

Re-examining Husserl's Non-Conceptualism in the *Logical Investigations*

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Abstract: A recent trend in Husserl scholarship takes the *Logische Untersuchungen* (*LU*) as advancing an inconsistent and confused view of the non-conceptual content of perceptual experience. Against this, I argue that there is no inconsistency about non-conceptualism in *LU*. Rather, *LU* presents a hybrid view of the conceptual nature of perceptual experience, which can easily be misread as inconsistent, since it combines a conceptualist view of perceptual content (or matter) with a non-conceptualist view of perceptual acts. I show how this hybrid view is operative in Husserl's analyses of essentially occasional expressions and categorial intuition. And I argue that it can also be deployed in relation to Husserl's analysis of the constitution of perceptual fullness, which allows it to avoid a objection raised by Walter Hopp—that the combination of Husserl's analysis of perceptual fullness with conceptualism about perceptual content generates a vicious regress.

1. Introduction

A recent trend in Husserl scholarship takes the *Logische Untersuchungen* (*LU*) as advancing an irredeemably confused conception of perceptual experience.¹ Within the confines of the same work, these commentators claim, Husserl advances both conceptualist and non-conceptualist doctrines about perceptual content.² However, they continue, Husserl's eventual recognition of this confusion in his early work spurred a gradual growth out of inconsistency into the light of a systematic view of perceptual intentionality and the nature of knowledge presented in his later works.³

¹ I will cite Husserl's *Logical Investigations* by "LU" followed by the number of the investigation, section, page of the Husserliana edition Husserl (1975), and then the page of Findlay's English translation Husserl (1970). Nearly all the quotations from *LU* are modified versions of Findlay's translation. I do not mark where I've made modifications.

² Hubert Dreyfus (1982) was, to my knowledge, the first to suggest this kind of inconsistency in Husserl's views. And the first to clearly articulate it as an internal conflict in *LU* was Kevin Mulligan (1995). Mulligan's reading set a trend followed in Barber (2008), Hopp (2008, 2010, 2011), Leung (2010), Mooney (2010), and Doyon (2011), just to name a recent few wherein this influence is most evident.

³ Commentators disagree about the view of perceptual content that Husserl endorsed in the *Ideas* (published in 1913) and later work. Mooney (2010 §4) thinks that Husserl grew into a consistent conceptualism. Barber (2008) and Hopp (2008) claim he later developed a consistent non-conceptualism. And Doyon (2011, 43) argues that he found his way into a position in which "the dialectic between the conceptual and non-conceptual ultimately makes no sense on a phenomenological basis."

While I agree that there is a distinctive development to be found in Husserl's corpus, I believe that the familiar story just related rests on a deep misunderstanding of the analysis of perception and fulfillment that's presented in *LU*. For, as I will argue here, there is no confusion over conceptualism in *LU*. Rather, *LU* presents a consistent view of the nature and intentional content of perception, which one can easily misread as self-contradictory, since it combines a conceptualist view of perceptual *content* (or matter) with a non-conceptualist view of perceptual *acts*.

The paper has two main divisions, each of which addresses a distinct challenge to the consistency of Husserl's analysis of perception in *LU* as it relates to non-conceptual content. The first division (§§2–5) focuses on the core argument for non-conceptual content, which is found in the Sixth Investigation (*LU* VI), and it explores this argument's connections with other key aspects of Husserl's analysis of perceptual intentionality. In §2, I present the basics of Husserl's analysis of intentionality and intuitive fulfillment. Close scrutiny of the latter, I believe, highlights a core conceptualist commitment of Husserl's view—that the type of intentional content (or “matter”) instanced in perception can also be instanced in judgment and belief. In §3, I present the inconsistency over non-conceptualism attributed to *LU* by recent commentators by reviewing the core argument for non-conceptual content that these commentators claim to find in *LU* VI §4. And in §4, I argue that this charge of inconsistency rests on a misinterpretation of this argument. In my view, Husserl is working with a distinction between two varieties of non-conceptualism about perception: a non-conceptualism about perceptual *states* or *acts* and a non-conceptualism about perceptual *contents*. I introduce this distinction by contrasting it with a strikingly similar distinction recently brought to prominence by Richard Heck's writings about non-conceptual content. And I show how Husserl's arguments for non-conceptualism in *LU* VI are to be understood as advancing a non-conceptualist view of perceptual *acts* that is compatible with the conceptualism about perceptual *content* (or matter) at the heart of Husserl's analysis of perceptual fulfillment. I conclude this division by showing how this reading of Husserl as advancing a hybrid view of perceptual content

I won't argue for any interpretation of Husserl's position in later work here. However, for a reading of Husserl's later view of perceptual content that is, I think, consistent with the hybrid view I argue is presented in *LU*, see van Mazijk (2016).

fits with his analysis of the meaning of essentially occasional expressions (§4.1) and categorial intuition (§4.2).

The second division (§§5–6) focuses on a related charge of inconsistency over non-conceptualism developed by Walter Hopp (2008). On Hopp’s reading, the combination of Husserl’s content (or matter) conceptualism with his analysis of the sensuous fullness (*Fülle*) of perceptual experience, articulated in the infamously obscure third chapter of the Sixth Investigation, generates a vicious infinite regress (§5). In response (§6), I argue that Hopp’s allegation rests upon a misreading of the text, which can be corrected in light of Husserl’s hybrid view of perception. In §§6.1 and 6.2, I provide the details of the correct reading, which exonerates Husserl’s view of the charge Hopp brings against it.

2. The Conceptualist Core of Husserl’s Analysis of Fulfillment

According to Husserl, every act of consciousness has two interdependent, yet independently variable aspects (*LU V* §20). One of these is the act’s *matter* (*Materie*). This is a part of the act that determines the act’s total intentional bearing on the world. The matter determines not only *which object* the act is intentionally directed at, but also *as what* the act characterizes its object, i.e., what properties the act presents its object as having. The other aspect is the act’s quality (*Qualität*). This is a part of the act that determines “whether what is already presented in definite fashion [in the act’s matter] is intentionally present as (e.g.) wished, asked, posited in judgment, etc.” (*LU V* §20, 429/589). Husserl calls the specific combination of matter and quality instanced in an act the *intentional essence* (*intentionale Wesen*) of the act (*LU V* §21).⁴

In this connection it’s important always to distinguish the abstract or ideal essence from the parts or “moments” in an intentional act that realize or instantiate this essence. When you and I both believe that the cherry trees in Central Park are in bloom, we each have a numerically distinct cognitive experience. Nevertheless, because these are both “believings” about the same thing, they share a set of type-identical features that

⁴ It is worth noting here that in *LU V* §21 Husserl defines in tandem with *intentionale Wesen* or “intentional essence” the term *bedeutungsmäßige Wesen*. I find Findlay’s English translation of this term as “semantic essence” very misleading, especially after more recent developments in philosophy of language that have given the term “semantic” a specific technical meaning. I prefer to translate the German literally as the “meaning-related” or “meaning-wise” essence, since it is clear that this term is meant to refer to the components of the concrete act that in their given configuration realize the abstract or *ideal* intentional essence.

constitutes the abstract intentional essence realized in each. Our two experiences are, in other words, distinct *tokens* of the same *type* of intentional essence.⁵ Husserl makes clear from early on in *LU* that the distinction between types and the moments that realize or instantiate them plays a crucial role in the analysis of intentionality given therein (cf., *LU* I §31, 105–6/330, §35; *LU* II Introduction; & *LU* V §20, 430/589). Where this distinction is important in the following, I will refer to the particular parts of a concrete whole as “moments” or “instances”. And I will refer to the abstract essences instantiated in these moments as “species,” “types,” or “ideal essences.”⁶

These two distinctions are deployed in Husserl’s phenomenological analysis of the structure of the experience of knowledge, which is communicated in the Sixth Investigation. This analysis focuses on articulating the structure of *Evidenz*—a term that refers to the distinctive experiential quality of an experience that marks it, from within the first-person perspective, as being an experience of knowledge (cf., *Prolegomena* §6, 13/60). The analysis hinges on there being a phenomenological difference between the experiences of *knowing* that such-and-such is the case, on the one hand, and, *thinking* or *merely believing* that such-and-such is the case on the other. Husserl calls the former a “fulfilled” (*erfüllt*) intentional experience, and the latter an “unfulfilled” or “signitive” (*signitiv*) intentional experience (cf., *LU* VI §8, 566–8/694–5 & §15).

⁵ It’s helpful to point out here that the kind of case just considered is different from that where, say, I have an experience of believing that Ceasar crossed the Rubicon and you have an experience of believing that Pluto is a dwarf planet. Here the two experiences instantiate the same type of quality, but different types of matter. It is also possible for my *merely supposing* that Pluto is a dwarf planet to instantiate the same type of matter as your *believing* that Pluto is a dwarf planet, even though they instantiate different qualities. As Husserl says, “Every quality can be combined with every objective reference [or matter]” (*LU* VI §20, 428/588).

⁶ This is not to suggest that the ideal essence of the *object* of an intentional act—e.g., the ideal essence of the cherry tree itself—is the same as the matter of an intentional act directed at the object. Rather, these are two distinct essences, which have important, *a priori* correlations (*LU* I §33). But, in *LU* at least, the type of matter (*Materie*) or meaning (*Bedeutung, Sinn*) of the act is something *instanced in* the total make-up of the act (*LU* I §31), even though it is not to be categorized as a merely psychological phenomenon. Or, as one might also put it, the matter of an act is a psychological feature, but it has irreducible logical aspects, which requires a kind of de-psychologized psychology, viz., *phenomenology*, to investigate (cf., *LU* Introduction to Volume 2 §3).

For example, suppose that I *believe* that the cherry trees in Central Park are in bloom simply on the basis of reading a report in the newspaper (signitive act). But then, because of my zeal for cherry blossoms, I go to the park and see the cherry trees for myself (intuition), thereby confirming my belief (fulfilled intentional experience). Husserl calls this kind of experience—an experience of seeing something to be just as I believe it to be—an *act of fulfillment*.

Husserl maintains that every act of fulfillment is a *complex act* (*zusammengesetzt Akt*)—i.e., roughly, an act that is composed of acts and whose total intentional reference is the sum of the intentional references of its part-acts (*LU V §18, 417/580*).⁷ These part-acts are:

1. an “empty” signitive act (e.g., an experience of believing or supposing that the cherry trees in Central Park are in bloom),

⁷ More carefully expressed, Husserl defines a “complex” or “compound” act as an act that is compounded out of other acts such that the intentional references of each component-act are “bound together in one total act, whose total achievement lies in the unity of its intentional reference. [...] [T]he unity of the presentational object [*der vorstelligen Gegenständlichkeit*], and the whole manner of the intentional reference to it, are not constituted *alongside* of the partial acts, but *in* them, in the way in which they are combined, a way which realizes a unified *act*, and not merely a unity of experience [*Erlebnisses*]” (*LU V §18, 417/580*).

It is worthwhile to note that, according to this definition, acts that Husserl calls *Aussagen*, i.e., “assertions” or “statements”—which philosophers today would call propositional attitudes—are synthetic acts of presentation, which also count as complex acts. For the matter of an assertion always has a complex, “articulate” (*gegliedert*), and “many-rayed” (*mehrstrahligen*) structure consisting of at least two “single-rayed” (*einstrahligen*), “inarticulate” or “unstructured” (*ungegliedert*) presentations—i.e., a subject-presentation and a predicate-presentation (see *LU V §38, especially 502/640 & §42*). As Husserl says, in acts of assertion, “Each member has its objectifying quality [*objektivierende Qualität*] [...] and its matter. Likewise, the synthetic whole as a single objectifying act has a quality and a matter, but the latter is now articulate” (*LU V §38, 502/640*). This point about the way in which the complexity of assertions differs from the complexity of an act of fulfillment will be crucial for the defense of Husserl that follows, especially in the discussion of the differences between his conceptualist commitments and those often found in the contemporary debate (cf., the beginning of [§4 below](#)) and in the discussion of categorial intuition ([§4.2 below](#)).

2. an intuitive act directed at the same object or state of affairs intended by the signitive act (e.g., a perceptual experience of the cherry trees in Central Park in bloom), and
3. a recognition that the intentional object of the intuitive act is the same (and has more or less the same properties) as the intentional object of the signitive act or, with reference to the essences of these acts, that the moments of matter instanced in the signitive and intuitive acts stand in a relation of “coincidence” (*Deckung*).

Within the unity of an act of fulfillment, the intuitive act confirms or justifies the signitive act by “offering it fullness” (*LU VI §14, 591/715; cf., LU VI §42, 615/735*). This confirmation of the content of the signitive act constitutes a new “appearance” of the object: the “appearance” of the object as *known* to be just (or more or less just) as it is presented in the signitive act. I will address in more detail exactly what intuitive fullness is in §6 below.

Husserl calls the combination of the intentional essence of the act with the degree of fullness with which an object is presented the *epistemic essence* of the act (*LU VI §28, 626/745*). The complete articulation of the epistemic essence of every possible intentional act is the grand ambition of Husserl’s phenomenological epistemology in *LU*. And the elucidation of the ideal essential structure of the act of fulfillment in perceptual judgment is the heart of this project. If we can elucidate the ideal essential structure instanced in those experiences wherein perceptual experience makes the truth of a judgment manifest, then this could serve as the touchstone for the theory of knowledge in other domains. For it would deliver an articulation of the fundamental structures of consciousness by which intuitive experience becomes *reason giving*.

A key point in all this for the argument to follow is the claim that the type-identity of moments of matter in intuitive and signitive acts is the core of what Husserl means by “coincidence” or *Deckung* in fulfillment. Now, I concede that this point is obscured in the text of *LU* by the fact that Husserl starts out using the term *Deckung* in a weaker sense, which does not entail type-identity (see especially *LU VI §§6–8*, where he leaves unspecified *how* two acts in the unity of fulfillment achieve reference to the same object as

being much the same).⁸ And so, some readers might come away from the text of *LU* with the impression that *Deckung* does not involve type-identity. However, a key result of a line of investigation starting at *LU* VI §9 and coming to conclusion at *LU* VI §26 is that *Deckung* does involve type-identity. As Husserl puts it in the initial formulation of his conclusion,

[...] it is clear that the concept of matter is defined through the unity of a total identification, namely as that in the act, which serves as the basis [*Fundament*] of identification; and, consequently, that all the many determining differences of fullness, all the peculiarities of fulfillment and increase in fulfillment, going beyond mere identification are not to factor in the formation of this concept. In whatever way the fullness of a presentation [*Vorstellung*] varies within its possible gradients of fulfillment, its intentional object [*intentionaler Gegenstand*], what and as what is intended [*welcher und so wie er intendiert ist*], remains the same. In other words, its matter remains the same. (*LU* VI §25 618/738)

Briefly, the key point Husserl is making here is that the “unity of total identification [...] which serves as the basis of identification”, i.e., the unity of *Deckung*, between two presentations in fulfillment is just when the moments of matter in each are type identical or, as Husserl puts it, when “the matter remains the same” despite differences in degree of fullness.⁹

Of course, even with this passage as proof-text, the defenses of the weaker reading of *Deckung* are not yet exhausted. While I do not have space in this paper to respond systematically to all of these, I will confront its primary bulwark: the lack of an interpretation of Husserl’s view of perceptual content that makes clear how an endorsement of conceptualism about perceptual content is compatible with the passages and implications of doctrines in *LU* that seem to deny it. In setting up the controversy over conceptualism in the next section, I proceed as if the reading of *Deckung* as involving

⁸ *Deckung* literally means “covering” or “backing”. And it is often used colloquially to refer to the kinds of financial “backing” or “coverage” that one buys in an insurance policy. So, it seems, *A* can in this sense “cover” or “back” *B* without being type-identical to *B*. Thanks to Walter Hopp for pressing an objection to an earlier version of this paper that forced me to make this important point clear.

⁹ See *LU* VI §8 where he makes this correlation between “unity of identity” and “*Deckung*” explicit; cf., *LU* I §14.

the (at least partial) type-identity of matters is correct. And, starting in §4, I begin to show how this strong reading of *Deckung* does not generate inconsistencies in *LU* once we correctly understand the kind of non-conceptualism Husserl is advancing alongside the basic conceptualist commitment of his analysis of fulfillment.

Henceforth, I will refer to the strong reading of *Deckung* as involving the type-identity of matter between intuitive and signitive acts the *conceptualist core* of Husserl's analysis of fulfillment.

3. The Controversy over Conceptualism in *LU*

The conceptualist core of Husserl's analysis of fulfillment is strikingly similar to conceptualism about perceptual content as this is understood in recent debates over non-conceptual content in philosophy of perception. John McDowell, in his paradigmatic presentation of conceptualism in *Mind and World*, specifies what it is for an intentional content to be *conceptual* in the following way:

In a particular experience in which one is not misled, what one takes in is *that things are thus and so*. *That things are thus and so* is the content of the experience, and it can also be the content of a judgement: it becomes the content of a judgement if the subject decides to take the experience at face value. So it is conceptual content. (McDowell 1996, 26)

This statement of conceptualism about content is a near equivalent to the conceptualist core of fulfillment elucidated in the foregoing. As Husserl says, "To every intuitive intention there pertains, in the sense of an ideal possibility, a signitive intention exactly accommodating its matter" (*LU* VI §21, 607/728). Therefore, we have grounds for the claim that there is indeed a commitment at the heart of Husserl's view about perceptual content that would be recognized as distinctively conceptualist today.¹⁰ Moreover, there is a resemblance between the ways McDowell and Husserl motivate conceptualism. For each argues that perceptual experience can secure the epistemic function of *Evidenz* (Husserl) or of being a reason for belief (McDowell) only if the intentional content of perception can also be the content of belief.

¹⁰ See also the way that Husserl's conceptualist commitment in *LU* is characterized in Hopp (2008, 223).

Alongside these striking similarities, however, there is one important difference that must be noted here. Where McDowell claims that conceptualism about perceptual content involves taking it to have a propositional structure, Husserl’s conceptualism only requires that the matter of perception can also be *at least part of* the total matter of a possible judgment or other kind of signitive act. Husserl maintains that the matter or “interpretative sense” (*Auffassungssinn*) of (straightforward) perception is importantly different in type from the matter of a statement (*Aussage*), an act with propositional content (*LU V* §33–36 & *LU VI* §§47–8). For while Husserl takes the subject- and predicate-presentations in the unity of a complex propositional matter to represent their objects like a perception does—i.e., in a “straightforward,” “nominal” fashion—they are united in this synthetic presentation by virtue of the imposition of a new “form,” a subject- or predicate-form, that is not already found in the matter of a straightforward object-perception (*LU VI* §49; cf., *LU V* §36, 490–3/631–3). Yet, one must notice, even though there is *more* to the propositionally structured matter of judgment than is in the matter of straightforward perceptual experience, this does not preclude—indeed, it presupposes—the possibility that “the new [propositional] form includes the whole old [straightforward perceptual] interpretative sense in itself and only grants it the sense of a new ‘role’” (*LU VI* §49, 686/797; cf., *LU V* §36, 491–3/632–3). So, even though Husserl does not claim that the matter of straightforward perception is already formed in a way that would allow it to serve a subject- or predicate-role in the matter of an act of judgment, he nevertheless maintains that the matter of a straightforward perception can be *imported into* the matter of a belief or judgment, after it’s been appropriately “shaped” by subjective synthetic operations (*LU VI* §49, 687/797). Therefore, Husserl’s conceptualism is weaker than McDowell’s insofar as it holds that the total matter of perception lacks propositional structure and that it can only be a *part* of the total matter of a judgment.¹¹

¹¹ McDowell (2009) abandons this strong conceptualist view for a view more like (but not exactly like) the one that I argue Husserl advances in *LU*. In this later view, McDowell abandons the idea that perception saddles the subject with a propositionally structured claim (or set of two or more claims). Rather, the content of perception is simply an immediate presentation of an object and its properties, which can itself be taken up in a judgment. Furthermore, this process of “taking up” perceptual content into a judgment requires more than just endorsing the content of a perception. Rather, this process involves “carv[ing] out

But, according to recent commentators, even this weak-tea conceptualism is enough to create inconsistencies in *LU*. These commentators locate the main arguments for the claim that the matter of perception cannot also be instanced as a part of the matter of belief, judgment, or other signitive acts in *LU VI §4*.¹² That Husserl is arguing for this non-conceptualist thesis here might seem obvious just from the section title: “The expression of a perception (‘perceptual judgment’). Its meaning cannot lie in perception, but must lie in peculiar expressive acts.” But to see more clearly how they read this as an expression of non-conceptualism, we must first understand what Husserl means by the term “perceptual judgment.” This term is defined in *LU VI §3* as meaning a kind of experience in which

I derive my judgment from my perception, that I do not only assert the relevant matter of fact [*Tatsache*], but perceive it and assert it as I perceive it. The judgment here is not concerned with the perception, but with the *perceived*. (*LU VI §3*, 548/679).

Perceptual judgment is, then, not *introspective* judgment—i.e., judgment *about* the perceptual experience itself—but judgment about the *object* of the perceptual experience, about the *object that appears* to one in the experience. Per the structure of Husserl’s conception of intentionality (as outlined in the previous section of this paper), if an “expression of a perception” is an expression that refers to the intentional object of the perceptual experience, then it is also an expression (albeit in a different sense of the term) of the *matter* of the perceptual act. And so, here Husserl must be claiming that the matter expressed in judgment “cannot lie in perception, but must lie in peculiar expressive acts.” This, in turn, suggests to commentators that the matter of the “expression of the perception” is peculiar to the linguistic act in the sense that the ideal type of matter instanced in the linguistic act of perceptual judgment cannot also be instanced in the perceptual experience that grounds the judgment (e.g., Leung 2010, 136). In other words,

that content from the intuitions’s unarticulated content before one can put it together with other bits of content in discursive activity” (McDowell 2009, 263–4). This not to say that McDowell’s later view of conceptual content is just like Husserl’s. But in it he certainly does move in that direction. For further characterizations of Husserl’s view that can be used to distinguish it from McDowell’s, see [§4 below](#).

¹² See Mulligan (1995, 171–2), Mooney (2010, §3), and Leung (2010, §6).

it seems that we could paraphrase the overall conclusion (as expressed in the title) of *LU VI §4* as

Non-conceptualism: the type of matter (or “meaning”) of perception cannot also be instanced in the “sense-giving” or “meaning-conferring” acts of thinking, judging, and believing.¹³

The central line of argument for non-conceptualism that these commentators see is:

1. Numerically distinct perceptual judgments that instantiate different types of matter could be based on the same perception.
2. The same perceptual judgment with no alteration in its matter could be based on numerically distinct perceptions that instantiate different types of matter.
3. The same perceptual judgment can suffer no alternation in matter even after the perception it is based on has ceased.
4. Therefore, the matter instanced in perceptual experience is non-conceptual, i.e., the matter of a perceptual judgment is not instanced in a perceptual experience, even when that perceptual experience serves as the foundation of the perceptual judgment. (cf., Leung 2010, 136)

To illustrate through an example, suppose I have a visual experience of a blossoming cherry tree. (1) Any of the following judgments could be based on this experience, even though each judgment instantiates a distinct type of matter: “The cherry tree is in bloom,” “There are pink flowers on that tree,” “This cherry tree is thriving,” “This cherry tree is beautiful.” (2) I could base the same perceptual judgement, e.g., “This cherry tree is in

¹³ Leung (2010, 136) gives the following paraphrases of the conclusion of the argument in *LU VI §4*: “that meaning does not lie in perception or any other intuitive” act, “that the intuitive act is not sense-giving,” and “that the intuitive act is also meaningful even without uniting with the meaning-conferring act in the synthetic act of fulfillment.” It is not clear to me, at least, that these are all saying the same thing. But as we will observe below, Leung thinks that Husserl himself does not realize what conclusion his argument in *LU VI §4* actually supports anyway. And so, he could claim that the shifts in meaning between these three statements are a symptom of the confusion in Husserl’s view.

bloom,” on a variety of different perceptual experiences: a visual experience of the tree from the street, from the top of the neighboring building, or as depicted on a television screen across town from a live feed on a security camera. None of the variations in perceptual experience affects a change in the matter of the expression. (3) Suppose that I judge “The cherry tree is in bloom,” while gazing at the tree in bloom. But then I lie down in the grass, close my eyes, and make the same judgment. Even after perceptual experience of the tree has ceased, my judgment can have the same matter as the judgment made while gazing at the tree. (4) What these possible variations in perception and judgment show is that the matter of my perception and the matter of my judgment can vary freely in relation to one another (at least after the perceptual judgment is made in relation to a perceptual experience that presents the object judged about). Therefore, the matter instanced in perception is distinct from the matter instanced in a signitive expression of perceptual judgment. These commentators take this claim to be expressed by Husserl in passages such as the following, which is found at the end of *LU VI §5*:

If we may trust our arguments, we must not only draw a general distinction between the perceptual and the significant element in the statement of perception; we must also locate *no part of the meaning in the perception itself*. (*LU VI §5*, 556/685, emphasis in original; cf., *LU VI §4*, 551/681)

4. Resolving the Controversy: Husserl’s Hybrid View of Perceptual Content

However, the ambivalence that these commentators detect in Husserl’s thinking about non-conceptualism emerges clearly in the very next sentence, which—when read with the interpretation of coincidence (*Deckung*) as involving type-identity—seems to deliver an unabashed endorsement of conceptualism about perceptual content:

The perception, *which presents [gibt] the object, and the statement which, by way of the judgement or, otherwise expressed, by way of the “thought-act” woven into the unity of the judgement thinks and expresses it, must be rigorously kept apart*, even though, in the case of the perceptual judgement now being considered, they stand to each other in the most intimate interrelation [*in der innigsten Aufeinanderbeziehung*], the relation of coincidence [*im Verhältnis der Deckung*], or the unity of fulfilment. (*LU VI §5*, 556/685)

Puzzling, indeed.

Many commentators maintain that, at junctures like this, Husserl was fundamentally confused.¹⁴ However, I want to argue that these passages actually express a consistent view. For while *LI VI §4* is advancing an argument for a non-conceptualist thesis, it is a kind of non-conceptualism about perceptual experience that is compatible with the conceptualist core of Husserl's analysis of fulfillment—a non-conceptualist thesis about the nature of perceptual *acts* that's different from a non-conceptualist thesis about perceptual *contents* or *matters*.

A clue that this is the case is suggested by Leung's response to the inconsistency in Husserl's thought that arises on his reading. Leung argues that *we*—readers of Husserl, intent on understanding the view that Husserl was *attempting* to articulate in *LU*—can simply set aside the slips of thought in *LU VI §4* because the argument for non-conceptualism it contains is not sound. As Leung points out, the independent variability of the matters instanced in perception and associated perceptual judgment only demonstrates that the matters instanced in each are *numerically distinct*, but not that they cannot be distinct instances of the *same type*. As Leung puts it,

What it can accomplish is only the assurance that the intuitive act is not essential to the phenomenon of meaning and that expression is still meaningful even without the corresponding intuition. But it is not enough to exclude the possibility that the intuitive act is also meaningful even without uniting with the meaning-conferring act in the synthetic act of fulfillment; thus it might still be sense-giving in itself. [...] Husserl seems to have neglected to consider the possibility that intuition [or perception] is essentially sense-giving, in the sense that it has always already been united with a meaning-conferring act insofar as it is an intuition, that is, insofar as it is an intuitively intentional act. (Leung 2010, 136)

However, this criticism of the argument in *LU VI §4* could also suggest—and this is something that Leung doesn't recognize—that we've been misreading the conclusion of the argument therein, that Husserl is not arguing for a non-conceptualism about the matter instanced in a perceptual state at all, but rather a non-conceptualism about the perceptual *act* (or state) as a whole.

As an adumbration of the more thorough elaboration of this distinction to follow, let's characterize it as follows. *Content non-conceptualism*, on the one hand, claims that

¹⁴ See, e.g., Mulligan (1995, 172 note 9), Hopp (2008), Mooney (2010), and Leung (2010).

the same type of intentional content present in a perceptual act cannot also be present as content in a belief or judgment. *State* or *act non-conceptualism*, on the other hand, claims that in order for a subject to have a perceptual experience with a certain kind of intentional content or matter, the subject need not *possess* any of the concepts deployed in a correct characterization of the content of one's perceptual experience. Content non-conceptualism, then, is a thesis about the intentional content of perceptual experience and the kinds of act in which it can serve as (a part of the total) intentional content. Whereas act non-conceptualism is a thesis about the kinds of intentional acts (or mental states) that the subject can have. What I'm claiming about *LU VI §4*, then, is that it communicates an argument for *act non-conceptualism*—i.e., for a claim that the conditions that must be satisfied by an act of consciousness to qualify as a perceptual act are not the same as the conditions that must be satisfied for an act to qualify as a propositional act.¹⁵

In light of this brief characterization of act non-conceptualism, we can see another clue that this is the thesis Husserl is pursuing in *LU VI §4*, which comes at the end of *LU VI §3*. There Husserl delivers a statement of the “general question” to be pursued in the following sections. He writes,

in connection with the [...] defined new sense of ‘expressed act’ [i.e., in relation to the notion of perceptual judgment], we wish to make clear the whole relation between meaning [*Bedeutung*] and expressed intuition [*ausgedrückter Anschauung*]. We wish to consider whether such an intuition may not itself be the act constitutive of meaning, or if this is not the case, how the relation between them may be best understood and systematically classified. We are now heading towards a more general question: *Do the acts which give expression in general, and the acts which in general are capable of receiving expression, belong to essentially different spheres, and thereby to firmly delimited act-species?* (*LU VI §3*, 549/679, emphasis added in last sentence)

What should stand out to us in this passage now is that Husserl does not say that he's setting out to find out whether the same type of matter can be instanced both in intuition and in propositional acts, but that he is setting out to determine whether the *act* of intuition and the *act* of expression are of the same specific type or, as he puts it, of the same “firmly delimited act-species.” In other words, it should be clear to us now that

¹⁵ For Husserl's conception of what I am here calling an assertive or propositional act, see footnote 7 above.

Husserl is saying that the arguments of *LU* VI §4 do not concern the question of matter or content non-conceptualism, but instead the question of act or state non-conceptualism.

In light of this, we can interpret away the alleged inconsistency over non-conceptualism in *LU*. Husserl decides in favor of *act non-conceptualism* as a result of the arguments of *LU* VI §4. And he decides in favor of *matter conceptualism*, as expressed in the conceptualist core of fulfillment, as a result of the investigations in *LU* VI §§6–26. So, what recent interpreters take to be a self-contradictory tangle in *LU* is actually not that at all. Rather, it is the expression of a hybrid view of perceptual content, which combines act non-conceptualism with matter conceptualism.

In order to make this interpretation clearer and more compelling, I will do the following: (i.) introduce the distinction between state and content non-conceptualism as this has been formulated in the recent debate over non-conceptual content in the writings of Richard Heck (2000; 2007) and others, (ii.) show how Heck’s way of formulating this distinction must be substantially modified before it can be applied as a characterization of Husserl’s view in *LU*, and (iii.) demonstrate that the Husserlian view that emerges—a *hybrid* view that combines non-conceptualism about perceptual *acts* with conceptualism about the *matter* of perceptual acts—is internally consistent.

i. Elucidation: I start on the first task by reviewing the introduction of the relevant distinction to the contemporary debate in the work of Richard Heck (2000; 2007).¹⁶ Using a formulation due to Josepha Toribio (2008, 354), we can express Heck’s distinction as follows:

Content non-conceptualism: For any perceptual experience *E* with content *C*, *C* is content non-conceptual iff *C* is essentially different in kind from the content of beliefs.

¹⁶ This distinction has also been recognized, although not using Heck’s terminology, in Speaks (2005) and Crowther (2006).

State non-conceptualism: For any perceptual experience E with content C , any subject S , and any time t , E is state non-conceptual iff it is not the case that in order for S to undergo E , S must possess at t the concepts that a correct characterization of C would involve.

To illustrate through an example: according to *content* non-conceptualism, in order to accurately describe my perceptual experience as being of a blossoming cherry tree, the intentional content of this experience must be such that it cannot also serve as the intentional content of the belief that the cherry tree is in bloom. On the other hand, according to *state* non-conceptualism, in order to accurately describe my perceptual experience as being of a blossoming cherry tree, I need not “possess” and “deploy” (as those in the contemporary literature like to say) the concepts BLOSSOMING and CHERRY TREE.

According to Heck, these claims are logically independent of each other. According to content non-conceptualism, the intentional content of my perceptual experience has no direct bearing on whether I can or cannot deploy the relevant concepts in a judgment or inference. And since this goes for content non-conceptualism, it also goes for content conceptualism. Thus, even if the content of my perceptual experience of a blossoming cherry tree could also be (a part of) the content of a belief, this does not entail that I must “possess” (in the relevant sense) the concepts BLOSSOMING and CHERRY TREE. Indeed, this condition of the content of my perceptual experiences entails nothing about my conceptual capacities at all. In regards to state non-conceptualism, the claim that I do not possess concepts that correctly characterize the content of my perceptual experience implies nothing about whether this content can also be the content of a belief or not. So, it seems, we have a clear conceptual distinction between content- and state-varieties of non-conceptualism.¹⁷

As Heck and others have noted, the distinction between two concepts of non-conceptualism is of use in blocking certain influential objections to conceptualism. Take,

¹⁷ This claim has been contested in the literature by Toribio (2007). However, I believe that the arguments in defense of the distinction in Duhau (2011) are convincing. Even if one is not of the same mind as me about these issues, I believe that Husserl’s version of this distinction can avoid all the points of concern that Toribio raises about it.

for instance, Speaks's (2005) argument that the fineness of grain argument against conceptualism only supports state non-conceptualism, not content non-conceptualism. The fineness of grain argument is based on the idea that the content of our perceptual experience far outstrips the concepts that a perceiving subject possesses—that, e.g., I don't have a color concept for every specific shade that is presented in many of my visual experiences. Upon grasping the distinction between state and content non-conceptualism, however, we can see that the flaw in this argument is to confuse the conditions of a perceptual experience's having a certain kind of content—a content that can also be the content of a belief—and the conditions of a subject's possessing concepts that correctly characterize a content. Once we distinguish the former from the latter, we see that it is possible for perceptual experience to have a content that can also be the content of a belief or judgment (i.e., it is conceptual) without the subject of that experience possessing concepts that would correctly characterize this content.

ii. Modification: The distinction between these two varieties of non-conceptualism must be modified in three important ways before applying it in a description of Husserl's position.

First, we must bring Husserl's instantiation-conception of meaning to bear. Heck's formulation of the distinction comes about in an engagement with Gareth Evans's (1982) conception of non-conceptual content. As such, it assumes a conception of intentionality that is largely influenced by Frege's approach to linguistic meaning. This conception recognizes a fundamental tripartite distinction between the act of meaning, the object meant (*Bedeutung*), and the intentional content, meaning, or sense (*Sinn*) of the act. Husserl fundamentally agrees with this tripartite distinction, but there is at least one important difference. For the neo-Fregeans, especially after the work of Michael Dummett, it is best to remain as neutral as possible about the nature of the relation between the subject and the intentional content of her mental states. So many have opted to characterize this relation largely in terms of subjective psychological capacities, e.g., a capacity to draw a certain kind of inference (cf., Toribio 2008, 359–60). Husserl, on the other hand, advances what would strike these neo-Fregeans as a dangerously

metaphysically loaded characterization of the relation between intentional content and act, namely, as being the *realization* or *instantiation* of a universal in a particular.¹⁸

This metaphysical flourish in Husserl's view, however, allows it to avoid a point of contention in the contemporary debate over non-conceptualism that abides even after recognizing the distinction between act- and content-varieties. That is the task of articulating the conditions of concept *possession* without taking on any unacceptable metaphysical commitments, which has proven to be very difficult.¹⁹ The Husserl of *LU* can simply pass this difficulty by and characterize the metaphysical differences between acts in which the subject deploys concepts and those in which she doesn't straightforwardly as differences in the essential experiential structures instantiated in each.

Second, we need to remind ourselves of the fact, noted above in relation to McDowell's conceptualism (at the beginning of §3), that Husserl's matter conceptualism does not require that the matter of perception have a propositional structure, but only that it can also be instanced as a part of a subject- or predicate-presentation in the unity of a propositional matter.

Third, these two differences in Husserl's view entail a reduction of the distinction between Heck's state and content non-conceptualism to a distinction between a thesis about *the total essence of the perceptual act* (in the decision concerning act non-conceptualism) and a thesis about *the essence of the matter instanced in a perceptual act* (in the decision concerning matter conceptualism). In other words, Husserl's content or matter conceptualism is a thesis only about a *part* of the total epistemic essence (type of matter, quality, and fullness) of a perceptual act—in particular, that the types of matter instanced in perceptual acts can also be instanced in an act of judgment. However, Husserl's act non-conceptualism is a thesis about the epistemic essence of the perceptual

¹⁸ That the act-content distinction is a substantial metaphysical thesis about the relation between mind and meaning in *LU* is suggested in Willard (1972). However, for an alternative reading of *LU* that takes it to be metaphysically neutral, see Zahavi (1992). I don't think that my point in the text requires taking sides in this debate.

¹⁹ For an overview of the kinds of issues that arise at this point in the debate over non-conceptual content see Bermúdez (2007, especially §II).

act *as a whole*—in particular, that the total essence of perception is in some way different from the total essence of an act of judgment.

iii. Demonstration of consistency: These observations set the stage for a demonstration of the consistency of Husserl's hybrid view. It's clear that, in general, we can acknowledge differences between the total natures of two things, while also acknowledging that they have some feature in common (e.g., this shirt and that shirt are different styles, but they have the same color). Since there is no reason to think that this same possibility does not hold for the relation between the total essences of two experiences, then there is no reason to think that the two following doctrines, which together constitute Husserl's hybrid view of the content of perceptual experience, are inconsistent with one another:

Conceptualism about perceptual matter: the intentional content or matter of any given perceptual state can also be a part of the intentional content or matter of an act of judgment or belief.

Non-conceptualism about perceptual acts: the total essence of a perceptual experience need not involve all of the elements necessary for an act to be an act of judgment or belief. In particular, it need not involve a propositionally structured matter.

In the next two sections (§§4.1–4.2), I will argue for the claim just put forward, that the crucial difference of perceptual acts is the fact that they need not involve propositionally structured matter. I will do this by considering two cases where interpreters have taken Husserl to be advancing non-conceptualism about perceptual matter in *LU*, namely, in his doctrines of essentially occasional expressions and categorial intuition. And I will argue that the relevant difference Husserl is drawing in both has not to do with whether the matter of a (straightforward) perceptual act can also be at least part of the total matter of a propositional act, but with whether the matter of the (straightforward) perceptual act needs to have a propositional structure or not. In short,

again, in both cases Husserl is attempting to maintain a commitment to matter conceptualism alongside a commitment to act non-conceptualism.

4.1 Essentially Occasional Expressions

How does this reading of *LU VI §4* bear on the observations about the meaning of demonstrative and indexical expressions or, as Husserl calls them, “essentially occasional expressions” in *LU VI §5*? There are prominent interpretations of *LU VI §5* that see it as expressing commitment to non-conceptualism about perceptual *matter*. However, I think that *LU VI §5* is most plausibly read as expressing commitment to non-conceptualism about perceptual *acts* that’s compatible with the conceptualist core of fulfillment, and so also with the reading of *LU* as advancing a hybrid view of perceptual content.

In this section of *LU*, Husserl contrasts two views of the meaning (*Bedeutung*) of essentially occasional expressions. According to one, which I will call the *importation view*, the meaning of an essentially occasional expression is literally taken up from the perceptual act. As Husserl puts it, “the intuitive act itself is a carrier of meaning [*Bedeutungsträger*],” which “in a literal sense makes *contributions* [*Beiträge*] to the meaning [of the essentially occasional expression]; contributions which can be *discovered* in the produced [essentially occasional] meaning” (*LU VI §5*, 553/683). In contrast to the importation view, Husserl recommends a conception on which “perception is an act which determines [*bestimmenden*], but does not embody [*enthaltenden*] meaning” (*ibid.*, 553/684). On this view, which I will call the *determination view*, the meaning of the term “this,” for example, does not import into itself the meaning of the direct perceptual experience of the object, but rather it achieves its own fully determinate object-oriented meaning by coming into relation with the perception. As Husserl puts it,

Perception accordingly realizes the possibility of an unfolding of this-meaning [*die Entfaltung des Dies-Meinens*] with its determinate relation [*bestimmten Beziehung*] to the object, e.g., to this paper before my eyes. But it [the perception] does not constitute [*konstituiert*] [...] the meaning itself, nor a part of it. (*ibid.*, 554/684)

Perception, in other words, is “an act determining [*bestimmenden*], but not embodying [*enthaltenden*] meaning” (*ibid.*, 555/684).

It's not hard to see how Husserl's rejection of the importation view might suggest that he's rejecting conceptualism about the matter of perception. For the importation view entails matter conceptualism, since having the same token matter in two acts entails that they also have the same type. And since Husserl rejects the importation view, it's natural to think that he must also be rejecting the matter conceptualism it entails. The way that some commentators speak about Husserl's view strongly suggests this reading. According to David Woodruff Smith, for example, Husserl holds that "the this-intention which is a constituent part of the judgment is not a constituent part of the perception" (Smith 1982, 206). And Kevin Mulligan and Barry Smith say that in Husserl's conception of indexical meaning "perception does not require 'the possession or acquisition of concepts or beliefs, in the sense in which adult human beings—but not neonates, squirrels, and mosquitoes—can be said to have concepts and beliefs (the sort of thing that can serve as premise in an inference)'" (Mulligan and Smith 1986, 138).²⁰

Now, these interpreters do not recognize the distinction outlined above between two varieties of non-conceptualism. And so, in passages like these they would not describe themselves as attributing to Husserl a rejection of matter conceptualism, but rather a rejection of conceptualism *tout court*. But, as we can begin to see now, the fact that they do not recognize the distinction is actually the root of the problem with their interpretations. For after the distinction is recognized, we can see that there actually is no rejection of conceptualism *tout court*. Instead, any complete rejection of conceptualism must be a two step procedure, involving the rejection of each of its two varieties. And this makes room for a reading of *LU VI §5* as advancing an act non-conceptualism about perception that's compatible with matter conceptualism, like that which I've argued is presented in *LU VI §4*.

It's clear that Husserl's preference for the determination view embodies a rejection of act conceptualism. For the determination view marks a clear difference between the

²⁰ Mulligan and Smith are here quoting J.W. Stephens (1978). I could not obtain a copy of this dissertation in order to provide the page number for their reference here.

What Mulligan and Smith say in this passage can be read as a rejection of act conceptualism insofar as they mention rejection of the claim that perception does not require the *possession* of concepts. But their parenthetical qualification makes it clear that they at least *also* intend to include matter conceptualism in the set of positions Husserl rejects.

total essence of the essentially occasional act of meaning and the total essence of the perceptual act insofar as it characterizes the former as an act whose existence is conditioned on the existence of a perceptual act, which occasions the determination of its meaning. Relatedly, as a clarification of the essential ground of this difference, Husserl suggests that there is a difference between the total matters instanced in perception and essentially occasional thought, insofar as each essentially occasional act involves a moment of matter that is not also found in the matter of a perception. Husserl calls the moment of matter peculiar to an essentially occasional act an “indicating” (*anzeigende*) meaning (*LU VI §5, 556–8/686–7*). (I will talk about the moment that is common—the “indicated” (*angezeigte*) meaning—in the next paragraph.) Therefore, the determination view of essentially occasional expressions entails act non-conceptualism about perception.²¹

But is the determination view compatible with matter conceptualism? I think so. For, it is important to notice, even though the determination view doesn’t allow essentially occasional thought to *import* into itself the token matter of the perceptual act it depends on, this does not mean that at least a *part* of the total matter in an essentially occasional meaning cannot be of the same *type* as that instanced in the perception. Moreover, Husserl asserts that there *is*, alongside the essential difference between the total matters in essentially occasional thought and perception, an essential *sameness* of matter between the two acts, namely, a moment of matter with nominal form, which Husserl calls the “indicated” (*angezeigte*) meaning of an essentially occasional expression (*LU VI §5, 556–8/686–7*; cf., *LU I §§2–6*). As Husserl puts it, this is a type of matter that “names an object ‘directly’ [...] not attributively, as the bearer of these or those properties, but

²¹ However, caution is required here. For it is not entirely clear how the indicating meaning bears on the total matter of an essentially occasional act. One option that’s compatible with the text (especially if one reads *LU VI §5* in light of the distinctions drawn in *LU I §§2–6*), takes the indicated meaning of an essentially occasional act to be a function of indicating meanings and contexts of utterance. And it takes *only* indicated meanings to be a part of the matter of the act. But this reading too is compatible with the act non-conceptualist understanding of perception, since it is still the case that essentially occasional expressions necessarily involve a kind of association with indicating meanings and contexts of utterance that straightforward perceptual acts do not. Thanks to an anonymous referee for help making the importance of this distinction salient.

without such ‘conceptual’ mediation, as what it *itself* is, *just as perception might set it before our eyes*” (LU VI §5, 555/684; emphasis added in final clause). This essential sameness in the total matters instanced in perception and essentially occasional thought suggests that Husserl is leaving room for the indicated meaning of essentially occasional thought to be essentially the same as (to be another instance of) the nominal matter of perception. And this is all that’s needed to admit the compatibility of Husserl’s analysis of essentially occasional expressions with the conceptualist core of his analysis of fulfillment.²²

Therefore, ultimately, what we find in the details of LU VI §5 is not a rejection, but rather a reaffirmation of the act non-conceptualism found in LU VI §4: a kind of non-conceptualism that claims there are crucial differences between the total essence of the act of perception and the total essence of the act of essentially occasional thought, which in this case includes differences between the total matters instanced in each. But these differences are compatible with the conceptualist core of fulfillment, since it is still possible for the total matters of perception and essentially occasional thought to essentially overlap at least in part—or to instantiate the same type of matter at least in part.

4.2 Straightforward and Categorical Intuition

²² There are, thus, as Husserl understands it, two meanings present in each essentially occasional thought, a “*duality [Doppelheit] in the indicative [hinweisenden] intention*” in these acts (LU VI §5, 557/686): the indicating meaning that is common to every act of a certain essentially occasional type (this-thoughts, I-thoughts, you-thoughts, here-thoughts, etc.), and the indicated meaning of nominal form that is peculiar to a “direct” awareness of the particular object of thought (this blackbird, myself, you, this place, etc.). Husserl’s characterization of these two dimensions of meaning is not as carefully spelled out as we might desire today, especially in light of the astounding developments in the logic and semantics of demonstrative and indexical expressions of the last few decades. However, I think it’s eminently plausible to see Husserl’s two-dimensional treatment of the meaning of essentially occasional expressions as anticipating at least the broad outlines of David Kaplan’s (1989) distinction between “character” and “content” (cf., Smith 1982, §III). As Smith points out, there are many important differences between Husserl’s and Kaplan’s conceptions. But the analogies are strong enough to suggest the ways in which one might develop Husserl’s view further so that it can be modeled in a fully-fledged semantics.

Another source of resistance to the conceptualist core of fulfillment in *LU* comes from interpretations of Husserl's (in)famous distinction between "straightforward" and "categorical" intuition, developed in *LU* VI chapters 6 and 7. Some commentators take this as marking a distinction between a kind of perceptual act that has conceptual content (i.e., categorical perception or intuition) and a kind that does not (i.e., straightforward perception). Therefore, even if there is no inconsistency over the conceptual nature of perceptual content (matter) in the first few chapters of the Sixth Investigation, which has been our focus so far, it does arise later on.

What motivates the matter non-conceptualist reading of straightforward perception in *LU* VI chapter 6? First, Husserl's characterizations of the distinction between categorical and straightforward perception in *LU* are largely cast in terms of the different kinds of matter that can be expressed in perceptual judgments about each. And it is easy to read these characterizations as asserting a complete difference in the types of matter found in each. Consider, for example, how Husserl sets up the difference between the meanings expressed by categorical and non-categorical judgments early on in *LU* VI chapter 6 (e.g., §40, 659–61/775–6). There he draws attention to the contrast between the meaning expressed by the nominal expression "the white paper" and the meaning expressed by the propositional judgment "the paper *is* white." The former expression, Husserl claims, simply refers to an object with a property (a piece of paper and its whiteness) in the straightforward manner of a name. However, the copula in the latter expresses a categorical meaning that refers to the peculiar *union* of the object (the paper) with its property (whiteness) in a state of affairs (the paper's *being* white). Therefore, one might maintain, since the second expression refers to a different kind of object (a state of affairs) from the first (a particular object), it must achieve this reference by means of a completely different kind of matter.

Now, of course, one might respond by pointing out that a total difference in types of matter does not preclude the possibility of a partial sameness of matter. But there is a prominent interpretation of the difference between straightforward and categorical intuition by Kevin Mulligan (1995), which takes it as consisting in a kind of total difference that precludes any overlap or sameness in the types of matter instantiated in

straightforward and propositional/categorical acts (be they assertive, as in a judgment or belief, or intuitive).²³

According to Mulligan, Husserl expresses the following distinctions in his conception of the difference between categorical and straightforward perception:

- (i) to see is to see either simply or propositionally;
- (ii) to see particulars is not to mean, is not to exercise a concept, neither an individual nor a general concept [...]. (Mulligan 1995, 170)

“To see simply,” as Mulligan uses this phrase, is to have a straightforward perceptual experience that lacks all categorial content. And “to see propositionally” is to have a perceptual experience that involves categorial content. Mulligan takes “seeing particulars” to take place in experiences of “simple seeing.” And he thinks, according to Husserl, that simple seeing/seeing particulars “is not to mean, is not to exercise a concept,” but that propositional seeing does involve (or at least presupposes an act involving) the “exercise” of a concept. As Mulligan puts it,

[Husserl] often describes the content of a judging, like that of an act of supposing, as an act of “meaning” (*Bedeutend, Meinen*), used as a gerund. Meaning, so understood, is complex, consisting of acts of naming and predicating. This is a somewhat unusual way of using “meaning,” which is most often used as a noun (*Bedeutung*). Husserl also uses “meaning” in this second way to describe the types or species instantiated by namings and predicatings and by the propositional wholes they make up. Husserl argues that seeing particulars is not any sort of meaning, neither naming (whether descriptive or not) nor predicating, because of the independent variability of perceptions, on the one hand, and perceptual judgements, on the other hand. (Mulligan 1995, 171)

To support these claims, Mulligan cites the argument from *LU VI §4*, which he reads as an argument in support of matter non-conceptualism (*ibid.*, 172). And with this as background, Mulligan claims that Husserl’s main argument for non-conceptualism about straightforward perception in *LU VI*, chapter 6 is the following (*ibid.*):

²³ Others who follow Mulligan’s reading of Husserl’s doctrine of the difference between categorial and straightforward perception as advancing a matter non-conceptualism about straightforward perception include Mooney (2010) and Doyon (2011).

1. Straightforward perception does not involve acts of naming or predicating (per Mulligan’s reading of the argument of *LU VI* §§4–5).
2. Categorial intuition necessarily does involve such acts (at least as a condition of the possibility of categorial intuition).
3. Straightforward perception is neither identical to nor a part of categorial intuition.
4. Therefore, the content (or matter) of straightforward perception cannot be part of the content (or matter) of categorial intuition.

But, in light of the points argued for in the previous two sections, we can see at once that there are at least three major problems with the background assumptions of Mulligan’s interpretation, which undermines the support for premise 1 of the argument just presented. And a close inspection of the text of *LU VI* chapter 6 reveals a further problem: that Husserl himself, for systematic reasons, denies both premise 3 and the conclusion of the argument just presented.

Problems with background assumptions: First, as Leung (2010 §7) observes, Husserl’s use of the term “*Bedeutung*” in *LU* (at least) does not support Mulligan’s claim that this term is used in that text only as a technical term denoting propositional meaning-types. Rather, Husserl consistently uses this term to refer *both* to the meaning (matter) of straightforward perception as well as the meaning (matter) of categorial acts (cf., *LU I* §15, 58/292).

Second, as I have argued above, *LU VI* §§4–5 does not contain arguments for matter non-conceptualism, but rather arguments for an act non-conceptualism that is compatible with the matter conceptualism at the core of his analysis of fulfillment, initially given in *LU VI* §§6–26.

Third, as we have seen in the previous section (§4.1 above), Mulligan is wrong to say that for Husserl “seeing particulars is not any sort of meaning,” including “naming,” *if* by this Mulligan means that acts of straightforward perception lack matter with nominal form. For Husserl is clear that the way that a perception intentionally relates to its object is *the same* as the way that a name refers to its object—i.e., “directly” or “not

attributively, as the bearer of these or those properties” (*LU VI* §5, 555/684)—and that this happens by virtue of the instantiation of the same type of matter in both perceptual acts and acts of merely thinking about an individual thing (cf., *LU V* §§38 & 42; *LU VI* §40, 659/774–5 & §49).

Problems with the textual basis: Husserl himself, in the very same chapter that Mulligan locates this argument, explicitly denies both premise 3 and the conclusion that Mulligan attributes to him. In *LU VI* chapter 6, Husserl claims repeatedly that the same type of nominal matter instanced in a straightforward perception can also be instanced in a categorial intuition (contra the conclusion of Mulligan’s argument); and that this is so because the token matter of a straightforward perception is imported into the total intentional content of a categorial perception founded on it (contra premise 3) (*LU VI* §46, 674–5/787; §48, 682–5/793–5; §49, 686–7/797; §53, 695–6/804; & §57, 703–4/810–1).²⁴

These claims are not haphazard, but are born from what Husserl takes to be *the essential peculiarity* of categorial intuitions: that they are *founded on straightforward perceptual acts*. As Husserl understands it, an act *F* is a *founded act* just in case:

- i. *F* contains at least one other act *A* as a part,
- ii. *F* is founded on (it could not exist without) *A*,²⁵ and
- iii. *F* has a part of its total matter that is not type identical to a part of the total matter in *A* (or, in the case where there is more than one founding act, the sum of the

²⁴ Mulligan notes that “Husserl often contradicts his thesis that simple seeing involves no meaning (*Meinen*), e.g., at *LU I* §23 and his thesis that to see is not to judge or believe (since these attitudes require propositionally articulated contents), e.g., at *LU V* §§27, 38” (Mulligan 1995, endnote 9). So, one might come to Mulligan’s defense by saying that Husserl’s multiple denials of the conclusion Mulligan attributes to him are born from the same confusion that bred the other contradictory moments in *LU*. However, I respond: until I see reason to think that this charge of inconsistency is not just itself a symptom of the confusion bred in the interpreter by not recognizing the crucial distinction between act and matter non-conceptualism, then I see no reason not to think of this objection as simply begging the question against my interpretation.

²⁵ See §6.2 below for further discussion of the concept of “foundation” (*Fundierung*) in Husserl’s mereology, which is developed in the Third Investigation.

matters of all the other acts that are a part of F) (*LU VI* §48, 681–2/792–3; cf. *LU III* §14 & *LU V* §18).

Per (i.), an essential peculiarity of a categorial perception F as *founded on* a straightforward perception A is that F involves A as a *part*. To further substantiate this claim, consider how Husserl makes this point in a passage at *LU VI* §48, 681–2/793–4, where he analyzes the performance of an act of categorial intuition (as expressed in the perceptual judgment, “This paper is white”) on the basis of a straightforward perception of an object (as expressed in the phrase “this white paper”). There he claims that the transformation of consciousness from the straightforward seeing of the white paper to the categorial seeing of it *as being white* consists in setting the total matter of the straightforward perceptual act in a predicative relation to the matter of a “part-intention” directed at a property of the perceived object, which is abstracted from the total matter of the straightforward intuitive intention. The intuitive consciousness that results from this synthesis, therefore, contains the straightforward perceptual consciousness as that which supplies the matter of the subject-term of the judgment—this nominal content is *imported* (to use the terminology introduced in §4.1 above) into the total matter of the categorial act. But the abstracted part-intention is added to it as a part of the predicate-term, which is united to the token matter of the original straightforward object-intention by a predicative function, which

will not itself count as this experienced bond among acts [*dieser erlebte Verband der Akte*]; it is not itself constituted as the object [*Gegenstand*], but it helps to constitute another object. It acts representatively [*sie repräsentiert*],²⁶ and to such effect, that A [the intentional object of the straightforward perception] now appears [*erscheint*] to have α [the intentional object of the part-intention] in itself (or, in reversed direction, α appears to be in A). (*LU VI* §48, 683/794)

Therefore, since the categorial intuition is founded on—and so, *imports* the matter of—the straightforward perceptual act, this means that the type of matter instanced in a straightforward perception can be instanced in categorial perception as a part of its total matter. And that means that the matter of straightforward intuition is conceptual by the

²⁶ For a discussion of the concept of representative content, see §6.1 below.

measure of matter conceptualism, but the straightforward act can still qualify as non-conceptual by the measure of act non-conceptualism.

5. The Infinite Regress in the Constitution of Intuitive Fullness

A significant gap in the foregoing discussion concerns the difference between the total essences—or, more specifically, the epistemic essences (see the definition in §2 above)—of straightforward perception and mere (unfulfilled) thought, belief, or judgment. Clarifying this essential difference is important for my defense of the claim that Husserl advances a hybrid view of the content of perceptual experience, since it partially underwrites the attribution of act non-conceptualism by isolating a key difference between the total essences of perception and mere thought (judgment, belief).²⁷ As mentioned in §2 above, Husserl claims that there is feature of intuition, which Husserl calls the “fullness” (*Fülle*) of the intuitive act, alongside its matter and quality that is not present in purely significative acts. It marks one of the differences between the total essences of perception and mere thought that supports my attribution of act non-conceptualism about perception to Husserl’s view in *LU*.

However, for some commentators—most famously, Hubert Dreyfus (1982) and, more recently, Walter Hopp (2008)—Husserl’s analysis of the constitution of fullness is itself deeply problematic. For, they contend, trouble arises when one attempts to bring Husserl’s conception of sensory fullness together with the conceptualist core of his analysis of fulfillment.

In this section, I present Walter Hopp’s (2008) version of the problem that purportedly arises from this combination. In the next section I will argue that this problem rests upon a misunderstanding of Husserl’s analysis of intuitive fullness.

I focus on Hopp’s challenge instead of Dreyfus’s for two reasons. First, Dreyfus’s interpretation of Husserl’s doctrine of perception is seriously flawed in ways that have

²⁷ This difference only *partially* underwrites the attribution of act non-conceptualism because in some cases there are also essential differences that distinguish the matters of straightforward perception and thought or judgment, as we have seen is the case for the differences between perception and essentially occasional thought (in §4.1 above) and for the differences between straightforward and categorial perception (in §4.2 above).

been well-documented in the literature.²⁸ Second, Dreyfus's challenge is primarily directed against Husserl's *Noema*, which is a concept involved in Husserl's more mature conception of intentionality and which was not clearly operative in *LU*. Hopp, however, both studiously avoids the mistakes in Dreyfus's reading and articulates an objection that focuses squarely on Husserl's view in *LU*.

In the Sixth Investigation, Husserl says that the moment of fullness (*Fülle*) in an intuitive act has the following characteristics:

- A. It is the moment of an act that gives its intended object “‘presence’ in the pregnant [*prägnant*] sense of the word, it brings something of the fullness of the object itself [*sie bringt etwas von der Fülle des Gegenstandes selbst*]” (*LU VI §21, 607/728*) or, as he also puts it, it “*analogically* gives presence to its object, or apprehends it as itself given” (*LU VI §21, 608/729*).²⁹
- B. Fullness is completely lacking in purely signitive acts, e.g., acts of mere thought, belief, and judgment. It is a “privation” (*Manko*) in purely signitive acts (*LU VI §21, 608/729*; cf., *LU VI §20, 605/726*).
- C. “*Fullness [...] is a characteristic moment of presentations alongside quality and matter*” (*LU VI §21, 607–8/729*, emphasis in original). This is so because the fullness of a given act can vary independently of its matter and vice-versa (*LU VI §25, 618/738*).
- D. The moment of fullness is a complex part of the intuitive act, which is constituted in part by a moment of matter. As Husserl puts it,

When we range an intuitive act alongside a signitive act to which it brings fullness, the former act does not differ from the latter merely by the joining on a third distinct moment of fullness to the quality and matter common to the two acts. This at least is not the case where we mean by ‘fullness’ the intuitive content of intuition. For intuitive content already includes a complete matter [*ganze Materie*], namely, the matter of an act *reduced* to a pure intuition. (*LU VI §25, 618/738*)

²⁸ See the critical discussions at Drummond (1990, 81), Kjosavik (2003, 55–6) and Hopp (2008, 226–8).

²⁹ This does not mean that fullness involves bringing the object *itself* into the act. Rather, it is the making experientially “present” of the object to the subject that it is not in merely thinking about it (cf. *LU VI §23, 613–4/734*).

According to Hopp, the root of the problem in this view is the combination of (C) and (D) with matter conceptualism. According to (C) (as Hopp reads it), fullness is a *third part* of the intuitive act, which is *numerically distinct* from its moments of matter and quality. And, according to (D), fullness has a moment of matter internal to it. In Hopp's reading, this entails that every intuitive act has *two* numerically distinct moments of matter: the moment of matter belonging to the intuitive act as a whole and the moment of matter belonging to its intuitive fullness.

One interesting result of this reading is that the moment of intuitive fullness has an internal structure that is fundamentally the same as the internal structure of an act of fulfillment (Hopp 2008, 225–6 & 2010, 17). As stated in §2 above, in an act of fulfillment, there are two numerically distinct acts—an intuitive and signitive act—with two numerically distinct moments of matter. And fullness is transferred from the intuitive act to the signitive act by virtue of the coincidence (*Deckung*) of the token matters in each. Analogously, as Hopp understands it, the moment of fullness is constituted by a coincidence (*Deckung*) between the moment of matter in the intuitive act and the (second) moment of matter that's a part of the moment of fullness (Hopp 2008, 226). So, it's the same kind of structure underlying both the constitution of fullness in intuition and the transfer of fullness from intuition to signification in fulfillment.

This understanding of Husserl's analysis of the constitution of fullness has a striking elegance. However, Hopp's remarkable insight is that, when one combines this conception of the constitution of fullness with the conceptualist core of Husserl's analysis of fulfillment, the elegance of the view irrupts into an infinite regress of ever more complicated relations of coincidence internal to the fullness of intuition. Here is how Hopp puts the point,

If Husserl is correct in maintaining that the matter of an act is conceptual, and therefore can serve as the content of an empty or signitive act, then the matter of the intuitive fullness of an act is capable of functioning merely signitively. But how, then, are we to characterize the difference between the intuitive fullness and an empty act with exactly that matter? Our only option, it seems, is to say that the former possesses intuitive fullness while the latter does not. But consistency demands that we treat this further moment of fullness—the fullness of the intuitive fullness—as a whole consisting of matter and fullness, and so the regress is on. (Hopp 2008, 226)

In other words, if every intuitive act A consists of a moment of matter M and a separate moment of intuitive fullness F (C above), and if every moment of fullness F contains a distinct moment of matter (D above), then, given matter conceptualism, the matter M_1 of F must itself be distinct from the “fullness of F ” (call this F_1) with which M_1 coincides to constitute F itself. For, per matter conceptualism, M_1 in F could be instanced in a purely signitive act, which lacks sensory fullness. So there must be a “fullness of intuitive fullness” F_1 that combines with M_1 to constitute F . But at this point, consistency with claim D demands that F_1 also have a moment of matter of its own M_2 alongside a further moment of fullness F_2 , which coincide to constitute F_1 , and so on, *in infinitum*, down the dark hole of conceptual matters and correlated moments of fullness of intuitive fullness.

In response to this problem, Hopp argues that we can retain the outline of Husserl’s analysis of fullness (represented in A–D above) only if we drop the commitment to matter conceptualism and adopt a weaker reading of *Deckung* that does not require the type-identity of matters in signitive and intuitive acts in the unity of fulfillment (Hopp 2008, 233). When we abandon matter conceptualism, then it is no longer required to posit a moment of “fullness of intuitive fullness” with a moment of matter of its own to stand in coincidence with the matter of the moment of fullness itself. Rather, we can maintain, as Hopp thinks Husserl does in his later work, that the matter of intuitive fullness is *sui generis* insofar as it contains fullness as an intrinsic feature, not as something constituted in relation to a numerically distinct moment of the overall act (Hopp 2008, 237–45; cf. Hopp 2011, especially chaps 1 & 5–7).³⁰ So, it seems, we find sufficient cause in Husserl’s analysis of the constitution of fullness to abandon the matter conceptualism at the heart of his analysis of fulfillment.

³⁰ I should like to note that I agree that Husserl’s later analyses of perceptual sense, especially as articulated in *Experience and Judgment*, rejects the claim that perception has the same noematic sense as a judgment. But there are interpretations of Husserl’s later views (as noted in footnote 3 above) that see them as maintaining a kind of content conceptualism, which, in turn, leaves room for the strong reading of *Deckung*. However, as I said before, I will not advance or defend any interpretative claims about Husserl’s later work in this paper.

6. Terminating the Regress on Husserl's Terms

I believe that Hopp's argument is built upon misinterpretation. In particular, I think that Husserl does not say that the matter of fullness is a numerically distinct moment of matter from the matter of the act as a whole. Rather, Husserl maintains that the matter of intuitive fullness is *a part of* the matter of the intuitive act as a whole. It's the same moment of matter serving a dual mereological role: on the one hand, it is a moment of the intuitive act as a whole; on the other, it is a moment of the fullness of the intuitive act, which is itself a moment of the act as a whole. As Husserl puts it (in a passage that we will examine closely in the following), the matter of intuitive fullness is nothing other than "the matter of an act reduced to a pure intuition" (*LU VI* §25, 618/738). I will clarify and argue for this claim in the next section (§6.1), where I will also argue that it is compatible with Husserl's hybrid view of perceptual content. Then, in §6.2, I will show how this conception of fullness as sharing its matter with the intuitive act of which it is a part is compatible with Husserl's emphatic claim that the fullness of an act is a third moment "*of presentations alongside quality and matter*" (*LU VI* §21, 607–8/729).

If this interpretation is correct, it yields a view of the constitution of intuitive fullness that avoids Hopp's regress without abandoning anything in the foregoing outline of Husserl's analysis of intuitive fullness and without abandoning the conceptualism about intuitive matter that's at the heart of his analysis of fulfillment.

6.1 The Moment of Matter in Fullness is the Same as the Matter of the Intuitive Act, the Compatibility with Matter Conceptualism

The key to understanding how the view in *LU* is innocent of Hopp's charge of regress lies in understanding how one can hold both

- i. that the matter of intuitive fullness is the same as the matter of the intuitive act as a whole and
- ii. that the matter of fullness could also be a part of the matter of a purely signitive act that lacks intuitive fullness (matter conceptualism)

And the key to understanding how this is possible lies in a proper conception of what Husserl says about the constitution of intuitive fullness in the crucial passage I referenced above, which I quote fully here:

For intuitive content [*der intuitive Inhalt*] already includes a complete matter [*ganze Materie*], namely, the matter of an act *reduced* to a pure intuition. If the intuitive act [*Anschauungsakt*] in question was from the outset a purely intuitive act, its matter would at the same time be a constituent [*Bestandstück*] of its intuitive content [*intuitiven Inhalts*]. (*LU VI §25 618/738*)

To understand this passage, we must understand some of the technical terminology it deploys and some of the distinctions these terms mark, which Husserl develops in sections leading up to it.

First, in *LU VI §22*, Husserl clears up an ambiguity that infects his use of the term “fullness” up to that point. On the one hand, he claims, “fullness” can be used to refer to a non-intentional sensation content in intuition (*LU VI §22, 608–9/730*). On the other, it can be used to refer to sensation contents “in their interpretation [*Auffassung*], i.e. not these [sensation] moments alone” (*LU VI §22, 609/730*). After marking this distinction, Husserl consistently uses the term “fullness” to refer to the latter: a complex of non-intentional sensation content in combination with an intentional interpretation or matter.³¹ For only the latter has “a value for the function of fulfillment” (*LU VI §22, 608–9/730*).

Second, after marking this distinction, Husserl draws a dizzying proliferation of distinctions and correlated technical terms within the space of four sections, which yields at least the following four terms that refer to the same thing that he uses the technical term “fullness” to refer to: “intuitive substance” (*intuitive Gehalt*) (*LU VI §§22–3*), “intuitively presentative content” (*der darstellende Inhalt*) (*LU VI §23, 613/734; §24,*

³¹ Another important text in this connection is in Appendix 8 of *LU VI*. There Husserl criticizes Brentano for holding that the mere presence of sensation to the mind is itself an “act” of consciousness, i.e., a part of the stream of consciousness that is itself intentional. As the appendix makes clear, Husserl was eager to maintain a clear distinction between the simple and non-intentional sensation content and the complex and intentional fullness of an intuitive act against Brentano’s view, which construes all the parts of a conscious act, including its sensory data, as intentional.

615/736), “intuitive content” (*der intuitive Inhalt*) (as in our key passage above), and “representative content” (*der repräsentierende Inhalt*) of an intuitive act (*LU VI §§25–6*).

Now, with this background, we can see straightaway that in the crucial passage above Husserl is saying that the fullness (=intuitive content) of an intuitive act has a complete matter. And this claim should not be surprising at all, given that he’s stipulated just three sections prior that he’s going to use the term “fullness” only to refer to the special combination of sensation content and interpretative matter. What *is* new in this passage, however—and what’s of paramount importance to my interpretation of Husserl—concerns the nature of the matter that’s present in fullness: that it’s nothing more than the matter of the intuitive act itself that’s “reduced to” the matter of an act of “pure intuition.”

To clarify what this means, we must understand the difference between the matter of a purely signitive act and the matter of a purely intuitive act. In this connection, it’s helpful to start out by noting that Husserl defines a “reduced” act as one in which we

abstract from all signitive components, and limit ourselves to what actually comes to representation [*wirklich zur Repräsentation kommt*] in its representative content. By so doing we form a *reduced* [*reduzierte*] presentation, with a reduced object in regard to which it is a pure intuition [*reine Anschauung*]. (*LU VI §23, 612/733*)

Thus, a “reduced” act is one in which all of the purely signitive components of the act (including the relevant components of the act’s matter) are stripped away by abstraction—i.e., we disregard all that corresponds in the meaning of the act “to the sum total of the remaining, indeed co-meant, determinations, which do not themselves fall in the appearance” (*LU VI §23, 610/731*)—leaving only the precipitate of “the sum total of the determinations of the object ‘that fall in the appearance’” (*ibid.*).³² And so, “the matter of

³² This distinction between the total matter of an intuitive act and the matter of the act “reduced to a pure intuition” might suggest that Hopp (2008, 225) is right to take Husserl as claiming that the internal structure of the moment of fullness *within* an intuitive act is the same as the structure of an act of fulfillment. However, Husserl clearly distances himself from this view by claiming that

the presentation [with complete fullness] has *no* signitive content whatsoever. In it all is fullness: no part, no side, no property of its object fails to be intuitively presented [*intuitiv dargestellt*] [...]. Not only

an act reduced to a pure intuition” is nothing other than that aspect of the matter of an act that intends a determination of the object that “falls in the appearance” of the object.

But what constitutes the difference between an aspect of the act’s matter whose objective correlate “falls in the appearance” and an aspect that doesn’t? Husserl addresses this question in *LU VI §26* where he says that the difference is nothing other than the presence of fullness in the former and the lack of fullness in the latter. And he analyzes the presence of fullness in an act as a difference in the relation between the moments of sensuous content and matter in the intentional act. When the objective correlate of the moment of matter and the sensuous content in an act have a “contingent, external” relation of dissimilarity, then the objective correlate does not fall in the appearance constituted in the act and it thereby lacks the feature of fullness (*LU VI §26, 623/741*). But when two moments enjoy an “essential, internal” relation of “resemblance,” then a moment of fullness is thereby constituted in the act (*LU VI §26, 623–4/741–2*).

Now, there is much to give one pause here—most striking of which is the claim that material objects have some sort of substantive and reflectively discernible *resemblance* with pure sensation contents.³³ But I want to set these worries aside for now to focus on how this understanding of the constitution of intuitive fullness facilitates the reconciliation of the two key claims mentioned at the beginning of this section (i. and ii. above). The crucial insight about Husserl’s view of the constitution of intuitive fullness is that both the presence of intuitive fullness and its privation in an act are states of affairs

is everything that is presented also meant [*was dargestellt ist, gemeint*] [...] but all that is meant is also presented [*alles Gemeinte dargestellt*]. (*LU VI §23, 612/732–3*).

In other words, unlike an act of fulfillment, there are not two distinct moments of matter that coincide within an intuitive act, which in turn constitute the fullness of the intuitive act. Rather, the fullness of an act just is the matter of an act that, within the confines of this act, presents its intentional object in a particular way—i.e., as intuitively presented. And, as we shall see more fully in what follows, it is *this kind* of intuitive content—where intention and sensuous presentation completely and seamlessly unite—that I think Husserl calls “the matter of an act *reduced* to a pure intuition”.

³³ For further discussion of problems and potential responses to problems arising from the concept of resemblance as employed here, see: for problems, de Boer (1978, 133–5) and Hopp (2008, 229–31, and the references he gives there); for responses to some of these problems, Williford (2013, especially footnote 34) and Kidd (2014, 136–7).

made up of the same basic kinds of elements. Fullness is not, then, an isolated feature of intuition, which can be added to and taken away from the total make-up of an act without correlated changes in the other constituents of the act. Rather, the presence of fullness in an act is nothing other than the fact that the matter and sensation content in the act share the right kind of relation—namely, a relation of *resemblance*; and its lack is nothing other than the fact that matter and sensation do not share this kind of relation. This elucidates what Husserl means in our target passage when he writes that if we consider a purely intuitive act, “its matter would at the same time be a constituent [*Bestandstück*] of its intuitive content [*intuitiven Inhalts*].” For the matter of a purely intuitive act would refer to an object that resembles the sensation content completely. The object of the act would be a mirror-image of the sensation content.

In light of this, we can see, contra Hopp’s interpretation, how its possible for both (i.) the moment of matter of an intuitive act to be a constitutive part of the act’s fullness and (ii.) potentially the matter of a purely signitive act. For the difference between the presence and absence of fullness consists only in the relation that the matter of the act has to its sensation content. It’s possible, then, for the very same moment (and so, also, the same type) of matter to be instanced in one act where it resembles its sensation content in the right way—thereby constituting the fullness of an intuitive act—and then in another act where it does not—thereby constituting a signitive act that lacks fullness.

6.2 How Fullness is a Third Moment in Intuitive Acts

But this picture of the constitution of fullness makes it difficult to understand how fullness could also be a moment of an intuition *alongside* its quality and matter (*LU VI §21, 607–8/729*). To get a better feel for the trouble one encounters here, consider that a moment (*Moment*) is a dependent part of a given whole, which cannot exist independently of the whole of which it is a part. For example, unlike the wood plank that makes up the table-top, which *can* exist independently of the table—this is a kind of part that Husserl calls a “piece” (*Stück*) of a whole—the top surface of the table cannot exist independently of the table. The top surface of the table is, therefore, a *moment* of the table (cf. *LU III §17*). This, in turn, might suggest that it’s not possible for one thing *P* to be a moment of two different wholes. More specifically, it might suggest that it’s not possible for the same

moment of matter to be both a moment of an act and a moment of another moment of the act, e.g., of the act's moment of fullness. And, if this is correct, then our reading of the moment of matter as serving double mereological duty in an intuitive act is actually unintelligible.

But there are two important distinctions that Husserl develops in his doctrine of parts and wholes in *LU III* that can be deployed to save the view.

The first is the distinction between “immediate” (*unmittelbar*) and “mediate” (*mittelbar*) or, as Husserl also calls it, “nearer” (*näher*) and “farther” (*ferner*) parts of a whole (*LU III* §§18–19). If *P* is a part of a whole *W* without being a part of any other part of *W*, but *P1* is a part of *W* only by virtue of being a part of *P*, then *P* is an immediate part of *W* and *P1* is a mediate part of *W*. This definition is applicable to both pieces and moments of wholes. However, it applies in a non-arbitrary way only in the case of the relations of moments to their wholes (cf., *LU III* §19). This means that the difference between mediate and immediate parthood is not absolute, but can only be specified in a non-arbitrary way by reference to the kind of whole in which the given part is present. For example, the top surface of the table is a moment of the table. And it is a moment of the plank that constitutes the table top. But we can see that this case does not present an illicit double-counting of moments after we specify that the top surface of the table is a *mediate part* of the table by virtue of being an *immediate part* of the plank that is a piece of the table. So, it's a part of both the table and the plank, but it's a part of each in a different way.

The second important distinction is that between two kinds of whole: a “pregnant whole” and a “narrow whole.”³⁴ A pregnant whole is one in which every part of the whole is dependent on or, as Husserl puts it, “founded on” every other part in the whole (*LU III* §21, 282/475).³⁵ And a narrow whole is one in which all parts of the whole are independent of each other except for one part, which all the other parts found (*ibid.*).

³⁴ These names are suggested by Husserl (*LU III* §21, 282/475). See Simons (1982 §3) for some helpful commentary.

³⁵ Husserl defines “foundation” as a relation in which “an *A* cannot exist as such except in a more comprehensive unity which associates it with an *M*” (*LU III* §14 267/463). In other words, *A* is founded on *M* iff, necessarily, if *A* exists as the kind of thing it is (with its particular properties) in a whole *W*, then *M* exists as the kind of thing it is in *W*.

Narrow wholes, in other words, are made up almost completely of parts that are “relatively independent as regards one another—where the whole falls apart into its *pieces* [*Stücke*],” except for the part that these all found together (*ibid.*). This dependent part or moment in a narrow whole Husserl calls the “moment of unity” of the whole (*LU III* §4, 237/442; §22, 286–8/478–9).³⁶ Since the “only true unifying factors [...] are relations of ‘foundation’” (*LU III* §22, 286/478), the moment of unity is the tie that binds the otherwise independent pieces together into a whole; as Husserl says, it is the moment in a narrow whole that “gives unity to the whole” (*LU III* §22, 288/479).

We can use these two distinctions to elucidate how the same moment of matter can be both the moment of matter in the act and the moment of matter in fullness by showing (i.) that fullness is a *mediate* moment of intuitive acts, which the act has by virtue of having the matter and sensation content that it does, and (ii.) that this is so because fullness is a narrow whole, constituted out of a moment of matter, sensation content, and a resemblance relation between these two that functions as the moment of unity in the whole.

i. Fullness is a mediate moment of intuitive acts: Relative to the intuitive act as a whole, the moment of fullness counts as a third moment of the act, which “may vary [...] while the same object with the same determinations is constantly meant with the same act-quality” (*LU VI* §28, 626/744). But fullness is only a *mediate* part of the act. For, as we have seen (§6.1 above), an act has intuitive fullness only by virtue of having the right combination of matter and sensation instanced in it. This interpretation is confirmed by what Husserl says in *LU VI* §§25–6 about the structure of the intuitive act that makes the independent variation of (degree of) fullness possible: namely, that one can vary the degree of fullness present in the act only by varying either the type of matter or the type of sensation content in the act in a way that brings about changes in the similarity each has with the other.

ii. Fullness is a narrow whole: If we abstract from the consideration of the intuitive act as a whole and focus only on the moment of fullness within it, we can see that the moment

³⁶ Cf., the concept of a “figural moment” in Husserl (2003, 215–19).

of fullness itself has the structure of a narrow whole. For, again, the moment of fullness in an intuition is composed of (1) a moment of matter and (2) a moment of sensation content that (3) share the appropriate relation of resemblance. Now, since matter and sensation content can vary independently of each other in the unity of an intentional act, these count as independent parts or pieces *of the act*. (Of course, considered relative to the total stream of conscious life, these count only as *moments* of the act [cf., *LU* III §13].) But since the relation of resemblance is founded on the moments of matter and sensation content in the act, and since it cannot vary independently of variations in those moments themselves, then it qualifies as a moment of the whole. Furthermore, since the relation of resemblance is what constitutes the unity of the moment of fullness *as such* by virtue of its being founded on the moments of matter and sensation content—i.e., since (*per impossibile*) removing it from the whole would be, as it were, the pulling of the thread that unravels the whole, reducing it to a collection of independent pieces—then it counts as the moment of unity in the fullness (cf., *LU* VI §26, 623–4/741–2).

It is illuminating to note in this connection that the possibility of a phenomenology of knowledge relies upon our capacity to consider fullness in a way that considers it as being a third moment of the intuitive act alongside its matter and quality. For without the ability to categorially “see” that structure in an act, we would not be able to identify the *epistemic essence* of a given act. Yet, the possibility of a phenomenology of perception that elucidates its epistemic function relies upon the kind of abstraction that considers fullness as a whole unto itself—a narrow whole. Fullness is that feature of an intuitive or perceptual act that gives it a value for the function of fulfillment. And to describe the constitution or essential internal structure of this feature, we must set aside concern for it *qua* moment of an intuitive act and, instead, to describe it as a whole unto itself. It is the *same* moment of fullness operative in fulfillment and in perception, but our phenomenological investigations must conceptualize it from two different vantage points. We can see now that this is no contradiction within Husserl’s phenomenological program in *LU*, but rather an exhibition of its analytical power.

7. Conclusion

If my interpretation of the doctrines of fulfillment and fullness delivered in Sixth Investigation is correct, then *LU* suffers no inconsistency about the conceptualist core of Husserl's analysis of fulfillment. Rather, what *LU* offers is a hybrid view of perceptual content that consistently combines a conceptualist view of the intentional *content* or *matter* of perception with a variety of non-conceptualism about perceptual *acts*. More specifically, it's a view that combines the thesis that the type of matter instanced in perception can also be instanced as a part of the matter of an assertive or propositional act (of judgment, belief, thought, etc.) with the thesis that the complete essence of perception is distinct from the complete essence of an assertive or propositional act. Given the number of obstacles in the contemporary debate over non-conceptual content that Husserl's view overcomes (as noted in §4 above), I believe, it is of more than just historical interest, but is a view to be reckoned with in the contemporary debate. However, my primary concern in this paper has been to deliver my interpretation of *LU* as a correction to the historical record. In particular, my goal is to correct the misidentification of the kinds of failure in *LU* that motivated later developments in Husserl's thought. If my arguments here are correct, Husserl did not begin the development of his phenomenological philosophy with a view of perception that mangles the distinction between conceptual and non-conceptual content. Rather he begins with a view that combines conceptual and non-conceptual commitments in a distinctive and systematically consistent way. Therefore, the motives for the changes represented in Husserl's later work must be other than what recent commentators have identified.³⁷

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