaries or a specific character, as was the case with the “things” and “ideas” in the *Beiträge*.⁹ Instead, it always appears within a dynamic interconnection with other hi/stories. This interconnection depends, on the one hand, on the hi/stories and the narrative horizon in which the individual entangled subject is situated, and on the other hand, on the pre-hi/stories that ground the hi/story—that is, the hi/stories of things and humans that emerge within the hi/story itself. It is for this reason that Schapp asserts that his method does not aim at any “investigation of essences” (*Wesensuntersuchung*),¹⁰ nor does it seek to provide a conceptual definition of hi/story. Hi/story is not something that can be grasped through an objectifying act or dissected and examined by isolating certain aspects or parts of it through intentional analysis in the Husserlian sense.

The impossibility of understanding investigations of entanglement as a search for essences also extends to what emerges within the hi/story, namely, the things-for, the external world, and all of the elements that pertain to reality and to what we narrate about reality. Even with regard to these aspects, we do not hold a neutral position, since they are rooted, on the one hand, in the original experience of the world from which the hi/stories of the things we deal with emerge, and on the other hand, in our past hi/stories, in which all our experiences of both real and fictional hi/stories converge. The evaluation of these is closely tied to two aspects of Schapp’s critique of phenomenology: the critique of the universal object and species, and the critique of ideal propositions. Regarding the critique of the universal object and the concept of species, Schapp explicitly states that what has been said about the indissoluble connection between every hi/story and its horizon can also be applied to the discourse on species (*Gattung*).¹¹ As for the critique of the “universal proposition,” it stems from the observation that hi/story itself, as a dynamic “formation,” cannot be grasped through a linguistic formulation that encapsulates its essence.¹² Let us delve more deeply into these two points.

Schapp addresses the problem of universals and species in §8 of the first section of *In Geschichten verstrickt*. Here he investigates the relationship between the individual and “species” (*Gattung*) in relation to things-for.¹³ He questions how we should understand the species of things-for, such as the species car, bicycle, cup, hammer, saw, etc. Can we identify an essence for these objects? Let us take, following Schapp’s example, the car before us and try to proceed from the perception of the single car to the species “car,” moving our phenomenological gaze from the particular to the universal. As we attempt to define its characteristic features, then according to Schapp, the first thing that becomes clear is that it presents itself to us primarily with its past, and this past is not dictated by a predetermined and

⁹ On the relation between species, ideas, and hi/stories, see Nuccilli (2020) and Vigo (2025).

¹⁰ See Schapp (2012, p. 95).

¹¹ See Schapp (2012, p. 100).

¹² See Schapp (2012, p. 95).

¹³ See Schapp (2012, p. 56f.).

objectifiable horizon. Rather, the past is configured in a way that is different for each of us. The emergence of the car-formation depends, in fact, on the relationship we have with that particular car, and therefore on how it relates to our own hi/story. On the other hand, it also depends on the dynamic context from which its hi/story emerges. This specific car may, for example, have a certain number of kilometers, be in good or bad condition, and have a certain market value depending on the wear and tear and damage sustained during its “life” on the road. Beyond this mere perceptual appearance, it also refers to the series (*Serie*) X from factory Y of year Z, thus connecting it to its production.¹⁴ Hence in its factuality, the car does not reveal itself as an isolated object, but immediately refers to the series and to the thousands of other cars produced in that series. If we attempt to analyze the relationship between different cars of the same make and model, we never encounter something like a species. Instead, we find a concrete conception of the car in the designer’s mind, a conception from which a sum of initially identical individuals has been produced, individuals that now diversify over time.¹⁵ Even if the cars leaving the factory may seem perfectly identical to one another, they already have a serial number, and may have already been sold to different buyers; their horizon therefore already outlines the destiny that each of them is bound to fulfill: “in every car, its hi/story is inscribed.”¹⁶ The continuous reference to the historical dimension in the perception of a single object of practical use undermines the very foundation of the mechanism of ideating abstraction as a means of accessing the species.¹⁷ If by species one intends the universal object (*allgemeine Gegenstand*),¹⁸ that is, the ideal object embodying all the characteristics that make a given thing a *what*, such an entity is never encountered in the cognitive experience of the thing. Taking up a conception similar to that of Rickert,¹⁹ his teacher in Freiburg, Schapp states in this regard:

In traditional language, the series would be referred to as a species (*Gattung*), but if by species one means a universal object, one would be inclined to say that 10,000 automobiles are precisely like a single object—a sum of individual objects of the same type as the single automobile. Each automobile has its own serial number [...]. We fail to perceive any universal object rising above the 10,000 automobiles.²⁰

Schapp thus redefines the concept of *Gattung*, grounding it in his view of things-for-as irreducibly individual objects situated within a context of production and use and having their own hi/stories. These objects emerge against a background of meaning that arises, on the one hand, from their belonging to a “series”—a set of items originating from the same initial design and each fulfilling its unique destiny in the

¹⁴ See Schapp (2012, p. 60).

¹⁵ See Schapp (2012, p. 61).

¹⁶ Schapp (2012, p. 57).

¹⁷ See Lübke (1954, p. 650).

¹⁸ Cf. Schapp (2012, p. 57).

¹⁹ See Rickert (1896, p. 394). Cf. Part I, Chap. 1.

²⁰ Schapp (2012, p. 57).

world—and on the other hand, from the producer's intent and the purposes for which each will be employed.²¹

Schapp's redefinition of the concept of *species* has implications for the very possibility of formulating linguistic propositions that claim any generality or ideality. Any proposition referring to the species understood as a universal object, such as "The car from series X of factory Y from the year 1950 has a poor suspension," does not have as its referent an ideal state of affairs that aligns with the concept of "car from series X of factory Y from the year 1950," in which all cars produced in that series would be subsumed under the defect of poor suspension. Rather, according to Schapp, the proposition refers to the sum of each individual car in the series, not to the species. "It is the individual cars that are defective, not the ideal object 'car' itself."²²

The critique of the phenomenological method in *In Geschichten verstrickt* unfolds on three fronts. On the first front, the method underlying the intuition of essence is criticized. Those who are entangled cannot rise to the position of a neutral observer because they are always the center of hi/stories that concern them. On the second front, the very concept of "object" (*Gegenstand*) is critiqued. The object is understood only as a fragment of the thing-for, that is, what pertains to the "thing" in its materiality and its alignment with specific predicative parameters. But in this way, its *Wozu*—its having a purpose—is no longer grasped. The *Wozu* refers to the context of use, and thus to the purposes of the thing and the designer's plan.²³ Finally, on a third front, what is criticized is the possibility of universals, whether they are species/ideal objects or ideal propositions concerning these objects. With the loss of the objectual referent and its claim to universality, even those propositions that according to "classical phenomenology"²⁴ can be grounded a priori now require a new foundation. The ultimate referent of any enunciative formulation remains the horizon of pre-understanding. This horizon is opened by the thing-for, and on a broader level, by the hi/story in which it emerges and by the horizons of hi/stories that provide the backdrop for this hi/story. Even the postulates on which the sciences build their statements must accordingly be rooted in the relationship that humans maintain with the external world through the thing-for, and thus in entanglement. And it is precisely with reference to these issues that Schapp addresses the foundational scope of the theory of entanglement of humans in hi/stories.

²¹ See Pohlmeier (2004, p. 50f.).

²² Schapp (2012, p. 58).

²³ See Schapp (2012, p. 69).

²⁴ Schapp states that he first heard this definition of "classical phenomenology" from Stavenhagen (see Schapp, 2012, p. 169). In general, he can be said to include within this definition all the orientations present in the phenomenological circles of Munich and Göttingen that contributed to the development of the phenomenological method across multiple fields. An important testimony to this is provided in the first volume of *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht*, where he mentions Husserl, Reinach, Daubert, and Pfänder together as those who gave shape to the phenomenological method (see Schapp, 1930, p. 182).

The relevance of the critique of the phenomenological method for the development of the philosophy of hi/stories emerges with full force in the concluding paragraphs of *In Geschichten verstrickt*. There Schapp reflects on the omnipresence of hi/stories and the ontological-hermeneutical status of entanglement.²⁵ He reconstructs the possible argument that a phenomenologist might launch against his theory of entanglement, and then provides a way out of the stringency of this argument by summarizing all the critical points highlighted throughout the work.²⁶

Against his hypothesis that nothing exists outside of hi/stories and entanglement, phenomenologists, according to Schapp, would mention universal objects and species.²⁷ Their first step would be to start from the correspondence between proposition and state of affairs (*Sachverhalt*). By proposition, they would mean the intentional sense (*Sinn*) of the proposition—what remains unchanged whether the proposition is affirmed or denied.²⁸ According to Schapp, the proposition's being does indeed remain indifferent to whether it is thought or not.²⁹ However, when it is thought, one immediately refers to states of affairs emerging for consciousness. These states of affairs refer to objects that in turn emerge from the states of affairs.³⁰ When dealing with individual propositions, singular states of affairs emerge, as is the case in propositions such as “The queen is ill” and “Sicily is an island.”³¹ When the propositions are universal, such as “Sulfur is yellow” and “The king has a heavy responsibility,”³² what emerges are universal states of affairs. But what determines the truth or falsity of these propositions? Where do they find their ontological foundation? According to Schapp, in phenomenological theory this occurs through the verification of the correspondence between proposition and state of affairs. It is this that determines discourse concerning truth or falsity: “A proposition is true when the state of affairs it intends exists.”³³ The existence of the state of affairs is determined when it presents itself in itself-giveness (*Selbstgegebenheit*). A proposition is verified when the state of affairs it intends can be brought into coincidence with the itself-given state of affairs in evidence. This happens differently depending on the kinds of states of affairs intended. If the intended state of affairs refers to ideal objects, such as the Pythagorean theorem, this itself-giveness can be reached through demonstration and the intuition of the moments that compose it. If the intended state of affairs concerns material objects, as in the proposition “Sicily is an island,” itself-giveness must come through perception, which occurs when navigating the island. But how can the apodicticity of this last proposition be justified if

²⁵ See Schapp (2012, p. 164ff.).

²⁶ See Schapp (2012, p. 169ff.).

²⁷ See Schapp (2012, p. 168).

²⁸ See Schapp (2012, p. 169).

²⁹ Cf. Schapp (2025, pp. 234–235).

³⁰ See Schapp (2012, p. 170).

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ See Schapp (2012, p. 171).

it requires verification that can only occur a posteriori and through coincidence with the states of affairs? If the strength of phenomenology lies in identifying ideal structures that are beyond any judgment of truth or falsity, why do we need correspondence with the states of affairs in acts of judgment?³⁴ In the case of Sicily, we can only know a posteriori if the proposition is true—proceeding not from an ideal object, but from the concrete object “Sicily.”³⁵

According to Schapp, the problem with the phenomenological conception of the proposition as a fundamental cognitive particle basically lies in the fact that every proposition seems already to presuppose the state of affairs it refers to. This means that it always seems to be subordinated to the knowledge of the concrete object it refers to. Furthermore, as we have seen, not only the object itself, but also the position of the subject is relevant in relation to knowing, and thus also to truth. To support his theory and to challenge the phenomenological theory, Schapp cites the example of the proposition “The queen is ill.” While it refers to something semantically understandable, this proposition will never refer to a unique state of affairs. First, there is the factual problem that it is not the concept of queen in general that is ill, but a specific queen: it could be a queen currently alive, such as Queen Elizabeth at the time *In Geschichten verstrickt* was written; a fictional queen like the “Snow Queen”; a queen of the animal kingdom such as a queen bee; or the queen of a kingdom that exists only in our dreams. Moreover, the proposition can appear in a grammar book as an example to illustrate a certain grammatical structure, or the same proposition can appear multiple times in a book and mean different things at different points regarding the same queen or different queens. Without further specification, the subject of the proposition cannot be identified. Only a broader articulation can determine the objectual referent to which a proposition can direct the intended state of affairs. And it is in this way that the conditions for a judgment of truth and falsity are established. The only way to bring the state of affairs to evidence is therefore to place it in a narrative context, in the context of one or more hi/stories. But that’s not all; the subject of the proposition itself, if it is someone who truly exists, is not neutral in relation to the one who utters, interprets, or predicates this proposition. That sentence can be uttered by a subject of the queen or by an inhabitant of another state neighboring the queen’s kingdom, or it can be uttered by a child repeating a grammatical example. Depending on the degree of involvement and the situation, the illocutionary force of the proposition and its ramifications for the present and future of the speaker also shift. For a subject of the queen, the queen’s illness and her possible departure may represent a reason for improving or worsening living conditions. For a beekeeper, it could signal ruin. For the child, it holds no significance.³⁶

³⁴ See Schapp (2012, p. 172).

³⁵ See Schapp (2012, p. 173).

³⁶ Cf. Schapp (2012, pp. 174–175).

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Chapter 11

Narrating and Listening: The Emergence of Hi/stories and the Need for a Narrative Approach



Abstract The reinterpretation of phenomenological verification in Wilhelm Schapp's philosophy of hi/stories unfolds through the theory of narrating and understanding, in which truth and itself-givenness are no longer grounded in the correspondence between propositions and states of affairs, but in participation in hi/stories. Understanding arises only when a narrative establishes a nexus of meaning between speaker and listener, allowing the listener to become co-entangled in the hi/story being told. Hi/stories do not emerge as isolated units with clear beginnings and endings, but as dynamic formations rooted in broader horizons of pre-hi/stories and open to further developments. Within this framework, narration does not create hi/stories but enables their emergence and continuation, drawing on shared experiential backgrounds. Truth itself is thus understood as the progressive disclosure of hi/story through the engagement of those entangled in it.

Keywords Narration · Co-entanglement · Hermeneutical verification · Hi/story horizons · Narrating and listening · Narrative approach

Precisely with regard to the hermeneutical conception of verification discussed in the previous chapter, Schapp offers an example of a narrative reinterpretation of the phenomenological problem of itself-givenness. He suggests that the verificationist theory of phenomenology should be understood in terms of his theory of “narrating and understanding” (*Erzählen und Verstehen*).¹ This theory is presented by Schapp in the introductory pages of *In Geschichten verstrickt*, in which he seeks to highlight what makes a hi/story understandable and how a hi/story emerges in narration. According to Schapp, to be understood, every linguistic expression must be embedded within a nexus of meaning shared between the speaker and the listener. If a speaker (A) wishes to be understood by a listener (B), the former must find, within what is being told, a point of connection with the latter's hermeneutical universe. A nexus of meaning arises, Schapp argues, only when the narration intertwines the

¹ Schapp (2012, p. 6ff.). Throughout *In Geschichten verstrickt*, Schapp also discusses the theory of narrating and listening (*Erzählen und Hören*), tending to overlap the moment of listening with that of understanding.

life-hi/story of the speaker (A) with the life-hi/story of the listener (B). Only in this way can the listener (B) be engaged and actively participate in the hi/story being told.² To illustrate this point, Schapp provides an example from the *Acts of the Apostles*, where Paul addresses the Athenians. Speaking at the Areopagus, Paul refers to the inscription on an altar erected by the Athenians, which reads “To the Unknown God,” and uses it as a point of contact with the Athenians’ worldview. He proclaims that the unknown God they worship is the world’s Creator, the Lord of heaven and earth.³ By doing so, according to Schapp, Paul intertwines his life-hi/story of the biblical God with the Athenians’ hi/stories related to their religious practices and the erection of the altar. Paul’s narrative allows him to establish a shared hi/story within the diverse hermeneutical horizons of Athenians, bridging his message with their universe of thought. In this way, Paul’s narration gives rise to a hi/story that—if understood and embraced—can become a shared hi/story of the deity he and the Athenians hold in common.⁴ Regarding the last point, it should be noted that it is not the narrative that gives rise to the shared hi/story through understanding; rather, it is the hi/story itself that is perpetuated through the narrative, emerging from the background of the lived experiences in which the speaker is entangled and the listener becomes “co-entangled” (*mitverstrickt*).⁵ The concept of co-entanglement is a central idea in the hermeneutics of hi/stories that will be examined in greater detail later. At this stage, however, it is useful to focus more specifically on how Schapp describes the emergence of a hi/story and its horizons, since this provides the basis for addressing the more structural aspects of entanglement and its connection to phenomenology.

According to Schapp, a narrated hi/story has two characteristics: (1) it does not emerge from nothing; and (2) one can just as well say that it has a beginning as that it does not, and just as well say that it has an end as that it does not.⁶ Let us delve into these two points, which are theoretically interconnected. Like Schapp, let us take the example of the fairy tale of Little Red Riding Hood. Although it is a fairy tale, the hi/story contained within it is not a merely fictional representation. The characters in the hi/story are, for instance, presented to us with an age: Little Red Riding Hood should be about 10 years old, the mother around forty, and the grandmother about 70. This age carries with it and in some way sustains the hi/story; for example, the powerlessness of the girl and the grandmother fills it and provides its conditions. If Little Red Riding Hood were 20 years old and the grandmother in her prime, the hi/story could not unfold as it does. What is true for age can also be said of the other elements present in the hi/story: Little Red Riding Hood’s birthday, the basket with the cake and wine for the grandmother, the little house in the forest, the

²Cf. Schapp (2012, p. 6).

³Schapp is referring here to Acts 17:22–23.

⁴Cf. Schapp (2012, pp. 6–8). For a deeper insight into the narrative structure of the *Acts of the Apostles*, see Neri (2025).

⁵See Schapp (2012, p. 107).

⁶See Schapp (2012, p. 88f.). In this context, Pohlmeier characterizes it as *Schöpfung ohne Anfang* (creation without a beginning). See Pohlmeier (2004, p. 66).

hunter. These elements are familiar to Europeans, and within the fairy tale, they carry a habitual meaning for us; thus they inherit their meaning and their world from our life-experience and our way of understanding such events and things in the world. In another world—for instance, one in which the inhabitants do not celebrate birthdays, or have not yet discovered wine, or lack a confectionery culture—the hi/story would necessarily take a different shape. It would need to begin in another way, or be supplemented with other hi/stories, in order to inform and captivate the listener—who would, in any case, find a point of connection in the day of their birth, in other forms of celebration, or in different kinds of food.⁷

This set of presuppositions points to branches of the hi/story that stand out against a broader background, an entire whole, so to speak, from which the hi/story emerges as a fragment and within which other hi/stories are found. The hi/story of Little Red Riding Hood, for instance, illuminates only a part of Little Red Riding Hood's life-hi/story; the same can be said for the grandmother and the hunter. Their lives and their hi/stories can and must remain indeterminate for the purposes of the hi/story, yet certain determinations describe and individuate them, such as age and kinship in the case of Little Red Riding Hood and the grandmother, or a profession in the case of the hunter. The objects in the basket, and the basket itself, also have a hi/story that fades into the background, since it is not relevant to the main plot, and yet they too bear a determination in the possible function they serve within the hi/story: namely, celebrating Little Red Riding Hood's birthday. The forest itself also represents a world, a world in which, for example, there are wicked wolves capable of deceiving naive children. The horizon of this world and of these spheres of life is immediately co-given with the hi/story, yet it must necessarily recede into the background so that the hi/story can emerge with a specific meaning and be told effectively.⁸

The narration and the audience themselves can, so to speak, shed light on that part of the horizon from which the hi/story emerges, and they can choose to illuminate other parts by shifting attention to other regions of the horizon that serve either as a presupposition (or a beginning) for the hi/story, or else as a further development. For this reason, according to Schapp, one cannot say precisely where a hi/story begins and where it ends. Every hi/story is inscribed within a broader network of narrative connections and can never be isolated as an autonomous and self-sufficient sequence. Each hi/story is preceded by a pre-hi/story that constitutes its implicit condition, and at the same time each pre-hi/story can be further traced back into another. The very idea of an absolute beginning of the hi/story thus proves problematic: what is presented as a beginning, even in the form of a mythical or cosmological origin, always appears as a point of emergence from a deeper weave. Even the example of the biblical hi/story of creation shows, according to Schapp, how the apparent beginning from nothing is immediately reinserted into a further

⁷Cf. Schapp (2012, p. 90).

⁸Cf. Schapp (2012, p. 91).

sequence, which refers to other levels—for instance, the hi/story of God himself, which then fades into darkness, opening the space for further hi/stories.⁹

The gap between what emerges in the hi/story and what remains implicit or only sketched out is structural to narration. Even when one tries to reconstruct the pre-hi/story, it never presents itself as a stable foundation, but rather as a new beginning of a hi/story, which in turn implies further premises and backgrounds. In Eastern fairy tales, such as that of the spirit and the fish, this narrative play becomes explicit: the apparent beginning of the hi/story is constantly pushed back, revealing that the understanding of the main plot does not necessarily require a complete genealogy, but only those traits of pre-hi/story that justify its unfolding. For Schapp, for instance, the tale of the spirit and the fish from *One Thousand and One Nights* should probably begin with the quarrel between the spirit and King Solomon, which took place 1800 years before the actual beginning of the hi/story. If one tries to transform the hi/story in this way, one immediately notices the loss of narrative tension. But even in this case, the tale would still not have a real beginning, since the quarrel itself once again has its own pre-hi/story. For understanding the hi/story of the spirit and the fish, however, what is essentially needed is only the main plot, i.e., the fact that Solomon locked the spirit in the bottle and bound the spirit's wishes in time until they are eventually fulfilled.

What results is an image of the narrative process as a continuous movement between foreground and background, between emergence and immersion, between told hi/stories and implicit hi/stories. Every hi/story emerges from a broader horizon that can never be fully thematized, and within which it is impossible to trace a definitive beginning or a clear line between what belongs to this hi/story and what precedes it. In Schapp's view, this problem is directly connected to the question of entanglement and of being-entangled in hi/stories. By describing the emergence of the hi/story in this way one must acknowledge:

[...] that it is difficult to distinguish what the hi/story itself is from our own participation in the hi/story. It is probably not the case that the hi/story is a constant entity presented before us, an entity that we simply perceive and recognize or that appears before us, but rather that our participation in listening to the hi/story and our preparedness [*Vorbereitetsein*] for the hi/story may be almost as difficult to interpret as the hi/story itself. When we have worked our way in this way up to the foreground of the hi/story and exposed all the relations within it, perhaps the main point is still missing: how the hi/story enters into us, or how we enter into the hi/story.¹⁰

The hi/story (and its pre-histories) is therefore rooted in the objective history of the world and in the hi/stories of the thing-for, yet it is not solely rooted in these; it also connects to the hermeneutical horizon and to the subjective hi/stories of the listener, finding pre-hi/stories in them as well. It is precisely these that comprise the listeners' being predisposed toward hi/stories and the modes and degrees of engagement through which they participate in the narrated hi/story. This is what makes possible,

⁹ See Schapp (2012, p. 88).

¹⁰ Schapp (2012, pp. 92–93).

within the dynamics of narrating and listening, what Schapp defines as the becoming-known (*Bekanntwerden*) of the hi/story. In this regard, Schapp remarks:

Just as hi/story automatically introduces us to the whole human being who is entangled in it and to the horizons of this person's hi/story—where the individual hi/story, which appears in the foreground, unravels from the guiding thread in all directions—so too can we, in a certain sense, expand hi/story in our own direction: toward the becoming-known of hi/story, toward the narrating, the listening to, and the understanding of hi/story. [...] As strange as it may sound to us, this “narrating and listening” itself seems to be a kind of hi/story, or is at least capable of being included and grasped within the space of a hi/story. In this case, it is not a matter of stacking one hi/story on top of another, but rather always a matter of a continuation of hi/stories in the “narrating and listening,” or of connections comparable to this ongoing process.¹¹

In its emergence through narration, the hi/story possesses a self-revealing dynamic that transcends the narration itself.¹² The latter is, in fact, only one among the many ways in which a hi/story can emerge and unfold its world together with those entangled in it: “What we mean to say is that the known hi/story tells itself, so to speak, if within the context of hi/stories its characteristic element emerges, and that perhaps this emergence is once again embedded in connections corresponding to those that take place in narrating and in listening.”¹³ Narrating, then, is nothing but a self-perpetuation of the hi/story, just as listening to and understanding the hi/story are. It is in this sense that we participate in the hi/story, becoming part of it as a resonance chamber of its self-revelatory dynamic.¹⁴ In receiving and continuing it, however, we do not merely remain neutral listeners; rather, the known hi/story interacts with our own hi/stories, which now become its background of understanding. We thus participate in the hi/story as agents who enable its continuation and as participants involved in it through understanding and empathic engagement, by immersing ourselves in the hi/story and identifying or not identifying with those entangled in it.¹⁵ Every hi/story, in fact, has a representational function¹⁶ in which it presents back to us the one who is its protagonist, the one entangled in the hi/story. Famous in this regard is Schapp's

¹¹ Schapp (2012, p. 101).

¹² This element has been brilliantly highlighted by Ricœur when in the first volume of *Time and Narrative* he cites the Schappian concept of being-entangled to support his hypothesis that a narrative background of experience structures any type of narrative and understanding of the self. Taking up Schapp, Ricœur says: “The story ‘happens to’ someone before anyone tells it,” and therefore the entanglement is a sort of “a prehistory of the told story” (Ricœur, 1984, p. 75). Cf. above Part I, Chap. 2.

¹³ Schapp (2012, p. 101).

¹⁴ Rephrasing Daniel Dennett's metaphor of the self as a center of narrative gravity (Dennett, 1992), one could say that both the narrator of the hi/story and the listener “gravitate,” in a sense, around hi/stories.

¹⁵ On the resonances between this conception and Husserl's theory of empathy, see Nuccilli (2023, p. 94f.).

¹⁶ See Rolf (2004, pp. 110–111).

claim that “the hi/story stands for the human,”¹⁷ by which he means the totality of the human being, even in his or her bodily existence:

With every hi/story, the entangled within it—or the entangled beings within it—emerges. The hi/story stands for the human. It extends or deepens, so to speak, within the human, independently of our intervention, by virtue of its own specific weight. We also hold that access to the human, to humans, occurs only through hi/stories, their hi/stories, and that the bodily emergence of humans is itself only an emergence of their hi/stories; for example, even their face, in its own way, tells a hi/story, and the body is for us a “body” only as long as it tells a hi/story or, which amounts to the same, as long as it conceals or attempts to conceal a hi/story.¹⁸

The body thus also becomes a means for the hi/story to present itself and for the hi/stories of the entangled to manifest. On this bodily dynamic of the self-narrating hi/story, Schapp builds one of the examples and analogies that made his philosophy of hi/stories widely known: the example of the judge. In the best-known chapter of his work, entitled precisely “The hi/story stands for the human,”¹⁹ the author invites us to imagine a judge who has in his hands case files containing many embarrassing details and a complaint against a respectable man from his city. These files therefore contain hi/stories (in the sense of real hi/stories, not in a derogatory sense). The same judge then finds himself, in the evening, at a social gathering where he meets the man mentioned in the files and is compelled to interact with him. Schapp now asks: “How does the hi/story formation, which has emerged before the judge through the case files, relate to the human being who now stands before him in person?”²⁰ Let us suppose that he is convinced of the correctness of the accusation: in that case, his conversation with the man will become cold, yet out of respect for the host, he will not be able to avoid maintaining social decorum. From this example, Schapp makes it clear that the judge believes he knows the man more fully and more clearly based on the case files and the hi/story contained within them than from the personal encounter that takes place in the evening.²¹ Even if he were to believe in the accused’s innocence instead, he would still compare the “man”-formation as it emerges from the files with the man he meets. He would seek signs to determine whether this formation could in some way be situated within the horizon in which the man appears to him in the course of the personal encounter. The hi/story, then, in some sense provides the primary horizon of meaning within which one attempts to situate the real presence of the man in the world. The human being emerges within the horizon of the hi/story primarily as entangled in it, and his present appearance is nothing more than a filling-in. To use phenomenological terms, the hi/story functions as the meaning through which we understand the human being, while the human being in his or her presence provides the fulfillment of that meaning. To decide its truthfulness, further elements of confirmation or refutation will be

¹⁷ Schapp (2012, p. 103).

¹⁸ Schapp (2012, p. 100). For a deeper analysis of the relationship between body and narration in the philosophy of hi/stories, see Nuccilli (2025).

¹⁹ Schapp (2012, p. 103).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Cf. Thieme (2025, p. 205).

required; the hi/story is nevertheless the primary access to the entangled one, and the elements contained in the case files will remain stable points on which the truth of the events is to be determined.²²

What has just been said comprises the theoretical framework within which Schapp attempts to reinterpret the phenomenological verificationist theory in the context of his theory of entanglement, which still rests on a lawyerly metaphor. He presents the case of a witness who has observed a murder and recounts the events to the judge.²³ In narrating the facts, the witness seeks to let the judge become immersed in the universe of the murder's hi/story, a hi/story in which the witness has unwillingly become entangled. This universe encompasses not only the events that occurred, but also the individuals involved in the hi/story: the murderer and the victim. The syntactic/semantic complexity of the narrative is, of course, composed of propositions that report states of affairs, and when considered as it presents itself, the narrative may describe a scenario that incriminates the murderer. However, according to Schapp, a judge who wants to verify the truthfulness of what is intended in the narrative must actively enter into the hi/story. To do so, the judge must not only ascertain the facts, but also explore what the narrative revolves around. This means delving more deeply into those involved in the hi/story: the victim and the murderer.²⁴ In the narrative, in fact, there are not only proper names and pronouns, but selves with their own hi/story and a past that must be uncovered. The very fact of the murder is not a mere state of affairs, but develops within a context of events. This cannot be grasped simply through the linguistic account; instead, this account opens onto a horizon made up of a myriad of hi/stories to be investigated. For instance, the murderer may have killed out of revenge, or because the victim was threatening in turn to kill a member of the murderer's own family. This dimension could be unveiled through a second account from someone involved, such as a family member of the murderer who has been threatened by the victim. The hi/story that is told is therefore not inherently truthful; instead, it offers a pathway into a process of concealments to be uncovered and falsehoods to be unmasked, at the end of which the true hi/story resides. Only through the judge's active participation in the hi/story can the facts be verified, bringing the hi/story as told into alignment with the hi/story of the events as they truly occurred. According to Schapp, even though the hi/story is not inherently truthful in comparison to the form of verification obtaining between a state of affairs and a proposition, there remains in entanglement an element that is in no way falsifiable: the very reality of the entanglement itself. Even if the hi/story told were never to correspond to the true hi/story of the events, the reality of those entangled in the hi/story would persist as an irreducible

²² According to Angehrn, Wilhelm Schapp's statement "The hi/story stands for the human" should be understood in light of the ascriptive dimension of the relationship: hi/story is not only what stands for humans; in a certain sense, humans also stand for it: "The fact that I cannot cast off my history means that I stand by it, recognize it as mine, and that it represents a commitment for me—one that I take upon myself and with which I must engage" (Angehrn, 1985, p. 65).

²³ See Schapp (2012, p. 183).

²⁴ See Schapp (2012, p. 184).

backdrop. When the layers concealed by the narrative are uncovered, what changes is not the fact that the victim and the murderer are entangled in this hi/story, but rather the specific manner of their entanglement. This is what must be brought to itself-giveness. By approaching the hi/story of the entangled defendant more closely, a window is opened onto the defendant's motivations. These motivations disclose the existential reality of the conditions in which the individual is entangled in the hi/story. By uncovering these motivations, the judge will understand much more about the life-hi/story of the murderer and will be able to cast a different light on the events, thereby arriving at a more nuanced judgment regarding the murderer's degree of culpability.²⁵ To do this, however, judges must also free themselves from the personal hi/stories that afflict them at that moment. They must ensure that the hi/stories concerning their own present or past do not interfere with the case in a prejudicial manner.²⁶

As we saw in the previous chapter, no understanding can be separated from entanglement, and the knowledge of the hi/stories can never be detached from the hi/stories in which the self is entangled at any given moment. Schapp clarifies the epistemological and ontological implications of this position with reference to Husserl's theory of intentionality in some notes following *In Geschichten verstrickt*. Regarding the internal dynamic of truth-verification that takes place between intention and intuition, he writes:

According to the phenomenological method, perception is a cognitive act among other cognitive acts; it has its specific place within the structure of these acts, and thanks to this position, it is oriented toward the search for truth. However, the hi/story itself is not a cognitive act. We do not comprehend our hi/stories; rather, we are entangled in our hi/stories. This being entangled is not a cognitive act, is not composed of cognitive acts, and is not even founded upon them. This becomes clear when we consider that being-human [*Menschsein*] and being-entangled-in-hi/stories are one and the same.²⁷

Any cognitive act requires a foundation in the existential condition of entanglement, which serves as the very ontological definition of the human being, and thus as the foundation of all knowledge and of the human participation in hi/story. Therefore, no form of understanding can detach itself from the totality of the human, which emerges in the intertwining of hi/stories, at the center of which we find the entangled self. The entangled self is not in a frontal relationship with the world, where the world appears before a consciousness and can be investigated by it; rather, the world itself emerges within the ontological and epistemological structure essential to the self's being entangled in a network of hi/stories. In this regard, Schapp states:

We only know a self or a person who is always again entangled in hi/stories, not a self who performs intentional acts or is directed toward the world through intentional acts [...]. In the world-environment [*Umwelt*], the human being is co-entangled, certainly not as a theorist, but as a whole human being. The world-environment can only be accessed through the hi/stories. One can inquire about the world as it appears in the hi/stories, but only from the

²⁵ Cf. Schapp (2012, pp. 184–185).

²⁶ See Schapp (2012, pp. 122–123).

²⁷ Schapp (2017, pp. 127–128).

person's centrality and the hi/stories' world-environment [*Geschichtenumwelt*] of this person's hi/stories.²⁸

There is therefore no truth that is not metaphysically and ontologically rooted in the essential condition of the being of the human, not only as entangleable, but as always already entangled in hi/stories. For Schapp, what this implies with respect to Husserl's conception of intentionality is that no form of subjectivity and cognitive act can be alienated from the condition of entanglement, which involves the whole human being in its entirety. Thus, no determination of truth proceeds through an intentional direction toward states of affairs that emerge in propositions, an intentional direction that is in search of apodictic ideal structures of understanding; instead, it always passes through the confrontation with, and immersion in, one's own narrative context of understanding, in the narrative context in which the world and others are presented. Thus, truth and itself-givenness always mean the itself-givenness of hi/story within the horizon of the hi/stories in which we are currently entangled.

The narrative transposition of the verificationist theory of phenomenology can be summarized in the following points, which move from narration to entanglement: (1) every reality always emerges from a narrative context, and there is no ideal reality—instead, reality itself is manifested only in a hi/story understood as a nexus of meaning; (2) this nexus of meaning does not exhaust itself in the syntactic/semantic dimension of narration, but is rooted in a ground shared between the hermeneutical horizons of the narrator and of the listener; (3) every narration brings forth one or more subjects entangled in a hi/story, and through narration, they are brought to itself-givenness; (4) the one who understands the hi/story can thereby have access to a spiritual dimension of the entangled subject through narration, so that what is given in itself-givenness is therefore not only the narrated hi/story, but also a part of the subject's life-hi/story and the world of the entangled subject; and (5) there is no access to reality and to others that does not pass through the filter of the hi/stories in which each individual is entangled: every itself-givenness always emerges from the context of the entangled subject's life-hi/story.

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²⁸ Schapp (2017, p. 136).

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Chapter 12

Co-entanglement: One's Own Hi/stories, Others' Hi/stories, and Universal Hi/stories



Abstract In Wilhelm Schapp's philosophy of hi/stories, the emergence and transmission of hi/stories are grounded in the dynamic interplay between narrating and listening, through which a hi/story unfolds beyond the limits of the immediate act of narration and opens onto broader horizons of meaning. Hi/stories spread within the hermeneutical space of those who receive them, intersecting with their own life-hi/stories and shaping every form of access to reality and to others. From this perspective, no experience can be understood outside the network of hi/stories in which individuals are entangled, and even self-understanding arises through an immanent engagement with one's own intertwined hi/stories. These hi/stories are multiple, stratified, and inseparable, forming a dense web that constitutes the horizon of lived experience. Within this framework, a fundamental distinction emerges between one's own entanglement and the entanglement of others, while the notion of co-entanglement expands this structure to include relations with other human beings, animals, and the natural world. At the same time, hi/stories can take on a collective dimension, giving rise to "hi/stories of we," which articulate different levels of shared belonging, from concrete communities to universal forms of human coexistence. In this way, individual and collective existence are understood as unfolding within a plurality of interconnected hi/stories that shape both personal identity and broader forms of communal life.

Keywords Co-entanglement · Hi/stories of we · Own hi/stories · Others' hi/stories · Lived experience · Religious hi/stories

Thanks to Schapp's theory of narrating and listening/understanding, it becomes clear how the hi/story emerges through narration, how every hi/story becomes known and knowable. For Schapp, the emergence of the hi/story has an almost mystical connotation: rather than merely emerging from the linguistic act and communicative interaction, the hi/story has, so to speak, the capacity to tell itself, transcending the current narrative fabric and opening horizons onto other hi/stories and the humans entangled within them. This capacity of the hi/story to branch into new hi/stories and to unfold itself along the plane of understanding is due to its position at the center of two hermeneutical poles: the being-entangled of both the

narrator and the listener in hi/stories, and the emergence within the telling of hi/stories of other entangled individuals comprising its center. The hi/story spreads within the hermeneutical horizon of the listeners, finding fertile ground in the available horizons, in their life-hi/stories, and in the shared horizons that these encompass along with the told hi/story.¹ For this reason, from the perspective of an immanent analysis of one's own entanglement, it can be said that there is no access to reality or to others that does not pass through the filter of the hi/stories in which each one is entangled, and that every itself-givenness always emerges from the context of the entangled subject's life-hi/story. This immanent analysis of one's own entanglement thus becomes the core of research within the theory of entanglement, an insight to which Schapp arrives only after having addressed the problem of how a world is given within the hi/story and how the hi/story spreads in the world until it sinks into the self that comes into contact with it. And a fundamental distinction emerges in this coming into contact: that between one's own entanglement and the entanglement of others.² Even when the subject who comes into contact with the hi/story thereby participates in it, he or she is not properly entangled; the hi/story becomes his or her own hi/story only marginally. For instance, even when the judge is deeply involved in the hi/story of the case under consideration, it still does not concern him personally: he is, so to speak, a secondary character in another hi/story in which the protagonist and the truly entangled individual is the defendant.³ These others' hi/stories that intertwine with one's own reveal a specific difference from a phenomenological point of view. The judge working on the case files can think at the same time of his own hi/stories, e.g., a quarrel with his wife or his past experience within a law firm. These hi/stories are not qualitatively different from the hi/stories that appear in the case files: the judge may have struck his wife after a fight and been reported; there may be cases of fraud or disputes that ended badly due to conflicts between a superior and a subordinate in a law firm. Yet the life-hi/stories involving the judge differ from the hi/stories present in the case files because unlike the latter, they do not unfold so clearly before his eyes, but intertwine with one another without any possibility of being distinctly laid out. Nonetheless, the judge's life hi/stories may potentially become, in some way, completely disclosed hi/stories for a third person who will participate in them as reader or listener. For example, if the judge applies for a position in the government at the ministry, the person evaluating the application will read the hi/story of the judge's life through the documents, although at the same time, the judge will continue to be entangled in his own life-hi/stories.⁴

Thus, in shifting the focus to the immanence of the hi/stories in which we are entangled, Schapp notes that they are manifold and intertwined with one another in multiple directions. Even if there is one hi/story that is likely to occupy us on a given

¹ Schapp (2012, p. 118).

² Schapp (2012, p. 120).

³ Schapp (2012, p. 121).

⁴ Schapp (2012, p. 122).

day and perhaps another hi/story that has shaped our existence for months, there are certainly others that may not be conscious, yet sink deeply into our being and function as the horizon and the pre-hi/story of the current hi/stories in which we are engaged. In any case, all these hi/stories cannot be separated from one another, for they are woven into an inextricable network of meanings and personal lived experiences. It is precisely with regard to lived experience, and in relation to this stratification of hi/stories, that Schapp immediately distances himself from a conception of entanglement and hi/story based on the notion of a transcendental consciousness. In this regard, he states:

One might perhaps be tempted here to speak of lived experiences. This would still correspond to ordinary usage—only in doing so, there is the danger of losing sight of the unity of the hi/story. We do in fact mean that every lived experience belongs to a hi/story. The hi/stories within us, however, do not unfold like rounded-off plays in a theater. There are lived experiences that are only the beginnings of hi/stories, or perhaps only insubstantial fragments, shards of hi/stories. Among these lived experiences, however, those stand out that belong to a complete hi/story. In this sense, many hi/stories, large and small, in which we are entangled may always unfold simultaneously. They do not stand so distinctly before us as the hi/stories we read.⁵

Rather than being contents that allow us to access our consciousness in a transcendental-phenomenological way, one's own hi/stories, like those of others, are pathways through which we can understand the degree to which we are entangled in them.⁶ By immersing ourselves in the hi/stories of our past, by evaluating how we have survived them and how they intertwine with our present hi/stories, we can truly find ourselves as that person who is always present within the hi/stories and who, in their unfolding, stands as their center, as the ultimate point toward which they tend and around which they articulate themselves. In this sense, it can be said categorically that no hi/story can ever be eliminated from our life. What changes is only the degree of actuality every hi/story possesses and the way in which it is inscribed as a pre-hi/story within the hi/stories in which we are presently entangled. For Schapp, some hi/stories are like “scars that may reopen from one day to the next, or even scars that, in general, never heal.”⁷ For this reason, there are hi/stories that can be said to be ours in a more original sense. An example is the hi/story of Hesiod's dispute with his brother over his inheritance, a conflict that permeates his principal work, *Works and Days*. The dispute constitutes a genuine pre-hi/story of the work, shaping the way in which Hesiod seeks to free himself from it. In *Works and Days*, the succession of the five races of humankind is recounted: the Golden Age, the Silver Age, the Bronze Age, the Age of Heroes, and finally, the Iron Age, which is identified as Hesiod's own. The fifth age is marked by a constant struggle between justice and injustice: in the short term, injustice may prevail, but in the long

⁵Schapp (2012, p. 121).

⁶For a parallel between Husserl's genetic phenomenology and Schapp's immanent analysis of entanglement, see Wälde (1985), pp. 91–130, who defines Schapp's philosophy of hi/stories as “narrative phenomenology.”

⁷Schapp (2012, p. 126).

run, a curse falls upon injustice while justice is blessed. *Works and Days* can be read as a poetic reflection on the exhaustion of one's own burdensome hi/stories and their extension into a wider horizon.⁸ According to Schapp, Hesiod's attempt to put an end to his own hi/stories, or at least to come to terms with them, can be understood as a form of flight (*Flucht*) from one's own entanglement. In this sense, one might draw a parallel with the various forms of withdrawal from the world: the Christian monks and priests, dervishes and fakirs, as well as philosophers, scholars, ministers, kings, and their officials. All of them can isolate themselves, or be isolated, in private hi/stories, seeking substitutes in different ways and places. Yet this flight remains inseparable from the past hi/stories themselves, and for this reason, it is nothing other than yet another way in which entanglement reiterates itself in other hi/stories, which concern the flight from previous hi/stories while potential opening toward future hi/stories.⁹ In this sense, it is impossible to escape our hi/stories; they hover around us as a horizon that enables us to look back upon our past life. On this point, Schapp writes: "We always see [hi/stories] as the head sees its body, the very body to which it itself belongs. We cannot even climb up or down from our hi/stories as one can from a train. No one can do so."¹⁰

Every evaluation of one's own existence thus passes through this access of the entangled individuals to their own hi/stories and is appreciated from the perspective of their position within those hi/stories. For Schapp, the questions with which we usually interrogate our existence are commands capable of recalling our hi/stories and arranging them according to what we are assessing about our life and our way of being. Every answer to these questions passes through these hi/stories, and the same holds true for our fellow human beings and the people around us. In the ordering of these hi/stories, it often happens that one emerges as the central point, the kernel around which all the others gather and take on their meaning, thus becoming the center of an entire life. This occurs, according to Schapp, in the great conversions of figures such as the Apostle Paul or Saint Augustine, events that encapsulate the whole trajectory of the convert's life. Life is thereby divided into two segments—the first, marked by emptiness, and the second, which reveals true life. Yet even in its negativity, the first part remains bound to the second, taking on a normative role and contributing to the definition of the newly won authenticity. Such a conversion, Schapp emphasizes, can occur only once and must endure until the end of life; moreover, its signs can often already be traced in the earlier phases of the personal hi/story.¹¹ Hi/stories possess from the very beginning their own direction of growth, one that cannot simply be abandoned or overturned, just as an oak cannot suddenly transform into a pine. They always preserve an underlying fabric, a basic tonality that remains constant throughout the entire narrative arc, while the events

⁸ Hesiod (2006, pp. 109–201).

⁹ See Schapp (2012, p. 125). This dynamic resonates with Heidegger's concept of authenticity and inauthenticity in *Being and Time*, where flight (*Flucht*) represents a retreat from one's existential possibilities (Heidegger 2001, pp. 174–182).

¹⁰ Schapp (2012, p. 127).

¹¹ See Schapp (2012, pp. 128–129).

that intersect with it—illness and recovery, storm and calm, threat and prosperity—belong to its destiny and accompany its unfolding. In this sense to see a tree means to see it together with its past and its future, along with everything that surrounds and sustains it; analogously, to understand a life means to grasp it within its narrative horizon, which embraces both the essential traits and the external and internal forces that shape its development. A human being with a given temperament may change over the years, but always within the web of meanings and situations that can be gathered into a coherent hi/story that renders this temperament in some way. This temperament, however, is neither the foundation nor the cause of the hi/stories; rather, it is the hi/stories themselves that give us the coherent picture of that temperament.¹² In this way, other entangled individuals are presented to us through the hi/stories of others, and we also form a representation of ourselves. Yet there is an important difference: in the case of others, it is much easier for us, as observers, to grasp hi/stories as emergent formations and to see a life-trajectory as something that possesses sense and coherence. In the case of our own hi/stories, however, we can never truly get to the bottom of them, because we are always continuously involved in them and thus absorbed in the very reiteration of these hi/stories in the form of lived experience and ongoing movement toward future horizons.

The metaphor of the tree plays a key role in *In Geschichten verstrickt*. It not only makes possible to gain a vivid grasp of how hi/stories emerge, drawing on a metaphysics of knowledge that follows a well-established tradition from Descartes¹³ to Husserl,¹⁴ but also introduces two fundamental topics. The first concerns the relation between the theory of entanglement on the one hand and phenomenological and psychologicistic positions on the soul and the soul's structural and emotional characteristics on the other; the second concerns the topic of co-entanglement (*Mitverstrickung*), that is, the way in which human beings, animals, and even plants participate together in the same hi/story. This latter topic then opens the field to more strictly philosophical issues such as time, causality, and ultimately the problem of universal hi/stories and of those hi/stories that concern religion and the human being's relationship to God.

Let us begin with the question of the relation between entanglement and the human soul. According to Schapp, in hi/stories we encounter what phenomenological doctrines of the soul understand as acts.¹⁵ In his view, the doctrine of the soul has traditionally operated within the tripartition of thinking, feeling, and willing. Over time, these distinctions have not remained static, but have been progressively refined and differentiated, especially within modern psychology. In this process of internal articulation, thinking is separated both from perceiving and from representing in order to delimit more clearly what can be regarded as “thinking” in the proper

¹² See Schapp (2012, p. 131).

¹³ See Descartes (1982, p. xxiv).

¹⁴ See Husserl (1987, p. 146).

¹⁵ Schapp (2012, p. 145).

sense.¹⁶ Pfänder's proposal belongs to this line of development: under the heading of genuine thinking, he includes a multiplicity of acts and operations such as understanding, questioning, supposing, reflecting, accepting, judging, drawing conclusions, grounding, and demonstrating, as well as refuting, counting, calculating, and examining. Alongside these stand more elementary and auxiliary operations, such as spiritual grasping, combining and separating, or comparing and differentiating. Taken together, these acts describe the various ways in which the spirit works on objects, deals with them, and organizes them. What unifies these operations is not their specific content, but their directedness: they are all oriented toward objects.¹⁷ For this reason, Pfänder brings them together under the notion of cognitive motions, by which he means the totality of psychic movements through which the subject relates cognitively to what stands before it. Within this framework, thinking is not an abstract and uniform faculty, but an articulated field of intentional, structured, and differentiated activities that make up the core of cognitive life.¹⁸ The same can be said of affective motions and of feelings. Yet for Schapp, it is precisely in the case of feelings that it becomes more evident that they cannot be observed in the way one observes a watch on one's wrist, but are instead given back to us through the hi/stories in which they find their fullest expression. If we want to arrive at what love is, this is possible only through the great love hi/stories; if we want to arrive at what hatred is, this is possible only through the great hi/stories of hatred, and first and foremost, through our own hi/stories of hatred and love. At the same time, however, we must not think that in doing so we are approaching an object or the concept of love or hatred. In hi/stories and in entanglement there is a circularity between affective motions and the hi/stories in which we are immersed, within an affective tonality that binds our own hi/story together with other hi/stories in which that feeling shines forth from the very origins of humankind.¹⁹ According to Schapp, it is not possible, for example, truly to understand what a feeling of sadness, cheerfulness, hatred, or love is by following the path of introspection concerning the psyche or consciousness, since this only allows one to grasp a momentary state or a succession of states or motions. In order genuinely to understand what such a feeling ultimately is, one must instead refer back to the hi/stories in which one is entangled and to the being of these hi/stories, a being in which the ground of any discourse on those motions must be sought and from which they cannot be isolated as in a laboratory. How, for instance, could one understand the love of young Werther by starting from his psychic motions, quite apart from his particular hi/stories, his entire hi/story, his overall hi/story with its pre-hi/story?²⁰

It is precisely in contrast to the psychological doctrine of the soul and of cognitive motions as objects to be investigated in terms of their intentionality and of what

¹⁶ See Schapp (2012, p. 146).

¹⁷ See Schapp (2012, p. 147).

¹⁸ See Pfänder (1933, p. 21 f).

¹⁹ Schapp (2012, p. 148).

²⁰ Schapp (2012, p. 157).

they are directed toward—a view characteristic of phenomenological and psychological approaches—that the scope of the theory of co-entanglement emerges. In this regard, Schapp writes:

The original locus in which we encounter love, hatred, pleasure, and pain, and all so-called affective motions, is made up of the hi/stories in which we, as “I” or “we,” are entangled, or by the hi/stories of others in which we are, in one way or another, co-entangled. If we speak at all of love and hatred, of pleasure and pain, this can refer only to the unfolding of hi/stories that emerge on the horizon, and always only to hi/stories in which we are in some way entangled.²¹

In this way we arrive at the universe of foundational feelings that we have already encountered in Schapp's phenomenology of values—but one that is expanded in *In Geschichten verstrickt* to include other forms of the co-entanglement of humankind, such as those concerning the relationship with nature and with animals. For Schapp, if we want to understand the role of plants and animals in the world, we cannot start from the scientific or evolutionary approach that aims to dissect every part of a plant or an animal in order to describe its biological and functional aspects. Rather, we must also grasp them as entangled in hi/stories.²² The only path of access to them therefore passes through entanglement, and in particular through that form of co-entanglement in which we understand others as entangled in hi/stories, and in an inclusive sense, also animals and plants, insofar as we are co-entangled with them in the environment in which we live or in the hi/stories that concern us, or insofar as we encounter them within a world-system of others' hi/stories.²³ According to Schapp, it is in the being-co-entangled (*Mitverstricktsein*) of plants and animals that one can bridge the substantial abyss that seems to divide human beings from animals, and in an even more profound way human beings from plants. The hi/stories that bind us to animals or plants, or the hi/stories that emerge around animals or plants, function like bridges over this abyss; they are articulated within the fundamental existential structure of the mutual being-co-entangled of human beings, animals, and plants. For Schapp, such a being-co-entangled of human beings and animals within a hi/story may have been what Homer had in mind when he described the encounter between Odysseus and his dog Argos. Odysseus arrives at his palace disguised as a beggar, while Argos lies weak, sick, and despised on a large dung heap near the tower of the palace. As soon as Odysseus approaches, the dog raises his head and ears; then he recognizes his master, wags his tail, and lowers his ears, but he is too weak to come closer to his master and dies. Odysseus sees him and secretly wipes away his tears. According to Schapp, in this hi/story, Homer describes exactly what the being-co-entangled of human being and animal in a hi/story is. In this episode we grasp the being-entangled of Odysseus and at the same time the being-entangled of Argos just as immediately as we would grasp the being-entangled of two human beings. And in this case, the difficulties in understanding the relation

²¹ Schapp (2012, p. 150).

²² Schapp (2012, p. 134).

²³ Schapp (2012, p. 136).

between Odysseus and Argos only arise when one attempts to analyze, as psychologists do, questions such as whether the dog has a soul, a capacity for memory, an intellect, or reason. For Schapp, all these questions become secondary in view of the certainty with which the being-co-entangled of the two within the same hi/story presents itself to us. This hi/story is not merely a single, accidental hi/story of the being-co-entangled of human being and animal:

[...] It is an allegory of the being-co-entangled of human being and animal in a hi/story, an allegory of the abyss between human being and animal and of the bridge over this abyss, or, from another perspective, an island on the horizon of animality as we encounter it, an island that draws along with it or illuminates the entire domain of animality. How it can happen, within such a depiction in which human beings and animals are entangled in hi/stories, and animals are also co-entangled among themselves, that human beings slaughter and consume animals, that human beings kill one another, and that animals, for their part, do the same, is in itself a compelling question, to which, however, one can gain access only within hi/stories and on the basis of hi/stories.²⁴

The hi/story of Argos and Odysseus becomes a hi/story in which the correlation of the life-trajectories of the human being and the animal grows so close as to survive the passage of time, and this hi/story of love for one's dog on the one side and for one's master on the other rises to the status of a paradigmatic example of what can be meant when one speaks of co-entanglement. The theory of co-entanglement thus opens itself to an ecological interpretation of human coexistence with the animals and plants that inhabit the earth, primarily in the form of a belonging to the same universal hi/story that sinks its roots back to creation.²⁵ This universal aspiration of the theory of co-entanglement thereby introduces the theme of the plural ontological dimension of entanglement: before being individually entangled in hi/stories as individual entities, we are already co-entangled in the hi/stories of groups to which we belong at different levels of implication and extension, from the family nucleus up to the whole of humankind. In Schapp's thought, this theme is linked to the question of identifying the ultimate foundational element of entanglement—those hi/stories in which we are involved in the first place not as individual persons, but as human beings. This theme is taken up from the linguistic side and then channeled into the path of the foundational experiences of every human being, such as being a father or a son, or a mother or a daughter, and finally opens onto the question of the relation to God, following the line of argument that had already been outlined in *Zur Metaphysik des Mütterturns*, though now taking the perspective of the theory of entanglement as a point of departure.

According to Schapp, the plural dimension of hi/stories and of entanglement first becomes apparent in the way they emerge and acquire a collective resonance. To clarify what this means, Schapp begins with what might be called the basic particle of a narrative situation: namely, narrating and listening, as discussed above. In his view, within the mechanics of narrating and listening, for every "I" that is entangled in a hi/story there is a series of potential "you's" ready to receive it; likewise, in

²⁴ Schapp (2012, p. 138).

²⁵ See Nuccilli (2023).

every “you” there is a potential “I” positioned at the center of the hi/story. Drawing in part on Buber’s dialogical conception,²⁶ Schapp thus highlights the absolutely a priori character of the “I-you” relation in every form of narration. This relation is contentless in character: it provides the ground on which the displacement of the archetypal relational figure of the “you” takes shape, in the third person, as a “he” or “she” entangled in the hi/story. Both the “I” and the “you” are co-originally present in the “he or she.” Every “he” or “she” is the “he” or “she” of an “I.” If one deepens the analysis from a linguistic perspective, one can ultimately arrive at a “we” in which all singular pronouns converge: “I,” “you,” and “he or she.”²⁷ The degree to which the “we” expands depends on the extent of shared entanglement. For example, the “we” can express belonging to the same sports club, to the same community, to the same nation, or to humanity as a whole. We can accordingly be entangled in the hi/stories that accompany our everyday experiences within a sports club, our community, our nation, or the whole of humanity. Schapp defines these as “hi/stories of we” (*Wirgeschichten*).²⁸ From this there initially emerges what can rightly be called an “onto-semantics of the we,” which is based on two dimensions. The first onto-semantic dimension of the we takes the form: “we Athenians, Germans, poets,” and so on, while the second onto-semantic dimension takes the form: “we human beings.” The “we” of this latter dimension is a kind of a-historical and irreducible a priori unity that alone makes possible all subsequent differentiation a posteriori (into particular we’s).²⁹ It is also because of this onto-semantic dimension that human beings can never free themselves from entanglement, and for this reason the hermeneutics it implies can only be grounded in an ontology.³⁰

According to Schapp, the hi/stories-of-we are not only those hi/stories that entangle groups of individuals on multiple levels until they encompass entire civilizations, as happens with the myths of ancient religion or biblical hi/stories; they are also those “paradigmatic” hi/stories that involve aspects ingrained in humanity.³¹ In this regard, Schapp cites the example of the parable of the prodigal son. The hi/story of the son returning home to his old father can entangle any parent, at any time and in any place, who is waiting for a son working abroad. Furthermore, this hi/story can refer to the father-son relationship in general, since it traces out the line of a common hi/story that is part of the whole human race.³² In Schapp’s view, there is in fact nothing that enables us to grasp what a “hi/story of we” is more clearly than the sphere he regards as more originary than any institutional or political form of community—namely, kinship, as already analyzed in *Zur Metaphysik des*

²⁶ See Buber (1970).

²⁷ See Schapp (2012, p. 190).

²⁸ See Schapp (2012, p. 194f).

²⁹ Both this definition and the following classification go back to Pohlmeier. See Pohlmeier (2004, p. 199f).

³⁰ See Nuccilli (2018).

³¹ See Schapp (2012, p. 196).

³² See Schapp (2012, p. 186).

Muttertums. As we have already seen in Part II, Chap. 7, kinship is not understood in a biological or naturalistic sense, but as a concrete, lived relation. The original core of every form of kinship lies in the father-child relation, and in an even more originary form, in the mother-child relation, whereas all other forms of community—family, lineage, people, and ultimately humanity—are derivations of these primary relations. With reference to his analyses of entanglement, and in contrast to his phenomenology of values, Schapp now maintains that what comprises motherhood and fatherhood can be grasped only narratively. Especially in the case of the mother-child relation, this hi/story is a formation in which joy and suffering interpenetrate in an unsayable way and accompany the child's entire process of growth, while for the mother it represents an ever-shifting apex of her own life. And it is in this irradiation of motherhood that Schapp identifies the material content that comes closest to the human "we."³³

Just as the lived experience of a mother's love makes it possible to grasp the love of God, access to a universal hi/story of the we can also be gained through the hi/story of the mother-child relation or of the father-child relation. A paradigmatic example of such a universal hi/story is the Christian universal hi/story, which integrates every I into the community of a single hi/story—not as an isolated individual, but as co-entangled with others in relation to God. Within such a relation, the I is always already included in a we, and singularity finds its meaning only within this co-belonging. Universal hi/stories, Schapp insists, cannot be constructed, but only encountered: one is either entangled in them or remains outside them. Myth, religious narration, and sacrifice (up to and including the figure of the martyr) function as sites of access to the we, making visible a reciprocal responsibility in which each person is, in a radical sense, the guardian of the other.³⁴ This theme of universal hi/story becomes central in *Philosophie der Geschichten*, where Schapp undertakes an initial systematization of the themes that emerged in *In Geschichten verstrickt* and offers a first attempt at reflecting on the role of his philosophy of hi/stories within, and in relation to, the history of philosophy, as well as on its significance for contemporary human experience, as we shall see in Part IV of the present book.

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³³ See Schapp (2012), p. 198.

³⁴ See Schapp (2012), p. 205f.

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Part IV
The Philosophy of Hi/stories: Positive
Worlds, Universal Hi/stories, and
Philosophical Knowledge

Chapter 13

Philosophy of Hi/stories: A Fourth Revolution?



Abstract The philosophy of Wilhelm Schapp is guided by a methodological impulse that resists the construction of closed systems and instead grounds philosophical inquiry in singular experience and its interpretive unfolding. From his early phenomenological investigations to the theory of entanglement, Schapp progressively redefines the status of concepts, values, and knowledge, emphasizing their dependence on concrete experience, historical context, and narration. In *Philosophie der Geschichten*, this approach opens onto a broader systematic horizon, where the philosophy of hi/stories is situated in relation to the history of philosophy and presented as a “fourth revolution” following those of Thales, Bacon, and Kant. Within this framework, the human being is no longer understood through states of affairs or propositions, but as fundamentally entangled in hi/stories that constitute the primary access to reality, self-understanding, and history. Starting from present hi/stories, Schapp develops a conception of hi/story as a temporally extended phenomenon, rooted in pre-hi/stories and open to future horizons, in which individual and universal hi/stories are interconnected through participation and co-entanglement. This perspective enables a reinterpretation of world, language, and history as emerging from the dynamic unity of hi/stories, while also raising broader metaphysical questions concerning the relation between hi/stories, the sciences, and the divine.

Keywords Philosophy of hi/stories · Present hi/stories · Universal hi/stories · Co-entanglement · History of philosophy · Fourth revolution

The impulse that permeates Schapp’s entire philosophical trajectory, articulated under the phenomenological motto famously quoted in the *Recollections of Husserl*—“In the beginning of phenomenology, the individual investigation is everything, the system is nothing”¹—is grounded in a conception of philosophical method that rejects the construction of self-contained systems of knowledge

¹ Schapp (2025, p. 235).

claiming apodictic foundations.² It is indeed true that in the *Beiträge* Schapp conceives ideas as a mediating level, which makes it possible for the sciences to apply their universal laws to singular objects, even those encountered in everyday life. Yet he nevertheless conceives them as always dependent on and bound to the understanding and the singular perceptual experience of the thing; without such experience, the very concept of the perceived thing could not even exist. For Schapp, the idea is not to be understood as an a priori in the sense of universal validity, but rather as that conceptual nucleus which arises only within, and through, the perceptual grasp of the thing itself. No general concept can, in this respect, reconstitute the uniqueness of perceptual experience.³ Similarly, although he channels the investigations of his phenomenology of law toward the a priori relations that constitute the pregivenness of law and speaks of works as historical a priori, from a methodological point of view, the method of eidetic intuition gives way to the comparative method, and the “phenomenology of creation” is founded primarily on the historical and individual value of the production.⁴ The ontological and epistemological conception of entanglement as presented in *In Geschichten verstrickt* seems, finally, to exclude any form of ultimate objectification or conceptual definition that does not pass through the contingency, on the one hand, of personal experience and the historical and cultural context, and on the other, of narration and the very contingency of the emergence of hi/stories and their understanding.⁵ This approach remains clearly present in the two subsequent works that complete the trilogy, namely *Philosophie der Geschichten* and *Metaphysik der Naturwissenschaft*. However, once the main tenets of the theory of entanglement are established and consolidated, Schapp’s thought reveals a whole series of elements that lead him to provide at least a more coherent, if not systematic, context for his philosophy of hi/stories.⁶ First of all, the question arises of engaging in a comparison between the theory of human entanglement in hi/stories and the past systems of his direct philosophical masters, such as Husserl, Reinach and Pfänder and his spiritual or philosophical predecessors, such as Plato, Descartes, Kant, and other figures from the culture and philosophy of the past, thus seeking to define the position and role of his philosophy of hi/stories within the broader history of philosophy. Secondly, the final pages of *In Geschichten verstrickt* opened the way to the analysis of a broader system of references in which the individual entangled human is situated, such as that of extended and inclusive plural subjectivities tied together by a common hi/story, or even the identification of hi/stories valid universally for the entire human race and foundational for whole cultures, such as religious ones. These issues raise

² See Nuccilli (2024, p. 35ff.).

³ Summa speaks in this regard of empirical concepts. See Summa (2025, p. 45). Cf. above Part II, section “The idea within perception Species individual ideas and understanding” Chap. 5.

⁴ See Nuccilli (2025, p. 115ff.). Cf. above Part II, Chap. 6.

⁵ Cf. above Part III, Chap. 10.

⁶ Cf. Joisten (2025, pp. 213–214), who rightly points out that Schapp’s approach should not be understood in the sense of a traditional a philosophy of history such as Voltaire’s *philosophie de l’histoire*, which aims at a comprehensive philosophical interpretation of the course of world history.

the metaphysical question of what lies beyond hi/stories and of the relationship between hi/stories and the divine and creation in general. Thirdly, precisely on the basis of these metaphysical concerns, the question emerges of how to ontologically link the world and language to the plane of entanglement, starting from the question of how one's own hi/stories and universal hi/stories are bound together, both at the structural level of language and at the level of the unified constitution of a world from entanglement and universal hi/stories. Fourthly, and collaterally to the other three, remains the question of the relationship between entanglement and hi/stories and the pure sciences, such as mathematics and physics. All four of these aspects are extensively addressed in *Philosophie der Geschichten*, with the last one receiving further elaboration in *Metaphysik der Naturwissenschaft*.⁷ To maintain argumentative coherence, I will follow the line of reasoning presented in *Philosophie der Geschichten*.

Evidence of the new dimension to which the philosophy of hi/stories aspires can be found in the preface of this last work. In the preface, Schapp indeed presents his philosophy of hi/stories as a “fourth revolution” in the cultural history of humankind, following those brought about by Thales, Bacon, and Kant.⁸ In doing so, he refers to the preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, where Kant speaks of three great revolutions: the first, associated with Thales, marks the establishment of mathematics as a science among the Greeks; the second, with Bacon, represents the foundation of the natural sciences; and the third, claimed by Kant himself, constitutes the grounding of metaphysics as a science, a grounding that remains closely linked to the ultimate foundations of mathematics and physics as sciences.⁹ According to Schapp, by identifying these revolutions along the progressive line of the foundation of the sciences, Kant not only relegated philosophy to an ancillary role with respect to the sciences, but also forgot the human being in his or her purest essence, what we are as human beings in ourselves and what we are in relation to history and the world.¹⁰ In the sciences we find only things, states of

⁷ See Schapp (2009, p. 112ff.); Mičić (2024). In *Metaphysik der Naturwissenschaft*, Schapp develops a systematic analysis of the conceptual foundations of the natural sciences, focusing in particular on space, time, and physical reality. Starting from the thesis according to which temporal and spatial determinations do not constitute independent structures but emerge within hi/stories, he examines how scientific concepts depend on systems of reference and contexts of interpretation. This is shown both through general analyses of space and time and through a confrontation with modern physics, in particular with Einstein's theory of relativity, in which notions such as simultaneity, measurement, and frames of reference reveal their non-absolute character. Schapp further contrasts the everyday world of things-for with the scientific description of reality in terms of atoms, waves, and fields, arguing that the latter does not replace the former but constitutes a derivative layer connected to it through a network of horizons. Although Schapp's position is undoubtedly highly relevant, it does not add anything substantially new to the framework of his narrative hermeneutics; for this reason, I have chosen not to provide a further detailed discussion of this work here.

⁸ Referring to Schapp's concept of *stilles Sprechen* (silent speaking) (see below, Chap. 5), Greisch speaks of a fourth silent revolution of thought (see Greisch, 2010, p. 190).

⁹ See Kant (1929, p. 17ff.); Schapp (2015, p. 23).

¹⁰ On this point, Joisten notes that the second volume of the trilogy takes a historical perspective on the status of a philosophy of hi/stories. Just as Husserl spoke of the “oblivion of the lifeworld” and

affairs, and propositions, and these elements concern the human being only partially. For Schapp, the human being in itself is not reached through states of affairs or propositions but only through hi/stories. Integrating his critique of phenomenology into the broader question of a historical and philosophical grounding of human being, he states:

We ourselves are not, in this regard, bloodless, ghostly points of relation that intend states of affairs, but heroes, kings, knights, priests, seers, saints, prophets, poets, or ordinary people entangled in hi/stories, each with their own particular hi/stories; yet all these hi/stories are connected from the beginning of time until today, forming a unity in which even the most wretched has just as much place as—and here one can clearly see how the circles close—the prophet and the founder of a religion.¹¹

Philosophy must turn toward this unity and this mode of being of the humans, and for this reason the philosophy of hi/stories stands in opposition and acts in a revolutionary way with respect to the dominant tendencies of modern Western philosophy, which seek to reduce human being to postulates that can be grounded scientifically. In contrast, Schapp proposes a Copernican revolution of perspective toward hi/stories, which in his view are the original phenomena (*Urphänomene*) upon which every philosophical question and even every attempt to construct scientific postulates must be founded.¹² Even the very basic tenets of the history of philosophy, namely the maxims of the Seven Sages, can, in Schapp's view, be grounded and find their place within the theory of human entanglement in hi/stories. Within this framework, without making any theoretical distinctions that would already direct the understanding of the history of philosophy, one can construct the arcs extending from the maxims of the Seven Sages to their reception, and onward to Kant and Husserl. This is always done starting from their position within this arc and from the impossibility of separating the theoretical reception within the historical-philosophical arc from the entanglement of human beings in hi/stories and the hi/stories in which they unfold.¹³

All reflections on the position of the human being and on the philosophy of hi/stories within the wider framework of the history of philosophy and culture are bound up with the problem of connecting the theory of entanglement to the major ontological questions of being, history, world, and language. In *Philosophie der Geschichten*, these reflections find their unity in a re-evaluation of the present actuality of our hi/stories and in the recognition of everyday hi/stories as the privileged site for thinking entanglement as a horizon open to the past and to others. The opening lines of the work, indeed, state that the entire investigation must begin from the

Heidegger of the “oblivion of being,” Schapp diagnoses in modernity an “oblivion of hi/stories” (*Geschichtenvergessenheit*) that must be overcome. See Joisten (2025, p. 213). By contrast, according to Marquard, Schapp's philosophy and his concept of hi/stories represent forms of compensation in response to the forgetting of history (*Geschichtslosigkeit*) in contemporary society; see Marquard (2004, pp. 45–56), and Nuccilli (2024, p. 49ff.).

¹¹ Schapp (2015, p. 25).

¹² Schapp (2015, p. 26).

¹³ Schapp (2015, p. 27).

present hi/stories (*gegenwärtigen Geschichten*), by which one must understand “the hi/stories of love, life, honor, property, fame, hatred, revenge, and those private hi/stories with which one goes to bed and wakes up in the morning.”¹⁴ Then Schapp invites the reader of the work to bring all these hi/stories back into their own private hi/stories (*eigene private Geschichten*) and to test whether these hi/stories in some way have something to do with the analysis and the hi/stories that emerge in the book.¹⁵ Participation in hi/story thus remains the fundamental starting point for plunging backward into the hi/stories of the past, beginning from the hi/stories in which we are currently entangled, particularly from the waking hi/stories. This actuality of the present hi/story, however, should not be understood as the *hier und jetzt* of Husserl, but as the “phenomenon of hi/story,”¹⁶ which, by its very constitution, has a temporal depth that is rooted in the past and saturated with the future. In this sense the hi/story has an actuality as a process that encompasses different temporal dimensions, for it “is constantly present as a whole in its course.”¹⁷ To approach hi/story as a phenomenon, one must therefore free oneself from any temporal presentation, since the actual time of hi/story is already marked by a past and a future. Likewise, as we have already seen in the part III, Chap. 4, every hi/story has a certain independence, which makes it narratable and confined within a unitary narrative, yet it is already rooted in a myriad of pre-hi/stories and floats, as above, “on a sea of hi/stories.”¹⁸ Alongside the actual hi/story, we find not only the prehi/stories, but also parallel hi/stories, lateral hi/stories, the hi/stories of our loved ones and of our neighbors, and above all, the hi/stories of those co-entangled with us.¹⁹ It is precisely in the form of co-entanglement that the actual hi/stories in which we live are connected to more comprehensive hi/stories. Consider, for instance, the hi/story of Werther and Lotte, a hi/story of poignant love in which not only the protagonists are co-entangled, but also those who, by reading it, relive a personal hi/story of suffering for love. In this way, readers themselves become co-entangled in a “universal hi/story” (*Allgeschichte*). For this reason, every hi/story contains a plurality of interpretations and is open to different meanings depending on one’s participation in the hi/story, that is, the position of our current hi/stories in relation to that hi/story. It is in this way that, according to Schapp, we can trace backward from the actual hi/story to all the hi/stories of the past, following the line and horizons of participation and co-entanglement.²⁰ The very event of birth, which we could reach by following all the hi/stories in which we are entangled or co-entangled, does not constitute any limit, since at birth we inherit hi/stories and are already, in some way, participants in the hi/stories we inherit and within which we are born. These hi/stories include

¹⁴ Schapp (2015, p. 31).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Schapp (2015, p. 32).

¹⁹ See Ibid.

²⁰ Cf. Ibid.

those of our parents, our ancestors, our fellow citizens, the culture in which we grow up, and finally, religion. It is precisely these hi/stories that, for Schapp, represent the horizon of interpretation in which we grow up and, ultimately, our world. According to him, we grow into this world and the question may arise whether the hi/stories that compose this world, the ancient hi/stories, somehow form a whole in which the individual, with their current hi/story, has a fixed place, as seems to be the case in the Bible or even in Homer.²¹ The answer to this question opens the way to defining how a world is structured in general, and in our case, how the Western world is structured.

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²¹ See Schapp (2015, p. 37).

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Chapter 14

Positive Worlds and the Peculiar World of the Occident



Abstract In *Philosophie der Geschichten*, Wilhelm Schapp develops a plural conception of world grounded in the dynamics of hi/stories. Rather than a single unified structure, the world appears as a constellation of positive worlds, each stabilized by foundational hi/stories and defined through a specific coherence of meaning. Belonging to a world thus coincides with being entangled in the hi/stories that sustain it, while every world opens onto the horizon of other worlds and ultimately onto more comprehensive universal hi/stories. Starting from present hi/stories, Schapp articulates a notion of actuality and time that departs from a punctual present and instead unfolds as a temporally extended process rooted in past and future horizons. Within this framework, the positive worlds of religion and culture coexist with the mathematical-physical world of modern science, which, despite its claim to autonomy, remains dependent on the hermeneutical and narrative contexts in which knowledge arises. Scientific concepts of world, time, and matter are thus shown to presuppose the interpretive horizon of hi/stories, through which they acquire meaning and intelligibility.

Keywords Positive worlds · Positive time · Universal hi/stories · Peculiar world of the occident · Present hi/stories · Mathematical-physical world

The first reflection to make about the world concerns the very status of the concept of world. Just as there is no history that can be said to be complete in itself except in terms of narrative functionality, there is likewise no unified or uniform way of defining the concept of world. One may speak, for example, of the world of Homer, the world of the Old Testament, or the Indian world; yet, according to Schapp, even for a given culture or a specific period one will never arrive at a single, unequivocal image of what is meant by “world.”¹ Taking up a line of thought already present in his philosophy of law, Schapp therefore maintains that it is not correct to speak of

¹ Schapp (2015, p. 41).

world in the singular; one must first of all speak of worlds in the plural.² Moreover, just like hi/story, every single world is not, in a literal sense, a definable formation (*Gebilde*), but contains within itself continuous modifications, modes of offering itself to us through entanglement in our hi/stories, and of opening up to and intertwining with other worlds.³ However, each world preserves a certain character of stability, which defines and structures it within a framework of coherence. In connection with Comte's distinction as applied to religion, he speaks of this structural coherence as a positive world, or as positive worlds.⁴ Every positive world has the characteristic of being grounded in hi/stories. At the center of each of these hi/stories, according to Schapp, stands the human being and above all the transience of human existence, and thus death. Not directly, but as a consequence of this, every positive world is permeated by religion to such an extent that one cannot imagine the existence of a world without religion.⁵ The foundational hi/stories of the positive world are therefore, in most cases, hi/stories that concern the divine. Even when there are exceptions, as for example in the Indian world, there is always a compensatory element that fulfills the same role that the divine had. The world of Homer, the world of the Old Testament, and the world of Islam all have to do with the divine, and all in a foundational way. All these positive worlds owe their existence and their continuance to God, and cannot be conceived without Him.⁶

But how do the different positive worlds relate to one another, and how is the concept of a positive world connected to the entanglement of human beings in hi/stories? Let us start from this latter question: Schapp clearly states that "to belong to a positive world is nothing other than another expression for being-entangled in hi/stories"⁷ and that each ultimately collapses into the other. More precisely, belonging to a positive world is realized and fulfilled only through the entanglement of human beings in hi/stories. Likewise, our hi/stories or those of others constitute the very weave of the fabric of positive worlds; without them, these worlds would be nothing but empty containers. This leads us to the question of how the different worlds connect and relate to one another. If we consider entanglement, and the fact that each hi/story emerges, in some way, out of a sea of hi/stories to which it is connected, we must likewise think that each individual positive world stands at the center of other worlds and has other positive worlds as its horizons. Since being

²In the first volume of *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht*, Schapp speaks on the one hand of *Wertwelten in Geschichte* (worlds of value in history), and on the other hand of the *Verschmelzung von Wertwelten* (fusion of worlds of value). In the first case, he refers to the universe of values found in literature, from the epic verses of Homer to Keller, when discussing companionship, family, and the pleasures of life (cf. Schapp, 1930, pp. 16–17). In the second case, he refers to the overlapping of different value perspectives on a single object or situation, based on who attributes value to it and the context in which it is considered (cf. Schapp 1930, pp. 22–24).

³Schapp (2015, p. 42).

⁴See Comte (1858).

⁵Schapp (2015, p. 41).

⁶Schapp (2015, p. 42).

⁷Schapp (2015, p. 43).

entangled in hi/stories means living in a positive world within a given positive time, being entangled also means finding oneself at the center of a world whose horizon contains countless other worlds and horizons. And if every world is interwoven with hi/stories, this also means that even our most personal hi/stories are, in some way, tied to the founding hi/stories of that world and, consequently, are also connected, even though indirectly, to the founding hi/stories that structure the other worlds appearing on the horizon.⁸ In this case too, just as with co-entanglement, we cannot say that we are *in* that positive world or that we are part of it, since that world appears on the horizon of our own and in some way presents itself as its continuation. Rather, our world and our hi/stories are, for those who inhabit that world, a horizon and a set of hi/stories into which their world gradually fades. In the background of these worlds, moreover, there is a founding hi/story in which the founding hi/stories of these worlds converge. As far as the positive Western world is concerned, Schapp locates this hi/story in the myth of creation. In the *Theogony*, Hesiod calls upon the Muses to explain to him how the gods and the earth came into being, and the sea and the stars and the sky and the earth, and how all this arose and what the beginning was.⁹ According to Schapp, the Bible responds to this question raised in the *Theogony* with the motto: “In the beginning was the Word.”¹⁰ This response resonates in the personal hi/stories of medieval Christians and continues to resonate for Christians today as one of the most enduring elements that links their most immediate personal hi/stories with the beginnings of Western culture, within a universal hi/story that encapsulates and sustains the positive Western world.¹¹ Now, according to Schapp, within this universal hi/story, Muslims and Jews are also entangled, though in different ways. The Jewish and Christian worlds, which find their foundation in the biblical hi/stories, can be conceived even without the Islamic world, whereas the Islamic world cannot be conceived without the monotheistic God of the Bible.¹² In the hi/story of the creation of the world, the universal hi/stories of Jews, Muslims, and Christians converge, and with them their positive worlds as well.¹³ This does not mean, however, that every believer of these three religions is entangled in the hi/story of creation in the same way, as if by tracing the hi/story of creation back to the appearance of Christ or Muhammad there were a single shared universal hi/story. Rather, each finds in the creation myth a different form of entanglement and a different grounding of their own positive world. And yet, each remains within the horizon of the other, and each finds in the other a point of connection from different fronts within the hi/story of creation.¹⁴ Every great hi/story, according to Schapp, leads back to this first hi/story, and every individual hi/story

⁸ Schapp (2015, p. 44). Cf. Joisten (2025, p. 218f.).

⁹ Hesiod (1914, pp. 1, 36, 53, 116).

¹⁰ John 1:1, NIV.

¹¹ Schapp (2015, p. 44).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Schapp (2015, p. 45).

framed and embedded within these great hi/stories in turn refers back to it. Concerning this, Schapp states: “At the center of our investigation stands the individual human being entangled in his or her hi/stories. Starting from him or her, or from his or her hi/stories, we feel our way forward in every direction through hi/stories and only through hi/stories, as far as we can go. In doing so, we encounter no boundary. We are not only entangled in our own hi/stories, but in the hi/story reaching back to the creation of the world, and likewise entangled sideways to the most distant human beings and, as we assume, to every living creature as well.”¹⁵ The theory of entanglement thus becomes, first of all, a kind of pan-narrativism in which every human being and every creature are held together by the hi/stories that weave through the foundational myths of the ancient world and the religions. From this premise, one must work backward in order to understand how this onto-hermeneutical condition of the human being relates to everything that concerns humanity and the way in which it lives within its positive world, above all with regard to knowledge and science.

According to Schapp, the positive Western world has a peculiar character marked by an intrinsic duality. One can say that two evolutions and instantiations of worlds coexist within it. On the one hand, it grows out of the world of Homer and the world of Hesiod, and out of their founding hi/stories—such as that of creation—up to Dante. On the other hand, however, the world of the mathematical-physical sciences was early established within it. This world takes root and asserts itself as the world of atoms in ancient Greece, follows a clear line of development up to the Renaissance, and from that point onwards becomes increasingly dominant all the way into modernity, shaped by the revolutions discussed in the previous chapter. Schapp refers to this instantiation of world as the “peculiar world of the Occident” (*Sonderwelt des Abendlandes*) and describes it as a world that “encompasses the Earth and all the stars under the guiding image of the atom,” and “is negatively characterized by its independence from religion and from the human being, thereby standing in contrast to the positive worlds from Homer to Dante.”¹⁶ The world of physics therefore stands in opposition to those positive worlds that contain the founding hi/stories of the Occident because, by excluding religion, it excludes their founding hi/stories, and, in an even more decisive way that Schapp will later make explicit, it excludes hi/stories themselves.¹⁷ However, he specifies that speaking of a contradiction is not entirely correct, since these worlds have in some way coexisted up to the present and certainly maintain a deeper relation with one another. Explaining this relation thus becomes the point of access for tracing the path from the world of religions and universal hi/stories back to the world of science and philosophical knowledge as it has taken shape through the three revolutions, and as it must now be prepared for the fourth revolution brought about by the philosophy of hi/stories.

¹⁵ Schapp (2015, pp. 46–47).

¹⁶ Schapp (2015, p. 54).

¹⁷ Cf. Schapp, J. (2004, p. 135f.).

Schapp's argumentative strategy with respect to this crucial juncture follows a very precise line. (1) He identifies the central elements that characterize the peculiar world of the Occident from a theoretical point of view and then deconstructs them by drawing on the conceptual apparatus developed in his philosophy of hi/stories,¹⁸ including also certain elements from his philosophy of law.¹⁹ (2) He examines the central loci in the history of philosophy in which these concepts take shape (Plato, Descartes, Kant) and shows the necessity of understanding their philosophical conceptions in a hermeneutical-narratological framework.²⁰ (3) He then works his way back from the conception of the positive world as it unfolds beginning with the universal hi/stories, that is, from Homer to Dante, always in relation to the relevant concepts of the peculiar world of the Occident, and he offers a more complete version of entanglement and of universal hi/stories,²¹ taking into account also those places in Greek philosophy in which a philosophy of hi/stories is foreshadowed,²² as well as the positive worlds of the Eastern tradition.²³ (4) He therefore addresses the question of language and the way in which entanglement relates to thought and speech, expanding the hermeneutical conception of the foundation of hi/stories and narratives²⁴ and revisiting Husserl's project of a pure grammar in a critical light.²⁵ Here we will touch upon point (1) only in a summary form, since most of the arguments are taken almost verbatim from Schapp's earlier works; in the following sections, however, we will turn to points (2), (3), and (4).²⁶

According to Schapp, a mathematical-physical conception of the world is constructed around the following seven principles: (1) world; (2) space, time; (3) matter, substance, atom, motion, force, field; (4) the structures of geometry, arithmetic, and mathematics; (5) perception, thought, knowledge, the senses, the ego; (6) proposition, concept, species (series), state of affairs, truth; (7) being. With regard to these points, it is of course clear that they are not always the same over time and change depending on the field of interest. For a physicist, point (3) will be central, followed by points (4) and (2), whereas point (5) may appear, for example, as a possible source of error for knowledge. The phenomenologist, by contrast, will see in these very same points the point of departure, while point (6) has a more universal

¹⁸ Schapp (2015, pp. 54–152).

¹⁹ Schapp (2015, pp. 64–89).

²⁰ Schapp (2015, pp. 155–190).

²¹ Schapp (2015, pp. 194–211).

²² Schapp (2015, pp. 239–248; 252–264).

²³ Schapp (2015, pp. 270–281).

²⁴ Schapp (2015, pp. 285–339).

²⁵ Schapp (2015, pp. 340–344).

²⁶ The part concerning the positive Eastern worlds lies beyond the scope of this work but is of great theoretical interest; for a discussion of Schapp's interpretation of the *Bhagavadgita*, see Linkenbach (2020).

range that extends from the historical sciences to the physical sciences. In any case, the elements contained in the different points are taken for granted and are not subjected to scrutiny. Regardless of all this, one can still say that they maintain a specific relation to one another; that is, when the conception of one of these points is modified in a given period, the other points also adjust themselves in harmony with that modification. Each of these points, according to Schapp, harmonizes within a single unity, and one must therefore take into account the consequences that arise when one of these points is brought into question in relation to the others, and one must follow the developmental arc of these transformations. In his view, for example, one must ask whether in our contemporary situation the very concepts of being and subject have not already fallen into crisis to such an extent that no essential core can any longer be defined. Beyond this, one must also ask whether the natural sciences truly grasp the very nature of the things they investigate and upon which they are founded. One must ask, for instance: "Is the world of the natural sciences a world? Does time in the natural sciences have a 'now'? Or is it a time without a 'now'? What are concept, species (series), proposition, state of affairs, truth within the domain of the natural sciences? Where do we otherwise encounter such structures? What are perception and knowledge within the field of the natural sciences?"²⁷

From Schapp's perspective, answering these questions means first of all answering the more fundamental one: "Are hi/stories in the physical world, or is this world in hi/stories?"²⁸ From this question begins the refoundation of Schapp's physicalistic conception of the world in a hermeneutic-narrative key. In the peculiar world of the Occident, the physicalistic world coexists with the positive worlds. Access to the positive world is gained through hi/stories; within hi/stories the self is entangled, and within hi/stories there appear the things-for, their *from-what*, the place in which they are located, and their objective time in the form of age. How, then, do these conceptions relate to one another within the interweaving of the positive worlds with the peculiar world of the Occident? How do the worlds of hi/stories relate to the world of atoms? In order to understand this, Schapp proposes performing a kind of reduction and hypothesizing that only the world of atoms exists and, in the most classical sense of phenomenology, states of affairs and the propositions corresponding to them, which present themselves as the foundation of all scientific knowledge. Let us suppose that a world made of hi/stories does not exist and that the world of atoms repeats itself infinitely, together with the states of affairs and the universal propositions that, for phenomenology, exist just as states of affairs exist. At a certain point, within this physicalized world flattened onto the foundations of scientific procedure, it happens that, at a given moment and within a context of altered environmental and atmospheric conditions, living beings appear, and finally what we call the human being appears. At that point, the question thus becomes whether, apart from the human being's initial questioning of what that world of atoms in which they live might be, there can be something like a definition of the world.

²⁷ Schapp (2015, p. 57).

²⁸ Ibid.

When, for example, we attempt to define its purely material aspect, we might say: “the world is lifeless, is a desert, is something dead,”²⁹ and yet these expressions have a meaning only if they appear within hi/stories. In the same way, every world stands in an oriented relation to time: the world in which we appeared, for example, had a past in which we were not yet there, and it now has a present in which we are there and a future in which we will no longer be there. The very forces of nature themselves are grounded in the concept of time, but this time does not contain within itself past, present, and future in a full sense, but only successions of events. Everything has its own now, which lies halfway between past and future, but this past and future are possible only on the basis of an oriented perspective, and this oriented perspective is given by the now from which the entangled subject analyzes a particular event or reflects on a temporal succession. If one attempts to bring this now to self-givenness and to fix it, one will obtain nothing other than something that is given primarily within the horizons in which we are entangled and within the hi/stories of our positive worlds. In this regard, Schapp writes: “Our conceptions of time arise from hi/stories, that is, from our present moment, from the birth of Christ, from the founding of Rome. One can somehow extend these conceptions of time back to the supposed appearance of the first living beings, and then further extend them into the history of the Earth and of the universe. All these calculations proceed from our respective present point.”³⁰

The physical world as we know it in its pure materiality, the things investigated by physics or astrophysics, cannot, according to Schapp, be extrapolated in any way, on the one hand, from the very hi/story of the achievements that led to the investigation of the physical world and, on the other hand, from the hermeneutic container within which this questioning and this knowing take place. The physical Moon and the question of when it was formed, for example, make no sense unless we begin from the way in which we understand the Moon, from the universe of understanding that revolves around it, from the valuational and narrative/historical horizon in which it is situated, and from its relation to day and night and thus to the Sun and to the Earth.³¹ Similarly, Schapp gives the example of a learned man who tries to speak to a peasant about Sirius, about its distance, composition, mass, and weight. The peasant then asks how one can know that that star is Sirius, and in doing so, according to Schapp, he grasps the real problem. Taking up again the theme of *Beiträge II*, which I discussed in the Part III, Chap. 8 concerning the relation between hi/story and naming, Schapp maintains that without a perspective on the horizon in which the name Sirius emerged, and without including the historical events and technical developments that led to its discovery, one cannot truly understand what Sirius is. What is always required, therefore, is a perspective of the present on the horizon of events that characterizes the hi/story of Sirius and the way it appears in the hi/story of humankind and its discoveries. Any temporal conception

²⁹ Schapp (2015, p. 58).

³⁰ Schapp (2015, p. 59).

³¹ See Ibid.

of the physical world and, consequently, any understanding of the laws governing it presupposes the world of hi/stories in which it is situated. Any physical world is therefore necessarily rooted in the world of hi/stories and, in this sense, in a positive world.³²

Within this conception, Schapp situates the problem already addressed in *In Geschichten verstrickt*, namely how the object of individual experience is related to universal concepts. The difference is that in *Philosophie der Geschichten*, starting from perceptual experience, he also takes up the question of property, which he had addressed in *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht II*, as well as the more general question of how the thing is related, on the one hand, to universal objects and, on the other hand, to the forms of knowledge that are grounded in them.³³ The thing that is given in perception is the thing-for together with its hi/story. This must be considered from two perspectives: (1) the perspective from which it presents itself in hi/stories, and (2) the perspective from which it carries hi/stories with it. From the perspective from which it presents itself in hi/stories, what is self-given in perception is the hi/story that becomes intertwined with the hi/stories through which we grasp that thing, namely our present hi/stories. From the perspective of the hi/stories it carries with it and which therefore directly concern the thing-for itself, a producer and all the persons who have used and possessed it emerge in the background. In this sense, the thing-for refers, on the one hand, to the sphere of property and, on the other hand, to value. This property and this value are not universal, but are tied to a single property relation and to a single concrete value at a concrete moment. This concrete value and this concrete property then refer to a series of property relations and to a series of values that a thing has assumed or lost over time, and in this way they open up an infinite horizon that branches out from the single thing given in perception toward the most distant past, thus connecting us with the hi/stories, cultures, and worlds of value to which that particular thing-for gives access.³⁴ The encounter between the self and the thing, even in the cognitive form of a self relating to the matter of the external world, from perception through to the most refined investigation of the atom in nuclear physics, is nothing other than a derivation of the inseparable relation between human beings and the thing as thing-for, that is, first and foremost as a product bound up with the hi/story of human production and with the original condition of the thing of having, for human beings, a value that exceeds the purely physical dimension. Thus, for example, the metre depends both ontologically and epistemologically on the platinum bar preserved in Paris that serves as the model of the unit of measurement metre. In the same way, the atom of gold is installed in the experience we have of gold in the form of material to be worked and insofar as it has value and meaning within our hi/story and, consequently, within the hi/story of humankind.³⁵ All the relations and hi/stories that concern gold in the hi/

³² Cf. Ibid. See above Part III, Chap. 8.

³³ See above Part II, Chap. 5.

³⁴ See Schapp (2015, p. 68).

³⁵ See Schapp (2015, p. 146).

story of humankind form a great unity within which, at a certain point, the atom of gold emerges as an element to be investigated from a scientific point of view. It is precisely there that another form of understanding of gold can begin. If we assume that gold is composed of gold atoms, we must nevertheless consider that, taken individually, they may no longer carry the same characteristics as gold itself. They may become what we call gold only in the coalescence of atoms, thereby assuming all the properties we observe. According to Schapp, however, even speaking of “coalescence” is not entirely correct, since atoms already seem to carry within themselves, in some way, the capacity to group together. Gold atoms, for example, could not group together with iron atoms. Each atom is similar to another at least insofar as it has the capacity to connect with the other, and yet this does not constitute a genuine epistemic starting point, since each gold atom, taken by itself, could be different from another and bind only by affinity with other gold atoms that are akin but not in themselves entirely identical. It may therefore be that what we call gold is composed of different gold atoms and represents only a variation of different golds, to the point that what we have investigated at the level of the atom no longer has any form of connection with what we encountered in the original piece of gold, with what seemed to give itself in perception as gold and to be bound up with the hi/story of the working of gold.³⁶ The issue becomes even more complicated if we think of other materials, such as lead. If we take a piece of lead that lies before us, we know that this piece, a certain number of years ago, was a piece of uranium. Indeed, we know even more than this: we know that each individual atom of this piece, at different times, transformed from a uranium atom into a lead atom. Each lead atom therefore has a different age from every other lead atom, a different moment at which it underwent this transformation. If one starts from the internal structure of the atom, then each atom would be different from every other in a way analogous to how an old man is different from a young man. In this way, according to Schapp, we encounter in the so-called atomic world nothing other than series of individual entities, comparable to the series of living beings. Strictly speaking, it would therefore be impossible to ground anything scientific on what characterizes the essence of an atom of a given material, nor can one assume a form of knowledge of matter that differs from that of its purpose and meaning within everyday experience and within one’s own hi/stories. In this regard, Schapp writes: “Can we now call what ultimately remains of matter—the atom as an individual and the atomic series—an identity? Does this atom have an identity, is it itself an identity? Or is its being sustained by the thing-for, so that it is nothing more than a reflection, a formation at the horizon of the thing-for? Does it have no identity of its own, acquiring its identity only as a reflection of the identity of the thing-for?”³⁷

Any kind of physical consideration of matter taken in itself, and of its composition, leads, according to Schapp, to nothing other than the being of the thing-for. By the being of the thing-for he understands, first and foremost, its being embedded in

³⁶ See Schapp (2015, p. 147).

³⁷ Schapp (2015, p. 148).

purposes and in relations of value and property that render it historical and a bearer of hi/stories, as well as the place and foundation of every form of theoretical knowledge. For this reason, the peculiar world of the Occident cannot exist without the positive world within which it develops, since every understanding of the world and every scientific cognitive experience already presupposes the hermeneutic and historical encounter with the things on the basis of hi/stories and of the horizon of hi/stories in which we are entangled.

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Chapter 15

Hi/stories and Philosophical Systems: Kant, Plato, Descartes



Abstract A reinterpretation of central moments in the history of philosophy emerges through the lens of Wilhelm Schapp's concept of hi/stories, with particular attention to key examples drawn from Immanuel Kant, Plato, and René Descartes. Rather than engaging their systems as a whole, the analysis concentrates on exemplary cases such as Kant's hundred thalers, Plato's chariot, and Descartes's piece of wax and automata, in which the limits of a conception of knowledge grounded in concepts, propositions, and essential determinations become evident. From this perspective, objects no longer appear as bearers of predicates or as instances of universal definitions, but as formations that acquire meaning, value, and reality only within the hi/stories in which they emerge. Reality and possibility, perception and knowledge, as well as the relation between concept and object, are thus reconfigured in light of the primacy of hi/stories, bringing into view the hermeneutical and narrative dimension that underlies even the most canonical philosophical examples and opening the way to a historically grounded understanding of the world.

Keywords Philosophical systems · Immanuel Kant · Plato · René Descartes · Concept and object · Theory of knowledge

The identification of the foundational role of hi/stories with respect to the central elements of scientific knowledge and of knowledge in general constitutes the point of departure for Schapp's reinterpretation and deconstruction of some central loci in the history of western philosophy and of philosophical systems as such, which, in his view, have contributed to constructing and grounding the peculiar world of the Occident. He focuses in particular on Kant, Plato, and Descartes. With regard to these authors, he does not wish to consider the way in which they address the great philosophical themes such as God, freedom, or immortality, nor the way in which they seek to provide an ultimate foundation for their systems. Rather, he aims to investigate the brushstroke of these philosophers, and in order to do so he identifies three elements from which to proceed: first, Kant's example of the hundred thalers within the argument of the *Critique of Pure Reason* concerning the impossibility of an ontological proof of the existence of God; second, Plato's example of the chariot

in the theory of ideas; and finally, the examples of wax and automata at the center of Descartes's reflections on metaphysics.¹

Starting from the first point, according to Schapp, Kant investigates experience in the *Critique of Pure Reason* from the perspective of the natural sciences and their objects as they were understood in his time, that is, by seeking the "true universals that present themselves with the character of inner necessity."² According to Schapp, this entails a specific stance on how the experience of the external world is to be understood. In Kant's time, what mattered was the inner experience one has of the laws of the world and its processes, such that an educated person did not need to have travelled very much through the world itself in order to claim to know it. There were, however, periods in which the external world was conceived in a different way. It was seen merely as the stage on which true reality manifested itself, a reality made up of human beings, cities, and hi/stories. Thus, at the beginning of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus is regarded as a wise man because he has seen many cities and come to know many people, and he can be considered respectable in this sense even though he does not aspire to knowledge with the character of inner necessity.³ This different conception of experience represents precisely one of the fundamental moments in which the peculiar world of the Occident comes to dominate the positive world. What is given in inner experience can, according to Schapp, articulate itself only in hi/stories. Kant, however, by tracing everything back to forms of knowledge given a priori, fails to take into account the very centrality of hi/stories for experience and for knowledge.⁴ This element manifests itself in its fullest extent in the example of the hundred thalers.

Kant uses the example of the hundred thalers to support his famous thesis that "being is obviously not a real predicate."⁵ Kant argues that one hundred possible thalers are exactly equal to one hundred real thalers. In his opinion, whether one has the hundred thalers and therefore they are real does not affect the concept of a thaler at all. Existence adds nothing to essence.⁶ With regard to this argument, Schapp maintains that it is genuinely difficult for him to understand what Kant means by reality when he speaks of "one hundred real thalers," and by possibility when he speaks of "one hundred possible thalers."⁷ When speaking of real thalers, in his view, Kant understands reality in the sense of something concretely existing, referring, for example, to one hundred thalers that are in a drawer or on his desk. These thalers may belong to one or more series, and they may have come into Kant's possession in various ways for commercial or private reasons, brought there by some acquaintance. Each of these thalers carries with it a hi/story that cannot be easily retraced but that is nevertheless, to some extent, reconstructible and already evident

¹ Cf. Schapp (2015, p. 155).

² Schapp (2015, p. 156).

³ See Ibid.

⁴ See Schapp (2015, p. 157).

⁵ Kant (1929, p. 200).

⁶ See Kant (1929, p. 201).

⁷ See Schapp (2015, p. 158).

at first glance and through the basic information we have about them: the coinage reveals their geographical origin and the historical period to which each coin belongs; their circulation reveals the context of their use and their purposes; their material appearance may tell us something about the places through which they have passed; and in the intentions of their current possessor there is already an idea of what is to be done with that money, thus pointing toward a future owner or possessor. The thalers, therefore, cannot be reduced to the concept as Kant understands it, since they are not composed of predicates that can be attributed to them *a priori*; rather, such predicates can be derived only from the series of unique and contextual events in which they came into being as thalers, and from the broader horizon within which money emerges as a medium of exchange and, further back, within the context of values in which the very need for coinage arises. The being or non-being of the thalers therefore depends, first and foremost, not on their definition in terms of essential determinations, but on their being embedded in the history of humankind and in the hi/stories of individual humans who have dealt with them. For those who, in the present, reflect on the being of the real thaler, since it is no longer in circulation, what presents itself is only historical reality and its emergence in hi/story. From this standpoint, the thalers become part of our historical horizon insofar as they once belonged to our forebears or appear in the hi/story and in the accounts of our forebears. They are real insofar as they are genuinely connected with human beings and with the hi/stories of human beings who are more or less close to us.⁸

Having clarified what is meant by real thalers, Schapp then asks what is to be understood by “one hundred possible thalers.” Kant seems to have in mind the mere representation of one hundred thalers, especially with regard to their essence or concept. According to Schapp, however, speaking of the possibility of the thaler as a concept makes sense only so long as the linguistic context of use is disregarded. For example, when someone says that they have a hundred thalers, the possibility that these thalers are not real is not even taken into consideration. For them to be considered property, they must be thought of as expendable in some way. Even in a dream where the hundred thalers are not real, the dreamer still imagines being able to spend them. Even though the hundred thalers may not be physically present, the context in which they are mentioned and the hi/story in which they emerge must always be considered. This includes also the hi/story of their ownership and the background hi/story of how money was invented as a means of exchange. It is only through these narratives that concepts like a coin and a thaler can be fully understood.⁹ Reality or possibility, therefore, is not tied to the concept but to the fact of the thaler’s historical narratability, that is, to its capacity to emerge within hi/stories together with the entire horizon of meanings that includes its context of use and its value. The being of the thalers and their reality are thus reduced to the fact that they have a sense within hi/story, a sense that is bound to their real significance, to their use, and to the fact that they possess

⁸Cf. *Ibidem*.

⁹For a discussion of the relationship between this position of Schapp and the critique of the concept in Wittgenstein, see Lübke (1972, p. 110ff.); see also Nuccilli (2024, p. 41ff).

economic value.¹⁰ Let us take, as Schapp does, the hi/story of Nasreddin, the mythical figure of the Turkish tradition. In one of the hi/stories handed down about him, it is said that while he was dreaming of receiving nine coins in his hand from someone and was firmly insisting that he would not accept fewer than ten, he was suddenly awakened and, finding his hand empty, closed his eyes again and said: "Very well, my friend, have it your way. Give me nine."¹¹ According to Schapp, one should not speak simply of dreaming of nine gold coins, but rather of a hi/story of a dream in which nine real coins appear. The point is not the opposition between reality and dream, but the fact that even within the dream the coins appear as real, that is, as bearers of meaning and of economic value. In the same way, one can say of Kant's hundred thalers that, even if they are merely represented in waking consciousness or even in a dream, they appear in that very representation with the same degree of reality, with the value of one hundred thalers and with their real historical and economic significance. They are therefore real in whatever form they appear, or at least real in intention, as one might say in phenomenological terms.¹² But this is still not quite the point. If we start from the purely intentional content, Kant would claim that "one hundred real thalers contain nothing more than one hundred possible thalers." The latter signify the concept, whereas the former signify the object and its positing as such; and if there were more in the former than in the latter, the concept would not fully express the object and would therefore not be an adequate concept of it. According to Schapp, however, there is more value in one's patrimony when it includes one hundred real thalers than in the mere concept of those same thalers (that is, in their intentional possibility). Indeed, the object in reality is not contained in the concept merely analytically, but is added to the concept, which is a determination of one's patrimonial situation, in a synthetic way, without this implying that the being of the hundred thalers adds anything to the content of the concept itself. The existence of the hundred thalers is thus already included in their being part of a patrimony.¹³ Thus, the concept of the thaler, which according to Schapp in Kant was left without a homeland, finds its home and no longer wanders in emptiness, but instead finds a worldly fulfillment in the concrete thaler as part of a sum and of a patrimony, and then in the emergence of the thaler within the hi/stories that concern it.¹⁴

Given the impossibility of providing an ontological proof of the existence of God, one must assume that God, too, appears only within hi/stories. According to Schapp, this occurs not in the form of a concept of divinity endowed with determinate attributes, but rather in the form of a concrete and singular God. This holds both for the hi/stories of the Bible and of monotheistic traditions more generally, as well as for myths and parables. There are, of course, cases in which the divine seems to lose all individual character in the face of the totality of being, as in pantheism; yet,

¹⁰ See Schapp (2015, p. 159).

¹¹ Suresha (2020, p. 154).

¹² Schapp (2015, p. 160).

¹³ Cf. Schapp (2015, p. 165).

¹⁴ See Schapp (2015, p. 164).

according to Schapp, in such cases we are no longer dealing with a hi/story about God, but rather with a different kind of hi/story, one that concerns the being-one of all things.¹⁵ With regard to access through hi/stories, the issue is therefore not, in Schapp's view, to decide whether God exists or not, but rather to understand whether God himself is entangled in hi/stories or instead appears within human hi/stories, and thus to ask how the relationship between God, hi/stories, and entanglement is to be understood. This latter problem will constitute one of the central issues in the discussion of universal hi/stories, which I will address in the following chapter. What is at stake here is to bring to light the way in which Schapp contrasts his theory of entanglement and his concept of hi/stories with the philosophical-argumentative framework underlying Kant's example of the hundred thalers, which he regards as emblematic of Kant's mode of thought. In this respect, Schapp positions himself in radical opposition to Kant, above all on three points. First, he calls into question the way in which Kant understands the concept of a thing, showing that reality and possibility are only modalities of the concrete emergence of a thing within a hi/story. Second, he challenges the role that Kant assigns to judgments and propositions, which are supposed to determine the essential features of a thing; for, according to Schapp, propositions arise and acquire meaning only within the dynamic context of a hi/story, and therefore cannot be understood as self-contained ideal entities. Finally, he questions the very relationship between things and judgments, and the way in which the correspondence between concept and thing is to be understood, since things are not in themselves enclosed within concepts but rather each carries its own hi/story, through which it is situated within a concrete world of meaning. In this sense, Schapp states quite explicitly: "The discovery of the proposition was perhaps one of the greatest discoveries, but the greatest discovery was that of its non-existence, once it is considered in relation to hi/stories."¹⁶

With the same deconstructive intent, Schapp also calls into question Plato's philosophy, beginning with the problem of the proposition itself¹⁷ and moving on to the issue of the relationship between reality and representation,¹⁸ and finally to the problem of the concept and the idea in relation to the knowledge of the individual thing. At the center of this discussion stands the example of the chariot discussed by Plato in the *Theaetetus*. In the *Theaetetus*, Plato addresses the problem of how one might arrive at a stable way of identifying and defining what a chariot is. In the dialogue, in his first attempt, Socrates recalls the passage in which Hesiod describes the chariot as being composed of one hundred parts, and points out to Theaetetus that those who are able to identify these components are in a better position to attain knowledge of what the chariot is, as opposed to those who lack such understanding.¹⁹ Schapp, like other early phenomenologists,²⁰ seeks to interpret Plato as a kind

¹⁵ See Schapp (2015, p. 162).

¹⁶ Schapp (2015, p. 166).

¹⁷ See Schapp (2015, p. 167ff.).

¹⁸ See Schapp (2015, p. 177ff.).

¹⁹ Plato, *Theaetetus* 207a-207c.

²⁰ See above Part I, Chap. 1.

of proto-phenomenologist. According to him, in attempting to define the chariot, Plato is in fact trying to determine the foundation of the judgment “this is a chariot,” and the justification of this judgment lies in the fact that the chariot is composed of one hundred parts. The weight of this judgment, therefore, lies in the “being-a-chariot” of the chariot itself.²¹ In addition to these judgments, there are others that concern further characteristics of the chariot, such as its belonging to a certain subject or its having been produced by another subject; and these judgments, too, pertain to the being-a-chariot of the chariot. According to Schapp, therefore, when one seeks to grasp, in the being-chariot of the chariot, the relation between the judgments that constitute our representation of it and the individual chariot itself, one must assume that, if there is such a thing as a real representation of the chariot, its starting point is not the hundred parts as such, but rather the hundred parts *as spoken of* by Hesiod, that is, the fact that the chariot present here, or the one we are representing, is placed in relation to the one described by Hesiod and to the series of chariots that precede it.²² The reference to Hesiod’s definition allows us to place Socrates’ contribution within that episode in the history of human culture represented by the discovery of the chariot, which cannot be understood in a compartmentalised manner in the hope of obtaining an essential definition of the chariot. Its very existence rather presupposes the attempts to model the chariot that have characterised its evolution up to the first models made of just two logs. Moreover, each chariot cannot be deprived of the role it played in the civilising process up to Socrates’ time. The only way to understand the chariot, therefore, is to understand its hi/story, behind which unfolds the entire hi/story of the series to which it belongs, as part of positive world of ancient Greece and, more generally, a fundamental dimension of the history of human culture.²³ In this case, therefore, when Socrates seeks to define the essence of Theaetetus in analogical terms with the chariot, it no longer makes sense to speak of his particular features, such as the shape of his nose; rather, one must speak of his hi/stories, and more precisely of the way in which he is rooted in the world of things and in the chariot through these hi/stories. In this way, according to Schapp, one can arrive at a genuine understanding of the essence of Theaetetus as someone entangled in hi/stories, and of the essence of the chariot as something that appears within its hi/stories and within the hi/stories of those entangled with it. It is in this sense, then, that the Protagorean dictum that “man is the measure of all things” is to be understood.²⁴ In the *Theaetetus*, by contrast, the Protagorean dictum is invoked to examine the relation between knowledge and perception, and to show how perception leads to a form of relativism that prevents it from serving as a genuine source of knowledge.²⁵ According to Schapp, Plato approaches the problem of the inadequacy of perception for grasping true being in

²¹ See Schapp (2015, p. 178).

²² See Schapp (2015), p. 179.

²³ Cf. Schapp (2016, p. 89). See Nuccilli (2020), p. 73 f.; Vigo (2025), pp. 93ff.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Schapp (2015, p. 183).

a manner that is comparable to Kant's, namely by considering it from the perspective of representation, and in particular through its manifestation in dreams or in states of madness. Indeed, in the *Theaetetus* (157d–162b), Plato compares perception to the representations that occur in dreams or in states of madness with those that arise in cases of sensory illusion. In dreams one may believe oneself to be flying, just as in madness one may believe oneself to be a god, and in both cases one holds these beliefs with the same conviction with which one believes one is perceiving something when the senses deceive us. In this regard, when one asks what advantage ordinary perception might have over such conditions, one is led to the conclusion that it has none, and that there is no reliable way to determine which of these representations is true at the moment in which it occurs. The conclusion reached by Socrates and Theaetetus is therefore that the senses cannot directly deliver the essential characteristics of things—such as being and non-being, likeness and unlikeness, difference and unity—but that these belong to the soul, which inquires into and seeks what is common to all things (*Theaetetus*, 186a). In this way, one arrives at the conclusion that perception can never attain true knowledge of things, but that only the soul and thought can do so.

According to Schapp, Plato appears to start from the assumption that there is something that is, something existent, which can be known through perception understood as a cognitive act rather than as mere sensation. From this presupposition, Plato then investigates perception by starting from wakefulness, dream, and madness. In these states, being appears in relation to what is worldly, that is, to the world understood in its most material sense, as it had been investigated by the physical philosophers who preceded him. For Schapp, however, the point of departure should lie precisely in the investigation of these states of the soul and of consciousness, namely wakefulness, dream, and madness, rather than in perception and representation as explanatory modes of those states. This is due to the fact that the world of wakefulness appears to be much closer to being than the other states. Since, in Plato, being is nothing other than the spatial and material locus of this world of wakefulness, he thus embodies the scientific outlook of his time, in which knowing remains bound to awakened, wakeful experience. However, if we step back in time and turn, for example, to Babylonian culture and to the Epic of Gilgamesh, we can see with Schapp that, in that cultural context, dreams assume a fundamental significance for knowledge, even greater than that attributed to the waking world. In such a context, Plato's question concerning the importance of perception for access to the external world would appear entirely inappropriate; instead, one would have to rely much more on the relation between human hi/stories and the myths concerning the gods. It is precisely within this intertwining that, according to Schapp, such experiences can “shine, as it were, into the most distant hi/stories, or lift the human being far above himself, in the sacred draught of ecstasy, up to the gods.”²⁶ Certainly, even in Plato's time dream and madness played an important role, but the distinctive feature of Plato's theory lies precisely in its attempt to overcome mere belief in order to attain firm knowledge and secure understanding of the real world in the state of

²⁶ Schapp (2015, p. 185).

wakefulness. It is in doing so, according to Schapp, that Plato ultimately forgets hi/stories.²⁷ If it is true that, in contrast to traditional philosophical knowledge, a major advantage lies in investigating the phenomena of wakefulness starting from the experience of the external world, Schapp holds that an additional advantage consists in examining the constancy of the relation between consciousness and world also in different states, such as sleep and delirium. This can be achieved only through hi/stories, which represent a universal condition transversal to all states of consciousness. Even in these states, things often appear to us as unified and embedded within a context of meaning, much as they do in the reality of wakefulness. Indeed, such states frequently provide different and more complex paths of access to our hi/stories, or to fragments of our hi/stories and of the things that appear within them.²⁸

Thus, in different ways and for different reasons, both Kant and Plato, according to Schapp, fail to grasp the hermeneutic element inherent in every relation between the human being and the external world. This relation always includes, on the one hand, the historicity of the thing as a thing-for, and, on the other hand, the embodied and historical relation of the human being to the thing-for. These elements cut across different states of consciousness and go beyond the mere perceptual relation to the thing. By contrast, according to Schapp, Descartes in his *Meditations on First Philosophy* seems to come closer to a philosophy of hi/stories with regard to perception and the representation of things. In the example of the piece of wax in the Second Meditation, Descartes considers the different states and modifications of the wax as elements that express the temporality of the wax itself, which nevertheless remains recognizable to thought only through its past, present, and anticipated states.²⁹ However, according to Schapp, even though a more comprehensive perspective is offered on the historicity of perception and on the horizons of the piece of wax, and the distinction between perception and representation thus becomes less relevant with respect to the hi/story of the wax, Descartes still does not grasp that dimension of the thing which relates it to human hi/story, namely the being of the wax in terms of its function or as a thing-for.³⁰ By considering the wax as a thing-for, one can highlight how the piece of wax has been put together from honey and for a purpose. In this way, the wax assumes a role within a hi/story, and with it also the materiality of the wax and its perceptual transformations, which appear as frames of that hi/story.³¹ This way of understanding perceptual experience would also help Descartes with regard to the example of the *automata* that appears shortly after the discussion of the wax. When Descartes claims that, upon seeing passers-by from a window, he is inclined to judge that they are human beings because he sees hats and coats, even though there might in fact be automata beneath them,³² Schapp's

²⁷ See Schapp (2015, p. 186).

²⁸ Cf. Schapp (2015, p. 187).

²⁹ See Schapp (2015, p. 188).

³⁰ See Descartes (2008, p. 23ff.).

³¹ See Schapp (2015, p. 189).

³² See Descartes (2008, p. 23).

objection is that Descartes does not take into account the historical and practical dimension of the things he names, such as hats and coats. First of all, automata would have no need for hats or coats at all. Moreover, each item of clothing bears a series of determinations that can guide our judgment as to whether we are dealing with human beings or not. There are no hats or coats in general, but men's or women's hats, worn or new hats, modern or outdated coats, fashionable or unfashionable ones, purchased in a particular place and embedded in specific practices of use. Without this horizon of hi/stories, the very question of whether the wearer is an automaton or a human being would make little sense. Even in cases where we cannot determine with certainty who is wearing the clothes, and even if the wearer remains unrecognized, what appears, according to Schapp, are in any case hi/stories that emerge from that particular item of clothing. Such items can already function as what Schapp will later call headers of hi/stories,³³ that is, as titles under which particular kinds of things are gathered within broader hi/stories, such as the hi/story of the discovery and use of the hat, or the hi/story of the development of a certain type of coat. Outside of this emergence of hi/stories, nothing else can be given; and the remaining question would then concern only whether the hi/story in question is true and whether it concerns real human beings.³⁴

To sum up, according to Schapp, Kant would have had a different conception of the hundred thalers, Plato of the chariot, and Descartes of the piece of wax and, of automata, had they been familiar with the formation of hi/story as he understands it. In this connection, he further maintains that it is not important to arrive at a definitive definition of what hi/story is, since we may not yet possess the philosophical tools required for such a task. What matters instead is to show that one cannot approach the thaler, the chariot, or the piece of wax except by way of hi/stories. This requires making use of the concept of the thing-for, for it is only through this concept that one can still explain what is to be understood by thing, thinghood, perception of the thing, and knowledge of the thing in relation to their hi/stories. For example, the thaler of Frederick the Great stands in an immediate relation to him and to his hi/stories, and its value changes with every defeat and every victory. It therefore makes no sense to speak rationally of the thaler if one believes it to be merely a round piece of silver and to be grasped through the determinations of silver plus the predicate of "existence." Likewise, without these historical relations one can say nothing about the concept of the thaler, nor about its essence or its species. The same holds for Plato's chariot and for Descartes's piece of wax and automata. Moreover, they appeal to hallucination and dream in order to legitimate the cognitive scope of representation and perception, whereas these dimensions should instead be addressed from the side of the existential condition in which they occur, namely from the side of the entangled one and of hi/story.³⁵

³³ See below Part IV, Chap. 17.

³⁴ See Schapp (2015, p. 189).

³⁵ Cf. Schapp (2015, p. 190).

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Chapter 16

Universal Hi/stories: Myths, Religion, and Philosophical Knowledge



Abstract Beginning from the Homeric and Hesiodic traditions, hi/stories are presented as the original fabric through which cosmos emerges out of chaos, binding together gods, human beings, and the dead within a unified narrative horizon. This unity is not grounded in spatial, temporal, or biological commonality, but in a shared narrative structure that enables individual hi/stories to participate in universal hi/story. The poetic dimension of narration, understood in an Aristotelian sense, provides the condition for this universality by opening horizons of possibility that exceed mere factual description and allow for a transhistorical continuity of meaning. At the same time, this narrative fabric is rooted in the primordial structure of the “we,” which precedes the individual and grounds every form of co-entanglement, extending from kinship relations to religious communities and ultimately to an all-encompassing “we all.” Within this framework, life and death, past and future, are integrated into a single hermeneutic horizon in which individual existence persists beyond its temporal limits through its participation in universal hi/story. Against this background, the emergence of scientific and philosophical worldviews appears as a progressive detachment from this narrative unity, replacing the mythopoietic and communal dimension of hi/stories with a world of facts that lacks the binding force of narration.

Keywords Universal hi/stories · Myth · Religion · Poetic knowledge · Collective subjectivity · Life and death

The examples discussed in the previous chapters are used by Schapp to reinforce, from a theoretical standpoint, his thesis that philosophical systems represent a deviation from what he takes to be the genuine origins of Western culture. These origins are to be found in the world of Homer and Hesiod, which constitutes a founding positive world in which a first expression of the human being as entangled in hi/stories already emerges in its full scope. This includes not only states of wakefulness and full consciousness, but also non-waking states, as well as the relation to the divine and the otherworldly. Once the presuppositions underlying, on the one hand, the physico-mathematical conception of the peculiar world of the Occident and, on the other hand, the philosophical systems that grow together within it have been

called into question, Schapp is left with the task of addressing how positive worlds themselves are configured on the basis of their cultural roots. These roots lie at the foundation of Western culture, remain in the background of the peculiar world of the Occident, and continue to exert their influence within the positive world of Christian religion. According to Schapp, these roots are to be located in universal hi/stories and in their original and pure configuration within Homeric mythology, prior to their being supplanted by philosophical systems. It is to this task that, as I shall show in what follows, the third part of *Philosophie der Geschichten* is devoted.

The starting point of Schapp's thesis is that Homer and, in a partly similar way, Hesiod present hi/stories in precisely the sense in which Schapp himself understands the concept of hi/stories, namely in a foundational sense. Upon their hi/stories they build a world which, without these hi/stories, would be nothing at all or, in Greek terms, would amount merely to chaos. For Schapp, therefore, the contrast between chaos and cosmos must be reinterpreted in light of the contrast between chaos and hi/story, since the cosmos begins with hi/stories and continues through hi/stories, and without hi/stories one could not speak either of the cosmos or of those who inhabit it.¹ This world and this hi/story are correlated and held together on multiple levels.² The figures who appear in Homer's hi/stories are human beings like ourselves, yet the hi/stories in which they are entangled rise from the earth to the sky and from the sky return to the earth. The gods appear on earth and within the hi/stories as protagonists of human hi/stories, and the figure of Zeus guarantees the unity of power in heaven and on earth, since the kings have received their sceptre of authority from him. This unity then extends even beneath the earth, where the realm of the dead is located. Earth, sky, and the realm of the dead form a unity in which everything and everyone has its place; yet this is not a place in a spatial or temporal sense, but a place within hi/stories. We are introduced to this world through the verses of Homer and Hesiod, and both consider it necessary to indicate the sources of their narrations, namely the Muses, who act as guarantors of the narrations by granting them a metaphysical, and thus philosophical, scope. This philosophical scope lies precisely in the coherence of the narrative fabric. Such coherence is to be understood both in the form of the Homeric "now," in which humanity, Zeus, Cronos, Uranus, Hades, and the realm of the dead are situated, and, through the Muses as guarantors of the narratability of the hi/story, as the narrative unity of development from the beginning up to the time of Homer and, through him, down to our own time.³ In this way, according to Schapp, the universal being of hi/story takes shape. Gods and the dead belong to ancient universal hi/story and also to our own, as hi/stories of human beings, our hi/stories. The Trojan War is not just any hi/story, but the hi/story the Greeks regarded as their own, and to which we can gain access only if we experience it as our own hi/story, if Hector's farewell to Andromache or Priam's supplication, or likewise the hi/stories of Odysseus, have

¹ See Schapp (2015, p. 194).

² See Schapp (2019, p. 55 f.).

³ See Schapp (2015, p. 195).

the same significance for us as they had for Homer. The Trojan War thus becomes the essential centre of human life, where the “human” and “life” shine forth through the events of the Trojan War.⁴ It is a hi/story *of* us but also a hi/story *for* us, and through it we gain access to Greek cosmogony and to the question of the creation of the world, as well as to our present understanding of it and of where it may lead us as human beings in the future. This is made possible through a connection once established between Zeus, Cronos, and Uranus, which, although it changes in its terms, persists within the great narratives of contemporary culture. It is as if, in moving through the ages, we were passing from one room to another within the same palace: the rooms change, but we remain under the same roof, and this roof might be called the “universe of universal hi/stories” (*das All der Allgeschichten*).⁵ The question thus no longer becomes whether what is narrated is true or not, but rather how we, and each individual hi/story, occupy this place within universal hi/story. “There is not even the smallest hi/story in which the blood of an entire universal hi/story does not flow,” Schapp states emphatically in this regard.⁶

But how is this unified narrative fabric and this relation between the individual hi/story and universal hi/story to be understood? To answer this question, one must first clarify in what sense the universality of hi/story is *not* to be understood. First of all, as already mentioned, it should not be conceived in physical or spatio-temporal terms, as we have already indicated. For example, we should not think that we are united as a human kind simply because we share the earth as our dwelling, or because we inhabit the same places, the same mountains, the same lakes, and the same rivers that existed in the past and in many cases have remained almost unchanged, or because we are subject to the same atmospheric and astronomical events that traverse the earth—the alternation of day and night, lightning, storms—which are the same for everyone. Nor should we think that what unites us as human beings is our common biological basis, which has likewise remained more or less the same since the time of Homer.⁷ How, then, can we feel that we belong to a universal hi/story that binds us to those times? The main difficulty lies in showing that we live in the same world while having a very different understanding of it and of the phenomena that belong to it. This understanding draws its nourishment from scientific progress and knowledge, which Schapp seeks to question at their very foundations. According to Schapp, however, the point is not to challenge our worldview in its specific content, nor to reduce our explanations of phenomena and earthly events to the mythical dimension of Homer. Rather, what must be considered is the narrative fabric within which these phenomena emerge and their development within a coherent hi/story, and to show that without such a narrative grounding they lack any deep rootedness in human being.

⁴See Schapp (2025, p. 239).

⁵Schapp (2015, p. 197); cf. Schapp (2019, p. 58).

⁶See Ibid.

⁷See Schapp (2015, p. 198).

Let us take, as Schapp does, the example of day and night or of fire. In the Homeric world these were living signs of powerful deities, whereas in the contemporary world they are explained through physical and astronomical phenomena. Yet these scientific explanations are not in opposition to myth but are indissolubly connected with it. They represent a transformation, but one that amounts to the continuation of the same hi/story. According to Schapp, the current interpretations of these phenomena possess a form that renders them coherent and cohesive throughout their development within the modern world, and this form is the form of narrative, which must not be understood in a historiographical sense but in a poetic one, as Aristotle understood it in the *Poetics*. In the *Poetics* Aristotle compares the historian and the poet and states that they do not differ because one writes in verse and the other in prose, but because one recounts what has actually happened, whereas the other recounts what could have happened.⁸ For this reason, according to Schapp, poetry is more philosophical, because it does not aim to describe reality as such but to disclose its possible horizons. In this way hi/story must be understood as Schapp understands it, namely as the opening of what is narrated to the real and to the possible, as horizons of future or parallel worlds. In this regard Schapp states that a hi/story does not suffer if it is true, just as a poem does not suffer if it is unreal, and vice versa.⁹ In a purely factual account the narrative loses its force, it loses the more genuinely poetic power that belongs to it, namely the power of expressing the self and of seeking an audience, the power that can truly captivate. It is precisely here that poetry and historical account meet, and one of the most vivid examples of this, according to Schapp, is provided by Homer when, in the *Odyssey*, he has Odysseus speak before the Phaeacians. Homer has Ulysses describe the situation like this: “So I spoke, and there was a great silence throughout the house. No one stirred, for they were all charmed by the story that I had told.”¹⁰ This is precisely what makes hi/story a poetic version of experience. In this lies the possibility for hi/story to be universal, namely in its poetic power to render experience through narration, opening up possible horizons of meaning that take shape beyond time and create bonds of sense and spiritual connection between the one who narrates and the one who listens. In this sense there are storytellers such as Homer, Dante, and Dostoevsky who are poetic geniuses, because they are able to give voice to and to sustain hi/stories that hold together entire worlds, from the origins of time and space to the end of the world and the heavenly realm.¹¹ These hi/stories thus aspire to universality because they possess the capacity to share and to open a narrative space within which every individual can find their own form of entanglement. They inaugurate, as it were, an open horizon in which each single hi/story can find its place within

⁸ Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics* 1451b.

⁹ Schapp (2015, p. 199).

¹⁰ Homer, *Odyssey*, 13.1–15.

¹¹ Cf. Schapp (2017, p. 45f.). This aspect has been brought out very clearly by Pohlmeier, who speaks of this mythopoietic capacity of the philosophy of hi/stories as an “aesthetics of genius”, insofar as it encompasses meta-hi/stories capable of binding entire hermeneutic horizons, including in an eschatological key. See Pohlmeier (2025, p. 24ff.).

universal hi/story. With regard to the constitution of a world grounded in universal entanglement and in the community of narrator and listener, every mechanistic explanation of the world and of the universe is nothing other than a later articulation of what has already been founded and created from the standpoint of narration and of the unfolding of hi/stories. Scientific explanations concerning universally experienced phenomena such as day and night, lightning, or fire are therefore nothing more than grounded derivations of the earliest mythical accounts of these phenomena, accounts that hold together the experience rendered in poetic and thus mythopoietic form in ancient times with the rationalized experience of more recent times.

But the mythopoietic power of hi/story alone is not sufficient to create a space of entanglement such that each individual life hi/story can be bound to a universal hi/story. As we have already seen in *In Geschichten verstrickt*, there is a basic onto-semantic structure of entanglement within which the poetic space of foundational myths is then articulated. This basic structure of entanglement consists in the “we” that grounds every individual hi/story and in fact precedes and comes before the articulation of any single individual hi/story. This “we” finds its first expression in kinship relations and then extends to entire religious communities precisely on the basis of the relational experience of kinship and of the values that grow within it and structure communities. For Schapp, every individual hi/story is therefore always at the same time a hi/story of the “we.”¹² This is to be understood in the sense that every form of entanglement of an I always contains a form of entanglement of a we, that is, it always has a plural resonance of a certain extent, and this extent reaches its maximum in universal hi/story. In universal hi/story this resonance simultaneously finds its limit, yet this limit is only temporary, precisely because universal hi/story has the capacity to open toward the future and thus toward new forms of entanglement. In this regard Schapp cites the example of the Christian eschatological narrative of the Last Judgment. Even though today it presents itself as a hi/story of the end, it already contains within itself the future individual hi/stories of those who are judged and subsequently the hi/stories of hell and of heaven. For every believer on the face of the earth, this eschatological narrative sustains possible ends and everyday aims in view of being prepared for that moment, thereby sustaining a universal form of entanglement within which the singular space of private hi/stories already moves on the universal chessboard of the Christian eschatological narrative of the Last Judgment.¹³

Yet while in the case of hi/stories concerning the Christian religion and the end of the world it is easier to identify the position of each individual, at least of believers, within the we, there are situations in which it is not so easy to grasp the way in which one is entangled in a hi/story in the form of the we. A hi/story that may be central for an individual I can become marginal for someone else who is entangled in the same hi/story, yet more in the form of something that remains on the horizon. Thus, for example, the hi/story of a pandemic may concern only peripherally those who do not fall ill, but it can irrupt into the life of a family as soon as a father or a

¹² Cf. Schapp (2015, p. 201).

¹³ See Schapp (2015, p. 202).

child becomes ill and turn into a concrete experience of what it means to be co-entangled in the same hi/story.¹⁴ Every we at the basis of co-entanglement thus unfolds in the most concrete form and not as something that can be analyzed theoretically, but only as something that can be experienced at the moment in which co-entanglement manifests itself in its most tangible form. Indeed, according to Schapp, one can say that there are as many we's as there are hi/stories, and moreover that each we is lived in each hi/story in a way that is either closer or more peripheral. Thus, for example, in the life of a family, the more children grow up, the more the we of the children narrows in relation to the parents, and with the parents' aging and then their death it fades for them and is often renewed in the children. In this way a form of openness of entanglement toward the past is inaugurated, one that overflows into a different we, namely the we of the ancestors and, more generally, of all those who are no longer there.

It is precisely at this point of human transience that one of the central themes of the relation between individual hi/story and universal hi/story takes shape. For Schapp, being entangled in hi/stories coincides with life, but it also coincides with death. Life and death are both present within entanglement, each implying the other. Death is in hi/stories in the same way as life is. Although, following the theory of entanglement, with the cessation of conscious life access to universal hi/story should become impossible, since access to personal hi/stories is no longer given, our hi/story nevertheless endures in universal hi/story thanks to the fact that it escapes our bodily constraints and persists within the forward projected horizon that opens from our present hi/stories toward the future. It is indeed true that our ancestors are dead, yet they live on in our hi/stories as our ancestors, just as we shall live on in the hi/stories of our descendants as their ancestors. This is the inseparable circle of life and death. Through this conception one can arrive at what Schapp calls the "we all" (*Allwir*), a we in which those who are presently entangled are together with those who have been entangled in the past.¹⁵ Yet this gives rise to a problem. Although the enduring influence of our ancestors and their hi/stories within co-entanglement is clear, we are no longer able to influence them, and it is therefore not entirely correct to say that they are co-entangled in our hi/stories. We thus find ourselves, so to speak, within a unilateral we, whereas a full we presupposes reciprocal action and simultaneous being. This is precisely the role of great mythic narratives such as those of Homer. They help us to rethink, in a different and productive narrative poetic sense, what concerns our past and our being in the world. The unilateral character that appears to us is in fact only a twentieth-century way of perceiving time and generations. There is the idea that time unfolds linearly across generations and backward as far as our animal ancestors. In this respect, according to Schapp, we often act with a kind of bad conscience and also with bad memory. When we speak of a we, this we is often only a skeleton, an empty container in which there is no genuine attempt at inclusion. Relatives in need are often forgotten, a mother is excluded because she abandoned her child out of poverty, the poor are forgotten,

¹⁴ Cf. Ibid.

¹⁵ Schapp (2015, p. 203).

and often the dead are forgotten as well. In this way the we becomes a unilateral we, filled only with a biological belonging to the species and incapable of opening onto a genuine sense of belonging to something total. In our time, according to Schapp, there is no place for the dead and for the gods within a we.¹⁶ And it is precisely here that, in our own time, the universal spirit that was present in Homer and the cosmogonic drive of narration are lost. For Homer, the gods and the demigods and the dead belong to the we. In his world, the hi/story and the hi/stories of the gods extend beyond the destiny of the we of the living humans and also of the dead. The destinies of human beings and of the dead, or rather the hi/stories of human beings, begin only against the background of the hi/story of the gods. Yet this takes place in an inseparable form of intermingling. According to Schapp, it is like a stone in a wall. The stone supports the wall, and the wall gives meaning to the stone in the position it occupies.¹⁷ The very episode of the Trojan War itself is nothing other than an occasion, a narrative device for speaking about life and death and about the being of individual hi/stories as part of a cosmogonic we in which every form of being is included. Greeks and Trojans share the same gods and the same underworld. Every moment of everyday life in each individual hi/story can be explained and traced back to belonging to this universal hi/story, within which the Trojan War appears as a great dramatic spectacle. Every individual senses this belonging to universal hi/story. The Trojan belongs to this universal hi/story just as much as the Greek, even prior to belonging to the more earthly and immediate hi/story of the war. It must be said, however, that in the Homeric world there always remains the problem of the almost unbridgeable division among the three realms, the world of the gods, the world of the living, and the world of the dead, even though they remain held together within epic and mythic memory. Schapp, by contrast, maintains that with his theory of entanglement in the we of universal hi/stories even this physical obstacle is overcome, albeit in a way that does not correct Homer but rather integrates his world and his universal hi/story into a new universal hi/story within the positive world inaugurated by the philosophy of hi/stories.¹⁸

This is another characteristic that distinguishes universal hi/stories. They have the capacity, through individual entanglement, to convey entire worldviews in an interwoven and pervasive way. In belonging to a universal hi/story we find the essence of human being, and for each individual the place occupied within universal hi/story is comparable to what philosophers understand by the Absolute.¹⁹ This is to be understood both in a purely vertical sense, that is, in the way each individual hi/story relates to universal hi/story, and in a transversal sense, that is, in the relations among individual hi/stories and among the individual entangled persons within the position they occupy in universal hi/story. Individual hi/stories are therefore already connected with one another through their belonging to universal hi/

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Schapp (2015, p. 204).

¹⁸ Cf. Schapp (2015, p. 224), see Joisten (2025, p. 227).

¹⁹ See Schapp (2015, p. 204).

story. According to Schapp, there are also situations in which one and the same individual hi/story stands at the center of two universal hi/stories, and at times, through this passage, it can occur that one positive world emerges from another positive world, so that other individual hi/stories enter into a new universal hi/story. An example of this can be seen in the conversion of the apostle Paul. This conversion appears as the passage from the Jewish world to the Christian one and to the universal hi/story that manifests itself within it, and yet the world it inaugurates does not negate the former world but is rather its continuation. The day of Paul's conversion is, according to Schapp, one of the most important and meaningful days in Christianity, and through a reciprocal play of action and reaction within an individual hi/story the axis of the world and of the universal hi/story that sustains it is shifted, drawing along a great number of other adjacent individual hi/stories of co-entanglement into that individual hi/story. A change in the I thus corresponds to a change in the we.²⁰ In this way reforms such as that of Luther can also be understood, and in them the reciprocity between universal hi/story and individual hi/story becomes manifest in the clearest manner, above all with regard to what is meant by co-entanglement in a collective hi/story. Every Christian, for example, is entangled in a universal hi/story that extends from Adam and Eve to the Last Judgment, yet for each individual this entanglement has a different meaning and can be transformed into a completely different vision, one in which a new universal hi/story may even be inaugurated, opening onto a new positive world. In such a case, according to Schapp, the new world that comes into being shapes the new universal hi/story, and this hi/story immediately radiates both into the most remote past and into the most distant future, reconfiguring the constellation of the we in which those involved are entangled.²¹

The same cannot be said of scientific revolutions. It is true that they often introduce a completely different vision of the world that includes a narrative concerning the human species and thus each individual. Yet in them the narrative binding force that holds the wall together is lacking, as is the mythopoietic dimension and the centrality of the we. In the scientific worldview facts prevail rather than hi/stories. It is one thing, for example, to view the human being as created and projected into a hi/story of faith and salvation, and quite another to adopt a scientific worldview that describes the human being merely as a tiny living entity on the surface of a rock drifting through space. In this way science casts the human being out of the world of hi/stories and confines them to the world of states of affairs.²² In fully adhering to a scientific worldview in which there is no room for the hermeneutic framework of entanglement, a decline and a deviation from the consubstantiality between individual hi/story and universal hi/story takes place, and this occurs in the West with Greek Enlightenment and with the emergence of a physicalist vision of the world that replaces the mythic vision of Homer and Hesiod. According to Schapp, for

²⁰ See Schapp (2015, p. 205).

²¹ Cf. Ibid.

²² See Schapp (2015, p. 204).

example, in the philosophy of the three Ionians, Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes, since neither persons nor gods appear, every possibility for hi/stories and for an explanation of the universe through hi/stories is excluded from the outset. For the Ionians, earth, sky, and water are no longer divinities. Anaximander holds that living beings emerged from the moist and that the human being originally emerged from other kinds of living beings, such as fish, which then developed into human beings. Whereas Homer and Hesiod, as Parmenides still does, seek support in the Muses and thus appeal to the principle prior to a universal hi/story, namely the guarantee of the narratability of origins, the three Ionians search for a principle that has no need of narration. They confine themselves to the search for facts, to understanding how earth, sky, and stars, water, fire, and air might have come into being and what the principle of everything might have been. The world they examine is therefore a self-sufficient world in which gods and human beings are irrelevant. The human being becomes merely the one who can know the dynamics of this world and thus retreats from entanglement in the universal hi/story of the whole to the position of a knower of facts that succeed one another in the evolution of the cosmos, thereby becoming an observer or a cognizer.²³ Even in this new relation between the human being and the world, which finds a further development in the conception of Democritean atomism, as already noted in Chap. 14, each individual hi/story continues to exist and to unfold. What is no longer present, however, is the mortar that holds the wall together: “the individual hi/stories no longer rest within universal hi/story, and universal hi/story no longer rests within them or upon them.”²⁴ What is thus lost is the onto-semantic presupposition of the we upon which every narration of the human being that aspires to universality is founded, where universality is understood as the unity of entanglement, as the hermeneutic space within which every hi/story lives and can reemerge even beyond the conscious experience of each individual. If we remain bound to facts, we must think that hi/story happens to the human being only at the moment in which it happens to them. Once their life has ended, however, their hi/stories also come to an end, and nothing of their trace remains in the world. A world of facts is a world in which the human being disappears with their death. In the same way, if the earth is reduced to a world of material events that can be experienced only in perceptual and sensory form, nothing remains but the earth as an object of investigation and, above all, waking experience, and one would be unable to account for those dimensions that concern dreaming, ecstasy, life after death, and all the eschatological questions that concern the human soul. In a positive world in which gods and the dead, myths and legends, fairy tales and mystical realities survive within universal hi/story together with the individual hi/stories of the living in the form of entanglement, even the transience of the human being and the unfathomability of the universe find their fulfillment and their expression within the hermeneutic space of hi/stories and of entanglement.²⁵

²³ See Schapp (2015, p. 238).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ See Schapp (2015, p. 197).

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Chapter 17

Hi/stories and Language: Thought, Speech, and the Grammar of Entanglement



Abstract The relation between hi/stories and language is approached through an analysis of thought, speech, and grammar grounded in the existential condition of entanglement. Language is no longer understood as an autonomous formal system, but as emerging from the lived and narrated contexts in which hi/stories unfold. Silent speaking appears as the most originary linguistic dimension, situated between lived experience and narrated expression, and as the inner medium through which hi/stories are accompanied, reworked, and prepared for speech. Words function not as carriers of isolated meanings but as headings under which hi/stories, things, values, and worlds are gathered and made intelligible. Grammar, in turn, is reinterpreted from within the structure of entanglement itself, so that noun, adjective, and verb no longer appear as self-grounding forms, but as derivative articulations of the ways in which human beings, things, and actions are situated within hi/stories. In this way, language is brought back to the hermeneutic and narrative ground from which it arises, while at the same time offering a critical reinterpretation of Husserl's project of pure grammar.

Keywords Silent speaking · Hi/stories and language · Grammar of entanglement · Words as headings · Pure grammar · Hermeneutics of language

As has been shown in the previous chapter, universal hi/stories are characterized as the ultimate horizon of entanglement. Within them, the existential space of tension takes shape between the entangled individual, his or her personal hi/stories, past, and cultural identity, on the one hand, and, on the other, the positive world to which he or she belongs together with the universal hi/story that sustains it. At the basis of this identity lies a peculiar semantic structure characterized by the “we”, which functions as the guarantor of belonging to universal hi/story. Within this we, as has already been emphasized several times, the ontology of entangled being and the hermeneutics of intersubjective and intra-individual reciprocity unfold into an onto-semantics that provides the foundation for entanglement and co-entanglement in hi/

story.¹ This leads Schapp, in the final part of *Philosophie der Geschichten*, to examine the problem of language in relation to co-entanglement and to the grammatical structure on which the existential condition of entanglement is grounded, in a kind of critical engagement with and reinterpretation of Husserl's idea of pure grammar.²

Schapp's discussion of the relation between entanglement and language unfolds on three levels: the hermeneutic narrative level, the semantic level, and the syntacticgrammatical level. With regard to the hermeneutic–narrative level, he starts from what he calls “silent speaking” (*stilles Sprechen*),³ and then goes on to address the relation between past hi/stories, present entanglement, and the hermeneutic mechanism of speaking and listening/understanding.⁴ As for the semantic level, he investigates the relation between the word and hi/story, the latter being understood as the context of sense within which a word, or a sentence in which a word appears, can be rendered intelligible.⁵ Finally, at the syntactic–grammatical level, he seeks to show how the entire conception of grammatical categories and their syntax can be reinterpreted on the basis of the existential condition of entanglement.⁶

Let us begin with the question of the relation between thought and entanglement in the form of silent speaking. Silent speaking can first of all be characterized as that form of inner articulation of language which can also take the form of speaking to oneself,⁷ in which the one entangled in hi/stories gathers within themselves the past, the present, and also the future.⁸ It constitutes the preparatory moment of speaking aloud. To describe this, Schapp once again allows himself to be instructed by ancient literature. He cites the examples of Sophocles' *Electra* and Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*. Almost all the words that Electra or Iphigenia give voice to have been reflected upon and brooded over for many, many years by the two heroines, during their most difficult days and their sleepless nights. Silent speaking has accompanied the hi/story throughout all these long years, by night and by day, continually rethought from its beginnings toward the most distant future, imaginatively constructing the day of revenge and triumph and perhaps also the doubts that emerge beyond triumph. In relation to this inner sea, the heroines' speaking aloud can, according to Schapp, be compared to the rippling of waves on the surface of the sea. It is in a certain sense guided by this silent speaking; it is not merely an inspiration of the moment, but is rooted in what has been silently said again and again. In speaking aloud, the space for improvisation is extremely limited, both for the dramatist and for the characters: everything has already been articulated and narrated inwardly, and not only within the individual soul of the entangled one, but also

¹ See Hütig (2020, pp. 107–108); Pohlmeier (2004, p. 199f.); Thiemer (2010, p. 151f.).

² See Fredsted (2025, p. 87).

³ Schapp (2015, p. 285).

⁴ See Schapp (2015, p. 294ff.).

⁵ See Schapp (2015, p. 297ff.).

⁶ See Schapp (2015, p. 313ff.).

⁷ See Schapp (2007, p. 131).

⁸ See Schapp (2015, p. 286).

within past narrations and hi/stories, such as the words of Tasso or of Antony, which sound like improvisations and yet arise from a centuries-old conflict within silent discourse, from which they have long been awaiting their emergence. This means that, in Schapp's perspective, speaking aloud is not merely a continuation, a repetition, or a reiteration of silent speaking, but a way of releasing the hi/story while nevertheless losing, in its narrative expression, a certain degree of control; and this holds true for drama as well as for all hi/stories, in whatever form they may present themselves.⁹ Precisely because of this originality of silent speaking and its immediate connection with entanglement in the soul of the entangled one, the most genuine dimension of hi/story is to be found in silent speaking. It is not exactly something comparable to thought, but rather adjacent to it; Schapp describes it as a buzzing and ferment in the head of the entangled one. It is within this buzzing that, according to Schapp, words and language find their true and legitimate realm of existence, whereas in books and in spoken discourse they assume a more external, less genuine and less transparent form—a form that becomes essential once again when they are internalized by the listener or the reader, while nevertheless embarking upon the path of a new hi/story that connects with those that came before.¹⁰ It is in this way that hi/story sets out on the path toward narratability. Not all hi/stories are narrated, but most of them appear as narratable. In this context, however, it cannot be denied that there are different types of narration, and that each of them already begins with very different types of silent speaking through which the entangled ones accompany their hi/story. It is no coincidence that Schapp chooses *Electra* and *Iphigenia* as examples of silent speaking, since this form of silent speaking is accompanied by the greatest poets in the world.¹¹

Accordingly, Schapp seeks to shed light on the unity of hi/story as it unfolds both within the inner space of subjectivity and within the worldly and embodied context in which subjectivity acts. He does so without detaching hi/story, on the one hand, from the entangled one and, on the other, from the positive world in which it progresses. With regard to this point, what proves to be fundamental is understanding how silent speaking is the element rooted in the individual lived experience underlying speaking aloud and thus constitutes the closest nexus between hi/story and language within entanglement. In relation to spoken action and enacted action, silent language is what enables continuity between lived hi/story and narrated hi/story, since they grow and co-grow in the same ground, in a kind of medial dimension of consciousness, between individual entanglement and co-entanglement in the universal hi/story of the positive world.¹² The possibility of understanding afforded through speaking aloud and narration depends on shared hi/stories, in such a way that the hi/stories of both the dead and the living are always present. These hi/stories unfold within the ever-open community of the we of ancestors and descendants,

⁹ See Schapp (2015, p. 284).

¹⁰ Cf. Schapp (2015, p. 286); Schapp (2018, p. 51ff.).

¹¹ Cf. Schapp (2007, p. 134).

¹² Cf. Schapp (2007, p. 133); Thiemer (2010, p. 152).

above all through the receptivity of the listener or the reader. This receptivity is hermeneutically non-neutral; rather, it is already situated within a shared universal hi/story. The miracle of the word and of narration is realized through the fact that narrator and listener, as well as writer and reader, are both entangled in a common hi/story and are situated within it in an originary and primordial time.¹³

It is precisely within this problematic framework that Schapp situates his reflections on words and on the relation that the semantic level maintains with entanglement and with the positive world. Let us take, for example, the case of the historical sentence known to all Westerners, “The die is cast,” uttered by Caesar when he crossed the Rubicon with his army. According to Schapp, the further explanations required to make the meaning of this sentence intelligible to a listener depend on how close that listener is to our positive world. If one is dealing with someone who still retains some memory of Caesar from school, the explanation can be very brief. If, by contrast, one assumes that the sentence is to be explained to a seventy-year-old Chinese or Japanese person who is unfamiliar with Western culture, one would have to construct a much more extensive discourse, one that conveys many more elements of the cultural world in which this sentence is situated, as well as its epochal and metaphorical meaning and the hi/story of the one who utters it. The same applies to people who come from even more remote cultures and are even further removed from us, up to a point at which there is no longer any cultural foothold between us and the listener for recounting the hi/story, and one must therefore construct an entire world from the very beginning.¹⁴

Caesar’s sentence is particularly relevant in this regard because it allows us to see how the plane of understanding is intertwined with our hermeneutic horizon. First of all, the sentence is metaphorical, and in order to understand the metaphor one must belong to a world in which the die is an object that bears a specific relation to chance. Second, one must grasp the fundamental importance of fate within Roman culture. Third, one must know the meaning of this sentence in relation to the act of crossing the Rubicon and, from there, in a cascading sequence, its connection to the figure of Caesar as emperor and to the epochal significance that the decision to cross the Rubicon has had for the history of political effects down to the present day. For Schapp, language and the word are bound to hi/story along the lines of entanglement and the positive world. The more our hi/stories condense around the narrative context in which a given written or spoken expression is situated, whether it is tied to a single word or to an entire sentence, the easier it becomes to understand it. The same applies when something has to be explained. The closer the world of hi/stories of the listener or the reader is to the written or spoken word or sentence, the more intelligible it will be to them. This is because this form of understanding takes shape as the continuation of a hi/story within the hi/stories in which we are, from time to time, entangled. When we read the newspaper of our own city, for example, the events reported there concern hi/stories that in some way connect with our own hi/

¹³ See Schapp (2015, p. 292).

¹⁴ See Schapp (2015, p. 296).

stories. A building may have burned down that is connected to our past, an acquaintance may have been arrested, or the acquaintance of an acquaintance may have been injured in an assault. These hi/stories take shape as continuations of our own hi/stories, with which we somehow went to bed and which, in the morning, link up with these new hi/stories. This cannot be said, or only to a much lesser extent, when we read a newspaper from another city, or even from another country. Those hi/stories connect with ours in a far more distant way, and we do not always fully grasp their meaning. In this way, according to Schapp, words resonate within the hermeneutic horizon of the listener, seeking points of connection with the hi/stories in which we are entangled or co-entangled.¹⁵

The issue here, once again, is that we cannot step out of the river of hi/stories in which we find ourselves and then, from the riverbank, observe how hi/stories and speaking relate to one another. In the same way, we cannot dissect hi/stories into sentences and sentences into words in order to arrive at an investigation of the word and its meaning in isolation.¹⁶ The question, then, is how the word can be understood in its historical–narrative dimension. According to Schapp, words must be understood as headings (*Überschriften*) that gather together the totality of beings that can be understood under them, along with the historical series of individuals who have belonged to them. In this sense, the word does not designate a self-contained meaning, but functions as a point of condensation for hi/stories, carrying within itself the sedimented relations, contexts, and historical continuities through which it has acquired sense.¹⁷ A heading can exist both for hi/stories and for those formations that cannot easily be inserted into hi/stories such as the Pythagorean theorem. According to Schapp a heading can also refer to major literary and philosophical works and within the hi/stories narrated in them there will often appear a hero whose name can itself function as a heading for the hi/stories. A heading also exists in biography, which differs from the single hi/story insofar as all the more or less connected hi/stories of an individual are brought together under a unifying designation, usually the person's name. In connection with biography, we then encounter the hi/story of a family, of a lineage, of a people, of a part of the world, and ultimately of humanity. In this case, the heading is the name “human being”. In this way we arrive at the hi/story of the human “we” through a name that encloses universal hi/story within an ever-widening circle. Within this circle one must also take into account the headings that concern gods, demigods and otherworldly beings in general such as demons, ghosts, spirits, djinns and all legendary creatures. The hi/stories of these beings too are characterized by being gathered under a heading whether this takes the form of an individual name or in the case of genera or formations akin to genera the name of the genus itself such as the gods or the centaurs.¹⁸ From there, one can then descend to animals, which can be co-entangled in our hi/

¹⁵ See Schapp (2015, p. 297).

¹⁶ See Ibid.

¹⁷ See Schapp (2015, p. 298).

¹⁸ See Ibid.

stories, and finally to all things that appear in hi/stories as things-for. Here too, we can define the designation of things-for as headings over the hi/stories in which these things-for primarily appear. As a heading, such a designation claims to cover the hi/story from its initial conception and then through the creation, production, and evolution of the different models of the thing-for up to the present day. Thus, for example, the heading ship applies to the dugout canoe, to the cog, to the galley, to the caravel, and all the way to the ocean liner, and it encompasses all the manifestations in which the ship appears in hi/stories. The heading thus stands for a series, but not in the way in which a name stands for a species. Rather, the name serves the emergence of a part of hi/story and, together with it, of the hi/stories that concern the antecedents of that thing-for within the hi/story of humankind.¹⁹ For this reason, headings also concern those aspects that inhere in things-for, such as property, contract, claim, and succession, and through succession also the family and all the values associated with it.²⁰ According to Schapp, if we succeed in grasping how hi/stories come to manifestation through the word in the form of a heading, we can also see how they relate to entanglement and how they resonate within the hermeneutic horizon of understanding. If we take each heading as a formation of hi/stories without binding it to the grammatical level, it becomes clear how such headings have changed their sense over the centuries and how they can be understood differently depending on the context. What changes at the semantic level, however, is not an isolated meaning, but a shift within a hi/story, against the background of a broader horizon of hi/stories that concern that thing-for as it unfolds along a front of universal hi/story. In the heading, therefore, much of the sense of the thing is preserved, albeit in the form of a hi/story that gradually fades into the horizon of the hi/stories of our positive world. In this regard, Schapp writes: “The sea with the crests of its waves, and the wind and the storm that produce them, the cliff and the land, are even today not a mechanical play of physical bodies, just as the Rhine is not a canal filled with flowing water. We can approach all these expressions only if we consider them as headings of hi/stories.”²¹

It must now be clarified that not only do the headings of hi/stories lack a binding semantic relation to the hi/stories themselves in the sense of determining or fixing the hi/story, but that, according to Schapp, there is likewise no need for a binding univocity between name and hi/story. There are indeed cases in which a single hi/story retains several names, as, for example, in the case of persons who have a nickname: the hi/story remains the same whether we use the proper name instead of the nickname, the nickname itself, or other designations. There are also cases, however, in which the same hi/story can appear under a completely different heading and thus emerge, so to speak, from another perspective. If, for example, we are unable to recall a person’s name, we look for a substitute name or a substitute heading within the context in which we find ourselves, for instance: he was the eldest son of X, or

¹⁹ See Schapp (2015, p. 299).

²⁰ See Schapp (2015, p. 301).

²¹ Schapp (2015, p. 302). Cf. Schapp (2018, p. 21f.).

he was the son of the one called the Red. This can be described as a provisional substitute for the correct heading, namely the name X. This also holds for past hi/stories, such as those of Homer. For while it is true that Odysseus, Achilles, and the other heroes are fixed in what they were, and that the names which function as headings of their hi/stories can no longer be altered, neither literally nor in their meaning, these completed hi/stories nonetheless continue to be carried forward into present hi/stories and still leave open a space for assuming a different future connotation. Thus, for example, while it is true that the Spartans of ancient Greece no longer exist, there nevertheless exists a connotation of a way of life that can be described as *Spartan*. There will therefore be living hi/stories in which these concluded hi/stories live on, sometimes even under the same headings, yet assume different forms and characteristics. In this way, we find ourselves, in different manners, co-entangled in hi/stories that can emerge even solely from a heading that nonetheless resonates differently in each of us, depending on the hi/stories in which we are entangled at that moment.²² According to Schapp, the true sense of a word corresponds precisely to this resonating within our hi/stories. If, for example, we try to call out words such as “the ship,” “the car,” or “the garden,” each of them may evoke a particular representation for each person; yet each of these representations leads back to that very thing which we use for a certain purpose—such as a car for driving or a ship for navigating—and thus always refers us to the universal hi/story of discovery and use in which we are, in some way, co-entangled whenever we use a car or take a ship. In this way, every word can assume the role of a heading for a hi/story, ranging from words that concern special feelings or values, such as humility or struggle, all the way up to the word that encompasses them all, namely Being, which is the most comprehensive heading and the one that brings all hi/stories together. According to Schapp, it corresponds to something akin to what a mathematician, within their own field, understands as the set of all sets.²³ And indeed every hi/story, in its very being, is always already linked to another hi/story, and in this sense, in their being, hi/stories are always already all together. In the heading, however, a hi/story comes to the fore and is, as it were, guided by it. The heading marches at the head of the hi/stories like a general at the head of their army, and the other hi/stories fall in line behind it until a new general appears and the order in which they are arranged changes. As long as they remain in a subordinate position, hi/stories present, so to speak, sub-headings, by means of which they are ordered under the heading of the main hi/story.²⁴ For example, if we speak of a missionary who traveled to Africa by ship, where he encountered Africans who had a different perspective on divinity, the main hi/story falls under the heading “missionary,” while the hi/stories of the ship, of the Africans, and of divinity fall under other headings. These, however, always concern further hi/stories that intertwine within this main hi/story by virtue of the heading “missionary.”²⁵ In this way, according to

²² Cf. Schapp (2015, p. 309).

²³ See Schapp (2015, p. 310).

²⁴ Cf. Schapp (2015, p. 311).

²⁵ Cf. Schapp (2015, p. 312).

Schapp, the word functions in relation to hi/story, and complex linguistic expressions function in relation to hi/stories. There is an indissoluble continuity between the sense that is uttered and the sense that is lived within the hermeneutical framework of shared hi/stories in which both the expression and the received sense resonate. This doctrine is compared by Schapp to Husserl's doctrine of intentionality, and more precisely to the distinction between empty intention and intuitive fulfillment. The word, as the heading of a hi/story, performs the function of intention. It presents a merely signitive intention in its givenness, whereas fulfillment, the moment of intuitive self-givenness, takes place only when, through the heading, we are co-entangled in the hi/story it discloses and appropriate it in lived experience, gaining access to it through our own hi/stories.²⁶

Indeed, the final pages of *Philosophie der Geschichten* are directed precisely at a questioning of the Husserlian attempt to ground a pure grammar on the basis of the assumptions just discussed, and more generally at an analysis of the relation between entanglement and basic grammatical structures. Schapp's position in this regard is unequivocal: grammar, as it is generally understood, presents itself with an apodicticity that lacks any internal justification.²⁷ This claim already begins with the most elementary syntax taught in the first days of school, with the distinction between subject, predicate, and object in the sentence, and with the fact that the sentence itself is taken for granted, as is the connection between sentences.²⁸ In the same way, the division of words into word classes is taken for granted: noun, adjective, verb, auxiliary verb, numeral, preposition; and it is then further assumed that the noun is declined, that singular and plural exist, that the adjective agrees with the corresponding noun in number, gender, and case, and that the verb has active and passive forms, that there are transitive and intransitive verbs, indicative and subjunctive moods, that tenses can be expressed as they are expressed, and that imperative forms of the verb exist. Within this classification, it is further taken for granted that there are invariant structures within which meanings change as the terms change. The sentence, its structure, and the grammatical elements that compose it thus become what conveys the sense expressed in the sentence and what makes its objective analysis possible.²⁹

Now, if, as has already been shown in Part III, Chap. 10, there exists for Schapp neither an ideal dimension of the proposition in which it would assume a univocal sense, nor a specific, self-sufficient unity of the sentence,³⁰ and if it therefore makes little sense to analyze the proposition in itself, it may make much more sense to analyze the parts that compose the proposition, always starting, of course, from the new perspective gained through the entanglement of human beings in hi/stories. To this end, Schapp retains the distinction between noun, adjective, and verb from

²⁶ See Schapp (2015, p. 313).

²⁷ See Schapp (2015, p. 340).

²⁸ Cf. Schapp (2018, p. 45f.).

²⁹ See Schapp (2015, p. 314).

³⁰ See Schapp (2015, p. 315).

which classical grammatical analyses proceed, and examines them one by one in order to show how they must be reinterpreted and re-grounded on the basis of his philosophy of hi/stories. With regard to the noun, Schapp states that it is to be understood, in the first instance, as the one who is entangled in the hi/story; in the second instance, as the thing-for; and in the third instance, as the from-what of the thing-for.³¹ These nouns are to be understood as headings, and the unity of grammatical structure is guaranteed by the way in which these elements are arranged within the hi/story. The noun functions as a linguistic heading that makes a unity recognizable without thereby reducing it to something static. For this reason, what is named is almost never an isolated thing, but rather a thing-for, that is, something that is what it is only in reference to ends, practices, and situations that concern the one who is entangled. In the same way, the from-what indicates the material from which a thing is produced, yet it always remains subordinate to this horizon of use. It does not refer to any independent entity complete in its sense, but is rather a heading under which the different ways in which gold is understood in hi/stories are gathered. To authentic gold belong the saga of Midas, the treasure of the Nibelungs, the dragon Fafnir, and the death of Siegfried. If we take, for example, Goethe's line: "For gold all strive,/to gold all cling."³² In this line we find something more than a mere material designation. The noun "gold" does not here refer to the metal as a from-what, but to everything that has historically and linguistically become intertwined with it: desire, power, wealth, corruption, promise, and ruin. This occurs because language preserves and concentrates within words the hi/stories in which they have played a role. The noun thus functions as a point of condensation: under a single name, practices, values, and narratives are held together, and they continue to resonate each time the word is used.³³

The same line of reasoning must also be applied to the adjective and to the verb. In classical grammatical analyses, the adjective is declinable and serves to further specify a noun, adapting to it in case, number, and gender. On the basis of this assumption, it is normally held that each type of noun gathers around itself corresponding types of adjectives, which express its properties. In this way, however, according to Schapp, one arrives at a leveling of the very relation between subject or thing and property. What grammar cannot distinguish, for example, is the way in which "red" applies to a man who is red haired, to a Native American, to a red car, and to copper, which is red, and whether this being red stands in a relation of the same kind and the same depth to each of these nouns.³⁴ Grammar treats adjectives as if they indicated homogeneous determinations, transferable from one noun to another without any change in the type of relation that binds them to their bearer. In reality, however, what is called a "property" encompasses a multiplicity of profoundly different relations. Even a minimal consideration shows that color, for

³¹ See Schapp (2015, p. 316).

³² von Goethe (1808, p. 179).

³³ See Schapp (2015, pp. 321–322).

³⁴ See Schapp (2015, p. 329).

example, can adhere to a surface, be painted on, be incorporated into a process of fabrication, be baked into the material itself, or manifest itself as an internal structure, as in the grain of wood. In each of these modes, the relation between color and thing is different, and it is far from clear whether one is always dealing with the same type of “property.” Is the color of a flower painted on a porcelain cup, in the same sense, the color of the cup and the color of the flower, or does it oscillate between these two belongings without ever stabilizing? Such questions do not admit of a definitive answer, because the relation between thing and property is not conceptually exhaustible. One can only draw orienting lines that point to ever new possibilities of connection, while a unifying principle emerges only within the structure of entanglement, in which the noun occupies a determinate and situated position with respect to its properties.³⁵ It follows, therefore, that the adjective does not express properties in the traditional sense, but rather differentiated modes of belonging and entanglement between things, persons, and hi/stories, which grammar tends to level under a single category, but which can be understood only against the background of the hi/stories in which they are given.³⁶

According to Schapp, verbs too follow the logic of entanglement. In German, the verb is defined both as *Tätigkeitswort* (word of activity) and as *Zeitwort* (word of time). Both definitions refer us directly to the one who is entangled. *Tätigkeitswort* points to acting, and acting is always carried out by the one who stands at the center of the hi/story, that is, by the one who is entangled in it as its main actor. The definition *Zeitwort*, by contrast, refers to time, to the moment at which an action has been carried out, is being carried out, or will be carried out. Likewise, the distinction between active and passive forms of the verb refers back to the one who is entangled, understood as the one who performs an action or the one who undergoes it.³⁷ The verb must therefore be understood first and foremost on the basis of the way in which the subject is entangled in the hi/story. Verbal conjugation itself is not a merely formal mechanism, but is connected to the form of entanglement that manifests itself in the hi/story and that is directly linked to the centrality of the one who is entangled in the emergence of the hi/story. There are verbs that belong to the I–you horizon and presuppose an immediate personal involvement, and there are verbs that are located predominantly in the domain of things and natural phenomena; finally, there are forms such as the imperative, in which the degree of involvement and exposure of the one who is entangled in the hi/story reaches its maximum. This distinction is not deducible from grammatical form as such, but from the way in which the verbal form conveys the bond between the one who is entangled and the hi/story, that is, the degree of action, participation, and responsibility in the hi/story or in the emergence of the hi/story.³⁸ Within this horizon, different verbal domains can be distinguished: inner acts such as thinking or feeling, acts that

³⁵ See Schapp (2015, p. 330).

³⁶ Cf. Ibid.

³⁷ See Schapp (2015, p. 331).

³⁸ See Schapp (2015, p. 332).

concern other entangled persons such as loving or hating, and acts that are directed toward things and their use. In all these cases, the verb is never self-sufficient, but is structurally oriented toward something: it calls for objects, addressees, instruments, and situations. Such integrations, according to Schapp, are not external additions but belong internally to the very condition of hi/story and entanglement. When a verb appears in a sentence, it always carries with it this demand for integration, which can find fulfillment only within an actual hi/story. From this there also follows the way in which finite verb forms are to be understood. They are not autonomous linguistic units, but fragments of hi/stories or, more precisely, titles or headings of hi/stories. It is precisely in this function that Schapp recognizes in the verb something analogous to a heading: not a heading of sets of objects, but a heading of hi/stories and of the fundamental ways in which human beings can be entangled in them. Expressions such as *I love*, *he loves* do not indicate an abstract action, but already contain the determinate person who acts in the hi/story: *I*, subject X, love. The ending is therefore not a mere grammatical marker, but possesses an essential objective content, since it already carries with it the position of the one who is entangled within the hi/story. The verb thus receives its meaning not from a combination of isolated linguistic elements, but exclusively from the continuous background of hi/stories from which it emerges and to which it incessantly refers.³⁹ Nouns, adjectives, and verbs are therefore distinctions and sectorializations that have sense only within the scope of grammatical analysis. To search within them for elements capable of yielding ideal units that might represent something genuinely being, as Kant or Husserl attempted to do, amounts to a displacement of philosophical interest away from what is truly foundational, namely the existential condition of entanglement. It is entanglement itself, together with the hi/story that emerges in each concrete case, that directs and grounds verbal expressions, rather than the recursive structures identified as foundational by grammatical science. Once removed from their narrative context, however, these structures lose all relevance in the domains of meaning and understanding. In the following concluding remarks, I shall seek to show how Schapp's final investigations into grammar and entanglement bring to a close a circle that was inaugurated many years earlier through an engagement with phenomenology and its method, with the aim of integrating phenomenological insights into the hermeneutic-narrative framework of his philosophy of hi/stories.

³⁹ See Schapp (2015, p. 335).

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Part V

Conclusions

Chapter 18

Going Back to Start Over: At the Origins of a Narrative Hermeneutics



Abstract The concluding reflections bring together the central threads of Schapp's philosophy by presenting the theory of entanglement as a radical reorientation of philosophical inquiry beyond the limits of phenomenology and traditional epistemology. Against Husserl's project of pure grammar and Kant's unexamined reliance on propositional structures, Schapp argues that propositions, concepts, and states of affairs are not self-sufficient foundations of knowledge, but derivative formations that emerge from hi/stories and lose their vitality when abstracted from their narrative context. In their place, hi/stories are established as the primary horizon of intelligibility, within which meaning, truth, and knowledge take shape through lived experience rather than formal justification. This shift gives rise to a narrative hermeneutics that integrates ontological and phenomenological concerns, showing that reality is accessible only through the dynamic interplay of narration, understanding, and entanglement.

Keywords Narrative hermeneutics · Entanglement · Phenomenology and its critique · Philosophy of hi/stories · Propositions and states of affairs · Grammar of entanglement

The analysis of the relation between grammatical structures of language and entanglement, outlined in the previous chapter,¹ constitutes the conclusion of Schapp's extensive philosophical attempt to reinterpret the categories of Western thought on the basis of the theory of entanglement. The scope of this project becomes especially clear in the comparison that Schapp himself draws with what Husserl sought to investigate through the idea of a pure grammar. Whereas Husserl aimed to identify ideal units of meaning capable of overcoming the contingency of momentary representation, Schapp instead arrives at a radical break. His critique of the concepts of proposition, state of affairs, and object leads him to a position that he himself describes as a radical reorientation of philosophical inquiry. In this sense, Schapp feels an affinity with Kant, who, in comparing himself to Copernicus, had deprived

¹ See above Part IV, Chap. 17.

the universe of its strong ontological status, reducing it to a world of appearances whose legality is bound to human cognitive faculties. In this way, the concepts of knowledge and truth were stripped of their metaphysical value.² However, Kant, as a precursor of Husserl in this respect, never subjects the propositions as a formation to critical examination. He adopts, in a dogmatic manner, the propositional structure inherited from tradition as a stable and self-evident object of philosophical inquiry, without interrogating either its conditions of validity or its internal stability. Against this presupposition, Schapp advances the claim of a third Copernican turn. Philosophical propositions and postulates are always embedded in *hi/stories* and emerge from *hi/stories*; once abstracted from their narrative context, they are transformed into lifeless formations. Traditional propositional analysis takes such lifeless formations as its object, whereas Schapp's investigation is directed toward what is living, thereby demonstrating that no structural continuity can be established between these two domains. Any attempt to justify a postulate leads only to further postulates and thus fails to yield an incontrovertible or definitive grounding. By contrast, a *hi/story* can be directly evoked through the recollection of concrete experiences drawn from everyday life, without recourse to formal proof. Even if a *hi/story* should turn out not to be true, what remains true is what it has evoked: the narrative configuration of meaning that has been established. Through the passage from one *hi/story* to another, a horizon opens up that connects individual *hi/stories* with collective and historical ones.³ This cohesion does not follow the path of deduction or apodictic certainty, but that of entanglement. From this, Schapp derives that the distinction between concrete propositions and general propositions likewise lacks apodictic content, as do, consequently, the Kantian distinctions between analytic and synthetic judgments and between a priori and a posteriori judgments. If one starts from a subject, whether a person, a thing, or a scientific concept, it becomes evident that what we call a "concept" in fact functions as a heading of *hi/stories*, whose horizon always points to further *hi/stories*. In the absence of stable boundaries between *hi/stories*, the distinction between what would be contained or not contained in a concept also loses its sense. This ultimately holds true for the formal sciences as well. The Pythagorean theorem is not intelligible as an isolated proposition, but only within a network of demonstrations, theories, and practices that refer, in the final analysis, to the art of measurement and to the concrete history of the reasons why the Pythagorean theorem was needed in the first place.⁴ It therefore makes no sense to seek something that would be more originary than *hi/stories*, and this confronts us with something that calls for an entirely new and different understanding of philosophy and of our being as human beings. In this way, what may be described as a "narrative hermeneutics" takes shape, in which, on both the side of hermeneutics and that of narration, one can also speak of ontology and

²See Schapp (2015, p. 340).

³See Schapp (2015, p. 342).

⁴See Schapp (2015, p. 343).

phenomenology, within a kind of chiasmic structure.⁵ From the hermeneutical-ontological perspective, this can be stated for three orders of reasons: (1) hi/story is the ultimate particle of reality, and everything is accessible and intelligible only through hi/stories; (2) the unfolding of this reality takes place within the condition of human beings as entangled in hi/stories, a condition that defines in its entirety human being and the way human beings perceive themselves and situate themselves in the world; (3) at the basis of entanglement lies an onto-semantic structure such as that of the “we”, which situates us within a universal hi/story through which we understand ourselves in our social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions.⁶ From the narrative-ontological perspective, we find the same orders, but with a different connotation: (1) hi/stories are the ground and the *raison d’être* of all narration; (2) the emergence of reality and of hi/stories can take place only within the dynamic of narrating and listening, or in the form of a narratable hi/story with a potential listener ready to vivify its meaning and vitality, the well-known notion of hi/stories as narrating themselves⁷; (3) the universal hi/story in which we are co-entangled, in the form of the great myths of Western culture, can be regarded as a narrative absolute, a kind of pan-narrative reality that includes all dimensions of being, from those who live to those who are no longer, from divinities to otherworldly beings, and finally the extra-worldly dimensions of dream and hallucination.⁸ From the hermeneutical-phenomenological perspective, by contrast, two orders of considerations are at work: (1) hi/story is characterized as something that emerges from a horizon, while the horizon represents what remains concealed of the hi/story. Hi/story is structurally constituted as a background from which narration or understanding can continually draw; there is thus a phenomenological-hermeneutical structure, in a Heideggerian sense, grounded in a dichotomy between *λόγος* and *λέγειν*. Narrating and understanding are configured as a gathering of what is already laid out within the horizon.⁹ To let something emerge therefore always means following, in a phenomenological manner, the lines laid out on the horizon by what emerges from the hi/story. Conversely, following one’s own entanglement in hi/stories, or the entanglement of others, likewise constitutes an inquiry of an introspective kind that bears all the hallmarks of phenomenological investigation.¹⁰ The second order of

⁵Other well-known definitions include that of Eichler (2010), who speaks of a narrative ontology; that of Wälde (1985, p. 97) who speaks of narrative phenomenology; that of Greisch (2010), who refers to a hermeneutical-phenomenological approach and to phenomenology as a philosophy of hi/stories and that of Thieme (2010), who defines the philosophy of hi/stories as a hermeneutics with a universalistic orientation. Pohlmeier (2004), by contrast, speaks of a hermeneutical-ontological approach, or of a hermeneutics of hi/stories. Each of these characterizations is appropriate and none excludes the others, as I aim to show above.

⁶See above Part IV, Chap. 16.

⁷See Schapp (2012, p. 101).

⁸See Schapp (2015, p. 204).

⁹See Heidegger (1984). Lembeck (2010) speaks in this context of an anthropology of *Sammeln* (gathering).

¹⁰See Wälde (1985, p. 71ff).

considerations is phenomenological in a phenomenological-deconstructive sense. Schapp's philosophy of hi/stories emerges in counterpoint to the basic tenets of classical phenomenology. The critique of phenomenology thus becomes the field in which the foundations of his narrative approach come to light. Without an internal deconstruction of the tenets on which the phenomenological method is based, starting from its aporias, it would not have been possible to arrive at the necessity of offering new conceptual responses to problems that are rooted in the history of philosophy.¹¹ With regard, finally, to the narrative-phenomenological dimension, there is a clear and unmistakable motive connected with the question of how we approach narration and how narration resonates within our hi/stories. Every narrated hi/story and every hi/story that we ourselves narrate finds its point of attachment in the life hi/stories in which we or others are entangled, and it resonates within them. These hi/stories constitute the pre-histories, the narrative antecedents that shape understanding and open up new narrative fronts. To follow these lines of entanglement, there is no other way than to elucidate them by carrying out a phenomenology of what belongs to the narrated hi/story and of what belongs to the hi/stories in which it resonates. Any phenomenological inquiry into narration must therefore pass through the structural features of entanglement, starting from the hermeneutic horizon of the hi/stories in which we are entangled.¹² It is in this way that all the interpretive perspectives are brought together, making it possible to understand Schapp's philosophy of hi/stories as a *narrative hermeneutics*.

By way of conclusion, what is important to note here, and what indeed constitutes one of the reasons for the present book, is that the philosophy of hi/stories does not emerge suddenly as an illumination that radically transforms Schapp's understanding of philosophy and phenomenology. Rather, as has been shown throughout the various parts of this study, the philosophy of hi/stories unfolds progressively as a coherent philosophical response to a persistent murmur¹³ that took hold early in the author's thinking, already within his phenomenology of perception. How can perception lay claim to anything universal if the things it perceives are objects charged with destiny, each fulfilling it in its own distinct way? How can the perceiving subject assume the role of a neutral observer if he is already so deeply intertwined with things and with the world, in a manner rooted in lived experience?¹⁴ These doubts, when they appear in the *Beiträge*, do not yet overturn the master's thought. Nevertheless, from them arises the need to offer another perspective on things, one that goes beyond an understanding of the world as it manifests itself in perception. Already in his philosophy of law there emerges the need to investigate the value-laden and practical dimension of things, their being historically embedded within a broader context of meaning and purposes. To approach this dimension, one

¹¹ See Part III, Chaps. 8 and 10 above.

¹² Cf. Part IV, Chap. 17 above.

¹³ To quote the very way in which the author understands the unfolding of hi/stories in consciousness and thought in the form of silent speaking. See Schapp (2015), p. 286.

¹⁴ See Part II, Chap. 5 above.

must first break with the phenomenological metaphor of the human being as observer, who abstracts from the world in order to analyze what appears before his eyes as it flows in a series of phenomena normatively regulated by a rationality inherent in the self-showing of things. Intentionality and the epistemic model of intuition of essences, characteristic of the Husserl of the *Logical Investigations* and of the phenomenological Platonism of which, as we have seen, Schapp himself was an exponent, must give way to an understanding of the human being as corporeally embedded in things. Things do not arise in the field of perception only to flow back into a realm of meanings as if no memory or prior knowledge of them were involved; rather, they are works that arise from human making. Things thus emerge from human creation, and when they confront us they are already embedded in a web of references constituted by the memory of the world, which grounds and shapes the universe of values into which human beings are born and within which they grow. Every human activity is indissolubly bound to one's biographical trajectory and to this world of values. There is nothing in the world that is not permeated by the experience of being brought into the world by acts of creation. Producing and creating bind us to the world and to things in an inseparable bond with our past and our future. The first crisis of the phenomenological paradigm thus occurs through the emergence of a new paradigm and an explanatory attempt to rethink human being, shifting from the figure of the observer to that of the creator.¹⁵ As this book has sought to make clear, and in contrast to much of the secondary literature, the phenomenology of creation constitutes the thematic ground on which the entire conceptual framework of the philosophy of hi/stories unfolds. What has not yet been made explicit within it is, on the side of the narrative-hermeneutical turn, the concept of entanglement, and, on the side of its ontological-metaphysical scope, the investigation of kinship as an experience that cuts across the whole of humankind, as well as the experience of maternal love as the first lived source of the experience of divine love that holds together the relation between human beings and God.¹⁶

These stages of the final paradigmatic shift from creator to entangled being are factually marked by a constant return to the problems and even to the examples of the first phenomenological work, i.e., the *Beiträge*. Confirmation of this can be found in an expanded second edition of the *Beiträge* dating from 1949, in which the investigation of perception coexists with a rigorous critique of the fundamental postulates of Husserl's phenomenology and of the other members of phenomenological circles. In particular, this work brings to light a reinterpretation of how the relation between meaning and the thing is to be understood. Meaning is conceived as an attempt to grasp, through the name, the hi/story of an object and to let emerge the dynamic web of relations from which it derives.¹⁷ The subject, on the other hand, assumes a specific position with respect to this hi/story and thereby loses the neutrality that had characterized the early phenomenological investigations of

¹⁵ See Part II, Chap. 6 above.

¹⁶ See Part II, Chap. 7 above.

¹⁷ See Part III, Chap. 8 above.

perception. Such a shift in perspective is, in the immediate sense, a direct consequence of the inquiries into the “phenomenology of creation” developed in the second volume of *Die neue Wissenschaft vom Recht*. From a broader perspective, however, it represents the most mature elaboration of methodological problems that had already emerged in Schapp’s early phenomenological work, including his doctoral dissertation. The question of the relation between human beings and the external world, the problem of defining the thing, and the impossibility of attaining an intuition of essence in fact constitute the three main axes of Schapp’s critique of phenomenology that we find in *In Geschichten verstrickt*. All three rest directly on a decision made relatively early by Schapp, namely, not to confine phenomenological inquiry to the domain of transcendental consciousness. In Schapp’s thought, the transition from classical phenomenology to a narrative-hermeneutical understanding of human beings takes shape through a complete reversal of the role assigned to perception as a source of knowledge. If work and use constitute the primary context in which the characteristics of things emerge, perception can no longer be regarded as originary, but only as a derivative moment, already shaped and oriented by human practices.¹⁸ The inclusion of the concept of entanglement in hi/stories functions as both a filter and a vector for a narrative reinterpretation of these problems. Works are no longer understood as bearers of hi/stories by virtue of their rootedness in a historically constituted value dimension. Rather, they are conceived as things-for, that is, as things endowed with an intrinsic temporality that intertwines with the temporality of the hi/stories of those who engage with them. This shift also legitimizes the narrative scope of things themselves: they emerge within hi/stories and at the threshold of entanglement, becoming in turn occasions for the emergence of shared hi/stories involving multiple human beings. Schapp thus does not employ the notion of the thing-for in order to call perceptual investigations into question, but to traverse them from a new perspective and, from there, to approach in historical and narrative terms the most intimate dimension of human existence: not merely being involved in the world through acts of creation, but being entangled in the hi/stories that concern the world and others.¹⁹ In this sense, hi/stories are no longer understood as the hi/stories of works that bind human beings together, but as the hi/stories that, in the existential condition of entanglement, hold together human beings and things.²⁰ In this way, by bringing to a close a hermeneutic circle initiated almost half a century earlier, the philosophy of hi/stories presents itself as a return to the original problems of phenomenology. Yet this return is not merely repetitive: beginning with an attempt to address specific aporias, it opens onto a further path that ultimately grounds a new way of understanding the human relation to the world and human being itself, in its finitude and in its deepest dimension, namely its relation to the divine.²¹

¹⁸ See Part III, Chap. 9 above.

¹⁹ See Part III, Chap. 10 above.

²⁰ See Part III, Chaps. 11 and 12 above.

²¹ See Part IV, Chap. 16 above.

The transition from phenomenology to the philosophy of hi/stories thus takes on the contours of a *Kehre* in the sense originally given to this term by Heidegger. Schapp's work unfolds along a philosophical path marked by an internally articulated unity of intent: despite the reversal of perspective it entails, it does not result in a structural rupture, but opens a new narrative-hermeneutic horizon against the background of enduring questions first posed by early phenomenology. To follow this trajectory does not mean forcing a continuity reading of Schapp's philosophy, but restoring clarity to each phase of his work, insofar as each articulates specific problems to which Schapp sought to respond throughout his intellectual trajectory. These problems and the responses they elicited situate his thought within a liminal zone of contemporary philosophy, at the intersection of phenomenology, hermeneutics, philosophy of law, philosophy of language, narrativism, philosophical anthropology, and related fields. Tracing the contours of these interconnections would undoubtedly be a fruitful undertaking, but it would require many more pages. And as already said, this monograph was conceived as a primarily expository introduction to Wilhelm Schapp's philosophical itinerary, aiming to make accessible, for the first time in English, the internal dynamics, tensions, and enduring relevance of his thought.

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