

A “Principally Unacceptable” Theory: Husserl’s Rejection and Revision of His Philosophy of Meaning Intentions From the Logical Investigations^{1*}

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Abstract: This paper accomplishes two goals. First, the essay elucidates Husserl’s descriptions of meaning consciousness from the 1901 *Logical Investigations*. I examine Husserl’s observations about the three ways we can experience meaning and I discuss his conclusions about the structure of meaning intentions. Second, the paper explores how Husserl reworked that 1901 theory in his 1913/14 Revisions to the Sixth Investigation. I explore how Husserl transformed his descriptions of the three intentions involved in meaningful experience. By doing so, Husserl not only recognized intersubjective communication as the condition of possibility of linguistic meaning acts, but also transformed his account of the structure of both signitive and intuitive acts. In the conclusion, I cash out this analysis, by showing how, on the basis of these new insights, Husserl reconstructs his theory of fulfillment.

Keywords: Phenomenology; Empty Intentions; Linguistics; Intersubjectivity; Descriptive Psychology

1. Introduction

A central conclusion of Edmund Husserl’s 1901 *Logical Investigations* (Hua XIX/ Husserl 1970. Hereafter, LU)² is that three kinds of intentions can

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² While all translations are mine, I provide references to the corresponding English translation where available, following a slash after the Husserliana pagination. Quotes from the *Logical*

be involved in the experience of meaning. There are word constituting acts, meaning giving intentions, and intuitive fulfilling acts. In recent years, there has been a surge of interest in research concerning the evolution of Husserl's descriptions of these three acts and their objects.³ Despite this, it is the contention of this essay that scholarship on Husserl's account of the experience of meaning is still inappropriately limited, where this has led to an inadequate presentation of his views not only concerning meaning-consciousness, but also the larger themes in his philosophy.

The pertinent deficiencies in research on this element of Husserl's philosophy have resulted from the fact that his manuscripts, which comprise his attempts to revise his Sixth Logical Investigation from 1913 and 1914 (Hua XX-1/2. Hereafter, LUE), have often been overlooked. Yet, in these writings, Husserl alters his understanding of the word-constituting act, the meaning intention, and the fulfilling intuitive act. That is to say that he reformulates his entire conception of the experiences of meaning. This lapse in scholarship on these manuscripts has led to a lack in our understanding of Husserl's account of all three of these intentions, as I briefly lay out now.

First, concerning word-constituting intentions, scholars have almost exclusively taken Husserl's claims from *LU*—and specifically, his First Logical Investigation—as his definitive theory regarding these acts and their objects.⁴ To quote one interpreter who maintains this view, Peer Bundgaard begins his article on Husserl's theory of language—which he composed years after the publication of *LUE!*—by writing, “From a purely quantitative point of view, Edmund Husserl has devoted a rather small amount of time and space to the study of language proper. Essentially, his contributions within this domain amount to the description of *language use* in the First *Logical Investigation*” (Bundgaard 2010: 368). This interpretation is not without seemingly good justification, as the First Logical Investigation is the only text, which Husserl published during his lifetime, wherein he executes an extensive and systematic analysis of the experience of signs. Yet, in many of Husserl's writings that he left unpublished, he expresses strong dissatisfaction with his account of the experience of signs from *LU* and asserts that the observations therefrom must not be taken as his final word on that issue. He continued to dedicate great efforts to amending his 1901 theory of the experience of signs, where

Investigations always come from the First Edition.

³ For just a few examples; Averchi 2018; Bernet 2019; Bianchin 2018; Hartimo 2019; Kwok 2019; Plotka 2019, 2020; Rinofner-Kreidl 2019; Sato 2019; Urban 2018; Zhen 2019. In particular, there has been a flurry of literature surrounding whether Husserl is in agreement with McDowell about non-conceptual content. The current text does not address this issue, which has already been solved.

⁴ Cf. De Palma 2008; Majolino 2010; Mohanty 1974; Simons 1995; Sokolowski 2002; Urban 2010; Zhu 2013.

this finally led to his single greatest overhaul of this part of his philosophy in *LUE*. With regards to these changes Husserl executes to his theory of signs in 1913/14, Rudolf Bernet claims, “Neither the *Logical Investigations* nor most of what has been written about Husserl’s philosophy of language ever since has prepared us for [them]” (Bernet 1988: 16. See note five below). Consequently, without more extensive examinations of *LUE*, the literature has only been able to represent Husserl’s immature views about the experiences of signs, which he himself had rejected.

Second, the lapse with regards to the scholarship on Husserl’s philosophy of meaning intentions can be accurately pinpointed once it is noted that, in 1901, Husserl claims that all acts, which give meaning to expressions, are of a signitive nature. Throughout the 1901 text—and indeed, throughout all of the works he published—Husserl does not write much about non-intuitive acts. It would thus seem to be inappropriate, if not impossible for a commentator to discuss non-intuitive, that is, signitive intentions at length. Accordingly, researchers who examine Husserl’s theory of intentionality, meaning, and fulfilment—in apparent lockstep with Husserl—often simply assert that signitive intentions are directed at that which is not present in person, without more extensive clarification.⁵ Yet, just as is the case with his theory of the experience of signs, after the publication of *LU*, Husserl recognizes that his analysis of signitive meaning intentions was by and large incorrect. As such, in *LUE*, he amends his observations from 1901 and does so by executing his definitive study of non-intuitive meaning intentions, which he now terms “empty” (*leer*) significative acts. As Ullrich Melle writes about the 1913/14 manuscripts, “Nowhere else has Husserl analysed empty intentions in such detail” (Melle 2002: 116. See note five). Specifically, Husserl transforms his account by introducing his descriptions of the “emptiness modification.” Despite the fact that Husserl, in these manuscripts, so altered his theory of non-intuitive meaning intentions—and by extension, his philosophy of intentionality—those unpublished texts have not been thoroughly discussed.

Finally, while Husserl’s theory of intuitive acts has been well explored in the secondary literature, the importance of a single novel conclusion that he arrives at in *LUE* has not been highlighted. This new insight about intuitions is worthy of close attention, because it shatters his previous account of fulfilment.

These points in mind, the objective of this paper can be stated and its relevance made clear. Namely, *the essay presents Husserl’s more mature vision of the experience of meaning in LUE*.⁶ I investigate how he, in those 1913/14 manu-

⁵ See, for example, Bernet 2003: 166 n. 4, Mooney 2010: 23–24; Mulligan 1995: 193–194, 204–206.

⁶ As the quotations found in this section suggest, there are three published essays, which do examine Husserl’s theory from 1913/14. These are Bernet’s 1988 chapter and Melle’s 1998 and

scripts, transforms his 1901 account of the experience of words, the meaning act, and the fulfilling intuition.⁷ *By doing so, a new picture of his philosophy of meaning-consciousness comes to the fore, where this reveals contemporary interpretations of his thought to be incomplete.* We will see why Husserl viewed his previous account from *LU* as “principally unacceptable” (*prinzipiell unzulässig*) (Hua XX-1: 146) and Husserl’s 1913/14 theory of meaning-consciousness will be disclosed as not only more robust and nuanced than is currently accounted for, but also as more phenomenologically accurate. Finally, this analysis will shed new light on Husserl’s observations from *LU*, as it places them in a new context.

In order to accomplish these goals, the following discussion is broken down into six further sections. In the second and third sections, I briefly retrace Husserl’s canonical account of the three experiences of meaning from *LU*. Sections four, five, and six individually address Husserl’s transformations to each of the three intentions that can be involved in meaning-consciousness. Finally, in the concluding section seven, I cash out the historical analysis of this essay. I demonstrate that Husserl’s alterations to his theory of word- and meaning-consciousness are not only important in and of themselves. Rather, I show how these changes also inspired Husserl to modify his descriptions of the experience of fulfilment: In light of the fundamental shifts he made to his descriptions of the experience of meaning, Husserl came to see that his previous theory of fulfilment could not suffice and that a new account had to be formulated. *By presenting the results of these novel observations, the paper reveals that interpretations of the larger themes in Husserl’s philosophy should be informed by a rigorous understanding of Husserl’s insights about meaning-consciousness from LUE.*

2002 texts. On the one hand, this current essay could be characterized as a synthesis of Bernet and Melle’s insights, as the former addresses Husserl’s semiotics from *LUE* and the latter, his account of meaning intentions. On the other hand, the goals of my essay substantially diverge from those seminal Husserl scholars. Bernet writes that he will, “hardly pay attention to the fact for example, that in Husserl’s mind the phenomenological investigation of the signs belongs to the larger context of intentional reference to an object or state of affairs” (Bernet 1988: 3), whereas Melle’s articles seek to examine the totality of *LUE* and, accordingly, do not examine non-intuitive intentions in extensive detail. I will also critically engage with the conclusions of both authors, as can be found in footnotes 21 and 26 and during my discussion of the emptiness modification in section five. Finally, the author of the current work owes many valuable insights to Reto Parpan’s unpublished dissertation (Parpan 1984).

⁷ To be emphasized is that *the goal of this work is not to talk about Husserl’s account of both the act and the object of meaning, but rather only the former.* Indeed, there is no need to examine the evolution of Husserl’s descriptions of the meant object and meaning from *LU* to his Lectures on the Theory of Meaning from 1908–1914 (Hua XXVI) and beyond, as this has been exhaustively investigated in the literature. In particular, Drummond’s works provide an exacting analysis of that evolution. Cf. Drummond 1992, 2012.

2. *LU: Three Experiences of Meaning*

In 1901, Husserl claims that three different kinds of acts can be involved in the experience of meaning.⁸ To elucidate Husserl's ideas clearly, I begin on the simplest possible level by examining his definition of these acts in abstract isolation from each other. First, Husserl describes an intuitive act as an intention that is directed at an object that, "can either be actually present through accompanying intuitions, or at least appears in representation, e.g. in a mental image" (Hua XIX: 44/ Husserl 1970: 192). A signitive act, in contrast, does not disclose an object in either perception or imagination. The object of a signitive intention simply does not intuitively appear. Husserl writes that, "A signitive intention merely points at its object, an intuitive intention gives it 'presence' [...]. A signitive presentation does not present analogically, it is 'in reality' no presentation, in it nothing of the object comes to life" (Hua XIX: 670/ Husserl 1970: 233). Finally, Husserl claims that all intentions that constitute words are intuitive. Word-constituting acts disclose existent words perceptually or non-existent words imaginatively (Hua XIX: 39–45/ Husserl 1970: 188–193).

To understand Husserl's 1901 theory of meaning-consciousness; however, these three acts cannot be simply grasped in abstract isolation. Rather, clarification concerning how they are or are not co-executed during distinct meaning experiences is required. Specifically, I examine Husserl's descriptions, from *LU*, of the execution of a signitive meaning intention in three different complex experiences. During these whole experiences, Husserl observes that signitive meaning acts can be directed at objects or states of affairs that are not intuitively given and can give meaning to words, but do not necessarily have to perform either of these operations.

First, Husserl's standard example of a meaning experience is a case where a signitive meaning act does give meaning to expressive signs and is directed at a state of affairs that is not intuitively given. These experiences can commence with the intuition of what Husserl calls "*Wortlaute*," for example, the word-scribbles, which make up the sentence on the page or the word sounds uttered by an interlocutor. When I see the *Wortlaute*; however, I am not just seeing this object as a physical object like any other. Rather, I experience the intuited *Wortlaute* as signs that associatively motivate me to become aware of another object or state of affairs, which is not intuitively presented. The intuition of the signs associatively motivates the signitive meaning intention, which is directed at the non-intuitively presented signified state of affairs (Hua XIX: 46/

⁸ The discussion of section two is a revision and technical deepening of a part of the analysis that I present in one of my other articles; see Byrne 2020b. In that text, Husserl's conclusions are placed and studied within a different context. Namely, I explore how Husserl analogizes perception and meaning acts in 1901, before showing why he rejected that parallel in LUE.

Husserl 1970: 193).⁹ The experience of certain linguistic signs is associatively tied to a meaning-giving intention, such that when I once more see or hear the former, I am motivated to execute the latter. Husserl writes, “The function of a word (or rather of an intuitive word-presentation) is to awaken a sense-conferring act in ourselves” (Hua XIX: 46/ Husserl 1970: 193).¹⁰ This signitive meaning intention is not only motivated by the intuited words, but also gives those words their meaning (Hua XIX: 44/ Husserl 1970: 192).¹¹ Finally to be noted is that when I execute this signitive intention, I am not also executing an intuitive act, such that I merely mean the state of affairs, without any validation or knowledge that the state of affairs is the way that I mean it.

Second, there are the signitive meaning intentions that give meaning to intuited expressive signs, but intend states of affairs that are also intuitively given. As was the case with the first example, so also in this second case, I execute a signitive meaning intention that is motivated by the word-constituting intuition of the expressive signs. The difference between the first and second examples is that, in this second case, I am additionally intuiting the same state of affairs that I signitively mean. During this experience, this intuition of the state of affairs can “fulfil” the meaning intention of that same state of affairs.¹² In fulfilment, the intuition, which does present that state of affairs intuitively before me, validates the signitive meaning act, which merely means that state of affairs.¹³ According to the Husserl of 1901, this signitive intention is still executed during fulfilment and is not replaced by the intuition. Husserl states, “We must; therefore, maintain that the same [signitive] act of meaning-intention, [...] is also part of the complex act of recognition, but that a [signitive] meaning-intention that was ‘free’ is now ‘bound’ and ‘neutralized’ in the stage of coincidence” (Hua XIX: 571/ Husserl 1970: 209). Husserl asserts that the signitive meaning intention must still be performed during fulfilment, as it is the intention that gives meaning to the words. The categorial intuition, in contrast, cannot give meaning to the expression, but can only fulfil that meaning.¹⁴

Third, there are those cases where the signitive meaning act is directed at an intuitively presented object or state of affairs and does not give meaning to expressive signs. Husserl calls such an experience, a “wordless recognition”

⁹ Cf. De Palma 2008: 44–51; Smith 1994: 173–175, Sokolowski 2002: 172–173.

¹⁰ I have discussed the evolution of Husserl’s understanding of this associative motivation at length in, Byrne 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, and 2019.

¹¹ Cf. D’Angelo 2014: 55–57; Woodruff Smith 1981: 117–119; 1982: 194–196.

¹² In the first edition of *LU*, Husserl initially conceived of fulfilment as occurring via a third act, but quickly abandoned this idea.

¹³ Cf. De Palma 2008: 51–54; Soldati 2008: 64–66. Properly considered, the quality or position taking of the act is that which is verified during fulfilment. In the case of a doxic objectifying act, the fulfilment validates the position taking of the signitive act; namely, my position that the object exists.

¹⁴ Cf. Bernet 2003: 156–160.

(*wortlos Erkennen*). He writes that we can, “recognize an object, e.g., as an ancient Roman milestone, its scratchings as weather-worn inscriptions, although no words are aroused at once or indeed at all” (Hua XIX: 592/ Husserl 1970: 223). Husserl claims that, in this example, I execute a signitive meaning intention, which is not motivated by intuited expressive signs and accordingly does not give expressive signs their meaning. Rather, the signitive meaning intention is aroused by the intuition of the object, which is to be recognized.¹⁵ He writes, “Genetically expressed, present intuitions stir up an associative disposition directed to the significant expression. But the meaning-component of this last alone is actualized” (Hua XIX: 592/ Husserl 1970: 223).¹⁶ This signitive meaning intention is thus also statically fulfilled by the intuition of the object or state of affairs that motivates it, such that, in adequate fulfilment, everything the meaning act intends is also intuitively given (Hua XIX: 592/ Husserl 1970: 223).

For all three of these cases, one should note that Husserl privileges the active execution of a meaning intention, as in writing or speaking, in contrast to passive reading or listening. In line with this, he purposefully sets aside or one could even state, ‘brackets’ the issues of intersubjectivity and communication in his study of signs and meaning in *LU*. This is because he believes that the essence of sign- and meaning-consciousness can be determined by studying the experiences of solitary speech or monologue. Husserl grounds this methodological choice on his insight that the additional operations, which language performs during communication with others, such as that of intimation, are incidental to our experiences of meaning (Hua XIX: 39–42/ Husserl 1970: 189–191).

3. *LU: The Inner Structure of Signitive Meaning Intentions*

A closer analysis of signitive meaning intentions—and specifically, the structure of those acts—is necessary for one to properly grasp Husserl’s 1901 philosophy of meaning consciousness. This is for two reasons. First, on the basis of his insights about the structure of signitive meaning acts, Husserl arrives at his more nuanced conclusions about the role of intuition and fulfilment in 1901. It is thus possible to correctly comprehend Husserl’s descriptions of

¹⁵ Cf. Vandeveldde 2008: 35–37; 2017: 59–60.

¹⁶ This idea, that the intuition of the recognized object motivates the wordless signitive meaning act is important to point out, because, according to Husserl, no meaning intention can be executed without a corresponding intuition, or at least corresponding intuitive content. Husserl writes, “A purely signitive act [...] indeed if it could exist by itself at all, i.e., be a concrete experiential unity ‘on its own’. This it cannot be: we always find it clinging to some intuitive basis” (Hua XIX: 619/ Husserl 1970: 241). In contrast, Husserl does assert that it is possible to execute an entirely intuitive act; namely, during internal perception.

the second and third examples of meaning experiences, which were outlined in section two, once one understands his account of the inner structure of signitive acts. Second, a great transformation Husserl makes to his theory of meaning-consciousness in 1913/14 concerns the inner composition of non-intuitive meaning intentions, where the analysis of this section lays the necessary foundation for my discussion of those alterations in section five.

To be clear, in this section, I am seeking to uncover Husserl's 1901 theory of the structure of all signitive intentions and not just categorial signitive acts. That is, I study the inner composition of both non-categorial single rayed signitive acts and categorial signitive intentions. This is because, according to the theory of *LU*, all signitive acts are composed of the same kinds of parts (substances = *Gehalte*) in the same manner, such that all of the following conclusions apply equally well to both categorial and non-categorial signitive acts. Moreover, in 1901, Husserl concludes that all signitive intentions—be they non-categorial single rayed acts or categorial acts—can function as meaning giving. They all can give words their meaning.

Now to the matter at hand, in 1901, Husserl defines the inner structure of both signitive and intuitive intentions by contrasting them with regards to their fullness. He provides an initial definition of fullness when he writes, “The fullness of the presentation is however the sum total of those pertinent determinations, by means of which [the act] analogically gives presence to its object, or apprehends it as self-given” (Hua XIX: 607/ Husserl 1970: 234). The fullness is the components of the intention, which correspond to or are responsible for the intending of the fully apparent object or parts of the object. As such, on the most basic level, it can be said that intuitive acts, which disclose the authentically apparent moment of the object, possess fullness, while signitive acts, which are directed at the non-intuitively given object or part of the object, lack fullness. Importantly, Husserl concludes that these kinds of acts differ with regards to fullness, because they are composed of different component parts: They possess different kinds of substance (*Gehalt*).¹⁷ Intuitive intentions are composed of “intuitive substance,” while the signitive intentions consist of “signitive substance.”

The intuitive substance has two “parts.” First, there is the “content” (*Inhalt*) of the intention. Husserl terms the content of the perception, “sensations” and the content of phantasy, “sensuous phantasms” (Hua XIX: 610/ Husserl 1970: 235).¹⁸ Husserl characterizes both kinds of contents as unique, unrepeatably elements of experience. Contents are not intended, nor are they intentional in themselves, as they rather belong to the stream of consciousness (Hua XIX: 397/ Husserl 1970: 104). The intuitive substance of the act is,

¹⁷ While Findlay's translation of *Gehalt* as substance is awkward and possibly misleading, I maintain his choice for consistency.

¹⁸ For a development of Husserl's view of “sensuous phantasms,” especially in regard to the question of imagination, see Plotka 2020.

however, not just this content, but rather the content, “in their apprehension, thus not these moments alone” (Hua XIX: 609/ Husserl 1970: 234). Husserl writes, “We call the presentative or intuitive representing [sensations] in and with its pertinent apprehension, the intuitive substance (*Gehalt*) of the act” (Hua XIX: 610/ Husserl 1970: 235). Husserl defines the apprehension of the act as that which takes up, interprets, or forms the content. Via an intuitive apprehension, the contents intuitively represent the intended object. (Hua XIX: 429–430/ Husserl 1970: 121).

These insights about the substance of intuitive acts in mind, Husserl’s understanding of the structure of signitive acts, as composed of signitive substance, can be straightforwardly laid out. Husserl claims that the signitive substance of an intention is the components of that act, which correlate to the object or parts of the object that do not intuitively appear. He defines the signitive substance as that, “which corresponds to the sum total of the remaining, subsidiarily given properties of the object, which do not themselves become apparent” (Hua XIX: 610/ Husserl 1970: 236). On the one hand, the signitive substance possesses no content, that is, no sensations or sensorial phantasms as such. There is nothing, which the signitive intention *in itself* apprehends to represent the intended object. On the other hand, the signitive substance still comprises the apprehending sense,¹⁹ which determines how I intend the object or state of affairs, which is not itself intuitively given.

In arriving at these conclusions, Husserl is claiming that signitive and intuitive acts are composed of the same kind of structural or component parts: Even though signitive intentions possess signitive substance and intuitive intentions have intuitive substance, they are yet both still composed of substance. Because they are both composed of substance, Husserl develops his theory by claiming that signitive and intuitive intentions both sit on an *unbroken* continuum of substance, with regards to their fullness. At the upper limit of the continuum of fullness, there are completely intuitive intentions, which are composed only of intuitive substance. If, in contrast, there is an increase in signitive substance, there is a decrease in intuitive substance, up to the null-point of an entirely signitive act, which, if it could exist, would have only signitive substance (Hua XIX: 611/ Husserl 1970: 236). Such acts would sit at the lower limit of the continuum of fullness, that is, at the null- or zero-point of that continuum. Husserl elucidates this idea by writing, “In the former, the [entirely signitive] presentation would have only signitive substance which [...] appears as the limitation case of intuition. In the second case, the

¹⁹ Husserl writes that the apprehending sense is, “*that element in an act which first lends it reference [Beziehung] to an object, and reference so wholly definite that it not merely fixes the object meant in a general way, but also the precise way in which it is meant*” (Hua XIX: 429–430/ Husserl 1970: 121). For a more extensive analysis of the apprehending sense and apprehending form, see Byrne 2020a.

completely intuitive presentation has *no* signitive substance whatever” (Hua XIX: 612/ Husserl 1970: 236).

During the development of his theory of fulfilment, Husserl not only works from these conclusions about substances, but he also—and importantly—deepens his theory of signitive substance. When discussing fulfilment, Husserl arrives at the insight that the signitive substance functions as an empty container; a container, which lacks in intuitive fullness. By arriving at this conclusion, Husserl is further able to affirm that fulfilment is the “filling up” of the signitive substance by the relevant intuitive substance (Hua XIX: 606–630/ Husserl 1970: 231–249. Cf. Melle 1999: 173–178). When the signitive meaning intention, which merely means a state of affairs, is met with the intuitive act, which intuitively gives that same state of affairs, the latter lends or pours its fullness, that is, its intuitive substance, into the empty container, which is the signitive meaning act with its signitive substance. A completely intuitive intention is thus an act where the intuitive substance has filled up all of the signitive substance. As we shall see below, in *LUE*, Husserl finds this theory of fulfilment (and further, his whole account of meaning-consciousness) from 1901 to be “principally unacceptable” (Hua XX-1: 146).²⁰ Indeed, his realization of the incorrectness of these observations about fulfilment serves as a primary motivating force for his transformation of his theory of meaning consciousness in 1913/14.

4. *LUE: Word-Constituting Act and Signitive Tendency*

Throughout the rest of this paper, I discuss how Husserl, in 1913/14, amends his 1901 descriptions of each of the three intentions involved in meaning-consciousness. While I will turn to examine Husserl’s transformation of his descriptions of non-intuitive meaning intentions in section five, and intuitive meaning acts in section six, I now investigate his novel conclusions about the experience of expressive categorial signs. I show that Husserl alters two of his fundamental 1901 conclusions about sign consciousness. First, he evolves his understanding of the motivation I experience to execute the meaning intention when I perceive the sign. Second, he comes to a new conclusion about the kinds of intentions that can constitute expressive signs. By combining these two insights, it will be shown that Husserl shifted his views about the relationship between intersubjectivity and language. While he privileged active speaking in monologue or “expression in solitary life” in 1901, he now sees that passive listening or hearing, that is, intersubjective

²⁰ In the relevant passage from Hua XX-1, Husserl is not only talking about the unacceptability of his 1901 philosophy of fulfilment, but also the reverse; those experiences where an intuitive intention becomes an empty act (*Entleerung*). His account from *LU* of both the *Erfüllung* and *Entleerung* of an act are revealed, in *LUE*, to be inaccurate.

communication by another to me, cannot be bracketed from the study of linguistic meaning-consciousness, because it is the necessary background for the execution of meaning acts.

The first development in Husserl's understanding of sign consciousness occurs during his discussion of the associative motivation, which arises from the signs and impels me to execute the meaning act. In 1913/14, Husserl affirms that I experience this motivation as a tendency. He writes, "The going-through-the-words-to-the-thing" [*Durch-das-Wort-auf-die-Sache'-Geben*] has a special character; a 'tendency' adheres to the words" (Hua XX-2: 154). When describing this tendency, Husserl alters his terminology and theory from the 1901 text: He states that this tendency—and not the act of meaning—is to be labelled as signitive.²¹ The "signitive tendency" of the categorial words is that which impels me to go beyond the expressive signs to execute the meaning act. To be clear, this tendency is not a presentation or any kind of intention, but rather the pull I experience to execute the meaning act (Hua XX-2: 204).²² In *LUE*, Husserl defines this new signitive tendency, by characterizing it as possessing an obligation (*das Sollen*), as I now study in more detail.

Husserl elaborates on his observation that the signitive tendency manifests itself as an obligation, by stating that this obligation originally has its source in a demand (*Zumutung*). Husserl observes that when another is speaking to me, I experience that other as placing a demand on me to understand the meaning of her expressive signs (Hua XX-2: 72). Husserl writes, "All authentic signs have their origin in the [demand], which comes from a demanding subject" (Hua XX-2: 97). As a result of the other's demand of myself, my experience of the expressive authentic signs changes: I experience the categorial expressive signs as possessing an obligation. The categorial expression now manifests itself to me as something that I ought to or "should" take as a communicative expression of a meaning (Hua XX-2: 97).

Husserl further claims that even in those cases where I am not currently experiencing the demand of another subject to understand her expressive signs—such as when I first open the pages of a book—the signs can still present themselves to me with an obligation. Husserl asserts that I am yet still able to experience those signs with their obligation, because a trace of the demand remains within the signs. This trace is the result of a habituation. During my previous communicative interactions with other subjects, I always experienced their spoken words as accompanied by their "personal" demands.

²¹ Indeed, Husserl writes in *LUE*, "It was a mistake in the first formulation of this investigation, a mistake which is still apparent in the First Investigation, that signitive and significative intentions were mistaken for each other" (Hua XX-2: 204).

²² Husserl claims, in *LUE*, that the signitive tendency also has a categorial structure, as it impels me from the categorially structured words to the categorially structured meaning. Bernet entertains this conclusion as—at least partially—justifiable (Bernet 1988: 14), whereas Melle rejects it outright (Melle 1999: 180).

Because I have encountered word signs as always accompanied by these personal demands throughout my life, I have become habituated to the fact that I am always demanded to understand categorial expressive signs. By means of this habituation, the personal demands of other subjects have transfused or percolated into the authentic linguistic signs themselves. As a result, even if no subject is there to demand that I understand the expressive signs, I still experience expressions as something that I am Demanded to understand.²³ This “impersonal” demand, which I experience, does not arise from nowhere or no one, but rather comes from the categorial signs themselves: I experience the signs as demanding me to understand them (Hua XX-2: 97–98). Husserl writes that, “The thought of the [personal] demand can fall away or entirely withdraw, but it still remains the case that, as soon as I grasp the ‘sign’ Z, I experience the [demand] to go over into and to terminate in the thematic consciousness of the meaning” (Hua XX-2: 84).²⁴ When I experience the categorial sign as demanding me to understand it, the sign appears with its obligation. The sign is, in that case, performing both functions, as it demands me and appears to me as something I should understand (Hua XX-2: 84).

Husserl’s second transformation of his phenomenology of word-consciousness concerns his insights about what kinds of acts can constitute words. We remember that Husserl previously observed that during a wordless recognition, I execute a meaning act without intending expressive signs at all. Hence, the term, “wordless.” Husserl, in contrast, now states that such recognitions, for example, of the drill or of the roman milestone, are not wordless. Rather, in these cases—and indeed, in all cases where it seems as if there is no accompanying expression—I am actually still intending a categorial expression, but I am doing so via a non-intuitive intention. During these experiences, even though the expression is not intuitively presented, it is yet still intended by an *empty* word-constituting act. Husserl describes this experience, by stating that the word, “is still there for us; even though it is intended in a fully un-intuitive manner” (Hua XX-2: 86). On Husserl’s 1913/14 account, there is thus never

²³ This conclusion prefigures much of Husserl’s later insights concerning passive synthesis and specifically, his observations about sedimentation. Indeed, this insight could be otherwise formulated as: the demand is sedimented into the signs themselves. Burt Hopkins defines Husserl’s understanding of sedimentation by writing, “‘Sedimentation’ is an important concept that Husserl introduced in his last writings to indicate the status of significant formations that are no longer present to consciousness but that nevertheless can still be made accessible to it. This status pertains both to the temporal modification of the experience of significant formations and the role that passive understanding plays in the apprehension of the signification of concepts and words” (Hopkins 2011: 25).

²⁴ On the basis of this conclusion and others that I have outlined in Byrne 2018, I must contest Bernet’s interpretation that, “In 1914, Husserl still maintains that [...] meaning or at least the practical intention to produce a meaningful sign precedes the lingual expression” (Bernet 1988: 15). As the citations show, Husserl no longer believes that there is this temporal dislocation between the word-constituting act and the meaning intention.

an experience where I can execute a meaning intention where that meaning act is not co-executed with a word constituting intention, be that latter act intuitive or empty.

By synthesizing these two insights, Husserl's new conclusions about the importance of intersubjective communication for word- and meaning-consciousness can be revealed. On the one hand, Husserl has observed that there is no meaning act without an accompanying word-constituting act. Meaning acts are always endowing expressions with meaning, even if the expression is intended non-intuitively. On the other hand, Husserl has claimed that all meaningful expressions, "have their origin in the [demand], which comes from a demanding subject" (Hua XX-2: 97). These two insights, when taken together, disclose that Husserl now believes that the execution of all meaning acts, which are always linguistically expressed, have their genetic origin in the passive reception of a communicative meaning from another subject. While Husserl does not reject the idea that meaning intentions are voluntary and deliberate on the part of the subject and that these acts are responsible for giving words their meaning in a particular case, he now affirms that—on a deeper level—there is a priority of the passive reception of meaning via linguistic expressions, which I hear or read. In direct contrast to his conclusion from *LU*, that intersubjective communication can be bracketed when investigating meaning, Husserl asserts, in *LUE*, that the intersubjective community and their communication to and with me serves as the background upon which I can begin to execute expressive meaning intentions in the first place.²⁵ In sum, signs are always already an intertwining or chiasm of myself and the other.

5. *LUE: Non-Intuitive Meaning Intentions*

In this section, I examine how Husserl rejects his conclusions about non-intuitive meaning acts from 1901 and proposes a different account all together. While Husserl changes his theory of non-intuitive intentions in many ways, I examine the two most important alterations he executes. First, I demonstrate that he no longer conceives of non-intuitive intentions as being composed of non-intuitive substance, but rather as modifications of intuitions. Second, I briefly investigate Husserl's conclusions that only a specific kind of intention can endow words with meaning.

To begin my discussion of Husserl's 1913/14 changes to his 1901 account of the structure of non-intuitive meaning acts, I first mention the terminological

²⁵ Despite my disagreement with Bernet, as just outlined in the above note 23, I concur with his reading that—for the Husserl of 1913/14—there is a priority of "passive signifying, insofar as every signifying which has the form of speech or writing presupposes that one already understands the meaningful sign one uses. The facticity of language precedes and allows for all lingual acts" (Bernet 1988: 16).

alterations he makes. Husserl no longer uses the term “signitive” to talk about non-intuitive intentions, because—as explained in section four—he employs that label for the tendency coming from the words. Instead, he claims that acts without any intuitive substance should be termed, “empty” (*leer*) acts (Hua XX-1: 90).²⁶ Husserl further alters his terminology by labelling meaning intentions, “significative” acts.

Husserl’s novel understanding of the structure of empty meaning acts can begin to be explained by once again examining how he contrast those acts with intuitive intentions. In *LUE*, Husserl largely reiterates his conclusions about the latter from *LU*. He still believes that an entirely intuitive act would be composed of intuitive substance (*Gehalt*). He further continues to conclude that the sensations (*Inhalt*) and their apprehension together make up the intuitive substance, writing that, “If we gather together the presenting sensations (*Inhalt*) in a perception, and if we take it with its unitary purely intuitive representing function [...] then we obtain the purely intuitive substance (*Gehalt*)” (Hua XX-1: 123). Moreover, he again claims that an inadequate intuitive act, such as a perception via the external sense, is composed of both intuitive substance and empty substance.

In contrast to his insights about the structure of intuitive acts, Husserl reverses his observations about the inner structure of non-intuitive intentions. He asserts that a totally empty significative intention²⁷ is not composed of empty substance, as it is instead the result of an empty modification of an intuitive act (Hua XX-1: 147). In his article that briefly addresses this tenet of Husserl’s thought, Melle *only* mentions that the emptiness modification is “peculiar” and that it is akin to the imaginative and phantasy modifications laid out in *Ideas I* (Melle 2002: 118). While Melle is correct that the emptiness modification is marginally analogous to those other modifications, I highlight that it is exceptionally different and that it requires a more extensive analysis.

²⁶ Ursula Panzer—in her introduction to *LU*—explains that Husserl employed the term “signitive” to cover all different empty acts, and that, “Husserl only turned against the use of the term signitive or symbolic intentions, as the term to label the whole class of ‘empty intentions’ in his lectures in Gottingen. See Ms. FI 5 / llb and 13a (1908)” (Panzer 1984: LXI n. 1). This in mind, it can be noted that Husserl’s thought concerning non-intuitive acts did not undergo a radical shift in 1913/14, as if he immediately jumped from his 1901 theory at that later date. Instead, his philosophy evolved slowly over time. The discussion of the current paper is thus a presentation of the results of Husserl’s decade-long endeavor to attain clarity with regards to word- and meaning-consciousness.

²⁷ In contrast to his claims from 1901 (*cf.* note 15 above), Husserl concludes, in *LUE*, that one can execute an entirely empty act, but not an entirely intuitive act. On the one hand, he now asserts that a totally empty act can be an empty meaning intention or an empty perception or imagination (which he alternatively terms a “dark” act. *Cf.* Byrne 2020a, 2020b). On the other hand, he claims that a completely intuitive act is not possible, because, as a result of temporal extension, even internal perceptions have empty retentional components.

An imaginative modification of a perception, for example, does not change the fundamental structure of that act: When a perception is imaginatively modified, the resultant imaginative act still possesses an intuitive substance and an empty substance. In contrast, an emptiness modification transforms the structure of the intuition. In what way is the structure changed? Husserl writes that, when executing an entirely empty act

The representing contents disappear and with this, the apprehension disappears, thus the entire intuitive substance disappears—and by virtue of the non-independence of the intuitive substance, that is, its essential togetherness with the supplementing empty substance—then also the latter disappears. (Hua XX-1: 145)

Otherwise stated, according to Husserl, via the emptiness modification, the empty intention does not have either intuitive substance or empty substance. As there is neither kind of substance, there can naturally be no structural division between them. Husserl writes that the empty act is executed, “without any of the reellen internal divisions and distinctions,” which an intuitive act possesses (Hua XX-1: 144). Empty significative intentions thus—by means of the emptiness modification—have a fundamentally different structure than full intuitive acts.

By adopting these solutions, Husserl has also rejected his conclusion about the continuum of fullness from LU, instead claiming that even though non-intuitive intentions do still occupy the null-point on the continuum of fullness, they simultaneously still break with that continuum. We remember that, in LU, Husserl concluded that an intuitive act can continually become less and less full, where there is an increase in the signitive substance and a corresponding decrease in intuitive substance. In the extreme case, the act can sit at the bottom of the unbroken continuum and be composed of only signitive content. In 1913/14, Husserl again concludes that an act can continually become less and less full, up until the act is composed of almost entirely empty substance. But, when the act becomes totally empty, the act no longer possesses empty substance or intuitive substance. There is a fracture in the continuum, where the empty intention breaks with the continuum of fullness. Without either kind of substance, it cannot—properly considered—sit on that register.

The second major change Husserl makes to his account of meaning-intentions in LU, concerns which kinds of acts can be meaning giving. As stated in section three, Husserl concluded in LU, that all different kinds of signitive intentions—both non-categorial single rayed and categorial acts—could endow words with meaning. In LUE, Husserl rather affirms that only certain kinds of intentions are able to express meaning. (Hua XX-2: 139–145. Cf. Melle 2002: 115). In his manuscripts, Husserl tests out three possible candidates for the kinds of acts that can express meaning. He first proposes that all kinds

of categorial intentions can be meaning giving (Hua XX-2: 158). He then suggests that a peculiar cognition (*eigenartiges Erkennen*) alone can function as a meaning act (Hua XX-2: 159–160). Finally, he advances the idea that it may be possible for the categorial act, which will be expressed, to come into a unity with the expression without another mediating intention (Hua XX-2: 160–161). In the end; however, Husserl leaves this issue unresolved. He does not affirm that one of these options is better than any of the others. Accordingly, even though Husserl’s consideration of these three options is noteworthy, without any deeper analysis or final answer on Husserl’s part in LUE, a further discussion of these insights would be mere conjecture.

6. *LUE: Intuitive Meaning Acts*

Finally, in this section, I very briefly investigate one change Husserl makes to his descriptions of the role that intuitions can play in meaning consciousness. Simply stated, in 1913/14, Husserl no longer claims that only non-intuitive experiences can serve to give words their meaning. Rather, he now claims that empty *or intuitive* categorial intentions (or categorial cognitions) can give meaning to expressions. To clarify this insight, it can be paired with Husserl’s conclusions about the signitive tendency, which were discussed in section four. In doing so, we see that Husserl believes that the signitive tendency of the expression can fuse the word-constituting act *either* with an empty act *or* with an intuitive act, where either can serve to give those words their meaning (Hua XX-2: 151–153). Melle correctly explains the novelty of this point by writing, “Linguistic consciousness is always two-tiered, either intuitive or not. Intuition, which, since all linguistic signs are categorial signs, can only be categorial intuition, can be directly expressed, that is, it can itself function as a meaning giving act” (Melle 2002: 179). By further incorporating this observation with Husserl’s above-discussed new descriptions of wordless cognitions, it can be concluded that Husserl believes, in 1913/14, that empty or intuitive meaning acts can give meaning to and fuse with—via the signitive tendency—emptily or intuitively intended words.

7. *Conclusion: Husserl’s New Theory of Fulfilment*

The historical analysis of this paper can now be cashed out, by discussing two of the ways Husserl transforms his theory of fulfilment in 1913/14, which are provoked by his new phenomenology of word- and meaning-experience. Specifically, I show that Husserl not only introduces a new “kind” of fulfilment, but that he also fundamentally modifies his canonical theory of fulfilment from 1901. *By presenting these novel observations, the paper reveals that interpretations of the larger themes in Husserl’s philosophy can and should be*

informed by an exacting comprehension of Husserl's insights about the experience of meaning from LUE.

First, on the basis of his insights concerning the obliging signitive tendency, Husserl proposes a novel kind of fulfilment, which he had not identified in 1901. He observes that, even though the signitive tendency is not an intention, it does have its own peculiar kind of fulfilment. Husserl elaborates on this kind of fulfilment or satisfaction by describing two possible experiences I can have when I perceive categorial signs. On the one hand, I am normally instantly guided by the signitive tendency of the expressive signs to execute the meaning intention. I immediately "allow" myself to be motivated by the tendency to go through the words to the meaning. When the words motivate my execution of the significative act, the "draw" of the tendency to perform the meaning intention has been embraced and is thereby satisfied or fulfilled (Hua XX-2: 155). On the other hand, when I see the words, I can resist the tendency to execute the meaning intention and rather intuit these signs as physical objects. I can look at the shape and colour of the words on the page or I can attend to the different tones and rhythm of the sounds coming out of the other's mouth. As I do not follow the signitive tendency, Husserl states that, in this case, the signitive tendency remains frustrated, unfulfilled, or impeded (*gehemmt*) (Hua XX-2: 155–156).

Second, Husserl alters his 1901 conception of the fulfilment of non-intuitive meaning acts and he does so in accordance with his new conclusions about the structure of non-intuitive acts, as examined in section five, and his novel insights concerning the kinds of intentions that can give meaning, as just investigated in section six. We know that, in *LU*, Husserl concluded that fulfilment occurs when the signitive substance of the signitive intention is "filled up" by the intuitive substance of the intuition. Yet, in *LUE*, Husserl finds this view to be "principally unacceptable" (Hua XX-1: 146). This is because he no longer believes that a non-intuitive act possesses any substance at all. Without any substance, there is no empty "container," which the intuitive act could pour its intuitive substance into. For this reason and others, Husserl recognizes that his conception of fulfilment as happening via filling up was inaccurate.

If the 1901 account is wrong, how then should one understand the experience of fulfilment? Husserl resolves this question by drawing from his new observations concerning intuitive meaning acts. Because he realizes that categorial intuitions can themselves operate as meaning giving acts, he also sees that, during fulfilment, the empty meaning intention does *not* have to be executed for the relevant words to have meaning. The categorial intuition can itself give the words their meaning in the first place, such that there is no need for the "bound" and "neutralized" empty meaning act to be performed during fulfilment for the words to obtain meaning. Accordingly, he can further conclude that, during fulfilment, where I execute an empty meaning act

and then come to categorially intuit that same state of affairs, the latter can simply replace the former. In replacing the empty meaning act, the categorial intuition both gives the words their meaning and validates (or alternatively, invalidates) that meaning. Husserl writes that, during fulfilment, “the word-consciousness is directly related to the intuitive consciousness, the empty intention is replaced (*ist abgelöst*) by the intuitive consciousness, which now itself, and without any mediation from an enduring empty act, [functions] as the meaning” (Hua XX-2: 151). Simply stated, because of the changes Husserl makes to his theory of non-intuitive and intuitive meaning acts, he no longer conceives of fulfilment as a kind of filling up of the empty intention by the intuitive act, but rather as a replacement of the empty act by the intuition.²⁸

This sketch of Husserl’s conclusions suffices to reveal that he, in *LUE*, drastically alters his conception of word- and meaning-consciousness and that, on the basis of those conclusions, he transforms his descriptions of fulfilment. By defining the motivation to execute the meaning, which adheres to the signs, as an obliging signitive tendency and by affirming that meaning acts can give meaning to emptily intended expressions, Husserl can conclude that intersubjective communication operates as the condition of possibility for the execution of linguistic meaning acts. In describing non-intuitive acts as empty modifications, Husserl transforms his understanding of the structure of those non-intuitive acts: He now states that they have neither intuitive nor empty content. In re-examining his insights about intuitive intentions, Husserl realized that these acts can give words meaning without the intervention of non-intuitive acts. Finally, he not only introduces a new kind of “fulfilment,” namely that of the signitive tendency, but he also reworks his theory of the fulfilment of meaning acts.²⁹ As should already be clear, these are not the only changes Husserl makes to his 1901 philosophy of meaning-consciousness. He modifies many of the other tenets of his theory in line with his novel account of meaning-consciousness in *LUE*, including his understanding of

²⁸ Husserl further alters his position concerning fulfilment in other significant ways in *LUE*. He states that, in addition to his *reel* or noetic understanding of fullness from LU, there is a *real* or noematic fullness. Moreover, Husserl develops a more complex and nuanced theory of fullness by modifying some of his observations from the first edition of section 23 of the Sixth Investigation. He claims that fullness is to be measured according to different ranks or continuums (*Rangstufe*). On the one hand, as Husserl had inchoately recognized in 1901, he now claims that fullness concerns the series of extent (*Umfang*) or richness (*Reichtum*), and liveliness (*Lebendigkeit*). On the other hand, Husserl discovers that fullness is also ranked according to clarity (*Klarheit*) or distinctness (*Deutlichkeit*), favourability (*Gunst*), and determinacy (*Bestimmtheit*). For further information on these alterations, see Melle 2002: 119.

²⁹ In a manuscript from 1909, which foreshadows Husserl’s 1913/14 conclusions about fulfilment outlined here, he arrives at a slightly different insight. While he does conclude in those manuscripts that an expression can be bound with either an intuitive or an empty meaning act, he also states that, “If the empty expressing goes over into a full expression, then they [the empty and intuitive acts] coincide” (Hua XX-2: 267).

temporality, the consciousness of possibility, and the experience of perceptual occlusion. A more comprehensive investigation into all of Husserl's transformations of his philosophy in *LUE* would; however, be the task of a much larger project.³⁰ It was rather the more modest goal of this paper to provide a clear overview of Husserl's philosophy of meaning-consciousness in 1901 and to explicate his most significant revisions to that theory in 1913/14. In doing so, I hope to have shown that Husserl's descriptions of the experience of meaningful expressions is more complex, philosophically interesting, and accurate than has previously been accounted for.

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³⁰ In my forthcoming research, I not only explore these other changes Husserl made to his thought, but also *explicitly* demonstrate how Husserl's conclusions from *LUE* shield him from Jacques Derrida's criticisms. Indeed, the careful reader would have already noted that this paper represents an *implicit* defence of Husserl from Derrida's critique in *Speech and Phenomena*.

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