

HUSSERL'S PHENOMENOLOGY OF MEANING IN THE *LOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS*

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SÍNTESE - Este artigo procura mostrar que, apesar de emergir de uma visão tradicional e metafísica da linguagem, a teoria husserliana do significado enquanto espécie ideal nas *Investigações Lógicas* não é redutível a uma expressão lingüística de uma adequação essencialista e representacional, mas antes enfatiza o papel da intencionalidade, a idealidade da linguagem e o caráter constitutivo da consciência no preenchimento da "significação" (*Bedeutung*).

PALAVRAS-CHAVE - Consciência. Intencionalidade. Linguagem. Representação. Significação.

ABSTRACT - This article seeks to show that, although emerging out of a so-called traditional, metaphysical view of language, Edmund Husserl's theory of meaning qua ideal species in the *Logical Investigations* cannot be reduced to the linguistic expression of an essentialist, representational adequation, but rather emphasizes the role of intentionality, the ideality of language, and the constitutive character of consciousness in the fulfillment of "meaning" (*Bedeutung*).

KEY WORDS - Consciousness. Intentionality. Language. Meaning. Representation.

Introduction

Edmund Husserl's theory of meaning certainly occupies one of the most privileged positions in the monumental building of his phenomenology. Perhaps because of its ubiquitous and underlying influence in Husserl's texts, "meaning" is one of those key words which best describe, along with "consciousness" and "intentionality", the very kernel of such a phenomenological project. The fact that both hermeneutics and deconstruction are among the legitimate children of Husserl's phenomenology only serves to confirm the central place accorded to "meaning" in Husserl's investigations. It would be impossible, however, to fully investigate the pervasive meaning of "Husserl's phenomenology of meaning" in a limited paper like the present one, which makes no pretensions to an exhaustive

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research but rather seeks to introduce a problematic within Husserl's own shift from the world of things towards a lifeworld phenomenology.¹ I shall thus confine myself to outlining Husserl's theory of meaning in the *Logical Investigations* and how it contributed to the development of a phenomenology in the *Ideas I*. I am particularly interested in Husserl's contribution to the hermeneutic "style" of the philosophizing of contemporary philosophers such as Heidegger, Lévinas, Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer, Ricoeur, Foucault, and Derrida. It is certainly beyond the scope of the present paper to examine the problematics raised by the hermeneutic movement and the original thinking of these philosophers. It is in the *Logical Investigations*, in effect, that we are to find the conceptual premises to all the phenomenological problems of signification and language, which would be later developed in the 1908 Göttingen lectures on the theory of meaning, but also in *Ideas I*, the *Crisis* and *The Origin of Geometry*.² As Jacques Derrida points out,

"Dans ce domaine [du langage] plus qu'ailleurs, une lecture patiente ferait apparaître dans les *Recherches* la structure germinale de toute la pensée husserlienne. A chaque page se laisse lire la nécessité – ou la pratique implicite – des réductions éidétiques et phénoménologiques, la présence repérable de tout ce à quoi elles donneront accès."³

As Derrida remarks, the first of the *Investigations* appears to command our reading of the subsequent ones. And this is to be taken as a strategic procedure in Husserl's writing, in that the rigor of his phenomenological analyses consists in the necessary absence of presuppositions (*Voraussetzungslosigkeit*) as a starting point. Even the *Faktum* of language cannot thus be regarded, according to Husserl's project, as a presupposition. Nevertheless, as we shall see, Derrida has convincingly shown us that such is not the case, for the Husserlian *mathesis* does conceal "a metaphysical presupposition", at the very heart of his theory of meaning, which in effect constitutes phenomenology, as it were, "from within". Long before Derrida, Heidegger had already begun this radical move against Husserl's "ontological presuppositionlessness" in a hermeneutic retrieval of the forgotten "Sein" eclipsed by and repressed at the heart of the Husserlian absolutized "*Bewusst-sein*". It is precisely within such a hermeneutical perspective, from within the *Logical Investigations*, that one must explore Husserl's theory of meaning.

¹ There is a gamut of excellent studies on Husserl's theory of meaning, among them Klaus Held, *Lebendige Gegenwart: Die Frage nach der Seinsweise des transzendentale Ich bei Ed. Husserl* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1966); Ernst Tugendhat, *Der Wahrheitsbegriff bei Husserl und Heidegger* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967); Guido Antonio de Almeida, *Sinn und Inhalt in der Genetischen Phänomenologie E. Husserls* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1972); Donn Welton, *The Origins of Meaning: A Critical Study of Husserlian Phenomenology* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1983); Carlos Alberto Ribeiro de Moura, *Crítica da Razão na Fenomenologia* (São Paulo: EDUSP, 1989); Peter Simons, "Meaning and language", in *The Cambridge Companion to Husserl*, ed. Barry Smith and David Woodruff Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

² *Vorlesungen über Bedeutungslehre, Sommersemester 1908, Husserliana XXVI*, ed. U. Panzer (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1989).

³ Jacques Derrida, *La voix et le phénomène. Introduction au problème du signe dans la phénoménologie de Husserl* (Paris: PUF, 1967), p. 1. Hereafter abbreviated as VP.

Expression and Meaning

The early Husserl's combined interest in mathematics and psychology led him to concentrate on the epistemology of arithmetic concepts, as we can infer from the titles of his *Habilitationsschrift*, *Über den Begriff der Zahl* (1887), and of his first important work, *Philosophie der Arithmetik* (1891), whose first volume bore the subtitle, "Psychologische und logische Untersuchungen". Under the influence of the psychologist-philosopher Franz Brentano, Husserl set out to articulate the psychological foundation of logic and philosophy. As Husserl would confess in the forward to the first edition of his *Logical Investigations*,

"I began work on the prevailing assumption that psychology was the science from which logic in general, and the logic of the deductive sciences, had to hope for philosophical clarification. For this reason psychological researches occupy a very large place in the first (the only published) volume of my *Philosophy of Arithmetic*. There were, however, connections in which such a psychological foundation never came to satisfy me."⁴

It was then maintained that the foundation of the concept of number is the psychological grounding of the concept of multiplicity. It is important to recall that Husserl's own thought was emerging out of a "psychologist" milieu, visibly marked by Neo-Kantian epistemology. According to that view, ours is a "world" constructed by reflection and abstraction upon and from physical contents, and all knowledge must be limited to psychic phenomena. This reduction of philosophical, mathematical, and logical questions to psychological questions has been called "psychologism". Husserl's phenomenology would thus appear as a radical attempt to overcome both psychologism and traditional empiricism. Nevertheless, this phenomenological breakthrough would not take place until the publication of Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen* in 1900 and 1901. Although I do not intend to examine here the historical evolution of Husserl's phenomenology, it is of utmost importance to note that Husserl's theory of meaning evolved within a philosophical framework strongly influenced by German empiricism and Gottlob Frege's logical criticism of psychologism, which indeed coincided with Husserl's own self-critical move to abandon his original philosophy of arithmetic and pursue the *Investigations*.⁵ Husserl's *Logical Investigations* undermines the psychological approach to embrace a phenomenological method, which was not fully developed until the appearance of the first volume of his *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie* in 1913. The *Logical Investigations* opens with a long, polemical "Prolegomena to Pure Logic", in which Husserl attacks both psychologism and the skepticism of empiricism. Descriptive psychology, however, must still be regarded as being relevant to the foundations of logic and, in fact, phenomenology itself is

⁴ E. Husserl, *Logical Investigations* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), vol. I, p. 42. Hereafter abbreviated LI. The German edition used is the *Husserliana*, vols. XVIII and XIX.

⁵ Cf. J.N. Mohanty, "Husserl and Frege: A New Look at their Relationship", in Huber Dreyfus, ed., *Husserl, Intentionality, and Cognitive Science* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1982); Jairo J. da Silva, "Husserl's Philosophy of Mathematics", *Manuscrito* XVI/2 (1993): 121-148.

first conceived at this descriptive level. The main systematic purpose of the Prolegomena is thus to refute the thesis that psychology qua empirical science can provide the philosophical explanation of logical notions and principles. Husserl begins his Introduction by pointing out that since John Stuart Mill, and owing particularly to his influence, logic has developed in a threefold direction: metaphysical, formal, and psychological (LI I, 53). It is upon the last one, which has also become the most prevalent, that Husserl must focus the attention of his critical investigations. Nevertheless, it would be misleading to reduce the focus of Husserl's efforts to his attack on psychologism. Like Kant, who remains along with Descartes and Hume his lifetime *maître à penser*, Husserl is particularly interested in the foundations of science (*Wissenschaft*), the validity of knowledge, and the so-called laws of thought, or, in his own words, in "the relationship, in particular, between the subjectivity of knowing and the objectivity of the content known" (LI I, 42). That is why, throughout his investigations, Husserl maintains that a science is to be defined according to the realm which it investigates. What is needed now is a *Wissenschaftslehre*, a theory of science, "whose peculiarity it is to be the science of science [*Wissenschaft von der Wissenschaft*]" (LI I, 60). Logic is thus established as *Wissenschaftslehre*, as "pure science", whose threefold task is summarized by Husserl in the last chapter of the Prolegomena (§§ 67-69): "the fixing of the pure categories of meaning, the pure categories of objects and their law-governed combinations"; "the laws and theories which have their grounds in these categories"; and, "the theory of the possible forms of theories or the pure theory of manifolds" (LI I, 236-240). However, it is only in the second volume (German edition) of the *Logical Investigations* that Husserl finally presents a definition of logic as "the science of meanings as such [*Wissenschaft von Bedeutungen als solchen*]" (LI II, 323/98). This double concern with "science" and its logical "founding" already delineates the Husserlian spiral of meaning as a phenomenological articulation between the "origin" (eidos) and the "signification" (logos) of the human experience of cognition. After developing the idea of a pure logic with a view to furnishing a "science of science", Husserl proceeds to examine the nature of "meaning" and its problematics in the second volume of his *Logical Investigations*. The title of the volume is very revealing (*Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis*) of Husserl's phenomenology of meaning, which is largely developed in the first four investigations. The phenomenological orientation of his studies is carefully expounded in the Introduction:

"We are not here concerned with grammatical discussions, empirically conceived and related to some historically given language: we are concerned with discussions of a most general sort which cover the wider sphere of an objective *theory of knowledge* [*objektiven Theorie der Erkenntnis*] and, closely linked with this last, *the pure phenomenology of the experiences of thinking and knowing* [*einer reinen Phänomenologie der Denk- und Erkenntniserlebnisse*]. This phenomenology, like the more inclusive *pure phenomenology of experiences in general* [*reine Phänomenologie der Erlebnisse überhaupt*], has, as its exclusive concern, experiences intuitively seizable and analysable in the pure generality of their essence, not experiences empirically perceived and treated as real facts ... This phenomenology must bring to pure expression [*zu reinem Ausdruck*], must describe in terms of their essential concepts [*deskriptiv in Wesensbe-*

griffen] and their governing formulae of essence, the essences which directly make themselves known in intuition, and the connections which have their roots purely in such essences. Each such statement [*Aussage*] of essence is an *a priori* statement in the highest sense of the word." (LI II, 249/6)

It is thus made clear that, in order to understand the essential constitution of our objects, we must proceed in "purely intuitive fashion" to investigate, according to the laws of a pure logic, how these objects have been given in grammatical form, that is, in linguistic expressions:

"The objects [*Objekte*] which pure logic seeks to examine are, in the first instance, therefore given to it in grammatical clothing. Or, more precisely, they come before us embedded in concrete mental states which further function either as the *meaning-intention* or *meaning-fulfilment* of certain verbal expressions – in the latter case intuitively illustrating, or intuitively providing evidence for, our meaning – and forming a *phenomenological unity* with such expressions." (LI II, 250/8)

What Husserl is concerned about is not the psychological judgement ("the concrete mental phenomenon") but the logical judgement, "the identical asserted meaning, which is one over against manifold, descriptively quite different, judgement-experiences" (LI II, 251). Thus Husserl goes on to develop a veritable analysis of signification, by studying the logical core of language in the First Investigation, "Expression and Meaning" [*Ausdruck und Bedeutung*]. It is interesting to notice that Husserl starts this investigation by pointing out the ambiguity (*Doppelsinn*) in the term "sign" (*Zeichen*): "Every sign is a sign for something, but not every sign has 'meaning', a 'sense' that the sign expresses [*Jedes Zeichen ist Zeichen für etwas, aber nicht jedes hat eine "Bedeutung", einen "Sinn", der mit dem Zeichen "ausgedrückt" ist*]" (LI II, 269/30). Although all signs signify, in that every signified has been pointed to by a signifier, not all signifiers have a meaning, insofar as not all signs are "expressions" (in Husserlian terminology). Of course, to speak of the *signifié/signifiant* oppositional couple is an anachronistic abuse on our part, for Ferdinand de Saussure's famous *Cours de linguistique générale* was not published before 1916. Moreover, strictly speaking in Saussurean terms, that would be quite problematic. I shall return to this problematic later, since it pertains to much of the criticism directed against Husserl's theory of meaning. For now, one must bear in mind that Husserl's conception of language falls within what has been called a "traditional" view of language. According to this view, language is a mere vehicle for expressing and transmitting a thought, which represents some independent reality. This traditional view, which dates back to Aristotle, maintains that a rational correspondence between the essence of a thing and its thought, and the word referring to both, is what makes knowledge and language possible, as it follows:

reality (essence) — thought (concept) — language (word).

The order of "determination" is thus obtained as we move from reality to thought and language, while the order of "reference" is to be dealt with in the opposite direction, as words refer to concepts and things. The traditional, metaphysical notion of "truth" is therefore logically implied by this view: truth is the correspon-

dence of ideas with reality, *adequatio intellectus ad rem*. The rational coherence of reality, thought, and language has become, in philosophical tradition, the task of metaphysics, epistemology, and logic, respectively. Following the revival of Kantian philosophy at the end of the nineteenth century, insoluble epistemological problems led some German philosophers of mathematics to turn to logic as a new kind of *philosophia prima*. And Frege was among those logicians whose contributions played a decisive role in the development of Husserl's theory of meaning. According to Frege, the meaning (*Bedeutung*) of a sentence or name is its reference, while the sense (*Sinn*) designates how the object referred to is actually thought of. This important distinction between "meaning" and "sense" was established in a seminal article by Frege, "*Über Sinn und Bedeutung*", first published in 1892.⁶ Because subtle differences between Frege's and Husserl's terminologies may lead to some misunderstandings, one must make clear the following correspondence: what Frege calls "Sinn" is named "Bedeutung" by Husserl, while Frege's "Bedeutung" corresponds to Husserl's "Gegenstand." One of Frege's own examples can help us to illustrate this distinction: although the two expressions "the morning star" and "the evening star" have the same meaning (*Bedeutung*) for they refer to the same object, the planet Venus, they do not have the same sense (*Sinn*), in that they refer to Venus in different ways.⁷ For Husserl, however, no distinction is to be made between "Sinn" and "Bedeutung", as we read in the *Logical Investigations*,

"'Meaning' [*Bedeutung*] is further used by us as synonymous with 'sense' [*Sinn*]. It is agreeable to have parallel, interchangeable terms in the case of this concept, particularly since the sense [*Sinn*] of the term 'meaning' [*Bedeutung*] is itself to be investigated. A further consideration is our ingrained tendency to use the two words as synonymous, a circumstance which makes it seem rather a dubious step if their meanings are differentiated, and if (as G. Frege has proposed) we use one for meaning in our sense, and the other for objects expressed [*für die ausgedrückten Gegenstände*]. To this we may add that both terms are exposed to the same equivocations [*Äquivokationen*], which we distinguished above in connection with the term 'expression' [*bei der Rede vom Ausgedrücktein*], and to many more besides, and that this is so in both scientific and in ordinary speech." (LI II, 292/58)

Even though it was Frege's antipsychologism which inspired much of Husserl's phenomenological conception of a pure logic, we can see that Husserl's theory of meaning differs from Frege's precisely because of the former's understanding of psychological concepts such as consciousness and intentionality. The entire problematic of constituting the object of thinking, and therefore what one refers to when speaking of something, is now to be examined in our study. Before we go on to consider what Husserl means by "Bedeutung" or "Sinn", we shall first try to expound Husserl's conception of the "Gegenstand", that is, the object of reference of an expression. We have seen that Husserl starts the First Investigation with a re-

⁶ G. Frege, *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik*, vol. 100 (1892), p. 25-50; ET: Peter Geach and Max Black, *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1952), p. 56-78.

⁷ G. Frege, op. cit., p. 58-62, 67 f.

mark on the ambiguous sense of the term "Zeichen": on the one hand, a sign has the general characteristic of "expression" (Ausdruck); on the other hand, a sign may stand for nothing, without expressing anything, being simply taken for an "indication" (Anzeichen), such as marks and notes. And Husserl proceeds to assert that "(t)o mean [Das Bedeuten] is not a particular way of being a sign in the sense of indicating something". (LI II, 269) An indicative sign is thus deprived of "Bedeutung", it is *bedeutungslos*, in that it does not fulfill a "significant function" (*eine Bedeutungsfunktion*). It follows that expressions (*Ausdrücke*) are to be distinguished from indicative signs (*anzeigenden Zeichen*) in that they are meaningful (*bedeutensamen*) (LI II 275/37). Furthermore, an expression not only has a meaning but it refers to certain objects (*Gegenstände*), that is, every expression is *about* something (*über Etwas*) (LI II 287/52). And this is not always a relation of naming, for not all expressions name their object(s). It is precisely at this level of reference of propositions that Husserl's theory of meaning marks itself off from Frege's. Whereas Frege associates the meaning (*Sinn*) of a proposition with the thought (*Gedanke*) expressed and its reference (*Bedeutung*) is the truth-value (*Wahrheitswert*),⁸ Husserl's proposition means a *Gedanke* but refers to a *Sachverhalt*, "state of affairs" (LI II 288/53). Husserl illustrates this by pointing out that two sentences saying different things such as "a is bigger than b" and "b is smaller than a" express, in fact, the same state of affairs, in that "the same 'matter' [*Sache*] is predicatively apprehended and asserted in two different ways." The phenomenological approach which characterizes Husserl's analysis of meaning cannot thus be content with a simple understanding of symbolic and linguistic functions, but it seeks to go back to the "things themselves", to employ the evidence of fully developed intuitions, truly symbolized by the words, and to reconstitute all meaning by determining their "irrevocable identification." For the main purpose of Husserl's "phenomenology of knowledge" remains the reconstitution of the essential connection between meaning-intention (*Bedeutungsintention*) and meaning-fulfillment (*Bedeutungserfüllung*), i.e. how the "subjective" and the "objective" are meaningfully articulated in the essence-structure of "pure" experiences. I am deliberately using the verb "re-constitute" to emphasize the implicit move of "recovery" in Husserl's theory of meaning, especially when he uses the verbs *auffassen* ("construe", "apprehend") and *auslegen* ("lay out", "explicate") in an interpretive, illustrative sense which we hope to explore throughout this paper. The constitution of meaning, from its founding intention to its fulfilled signification, is itself reconstituted by Husserl's methodological *Einführung* into phenomenology proper, of which the *Logical Investigations* constitutes the ideal propaedeutics. That is why Husserl concludes the First Investigation with the logical thesis of "the ideally unified meaning" (§§ 29-35). Because logic has been established as "the science of theoretical unity", the nature of all given theoretical unity is "unity of meaning" and that is what makes knowledge possible. Husserl makes clear, however, that he is not advocating the metaphysical existence of "universal objects" in a divine mind or in some *topos ouranios*, but he is radically seeking to overcome both

⁸ Ibid., p. 61-64.

idealism and realism by displacing the center of the epistemological debate, away from its actual reference toward the very correlation of meaning between the "knowing" subject and the object to be "known."

Objectivity and Meaning

In the next three Investigations, Husserl develops some of the guiding ideas that have been introduced in the First Investigation, in connection with the essential distinction between "*Bedeutung*" and "*Gegenstand*". "Everything that is logical", says Husserl, "falls under the two correlated categories of *meaning* [*Bedeutung*] and *object* [*Gegenstand*]" (LI II, 325/101). Objectivity (*Gegenständlichkeit*) is determined by the logical laws of meaning, "which consider meanings in respect of their having or not having objects". As an object, "the parallelogram of forces" results from the apprehension of an "ideal meaning", while "the city of Paris" is a "real object" of sensory or imaginary perception. But both require for their "being known" a correlative kind of apprehension (*Auffassung*). Therefore, Husserl is no longer primarily concerned about the "reality" of the object and its "existence", but he is affirming that only an "objectifying act" gives us an "object" through its "presentation" (if it is actually there) or through its "representation" (if it is not there, but is, for instance, imagined or thought). That means that we may as well be dealing with purely imaginary objects, objects which are "merely thought." Meaning is given thus in the very signifying intention toward an object:

"If we seek a foothold in pure description, the concrete phenomenon of the sense-informed expression breaks up, on the one hand, into the *physical phenomenon* forming the physical side of the expression, and, on the other hand, into the *acts* [*Akte*] which give it *meaning* [*Bedeutung*] and possibly also *intuitive fullness* [*anschauliche Fülle*], in which its relation to an expressed object is constituted [*eine ausgedrückte Gegenständlichkeit konstituiert*]. In virtue of such acts, the expression is more than a merely sounded word. It *means* something [*Er meint etwas*], and in so far as it means something, it relates to what is objective [*Gegenständliches*]. This objective somewhat can either be actually present [*gegenwärtig*] through accompanying intuitions, or may at least appear in representation [*vergegenwärtigt*], e.g. in a mental image [*im Phantasiebilde*], and where this happens the relation to an object is realized." (LI II, 280/44)

Brentano's notion of intentionality in the constitution of mental acts, i.e. the fact that all consciousness is consciousness of something, is critically discussed in the Fifth Investigation ("On Intentional Experiences and their 'Contents'"). It is only then that the difference between an "intuitive act" (which reaches its object) and a "signifying act" (which simply aims at it), an essential difference which underlies his entire conception of "fullness" (*Fülle*) in the (re)constitution of meaning, is phenomenologically articulated. Because consciousness is always intentionality, the difference between "pure thought" and "contact with reality" does not lie in the object, but in its mode of givenness, in its mode of being experienced. Knowledge appears then as the confirmation by intuition of what was meant in the unfulfilled, signifying intention, in that the "emptiness" of signifying acts is finally fulfilled by

the "fullness" of intuitive acts. Such is indeed the pervasive theme of the Sixth Investigation, "Elements of a Phenomenological Elucidation of Knowledge". Even though I cannot deal here with Husserl's meticulous theory of intuition, I have simply tried to indicate its correlative significance for his theory of meaning. In fact, Husserl's phenomenology must always be taken as a whole, as a complex whose correlated parts inform and support each other. Precisely because phenomenology originally meant to get rid of "presuppositions", some of the main groundmotifs of the *Logical Investigations* cannot be fully understood until we take into account their developments in Husserl's *Ideas*. As the title of his Second Investigation indicates (*Die ideale Einheit der Spezies und die neueren Abstraktionstheorien*), Husserl's key notion of "ideality" is to be now extensively expounded. I have suggested above that the ideality of meaning is bound up with the fact that pure logic deals exclusively with "the ideal unities that we here call 'meanings'" (LI II, 322). Such is the basis for knowledge, in general, and for scientific expressions in particular, in that objectivity and "objective meaning" are made possible. The essence (*Wesen*) of meaning cannot thus reside in a subjective experience, but must be found in its "content", in its "Idea": in Husserl's own illustrative words, "we mean, not this aspect of red in the house, but Red as such" (LI II, 340). This act of meaning as an identical, intentional unity is an act "founded" (*ein fundiertes*) on underlying apprehensions (*Auffassungen*) of the object, i.e. on certain aspects of this object "meant" by the knowing subject: "a new mode of apprehension has been built on the intuition [*Anschauung*] of the individual house or of its red aspect, a mode of apprehension [*Auffassungsweise*] constitutive of the intuitive presence of the Idea of Red [*die für die intuitive Gegebenheit der Idee Rot konstitutiv ist*]" (LI II, 340/114). We cannot thus have "meaning" without the givenness of the object itself; moreover, this givenness is correlative to intuitive acts, which possess its object, whether by "perception" (*Gegenwärtigung*, "presentation") or by memory and imagination (*Vergegenwärtigung*, "re-presentation") (§§ 25-30). Since perception is, for Husserl, a "primary intuition", insofar as it gives us being *in persona*, it is in this correlative opposition between "intuition" and "re-presentation", but especially in (re)presentation itself that we must find one of the conceptual clues to the ambiguous sense he assigns to the word "meaning" (*Sinn/Bedeutung*).

Following Brentano's theory of intentionality, Husserl affirms the interdependence of intentional acts and representations, in that "an intentional experience only gains objective reference by incorporating an experienced act of presentation in itself, through which *the object is presented to it* [*Ein intentionales Erlebnis gewinnt überhaupt seine Beziehung auf ein Gegenständliches nur dadurch, da in ihm ein Akterlebnis des Vorstellens präsent ist, welches ihm den Gegenstand vorstellig macht*]" (LI II, 598/443). We must recall that Husserl's systematic criticism of the theories of abstraction that were proposed by Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Mill, in the Second Investigation, reaches a climax in his attack on the traditional conception of representation as "a device for economizing thought" or as mere "substitution" (§§ 24-31). As over against idealism and empiricism, Husserl criticizes the language of cause-and-effect which characterizes those theories of

thinking, and proposes the psychological explanation which takes into account the intentional nature of consciousness. Furthermore, Husserl maintains that we intend or mean a "generality", in a part-whole correlation of meaning which ultimately discloses a unity of fulfilment. He finally denounces the nominalist tendency to confuse generality with the representative function of an image or name. For Husserl, meaning is thus bound with intentionality and its fulfilment as expression: expressions as such are constituted by their meaning. As he says in the First Investigation,

"The new concept of meaning therefore originates in a confusion of meaning with fulfilling intuition. On this conception, an expression has meaning if and only if its intention – we should say its 'meaning-intention' – is in fact fulfilled, even if only in a partial, distant and improper manner. The understanding of the expression must be given life through certain 'ideas of meaning' (it is commonly said), i.e. by certain illustrative images." (LI II, 295)

An essential distinction is thus upheld between intuition and meaning: as Lévinas puts it, "(m)eanings aim at their objects; intuition, and in particular perception, reaches them".⁹ It follows that "representation", as opposed to the "direct presentation" of perception, implies different modes of apprehension in the objectifying act. Of course, the use of three different words in German (*Vorstellung*, *Repräsentation*, and *Vergegenwärtigung*) might serve to indicate the psychological nuance of their semantic trope, in connection with the theory of intuition. However, Husserl's theory of meaning turns out to emphasize an equivocal, albeit significant continuity between these words, as we shall see in the next section. It is interesting to note here that Husserl focuses on the ambiguity of the term "*Vorstellung*", as he sums up some of its different connotations:

1. Presentation [*Vorstellung*] as act-material [*Aktmaterie*] or matter, which can be readily completed into: Presentation as the representation [*Repräsentation*] underlying the act, i.e. the full content of the act exclusive of quality;
2. Presentation as "mere representation", as qualitative modification of any form of belief, e.g. as mere understanding of propositions;
3. Presentation as nominal act, i.e. in the sense of an act-class necessarily represented in every complete act since every "matter" [*Materie*] (or "representation") must be given primarily as the matter of such an act;
4. Presentation is often opposed to mere thinking. The same difference is also operative that we also call the difference between intuition [*Anschaung*] and concept [*Begriff*]. To present something to oneself means therefore to achieve a corresponding intuition of what one merely thought of or what one meant [*bedeutet*] but only at best very inadequately intuited [*veranschaulicht*];
5. A very common concept of presentation concerns the opposition of imagination [Imagination] to perception [*Wahrnehmung*].

⁹ Emmanuel Lévinas, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern, 1973), p. 73.

Husserl goes on to include in this list the "content" itself of "*Vorstellungen*" (LI II, 652-659/520-529). What is of utmost importance for our study is Husserl's remark that "an act of presentation is as such directly intuited, precisely where this distinction between a presentation and a presentation of this presentation is phenomenologically drawn." It is precisely to this *Vorstellung der Vorstellung* that we must turn now, as we explore the meaning of meaning in Husserl's *Ideas I*.

The Meaning of Meaning

In the previous sections I attempted to understand how Husserl articulates *Bedeutung* and *Gegenstand* in the *Logical Investigations*, suggesting that his theory of meaning would be incomplete without the clarifications furnished by the *Ideas I*. As Paul Ricoeur observed in the preface to his French translation of the *Ideen I*, Husserl's masterpiece opens with an extremely difficult chapter on logic which paradoxically presupposes the pre-understanding of his *Logical Investigations*:

"If phenomenology is to be 'presuppositionless', in what sense does it presuppose a logical framework? Initially it is impossible to answer this question, for the response would be just the law of the spiritual movement of *Ideas I* which we are going to attempt to grasp. This law is at first supported by a logic and a psychology, then through a spiral motion it changes level, is freed from these initial supports, and finally emerges as primary and without presuppositions. Only at the end of this deepening movement is phenomenology in a position to found the science which at first elicited it."¹⁰

Although Ricoeur's "deepening", hermeneutical reading of Husserl should never be dismissed as an "apologetic" one – even though Ricoeur may be regarded as a "faithful" disciple of Husserl –, the "presuppositionlessness" of phenomenology remains far from being decided. I am certainly not suggesting that Ricoeur (or, for that reason, the phenomenological movement in France) would ever be satisfied with Husserl's liberation from psychologism and logicism, as a decisive evidence of having found a "presuppositionless" Archimedean point. Nor am I questioning the radicalness of Ricoeur's hermeneutical critique of the "transcendental". I simply think that this kind of critique is not radical enough, in that it turns out to think itself to be "transcendental", in that it simply assumes too much – or at least more than it can, *de facto* and *de jure*. After all, Ricoeur himself seems to betray the "transcendental" claims of his own project, when he describes it as a post-Hegelian return to Kant.¹¹ Although I do not intend to re-examine Ricoeur's hermeneutical critique, his *rapprochement* between Husserl and Kant is very instructive, especially as it concludes that "Husserl *did* phenomenology, but Kant *limited* and *founded* it".¹² My point here

¹⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern, 1967), p. 15.

¹¹ Cf. P. Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), p. 3; *Le conflit des interprétations* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), p. 403.

¹² P. Ricoeur, *Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology*, op. cit., p. 201. The original version of this article, "Kant et Husserl", appeared in *Kantstudien* XLVI (1954). Cf. for an exhaustive study Iso

is that Ricoeur succeeds in showing that Husserl's transcendental phenomenology moves away from the ontological ground of Kant's critique towards the constitutive problem of subjective life, and yet he fails to account for the very "foundation laying" (*Grundlegung*) which allows for the articulation of the limiting function with the self-determination of the in-itself as freedom in the practical use of reason. In effect, it would be only in light of Husserl's shift from the "world of things" towards the "life-world", and the transitions from his static phenomenology towards genetic and generative phenomenologies in the later writings, that one can fully undertake the task of a transcendental phenomenology of meaning, particularly for the social sciences.¹³

The essence (*Wesen*) of phenomenology, its peculiar characteristic as foundational, pure science, consists in its radical opposition to what Husserl calls "the natural attitude". As opposed to our naive belief in the world, which we often take for granted in our natural, dogmatic attitude, Husserl challenges us to suspend, to bracket, such an ensemble of *doxai* we call "world", in order to become conscious of this very "world" we have constituted as unity of meaning and of our being-in-the-world which conditions this constituting. Phenomenology as we find in Husserl's *Ideas I* may be fairly described as an invitation to see what has been given to us in the constitution of the world and the meaning of this givenness (*Gegebenheit*). "Seeing" must be understood in its most phenomenological sense, the "bringing into light" and "making to appear" (*phainesthai*) of the phenomena, which Heidegger so neatly explores in § 7 of *Sein und Zeit* ("*Die phänomenologische Methode der Untersuchung*"). I remark in passing that Heidegger's "ontological investigation" essentially differs from Husserl's "logical investigation" precisely because of the "transcendental" claims of the latter.¹⁴ For the *logos* Heidegger is seeking after is the primordial "gathering" which has been forgotten and eclipsed by the metaphysical *eidos* of transcendental participation. Husserl's "Platonism", his pedagogy of liberation from *doxa* to *epistémé*, even in its subtlest attacks upon realism and idealism, seems to pervade his phenomenology of seeing as a tacit longing for the *parousia* of the Other. In effect, Husserl's philosophy gradually moves away from an ideal, transcendental logic towards the intersubjectivity of a transcendental, linguistic community. The "transcendental consciousness", which appears in between, serves to confirm the "central" place accorded to the *Ideas I* in the *opera husserliana*.

Indeed, what we find in the *Ideas I* is both a description of "pure phenomenology" and the transcendental propaedeutic which introduces us to it, i.e. a "phenomenological philosophy". Therefore, the title of Husserl's *magnum opus* at once

Kern, *Kant und Husserl. Eine Untersuchung über Husserls Verhältnis zu Kant und Neukantianismus* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1964).

¹³ Cf. the excellent study by Anthony Steinbock, *Home and Beyond: Generative Phenomenology after Husserl* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern, 1995); I alluded to some of Steinbock's guiding theses in my *Tractatus ethico-politicus* (Porto Alegre: EDIPUCRS, 1999), p. 189-211.

¹⁴ Cf. Ernildo J. Stein, *Seminário sobre a Verdade* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1993), p. 146-180; 218-256; Zeljko Loparic, "O Ponto Cego do Olhar Fenomenológico", *O que nos faz pensar* 10/1 (1996): p. 127-149.

indicates and means what must be the *Sache* of the book: *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*. Husserl is above all concerned about the role and place of consciousness in our experience of cognition. The Cartesian *cogito* is no longer reified in the dichotomist opposition of *res cogitans* to the *res extensa*, but it gives way instead to the stream of consciousness (*Bewusstseinsstrom*) uniting each distinct *cogitatio* to a distinct *cogitatum* (I §§ 28, 34-37).¹⁵ The transcendental spiral of Husserl's epistemology, predelineated in his ideal of a *Wissenschaftslehre* in the *Logical Investigations*, is now more sharply drawn against the contrasting backgrounds provided by both naturalism and idealism. Following Kant, Husserl seeks to know how experience as consciousness gives or contacts an "object" (*Gegenstand*). The meaning (*Bedeutung*) of this constituting/constituted experience of consciousness vis-à-vis an object, that is, the constitution of meaning, appears thus as one of the major themes of the *Ideas I* (I §§ 34ff., 76ff., 136ff.). Furthermore, the very modifications brought about by the phenomenological attitude as meaningful descriptions of experience strongly suggest, as John Caputo has shown, that we find in Husserl a veritable "proto-hermeneutics":

"A 'hermeneutic' because it shows how we make our way through the flow of experience by means of certain anticipatory cuts which adumbrate its structure and predicts its course, which gives us a reading or interpretation of things; but a 'proto-hermeneutics' because in the end it backs off from the full implications of its own discovery."¹⁶

In his complex analysis of the *Erlebnis*, which constitutes one of the main objects of a "pure phenomenology", Husserl defines phenomenology as "a descriptive eidetic doctrine of transcendently pure mental processes as viewed in the phenomenological attitude [*eine deskriptive Wesenslehre der transzendental reinen Erlebnisse in der phänomenologischen Einstellung*]" (I 167/171). It is only through the *epoché*, i.e. the suspension of the natural thesis of the world, that consciousness attains by reflection a "region" which transcends nature – the phenomenological region of the "pure consciousness" – and operates what may be called its "transcendental constitution" of meaning. This is summarized in a highly revealing remark by Husserl, in his "General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology":

"Concerning our terminology we may add the following. Important motives, grounded in the epistemological problematic, justify our designating 'pure' consciousness, about which we shall have so much to say, as transcendental consciousness and the operation by which it is reached the transcendental *epoché*. As a method this operation will be divided into different steps of 'excluding', 'parenthesizing'; and thus our method will assume the characteristic of a step-by-step reduction. For this reason we shall, on most occasions, speak of phenomenological reductions (but also, with reference to their collective unity, we shall speak of *the* phenomenological reduction) and, accord-

¹⁵ *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. F. Kersten (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1983); hereafter abbr. I. The German edition is that of the *Husserliana*, III.

¹⁶ John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 38.

ingly, from an epistemological point of view, we shall refer to transcendental reductions. It should be added that these terms and *all* others must be understood exclusively in the senses that *our* expositions prescribe for them and not in any others which history or the terminological habits of the reader may suggest." (I 66)

Husserl's remarks on terminology often reveal, as in the quotation above, his proto-hermeneutic preoccupation with possible misunderstandings on the part of his readers, due to a certain pre-understanding of the matter presented. The interdependence of representation, historicity, and understanding is not explicitly articulated by Husserl, but is remarkably predelineated in his phenomenological project. In point of fact, the above confession of the father of phenomenology betrays, at once, the circularity and prolific effectiveness of Husserl's *transcendental* logos. On the one hand, the innumerable detours and contours of the Husserlian spiralling appear to transcend the traditional delineations of limiting concepts in philosophy, in that his analyses seem to go deeper, as it were, into the essential *Sache* of meant objects. For meaning is, in effect, the signifying, interpretative fulfillment of positing objects as posited (I §§ 131-134). However, the meaning of the "is" never is completely made explicit by Husserl. In particular, his inarticulate correlation of being and intuition – almost exclusively articulated as (re)presentation, thence the circularity – has to a large extent tilled the soil for the germination of Heidegger's fundamental ontology and post-Heideggerian hermeneutics. On the other hand, the ontological neutralization implied by this circularity cannot inhibit the genesis of sense, for, as Caputo points out, "(t)he very project of neutralization proceeds from an ontology of consciousness as self-neutralizing."¹⁷ The proliferation of hermeneutic projects and pro-grammes after Husserl, including the retroactive effects of his own deconstruction, are there to prove it. What is at stake, in the ultimate analysis, is "presence" and its "transcendental" place in Husserl's theory of meaning, as we are dealing with a particular problematic which has underlined this entire paper: if meaning is omnipresent, what is the place of such a "(re)presentation" as omnipresence? This is certainly what might be termed the displacement (*Entstellung*) of the representation (*Vorstellung*), namely, the transcendental move which keeps placing it-self always "before" (*vor*) the placing (*stellen*) of an undecided self. That is why we have found the meaning of meaning, according to the topography of *Ideas I*, in the "transcendental" (dis)placing of the (re)presentation. And this is a constitutive matter of principle (*arché*), in fact, the "principle of principles":

"(T)hat every originary presentive intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition, that everything originarily (so to speak, in its 'personal' actuality) offered to us in 'intuition' is to be accepted simply as what is presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it is presented there." (I 44/52)

The self-givenness of being (*als was es sich gibt*) is itself expressed in terms of a "transcendental as", a correlation of meaning between the *essentia* of what is given (*Was*) and its *realitas* that is (*Da*) the intrinsic *possibilitas* of the giving itself. Such is the Husserlian meaning of meaning: this "transcendental" movement from

¹⁷ J. Caputo, op. cit., p. 54.

the ideal *Sinn/Bedeutung* to its real *Erfüllung/Bedeutung*. Although I have not dealt with the technicalities of Husserl's "noetic-noematic" correlation of meaning, its essential meaning lies precisely in this implicit move of signification, from a pre-linguistic *Sinn* towards its signifying *logos* (I §§ 124-127): The ideal sense, as a void, an absence, demands to be fulfilled so as to express what the sign stands for. Of course, as we have seen in the previous sections, not every sign has a "meaning". I have highlighted this double function of the "as" in order to indicate the transcendental placing of *Bedeutung* between its original sense (*Sinn*) as given presentation of the *Gegenstand* and its teleological fulfilment (*Erfüllung*) as (re)presentation of givenness. It is precisely at this level of transcendental "between-ness" that I shall attempt to conclude, by returning to the problematic of origin (*arché*) and end (*telos*) of the world *qua* structure, genesis and horizon of meaning.

Between Eidos and Logos: Displacement of the Critique

I shall close this brief study of Husserl's theory of meaning in the *Investigations* with a few remarks concerning this problematic of origins, which turns out to be the problematic par excellence in the critique of transcendental analyses. As I have indicated throughout this article, the meaning of meaning can be linguistically expressed in terms of a "transcendental" move from an original sense toward its logical fulfilment. The idea of an "original meaning" is largely developed by Husserl in his intriguing study on the *Origin of Geometry*, translated into French and critically analyzed by Derrida. According to Husserl, the fact that the original meaning of geometry continues to be valid *hic et nunc*, preserving thus this selfsame meaning throughout history, indicates that there must be a certain "unity" of meaning associated with this "ideal object" (*ideale Gegenständlichkeit*) we call "geometry".¹⁸ The constitution of the geometrical tradition implies, therefore, a "transcendental" ideality vis-à-vis its own history.

We have already seen that Husserl's "ideality" cannot be mistaken as an expression of psychologism or metaphysical idealism, but should be regarded as a limiting concept, correlative to the *Idee* "in the Kantian sense" (I 166f.). I have also indicated that, in the *Logical Investigations*, the ideality of meaning is bound up with the self-constitution of ideal objects, as opposed to language which is itself constituted (cf. LI II 248f-256). Derrida points out that, in the *Origin*, Husserl brackets "constituted language" so as to highlight the "originality of constitutive language":

"To constitute an ideal object is to put it at the permanent disposition of a pure gaze. Now, before being the constituted and exceeded auxiliary of an act which proceeds toward the truth of sense, linguistic ideality is the milieu in which the ideal object settles as what is sedimented or deposited."¹⁹

¹⁸ J. Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction* (University of Nebraska Press, 1989), p. 160 f. The original French edition came out in 1962.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

It is thus through language and within language alone that history reveals and makes possible the very "handing down" and "sedimentation" of its objective historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*). Tradition and language imply together the ideality of meaning which leads Husserl to define history as "the vital movement of the coexistence and the interweaving of original formations and sedimentations of meaning".²⁰ There is, therefore, a transcendental movement from an original meaning toward its historically constituted sedimentations, a movement which presents itself as constitutive of history and historical meaning. The question that arises now concerns not as much the movement itself, between *arché* and *telos*, as the ultimacy of such a transcendental referring. In other words, what is the "absolute" signified/signifier after all? Caputo has shown that "what is ultimately and truly absolute" (I 193) in Husserl's theory of constitution is nothing other than "the time-flow itself, the absolute streaming of the stream, the flux (*Fluss*) itself", underlying all the accumulations of unities of meaning (including the transcendental ego) and maintaining the primordial absolute of temporality in time-consciousness (I 194-196).²¹ Derrida points out that the internal time-consciousness is itself what makes history possible by its implicit dialectic of protention and retention: "In the movement of protention, the present is retained and gone beyond as past present, in order to constitute another primordial and original Absolute, another Living Present."²² It is in this very *lebendig gegenwärtig* that Derrida discerns what he calls "the ultimate form of ideality", the phenomenological incarnation of the metaphysics of presence:

"La forme ultime de l'idéalité, celle dans laquelle en dernière instance on peut anticiper ou rappeler toute répétition, l'idéalité de l'idéalité est le présent vivant, la présence à soi de la vie transcendante. La présence a toujours été et sera toujours, à l'infini, la forme dans laquelle, on peut le dire apodictiquement, se produira la diversité infinie des contenus." (VP 4f.)

Derrida goes on to affirm that this ultimacy of presence has, after all, dominated the problematic of metaphysical foundations since the foundation of metaphysics by the Greek opposition between "matter" and "form". The radicalness of such a problematic – the foundation of the foundation – certainly reveals Derrida's indebtedness to his great *maître à penser* Martin Heidegger, whose hermeneutic reading of Kant's *Kritik* is radicalized by deconstruction. In fact, one of Heidegger's critical remarks in his seminal study on *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (1929) is directed against the Kantian idea of a "transcendental logic", which Heidegger denounces as sheer nonsense (§ 45).²³ I think, furthermore, that this criticism is certainly also aimed at Husserl's "transcendental phenomenology", as Heidegger maintains the fundamental ontological project of *Sein und Zeit*, where the disclosedness of Being is said to constitute the very *transcendentalis* of phenomenological truth (§ 7).²⁴ Derrida goes,

²⁰ Ibid., p. 174.

²¹ J. Caputo, op. cit., pp. 46 f.

²² J. Derrida, *Origin of Geometry*, op. cit., p. 58.

²³ Cf. M. Heidegger, *Kant et le problème de la métaphysique*, Introduction et traduction de l'allemand par Alphonse de Waelhens et Walter Biemel (Paris: Gallimard, 1953), p. 299.

²⁴ M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986), p. 38.

however, further than the early Heidegger, as he questions the constitution of presence at the very ontological level of the hermeneutic project: "presence" is "founding" itself, even if we assume the primordially of language. Derrida thinks in effect that Husserl's pre-linguistic, transcendental subject betrays, as it were, a certain *dépassement* (an "overcoming"), a *relève* (in the radical sense of *verwinden*) of its own self-presentation, which anticipates somehow its being constituted by language.

We can thus see that, although emerging out of the so-called traditional, metaphysical view of language, Husserl's theory of meaning is not confined to the linguistic expression of a re-presenting thought or its corresponding reality, present somewhere *in essentia*. Although he remains on a metaphysical level of "presence" (either real or ideal "presencing"), Husserl wants to emphasize the role of intentionality, the ideality of language, and the constitutive character of consciousness in the fulfilment of "meaning". This ambiguous phenomenology of meaning, between an original meaning (*vouloir dire*) and its fulfilled constitution as meaning (*signification*), presupposes thus a "découpage of the logical a priori within the general a priori of language" (VP 7), which Derrida sees already predelineated in the Husserlian project of a "pure logical grammar" (LI II, 527). The ideal of presuppositionlessness, in spite of its failure to avoid the omnipresent presupposition of its own presencing as self-constituting *eidōs*, has nevertheless opened up an undecidable horizon of meaning which resists logical closures. Derrida believes that the very phenomenological endeavor to protect the spoken *logos*, as opposed to the sedimentary *graphé*, the *logos* affirming itself as fulfilled intentionality, betrays its original ideality as "voice" (*la voix, phoné*), which is also the living (*lebendig*) medium for a self-constituting consciousness. (VP 9) If *logos* and *phoné* are essentially tied up with each other, a transcendental "between-ness" appears thus to "participate" in the "constituted" and "constituting" aspects of significations, "between" an un-heard signified and its responsive signifier, continually impelling us to respond and to speak. What lies "between" signified and signifier remains arbitrary, since no transcendental place has been found where to judge (*kaineo*) from. And this crisis of "transcendental" thinking continues to remind us that no critique has thus far been capable of deciding the ultimate meaning of our responding to the voice of Being.