Husserl Studies (2020) 36:123–139
https://doi.org/10.1007/s10743-019-09255-5

Husserl's 1901 and 1913 Philosophies of Perceptual Occlusion: Signitive, Empty, and Dark Intentions

Thomas Byrne[1]

Published online: 6 November 2019
© Springer Nature B.V. 2019

Abstract
This paper examines the evolution of Edmund Husserl's theory of perceptual occlusion. This task is accomplished in two stages. First, I elucidate Husserl's conclusion, from his 1901 *Logical Investigations*, that the occluded parts of perceptual objects are intended by partial signitive acts. I focus on two doctrines of that account. I examine Husserl's insight that signitive intentions are composed of *Gehalt* and I discuss his conclusion that signitive intentions sit on the continuum of fullness. Second, the paper discloses how Husserl transforms his 1901 philosophy in his 1913 revisions to the Sixth Logical Investigation, affirming that the occluded parts of perceptual objects are intended by empty contiguity acts. I demonstrate how he overturns the two core doctrines of his theory from the *Investigations* in these revisions, claiming that empty intentions are not composed of *Gehalt* and asserting that those acts break with the continuum of fullness. Husserl implements these changes to solve problems that arise from his recognition of two new kinds of intentions; darker and completely dark acts. Finally, in the conclusion, I cash out this analysis, by indicating that, in 1913, Husserl transforms his theory of fulfillment on the basis of his new insights about empty acts.

✉ Thomas Byrne
T.byrne3@gmail.com; Thomas.byrneiii@kuleuven.be

[1] Philosophy and Religious Studies Department, E21-4101 Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Macau, Avenida da Universidade, Taipa, Macau, China

1 Introduction

In his 1901 *Logical Investigation* (Hua XIX/1970; hereafter LU),[1] Edmund Husserl arrives at a seemingly trivial insight which would serve as a pillar of his phenomenology of perception: Externally[2] perceived[3] objects are perspectivally given. I do not, properly speaking, see all of the three dimensional spatial object at one time but am rather only given the front side of the object in its full authentic appearance. Importantly, Husserl further concludes that the occluded backsides and insides of the perceptual object are not simply lost to consciousness. I am still aware of those sides: they are still intended by me. In 1901, Husserl terms the consciousness of the apparent parts of an object partial "intuitive" intentions, and he calls the awareness of the occluded backsides and insides of an object partial "signitive" intentions. To be clear from the start, the partial signitive intentions of single-rayed perceptions[4] are not categorial acts, hypotheses, or imaginative intentions. Partial signitive intentions are rather, as moments of a perceptual intention, simply perceptually directed at the occluded sides of the perceptual object.[5]

Even though there have been numerous publications concerning Husserl's theory of perception in recent years, a good majority of that literature focuses on Husserl's account of the intuitive moment of external perception. Because Husserl concluded that intuition is the custodian of truth, scholars have concentrated on Husserl's

[1] I provide references to the corresponding English translation where available, following a slash after the Husserliana page number. Quotes from the *Logical Investigations* always come from the First Edition.

[2] Husserl broadly defines external perceptions or perceptions via the external "sense" (I treat these terms as synonymous throughout the paper), claiming that they are all of the experiences one can have via the five senses (Hua XIX, p. 667/1970, p. 277). The inner sense or inner perception, in contrast, is the intending of "'inner objects', the ego and its internal experiences" (Hua XIX, p. 667/1970, p. 278). Since Husserl concludes, in 1901, that perceptions via the internal sense are adequate, that is, they contain no signitive intentions, his discussion of internal perception is not immediately relevant for the purposes of this paper.

[3] Concerning my discussion of Husserl's theory of intuition, for reasons that will become clear just below, in this essay I primarily deal with his descriptions of perception and less so with his understanding of imaginative intentions. Yet, it should be noted that Husserl's 1901 conclusions concerning external perceptual acts naturally can be translated to account for imaginative intentions. According to his 1901 philosophy, the latter, just as the former, are composed of intuitive and signitive *Gehalt* and both are directed at perspectivally given objects.

[4] For brevity, I discuss only the signitive components of single-rayed non-categorial external perception in this essay. The question of whether categorial objects or states of affairs are given perspectivally would be the topic of another study. On this point; however, it is worth mentioning that in *Ideas I*, Husserl does seem to claim that essences, which are categorial objects, are intuited perspectivally, at least when that term is analogically understood. He writes, "The specific character of certain categories of essences is such that essences belonging to them *can* be given only *'one-sidedly',* in a sequence 'many-sidedly', yet never 'all-sidedly'" (Hua III-3, p. 13/1983, p. 8).

[5] Just from this claim, the interpretation of this paper already stands in contrast to the readings of other scholars, such as Sean Kelly. Kelly asserts that, for Husserl, the hidden sides of objects are "hypothesized but sensibly absent" (2005, p. 79). According to Kelly's Husserl, the perception of the hidden sides of objects is more cognitive than perceptual. For example, Kelly writes, "On Husserl's account […] I know or believe or hypothesize or expect that the object has certain hidden features, but I do not properly speaking see it as such" (2005, p. 80).

descriptions of those partial intuitive acts, as their studies often have the goal of revealing how Husserl's observations can be employed to critique or amend other—often analytic—philosophies of truth (see note 6 below). As a result, Husserl's insights about how I execute a partial or whole intuitive act are well understood.

In contrast, Husserl's 1901 observations about the partial signitive intentions of external perception have frequently been overlooked. Many scholars simply assert that the partial signitive intentions of external perception are directed at the occluded parts of the object without any further elucidation.[6] Simply stated, even though Husserl emphasizes that signitive intentions are a moment of every external perception, these partial acts have still not been given the attention they are due. As a result, only one half of Husserl's theory of perception has been properly covered and his account of the fulfillment of a signitive intention by an intuitive intention still remains unclear.

The first goal of this paper is to remedy this gap in the literature: *The essay explores Husserl's philosophy of the partial signitive intentions of external perception from the 1901 Logical Investigations,* so as to present a more accurate picture of his early account of perception. To do so, I primarily examine two interconnected tenets of Husserl's theory of signitive intentions from 1901. Namely, I explore his conclusions about the structure or component parts of signitive intentions and his observations about the location of signitive intentions on the "continuum" of fullness (*Fülle*).

At the same time, if this essay is to properly disclose Husserl's philosophy of our awareness of the occluded sides of perceptual objects, a discussion of LU alone would not suffice. After the publication of that 1901 text, Husserl recognizes that his analysis of partial signitive intentions was by and large incorrect. While he maintains that one is aware of the occluded sides of external perceptual objects, he realizes that his descriptions of those experiences was inaccurate. As such, in his 1913/1914 revisions to the Sixth Investigation (Hua XX-1/2; hereafter *Revisions*), Husserl seeks to amend and transform his observations from 1901 and does so by executing his most extensive and definitive study of the intending of the occluded sides of perceptual objects, which he there terms "empty" (*leer*) acts. Indeed, as Ullrich Melle writes, "Nowhere else has Husserl analysed empty intentions in such detail" (2002, p. 116). Despite the fact that Husserl radically altered his theory of partial signitive intentions—and by extension, his whole account of perception—in

[6] To provide three examples from just this journal: First, in "Husserl's Conception of Experiential Justification", Phillip Berghofer only briefly repeats the standard definition of signitive intentions. He simply writes that signitive intentions are the acts "in which what is given to us is not the object in its actual presence but the object as something that is meant only" (2018, p. 147). Second, Timothy Mooney, in "Understanding and Simple Seeing in Husserl", merely once mentions that signitive intentions are opposed to intuitive intentions (2010, pp. 23–24). Finally, in "Desiring to Know through Intuition", Rudolf Bernet only directly explicates Husserl's account of signitive intentions in a footnote (2003, p. 166 n. 4). It should be mentioned that, outside of this journal, Kevin Mulligan provides an exacting, yet brief investigation of Husserl's theory of signitive intentions in "Perception" (1995, pp. 193–194 and 204–206). In sum, most analyses of Husserl's theory of perception do seek to clarify his conclusion that a partial intuitive intention fulfills a partial signitive intention. Yet they normally only extensively discuss the former kind of partial acts.

these manuscripts, they have not been thoroughly discussed in the literature.[7] The reader will become even more surprised to learn that these manuscripts have been largely neglected, when it is noted that Edith Stein recognized the importance of Husserl's discussion of empty intentions from 1913 and decided to compile and publish Husserl's writings under the titles, "The Emptiness Modification" and "Possibility and Consciousness of Possibility".

The second goal of this paper is accordingly to present a comprehensive examination of how Husserl transforms his 1901 account of partial signitive intentions in the 1913 Revisions. This will not only unearth Husserl's definitive view concerning the experience of perceptual occlusion, but will also shed new light on his observations from LU, as it places them in a new context. Concretely, I examine how Husserl transforms the two central tenets of his theory of signitive intentions from 1901. I study, first, his changed perspective concerning the structure or component parts of signitive—now, empty-acts, and second, his novel claim that empty intentions break with the continuum of fullness.

To accomplish these two goals, the following analysis is broken down into three further sections. Section two is dedicated to exploring how Husserl, in LU, develops those two tenets of his philosophy of signitive intentions, by establishing a contrast between signitive and intuitive acts with regards to their fullness and the kind of "*Gehalt*" they possess. In section three, I examine how Husserl transforms those two doctrines in *Revisions* by introducing the "emptyness modification". I reveal that Husserl implements his changes to his philosophy of signitive acts in order to solve problems that arise from his 1913 recognition of two kinds of intentions: darker and completely dark acts. Finally, I emphasize that this analysis of Husserl's theory of signitive and empty acts is not executed just because Husserl's observations about those intentions are philosophically rich and interesting. Rather, in the conclusion to this paper, I demonstrate that Husserl's 1901 and 1913 insights about perceptual occlusion can also be employed to augment ongoing discussions in the literature, specifically those concerning Husserl's theory of fulfillment. I cash out the analyses of sections two and three by indicating how Husserl, in 1913, needed to, and did, alter his theory of fulfillment on the basis of his new observations about empty intentions. In doing so, I reveal that an analysis of intuitive acts alone is not sufficient, but that it is by additionally grasping Husserl's robust theories of signitive and empty intentions that a more accurate account of his phenomenology of fulfilment can be realized.

[7] Of the few scholars who have discussed Husserl's theory of signitive intentions, Ullrich Melle has provided the most extensive and exacting analyses. On the one hand, this essay expands upon Melle's conclusions from his articles, "Signitive and Signifikative Intentionen" (1999) and "Husserl's Revisions of the Sixth Logical Investigation" (2002). On the other hand, at times I develop my own interpretation of Husserl by critically engaging with Melle's reading of Husserl's *Revisions*. In particular, see notes 26 and 28 below.

2 *Logical Investigations*. Structure and the Continuum

In this section, I examine Husserl's 1901 descriptions of signitive intentions. I clarify how Husserl arrives at his conclusions concerning signitive intentions by contrasting them with intuitive acts, specifically with regards to their differences in "fullness" (*Fülle*). By performing this study, the two critical doctrines of Husserl's theory of signitive intentions will become clear; namely, his understanding of the component parts of signitive intentions and his observations concerning their location on the continuum of fullness.

To properly address Husserl's differentiation between signitive and intuitive intentions, I begin with an investigation of his 1901 account of fullness, as it is on the basis of fullness that Husserl establishes the central contrast between those two kinds of acts. In LU, Husserl 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, p. 607/1970, p. 234).[8] The fullness is those components of the intention which correspond to or are responsible for the intending of the fully apparent 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 the partial signitive acts, which are directed at the occluded parts of the object, lack fullness.[9]

Importantly, Husserl concludes that these kinds of acts differ with regard to fullness because they have different component parts. Looking first at intuitive acts, Husserl states that we can define those components in two ways.

First, Husserl defines the fullness of the intuitive act as the "*Inhalt*"[10] of the intention. This *Inhalt* is the content of the act considered in abstraction from its "apprehension" (*Auffassung*), that is, the content "in abstraction from its function in imagination or perception" (Hua XIX, pp. 608–609/1970, p. 234). Husserl terms the *Inhalt* of the perception, "sensations" (*Empfindungen*) and the *Inhalt* of phantasy, the "sensuous phantasms" (*sinnlichen Phantasmen*) (Hua XIX, p. 610/1970, p. 235). Husserl defines both—the former being of concern here[11]—as unique, unrepeatable elements of experience. *Inhalte* are not intended or perceived objects, as

[8] At another point, Husserl writes, "The sum total of the communally fused moments, considered as the fundament of the pure intuitive apprehension […] comprises the fullness of the [intuitive] presentation" (Hua XIX, p. 608/1970, p. 234).

[9] As such, if the act attained the ideal of fullness, that is, if the intention were entirely full, the act would then only contain components that would correspond to apparent parts of the object. In such a presentation, "no part, no side, no property of its object fails to be intuitively presented, none is merely indirectly and subsidiarily meant. Not only is everything that is intuitively presented also meant […] but whatever is meant is intuitively given" (Hua XIX, p. 612/1970, p. 236).

[10] I have chosen to leave Husserl's terms "*Inhalt*" and "*Gehalt*" untranslated. While Findlay translates them as "content" and "substance", I believe that these terms—and the latter in particular—obscure the meaning Husserl sought to communicate. Moreover, by leaving them in their original German, the distinctions between them remain lucid.

[11] See note 3 above.

they rather belong to the stream of consciousness (Hua XIX, p. 397/1970, p. 104). In sum, *Inhalte* are not intentional in and of themselves.

The second way that we can conceive of the components of the act which are responsible for fullness is termed, by Husserl, the intuitive *"Gehalt*" of the intention. The intuitive *Gehalt* is composed not only of the *Inhalte*, but also the apprehension of the *Inhalte*. The intuitive *Gehalt* is not the *Inhalte* in abstraction from their apprehension, but rather the *Inhalte* "in their apprehension, thus not these moments alone" (Hua XIX, p. 609/1970, p. 234). Husserl summarizes this point by stating, "We call the presentative [*darstellenden*] or intuitive representing *Inhalt* in and with its pertinent apprehension, the intuitive *Gehalt* of the act" (Hua XIX, p. 610/1970, p. 235).[12]

To clarify Husserl's notion of apprehension, I note that he defines the apprehension of the act as that which takes up, interprets, or forms the *Inhalte*.[13] Via an intuitive apprehension, the *Inhalte* intuitively represent the intended object. In sections 16–29 of the Sixth Investigation, Husserl elaborates on this conclusion, claiming that there are two parts of the apprehension: the apprehending matter or sense and the apprehending form. Husserl ascribes a broad intentional function to the apprehending matter or, when it appears in signitive intentions, simply, the matter. When interpreting the sensorial *Inhalt,* the apprehending matter 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, pp. 429–430/1970, p. 121).[14] Apprehending form, in contrast, not only determines how the *Inhalt* is to be interpreted—such that it dictates whether the object is represented in an intuitive, signitive, or mixed "fashion" (*Weise*) (Hua XIX, p. 624/1970, p. 245)—but also, when the apprehending form determines that the *Inhalt* is to be apprehended to intuitively represent the object, it regulates whether that *Inhalt* perceptually or imaginatively represents that object.

In sum Husserl concludes, in 1901, that the fullness of the act—that in the act which is responsible for the appearance of the front side of the object—can be conceived of as either the intuitive *Inhalt*—the flowing and changing sensations or phantasms, which can represent the object—or as the intuitive *Gehalt*—the *Inhalt* in and with its apprehension.

In contrast to partial intuitive intentions, partial signitive intentions, which are those parts of the perceptual intention that are directed at the occluded parts of the

[12] Certainly, Husserl is not entirely consistent in the application of these terms in 1901. He sometimes uses the term *Inhalt* for what is clearly *Gehalt* and vice versa.

[13] Husserl develops his descriptions of the relationship between the *Inhalte* and apprehension in opposition to Natorp and other thinkers like him, who claim that all changes in the represented objects are due exclusively to alterations of content (Cf. Natorp 1888, p. 182). Husserl instead asserts that *Inhalte* can continually change, but that if the apprehension remains invariant, it will continue to interpret the distinct *Inhalte* as representing the same object and properties.

[14] Husserl even goes so far as to write that, "To each part and property of the object, including its reference to a *hic et nunc*, there must necessarily be a corresponding part or moment of [the matter]" (Hua XIX, p. 610/1970, p. 235).

object, lack such fullness. To highlight the contrast between these components of experience and the intuitive *Gehalt*, Husserl terms them the "signitive *Gehalt*". He writes that the signitive *Gehalt* of the act is that "which corresponds to the sum total of the remaining, subsidiarily given properties of the object, which do not themselves become apparent" (Hua XIX, p. 610/1970, p. 236). What is this signitive *Gehalt*? On the one hand, the signitive *Gehalt* possesses no *Inhalt* as such. There is nothing which the partial signitive intention *in itself* apprehends to represent the intended object. On the other hand, the signitive *Gehalt* still comprises the matter of the act, which determines how I intend the occluded sides of the object with these or those properties.

In arriving at this conclusion, Husserl is claiming that partial signitive and intuitive intentions are composed of the same kind of structural or component parts: Even though signitive intentions possess signitive *Gehalt* and intuitive intentions have intuitive *Gehalt*, they are yet both still composed of *Gehalt*. This insight can also be translated into the noematic register of Husserl's later philosophy to reveal his understanding of the structure of perceptual objects: In external perception, the intuitive *Gehalt* is responsible for the intending of the appearing front-side of the object, which Husserl would later call the intuitive "core" (*Kern*), and the signitive *Gehalt* is directed at the co-meant occluded sides of the object, which Husserl subsequently terms the "halo" (*Hof*).[15] Then, objectively taken, it can be said that Husserl already implicitly understood, in 1901, that the externally perceived object is structured as having an intuitively given core and a co-meant halo.

Further, by describing intuitive and signitive acts in these ways, Husserl has established an *unbroken* continuum on which all acts sit. At the upper limit of the continuum of fullness there are completely intuitive intentions, which are composed only of intuitive *Gehalt*. At the lower limit of the continuum of fullness, that is, at the null-point, there sit entirely signitive intentions, which possess only signitive *Gehalt*.[16] Husserl writes, "In the former, the [entirely signitive] presentation would have only signitive content which […] appears as the limitation case of intuition. In the second case, the completely intuitive presentation has *no* signitive *Gehalt* whatever" (Hua XIX, p. 612/1970, p. 236).[17] When there is an increase in intuitive

[15] On Husserl's later theory of perception, the co-meant halo also comprises the not-intuitively-presented co-meant objects and larger surroundings. See Hua XX-1, pp. 90–93.

[16] The signitive act does not merely consist of the matter, but also of what Husserl calls the objectifying "quality". Husserl emphasizes that an analysis of quality is not directly relevant for his theory of fullness. He writes, "in the following investigation [of fullness], only the 'matter-side' of an act's intentional essence will have relevance for the relationships to be established. The qualities of our intentions (whether assertive or merely presentative) can be varied indifferently" (Hua XIX, p. 607/1970, p. 233). Following Husserl, I do not discuss quality in further detail in this essay.

[17] To be clear, in 1901 Husserl asserts that it is not possible to execute an entirely signitive intention. There must be an accompanying intuition, which motivates the signitive intention. More appropriately stated, consciousness must *reelly* contain *Inhalt* for the signitive intention to be performed, as the former serves as the necessary support for the latter. 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, p. 619/1970, p. 241). In contrast, Husserl does assert that it is possible to execute an entirely intuitive act; namely, during internal perception. See note 2 above.

Gehalt there is a decrease in signitive *Gehalt*, up to the upper limit-point, that is, a completely intuitive intention that has only intuitive *Gehalt*. Contrarily, when there is an increase in signitive *Gehalt*, there is a decrease in intuitive *Gehalt*, up to the null-point of an entirely signitive act, which has only signitive *Gehalt*. In between these two points sit the acts that are composed of both intuitive and signitive *Gehalt*, such as an external perception. To clarify these insights, Husserl analogizes the continuum of fullness with the mathematical continuum between 0 and 1. He writes, "If we now define the *weight* of the intuitive (or signitive) *Gehalt* as the sum total of the intuitively (or signitively) presented moments of the object, both 'weights' in each presentation will add up to a single total weight. […] Always therefore the symbolic equation holds, $i + s = 1$" (Hua XIX, p. 611/1970, p. 236). In the case of a normal external perception, s (the signitive *Gehalt*) could be .5 and i (the intuitive *Gehalt*) would also be .5. So if the signitive *Gehalt* increases—that is, if the act becomes less intuitive—i could decrease to .25 and s increase to .75, up until i equals 0 and s equals 1.

3 Husserl's 1913 *Revisions*: New Divisions

In his 1913 *Revisions* to the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl transforms his previous two doctrines concerning signitive intentions: that partial signitive intentions of single rayed external perceptions are composed of signitive *Gehalt,* and that signitive acts sit on the continuum of fullness. To provide the proper context within which it will be possible to understand those two alterations, in this preparatory section I address Husserl's more general modifications to his philosophy of signitive intentionality in 1913. As will be shown in the following sub-sections, these overall changes Husserl makes to his theory lay the groundwork upon which he can execute his drastic revisions to those two tenets of his account of signitive acts from 1901. Concerning the general changes to his philosophy of intentionality I discuss, on the one hand, how Husserl transforms his terminology when discussing the acts that have no intuitive *Gehalt;* on the other, I demonstrate how he discovers new divisions between the acts emptied of intuitive *Gehalt* and intuitive intentions.

To begin, I examine how Husserl, for good reasons, changes the terminology he employs when discussing the experiences of the occluded backsides of perceptual objects. Husserl is motivated to make these alterations because he sees that he was misguided when he applied the term "signitive" to those intentions. This label and even so, his descriptions, seemed to suggest that he conceived of the experience of the occluded parts of the perceptual object as if it were an intending of the signified object of a sign. In fact, in LU Husserl even went so far as to assert that the signitive *Gehalt* is a "pure signification" (*reine Signifikation*) (Hua XIX, p. 612/1970, p. 237). In 1913, Husserl sees that he must change his terminology to clearly segregate the presentations of signified objects from the perceptual presentations of occluded sides. To begin to do so, he claims that all intentions which have no intuitive *Gehalt*

are to be called "empty" (*leer*) acts (Hua XX-1, p. 90).[18] He then concludes that the term "signitive" should be applied to the intentions that are directed at the signified of a sign. From this, Husserl asserts his important insight that there are empty intentions which are not of a signitive nature.[19]

To clarify these non-signitive empty intentions, Husserl distinguishes two kinds of intuitive intentions from two types of empty intentions. The first division Husserl draws is a direct adaption of his 1901 distinction between partial intuitive intentions and partial signitive acts. On the one hand, there are simply the intuitive intentions which are favorably directed at a clear and distinct front side of the object, that is, its intuitively given core (see note 21 below). For clarity, I term these, "full" intuitive acts or "full" intuitive partial intentions. Second, there are those partial intentions which are directed at the occluded co-meant sides of the object, that is, at the core's halo. In 1913, Husserl calls these "empty contiguity intentions". He describes these partial acts by writing that we find a "pointing beyond in the form of empty intentions, which, by means of contiguity, point beyond the appearing thing itself to other parts of the thing" (Hua XX-1, p. 93).[20] In line with these insights, Husserl again asserts that an entirely full perception, if it were possible,[21] would sit at the upper limit of the continuum of fullness, whereas a total empty intending occupies the null-point. Husserl also reiterates that an external perception which is composed of both intuitive acts and empty contiguity intentions sits somewhere along the continuum and does not occupy either extreme point.

The second division Husserl makes between kinds of intuitive and empty intentions is more difficult to pry apart, because it initially appears as if he only identifies one type of act, which he calls "dark" (*Dunkel*). Yet, closer inspection of the text

[18] Husserl does use the term "empty" in LU. However, it is largely employed as synonymous with signitive.

[19] In the second volume of Hua XX, Husserl further revises his theory of signitive acts. He there asserts that the term "signitive" applies to the tendency, which arises from the intuition of the words, to execute the pertinent meaning-giving act, and that only the meaning-intention itself should be called the significative act (Hua XX-1, pp. 203–204). Melle explains these points well by writing, "The meaning in the sense of the intention, which points beyond, must be distinguished from the meaning in the sense of the thematic intention. The signitive intention leads over into the significative intention, and is satisfied in the latter" (1999, p. 177). In fact, Husserl laments the fact that he largely equated the terms signitive and significative in LU, writing that 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, p. 204).

[20] Husserl not only outlines these contiguity intentions, which point beyond the seen front side of the object (*hinausweisende Intentionen*), but also discovers partial acts which point-inward towards the further determinations and determinabilities of that already apparent front side (*hineinweisende Intentionen*). He writes, "The appearance of a colored so and so given spatial figure points to continually new manners of appearance of the same colored figure, the same figure in its continually new orientations" (Hua XX-1, pp. 91–92). For further information on Husserl's theory of *hineinweisende Intentionen*, see Melle (2002, pp. 117–118).

[21] In total contrast to his claims from 1901 (Cf. note 17 above), Husserl concludes, in *Revisions*, that one can execute an entirely empty act but not an entirely intuitive act. As discussed below, an entirely empty act can be a meaning-intention or a fully dark act. A completely intuitive act is not possible, because Husserl sees that, as a result of temporal extension, even internal perceptions have empty retentional components.

reveals that Husserl actually describes two different kinds of dark intentions, one of which is still intuitive and one of which is empty.

First, Husserl identifies intentions that are less full. These acts are partially, but not entirely, lacking in intuitive *Gehalt*. They sit on the continuum of fullness, but near the bottom end of the series. He writes that these acts are "unclear, [but] are yet always still intuitions. They have *reellen* intuitive *Gehalt* and equally so, the necessarily included *reell* empty *Gehalt*" (Hua XX-1, p. 144). I call these intentions, which have less fullness but are still intuitive, the "darker" acts. In contrast to these, Husserl states that there are intentions which can be termed "fully dark" (*vollen Dunkel*). Fully dark intentions have no intuitive content and sit at the null-point of the continuum of fullness.[22] In other words, fully dark intentions are empty acts.

Husserl provides two examples of such fully dark acts. First, I can experience whole empty or completely dark "perceptual" intentions when the light in a room goes out. In that case, the objects and the room do not simply vanish, such that I take myself to be in a void. Rather, I am still "perceptually" aware of those objects via the entirely dark intentions. Husserl describes these experiences by writing that "in the often used example of the extinguishing of the light […] in full darkness the object stands there, we are still perceptually directed at, it is still there, but we do not 'see' it" (Hua XX-1, p. 141). Second, completely dark "phantasy" occurs during the intermitting of a phantasy, where the phantasied object does not—at least for a moment—intuitively appear but is yet still intended (Hua XX-1, p. 142).

In sum, by defining acts in this way *Husserl has set up a contrast between two kinds of intuitive intentions – more full and darker acts—and two types of non-signitive empty intentions—contiguity and completely dark acts*.

3.1 The *Revisions*. Structure and Continuum. Two Difficulties

With Husserl's differentiations between these acts held in mind, in this sub-section I begin with a brief analysis of Husserl's revised understanding of the structure of intuitive acts, both full and darker, which remains—at least somewhat (see note 23 below)—unchanged from LU. I then execute a more extensive investigation of his descriptions of the structure of empty acts: the completely dark intentions and, subsequently, contiguity acts. This will reveal two difficulties that Husserl encounters when trying to account for empty intentions. The analysis will show that those two problems both stem from Husserl's observation that the objects of fully dark intentions seem to be perspectivally given. As shall be disclosed in the next sub-section, Husserl's drastic modifications to the two doctrines of his 1901 theory of perceptual occlusion are the direct result of his attempt to resolve the two problems that are revealed in this sub-section.

[22] To be noted is that, in section 18 of *Revisions* (Hua XX-1, pp. 94–96), Husserl additionally outlines two ways to divide between kinds of empty intentions. He distinguishes between associative and non-associative empty acts; he then divides associative intentions which are motivated by an "arousing object" (*Erregerin*) from those that are not.

Looking first at Husserl's 1913 understanding of the structure of intuitive acts, it can be said that he largely reiterates his conclusions from LU. An intuitive act, such as a perception, is composed of both intuitive and empty *Gehalt*. Husserl clearly holds on to the idea that *Inhalte* are apprehended to intuitively represent the intentional object. He writes, "It belongs to the *reell* essence of the 'apprehension' belonging to the pertinent perception, to give [the *Inhalte*] the character of a presentation of the pertinent presented object" (Hua XX-1, p. 123). He further still concludes that the *Inhalte* and their apprehension together make up the intuitive *Gehalt*, writing that if we "gather together the presenting *Inhalt* in a perception, and if we take it with its unitary purely intuitive representing function […] then we obtain the purely intuitive *Gehalt*" (Hua XX-1, p. 123). In line with this, Husserl claims that a darker act—that is, a less full but still intuitive intention—like all other intuitive acts, also has an intuitive and signitive *Gehalt*. The darker act is still directed at its less clear perceptual object in a perspectival manner: Its object is given with an intuitive core and an empty co-meant halo. With this same structure, the darker acts and their objects clearly sit on the continuum of fullness.[23]

The problems arise for Husserl when he attempts to describe the structure of completely dark acts. Specifically, he observes that even a fully dark act discloses its object perspectivally. He writes that in the case where the light goes out, "We know very well from which side, in which orientation, one could almost say in which manner of appearance [the object] comes before us—even though it is entirely and truly not 'seen'" (Hua XX-1, p. 142). Despite the fact that no side of the object appears to me during this experience, I still "see" that object from a front-side and with its co-meant occluded backsides. Indeed, when the lights go out in the room, I am not just intending physical objects without sides; I am aware of those objects in their spatial location relative to me, with these or those sides facing me. The seeming conclusion of this discovery appears to be that the object of the fully dark act has, "in the empty presentation, only just in an empty way, all of the distinctions of core and halo, of fullness and emptiness" (Hua XX-1, p. 143). This would mean that the objects of completely dark intentions would have the same "phenomenological structure, that of its 'core' and its 'halo' as full intuitions" (Hua XX-1, p. 142). Moreover, the completely dark act would have the same structure as a full perception. The completely dark act would have an "intuitive" *Gehalt* which corresponds to the front-side or "intuitive" core of the object, even though that front-side does not appear, and an

[23] While these conclusions mostly align with Husserl's understanding of fullness and intuition from LU, he also alters his position in significant ways. He states that, in addition to his *reell* 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 (*Rangestufe*). On the one hand, as Husserl 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*), favorability (*Gunst*), and determinacy (*Bestimmheit*). For further information on these alterations, see Melle (2002, p. 119).

"empty" *Gehalt* which would correspond to the co-meant halo (Hua XX-1, pp. 144–145).[24]

The first problem arising from this insight can be understood when one recognizes that, for the Husserl of 1913, acts that have the same structure—that is, the intentions that possess the same component parts of intuitive and empty *Gehalt*—all sit on the continuum of fullness. The difficulty Husserl then sees is that if the completely dark act has the same structure as intuitive acts (full or darker) of intuitive and empty *Gehalt*, as seems to be the case, then the fully dark intention could not be distinguished from the continuum but would rather sit wholly within it. Husserl writes, "*According to this interpretation*, the null-limit of unclarity would (*wäre*) itself belong to the series of gradual clarity or unclarity. The distinction between clarity and unclarity would then have to be spoken of as a blend of nuances with regards to its ideal limits of 0 and 1—perchance just as is the case with the nuances between black and white" (Hua XX-1, p. 142; emphasis mine). This claim—that completely dark intentions have the same structure as intuitive acts and thus sit on the continuum of fullness—is unacceptable for Husserl in 1913, as he instead believes that a different viewpoint is more phenomenologically accurate for reasons discussed below. Indeed, if Husserl accepted this conclusion, he would be largely returning to his doctrine from LU and not revising it.

The second difficulty Husserl encounters concerns the structure and objects of empty contiguity intentions. Husserl inquires if the objects of completely dark acts are given in the same way that the co-meant occluded sides of the object are. In other words, Husserl asks: Do completely dark and contiguity intentions have the same structure? If it is assumed that the objects of completely dark intentions do have a core-halo structure, the answer clearly cannot be positive. If the object of a fully dark act had a core-halo structure, and if empty contiguity intentions also had that same structure—that is, of the core and halo—Husserl correctly notes that an absurd infinite regress would result. The emptily intended halo would then itself have a core and a halo. The latter emptily co-meant halo would also itself be structured as having a core and a halo, and so on. Husserl outlines this implication by writing that the "empty [contiguity] presentation would then have, regarding its object, its own manner of givenness again a halo and a core, which itself would lead to new empty presentations, and so on *in infinitum*" (Hua XX-1, p. 144). Husserl correctly rejects this (im)possibility of a never-ending series of empty halos contained within other empty halos, but he still has not provided an account of how to correctly describe the structure of empty contiguity acts.

[24] Naturally, these terms are being used in an extended sense. In a *Beilage* to the revised chapter, Husserl more clearly terms these partial acts the "Quasi-Fülle" and the "Quasi-Leer" (Hua XX-1, p. 240). Of note is that Husserl radically alters his theory in the pertinent *Beilagen*, since he rejects his revisions of the chapter and instead readopts many of his conclusions from LU.

3.2 *Revisions*. Structure and Continuum. Solution

In order to resolve both of these difficulties, Husserl transforms the two tenets of his theory of perceptual occlusion in 1913. First, he observes that *contiguity and completely dark acts are "empty modifications" of intuitive intentions, such that they have a structure that is different from intuitive acts*. Second, he claims that because both of those empty experiences have a different structure than intuitive acts, even though they sit at the null-point of the continuum of fullness *these empty intentions yet break with that continuum*.

The first revision can be otherwise stated as follows: Empty intentions—both fully dark and contiguity acts—are not acts which have been drained of intuitive *Gehalt*; instead they are modifications of intuitive intentions. Husserl emphasizes that both of these kinds of intentions are empty modifications when he writes, "The empty-modification of external perception […] is exemplified in the halo of perception *and* in the example of the empty, un-intuitive 'perception', of the object, which is 'still standing there' during the extinguishing of the light" (Hua XX-1, p. 147). To properly clarify this insight, I first look at Husserl's new descriptions of completely dark acts as empty modifications, before turning to his analysis of partial contiguity intentions as empty modifications.

Concerning Husserl's descriptions of completely dark intentions as empty modifications of intuitions, Melle only mentions that the empty modification is "peculiar" and that it is akin to the imaginative and phantasy modifications laid out in *Ideas I* (Melle 2002, p. 118). While the empty modification is marginally analogous to those other modifications, I highlight that it is exceptionally different and that it requires a more extensive analysis. An imaginative modification, for example, does not change the fundamental structure of the perceptual intention: When a perception is imaginatively modified, the resultant imaginative act still possesses an intuitive *Gehalt* and an empty *Gehalt*. In contrast, an empty modification transforms the structure of the full perception. When executing an empty completely dark act, Husserl writes, "The representing contents disappear and with this, the apprehension disappears, thus the entire intuitive *Gehalt* disappears—and by virtue of the non-independence of the intuitive *Gehalt*, that is, its essential togetherness with the supplementing empty *Gehalt*—then also the latter disappears" (Hua XX-1, p. 145). Otherwise stated: According to Husserl, the empty dark intention does not have intuitive *Gehalt* or empty *Gehalt*, so there is naturally no structural division between them.[25] Husserl

[25] From this solution an important question arises: If an empty intention does not have the structure of intuitive and empty *Gehalt*, then how can Husserl account for the fact that the object of the completely dark act is perspectivally given? Husserl's only answer is that the "modification is so essentially structured, that it demands for its fulfillment a corresponding intuition, which in itself has *reell* certain empty components; where they also require for their fulfillment, new intuitions, with new *reell* empty components and so on […]" (Hua XX-1, p. 145). Even though there is no intuitive or empty *Gehalt* in the empty dark act, the intention still emptily discloses its object perspectivally, as is evidenced by the fact that it can only find its fulfillment in an intuition which has empty and intuitive *Gehalt,* that is, in the intending of an object that possesses an intuitive core and an empty co-meant halo. Unfortunately, Husserl does not provide the reader with more information on how to understand this point.

writes that the fully dark intention is executed "without any of the *reellen* internal divisions and distinctions" which the perceptual act possesses (Hua XX-1, p. 144). Thus it can be concluded that the completely dark intention has a fundamentally different structure than the full intuitive and darker acts.[26]

Husserl makes it clear that he also conceives of contiguity acts as modifications of perceptual intentions (Hua XX-1, pp. 147–148). In coming to this insight, Husserl can additionally resolve the problem of the infinite regress of halos. As the empty contiguity intentions are modifications of perception, there is within them no division between intuitive and empty *Gehalt*. Accordingly, the corresponding co-meant occluded backsides do not have a core-halo structure. Because the empty co-meant halo does not have a core and a halo, the problem of an infinity of halos dissipates.

By adopting these solutions, Husserl has executed his transformation of the two main tenets of his theory of empty intentions. First, he concludes that empty contiguity and empty dark intentions have a different structure from intuitive acts, be they full or darker. While full and darker intentions both possess an intuitive and an empty *Gehalt*, contiguity and fully dark acts do not have that structure. Second, Husserl can assert that empty intentions do occupy the null-point on the continuum of fullness but yet still sit outside of that continuum. To clarify this insight, I return to Husserl's example of the mathematical continuum between 0 and 1. In 1901, Husserl concluded that an intuitive act can continually become less and less full where there is an increase in the signitive *Gehalt*—perhaps from .5 to .75 to 1—and there is a corresponding decrease in intuitive *Gehalt,* respectively from .5 to .25 to 0. In 1913, Husserl again concludes that an act can continually become less and less full up to, for example, where the signitive *Gehalt* is at .99 and the intuitive *Gehalt* is at .01. But when the act becomes entirely empty, the division between signitive and intuitive *Gehalt* disappears. The signitive *Gehalt* does not measure at 1, nor does the intuitive *Gehalt* sit at 0. Rather, there is a fracture, where the completely empty intention breaks with the continuum of fullness.

4 Conclusion

In this essay I explored how Husserl describes our awareness of perceptual occlusion in 1901 and how he altered those observations in 1913. In LU Husserl stated that I am aware of the occluded backsides and insides of objects via partial signitive intentions. He claimed that when there is a decrease in intuitive content, there is an increase in signitive content, up to the limit-point where the whole act is a signitive intention composed only of signitive *Gehalt* (see note 17 above). In contrast,

[26] Ullrich Melle adopts a different interpretation of Husserl's theory. He writes, "A difference has to be made between empty representation and an obscure [dark] intuition, i.e., an intuition emptied of intuitive content. Otherwise we are faced with an infinite regress" (2002, p. 118). A generous reading of Melle's comment here would suggest that he is differentiating darker intentions from empty intentions, which is a division that Husserl certainly endorses. Yet Melle's assertion that "obscure intuitions are emptied of intuitive content" lets the reader know that he is actually trying to claim that Husserl differentiates between completely dark and empty intentions, which is not the case.

in *Revisions* Husserl observes that we are conscious of the occluded backsides of perceptual objects via empty contiguity intentions and not signitive acts. Husserl further altered his 1901 interpretation by concluding that empty completely dark and empty contiguity intentions are not composed solely of empty *Gehalt*. Instead, they are modifications of perceptions, which have a different structure because they possess neither intuitive *Gehalt* nor any empty *Gehalt*. To summarize, the intentions which occupy the null-point of fullness are described as sitting on that continuum of fullness in 1901, while they are conceived of as breaking with the series in 1913.

As stated in the introduction of this paper, these Husserlian insights about signitive and empty acts have often gone underappreciated in the literature. When examining Husserl's theory of fulfillment, for example, scholars have historically focused their analyses on his observations about intuitive intentions, which serve as truthmakers during fulfillment. This approach has, however, limited our understanding of Husserl's theory of fulfillment (and equally, his account of perception). Indeed, Husserl's insights about signitive intentions—which in 1901 he describes as the acts that undergo fulfillment—play a significant role in informing his conclusions about fulfillment. Accordingly, Husserl's revisions to his descriptions of signitive intentions in 1913 necessitated that he change his observations about fulfillment in equal measure. To cash out my above analysis of LU and *Revisions*, I briefly discuss one of the alterations Husserl makes to his theory of fulfillment in 1913 which is provoked by his new phenomenology of empty intentions. Specifically, I work from Husserl's conclusions about the empty contiguity intentions of perception to indicate how he reformed his theory of the fulfillment of expressed empty meaning intentions. By presenting these conclusions, the paper provides an initial proof of concept for how a novel approach—to examine Husserl's philosophy through the lens of his descriptions of signitive and empty intentions—can prove useful in helping us to understand the larger themes of his philosophy.

In LU, Husserl claims that both the partial signitive intentions of perception and so also signitive meaning intentions are composed of signitive *Gehalt*. In line with what was stated above, during the fulfillment of these signitive meaning acts the signitive *Gehalt* is reduced and the intuitive *Gehalt* increases. The Husserl of 1901 conceives of this process of fulfillment of a signitive meaning act (and indeed of all signitive intentions) as the filling up (*aüsfullen*) of that act by the relevant intuition of the state of affairs. As a result, he concludes that both the signitive and intuitive acts are executed together during fulfillment, since otherwise there would be no intention that the intuitive act could fill up. Husserl writes, "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, p. 571/1970, p. 209).

As we know, according to Husserl's 1913 philosophy the empty act lacks both empty and intuitive *Gehalt*. In line with this Husserl concludes that, during fulfillment, the empty meaning intention is not "filled up" by the intuitive act: The intuitive *Gehalt* does not so-to-speak fill the empty *Gehalt* of the meaning intention. Husserl now takes it to be unsatisfactory to conceive of the empty act as a container or receptacle into which the intuitive act pours its fullness.

Since Husserl recognizes that the intuitive act does not fill up the empty intention, he also sees that there is no requirement that both must be executed together during fulfillment. Because during an expression of an intuitively presented state of affairs the categorial intuition is not "filling up" an empty meaning act, Husserl considers the possibility and ultimately concludes that the latter need not be executed during fulfillment. Rather, only the word constituting act and the categorial intuition alone may be performed, where that intuition suffices both to give meaning to the words and to validate that meaning. Husserl further clarifies this insight by claiming that an expression can be given its meaning *either* by an empty meaning intention *or* by a categorial intuition. During the validation of the meaning by an intuition, the empty meaning act does not have to be co-executed with the categorial intuition; it need not be continually performed, but now in a "neutralized" and "bound" state. Instead, the empty meaning intention simply does not have to be performed.[27] Husserl summarizes these points by writing, "The essentially same word-consciousness is at one time bound with the intuitive judgment and at another time bound with the un-intuitive judgment, which have the same intentional essence. Or, perhaps it can be more properly said, with judgments which have the same intentional essence, they are at one time founded in intuition, and at the other time in the dark [*dunklen*] 'empty' presentation" (Hua XX-1, p. 67).[28]

While this analysis does suffice to demonstrate that Husserl's conclusions about empty intentions inform his descriptions of fulfillment and the validation of meaning in 1913, a more comprehensive investigation of this novel account of fulfillment—along with an examination of the many other modifications Husserl makes to his philosophy on the basis of his observations about empty intentions—would be the task of a much larger project. It was rather the more modest goal of this paper to clearly elucidate Husserl's philosophy of signitive intentions in 1901 and his revisions to it in 1913. In doing so, I hope to have shown that Husserl's descriptions of perceptual occlusion are more complex and philosophically interesting than has previously been accounted for.

Acknowledgement I would like to thank Witold Plotka, Daniel Murphy, Dermot Moran, Julia Jansen, Ullrich Melle, Claudio Majolino, and the anonymous reviewer.

Funding Postdoctoral Research Grant From KU Leuven Internal Fund; Postdoctoral Research Grant from "Talent Search Project", University of Macau.

[27] In a manuscript from 1909, which foreshadows Husserl's 1913 conclusions about fulfillment 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 [the empty and intuitive acts] coincide" (Hua XX-2, p. 267).

[28] On the one hand, Melle encapsulates this idea well by writing, "Intuitive and empty expressions have the same structure. The meant, which is bound with the word by the intentions that points-beyond, is either an intuitive or an empty meaning. The linguistic consciousness is always composed of two parts, either intuitive or not" (1999, p. 179). On the other hand, Husserl's quote from page 67 makes it further clear that Melle's interpretation of Husserl's theory of dark intentions is untenable. In contrast to Melle's claims, Husserl here describes the same act as being dark and empty, that is, he equates (complete) darkness with emptiness.

References

Berghofer, P. (2018). Husserl's concept of experiential justification: What it is and why it matters. *Husserl Studies, 34*(2), 145–170.

Bernet, R. (2003). Desiring to know through intuition. *Husserl Studies, 19*(2), 153–166.

Hua XX-1. Husserl, E. (2002*). Logische Untersuchungen. Ergänzungsband. Erster Teil. Entwürfe zur Umarbeitung der VI. Untersuchung und zur Vorrede für die Neuauflage der Logischen Untersuchungen*. U. Melle (Ed.). Den Haag: Kluwer.

Hua XX-2. Husserl, E. (2005). *Logische Untersuchungen. Ergänzungsband. Zweiter Teil. Texte für die Neufassung der VI. Untersuchung. Zur Phänomenologie des Ausdrucks und der Erkenntnis*. U. Melle (Ed.). Den Haag: Kluwer.

Melle, U. (1999). Signitive und Signifikative Intentionen. *Husserl Studies, 15,* 167–181.

Melle, U. (2002). Husserl's revisions to the sixth logical investigation. In D. Zahavi & F. Stjernfelt (Eds.), *One hundred years of phenomenology: Husserl's Logical Investigations revisited* (pp. 111–124). Dordrecht: Springer.

Mooney, T. (2010). Understanding and simple seeing in Husserl. *Husserl Studies, 26*(1), 19–48.

Mulligan, K. (1995). Perception. In D. W. Smith & B. Smith (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to Husserl* (pp. 168–238). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Natorp, P. (1888). *Einleitung in die Psychologie nach kritischer Methode*. Freiburg: Mohr.

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.