

THE LEFTOVER OF GOOD SENSE: ON TRANSCENDENTAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE LIGHT OF THE POSTSTRUCTURALIST CRITICISM

GEORGY CHERNAVIN

PhD, Assistant Professor, National Research University — Higher School of Economics, 105066 Moscow, Russia.

E-mail: gchernavin@hse.ru

Radically different strategies of interacting with sound common sense, found within three big philosophical discourses of the 20th century (analytic philosophy, poststructuralism, phenomenology), led nearly to the impossibility of communication between those discourses. The judgement by Deleuze concerning Kant's critical philosophy and Husserl's transcendental philosophy seems to be an example of the failed philosophical dialogue, this time between post-structuralism and (classical as well as modern) transcendentalism. Deleuze sees in transcendental philosophy the dominance of the twofold instance of the common sense; the two forms are the *sensus communis* (which dominated already in Kant) and the *bona mens* (which crystallized in the Husserlian *Urdoxa*). Even if one could agree that the post-structuralist reading of transcendental philosophy is likely sometimes too rash, it is still helpful. One can then see that at the center of the research-field of transcendental phenomenology a real nodal point of paradoxes remains: first of all, the so-called «paradox of human subjectivity» — the relation between the empirical and the transcendental, which seems to be paradoxical for sound human understanding. One could contrast here the goal of transcendental research, which consists in sense-building and sense-enrichment, with the poststructuralist art of the forming, inventing and production of concepts. The passion for paradoxes, the provocation of the sound human understanding as a motor of thinking (characteristic of poststructuralism) is still bound to *doxa* and to the *common sense*, although it tries to «turn it inside out». Transcendental philosophy tries rather to take a «step back» from the solidification of common sense in order to observe the sense-building *in statu nascendi*.

Key words: Transcendental philosophy, poststructuralism, common sense, doxa, paradox, Husserl, Deleuze.

ОСТАТОК ЗДРАВОВОГО СМЫСЛА: ТРАНСЦЕНДЕНТАЛЬНАЯ ФИЛОСОФИЯ В СВЕТЕ ПОСТСТРУКТУРАЛИСТСКОЙ КРИТИКИ

ГЕОРГИЙ ЧЕРНАВИН

PhD, доцент, Национальный Исследовательский Университет — Высшая Школа Экономики, 105066 Москва, Россия.

E-mail: gchernavin@hse.ru

© GEORGY CHERNAVIN, 2015

Радикально различные стратегии взаимодействия со здравым смыслом, которые можно найти в рамках трех больших философских дискурсах XX века (аналитической философии, постструктурализма, феноменологии), привели к невозможности коммуникации между этими дискурсами. Суждение Делёза относительно критической философии Канта и трансцендентальной феноменологии Гуссерля кажется примером такого неудавшегося философского диалога, в данном случае между постструктурализмом и (классическим, равно как и современным) трансцендентализмом. Делёз видит в трансцендентальной философии доминирование двойкой инстанции *common sense*; двумя формами этой инстанции являются *sensus communis* (доминировавший уже у Канта) и *bona mens* (кристаллизовавшийся в *Urdoxa* Гуссерля). Хотя нетрудно заметить, что постструктуралистское прочтение трансцендентальной философии иногда кажется чересчур поспешным, оно тем не менее может оказаться продуктивным. Мы можем обнаружить, что в центре исследовательского поля трансцендентальной феноменологии завязывается целый узел парадоксов: прежде всего, так называемый «парадокс человеческой субъективности» — отношения между эмпирическим и трансцендентальным, которые с точки зрения здравого смысла выглядят парадоксальными. Можно сопоставить цель трансцендентального исследования, состоящего в смыслообразовании и обогащении смысла, и постструктуралистское искусство формирования, изобретения и производства концептов. Страсть к парадоксам, провокация здравого смысла в качестве движущей силы мышления (характерная для постструктурализма) все еще привязана к *doxa* и к *common sense*, хотя и пытается «вывернуть их наизнанку». Трансцендентальная философия пытается скорее сделать «шаг назад» от застывших образований здравого смысла, для того, чтобы наблюдать процесс смыслообразования *in statu nascendi*.

Ключевые слова: Трансцендентальная философия, постструктурализм, здравый смысл, докса, парадокс, Гуссерль, Делёз.

The powerlessness of this philosophy to break with the form of common sense, which was clearly present in Kant, is present again in Husserl.

Gilles Deleuze (Deleuze, 1990, 98)¹

Should transcendental phenomenology have a «good sense» [?]

Edmund Husserl (Husserl, 2002, 177)

The Strategies of Interacting with Common Sense

Contemporary philosophy mobilizes different strategies of interacting with *common sense* in its two most important forms, the *bona mens* and the *sensus communis*. The tradition of the philosophy of ordinary language starting from the debates between Moore and Wittgenstein sees the necessity either to defend common sense, or to restore it, as if it was once lost. For poststructuralism, especially for its Deleuzian version, the passion of philosophy is not the *common sense*, but the paradox. That is why the task of living philosophy also consists in the provocation of the «sound» human mind. Nevertheless,

¹ «Ce qui apparaissait déjà si nettement chez Kant vaut encore pour Husserl: l'impuissance de cette philosophie à rompre avec la forme du sens commun» (Deleuze, 1969, 119).

defence (or rehabilitation) and provocation are not the only possible strategies. For a certain tendency in phenomenology, which places itself in aftermath of Kantian transcendentalism (the mature Husserl, Fink, recently Richir), the essential moment of philosophical work consists in the «suspension» of the self-understood claims of natural objectivism, of the «power of “*common sense*”» (Husserl, 1954, 183; Husserl, 1970, 180).

These radically different strategies of interacting with sound common sense, found within three big philosophical discourses of the 20th century, led nearly to the impossibility of communication between those discourses. In each case, the chosen strategy of interacting with the common sense is seen as a natural strategy or even as the only possible one; the philosophical concurrent would be too quickly (from quite a commonsensical perspective) disqualified as «unphilosophical».² In a strange way, philosophers often hold positions of the irritated common sense when they meet a philosophical discourse which is radically different from their own perspective, instead of undertaking a philosophical «aspect change».

The judgement by Deleuze (concerning Kant’s critical philosophy and Husserl’s transcendental philosophy), cited here as an epigraph, seems to be an example of the failed philosophical dialogue, this time between post-structuralism and (classical as well as modern) transcendentalism. The Deleuzian critique of Husserl tries to demonstrate the following points: from one side, there is the remainder of the «*sensus communis*», which Husserl, according to Deleuze, took over from Kant with his formal, general determination of the object of the experience («some object = X»); from other side, one finds the remainder of the «*bona mens*», which Husserl preserved in the conception of the *Urdoxa*. We will not ascertain right now the extent to which Deleuze’s judgement represents the facts to avoid all philosophical position-taking possible. Of more vital importance is the task to determine more precisely the architectonical place of common sense (of both *bona mens* and *sensus communis*). Mainly for this reason, we ought to analyse the «incapacity for dialogue» as well as reciprocal reproaches shown by the representatives of both post-structuralism and transcendental philosophy.

According to Deleuze, the *doxa* of sound understanding, of good sense, goes only in a one direction («*le bon sens se dit d’une direction: il est sens unique*» (Deleuze, 1969, 93)), it pretends that each thing has only one stable sense; the genuinely philosophical way of thinking should avoid such a «unilaterality» and demonstrate rather a *para-dox*, a «bilaterality» of sense. The fact that Deleuze fails to find such a bilaterality in Husserl is just another example of the difficulty to achieve inter-discursive philosophical aspect-change.

² Wittgenstein saw this situation clearly: «Der Mensch mit gesundem Menschenverstand, wenn er einen früheren Philosophen liest, denkt (und nicht ohne Recht) “lauter Unsinn”. Wenn er mich hört, so denkt er: “lauter fade Selbstverständlichkeiten!” Wieder mit Recht. Und so hat sich der Aspekt der Philosophie geändert» (Wittgenstein, 1979, 30).

The Incomplete Suspension of Common Sense

Far from overturning the form of common sense, Kant merely multiplied it. Must not the same be said of phenomenology? Does it not discover a fourth common sense, this time grounded upon sensibility as a passive synthesis — one which, even though it constitutes an *Ur-doxa*, remains no less prisoner of the form of *doxa*? (Deleuze, 1995, 137)

Deleuze sees in the Husserlian model of sense-giving the dominance of the twofold instance of the *common sense* (of the sound human understanding); the two forms are the *sensus communis* (which dominated already in Kant) and the *bona mens* (which crystallized in the Husserlian *Urdoxa*). The *Urdoxa* stabilises the concordant streaming of experience, even if the identification of the object through a quasi-Kantian *sensus communis* fails. For Deleuze, the *Urdoxa* is an extra-instance of the «insurance» that guarantees the self-identity of the objects, an instance that effaces the paradoxical, self-contradicting element from the process of the sense-building.³

Concerning the first thesis (the supposed remainder of the Kantian *sensus communis* by Husserl): one can find in Husserl an imprint of the Kantian three-fold synthesis of the apprehension-reproduction-recognition (the interlacing between the perception, the imagination and the concept). The Husserlian apperception that he (with a certain emphasis) deciphers as «*Ad-Perzeption*», which is nothing other than the sense-accretion of perception, bears the moments of apperception, of reproduction and of recognition (according to *sensus communis*).

Concerning the second thesis (the alleged solidification of common sense in the form of «good sense» of the *Urdoxa*): one could raise an objection that Husserl in no way postulates the *Urdoxa*, but, on the contrary, suspends it. But nevertheless, it is difficult to neglect that in the late manuscripts, Husserl does state an original right of the natural belief in being, the original *doxa*.⁴ Does the Husserlian doxical presumptivity

³ «La donation de sens husserlienne [est dépendante d'une] ...instance à double face (*Urdoxa* et objet quelconque). <...> Dans la théorie husserlienne de la *doxa*, les différents modes de croyance sont engendrés en fonction d'une *Urdoxa*, laquelle agit comme une faculté de *sensus communis* par rapport aux facultés spécifiées. <...> Husserl pense la genèse [du sens], non pas à partir d'une instance nécessairement "paradoxale", et "non identifiable" proprement parler (manquant à sa propre identité comme à sa propre origine), mais au contraire à partir d'une faculté originaire de *sensus communis* chargée de rendre compte de l'identité de l'objet quelconque, et même d'une faculté de *bon sens* chargée de rendre compte du processus d'identification de tous les objets quelconques à l'infini» (Deleuze, 1969, 118–119).

⁴ «Der Weltglaube ist kein blinder, sondern allzeit ein begründeter, ein sich fortgesetzt berechtigender und nicht preisgebender <...> auch nicht ein leerer Glaube. Obschon rein passiv in der fortgehenden Einstimmigkeit der Erfahrung erwachsen, trägt er doch in sich ein Urrecht» (Husserl, 2008, 234).

(*Präsumptivität*) of experience have the role of the normalizing, compensatory *bon sens*? This question remains open.

But nevertheless, transcendental philosophy is not so naively dogmatic as Deleuze likes to see it. It is important to mention that for Husserl, the thought experiment suspending the concordance of experience is quite constitutive. Already in Kant there was an experimental attempt to suspend the threefold synthesis: an attempt to show the «shut-down» of apprehension, of reproduction, of recognition.⁵ In Husserl, this Kantian strategy takes the form of the thought experiment of the decomposition of the concordance of experience, of the disintegration of «objectivity (*Gegenständlichkeit*)» in the heap (*Gewühl*) of rough sense-data. The self-identity of objects is not postulated simply as a correlate of the *sensus communis*, but stated as a normal condition of experience. The non-self-identical, «flowing», «multi-colored» objectivity (*Gegenständlichkeit*) is still thinkable in Husserl, but it would be seen as a more marginal phenomenon. Deleuze would like to put the «unsteady», «non-self-identical character» of the processes of objects- and sense-building at the center; for Husserl this aspect of the experience is certainly/clearly visible, but is not central in the senseful construction of the world of our experience.

One can thematize the frontiers of the *sensus communis* within Kant and Husserl's transcendental philosophy. But neither philosopher pushes this strategy of thinking towards the paradoxical non-self-identical reverse side of the *sensus communis*. They do not develop this analysis, because for them the normal condition of experience is more important than the marginal counterexample. One could discuss even the primacy of the normality of experience, which is quite fundamental for Kantian and Husserlian philosophies: without the normal, one can hardly speak of the abnormal (Deleuze would like to draft the other paradigm, in which there is no more primacy of normality or of the concordance of experience). A definitive, intersubjective justifiable form of the *sensus communis* would still be conserved by the transcendental philosophy. This aspect of the *common sense* would not advisably be completely suspended or shut down; it is (in Deleuzian optics) a consciously moderate position: to keep a remainder of common sense.

But then, relying on this, Deleuze concludes that transcendental philosophy in general and transcendental phenomenology in particular smuggles in the remainder of «good sense (*bon sens, bona mens*)». And this is already a vexed question. Such a diagnostics overlooks the paradoxical character of the (non-)self-identity of human/transcendental subjectivity. It misses the fact that through the accomplishment of the reduction, an unpredictable transformation of the perspective in the phenomenological change of attitude happens, which clearly goes against the *bon sens* of the natural attitude or even

⁵ «Würde der Zinnober bald roth, bald schwarz, bald leicht, bald schwer sein, ein Mensch bald in diese, bald in jene thierische Gestalt verändert werden <...> so könnte keine empirische Synthesis der Reproduktion statt finden» (Kant, 1975, A101).

diverges from *bon sens*. Deleuze claims that Husserl, in the same way as Kant, hypostizes the empirical and dogmatically portrays it as the transcendental.⁶

The transcendental was for Deleuze only an illusionary projection of the empirical. In such a way, the correspondence between the empirical and the transcendental seems to be simplified. In Husserlian Phenomenology, one could better speak about the reciprocal projection (*Hineinprojizieren*) of the transcendental into the mundane.⁷

The Turning-off of Good Sense:

The Paradoxical Correspondence between the Mundane and the Transcendental

Even if one could agree that the poststructuralist reading of transcendental philosophy is likely sometimes too rash, it is still helpful. Deleuzian optics, according to which the true passion of philosophy is the paradox, permits us to look at transcendental phenomenology. One can then see that at the center of the research-field of transcendental phenomenology a real nodal point of paradoxes remains: first of all, the so-called «paradox of human subjectivity» — the relation between the empirical and the transcendental, which seems to be paradoxical for sound human understanding. Phenomenology takes over a Kantian strategy when it thematizes a necessarily «transcendental illusion» (of the psychologism, of redoubling)⁸, when it makes visible a trap, quite unavoidable for human «sound understanding». In this sense, the poststructuralist himself, who understands the transcendental as a mere redoubling of the empirical, remains a prisoner of «sound human understanding».

⁶ «What is evident in Kant, when he directly deduces the three transcendental syntheses from corresponding psychological syntheses, is no less evident in Husserl when he deduces an originary and transcendental “Seeing” from perceptual “vision”» (Deleuze, 1969, 119; Deleuze, 1990, 98).

⁷ «Die transzendente Subjektivität ist <...> in die immerfort schon konstituierte und sich fortkonstituierende Welt hineinprojiziert. <...> jedes solche Projizieren ist selbst sinngebende Leistung» (Fink, 1988, 213).

⁸ «Das erweckt zunächst den falschen Schein, als ob das transzendente Ich ein innerster Kern im Menschen sei, und zwar das, was diesem Realen den eigentlichen Charakter der Menschlichkeit verleiht, das, wodurch dieses Reale nicht nur wie anderes Reale Dasein hat, sondern die wunder-
einzigartige Seinsweise: dass es eben menschliches Ich ist, das als Ich einen bewusstenmäßigen Horizont von Welt hat, durch Erscheinungen von ihr auf sie, insbesondere auf alles außer ihm bezogen und dadurch zu einem Leben in der Welt (menschlichem Dasein in der Welt) befähigt. Aber natürlich ist das für den, der die phänomenologische Reduktion versteht und in ihrem wirklich methodischen Sinn übt, ein Widersinn. Weder ist das transzendente Ich im Menschen (also in der Welt), noch ist der Mensch und die Welt im transzendentalen Ich bzw. der transzendentalen Intersubjektivität, wofern das “in” irgendein reelles Enthaltensein bezeichnet. <...> Weder ist das transzendente Ich im Menschen — also in der Welt —, noch ist der Mensch und die Welt im transzendentalen Ich» (Husserl, 2002, 290).

Transcendental philosophy could provoke *common sense*, if it simply demonstrated paradoxes.⁹ The strategy of suspending or of «turning off (*Ausschaltung*)» extends more in the direction of neutralizing the common-sensical *doxa*, showing that the transcendental (despite the poststructuralist reading) is not an inner core of the human being, but rather a potential of a breakthrough towards the transcendental.¹⁰ The most important thing that a human being carries in itself is perhaps neither the human character, nor the character of being — it is the point at which transcendental philosophy diverges definitively from sound human understanding.

Conclusion: Sense-Enrichment versus Paradoxes

One could contrast here the goal of transcendental *research*, which consists in «sense-transformation and moving sense-enrichment through disclosing experience with the formation of the horizons of experience and their theoretical determination» (Husserl, 1993, 77–78)¹¹, with the poststructuralistic *art* of the «forming, inventing and production of *concepts*» (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, 2). From one side, we have sense-buiding research, from the other side — concept-bulding art. This obvious difference in goal-setting renders clearer the answer to the question why one (in transcendental philosophy and poststructuralism) develops such divergent strategies of interaction with *common sense*.

The sense-enrichment required by Husserl is the sense-accretion of the life of consciousness through a transcendental dimension. The world (as effective reality) is always here; the transcendental is not yet in the world, not yet here. The conditions of the possibility of experience are not yet here. It sounds paradoxical, but paradoxes are not the end in itself for transcendental phenomenology, rather its by-product. The passion for paradoxes, the provocation of the sound human understanding as a motor of thinking (characteristic of poststructuralism) is still bound to *doxa* and to the *common sense*, although it tries to «turn it inside out». Transcendental philosophy tries rather to take a «step back» from the solidification of *common sense* in order to observe the sense-building *in statu nascendi*.

⁹ For example: «Ich in der Epoché bin nicht mehr ich, der Mensch» (Husserl, 2002, 292) — d. h. “ich ≠ ich”; «Ich sehe auch, dass diesem Ego zugehört ein Geltungsleben, das *nicht menschliches in der Welt* ist, für mich, der in der Epoché steht» (Husserl, 2002, 292) — this means that I am in the world and not in the world, I am at once a human being and not a human being.

¹⁰ «So ist das Bewusstseinsleben des [transzendentalen] Ich *nicht menschliches*. Das Verhältnis von Ich im gemein menschlichen Sinn und *ego* ist ganz eigenartig. Sofern der Mensch Selbstobjektivierung der transzendentalen Subjektivität ist, aber nicht als “Dasein im Menschen”, als einen irgendwie aus zunehmenden Kern im Menschen, sondern nur als *Potenzialität*, vom mir Gelten als Mensch *zur Transzendentalität durchzubrechen*» (Husserl, 1973, 456–457).

¹¹ «Sinnverwandlung <...> und der *beweglichen Sinnbereicherung* durch erschließende Erfahrung mit Bildung von Erfahrungshorizonten und [ihrer] theoretischen Bestimmung».

REFERENCES

- Deleuze, G. (1969). *Logique du sens*. Paris: Minuit.
- Deleuze, G. (1990). *The Logic of Sense*. New York: Athlone Press.
- Deleuze, G. (1995). *Difference and Repetition*. London, New York: Continuum.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1994). *What is Philosophy?* New York: Columbia University Press.
- Fink, E. (1988). *VI. Cartesianische Meditation. Texte aus dem Nachlass Eugen Finks (1932) mit Anmerkungen und Beilagen aus dem Nachlass Edmund Husserls (1933/34), Teil 1. Die Idee einer transzendentalen Methodenlehre*. Husserliana Dokumente (Hua II/1). Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Husserl, E. (1954). *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaft und die transzendente Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie* (Hua VI). Den Haag: Nijhoff.
- Husserl, E. (1970). *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Husserl, E. (1973). *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlaß. Dritter Teil (1929–1935)* (Hua XV). Den Haag: M. Nijhoff.
- Husserl, E. (1993). *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie. Ergänzungsband. Texte aus dem Nachlaß (1934–1937)* (Hua XXIX). Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Husserl, E. (2002). *Zur phänomenologischen Reduktion. Texte aus dem Nachlaß (1926–1935)* (Hua XXXIV). Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Husserl, E. (2008). *Die Lebenswelt. Auslegungen der vorgegebenen Welt und ihrer Konstitution. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1916–1937)* (Hua XXXIX). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Kant, I. (1975). *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Bd. III–IV). Frankfurt a. Mein: Suhrkamp.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1979). *Schriften: Beiheft* (Bd. 3). Frankfurt a. Mein: Suhrkamp.