Husserl, With and Against Frege*

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Translated from the French by Elizabeth Davis†

What can we learn from Husserl today? What can we learn, if we refuse to endorse the theses which characterize transcendental phenomenology: the possibility of eidetic analysis and the appeal to the evidence of essence, the indubitable character of immanent perception (and corelatively the absolute validity of the Cogito’s reflection on its cogitata, opening up to a description, free of all theoretical freight, of experiences), and the possibility of bracketing the thesis of the world without absurdity?

One of the most widespread philosophical means of doing this today consists of seeking in the Husserlian analysis of intentionality (actually in a certain tendentious reading of this analysis) the proper concepts for founding a psychological theory of mental states and psychic processes, conceived, according to the "computationalist paradigm," as operations on these mental states. In this article I would like to instill some doubts on this subject by protesting against an historico-philosophical operation which seems to be an appropriation of an illegitimate legacy. To make of Husserl "the prescursor of the current interest in intentionality—the first in the philosophy of language and the mind to have a general theory of the role of mental representations," in the words of Hubert Dreyfus¹ is not possible except at the cost of considerable distortion of Husserl’s philosophy: the naturalization of phenomenology, the decline of a philosophy cut out to be ranked first in descriptive psychology. In order to dispel at the outset any misunderstanding of my position, I would like to make clear that I am not arguing for a return to transcendental phenomenology, a project in which I do not believe, but rather against a series of confusions which are of important in comprehending the very concept of intentionality. (By what strange turn of thought does one feel obliged to assume Husserl’s authority and passion to speak about the transcendental subject, while elsewhere one openly claims to draw from naturalism in the philosophy of the mind?)

The influence of Frege, more or less

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explicit or diffuse, is considerable in this deforming re-reading of Husserl, and it is in part due to a very general “Fregean vision of the world” that one attributes to Husserl, in the end, a non-Husserlian concept of intentionality. As evinced by certain recent speculations about the “Husserlian” theory of the noema, in which noematic senses would essentially be entities of the same nature as Fregean Sense [Sinn], the problematic of intentionality has become little by little a problematic of mediation. Since meanings of the Fregean sort are, in a well-known manner qua modes of presentation, intermediaries through which the world gives itself to be known to the knowing subject — the characteristic noematic structures of the intentionality of the mind, thus identified with the stratum of Sense, have become a third world, through which the subject enters into relation with “intended” objects (rather than “intentional” objects, since in general we are considering real objects — a slight lexical shift wherein the subreptive movement from one philosophy to another shows its face!). Opposed to this Fregeanized Husserl, I would like to assert that the authentic Husserlian problematic of intentionality is not a problematic of mediation.

I will try to show this in multiple ways, by underlining first of all the general and radical incompatibility of the perspectives of the two authors, and then presenting a rapid exegesis of Husserl’s crucial texts concerning concepts of linguistic meaning, of noematic sense, and likewise, the analysis of the relations between the stratum of particular intentionality of expression and intentional experiences in general. Insofar as the thesis according to which Husserl today helps us to construct a “representational theory” of the mind owes part of its seductive strength to the fact that it reconstructs and corrects a Husserl “à la Frege,” restoring the sharp edge of their differences will perhaps permit us to restore to more just proportions the evaluation of the Husserlian legacy.

There remains something curious in this Fregean alchemy in which one, so to speak, recooks noemata. It is as if the Fregean theory of Sense were so assured that to reinterpret intentionality in this conceptual framework would, ipso facto, make a respectable author of Husserl! I will try to show, against the grain of the general interpretive tendency, that Husserl, used advisedly, would permit the elucidation and perhaps the abolition of a difficulty in Frege’s philosophy of logic closely linked to the position of the intermediary sphere of Sense. We need to put the myth of the “third realm” out of our minds, and on this point Husserl can help us uproot our Fregean beliefs.

The positive (though limited) response to the question posed at the outset — What can one learn from Husserl today? — will thus take the form of a counter-proposition: to play Husserl, particularly the Husserl of Formale und transzendentale Logik, against Frege. I will conclude by showing that Husserl’s profound analyses on the subject of what he calls “the double character” of logic, which realize

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the illusion and the hypostasis of Sense which the logician of the Fregean sort succumbs to, can shield us from the temptation of using the Fregean notion of Sense as a clarifying notion to which it would be illuminating to reduce or identify notions reputed to be more problematic (such as the notion of the noema). More generally, these analyses deserve to be made present again today as so many warnings to the logician: that he not confound conceptual constructions with a fantastic vision of linguistic meaning.

I. Logic, Sense, and Reference in Frege

I will begin by describing an incertitude which clearly emerges from Frege's texts concerning the determination of the object of logic:

What is distinctive about my conception of logic [wrote Frege in July 1919] is that I begin by giving pride of place to the content of the word "true", and then immediately go on to introduce a thought as that to which the question "Is it true?" is in principle applicable. I come by the parts of a thought by analyzing the thought.

Frege was fully conscious of the original and revolutionary character of this (at least methodological) primacy which is accorded to the unity of meaning expressed by a complete utterance. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Frege's great "discoveries" — the prodigious expansion to which he subjects the notion of concept, the thesis of the functional or unsaturated character of these same concepts, and even the generalization of the distinction between Sense and Bedeutung [reference] to all parts of speech — proceeds from his foregrounding of propositional meanings, or Thoughts [Gedanken]. In effect, it is the reasoned analysis of Thoughts that reveals the necessity of establishing fundamental distinctions: a distinction between the region of Sense, to which Thoughts belong, and the domain of things [Sachen] which, as references of our most ordinary discourse, are the Bedeutungen of components of discourse; a distinction, within the region of Sense, between the different categories of meaning; and a distinction in the world itself between objects and entities of the functional sort, that is, between the categories of reference. In sum: the analysis of Thoughts leads at the same time to diverse categories of meaning, to diverse categories of reference, and to the distinction between categories of meaning and categories of reference, between meaning and "objectness", in a non-Fregean, but rather Husserlian, sense of the word.

Hence the question: how does Frege determine the status of logic, relative to this fundamental distinction? There are, manifestly, universal laws which govern the sphere of Sense and the domain of things, but these laws are different. For instance, a principle of composition applies to meanings (the senses of parts of an expression are parts of the sense of the total expression), but does not apply to the world of things. The expression "the capital of Sweden", Frege observes, refers to an object of which Sweden is not part. The references of the parts of an utterance are not part of the reference of the utterance, which is a simple object, a truth-value, etc. Are laws of logic, then, as morphological laws separating the "endowed with sense" from the "devoid of sense", laws of Thought, or laws of the world, of object-
ness? The question persists with respect to logic as a theory of inference: are the laws of logic [Grundgesetze] laws of consequence or laws of True Being [Gesetze des Wahrseins]? In other words, is Frege’s logic essentially a formal apophanty or a formal ontology? And, correlativev, is it a logic of consequence, or a logic of truth?4

To my knowledge, there isn’t any tidy response in Frege’s work to this question, even though there is incontestably a dominant practical orientation toward the second determination. And at times it even seems that there are confusions in Frege’s thought, as if the question itself wasn’t clearly perceived. Taking quick stock of a few texts touching on this problem will establish this point.

“It would not be out of the question to say that the laws of logic are nothing other than the deployment of the content of the word ‘true’”, as Frege expresses this view in one of the oldest versions (dated 1879-1891 by the editors of the Nachlaß) of a text which he seems to have ceaselessly reworked, but never published.5 But this remark only defines the limits, in the manner of a first approximation, of the field of logic proper. Its sole goal is to lead us to isolate das Logische — the content or properly logical element — by separating it from the expressive array, pragmatic or rhetorical (the tone, the coloration, etc.), that is linked to the exigencies of communication, and by protecting it from all psychologizing interpretation. Now, the logical core at the heart of linguistic meaning is precisely the Thought, provided that one understands the term correctly — that is to say, in an objective sense. According to this line of thought, the intervention of the “predicate” of truth has only one a heuristic or warning function, which asks us, via the question “What are the bearers of truth?” (response: Thoughts) to “delimit more precisely the domain [das Gebiet] of that which one can affirm as truth, and where truth can be the general question.” It is thus that Frege introduces his study of Thoughts in Der Gedanke.6

In this manner, one could cite many Fregean texts wherein logic’s task is presented as that of isolating, and then analyzing, the Thought into its elements. Let us think, briefly, of the “Troisième Recherche logique” of 1923, Compound Thoughts, which seems to present logic as a systematic study of the processes of completing the work of constructing Thoughts [Wie der Aufbau des Gedankens geschieht]. These are processes in which “the parts compose themselves in such a way that the Whole is something more than the isolated parts.” Likewise, in the unpublished work of 1923, it is a matter of analyzing “this property of Thoughts which is logical generality.”7 And in the unpublished work of 1906, “E inleitung in die Logik,” the totality of semantic and ontological distinctions is progressively deployed, starting from “the analysis of Thought in parts which are not themselves Thoughts.”8

But the conclusions which one might draw from these texts must be contrasted with others of Frege’s curt statements which one finds in particular in the unpublished “Ausführungen über Sinn und Bedeutung.” It is appropriate here to briefly summarize the context in which Frege formulates the idea that logic is concerned essentially with the Bedeutungen of the parts of speech, in the form of a thesis of extensionality.

Just as an object is the Bedeutung of a proper name, Frege reminds us, so a concept is the Bedeutung of a general term. But, as he recognizes, therein lies a possible objection. The Bedeutung of an expression is in effect determined accord-
ing to the following fundamental principle: two expressions have the same *Bedeutung* if and only if they are mutually substitutable *salva veritate* (at least in “habitual” contexts, not oblique ones — even though in Frege this reservation can ultimately be lifted; but let’s put that aside for the moment). Now, we observe — it is a fact — that two general terms are mutually substitutable *salva veritate* if and only if they are true of the same objects, that is, they have the same extension [*Umfang*]. From there — in accord with the principle governing the assignment of *Bedeutung* — why not admit the extensions of the concept as references of general terms? Frege dismisses that objection, claiming that it is necessary to propositional unity that the reference of a general term be incomplete, unsaturated — as is the concept (that is its “predicative nature”), not the extension, which is an object. But he adds immediately “that there is a kernel of truth in this suggestion”; and this kernel of truth is simply that such a proposition is inspired by the idea that logic is essentially extensional, and for this same reason is a theory of references (given the principle presiding over the assignment of *Bedeutungen*, the references are for Frege analytically extensional entities; that is why the rest, Fregean concepts, are, as references of general words, *ipso facto* extensional9).

Here is the text where Frege affirms that the laws of logic are, above all, laws which apply in the domain of references:

And with this statement we have, I believe, made an important concession to extensionalist logicians. They are right when they show by their preference for the extension, as against the intension, of a concept that they regard the meaning [*Bedeutung*] and not the sense of words as the essential thing for logic. The intensionalist logicians are only too happy not to go beyond sense; for what they call the intension, if it is not an idea, is nothing other than the sense.

And now the chief sentences for our topic:

They forget that logic is not concerned with how thoughts, regardless of truth-value, follow from thoughts, that the step from thought to truth-value — more generally, the step from sense to meaning — has to be taken. They forget that the laws of logic are first and foremost laws in the realm of meanings and only relate indirectly to sense. If it is a question of the truth of something — and truth is the goal of logic — we also have to inquire after meanings; we have to throw aside proper names that do not designate or name an object, though they may have a sense; we have to throw aside concept-words that do not have a meaning,... which have vague boundaries....

Therefore even if we concede to the intensionalist logicians that it is the concept as opposed to the extension that is the fundamental thing, this does not mean that it is to be taken as the sense of a concept-word: it is its meaning, and the extensional logicians come closer to the truth in so far as they are presenting — in the extension — a meaning as the essential thing.10

This text thus orients us toward a much more narrow determination of logic.
than before. According to the first point of view — that belonging to logic as a theory of sense (morphology of meanings, logical grammar) and as an analysis of methods of the composition of thoughts (formal apophantics) — it doesn't seem that we would need, for instance, to exclude “pseudo-thoughts” from our considerations (that is, the thoughts which lack truth-value because they contain a sense to which no reference corresponds: “Ulysses was set down on the ground of Ithaca in a profound sleep”, “Scylla has six heads”, etc.). Indeed, Frege regularly repeats that the thought remains identical to itself, that the proper name contained in such utterances has or does not have a denotation — a comment used in “Einleitung in die Logik” to prove that the Bedeutung of a proper name is not part of the thought.11 Moreover, the Ausführungen text that I have just cited leaves open the possibility that relations of consequence exist between thoughts as thoughts, that they have or do not have a truth-value. But then, if one must admit this large notion of logical consequence, and correlative the legitimacy of a simple logic of consequence, one needs also to admit that a logic such as that which Frege constructs is much more narrow: not only is it a formal ontology, insofar as it exposes the laws of objectness (Bedeutungen), but it is also, in the strongest sense, a logic of truth (these two determinations nearly coincide in Frege, since truth-values belong to the domain of Bedeutungen, and fall into the category of objects).12

Naturally, this point reflects back on the understanding of the formula according to which logic is the theory of the laws of True Being, an expression which needs to be taken for the moment in the strong sense. Everything happens as if Frege had in mind a more narrow relation than that of consequence, a relation which one might call (even though this name is not used by him) the relation of deducibility: a relation which takes place between two utterances, A and B, and which permits positing or detaching B on the basis of A. It is in virtue of this relation that, A being true, B follows (cf. §6 of the Begriffsschrift, for example). Thus we move, in logic, from true to true. It is in this sense that for Frege logic is a logic of science and not of fiction.

Still, lacking an explicit thematization of the question posed by this double orientation of logic, the question of the object of logic suffers in Frege from an ultimate indecision. Certain troubling texts go so far as to question whether Frege even understood the extent of the problem: one can only evoke here the last pages of his reponse to Benno Kerry, “Über Begriff und Gegenstand,” where Frege, arguing in favor of the predicative nature of concepts which radically forbids making them the objects of discourses, emphasizes the necessity of admitting the unsaturated parts of the Thought in order to formulate the possibility of composition into a unity of meaning. Should we not interpret such confusion between that which applies to categories of meaning and that which can apply to categories of reference as a sign of a deeper confusion within Frege’s thought over the manner in which one ought to conceive relations between the stratum of sense and the things of the world which are the habitual references of discourse? If so, the question of the object of logic — apophantics, or formal ontology? — would lead us to the heart of the major difficulty in Frege’s philosophy. He maintains “Ein drittes Reich muß anerkannt werden,” on the subject of the urgency of posing, next to the Innenwelt of subjective representations and the Aussenwelt of the exterior world perceptible by the senses, the third realm of meaning — which mediates between the other two.
But this gesture immediately introduces a problematic element into the coherence of the Fregean philosophy of logic.

II. On Some False Ideas

One could try to appeal to a programmatic idea which has been baptized “analysis of intentionality.” And one can see very well what the line of thought would be which would lead (in the style of strong “hermeneutic ecumenicism” in vogue today) to a solution of the “Husserlian sort” to the problem posed by Frege’s logic. Departing from the identification of noemata and Fregean Senses, the thesis could take the following form: just as the noema is an abstract, non-perceptible entity — an articulated “structure” which operates the mediation between subject and object, and permits the realization of “being-directed-onto” representations — so Fregean Sense is an intermediary entity (the mode of givenness of the object, or that in which the method of giving is contained) thanks to which objects are presented to us. Logic, the theory of Sense, would then be mediately a theory of objectnesses, viewed through meaning. Thus, one would simply play against concepts of intentionality and the noema the role given them in contemporary philosophy of the mind: the role of hyphen between consciousness and the world. This mediating function is explicitly characterized as such, for example in Føllesdal when he writes (the “third thesis” on the nature of noemata): “The noematic sense is that in virtue of which consciousness is in relation with object.”

Even though Searle’s vocabulary is more brutal (more naturalistic), his vision of intentionality is deeply analogous. It is a matter of the property which representations have “of putting the organism in relation with the world,” and the common trait of all these interpretations is the conception of intentionality as a certain sort of relation — a mysterious relation perhaps, but a relation nonetheless!

I think that an interesting phenomenological elucidation of this problem of the status of logic, left in suspense by Frege, can be found in Husserl, but it will not be extracted from the general theory of intentionality. However, before saying where and how Husserl thematizes the problem posed by Fregean Senses, I should justify my negative assessment of the line of thought described above. In that vein, I would like to show why it is not possible to link in the manner described the Fregean conception of meaning and Husserlian analysis of noematic structures.

Intentionality against Ontological Naïveté

What one might call the seminal problem of all of Husserlian philosophy is quite different from the genre of questions that Frege brought to light. In all its generality, one can formulate it thus (trying to exercise the greatest philosophical neutrality): how are we to understand that in the flux of psychic phenomena, “experiences” [Erlebnisse] of the subject, which are essentially private phenomena, elusive, and in the flux of temporality, present themselves as “formations” of all sorts whose manifest properties are very different from the experiences themselves? They are stable, in the sense of being recognized as identical throughout different episodes, in the course of which they are viewed as themselves; they are transcendent, in the sense that they are not confounded, phenomenologically speaking, with the psychic
processes of the subject; they are public, or intersubjective, in the sense that they give themselves as perceptible or thinkable by a community of individuals, and ultimately savants. The term "Ideality," by which Husserl generically designates these formations, connotes at the same time the consciousness of a unity toward which multiple psychic effectuations are directed, and the consciousness of transcendence with respect to the flux of mental life. Transcendance and consciousness of a unity equally apply, at the level of generality, to psychic objects of sensible perception and to the theoretical formations of the sciences. In §62 of Formale und transzendentale Logik, Husserl describes most generally this mode of Ideality:

In the sense of all objects graspable by experience, even that of a psychic object, a certain ideality, contrary to multiple psychic processes, separated by an individuation whose temporality is immanent, is implicated.... It is the general ideality of all intentional unities, contrary to the multiplicities which constitute them.

The "transcendence" of all the species of objectness which contrast with the consciousness of this objectness, consist in this [ideality].

A consequence of foregrounding this problem is that Husserl, in introducing his concept of intentionality, did not at all intend to restore the problematic of representation, conceived as an intermediary sphere between the subject and the world (in this sense, it is particularly unfortunate to make Husserl out as the father of a "representational theory" of the mind!), but presumed instead to deliver reflection from the impasses to which this problematic, according to him, had brought the theory of knowledge. And in order to do this, it was necessary to radically rethink the terms of the problem: to rethink it as a problem of the constitution of the One in the Multiple, without presupposing the ontological thesis of the world already there. If one accedes for a moment to taking this radical question seriously — the question of knowing how idealist formations could be given to a subjectivity — then Frege’s point of view, like all realist points of view, remains philosophically naïve. Frege constantly presupposes that the objective-being is there, outside of the subject, in its different forms and according to its different genres, and the question that he poses to himself is to understand how what is outside of the object can enter into relation with the mind. Husserl ridiculed this naïve manner of understanding knowledge, conceived as a sort of breaking into consciousness by the subject, and would have retorted to Frege that the hypothesis of a particular power of the mind — the power of thinking, that is to say of grasping [fassen] Thoughts, a power owing to which we can, moreover, accede to sensible objects and know concepts — was nothing more than a label put on a poorly posed problem. All ontological presupposition meets with the difficulty that

there is no conceivable place where the life of consciousness could or should be shattered, or where we reach a transcendence which could have a sense other than that of an intentional unity appearing in subjectivity, even of consciousness....

A world, the existence in general of all conceivable space, does not penetrate "θύραθεν" my ego, the life of the consciousness.

The first remark to make on the facility with which the term "sense" comes
under the pen of whoever engages herself in this style of phenomenological description is simply this: if being is not presupposed from the outset in the realist manner, then it appears to be only a "pole of unity," and precisely the "sense" of certain experiences. It remains to describe — to describe, not to explain, which would presume causal transcendence! — the various modes of this sense of objectivity.

It is amusing to note on this subject that Husserl himself expressed (in a prophetic manner!) the greatest fears with respect to the uses and abuses to which the word "intentionality" is subject. To be sure, the character "oriented to," the direction toward the object, is "a distinctive trait of experiences which one can take as the central theme of phenomenology oriented 'objectively': intentionality," as Husserl writes in §84 of Ideen. But he adds immediately:

This is because nothing is accomplished by saying and discerning that every objectivating [representation; Vorstellen] relates to something objectivated, that every judging relates to something judged, etc.... This is... a very simple way of taking the phenomenological doctrine of essences as something very old, as a new name for the old logic and those disciplines which must be ranked with it.18

Naturally, the simplest manner of reducing (in a non-phenomenological sense!) intentionality to "an old thing" is to conceive it as a relation in the usual sense, something which takes place between two distinct entities and exists entirely independently of any relational link. However, one should understand that in Husserl's eyes, intentionality could not be a relation, precisely because the problematic of intentionality was to replace the na"ive position of real relation, in knowledge, between the subject and object. The thesis of the non-relational character of intentionality is, according to Husserl, the key to all ulterior understanding of the constitution of objectivity in the subjective life. In §36 of Ideen, Husserl says of this strange mutual "relation" of consciousness and the transcendent, which certainly has its enigma [ihre Rätsel]:

It should be well heeded that here we are not speaking of a relation [Beziehung] between some psychological occurrence — called a mental process — and another real factual existence [einem anderen realen Dasein] — called an object — nor of a psychological connection [einer realen Verknüpfung] taking place in Objective Reality [in objektiver Wirklichkeit] between the one and the other.

That intentionality is not a relation in the sense to which a century of logico-mathematical culture has habituated us follows from the problem that it is the con-
cept's job to resolve: the constitution in the life of the subject of the ideality of all objectivity. Husserl was quite aware that there was an enigma for those remaining in the naïve position of scientific realism. The analysis of noematic structures should, according to him, permit us to see this more clearly in the problems of constitution.

**The Generalization of the Concept of Sense**

What, then, must we think of the oft-repeated assertion (made, in a certain way, by Husserl himself) that the notion of the noema is a “generalization of the notion of Sense”—a thesis which leads the most resolute commentators to purely and simply identify noemata and linguistic meanings? Some explication of texts is inevitable here.

It seems that Husserl, prompted by a logician’s interests, initiated—and perhaps discovered—the analysis of Ideality’s modes of being with the special case of idealities which give themselves in the “sphere of expression,” via particular “logical experiences”—understood by the senses in the narrowest sense, expressed or grasped in the course of the understanding of speech. Through the subtle analyses of the “Première Recherche logique,” some ideas emerge with a particular force. In particular, if, in the present understanding of language (which can be the simple activation of phonic or visual traces), words are activated with intentions of meanings which make them into proferred words or thoughts with sense, then the words themselves—the complex expressions in which they figure, identical through the diversity of their possible repetitions, and thus applying as idealities—are bearers of a meaning confounded neither with “what I mean” in using them (the viewed objectnesses, or “full senses”) nor with the “intentions of meaning” I confer on them (which could be in part identified with the senses of the words in my “idi- olect”). We must distinguish fleeting, psychic experiences of belief or of enunciation, their ideal content, the meaning of the utterance as a unity within diversity. We also recognize this meaning, in each evident act of reflection, as being that to which there is something identical in intention; we don’t place it arbitrarily in the utterances, but we find it there.

This recognition of meaning as “intentional unity” is of course purely liminal: it does not prejudge the necessity of ulterior distinctions, for instance between meaning properly put and “the third sense of the being-expressed, [which] concerns objectness viewed in meaning, and expressed by way of it” (as in §12 of this “Première Recherche”). But I will put this point aside until the third part of this article, since it touches on Husserl’s resolution of the Frege problem—that of the relations between meaning and reference.

At the time of *Logische Untersuchungen*, Husserl thought of the relation between meaning and psychic experiences of meaning as “ideally” modeled on the relation between the individual object and the general, or species of, object— the legitimacy of which the “Seconde Recherche” is devoted, through analysis of the consciousness of generality, to justifying. I will put aside the question of knowing whether this reponse is philosophically satisfying (it is interesting to learn that, in Husserl’s words in §31 of the “Première Recherche,” “meanings form a class of concepts in the sense of general objects”; but a discussion of the status of “specific
singularities” takes us too far), but one well sees, in what the question could not do, the ultimate response in Husserl’s eyes. In not bringing the status of meanings back to the status of other idealities, the question presupposes the general status of Ideality — which was precisely the problem to comprehend. And it’s here, in a deepening of the question, that the general analysis of noematic structures, which must realize the possibility of all intentional unities, materializes. One can already see that the notion of the noema is interdependent, more than with a simple generalization, with a radicalization of the question of Sense.

Already in the “Cinquième Recherche logique,” Husserl made this sort of move: what was freed in the sphere of expression — intricacy and difference between acts and the intended correlates — would be the object of a generalizing reprise concerning all intentional experiences. The insertion of “experiences of meaning” [Bedeutungserlebnisse] into the encompassing class of acts or intentional experiences should allow us to go farther in “the answer to the question of the origin of the concept of meaning,” as Husserl succinctly puts it in the introduction to the “Cinquième Recherche.” If there is, in effect, a greater generality in the field of application of the analysis, then the concepts brought to light in the field ought to have a foundational range relative to appropriate traits on the ζύγος level. It follows that finding the “explicans” of the difficult notion of noema in a so-called clear and familiar concept of Sense is perfectly alien to Husserl’s approach. It is, on the contrary, the analysis of noematic structures which should help us to better understand the possibility of unities of meaning as all the “ideal poles of unities,” or of all transcendences.

Certainly, in the course of this enlargement, the concept of “sense” remains operative in a certain manner: Noemata — i.e. noematic sense — fall in a certain way into the category of Sense. But it is important to see that here it is not at all a question of a simple generalization “in extension” of a strictly determined concept, but rather of the enrichment, the complication of a “supple” and fluid category, whose utility is in the extent of its flexibility (at least in Husserl’s eyes; it is open to whomever is hostile to this Bergsonian methodology to see no more there than the metaphoric use of concepts!). There again, it seems that Husserl foresaw the misinterpretations to which this operation was exposed — an operation which, drawing from an historically paradigmatic, but not originary, case of linguistic meaning, withdrew from the term “sense” all that which connoted the presence of a pole of unity appearing in multiple experiences, in order to export it to all modes of comparable presence. Witness this passage (§55 of Ideen):

In a certain way, and with some caution in the use of words, we can also say that all real unities are “unities of sense” [Einheiten des Sinnes]. Unities of sense presuppose a sense-bestowing consciousness ... Reality and world are names here precisely for certain valid unities of sense, unities of “sense” related to certain concatenations of absolute, of pure consciousness which, by virtue of their essence, bestow sense and demonstrate sense-validity precisely thus and not otherwise.

In accordance with the methodology of the descriptive disciplines to which Husserl explicitly ascribed and which he tried to justify (in particular in §74 of Ideen) — the methodology of the vagueness of concepts and of the “fluid spheres
of application" — Husserl aimed, in this sense, toward a generalization of the concept of Sense. But this term, admissible regardless of its penchant for confusion, should not obscure the correlative modification to which the initial notion of the sphere of consciousness, in the extent of its “living”, fluid character, submits. Noemata are not Senses, if one understands by that the formula which brings the unknown back to the known; noemata are Senses, if one allows oneself to be guided by the “scientifically” fecund analogy intended to enrich the original notion.

The text of Husserl which is often invoked to support the false interpretation of relations between Sense and noemata warrants being cited here in extenso, because it introduces us to the problematic of relations between the originary strata of consciousness, independent of language (sensible perception, imagination, etc.; the strata called “ante-predicative”), and the stratum derived from “foundational” acts of expression. In the course of his exportation from the limited sphere of expression to the whole sphere of intentionality, Husserl explains most clearly the modification in the meaning of the concept of Sense; in §124 of *Ideen* he writes:

> We shall restrict our regard exclusively to “signifying” [Bedeuten] and “signification” [Bedeutung]. Originally, these words concerned only the linguistic sphere, that of “expressing” [Ausdrücken]. But one can scarcely avoid and, at the same time, take an important cognitive step, extending the signification of these words and suitably modifying them so that they can find application of a certain kind to the whole noetic-noematic sphere: thus application to all acts, be they now combined with expressive acts or not. Thus we have continued to speak of “Sense” [Sinn] in the case of all intuitive mental processes — a word which is used in general as equivalent to “signification” [Bedeutung]. For the sake of distinctness we shall prefer the term signification for the old concept [für den alten Begriff] and in particular, in the complex locution of “logical” or “expressive” signification. We shall continue to use the word sense as before in the most all-inclusive range.22

**The Sphere of Expression and Its Relation to Noematic Structures in General**

One cannot abstract from the context in which Husserl introduces this terminological decision, which expresses the difference between the narrow concept of linguistic meaning and the new, larger concept of Sense. In the ending to the third section of *Ideen*, having already covered a certain number of originary spheres, Husserl shifts the analysis to noetic and noematic stratifications — that is, to the edification of new formations founded on simpler ideal formations (just as judgment of perception is “founded” on a perception, evaluation on a “given” of the evaluated object, etc.). Among these superior formations, one naturally finds those which are linked to language, and one sees immediately: (1) that linguistic meanings do not fall any less than other idealities into the general concept of noema; but (2) that linguistic meanings, inasmuch as they form a special class of noemata, are distinct from noematic structures appropriate to other strata, for instance perception, and this distinction leaves in place a more exact determination of their relations. Here is what Husserl says, in §124, about the first point:
Interwoven with [verweben sich] all the acts considered before are the expressive act-strata, which are "logical" in the specific sense, in which the parallelism between noesis and noema is to be made evident no less than in other acts.

It is impossible to analyze in detail here the extraordinarily difficult problems posed by the relations between experiences of expression and non-expressive experiences, but Husserl's general thesis is, nevertheless, perfectly clear. It specifically forbids confounding noemata of non-expressive intentionality, as "givers of the object" (a formulation to which I shall return) in their role of creating structures of objectivity, and linguistic meanings which have no creative role but reveal, as constituted objectinesses, the same type of noetic-noematic analysis. Husserl expresses (perhaps bizarrely) this idea in speaking of "the unproductive character" of the sphere of expression:

Apart from the fact that it confers expression precisely on all other intentionals, the stratum of expression — and this makes up its own peculiarity — is not productive. Or, if one wishes: its productivity, its noematic production, is exhausted in the expressing and with the form of the conceptual which is introduced with <the expression>.23

It would be useful, in order to better grasp what is at stake in this thesis, to compare the description Husserl gives in §124 of the relations between sensible perception, which requires no grasp of meaning, its verbalization in an act of enunciations (perhaps interior) — a process during which a new noematic stratum is articulated to its precedents — and the "corresponding" text of Frege at the end of the "Première Recherche logique." According to Frege's analysis, there is no perception of object without a grasp of Thoughts. There as elsewhere, the realm of Sense plays its intermediary role of mediation between the interior world of the subject and things, sensible objects, abstract objects and concepts: the world of references. Linguistic meanings according to Husserl do not have this function of opening up the objective world to the subject: they are rather one of the forms or strata of objectivity.24 It remains to be seen whether the concept of noema, for its part, is respectfully included according to this problematic of mediation; that will be the last point in this argument.

Are Noemata Intermediary Senses Between the Subject and Object?

In a way, I have already responded in the negative to this question in recalling the inaugural problematic of phenomenology: the problematic of mediation presupposes a given region of the exterior—being of the subject from which there is no more to ask than how the mind can be "directed" or "oriented" toward it. There are however some more detailed arguments. If the intentional object as presented in the noema is distinct from the real object, how are we to understand this splitting of objectivity (one finds a comparable argument, very paradoxically, in Russell, directed against "ideas" or representations which forbid us to grasp the same thing)? Must we say that for the real tree, which I do not perceive, there is a perceived tree, a phantom double of reality? Let us recall the classic analyses that Husserl directed against the idea that the intentional object could be a noematic entity distinct from the real object:
But if, in this way, we try to separate the actual object \([\text{wirkliches Objekt}]\) (in the case of perception of something external, the perceived physical thing pertaining to nature) and the intentional object, including the latter \(<\text{as}>\) really inherently in the mental process as "immanent" to the perception, we fall into the difficulty that now two realities ought to stand over against one another while only one \(<\text{reality}>\) is found to be present and even possible. I perceive the physical thing, the Object belonging to Nature, the tree there in the garden; that and nothing else is the actual Object of the perceptual "intention."\(^{25}\)

We shall not pursue the argument of infinite regress which is implicated in the idea that noematic sense — the intentional object — would be a third entity, interposed between the mind and the real object (which could not exist without orientation-toward, i.e. intentionality, itself being affected). It suffices to recall that for Husserl, "real" \([\text{wirklich}]\) "has no sense of existence outside of consciousness, but amounts to not simply having a presumptive existence."\(^{26}\) This point admitted, how should we understand Husserl's analyses when, at the core of noematic structures, he handles distinctions between complete noema, noematic sense, kernel \([\text{Kern}]\), and viewed object?

The problem appears when in the fourth and last section of Ideen, at the beginning of the chapter justly entitled "Der noematische Sinn und die Beziehung auf den Gegenstand" (these texts are the object of the highly particular predilection of commentators who Frege-ize Husserl!), Husserl poses the following genre of questions:

The noema in itself has an objective relation \([\text{gegenständliche Beziehung}]\), and, more particularly, by virtue of its own "Sense." If we ask, then, how the consciousness-"sense" has access to the "object" which belongs to it and can be "the same" in manifold acts of very different content...

He proposes (with the quotation of words correlative to the parenthesizing of the world) the following formula as a general way of responding: "All noemata have a content — that is, their Sense — and are related through [their content] to 'their' object."\(^{27}\) One would not know how to understand this formula, of course, as restoring the split already condemned between Sense and object. But this becomes clear in the following comment:

We then become attentive to the fact that, with the statements about the relation (and specifically the direction) of consciousness to its objective something, we are referred to an innermost moment of the noema \([\text{auf ein innerstes Moment des Noema}]\).\(^{28}\)

To summarize §130-131 in Ideen (which constitute one of the work's high points), one could outline the following analysis according to structures of objectivity (I abstract from the doxic aspects of the grasping of objectivity). All description of a given object can first of all eliminate the predicates of subjective coloration and achieve a collection of determinations of the thing (the content of the noema, the "closed system" of formal or material predicates). Thus the book before me has its form (distinct from the perspective from which I approach it), its objective size, its proper color, its weight, etc. But second, one must recognize all these objective
predicates as properties of the same object, which is thus the ultimate support of all the predicates, but which, as pure support, is no longer predicatively qualifiable. The object is certainly not the pole toward which all the properties converge or to which they all attach. One could claim that Husserl is attached to describing this structure of perception, and most generally of all giving of the object, according to which the world presents itself as a collection of distinct unities which "support" their qualities, attributes, and states. This noematic description, which thus ends up distinguishing between "pure and simple object" and "the object in the how of its determinations" (and Sense, Sinn, is exactly this *Gegenstand im Wie*), is ultimately not very different from the world such as it was seen in the atomist logic of Russell — to the close ontological thesis.29

Let's summarize this too-long analysis of texts:

The notion of noema, crucial according to Husserl for understanding the whole presence of an Ideality, cannot be confounded with the notion of linguistic meaning (these meanings are but certain Idealities, linked to language).

The notion of noema cannot be confounded with the notion of Fregean Sense, the collection of intermediary entities (modes of presentation) permitting access to things, to ordinary references. Moreover, the typically Fregean opposition of intentions (Senses) and its extensions (*Bedeutungen*) is not pertinent to the distinction between the content of a noema and the noematic object. In fact, we will rediscover this as a new distinction, interior to the stratum of expression, in the third part of this article.

The poor question, when one reads Husserl, is this: what entity must we assign as being the Sense? First, because we cannot presuppose any entity which the left hand of ontology could give us while the right hand of phenomenology ignored what the left hand was doing. And second, because the whole superior level of unity is or makes Sense *vis-à-vis* inferior unities.

The better question — I come back after this negative analysis to the idea that Husserl can nonetheless be useful to us — is the following: how can Husserl help us get rid of the problem which Frege bequeathed to us: What is Sense?

III. Logic As a Thematic About-Face

It is surprising to see how contemporary commentators on Husserl seemed to think the identification of noemata with Fregean Senses could lend reasonableness to the theory of intentionality. One reads this in the words of McIntyre and Smith, in a useless text lucidly entitled "Husserl's Identification of Meaning and Noema":

The fact that noematic senses are expressible, and thus are linguistic meanings, shows that noemata such as conceived by Husserl are more familiar than we can believe.... Since linguistic meanings are themseves noematic senses, that means that by way of our language, we have direct knowledge of a good number of noematic Senses.30

For isn't the Fregean notion of Sense in a better position than the Husserlian theory of noemata? I introduced this question above by way of a problem which might, all things considered, appear secondar, that of the object of logic. Since McIntyre's and Smith's hermeneutic operation (as at the heart of Føllesdal's) had an
interest only to the extent that one presupposes that Sense is something known, thus that ordinary linguistic understanding of words is a sort of knowledge which gives us access to certain entities, meanings or intensions, I would like to re- pose the question from a different angle, namely, the psychological or epistemological angle of the understanding of sense.

It has been a good twenty years since the idea that the understanding of words is assimilable to a mental state (or to a process, or to a psychological disposition) in which we "grasp" an intension was made the object of much detailed criticism. Instead of redoing this general argumentation, I would like to show (since my precise target is the Fregean notion of Sense) that the "official" Fregean model of the understanding of Sense is so psychologically unlikely that Frege himself had to question it — under the form, granted, of scattered observations which he is careful not to put integrate with his official doctrine.

If one tries to summarize this official doctrine, one obtains roughly the following description of the phenomenon of the understanding of words, which should allow us (in virtue of the principle of the compositionality of Sense) ultimately to "grasp" [fassen] new Thoughts, composed of the already-known meanings of words. Although meanings are not mental entities, a "grasping" process situated "on the borders of the mental" should accompany the auditory or visual perception of a series of signs. Of course, the "grasping" of meanings is not only the direct contact of the mind with certain entities (called "intensions"), since it is not enough to grasp the meanings which are viewed; they need, rather, to be grasped precisely as viewed meanings. Understanding thus sets to work at least three distinct processes: (1) the perception of the psychic phenomenon, (2) the dispositional knowledge which permits us to direct ourselves toward the right intension (the meaning of this word), and (3) the grasping of what is called meaning, which is the term given this process (when it is we who speak, the order of logical or temporal priority is reversed). Knowledge is shared within the same linguistic community, and it is in this sense that one can say that Sense is known by all competent locutors of a language.

To the extent that Sense is a mode of giving [Art des Gegebenseins] reference, the grasping of the intension is, in a mediating way, the knowledge — ultimately imperfect and perhaps never achieved — of reference (the extension, in the generalized Carnapian usage of the word). But the knowledge of Sense, which is the element of mediation toward the reference, should be immediate and thus somehow total, since we can no longer suppose a method of giving Sense, at the risk of infinite regress. What then is the nature of the mental state which is supposed to give the term of the process of understanding? In other words, what is it to directly
grasp an intension? (The question is of the same order as this one: what should one see, when one is supposed to have the intuition of a concept?)

The traditional response to this genre of question is to distinguish the fact (we grasp the intension from afar, vaguely and confusedly, “in a haze”) and the law (but it is still the intention which we grasp, in rendering it, via analysis, “clear and distinct,” which it wasn’t in ordinary understanding). And when Frege realizes that something isn’t working in his theory of the grasping of sense, it’s invariably this genre of solution that he gives himself up to.

The text where Frege goes furthest in re-questioning the official model is without doubt the unpublished “Logik in der Mathematik,” although the occasion for Frege’s doubts is apparently a lateral point of methodology. How is it, Frege asks, that it is sometimes so difficult to assure the appropriateness of a definition, in the sense of logical analysis of a notion and its formal reconstruction, if the notion (the Sense) is what one knows when one understands the word as ordinarily designated? And, a subsidiary question: how is it possible that the mathematicians who have such a bad definition of Number (Frege is thinking in particular of Weierstrass) understand the word “number” sufficiently to be able to do arithmetic? Is it thus that the linguistic meaning of the word, which the locutors understand everyday, is not the concept itself, the intension? In order to evade this difficulty, Frege multiplies concessions and metaphors. Ordinary understanding is a non-present grasping of the notion, or simple dispositional knowledge; most often, we use these words as boxes or receptacles of Sense, which we don’t make the effort to open (question: if we were to open the box, would we see the concept inside?). Perhaps one should say that each mathematician has her own arithmetic, according to the sense she attaches to the word “number”? But then the hypostasis of meanings, which were to assure the possibility of a public and shared science, would come to nothing. The haze, as always, gets us out of the problem; but how thick should the fog be, adds Frege, apparently without irony, for us to continue to pretend that the same intension is grasped in understandings which are so poor, and so different from one another according to the locutors, even among specialists!

It is certainly possible that Frege, late in life, renounced the idea that the understanding of language implicated a process where, parallel to the perception of signs, the mental eye of the mind directly “perceived” meanings. At the least we could infer this from a remark he made in passing, according to which it is not possible to grasp Thoughts “in the nude,” without the clothing of a sensible medium of signs. But it is not advisable to spend too long on this observation, even though it demolishes the idea of a direct grasping of Sense. The position of Frege as a logician permitted him to eliminate these questions of psychology, and his last word on this point is simply that the grasping of Thoughts “is perhaps the most mysterious process there is.”

And it is here that Husserl can enlighten us: he tries to explain how the constitution of the sphere of Sense is correlative to a thematic about-face by which the mind, in the scientific manner, turns away from the original direction toward objectness.

The point of departure of Husserl’s reflection on this subject is the question we have just left: the double character of logic. We saw above how this double character inscribed itself into Frege’s work in the form of an indecision about the object of
logic. Husserl saw it deployed throughout the history of European thought, from the Aristotelian birth of logic up until the development of modern “formal” mathematics (theories of multiplicities) as an oscillation of logical thought between the opposing poles of a “theory of Judgment” on the one hand and of a mathesis universalis on the other. But this double character is rooted, and thus in a sense founded, in the distinction of two equally legitimate levels: formal apophanty on the one hand, with its three strata (morphology of meanings, or pure logical grammar; logic of consequence; logic of truth, however much this last approaches the strict framework of the apophantic) — Husserl, like Frege, linked truth with ontology, with reference.37

An observation, already made by Husserl at the time of Logische Untersuchungen, can send us forward: even in the scientific attitude, it is toward reality, toward the states of things, objects, that the intention of knowledge is directed. (Frege would not have denied this entirely, thinking that to know and judge was to move from Sense to Bedeutung; but perhaps he missed the true nature of the scientific attitude, when he presented the initial steps of it as moments “of simple consideration” of Sense, or Thought simply grasped.38) “Premiere Recherche logique,” §34, “Im Akte des Bedeutens wird die Bedeutung nicht gegenständlich bewußt”:

When we realize this act... we naturally see its object, and not its meaning. When for example we make an utterance, we bring a judgment to the thing of which it is a question, and not to the meaning of the enunciative proposition, [which would be] judgment in the logical sense. This only becomes an object for us in the reflexive act of thought....

In accordance with this originary orientation, whose legacy is the scientific attitude, analysis itself — logic as theory of science — inherits this ontic direction toward things and objectnesses. But for the moment:

We have to show, in opposition to the thematic orientation we had up until now, that a thematic about-face [eine thematische Wendung] is always possible, in accordance with which it is not the domain of considered objects and the categorical objectnesses of the highest level constructed from it which are in the thematic field, but rather — what is entirely other and completely distinct — that we name judgments like their constitutive elements, their liaisons and other transformations which end in judgments in ever new degrees.39

This critical attitude thus intervenes into the scientific attitude for the second time: what has been posed and admitted is “crossed out,” scrupulously reconsidered, put back into question. What Husserl calls “the intended as such” — the region of Sense — materializes for the second time in opposition with the “just” intended, objectness, as correlate to the critical return to the objectnesses admitted
in the first place. Here are some excerpts from Husserl’s clearest texts on this subject:

What has been said suffices to show that the distinction of what is intended from what is real is a prelude to the distinction of the sphere of simple judgments (in the enlarged sense) from the sphere of objects.

With this intended as such, the simple correlate to the “expression of an opinion” [Meinen], we have then retaken in hand what in traditional logic is called judgment (apophansis) and is the theme of apophantic logic.

All the intended entities of high degree belong to the region of intended entities or opinions. In place of opinion we could equally well say sense, and in considering utterances we can speak of their meaning. To pose the question of the meaning or the sense of an utterance, is not obviously different from passing immediate judgment on the being which judges and utters, in a considered attitude — in which judgment the corresponding opinions relative to the objects, to the states of things, come to be grasped or posed. Thus can we qualify this region as a region of sense. There are senses of the states of things (states of things intended as such) for autonomous predicative judgments; there are objective senses in the strict sense for objects — substrates, for the relations of the senses of the relations, etc.40

If we strip these texts of their mentalist and psychological coloration, it seems to me that we can interpret them as a description of the origin of an illusion — an illusion in which the logician believes himself to have found, residing already at the heart of linguistic meaning, the products of his activity of rational construction or reconstruction. From this follows the temptation to identify concepts thus constructed with intensions which would be the sense of words, that which a locutor knows when she understands the words of her language. It also seems to me that we could see there an appeal to modestly liberate the procedure of explanation (in Carnap’s sense) from the myth of the preexistence of Sense. “How little we know” when we use the words that we know how to use, according to Putnam’s synthesis of a half-causal, half-sociological theory of reference — Husserl warns us of this when he introduces in the “Première Recherche logique” the concept of “intention of meaning,” as opposed to the full sense, and labels as “popular conception” the idea which takes ordinary understanding of words to be the grasping or the direct knowledge of conceptual essences. Of course, we can continue to speak of “concepts,” of “intensions,” of “logical meaning,” (the argument has nothing to do with a nominalist mistrust, on principle, of meaning!), but the notion of a thematic about-face prevents us from believing we can simply rediscover a preexisting realm of Sense between the world and us. Considering the confusion which reigns today on this question, Husserl’s warning maintains its general value: do not confound the logical activity of construction with a philosophy of language, which would be a poor philosophy of language indeed! θ
Endnotes

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3This turn of thought is particularly clear in the unpublished work of 1906, “Einleitung in die Logik” (Gottlob Frege, Nachgelassene Schriften). The word “objectness,” instead of “object,” is used for speaking of things in general, which are most often the Bedeutungen of speech, to the extent that Frege’s ontology radically distinguishes, within the region of things, object (Gegenstand) from entity of the functional sort.

4Edmund Husserl, Gesammelte Werke, XVII: Formale und transzendentale Logik, ed. Paul Janssen (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974). French translation by Suzanne Bachelard under the title Logique formelle et logique transcendentale (Paris: PUF, 1957, 1984). See in particular §§14-20. Husserl distinguishes, by way of example, two formulations of Modus Ponens and Modus Tollens: one which belongs to the logic of pure consequence, and the other to the logic of truth. It seems that the language in which the logic of truth is formulated essentially contains the predicate of truth, but it is hazardous to speculate on this point in order to oppose the Husserlian conception to that of Frege (in whose work what is properly called laws of logic, being the Names of the True, make no mention of the predicate of truth).

5Gottlob Frege, Nachgelassene Schriften. The first of these texts, “Logik,” is dated by the editors to 1879-1891.

6In the unpublished “Logik” (cf. Gottlob Frege, Nachgelassene Schriften), having defined the task of logic as that of “isolating the logical element,” Frege adds in the same spirit: “The task of logic being what it is, it follows that we should turn away from all that is not necessary for formulating the laws of inference.”

7Gottlob Frege, “Logische Allgemeinheit,” in Nachgelassene Schriften.

8Gottlob Frege, “Einleitung in die Logik,” in Nachgelassene Schriften. In “Einleitung in die Logik,” the arguments which lead to positing the Sense of proper nouns as part of Thought, and a Bedeutung of conceptual terms corresponding to the unsaturated part of Thought, proceed, much more clearly than in the article “Sinn und Bedeutung,” from the preliminary position of Thought, which becomes the true point of departure of all logical analysis.

9This point is clearly shown by Philippe de Rouilhan in chapter 2, §10, of Frege, les paradoxes de la représentation (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1988).

10Gottlob Frege, “Ausführungen über Sinn und Bedeutung” (1892-1895), in Nachgelassene Schriften. The decisive sentence is this: “Die logischen Gesetze zunächst Gesetze im Reich der Bedeutungen sind.”

entire development was effected at the University of California Press, 1964, p. xvii). The awaited interpretation of the system is entirely extensional.”

In “Sinn und Bedeutung,” Frege speaks of “Sinn des Zeichens, worin die Art des Gegenseins enthalten ist” (cf. Frege in *Kleine Schriften*). If one believes in the analysis of sensible perception outlined in *Der Gedanke*, the grasping of Sense is the necessary condition for all giving of an object (on the basis of sensible impressions) that perception expressed linguistically or not.

Dagfinn Føllesdal, “Husserl’s Notion of Noema,” in *Husserl, Intentionality, and Cognitive Science*. Føllesdal affirms that the notion of noema was introduced by Husserl in order to resolve the problem of the non-existent: if I think of a certain centaur, I am intentionally directed toward the noema, but no object in this case corresponds to the noema. The Fregean notion of Sense undoubtedly answers this question, but the function of the Husserlian notion of noema was not in the least bit the resolution of this problem!


Edmund Husserl, *Gesammelte Werke, III: Ideen zu einer neuen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, I, ed. Walter Biemel (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950; 1st ed., 1913). One must reread the whole first chapter of the fourth section, and particularly §135: “In the largest sense of the word, an object ‘constitutes itself’ (konstituiert sich ein Gegenstand) — ‘be it real or not’ — within certain sequences of consciousness which include an evident unity (Einheit), to the extent that they involve by essence the consciousness of an identical X.”

See §94 and §99 of Edmund Husserl in *Edmund Husserl, Gesammelte Werke, XVII* (see note 4).

See §87 of Edmund Husserl, *Gesammelte Werke, III* (see note 16). Aron Gurwitsch insists on this point in “Husserl’s Theory of the Intentionality of Consciousness” (p. 60 in Husserl, *Intentionality, and Cognitive Science*). He remarks that phenomenology’s central problem is that of the consciousness of identity, and adds: “For this reason, it is insufficient to define intentionality as the fact of being directed-toward, even if, as a first approximation, it is a matter of true and valid remark.... The direction-toward denotes simply a phenomenal trait of the act....”

This is the case with Ronald McIntyre and David W. Smith, in “Husserl's Identification of Meaning and Noema” (cf. Husserl, *Intentionality, and Cognitive Science*). One of the proposed arguments is that, since in theory all noematic structure is expressible, noematic Sense is identical to linguistic meaning. This is like saying that since the world can be expressed in language, then the world is language!


Husserl asks himself in these paragraphs whether phenomenology could take the form of an axiomatic discipline, because the phenomena of experiences would constitute a “defined multiplicity” (a model, we would say, of a system of axioms). The response is “no!”, because phenomenological concepts cannot have the character of exactitude; the essences of the experience are fluid.

In this end of the third part of “Ideen,” we retread, but inversely, the path which leads from the “Première” to the “Cinquième Recherche logique.” An interpretation like that of McIntyre and Smith is rigorously forbidden by remarks such as this: On the subject of meaning, Husserl says that
"a specific intentional medium offers itself to us" — in other words, there is a noematic moment appropriate for expressing it.

23 See §124 of Edmund Husserl, *Gesammelte Werke, III.*

24 Taking "objectivity" here in the largest sense of "ideality." One can express it thus: "The fact that 'senses' as objects, as opposed to related acts and to subjects, are 'transcendant,' are the ideal poles of unity, just as objects which are not 'senses,' that needs only to be mentioned. One finds oneself in effect facing the same situation for all objects in general." See §48 of Edmund Husserl, *Gesammelte Werke, XVII.*

25 See §90 of Edmund Husserl, *Gesammelte Werke, III.* §11 of the "Cinquième Recherche logique," as well as the Appendix to §11 and §20, also merit being cited in extenso: "It suffices, in order for one to face facts, to say: the intentional object of representation is THE SAME AS the veritable, ultimately exterior object, and it is ABSURD to establish a distinction between the two" (Husserl's emphasis).

26 This is the last sentence of the Appendix to the "Cinquième Recherche logique."

27 See §128 and 129 of Edmund Husserl, *Gesammelte Werke, III.*

28 See §129 of Edmund Husserl, *Gesammelte Werke, III.*

29 Russell later ridiculed this conception, saying that ultimate substrates (the values of individual variables in a logically perfect language) become the invisible hooks to which properties would attach like hams to rafters on a farm. See chapter 14 of Bertrand Russell, *My Philosophical Development* (London: Allen & Unwinn, 1959).

30 See p. 91 of Hubert Dreyfus in *Husserl, Intentionality, and Cognitive Science.*


32 Gottlob Frege, "Sinn und Bedeutung," in *Kleine Schriften.*

33 Text dated 1914, in Gottlob Frege, *Nachgelassene Schriften.*

34 "Wie stark muß der Nebel sein!" said Frege in "Logik in der Mathematik" (cf. *Nachgelassene Schriften*).

35 In the unpublished work dated 1924-25, "Erkenntnisquellen der Mathematik und der mathematischen Naturwissenschaften" (cf. *Nachgelassene Schriften*), Frege affirms that if it is not inconceivable that beings different from us directly grasp Thought, we others should dress [Thought] in the sensible clothing of signs in order to be able to apprehend it.


37 Cf. §14-22 of Edmund Husserl, *Gesammelte Werke, XVII.*

38 One reads, for example, in *Der Gedanke*: "The scientific approach habitually includes several stages: first of all a Thought is grasped..." (Gottlob Frege in *Kleine Schriften*). This description of the scientific approach is already at work in the preface to the *Begriffsschrift* of 1879.

39 See §44 of Edmund Husserl, *Gesammelte Werke, XVII.*

40 See §44, 45, and 48 of Edmund Husserl, *Gesammelte Werke, XVII.*