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Getting Geist - Certainty, Rules And Us

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GETTING GEIST – CERTAINTY, RULES AND US

Kevin Mulligan (Geneva)

Du hast wohl recht, ich finde nicht die Spur
Von einem Geist, und alles ist Dressur
Goethe, *Faust*

It is a great temptation to want to make spirit (den Geist) explicit
(CV p. 11)

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§1 Getting Geist

Meaning (das Meinen), for example Sam's meaning that it rains by saying "es regnet", forms of life and the senses of propositions or thoughts are three categories that loom large in Wittgenstein's writings on language and mind. How do they stand to one another, how are they connected ? The question was addressed before Wittgenstein by the realist phenomenologists, Scheler, Hartmann and Ortega as well as by the Viennese philosopher and psychologist, Karl Bühler. Like Wittgenstein, these philosophers were quite clear that the category to which meaning belongs and the category to which belong the senses of individual propositions cover a great variety of cases and that a form of life has many dimensions. Language is only one of the phenomena which go to make up human life (cf. RFM VI) or culture. The acts and activities of a person are one thing, the acts and activities of interacting persons another thing and the contents of both yet another thing.

In what follows I sketch the connexions between these categories described or asserted by Wittgenstein and the phenomenologists and set out and develop what I take to be the two philosophically most interesting and least understood elements of their answers. The first is the claim that we do not typically know what someone means when he uses a particular expression or that some action is the following of a given rule. Rather, we enjoy primitive certainty about what a person means, what rule is being followed. The second has to do with the role of what is now sometimes called collective intentionality in such primitive certainties. My subject might, then, be described as *Geist, Gewissheit and Gemeinsamkeit*.

The clearest and most thorough description of our three categories and their interrelations within the phenomenological tradition is that given by Nicolai Hartmann in his 1933 book *Das Problem des geistigen Seins*[1]. One of the most peculiar features of this book for the anglophone reader is the liberal use made of the noun "Geist" and the adjective "geistig". Like many another phenomenologist, Hartmann talks happily of the "geistige" or spiritual acts and states of a person. Such episodes by no means exhaust what we often call the psychological or mental activities and states of a person. Like Scheler before him, Hartmann distinguishes between "geistige" acts and "seelische" activities (PdG 69), spiritual acts and the activities of a soul. His preferred name for the first of our three categories is "personal spirit". Hartmann often labels his second category "spiritual life" and, more often, "objective spirit" (a label taken from Hegel who, Hartmann thinks, gets nearly all features of objective spirit wrong). The third category, of contents, propositions, theories and works of art is baptised “products”, “works” or "objectified spirit". Hartmann argues that all the denizens of the first two categories are temporal particulars. In the first category we find all those spiritual features of a person of which he is the only immediate bearer. In the second all those spiritual properties of a persons which are essentially social or cultural, for example the properties of ordering or promising but also all the processes which make up the interactions between persons, processes which constitute history. These processes are all shared, hence Hartmann's term "Gemeingeist", the common mind[2]. Hartmann’s ambition in making this threefold division is well described by one of his commentators (Oberer 1965 121): only a theory of Geist can avoid the Scylla of psychologism and the Charybdis of logicism.

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[1] Henceforth “PgS”. I quote from the third edition of 1962, which is unchanged from the first edition except for the pagination.

[2] Cf. also Scheler GW 8 24f.

Arnold memorably points out the difficulties anglophones have with "Geist" (and gives me my title) when he introduces "the great doctrine of ´Geist`" via the words of a Prussian professor:

> What unites and separates people now is Geist...you will find that in Berlin we oppose "Geist" - intelligence, as you or the French might say, - to Ungeist...We North-Germans have worked for "Geist" in our way...[I]n your middle-class "Ungeist" is rampant...What has won this Austrian battle for Prussia is "Geist"...I will give you this piece of advice, with which I take my leave: Get Geist...."Thank God, this d--d professor...is now gone back to his own Intelligenz-Staat. I half hope there may come a smashing defeat of the Prussians before Vienna, and make my ghostly friend laugh on the wrong side of his mouth...(*Friendship's Garland*)[3]

Although Scheler and Hartmann insist on the distinction between biological, "seelische" and "geistige" phenomena they also like to speak of the life of the spirit and of its forms. Referring to the "philosophy of life" Hartmann notes

> Geist has been characterised as "life". What was meant was not of course the life of animals and plants, but a higher, characteristic type of life (PgS 47)

"Life", then, can be used with a "wider meaning" (PgS 47), although as Scheler says, talk of the “life of spirit” is improper (*Stellung* 44ff.). All life, Hartmann says, creates form, organic life and much more so "das Geistesleben". The “mobile life of spiritual form" is a "process quite distinct from organic process" (PgS 297). Geist build on and forms a biological or vital "common form of life" (PgS 207).

Wittgenstein does not, as far as I can see, ever call life "spiritual". But the distinction between two senses of "life" is important to him.

> Physiological life is of course not "Life". And neither is psychological life. Life is the world (NB 24.7.16, cf TLP 5.621)

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[3] I am ashamed to admit that I owe my intelligence of this text to Derrida's *De l'Esprit* (115-6).

When Wittgenstein talks of life, our life (RPP II §187), life in its entirety (LWPP II S. 41) and of forms of life he, too, has in mind something which goes beyond biological life[4].

In their descriptions of our three categories Bühler (1927, 1934) and Wittgenstein dispense almost entirely with the vocabulary of Geist in putting forward their positive claims. Wittgenstein, however, does use the vocabulary of "Geist", very often in order to formulate positions he rejects. He thinks it is profoundly wrong to admit spiritual processes. In PI he treats the category of "seelische" processes as being misleading in just the same sort of way as that of "geistige" processes and for the same reasons (PI §§153-4). He does, however, at one point describe Ramsey's spirit, as opposed to his soul, as ugly. He also says

> The sense of a proposition (or a thought) isn't anything spiritual
> (PG I vi p. 131)

There are at least two other types of application of "Geist" in Wittgenstein. It may be used, as a matter of ordinary German, to talk about the Geist of a person and about the Geist of something which involves many persons. The word is often used in the latter way by Wittgenstein in remarks which give expression to his world-view. Thus there is the Geist of the great stream of American and European civilisation which tries to grasp the world in its periphery by accumulating and constructing ever more complicated structures. There are those manifestations of Geist to which civilised man is blind. A great culture is like a large organisation that indicates to its members their places at which they can work in the Geist of the whole. There is the spirit in which science is carried on nowadays (CV p. 8). These applications of "Geist" correspond fairly exactly to what Hartmann calls "objective spirit". Then there is the Geist of the reverent man, striving to grasp the world at its centre, in its essence (PR Preface), a hero of both Scheler and Wittgenstein.

§2 How (spiritual) Meaning, Forms of (spiritual) Life and (spiritual) Products hang together

What sort of an episode, if any, is spiritual meaning (das geistige Meinen) ? Is it, as the expression strongly suggests, a mere ghost or phantom ? Scheler and Hartmann think that there are spiritual acts, performed by persons,

[4] Cf. Baker & Hacker 1988 239ff..

for example loving, willing, cognizing (apprehending, Erkennen - PgS 56, 73). And Scheler frequently gives meaning as an example of such an act.

Wittgenstein's deconstructions of the very idea of a spiritual or "seelische" *process* of meaning something by a word leave open the possibility, noted by Kripke, that meaning is a sort of primitive *state* (Kripke 1993 51).

The categories of process and state are not, however, the only determinates of the category of episode. As Reinach forcefully argued in 1911, meaning is a *punctual act*. Unlike presentations (Vorstellungen) it cannot endure. Reinach added that meaning is necessarily bound up with an expression. This view is compatible with Wittgenstein's claim at PI §693 that there is nothing more wrong-headed than calling meaning (Meinen) a spiritual activity. It is not an activity since activities go on, take time[5].

In order to understand what meaning is we must, all our authors agree, look at our two other categories, life in a more than merely biological sense of the term, and contents.

Spiritual acts are acts of persons. But, says Hartmann,

> What is characteristic of spiritual life is precisely that particular individuals do not exist by themselves, do not have an isolated real existence outside the common sphere of spiritual life (PgS 69)

The "common spiritual sphere" is made up of the "action and reaction" of persons (PgS ch. 11 (b)), "die gelebte und im lebendigem Austausch sich auslebende Gemeinsamkeit eines Geistes" (PgS 285). Individuals and the common mind are interdependent:

> Der Gemeingeist mag...noch so sehr vom Kollektivum der Einzelpersonen getragen sein, er ist doch selbst wiederum Einheit und Ganzheit, ein in sich gestaltetes und gefügtes Gebilde, das seinerseits den Einzelnen trägt (Hartmann SS 1933 Kl Schr. I 32)

The common mind has a form, it is also based on and forms a "collective form of life" (PgS 209). But it also forms its bearers:

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[5] When phenomenologists, early and late, clamour that the introduction of "thingly" categories into the description of mind is an error which has catastrophic consequences the positive alternative analysis they have in mind is that given by Reinach (and, first of all, by the Hungarian philosopher, Palagyi).

> Im geistigen Leben gestaltet sich das Gemeinsame zur besonderen Formprägung in bestimter Zeit aus. Die Lebensweise, die Sprache, die Verkehrform, die Denk- und Auffassungsweise, die Sitten und anerkannten Wertungen, das geltende Recht (auch das Ungeschriebene), die geltende Moral und Religion, der Geschmack, die Kunst, das Wissen - sie alle bilden zusammen eine einzige, grosse, inhaltlich durchgestaltete geistige Masse, die allen und keinem gehört, von keinem Einzelnen erfunden oder erschaffen ist, an deren stets lebendiger Umgestaltung aber doch alle beteiligt sind. Der Einzelne wird in ein bestimmtes geistiges Milieu hineingeboren, er "wächst" hinein, übernimmt seine Geformtheit in die eigene innere Form (Hartmann SS 1933 Kl Schr. I 32; cf. PgS 205ff., 229)

A definite social and legal life, a definite political tendency, morality, belief, taste, language are all forms (Geformtheiten) which together make up a common inherited, handed down spirit. And this belongs "to the nature of human life" (PgS 257)

Spiritual life is made up of processes. So it is not any sort of corporate person. Nor does it have any goals. Thus far Hartmann agrees with Brentano and Marty and with their eighteenth century Scottish predecessors. But the process of unplanned selection in social and cultural life on which these philosophers and Hayek insist so much is mentioned only in passing by Hartmann[6]

A favourite metaphor for spiritual processes in Hartmann and other phenomenologists is that of the stream - "the stream of historical life" (PgS 72). The metaphor is also used by Wittgenstein to state the dependence of the inner and of semantic relations on life:

> Only in the stream of thought and life do words have meaning (Z §173)
> What goes on within also has meaning only in the stream of life (LWPP II p.30)

Wittgenstein returns again and again to such dependences:

> Is meaning (Bedeutung) then really only the use of a word? Isn't it the way this use meshes with our life (in das Leben eingreift) ? But isn't its use a part of our life? (PG I ii §29)

> An intention is embedded in its situation, in human customs and institutions (PI §337)

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[6] PgS chs 45, 50 b, 59 e,f.

> I have used the term "embedded", have said that hope, belief, etc., were embedded in human life, in all of the situations and reactions which constitute human life (RPP II §16)
>
> ...the two concepts are embedded quite differently in our language-games (RPP II §54, cf §150)

Neither Hartmann's programmatic assertion of the interdependence of meaning and spiritual life nor the metaphors of Wittgenstein just quoted are particularly illuminating. But Hartmann's assertion sums up a number of more detailed claims and arguments set out by the phenomenologists. And so some light can be thrown on the interrelations between linguistic and spiritual episodes, on the one hand, and life, on the other hand, by considering Husserl's original answer to the question, What, if anything, makes an act of meaning spiritual ? and subsequent modifications of it. In the *Logical Invesitigations*, acts of meaning and the acts which verify these are what they are because of the positions occupied by the contents of these acts within a system. By "system" Husserl means a theoretical unity in which propositions stand in deductive and inductive relations to each other.

Each part of this answer came to modified in a variety of ways. As we have seen, Reinach claimed that acts of meaning are inseparable from uses of words - a claim originally rejected by Husserl - and discovered the punctuality of meaning. As we have also seen, Scheler and others distinguish within Husserl's category of "Akt" between what is spiritual and what is merely psychological, and they reserve "Akt" for the former.

The notion of a system is also enlarged. Already in the *Investigations* Husserl had noted the existence of a third type of justification, in addition to deductive and inductive justification, defeasible justification which yields not probabilities but certainty. As he turned his attention to the understanding of everyday life systems of "motivation" loomed larger and larger in his writings. For everyday life is made up of relations of motivation.

The new, enlarged understanding of what a system might be makes it possible to give new answers to our question. As an acute commentator on phenomenology in the 1920's noted[7], phenomenology was torn between two tendencies. The claim that acts of meaning and associated acts of verification constitute knowledge of mind-independent facts inclines it towards realism. But

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[7] Winkler 1921 76ff..

the claim that what makes such acts acts of meaning is their position within a system of relations of justification can easily lead to idealism. And phenomenologists did indeed part company along just this fault line.

The new understanding of system emerges most clearly in a revision of the account of content given by Husserl in the *Investigations*. On this account, acts of meaning instantiate ideal, atemporal contents, the thoughts or abstract propositions of Bolzano and Frege. At the other theoretical extreme, Marty argued in 1908 that judgings instantiate no types at all. Husserl himself quickly came to see that many if not all meaning-contents are in fact not atemporal entities but "bound idealities", bound to the contexts from which they emerge. Hartmann defends two radical versions of this sort of claim. As we have seen, he thinks that a person's acts are all dependent on cultural and social life; the same is true of the contents of such acts. Of the shared contents making up a form of life, concepts and judgements, true and false, are the most clearly demarcated but there also non-conceptual contents and goals; contents connect individuals (PgS 71). Contents migrate (wandern) (PgS 179-80). Spiritual life is made up of processes and Hartmann often seems to say that contents too belong to the stream of life. But some contents, for example works of art, theories and concepts, leave the stream and come to endure because of their incarnation in enduring material form[8]. Such contents depend on their creators but their endurance depends on other individuals and on forms of life. Some enduring contents change forms of life. Thus not only are the three types of Geist interdependent, there are further relations of dependence between members of each pair.

Hartmann's answer to our question, then, is that what makes an act of meaning spiritual is in part the dependence of the content of such an act and of its bearer on the cultural and social life which forms its context. Where Husserl repeated, monotonously, that acts of meaning (Meinen) "give", "lend" meaning (Bedeutung, Sinn) to words and sentences, Hartmann and Scheler say that such lending, giving and animating supervenes on a context.

This answer, like those given by many realist and idealist phenomenologists, and the other answers to our question so far mentioned, belongs to the broad family of spiritualistic (or ghostly) accounts of meaning and sense.

The new understanding of the variety of systems also makes possible a family of more or less naturalistic answers to our question. All such answers

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[8] Hartmann's ontology of enduring contents in PgS is set out in greatest detail in his analysis of works of art. Another realist phenomenologist, Roman Ingarden had provided an even more thorough analysis of such objects two years earlier (Ingarden 1931).

share a common form: what gives or lends meaning to the use of an expression, what animates it, is not any sort of spiritual episode – neither wholly nor in part, neither a process nor a punctual event – but its place in cultural and social life, in particular its place in the systems making up such a context. One might open Sam's head at the very moment he means that it is raining by saying "Es regnet" and find no brain. Sam's meaning that it is raining is what it is in virtue of the many relations of justification in which his action is embedded. Such a view is compatible with the claim that meaning is punctual provided the claim just amounts to saying that "mean" (meinen) does not occur in the progressive form.

Of course naturalist answers of this sort are compatible with and do well to accept the claim that content, whether or not it has become an enduring product, for example a concept, is closely tied to processes: there is the application of a word at a moment, the extended history of its use and the pattern of this use. In addition, although naturalistic accounts deny "Geistigkeit" to meaning (Meinen) they may, in effect, accord it to forms of life. Provided forms of life are not taken to be biological phenomena through and through, as opposed to being rooted in multifarious ways in biology, provided "life" is used in the two senses distinguished above, then we have a naturalism with a spiritual gloss or patina - naturalism with a touch of Geist. Whether or not a philosopher encapsulates this view in a slogan such as "das geistige Leben" is then perhaps only a matter of how explicit he wants to be. Naturalism with a touch of Geist is a compromise between strong naturalism and strong spiritualistic positions. There are other compromise positions: a philosopher might, for example, want to allow for spiritual acts and argue that what makes an act spiritual is the place its content enjoys in some system.

The philosophies of mind and language which Karl Bühler (cf. Mulligan 1997) and Wittgenstein set out in the 1930's are best understood as providing naturalistic answers of the type described to our question. Wittgenstein is not contradicting himself when he writes that it is not any "geistige Meinen" which gives life to sentences (PI §591) and that a word has the meaning someone has given to it (BlB p 27). Linguistic activity is not based on any sort of spiritual episode. Signs are alive in use, when used (PI §432); there is a life of utterances (PI I xi S. 544, II vii). To imagine a language is to imagine a form of life (PI §19), speaking a language is part of an activity, of a form of life (PI §23).

Not only is meaning not spiritual, the other acts which the phenomenologists described as spiritual are not spiritual either. Ordering, asking, narrating belong to our natural history as much as eating and drinking. Nor are the underlying abilities spiritual abilities (PI §25). But there is a spiritual set or attitude (PI §673).

Like the phenomenologists, Wittgenstein often describes the contexts of uses of words and of other items in terms of systems of different sorts. The "Systemgedanke" undergoes almost as many transformations in his thought as in that of the phenomenologists. Thus, like his predecessors, he uses "system" in even more ways than those mentioned so far – there are systems of colours, systems of definitions, mathematical and non-mathematical. In §4 we shall look at the final avatar of the notion of system in his thought and within phenomenology. In the next section we shall examine a divergence between the phenomenologists, on the one hand, and Wittgenstein and the naturalistic currents within descriptive psychology, on the other hand which is as fundamental as the divergence of opinion about the category of spiritual meaning (Meinen). Before turning to this difference let me illustrate the claims made above about the convergence between the spiritualistic and the naturalistic rejection of meaning-Platonism and convergence about what it is for a form of life to be shared.

First, the rejection of meaning-Platonism. As we have seen, Hartmann thinks contents may depend on the forms of common life[9] or separate off from such forms of life. It is, he says, difficult to draw a line (PgS 410) The line is provided when contents are fixed in enduring material. Such contents depend on a form of life, on individual lives - on personal and on objective spirit - and on this material (PgS 450ff., 408ff.). So they are not ideal entities, they merely appear to be ideal (ch 51). They enjoy validity or "Geltung" (which is not to be confused with atemporal truth (474, cf. Ethik ch 19 b). The historicity of products is an epiphenomenon of the historicity of living spirit, of the forms of spiritual life (483). Every concept is such a product, labile and unstable, changeable and changing (499).

Wittgenstein, too, advances such a claim, a claim which appeared to Bolzano, Frege and the early Husserl to be absurd:

> When language-games change, then concepts change, and with the concepts the meanings of words change (OC §65)

To the extent that logic belongs to common life it is, Hartmann argues, historical[10]. "Because of the sublimation" of atemporal contents "the real life of the spirit has been forgotten" (PgS 59). Wittgenstein rejects, without qualification, the view of logic as sublime (PI §89ff.); logical concepts are not super-concepts, the use of logical words is as humble as that of non-logical words (§97). Logical concepts change, like other concepts.

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9 Hartmann is not always consistent on this point, cf PgS 71, as Oberer 1965 57 points out.

10 "To the extent" – cf. Hartmann GdO 298ff., Aufbau ch. 42 c, 18 a, Oberer 1965 83f., 111f..

Second, sharing. The contents of our acts in the context of a form of spiritual life are intersubjective, Hartmann argues, in a dense but important section, in two distinct ways. First, they are intersubjective in the sense that they are handed down, separable from the behaviour and acts of individuals and are multiply accessible. But secondly contents together with individuals exhibit "a connecting structure common to all" (PdG 182) which is more fundamental than intersubjectivity of the first sort:

> ...as I feel hot and cold, sense red and green, so or in a similar fashion others; what I correctly "infer" from the same experience is inferred by others. Only because of this is it possible for us to understand each other about what there is. Not only do we in fact live in a common world but we do so with respect to our knowledge and understanding (PdG 182)

This "intersubjectivity of experience and world-picture", in its turn, has a substratum in the common constitution of our bodies and souls, a constitution which allows for great variations and hence considerable differences in opinions (Meinungen). But spiritual intersubjectivity of the two kinds distinguished is distinct from this underlying level. The level of shared contents is, for example, that of logical connections ("The individual has no private logic"). The second, more fundamental kind is most clearly marked in the cognitive domain. Developing claims of Scheler's Hartmann argues that that there are shared categories, particularly of intuition, which we use to grasp the real world, the categories of causality, of relations of more and less (PdG 182-184).

As Wittgenstein puts it, in a compressed and famous passage, there is an "agreement" (Uebereinstimmung) of the form of life which is not agreement in opinions. Agreement in opinions is distinct from a deeper agreement, "agreement in judgements". The example Wittgenstein seems to give of this sort of agreement is that of obtaining and stating results of measurement. To note the existence of agreement in judgements does not, he says, abolish logic (PI §§241-2).

§3 Rules rule !

The philosophy of linguistic rules and norms within descriptive psychology and phenomenology takes two quite different directions. The origin of the difference is to be found in a disagreement about whether words are or are not at bottom tools. Rejection of the assimilation of words to tools (Husserl, Scheler, Hartmann) because of the role of spiritual acts of meaning leads to one

distinctive philosophy of norms. A central feature of this philosophy is the claim that neither meaning (Meinen) nor signification (Bedeutung) should be reduced to a matter of the rules governing the use of words and the verification of sentences. Another feature is the claim that syntactic and semantic relations, as well as relations of justification and logical relations, are internal but not at bottom normative.

The view that words are tools leads Marty and his follower, Ahlman, to a view of linguistic rules as determining how mental states can be transferred from a speaker to his interlocutor - a view rejected by Wittgenstein – but, in Bühler's hands, yields a more sophisticated naturalism about linguistic rules and their variety.

Both forms of life and cultural products, Hartmann thinks, exert power (Macht). The common mind exerts a power which the individual can feel, has a hardness which he can "run up against[11]. The common mind has a "life of its own", distinct from the lives of its bearers (PgS 286), this life is distinct both from laws and norms and conventions and from explicit formulations of these, it is to be found in the common feeling about what is valid (gilt) (PgS 293). Validity (Geltung) is the force of conviction of some opinion in a community (PgS 474). Similarly, objectified spirit, cultural products, enjoy a "determining power" over forms of life (PgS 518).

What does "power" here mean ? How does such power manifest itself ? Some of Hartmann's formulations lend themselves to almost foucauldesque interpretations. But more often than not he has in mind an explanatory framework which goes back to Brentano and was set out in some detail by Scheler. To grasp real entities as valuable, as goods, typically leads to a grasp of what ought to be the case and of what ought to be done (Ethik ch 19). Now both forms of life and their products are spiritual goods (PgS ch. 57 (a)). The phenomenology of the first step in this story can be described in terms of normative forces, pushings and pullings, but of course such demands (Anforderungen) or requirements are not really any sort of compulsion (Zwang or Nötigung, Ethik 181), either in the case of cultural or in the case of ethical values.

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[11] PgS 272ff. - Cf. "But now imagine you were to come into a society in which, as we want to say, feelings can be recognized with certainty from appearances (we are not using the picture of the inner and the outer). But wouldn't that be similar to coming from a country where many masks are worn into one where no, or fewer, masks are worn? (Thus perhaps from England to Ireland.) Life is just different there" (LWPP II S. 42-3).

Perhaps the fullest treatment of linguistic rules within the tradition of descriptive psychology is given by Ahlman in his 1926 monograph on *The Normative Moment in the Concept of Meaning*. He (1926 8) argues that "the normativity of language is a form of the normativity of morals" (7); in each case norms have the power to bind us. Large discrepancies between norms and practise always lead to modifications of norms. This is rare in the case of moral norms, more frequent in the case of legal norms and linguistic norms are especially sensitive in this respect. "The norms of language get their content from use, but do not coincide with use" (9, cf 16-17). Our dependence on linguistic norms emerges most clearly when they are violated, something which "Sprachgefühl" signals to us. One may note that a norm is at work, determine that a norm is to be followed, apply or follow a norm or compare behaviour with a norm (12). We determine whether two individuals belong to the same linguistic community by finding out whether they observe the same norms and not vice versa - "the norm system has priority over the linguistic community"[12]. Indeed the existence of artificial languages shows that norms are independent of communities (15).

A norm is an organic part of a language (17). "We normally presuppose that the foundation of a single expression is an entire system of norms..." That is why we speak of a system of meanings (24). One important class of norms, difficult to formulate, contains norms indicating which new norms can be created if necessary (24). A meaning is occasional when it is considered in the light of a norm system constituted by an act of meaning. It is usual when based on a supraindividual norm system (26). "The norms of use are only intuitively present in the consciousness of speakers and understanding individuals, and precisely this has as a consequence that they are often indeterminate" (28). In everyday life practise serves to eliminate this indeterminacy. Since this is not possible in science, there definitions are necessary (28). Some concepts are based on automatic reactions and inseparable from sets (88-9) - one might want to say that in such cases the reactions belong to the concept.

On Ahlman's mentalist account to ask for the meaning of a word is to ask what psychic content is to be connected, in accordance with the norms of a language, with the presentation of a sound (13), the psychic acts that are required by a norm (18). Ahlman here follows Marty. Within the tradition of descriptive psychology it is Karl Bühler who drops this mentalistic restriction.

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[12] Cf. Ortega HG 200: "something is not a use because it is frequent, rather we do something frequently because it is a use".

Bühler distinguishes sharply between the goals or intentions of a speaker and the function of the words he uses and points out that this allows us to distinguish

> within every concrete linguistic utterance, for each of the three dimensions of sense, between the actual intention of a speaker, the "subjective" linguistic sense, and the "objective" linguistic sense, that is, what the chosen expression means according to the rules of usage (Bühler 1927 134)

The three dimensions of sense Bühler mentions are those of expression or utterance (Ausdruck, Kundgabe, Aeusserung), steering (Steuern) and representation (Darstellung). Thus linguistic rules, according to Bühler, display a much greater variety than on the mentalist account - the syntactic and semantic rules connected with representation, the rules governing linguistic interaction and the manifestation of mental states.

Wittgenstein's writings on rules are often difficult to follow. Above all because it is not always clear whether the notion of a rule he is employing is a normative one. (Marty's use of "rule" is unclear in the same way). This difficulty is connected with the fact that not all rule-formulations and not all rules contain a deontic component, an ought. Some rule-formulations are employed to make stipulations (festsetzen), to fix something, as when it is stipulated or determined that a German citizen is one born within the Reich. Such determinations may be thought to entail propositions with deontic content but they do not have any such content. A third problem has to do with the nature of normative rules – are they categorical (as I think they must be for Wittgenstein) or hypothetical ? If linguistic norms govern the ways mental content is to be transferred from one mind to another, as Marty thought, then they would be hypothetical norms. A final source of difficulty concerns the relations between a series of type-token relations to which Wittgenstein often seems to be appealing.

There is the relation between meaning in the sense of Bedeutung and meaning in the sense of Meinen. There is the relation between the particular application of a word and the concept it expresses and the relation between the latter and meaning something with the word. There is the relation between the use of a word and a particular application of it. There is the relation between a rule and those episodes which are followings and breakings of the rule. Finally there is the relation between an order and its content and the episode of carrying out the order and the analogy between this relation and the rule-rule following relation. Various claims about the interrelations between these relations are scattered throughout Wittgenstein's writings, others are not difficult to infer.

Thus a change of concepts leads to a change in the meanings of words, as we have seen (OC §65), and so presumably to a change in use.

Whatever the truth of the matter about the relations between these relations in Wittgenstein's writings, there is a deeper exegetical problem. It is plausible to say that many of the relations mentioned in the last paragraph are type-token relations and that type-token relations are internal relations – two claims endorsed by Husserl. Now a case can be made for the view that the later Wittgenstein believed all internal relations to be normative relations or to be inseparably bound up with rules. Should we attribute to Wittgenstein the view that rules and rule-breaking, Bedeutung and Meinen, the content of an order and the carrying out of the order etc are normative, internal type-token relations ? And if not, should we attribute to him some part of this package ?

Whatever we think about these difficult questions we cannot fail to note how important the phenomenon of normative pull is for Wittgenstein. The rule "always tells us the same, and we do what it tells us" (PI §223); we "look to the rule for instruction and do something without appealing to anything else for guidance (§228). Further,

> Any other arrangement would strike us as incorrect. Through custom these forms become a paradigm; they acquire so to speak the force of law. ('The power of custom'?) (RPP I §343)
>
> That is just the characteristic expression of someone who is under the compulsion (gezwungen) of a rule (PI I §231)

Wittgenstein rejects the picture of an inner voice telling us what to do (PI §232) and criticises at length the idea that rules determine or necessitate in what Baker and Hacker call normative or mechanical ways (Baker & Hacker II 1988 109). But normative determination can be understood in many different ways, as we have seen. It can be understood as necessitation. But there is no such necessitation. It can be understood as the way a rule guides us as opposed to the way we make use of rules as guides. Neither of these two ways of understanding normative determination is present in the idea of a normative pull, as described by Scheler and Hartmann, which originates in the phenomenon of an affective grasp or reaction to valuable objects or goods.

A striking feature of Wittgenstein's positive description of rule-following is that it is couched in the language of automatic behaviour - the rule-follower does not choose, he follows the rule blindly (PI §219). But what Wittgenstein

says here is of course compatible with the claim of Scheler and Hartmann that all automatic behaviour, like all action, is based on an affective attachment to certain goods, for example cultural goods such as one's language. There is little doubt that Wittgenstein, like Scheler, emphatically preferred natural languages to artificial ones. But in (what have been published as) the central formulations of his views on rule-following this level of affective attachment and the view that it underlies automatic behaviour has no place.

Such attachment could not of course be any sort of fleeting feeling, not even outraged Sprachgefühl. It would rather be the sort of long-lasting state Scheler calls a spiritual state or "Gesinnung", a sentiment. On Scheler's view, automatic, spontaneous activity is founded on such calm states. It is with respect to such activity that his view of the will as entirely negative is most plausible. Automatic behaviour is behaviour a person can interrupt if he chooses but not behaviour he has chosen to carry out. It is guided by his long-lasting sentiments. Scheler indeed (1982 GW 4 629) anticipates and rejects what was to be Wittgenstein's view:

> Am Anfang war nicht die Tat, sondern das Wort und die Liebe

So much for the families of naturalistic and spiritualistic views of the relation between meaning (Meinen) and life. But what, if anything, do we know about meaning ?

§4 Knowledge or Scepticism vs Primitive Certainty

Knowledge vs Scepticism

Do we know what we mean (meinen) when we use words ? Do we know what someone else means ? Do we have knowledge of what a word means (bedeutet) ? Do we know when someone is following or breaking a rule for using a given word ? Do we have knowledge of rules ? Can we aspire to complete knowledge in these areas ? Or is scepticism in one or more of these cases the correct response ? Even if the sceptic is right, there is room for a positive account of our relations to the words we use.

It seemed obvious enough to Husserl (LI VI §§6-8), §13) in 1901 and to Wittgenstein some twenty years later that there is knowledge of meaning. To understand a proposition (Satz), Wittgenstein writes (TLP 4.024, cf. 4.243) is to know (wissen) what is the case if it is true. The two Austrian philosophers roundly declared scepticism to be "absurd" and presumably thought that this

condemnation applied to the special sort of knowledge they had brought to the attention of philosophers. Wittgenstein's account of knowledge of meaning has been remarkably influential within philosophical semantics. Similarly, Bühler's 1908 (cf. Bühler 1934 253) argument, inspired by Husserl, that we have non-sensory knowledge of linguistic rules enjoyed great popularity in psychology.

Recognising or cognising (erkennen), Husserl thinks, is a relation between words - he considers the cases of proper names and classifying general terms - their senses and objects and a range of possible perceptions of these objects. Between the sense of a word and the relevant range of possible perceptions there is an internal relation (LI VI §§6-8), §13)

> To "call [nennen]something red" - in the fully actual sense of "calling" which presupposes an underlying intuition of the thing so called - and "to recognise, cognise something as red" are in reality synonymous expressions...(LI VI §7)

Husserl's account of knowledge of meanings and that given by Wittgenstein are perhaps incompatible with the claim that such knowledge is in principle incomplete or partial. Hartmann, however, argues at some length that there is "no adequate consciousness or awareness", immediate or mediate, of the forms of spiritual life (Hartmann PgS 310ff.) in general, and so of language in particular. Indeed this is what explains the (independently plausible, Scottish and anti-German) claim that objective spirit has no goals (329). At one point he calls the incomplete awareness we have in this area incomplete knowledge. But his somewhat obscure claims about the inapplicability of the the distinction between appearance and reality to the common mind and to enduring products push him towards a sceptical position. Thus he says at one point that enduring contents have an objectivity which has nothing to do with knowledge (475).

There is an alternative to the view that what a person means, signification and rules are things we can know, imperfectly or not, which, unlike scepticism in these areas, tells us just how we are related to meaning and rules. Our relation to meaning and rules is not cognitive; we enjoy primitive certainty in this areas. This view is suggested, no more, by both Husserl and Wittgenstein.

Primitive Certainty

What, then, is primitive certainty ?

The three high points of twentieth century philosophy of primitive certainty occupy a period of 40 years - 1911-13 (Reinach, Leyendecker, Husserl,

Scheler), 1934-36 (Ortega) and 1950-51 (Wittgenstein). In the case of the phenomenologists, the immediate source is probably the account of perceptual certainty given by Brentano and Marty.

Many names have been given to the fundamental type of belief or certainty or to special cases thereof - "simple or straightforward (schlicht), naive certainty" (Husserl), "simple or straightforward belief" (Scheler), or simply "belief" (Ortega) and "unfounded belief" and "certainty" (Wittgenstein) - and to the less fundamental type of belief or certainty - "critical belief" (Scheler), non-naive certainty (Husserl), "adherence" (Ortega), “founded belief” (Wittgenstein). Primitive certainty, if we believe these philosophers, is everywhere. It is involved in perception, action, in one's relation to one's own mental states and in our relations to a great variety of contingent propositions, banal and exotic, of merely local and of global importance. Certainty, so understood, as a foundation or soil, is to be distinguished from the shifting sands of competing hypotheses and from a sea of doubts. Belief or certainty, then, is either primitive or critical. If critical has emerged from some cognitive process. If primitive it has no origin in any such process. Critical belief, we might say, manifests degrees, not so primitive belief.

In *Ideas* (1913 §§103-7, cf. 1948 §21) Husserl points out that certainty can be considered either as an attitude or as a modality and in each case there is a distinction to be drawn between naïve and non-naïve certainty. The basic attitude of "simple, naive certainty" is illustrated by much ordinary perception and also by many judgements. But there is also the certainty which emerges out of doubt or hesitation and subsequent confirmation or disconfirmation.Certainty as a modality is expressed by a special sort of functor or concept:

It is certain that p
That p is certain

These sentences represent states of affairs which contain names of states of affairs. Such certainties are also either naïve or non-naïve.

Ortega, a friend of Hartmann, gives by far the fullest account of primitive certainty. He sums up many of his claims as follows:

> Nun gibt es jedoch kein menschliches Leben, das nicht von vornherein auf dem Fundament gewisser Grundüberzeugungen ruhte und sozusagen auf ihnen errichtet wäre...Diese Grundideen, die ich Geglaubtheiten nenne, tauchen nicht in einem bestimmten Augenblick innerhalb unseres Lebens auf, wir gelangen nicht zu ihnen durch einen besonderen Denkakt, sie sind mit einem Wort keine Gedanken, die wir uns über etwas machen, auch

> nicht von jener, durch ihre logische Vollkommenheit ausgezeichneten Art, die wir als "wissenschaftliche Theorien" bezeichnen; diese Ideen, die im wahrsten Sinne Geglaubtheiten sind, bilden vielmehr den Kontinent unseres Lebens selbst und haben darum nicht den Charakter von Einzelinhalten innerhalb seiner. Sie sind sozusagen nicht Ideen, die wir haben, sondern Ideen, die wir sind (VLI 42).

Ortega's main account of his distinction between beliefs (creencias) and ideas is set out in his article, "Ideas y Creencias", the first chapter of which appeared as part of a German paper, "Von der Lebensfunktion der Ideen" (On the vital function of ideas), in 1937. His account is developed in his paper "Historia como sistema", which appeared for the first time in 1936, in English, as "History as a System", and in 1943 in German, and in many other places[13].

One of Ortega's most important claims is that in primitive certainty our attitude towards certain states of affairs is a practical one, we count on them:

> ...mit den Geglaubtheiten (creencias) rechnen wir (contar con) - immer, ohne Unterbrechung (VLI 43)

Another is his claim that primitive certainties form systems. This is what I called above the last avatar of the notion of a system in phenomenology. Our primitive certainties form systems and our non-primitive certainties, our ideas, also form systems. But in each case "system" means something very different. In the first case, the systems are formed of non-logical relations and the relevant systems are not doubles of reality. In the second case, the system is made up of logical relations and stands over against the world as its constructed double (VLI 46). In the sense in which ideas or critical beliefs form a system, primitive beliefs do not form systems:

> I have spoken of [beliefs] as a repertory to indicate that the plurality of beliefs on which an individual, a people or an age is grounded[14] never possesses a completely logical articulation, that is to say, does not form a system of ideas...The beliefs that coexist in any human life, sustaining, impelling and directing it, are on occasion incongruous, contradictory, at least confused (HaS 284, HcS 10)

The last three predicates in the last sentence pertain to what is believed, its content. The first three predicates pertain to belief's function. From this

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[13] The main similarities between the analyses of certainty of Ortega and Wittgenstein were pointed out a long time ago by M. van den Hoven (1990).

[14] The Spanish is more accurately translated as: "the plurality of beliefs in which an individual, a people or an age is/finds itself" (HcS 10)

functional point of view, primitive certainties do indeed form a system, "das System unserer echten Geglaubtheiten" (VLI 45):

> ...beliefs, a mere incoherent repertory in so far as they are merely ideas, always constitute a system in so far as they are effective beliefs; in other words...while lacking articulation from the logical or strictly intellectual point of view, they do none the less possess a vital articulation, they function as beliefs resting on one another, combining with one another to form a whole...In every human life there are beliefs that are basic, fundamental, radical, and there are others derived from these, upheld by them and secondary to them (HaS 284, HcS 11)

Why this order ? "[S]hould the beliefs by which one lives lack structure, since their number in each individual life is legion there must result a mere pullulation hostile to all idea of order and incomprehensible in consequence (HaS 284, HcS 11).

Husserl and Ortega note in passing what might be called Moore's problem, the strangeness of all attempts to express primitive certainty. Husserl says that the transition from the attitude of naïve certainty to the description of some state of affairs as certain is unnatural. Ortega writes:

> Wir gelangen zu ihnen [den Geglaubtheiten] nicht im Verlauf einer Bemühung um Einsicht, sondern sie wirken schon in unserem Grunde, wenn wir anfangen, über etwas nachzudenken. Darum pflegen wir sie nicht in Sätzen auszusprechen, sondern begnügen uns, auf sie anzuspielen, als etwas, was für uns schlechthin wirklich ist (VLI 43)

In his discussion of Moore's problem, Wittgenstein, like Husserl, makes a dsitinction between certainty as an attitude and as a modality, between subjective and objective certainty, and also distinguishes between two types of objective certainty, founded and unfounded (OC §194, §§271-3). Like Ortega he describes a practical attitude towards objective certainties: there are propositions which "stand fast for me" (die für mich feststehen...OC §152). Wittgenstein, too, seems to think of unfounded beliefs as forming a system (OC §102, §105, cf. §603; §136)

Primitive Verbal Certainties

We are now in a position to understand the claim that we standardly enjoy primitive certainty about words and their objects or count on propositions dealing with the relations between words and objects as enjoying primitive certainty.

Wittgenstein seems to be making some such suggestions in a number of passages. Beerman (1999 125) points out that *On Certainty* contains a large group of linguistic examples which Wittgenstein seems to want to treat as being similar to the other examples he gives of primitive certainty although, according to Beerman, he does not ever say that they are propositions enjoying primitive certainty. The group in question contains propositions of the form "-- is called (heisst, genannt) –" (cf. OC §369, §456, §506, §515, §519). Thus he writes:

> If, therefore, I doubt or am uncertain about this being my hand (in whatever sense), why not in that case about the meaning of these words as well ? (OC §456)

One reason for thinking that Wittgenstein did not want to treat these examples in the same way in which he treats his favourite examples of primitive certainty is that he also talks of knowledge of meaning late in OC:

> ...one is not playing [the language-game], or is playing it wrong, if one does not recognise (erkennt) objects with certainty (OC §446)

> Every language-game is based on words and objects are re-cognised (wiedererkannt). We learn with the same inexorability that this is a chair as that 2 x 2 = 4 (OC §455)

> Can I be making a mistake...in thinking that the words of which this sentence is composed are English words whose meanings I know ? (OC §158)

In 1901, as we have seen, Husserl thought that we typically know what things are called. But after his discovery of primitive certainty there is a revision of this view. In 1929 he says that the different types of logical complexity one has mastered become an enduring possession, what was at one time valid acquires a "habitual" validity and he says that one enjoys certainty and conviction that the relevant steps can be reactivated (FTL §42 (f) 123). His view is that primitive certainties about what words mean were not originally primitive, a claim rejected by Ortega and Wittgenstein in the case of many primitive certainties.

In his account of recognition, as in his analysis of meaning, Bühler drops any appeal to sense:

> Zeigt man einem älteren Kind Gegenstände vor, deren Namen es enweder selbst anzugeben hat oder die ihm dazu gesagt werden, so vollzieht es Benennungsurteil, sofern es Ueberzeugungserlebnisse hat, die sich auf den Sachverhalt des "Heissens" erstrecken. Das Kind erfasst, dass ein Ding so und ein anderes anders "heisst", das ist so viel, wie dass die Dinge mit den betreffenden Namen "gemeint" seien (Bühler GEK §30 398).

Buhler, however, thinks that such certainty admits of degrees, that its object is always a state of affair and that it typically passes through three stages from familiarity to re-cognition (wiedererkennen) to memory.

That there is primitive certainty about what words mean is suggested but not clearly endorsed by Wittgenstein in OC. Fans of the “third Wittgenstein” will doubtless find it an interesting exercise to consider what becomes of different descriptive claims made by the second Wittgenstein in the light of his discovery of primitive certainty. This might be called inventing the fourth Wittgenstein. Thus Baker and Hacker say that

> the remark ´I follow the rule blindly`signifies not the blindness of the sleep-walker but the certitude of one who knows his way. I know exactly what to do (Baker & Hacker 1988 II 105)

From the point of view of the fourth Wittgenstein the last sentence should perhaps be dropped. If the certitude is primitive no knowledge is involved.

But then if we do not typically know that an action is the following of a certain rule or that it only seems to be such an episode, what is our relation to the distinction between really following a rule and seeming to follow a rule ? One intriguing answer runs as follows. We typically enjoy primitive certainty about whether a given action is or is not a following or breaking of a given rule. Similarly, we are sometimes primitively uncertain whether this is the case – we are just lost. Where primitive uncertainty occurs we may want to investigate whether or not some rule is being followed, to determine what speaks in favour or against a particular hypothesis. At this point, but only at this point, the choice between two theoretical alternatives presents itself: scepticism, of the sort often attributed to Wittgenstein and Hartmann’s view that only very limited knowledge is possible.

§5 Scepticism and Knowledge vs Primitive, Collective Certainty

Primitive certainties, we have seen, are either subjective or objective. In each case, the realist phenomenologists think, they may be either solitary or shared. The distinction applies to all theoretical and many practical attitudes. Consider one of my primitive, subjective certainties. It may concern me or us or neither of us. But in all cases I will be aware that it is *mine* or a certainty of mine which is one of the things *we* are certain about. Similarly, my practical attitude of counting on some objective certainty is an attitude I am aware of as mine or as one of ours. In the same way I am aware of some of my activities as mine, of other activities as activities I am performing as part of our activities.

Shared acts and activities in the present sense are to be distinguished from the two meanings of "shared" and "intersubjective" noted in §3 which are distinguished by Hartmann and Wittgenstein: contents are shared if they are multiply accessible and fundamental categories, for example of measaurement, are shared by those who apply them in the same way

Simple non-linguistic interactions like those of the master and his apprentice, to use an example from the 1920's of Walther and Bühler, typically involve the awareness that one is acting in concert, co-acting (Mithandeln). Nothing changes in this respect if one adds simple linguistic actions – "A slab !" – to the example. Now there are some good reasons for thinking that primitive certainties about what a person means, about rule-following and about rules are collective primitive certainties.

In the last section we explored the claim that I cannot or do not typically know that Sam means that it is raining when he utters the sentence "Es regnet" in an assertive tone of voice. The main argument in favour of this claim is that on hearing Sam say what he says I find no transition from evidence to knowledge. Similarly, were it the case that I know what Sam means it should be possible to distinguish in my knowledge-state what confirms and what is confirmed. But no such distinction is apparent. It is true that my perceptual awareness of Sam's voice is not the sort of thing for which I typically have evidence, either. But, goes the suggestion, that is because simple perception is typically an example of primitive certainty. If I do not know what Sam means, the suggestion was, then the best alternative is that I enjoy primitive certainty about what he means, whether this is subjective or objective.

Scheler arrives at the conclusion that I cannot know what Sam means by a different route. In order to know what Sam means his act of meaning would have to be an object of cognition for me. But, Scheler argues, Sam's act is neither a private nor a public object. It is not a possible object of any sort. Rather, in listening to Sam I mean in concert with Sam, I co-mean with Sam what he means:

> Was heisst denn, ein Wort "verstehen" ? Sagt jemand, nach dem Fenster hindeutend: "die Sonne !" oder "draussen ist schönes Wetter", so heisst "verstehen" dies und nur dies, dass der Angeredete, der Meinungsintention des Redenden und seiner Rede folgend, den *Sachverhalt* "Scheinen der Sonne" oder "dass es draussen schönes Wetter ist" miterfasst (Scheler (1915) GW 3 179)

The state of affairs is "mitgemeint", co-meant or co-intended (Scheler (1915) GW 3 179). What holds for Meinen is true of all spiritual acts, thinks Scheler (1916) GW 2 390-1, 380). They can only be co-performed (and, presumably, fall under descriptions). Hartmann, as we have seen, thinks that we do have cognitive access to acts, forms of life and works, albeit a very inadequate access. He therefore rejects Scheler's view (Ethik 231ff.). Scheler's view that spiritual acts are not possible direct objects is combined with the claim that to be such an object is to be a public object and that all "seelische" states are public objects. There is, he thinks, no such thing as my private access to the suffering my toothache is responsible for.

Scheler's account of my relation to Sam's meaning that the sun is shining or that it is raining can be extended to yield the view that my relation involves not only participation but also primitive certainty and indeed collective primitive certainty. It is necessary only to invoke a very attractive account of one's relation to one's own mental and spiritual tropes that is given by Leyendecker and Ortega. According to these two realist phenomenologists, my relation to such tropes is that of primitive certainty. I do not know I have toothache, says Ortega, rather, I enjoy primitive certainty that I have toothache[15].

If, now, we assume that primitive certainty about meaning is that of the practical attitude of counting on and that what I count on is the objective certainty of a state of affairs, then when I hear Sam saying "Es regnet" in an assertive tone of voice, I co-mean that it is raining and count on this as certain and on the certainty that Sam means that it is raining by "Es regnet". Sam enjoys a comparable certainty about what he means. If my exchange with Sam is typical of successful everyday communication in that it is based on a considerable amount of reciprocal steering, then Sam and I will each count on the certainty that his certainty is part of our primitive certainty.

Thus the account of primitive certainty about meaning has developed into an account of shared or collective primitive certainty. It is not too difficult to imagine how the above account of primitive certainty about rules and their

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[15] On the analysis given by Leyendecker and Ortega and its relation to Wittgenstein's account of first-person awareness, cf Mulligan 2002.

instances could be extended in the same way. Similarly, since “the rule-governed nature of our language permeates our life” (LWPP II), forms of life, spiritual or not, are what we are primitively and collectively certain about. To say they are “given”, “what is to be accepted" (das Hinzunehmende, PI II xi S 572) would then just be to say this. Scheler made part of this point during the First World War: a member of a community essentially shares three things with other members of the community, collective intentionality, common categories - conceptual and intuitive – and contents. This is what it means, he argued, to share a natural language and a natural Weltanschauung. "Groundless trust" is the basic attitude in a community (Scheler (1916) GW 2 518). But it is Ortega, in his analyses of "uses", "customs" and "norms", who most clearly points out the connexion between the way these bind us (have vigencia, Verbindlichkeit), their "power", and the way we collectively count on them[16].

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[16] HaS 308, HcS 50, 107ff., HG 194, 267ff.. Husserl occasionally notes the existence of collective primitive certainty about sense. In §4 we saw that Husserl allowed for solitary primitive certainties about different types of logical complexity. He also thinks that his description of this case holds in the case of a "community of judgers" or "judgement community", of logical complexities which are "constituted" "for us" (FTL §42 (f) 123).

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