

HUSSERL'S *LOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS*: AN INTRODUCTION

The years 2000/2001 mark the centennial of the initial publication of Edmund Husserl's remarkable *Logical Investigations*, to which the present volume is devoted. Each of the first six essays in this issue is directed respectively at a different one of the six logical investigations in the second volume of Husserl's work.<sup>1</sup> The aim of the present paper is to set the stage for these essays by making some remarks about the first volume, the *Prolegomena to Pure Logic* and by providing a thumbnail sketch of the argument of the second volume as a whole.<sup>2</sup> In the opening lines of the foreword to the second edition (1913) Husserl famously characterized the *Logical Investigations* as "a breakthrough and thus not an end, but a beginning". In order to appreciate the sense of this remark, it is necessary to look backwards as well as forwards from the book. With this in mind, I begin with review of the two sources of the work, as reported by Husserl himself in the original foreword of 1900.

Husserl says that the *Logical Investigations* grew, first, out of unavoidable (*unabweisbare*) problems that repeatedly hindered his efforts, over many years, to provide a philosophical clarification of the theory and method of pure mathematics. When he looked to contemporary deductive systems, he found only obscurity regarding their theoretical status. Flagging the self-reflexive demands he would place on phenomenology, Husserl complains that contemporary logic, called to clarify science, is not itself a science. This complaint, it bears emphasizing, should not be construed as a failure to appreciate the development of mathematical logic which Husserl characterizes as an "indisputable discipline of mathematical form and method". Yet it was precisely the development of this logic, not restricted to a purely quantitative domain, that brought home to him the need for "a general theory of formal deductive systems", a theory that not only elaborates the connections and differences between quantitative and non-quantitative domains, but takes the further step towards "the more fundamental questions of the essence of the form of knowledge in contrast to the matter of knowledge and the sense of the difference between formal ... and material determinations, truths, laws".<sup>3</sup>

In the original foreword of the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl singles out an additional source of the work, namely, a dissatisfaction with attempts, including his own, to clarify the logic of deductive sciences through psychological analyses. Psychology was “clear and helpful” when it came to questions of origins of mathematical notions or the formation of a practical method. But the transition “from the psychological connections of thinking to the logical unity of the content of thinking” was uneven and obscure. Increasingly, he came to doubt that “the objectivity of mathematics and science was compatible at all with a psychological grounding of the logical”. As a result of these doubts, as he puts it, “I saw myself forced more and more to general critical reflections on the essence of logic and especially on the relation between the subjectivity of knowing and the objectivity of the content of knowledge”. He resigned himself to postponing his philosophical-mathematical investigations until he had succeeded in “penetrating the basic questions of epistemology and the critical understanding of logic as a science”.<sup>4</sup>

By Husserl's own account, then, the *Logical Investigations* has two sources: the problem of providing a scientific, self-reflexive account of logical form and method, as a condition of science, and the problem of relating the subjectivity of knowing with the objectivity of the content of knowledge. Among the many formidable issues confronted by Husserl in the *Logical Investigations*, perhaps the most formidable is that of the convergence of these two problems.

In this connection, there are two important clues to the work, flanking the foreword of the first edition. These clues deserve mention both because they situate the work historically and biographically and because, not unlike the two sources of the work, they signal a basic tension running through it. The first clue is the dedication “in admiration and friendship” to Carl Stumpf, Brentano's erstwhile student, under whom Husserl, at Brentano's suggestion, wrote his habilitation “On the Concept of Number: Psychological Analyses”, later incorporated into the *Philosophy of Arithmetic: Psychological and Logical Investigations* of 1891 (XII: 1–21, 289–338). The second clue is the quotation from Goethe at the end of the foreword: “One is against nothing more stridently than the errors one has first set aside” (Goethe 316).

What makes these clues intriguing is their seeming incongruity both with aspects of the historical record and with one another. There is a standard picture of Husserl's development in the last decade or so of the nineteenth century to the effect that Frege's criticisms, in an 1894 review of the *Philosophy of Arithmetic*, enabled Husserl to see the error of his psychologistic ways in the days when he worked under Brentano and Stumpf.<sup>5</sup>

On this standard picture, the Goethe quotation is tantamount to an admission of such a lapse. The quotation, however, is misleading inasmuch as it suggests that Husserl embraced the psychologistic arguments criticized in the *Prolegomena*. But there is no evidence in his *Philosophy of Arithmetic* or elsewhere that he ever seriously entertained a theory of the sorts drafted by Mill, Sigwart, Mach, or others.<sup>6</sup>

Still, Husserl does attribute the mistakes of his earlier writings, if not explicitly to a psychologistic approach, at least to a conviction that psychology in some sense – no doubt the “descriptive psychology” that he learned from Brentano – is the key to a “philosophical clarification” of logic. Husserl also observes that the course of his development had distanced him “from the men and works to which my scientific education is most indebted” (XVIII: 7). Given this observation and the critique of his earlier work, his dedication to Stumpf might seem disingenuous, to say the least.

Yet Husserl’s debt to Stumpf is sufficient to regard the dedication as quite genuine. When Husserl penned his dedication, Stumpf was mainly known for three works: his habilitation, *On the Psychological Origin of the Representation of Space* (1873), his two volume study of the *Psychology of Sound* (1883–90), and a long essay entitled “Psychology and Epistemology” (1892). From the account, in Stumpf’s habilitation, of the relation between visual qualities and extension, Husserl derives his definition of dependent and independent parts, a central theme of the Fourth Investigation, and the notion of “fusion” (*Verschmelzung*) elaborated by Stumpf in his *Psychology of Sound* provides Husserl with crucial hints in the same context. What also no doubt struck a sympathetic chord in Husserl’s thinking is the essay “Psychology and Epistemology”, with its insistence that there must be a way between empiricism and Kantian transcendentalism and that, while rational justification and psychological explanation are not to be confused, “no claim can be epistemologically true and psychologically false”.<sup>7</sup>

This last remark might in fact be considered one of the mottos of the first volume of the *Logical Investigations*, entitled “Prolegomena to Pure Logic”. As the title suggests, the *Prolegomena* say what must be said first, in order to carry out the task of the *Logical Investigations*. In the *Prolegomena* Husserl accordingly argues that logic is a theoretical, formal, and a priori science, independent of psychology or metaphysics, in contrast to the widely held assumption that logic is a practical art dependent upon some other, typically empirical science. Yet he is far from denying that the question of logic’s “theoretical foundations” (*theoretische Grundlagen*) and its relationship to psychology “essentially coincides . . . with the car-

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## HUSSERL'S THEORY OF MEANING IN THE FIRST LOGICAL INVESTIGATION

It is by way of a reflection on the idea of *science* that Husserl is inevitably led to a theory of meaning in the *Logical Investigations*. According to Husserl, knowledge does not necessarily have to be expressed in the form of a sentence. Knowledge may very well have a place outside of any kind of explicit formulation, even though it is only in the form of sentences that truth “can become an abiding possession of science, a documented, ever available treasure for knowledge and advancing research” (Husserl 1970, 250).

One here recognizes a theme that is very similar to Frege's idea of knowledge as a “common treasure of thought which is transmitted from one generation to another”. For Husserl as for Frege, what is at issue is to understand the type of objectivity of human thinking and its linguistic expression, an objectivity that is public and independent of the contingencies of any particular human subject.

For both Husserl and Frege, however, the type of objectivity here in question remains beyond discourse and the actuality of any utterances, even though this type of objectivity is manifest only in discourse. The problematic of both Husserl and Frege is thus centered on the *identity* of meaning which transcends different acts of stating and inscription, thus allowing various individuals to say “the same thing” and understand each other.

Husserl probably did not acquire his notion of the ideality of meaning directly from Frege, even though the German philosopher's anti-psychological critique which he targeted against the Austrian philosopher's first stage of thinking could have in fact provided a circumstance to arrive at this notion. The decisive source for Husserl's theory of ideal meaning in the *Logical Investigations* is undoubtedly Bernard Bolzano's *Wissenschaftslehre* (1837). An ideal entity with a certain form of identity which functions as the support for the objectivity of the sciences, Husserl's notion of meaning bears a direct relation to Bolzano's ideas of “representation in itself” and “proposition in itself”.

However, this is not the only aspect of Husserl's theory of meaning which the First Logical Investigation presents in the service of a phenomenological elucidation of science as that body of knowledge which is expressed and preserved in meanings.

After 1896 (the year Husserl taught an intense course on Bolzano recently edited by Elisabeth Schuhmann), Husserl is a theoretician of the ideality of meaning expressed in sentences. But Husserl also is and remains a psychologist who issues from the school of Brentano and who thinks in terms of "intentionality" – acts by which consciousness relates to (or at least intimates) its objects. In the preface to the first edition of 1901 of the second volume of the *Logical Investigations*, phenomenology is defined as a descriptive psychology. But as a descriptive psychology, it is the result of a synthesis of Bolzano's anti-psychological objectivism (which assisted Husserl in discovering the ideality of thought) and Brentanian psychology as a philosophy of consciousness. Phenomenology is the ideality of meaning plus intentionality.

The synthetic character of Husserl's phenomenology is nowhere more clearly delineated than in the first stage of the construction of the *Logical Investigations*: the theory of meaning. In effect, Husserl's theory of meaning, as it is developed in the First Logical Investigation, is marked by a profound duality. On the one hand, the ideality of meaning takes on a prominent role and, in fact, even serves as the prototypical possibility for ideal objects in general. On the other hand, the fundamentally intentional character of meaning is brought to light by showing how meaning is inscribed in acts of consciousness, namely, meaning acts. This duality creates a number of tensions, but it should also be seen as responsible in large measure for the phenomenological character of the analysis itself. Between two styles of analysis and problems, each of a different origin, phenomenology attempts to blaze a new and third path – one on which intentionality and semantic objectivity would become compatible.

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In light of the general aim of the *Logical Investigations* (the phenomenological elucidation of the conditions for what is called "science"), the First Logical Investigation will undertake an investigation of a basic element of science: expression (*Ausdruck*).

What exactly is an expression?

Husserl begins by distinguishing expressive signs from non-expressive signs. One could not claim that all signs "express" something. For example, a simple mnemonic sign like a knot in a handkerchief does not

“express” anything. By pointing to a past experience that we are to remember, a knot in a handkerchief simply *indicates*. In itself, such a sign does not “express” anything and does not say anything about the experience in question or about anything else.

One must therefore clearly distinguish what gives rise to an indication, the stimulus by which consciousness receives an orientation towards something existing by means of another existing thing (for example, the sign that I perceive), from what properly belongs to an expression. If expressions are themselves signs (*Zeichen*), the relation which obtains between expressions and their meaning is not one of indication (*Anzeichen*). Meaning is not something belonging to an existing object, of which an expression would have the function of calling to mind a past, present, or future existence. What is, then, the status of expression?

One should note that Husserl does not present this theoretical object as if it constituted his own invention or a point of view properly his own. For Husserl, it is more a question of beginning from a distinction that is a common one, in order to delineate its significance by means of phenomenological description.

What, indeed, do we commonly discern as belonging to an expression?

On the one hand, we recognize the physical “face” of an expression (sounds, written signs) and, on the other hand, we recognize a “psychic experience” (*Erlebnis*), which is associated with signs (in the sense of a psychological association). It is this “psychic experience” which is supposed to constitute the “meaning” of the expression in question.

Husserl's problem is thus to give this distinction a rigorous status by displacing the implicit metaphysics which is contained in this distinction *in terms of description*. In effect, by following Husserl's own exposition of the “naïve” theory of expression, as we find it inscribed in the ordinary use of language, we recognize that this is nothing other than the “*idea*” theory of meaning. According to this theory, as had been argued by Locke, meaning amounts to the idea associated with the word. By contrast, Husserl will attempt to demonstrate phenomenologically that such a theory is false. By means of a phenomenological description, the terms in which this theory is inherited (“physical face of the sign” and “meaning”) will undergo a profound transformation.

To be sure, if we focus exclusively on the situation where discourse (*Rede*, which constitutes the proper level of what Husserl calls “expression”) is used in its most common function, namely, in its communicative function, it is easy to understand what sustains the “naïve theory” of expression. As a basic point of fact, it would seem that discourse is essentially geared towards making something known to someone other than

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LANGUAGE AND THE FORMATION OF GENERAL CONCEPTS:  
THE SECOND LOGICAL INVESTIGATION IN A GENETIC LIGHT

1. INTRODUCTION

I suspect the title of this paper may raise a few eyebrows. We all know that Second Investigation does not contain a genetic model of concept formation. To the contrary, in the Second Investigation Husserl constantly attacks the British empiricists for substituting accounts of psychological genesis for phenomenological analysis, and even suggests that the two are mutually exclusive.<sup>1</sup> We also all know that there is no discussion of the role of language in concept formation in the Second Investigation, in the *Logical Investigations* as a whole, or anywhere else in Husserl for that matter. Is not Husserl famous (or rather infamous) as that 20th century philosopher who failed to make the linguistic turn, and so who would have little or nothing to say about how conceptual thought involves words? One could even argue that for all his criticism of the empiricists in the Second Investigation and elsewhere, Husserl remains locked in the very same empiricist conception of the pre-linguistic genesis of concepts that proponents of the linguistic turn have challenged so effectively. For example, Wilfrid Sellars has branded as a version of the Myth of the Given the classical empiricist view that concepts are formed on the basis of perceptions of particulars and associations among these particulars. On the empiricist account, Sellars holds, language enters in only at the end, as a set of convention sounds supervening upon a solipsistic, pre-linguistic logical space of meaning. Sellars opposes this view with his psychological nominalism, which maintains that: (1) the perception of *p* presupposes possessing the concept of *p*, and so cannot be its genetic origin; and (2) the acquisition of the concept of *p* presupposes a complex network of other concepts and social initiation into pre-existing language-games.<sup>2</sup> For Sellars, the linguistic turn means that language is the pre-condition for the most basic forms of cognition, concepts, and intentionality. He defines psychological nominalism as the

view that prior to language, there is no awareness of the logical space of particulars, sorts, resemblances, facts, and no intentionality at all.<sup>3</sup>

If the Sellarsian form of the linguistic turn is right, then the prospects of deriving something useful from Husserl for the relation between language and concepts could seem pretty bleak. Minimally, Husserl shares the empiricist view that the attentive perception of individuals and their individual features occurs prior to and as a condition of the formation of general concepts. Further, although Husserl does not explicitly deny that language plays a role in the formation of general concepts, he also does not give an actual account of the role of verbal language in ideation. So arguably, ideation *could* be interpreted as an essentially solipsistic, non-verbal process according to Husserl.

Yet despite the validity of some of the objections against Husserl raised from the point of view of the linguistic turn, and despite his own distaste for genetic analyses in the Second Investigation, I will argue that certain insights from Husserl are quite useful for addressing the question of the relation between language and conceptualization. I also believe these insights can help us understand the role of language in a deeper and more adequate way than is generally done by advocates of the linguistic turn, including Sellars himself. One central contribution is Husserl's analysis of what conceptualization is (and what it is not). The difficulty of arriving at a clear understanding of the nature of general concepts is made evident by Husserl's critique in the Second Investigation of the many wrong turns of the empiricists. Lacking such an understanding, it is impossible to give an accurate determination of the relation of language to concept. Further, Husserl's own later genetic approach emphasizes that there are many levels and stages of conceptualization. This approach corrects the tendency to an all-or-nothing notion of conceptual awareness characteristic of Sellars and others under the influence of a certain interpretation of the Kantian distinction between concepts and intuition. The Sellarsian–Kantian reasoning runs: intuitions without concepts are blind, concepts presuppose and are formed on the basis of language, intuitions without language are blind, all intentionality is linguistic. Arguably, it is the all-or-nothing approach that founds the claim that *all* conceptual awareness presupposes language. One chooses as paradigmatic what is in fact only a relatively sophisticated type of conceptuality that does in fact presuppose language, and claims that there is no other kind. But if there are more primitive and genetically prior forms of conceptualization, then this approach really does not answer the *general* question of whether concepts presuppose language. Further, this approach says nothing about how and at what point language enters in, or precisely what changes it effects in pre-linguistic intentionality. That is,



the Sellarsian-Kantian version of the linguistic turn does not provide an account of the *genesis* of conceptual awareness, the genesis of language, or of the interrelations between the two.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, I would argue that a serious failing of the Sellarsian-Kantian approach is that it undercuts the very possibility of providing an adequate genetic account of concepts and language. For if we start with the view that there is no intentionality at all prior to language, how can language and concept acquisition ever get off the ground? On this view, we must assume that at the start of language acquisition there is no attentive awareness, but only the stimulus-response production of sounds. Yet how can even the most rule-governed production of sounds move a system across the abyss from blind stimulus-response behavior to vision, attentive awareness, and conceptual thought?<sup>5</sup> By contrast, in the mature Husserl we find a detailed genetic account of the various stages of pre-predicative and predicative judgment on the basis of which conceptual judgments first emerge. The idea that there is at least some pre-linguistic intentionality and that this gradually becomes conceptual and linguistic intentionality is far more plausible than the view that language and concepts emerge out of a system with no intentionality at all.<sup>6</sup>

In the first part of my paper I will set forth a genetic account of the stages of conceptualization. I will also show how the Second Investigation can be read in the light of *Experience and Judgment* as contributing to such a genetic account. In the second part I will discuss the role of language in this genesis. It is true that even the mature Husserl has little explicitly to say about the genesis of language, or how language enters into the genesis of concepts. Therefore in the second part of my paper I will draw upon other sources (especially the developmental psychologist Vygotsky) to develop an account of the role of language at the various stages of conceptualization outlined in Part I. Although I will examine certain empirically-based developmental models, it should be stressed that I do so only as a starting-point and illustration of my analysis. In fact I ultimately support a view quite different from that of Vygotsky. My concern here is in any case not the empirical developmental question of how concepts *in fact* emerge, or of what role language *in fact* plays in their genesis. Rather, my concern is the philosophical question of the *necessary* genetic conditions for the emergence of concepts, and the *necessary* role (if any) of language. In this sense, I maintain the distinction dear to Husserl between a psychological and a phenomenological genetic account. However, I think that accounts of empirical genesis can at least give us clues about what would be an adequate philosophical account. Minimally, we would want the necessary relations asserted by the philosophical model to be consistent with the