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HUSSERL'S THEORY OF MEANING AND REFERENCE¹

Analytic philosophers have until recently been reluctant to investigate the complex historical roots of their own philosophical tradition. Slowly, but surely, however, the necessary work is being done, and it is interesting in this respect that not only the Anglo-Saxon but also the Continental roots of analytic philosophy are being usefully illuminated.² For as Michael Dummett points out in his *Origins of Analytic Philosophy*, the habit of referring to analytic philosophy as 'Anglo-American' represents a grave historical distortion: such philosophy "could at least as well be called 'Anglo-Austrian'".³ As Dummett notes, many tendencies in Central European thought contributed to the early development of analytic philosophy. Dummett himself concentrates on just one aspect of this historical complex, namely on the relationship between the theories of meaning and reference developed by Frege and by Husserl in the years around the turn of the century. It is to this specific issue, too, that the present essay is devoted, though we shall here attempt a more sympathetic reading of Husserl's views on these matters than is to be found in Dummett's work.

PSYCHOLOGISM

Let us examine, first of all, Frege's and Husserl's competing strategies in relation to the problem of psychologism. For our present purposes we can regard psychologism as a view which assumes that logic takes its subject-matter from the psychology of thinking. A doctrine of this sort has a number of advantages. If thoughts or propositions are (as the proponent of psychologism presupposes) internal to the mind, then it is very easy to see how they play a role in our cognitive activities and how we come to 'grasp' them. The psychologist has an easy time also in

explaining how logic should be applicable to our activities of thinking and reasoning as they actually occur. Notoriously, however, these advantages are outweighed by the relativistic consequences which psychologism brings in its wake. Moreover, if thoughts are internal to the mind, then it becomes difficult to see how they could be communicated and how they could be bound together to form scientific theories and similar higher-order objective structures. For these and other reasons Frege and Husserl, like Bolzano before them, were led to the 'platonistic' view that thoughts, in contrast to images and dreams, cannot be immanent to the mind of the cognising subject.

The platonistic doctrines formulated by Bolzano, Frege, and Husserl (as also by Meinong and other heirs of Brentano) initiated a new, ontological mode of doing philosophy which did much to make possible the birth in Central Europe of both analytic philosophy and modern logic. This can be seen most clearly in the work of the Lemberg-Warsaw school in Poland, where students of Twardowski evolved new techniques for manipulating propositions and other logical objects in systematic ways, techniques which would have been inconceivable so long as propositions and their contents were seen as immanent to the mind.⁴

The rejection of psychologism did however bring problems in its wake. For when thoughts are banished from the psyche, then the problems which psychologism had found it so easy to resolve must be squarely faced. How, if thoughts or senses are external to the mind, do they relate to our empirical activities of thinking and reasoning? How, in Fregean terminology, does it come about that we are able to grasp them? And how does logic come to be applicable to our actual thinkings and inferences? Frege seeks to solve these problems, in effect, by assigning to language the job of mediating between cognitive events on the one hand and thoughts and their constituent meanings on the other. Unfortunately however he does not specify how this mediation is effected. That is, he does not tell us how, in using language, we should be related to meanings:

For Frege an expression simply *has* a sense; one who uses it does not need to bear its sense in mind throughout the process of employing it. (Dummett 1988, p. 18)

Moreover, Frege does not tell us how thoughts or propositions themselves should be related to the corresponding bits of language. For the platonist, thoughts and their constituents look after themselves, as it were, so that the fact that there is any link at all between thoughts and the sentences which express them may come to seem like some sort of magic. Indeed Frege defends the view (shared also by Bolzano) that it does not belong to the essence of thoughts or senses to be brought to expression in language at all. Frege sees no contradiction in the assumption of a being who could grasp thoughts directly, without linguistic clothing, even if for us humans it is necessary that a thought of which we are conscious enters into our consciousness always with some sentence or other.

All of this means, however, that we cannot derive from Frege's own writings a clear account of what it is to grasp a sense, nor of how it is determined which sense is bound up with which expression. The precise mental processes that consciously take place in one who uses the expression are for Frege irrelevant.

For understandable reasons Frege's successors therefore sought new ways of understanding the precise manner in which access to meanings is secured via the medium of language. Thus Wittgenstein might be said to have conceived both mental acts and objective meanings as dependent upon or as secondary to language use as social phenomenon: they are different sides or aspects of that complex social and institutional whole which is language in employment. Dummett, too, seems to embrace a dependence of this sort.⁵ From the perspective of the Husserlian tradition, however, the link to meanings is seen as being effected not by language but by our mental acts themselves, and it is this tradition, above all as represented by Husserl, that we shall examine in what follows. Above all, we shall have to establish whether Husserl succeeded in developing an act-based theory of meaning that was able to avoid the pitfalls of psychologism.

BRENTANO AND INTENTIONALITY

An acceptable account of thought and language must tell us how we gain access not only to meanings (to thoughts or propositions) but also to

objects of different sorts. It must address, in other words, the problem of objective reference or intentionality, a problem which, as Dummett points out in his chapter on 'Brentano's Legacy' in *Origins of Analytic Philosophy*, was bequeathed by Brentano to his successors. Unfortunately, however, Dummett, like many others, misunderstands Brentano here, imputing to him a more commonsensical view than his writings would properly permit. Brentano's 'most familiar positive thesis', Dummett tells us – the thesis that acts of consciousness are characterised by their intentionality – consists in the claim that all such acts are 'directed towards external objects'. The object of a mental act is, on Dummett's reading of Brentano, 'external in the full sense of being part of the objective world independent of the subject, rather than a constituent of his consciousness.'⁶

Certainly in the famous 'intentionality passage' in *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (p. 88) Brentano's views in this connection are not unambiguously expressed. Yet Brentano himself appends a footnote to this passage in which he makes clear that for him the intentionality relation holds between an act and an object immanent to the mind. Thus he points out that 'Aristotle himself had spoken of this mental in-existence' and he goes on to elaborate Aristotle's theory according to which 'the object which is thought is in the thinking intellect.'⁷ This same thesis is to be found as part of Brentano's more detailed formulations in the *Descriptive Psychology*, where Brentano explicitly contrasts 'parts of the soul' in the *strict or literal* and in the *modifying* sense, and assigns what he calls 'immanent objects' to the former class.⁸ And even in his later, reistic phase, when Brentano no longer conceived objects of thought as immanent to the mind, he still goes out of his way to emphasise that 'things' or '*ens reale*' as he understands them are not at all to be identified with the sorts of external objects which are normally supposed to people the world and to be the targets of our acts (objects in relation to which Brentano maintained a consistently sceptical stance).

OBJECTIVE REFERENCE

It cannot be denied, however, that Brentano's ontology of mind inspired his students to develop a range of alternative accounts of how it is that

acts and objects, including putative external objects, are embrangled together. The problem of intentionality to which Meinong, Husserl, Twardowski, *et al.* can be seen to have addressed themselves, a problem that is still very much alive today, may be formulated as follows: how are we to understand the directedness of our acts, their capacity to point beyond themselves to objects, given that (pre-theoretically considered, at least) not all our acts are veridical (that they are not all such as to *have* an object in the strict sense)?

For Frege all directedness to objects is held to be achieved via thoughts or senses, i.e. via entities in the realm of meanings.⁹ (The grasping-problem outlined above is hereby in a sense doubled, for the Fregean now has to explain not only how we grasp thoughts or senses, but also how thoughts or senses in their turn are able to grasp or fix onto objects.¹⁰)

The realm of thoughts and senses *is*, as Frege conceives it, the realm of modes of being given of entities of different sorts, and because thoughts and senses are accessible to us only via language, it follows that such modes of being given are for us always also modes of determining the object-relatedness of some corresponding expression. The sense of an ordinary singular term in a non-oblique context is, unsurprisingly, the way of determining its ordinary referent. But what of the senses of other sorts of expressions? Here Frege, familiarly, awards a special role to the sentence, and affirms his 'context principle', a principle to the effect that the senses of sub-sentential expressions are determined by the role they play in the context of the sentence as a whole. Because the referent of a sentence is now held by Frege to be its truth-value, it follows that the sense of a sub-sentential expression is identifiable as the contribution this expression makes to determining the truth-value of the sentence in which it occurs. But the sense of such an expression does not hereby cease to be a way of referring to some entity. In Dummett's own words, a sense is for Frege "a step in the determination of a thought as true or false, representable as a particular means of determining a referent of the appropriate logical type." (1988, p. 96) Frege, therefore, extends the notion of reference or object-directedness from singular terms to all significant expressions. While singular terms keep the referents they had from the start, Frege is led to embrace as referents for expressions in other categories a whole menagerie of hitherto unencountered brands of

'saturated' and 'unsaturated' entities, entities which — in some passages at least — he seems to conceive as the result of a sort of mereological subtraction of the referents of singular terms from truth-value-wholes.¹¹

HUSSERL'S FIRST THEORY OF MEANING

For Frege, then, the problem of the intentionality of *acts* does not arise: directedness is achieved not by acts directly but only via language (sense or meaning), and every use of language simply *has* its sense. The problem of intentionality is replaced by the problem of grasping senses, a problem which Frege noticed in passing but in the solution of which he was hardly interested. For the author of *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, too, the problem of intentionality does not arise, since every act simply has its immanent object, and Brentano is not concerned with the question as to what these immanent objects might correspond to in the world. In the thought of Meinong, similarly, the problem of intentional directedness is trivialised, since Meinong denies that there are non-veridical acts in the strict sense of acts lacking objects *tout court*. Every act is simply and automatically guaranteed an object of appropriate type, though of course the problem still arises of establishing which objects exist and which do not.

It seems that it was Husserl who first tackled the problem of intentional directedness in a non-trivial way, employing to this end the theory of part, whole and unity that is set forth in his third Logical Investigation, together with the theory of 'empty' and 'fulfilled' intentions sketched in Investigation I. Husserl's theory is interesting above all because, unlike standard mereologies, it concerns itself not simply with relations between parts and their circumcluding wholes, but also with the different sorts of relations which can obtain among the parts within a whole. The most important such relation, for our present purposes, is that of *dependence*, which holds between one part and another when the former cannot as a matter of necessity exist except in a whole in which it is bound up with the latter.¹² Such dependence, illustrated for example in the relation between a colour and its extension, or between the constituent pitch, timbre and loudness of a tone, may be either reciprocal or one-sided. The same entity may in addition stand in dependence-relations

to more than one relatively independent entity; relational entities such as kissings or promisings provide examples of dependence-structures of this sort.

Mental acts are complex events. And like all complex entities they can be sliced into dependent parts in different ways, according, as it were, to the axis along which one chooses to slice. There are, first of all, certain sorts of constituent parts of mental acts which, though not experienced as acts in their own right, are nevertheless such as to point beyond themselves in the strong sense that they are guaranteed *sensa* as objectual correlates. This holds above all of those act parts (called by Husserl '*Empfindungsmomente*') through which sensory content is channelled in perception. Act parts of this sort are responsible for what we might call low-grade intentional directedness. In the normal course of mental experience, however, such act parts exist only as knitted together with other sorts of constituents (Husserl calls them '*Auffassungsmomente*') through which higher grades of directedness may come about. It is, crudely speaking, because the acts which result from such knitting together may fail to map any corresponding knitting together among the objectual correlates of the constituent act parts, that there arises the possibility of a non-veridicality of our acts.¹³

To this distinction of levels Husserl now adds the distinction between 'empty' and 'fulfilled' intentions. Husserl saw that our acts are typically organised in different sorts of chains unfolding in time. Even when we move back and forth in our experience from ('fulfilled') acts which are supported by appropriate sensory experiences to acts ('empty signitive intentions') in which such support is lacking, the moment of higher-level intentional directedness may nonetheless be preserved on the level of the act as a whole (as when I see a person and then continue to think of this same person as he walks out of the room). There is in general a wide range of variance between the two extremes of empty intendings and what we might call total fulfilment, through all of which the object-directedness of our acts may nonetheless be preserved as something invariant.

A spectrum of possible cases can now be distinguished:

acts which have objects both at the level of act parts and at the level of act whole (veridical fulfilled intentions), for example

normal perceptions;

2. acts which have objects only on the first level (non-veridical fulfilled intentions), for example hallucinations;
3. acts which have objects only on the second level (veridical empty intentions), for example a case of thinking abstractedly about the tallest Finnish spy;
4. acts which have no objects at all (non-veridical empty intentions), for example a case of thinking abstractedly about the golden mountain.

These four kinds of cases are all such as to be experienced by the respective subject as having objects of their own.¹⁴ Moreover, we can recognise acts involving object-directedness at still higher levels. This is above all because acts and act parts may be knitted together into those special kinds of objectifying acts we call *judgments*, which are experienced as being directed towards special objects called *Sachverhalte* or states of affairs. *Sachverhalte* can in turn become the objects of nominal acts on successively higher levels (the redness of the rose; the existence of the redness of the rose, the value of the existence of the redness of the rose, and so on). Husserl argues, however, that the cognitive capacities presupposed by such higher-level acts can be acquired only via lower-level experiences, and above all via experiences of sensation.¹⁵

THE GEOMETRY OF MEANINGS

Acts may stand, now, in a range of different sorts of similarity relations in virtue of the different sorts of parts distinguishable within them. Above all acts may manifest a similarity in object-directedness in virtue of sharing what Husserl calls a similar 'content'.¹⁶ Such similarity relations between act components as individuals are taken by Husserl to imply the existence of *ideal species* which these components instantiate (species which are thereby instantiated also, in a derivative sense, by the corresponding acts). Hence we can talk of acts having *similar* contents; but we can also talk of acts sharing *identical* contents in the sense that they have parts which instantiate the same ideal species.

Husserl's theory of linguistic meaning in the *Logical Investigations*

is now built up on this basis. Certainly in the "Prolegomena" to the *Investigations*, Husserl had been so concerned to distance himself from psychologism that he had disdained, like Frege, to give an explanation of how it comes about that a certain expression comes to have a certain sense. Senses were seen by him there as constituting a realm of special objects ('ideal meanings') which can look after themselves. In the later parts of the *Investigations*, however, Husserl filled out his conception of meaning in a way which draws in an almost shockingly economical way on the just-mentioned ontology of species and instantiating individuals. Husserl takes seriously not merely that the world of external substances is divided in (what we can now recognise as) Aristotelian fashion into hierarchies of 'ideal species' of different orders of generality; he holds further that the parts and moments of our mental acts, too, are divided into species in the same way, in virtue of the similarity relations which obtain between them. In a bold conceptual move, Husserl then simply *identifies* linguistic meanings with certain species of this sort. And it is in this sense that we are to understand his talk of 'ideal meanings'.

To make sense of this identification we must recall, again, that acts can be sliced into parts in a variety of different ways (compare the ways in which sentences, for Frege, can be sliced in different – though not arbitrary – ways into saturated and unsaturated components). The results of such slicing will, in many cases, be such as to share with the act as a whole its character of being an event unfolding in time. The corresponding species will therefore be species of mental activity. Linguistic meanings can clearly in no way be identified with species of this sort. Some partitions of the act, however, yield constituents – above all those constituents referred to above as the 'contents' of our acts – which are shorn of the event-character of the act as a whole.

An apple, too, may be sliced into parts in different ways. Some such slicings will yield parts which will preserve, for example, the quality of edibility. We can conceive, however, in a Scotistic vein, of other sorts of slicing; for example we may conceive that the apple is divided into its individual matter and its individual form or shape. The latter is a purely geometrical entity, an individual instance of a certain geometrical ideal species. It is in virtue of its form that the apple is subject to certain necessary geometrical laws. Such laws apply first of all to the form itself, but they apply also, in a derivative sense, to the apple as a whole

and indeed to any and every entity which instantiates the form in question.

We might summarise Husserl's view of meaning as follows: certain mental acts (above all acts of language use) are amenable to (abstract) divisions which yield parts – called 'contents' – which, in virtue of the ideal species which they instantiate, are subject to necessary laws (analogous to the geometrical laws which hold of shapes). These include the laws of logic, which are necessary laws which govern real events of thinking and inferring, just as geometrical laws govern real spatial forms. (Husserl is by this means able to avoid one central pitfall of psychologism.¹⁷) And they include also laws amounting to the equivalent of logical well-formedness rules applicable to (corresponding) parts of mental acts.

Because it is certain content-species which are identified by Husserl as the meanings of our linguistic expressions, it comes as no surprise that it is through reflections on language that we can most easily come to an understanding of what contents in general are. This epistemological-heuristic fact should not, however, sanction the conclusion that contents are such as to depend for their existence on language use. On the contrary, Husserl holds that language is possible only because of the brute fact that our acts and their contents (a) rest on secured access to sensible differences in reality (via the low-grade intentionality mentioned above), and (b) manifest a range of different sorts of similarity relations, both as between one occasion and another and also as between one subject and another.

Meanings are as it were ranged 'above' the acts which instantiate them. This instantiation comes about willy nilly, in reflection of whatever the relevant individual contents of the acts themselves might be. The meanings are for their part entirely inert: it is not the meaning (something ideal, a mere universal, a practical nothing), but the act itself that is responsible for its object-directedness. For Husserl, therefore (to coin a phrase), an expression simply *has* a meaning; one who uses it does not need to bear this meaning in mind throughout the process of employing it. Meanings do nonetheless play an important role in the theory. Thus they serve to provide an objective subject-matter for the science of logic, and they allow us to explain the possibility of using language for interpersonal communication as consisting in the fact that

the acts involved in language use on the parts of different subjects can share identical (meaning) species. From Husserl's perspective the existence of a qualitative and structural similarity of acts of different subjects was indeed a necessary presupposition of the fact that language originated at all. In addition however the phenomenon of language creates new possibilities of qualitative and structural similarity by providing a common architecture of complex act- or content-wholes that is exploited equally by all those who have mastered the language in question. In this respect it is important to bear in mind again the fact that content (which is to say object-directedness) can remain invariant even across wide differences e.g. in the sensory fulfilment of our acts.

EXPRESSION AND MEANING

An act instantiating a meaning species is in each case, Husserl tells us, a certain complex whole, a 'concrete phenomenon which is an expression animated by sense'. Such a complex whole

divides into, on the one hand, the physical phenomenon, in which the expression constitutes itself according to its physical aspect, and, on the other hand, the acts which give it meaning and possibly also intuitive fulfilment and in which its relation to an expressed objectivity is constituted. (1970, I, p. 280, translation amended and emphases removed)

Dummett accuses Husserl of maintaining here what he calls 'a Humpty-Dumpty view of this matter: the view, namely, that an utterance assumes the meaning that it bears by an interior act of investing it with that meaning.'¹⁸ He complains, in other words, about an air of arbitrariness he claims to detect in Husserl's account, as if the relation between an utterance and the act which lends it meaning were a matter of a more or less arbitrary association.

Dummett quite correctly criticises those act-based conceptions of meaning which conceive act and utterance as separate phenomena which have to be joined together by associative relations of one or other sort.¹⁹ The theory defended by Husserl is safe against such criticisms, however,

for the expression and the sense which animates it are not conceived by Husserl as separate and distinct, but as one 'concrete phenomenon' within which different sides (dependent parts or moments) can be distinguished at best only abstractly (like North and South poles of a magnet). The expression animated by sense is an entity of a special sort, a hybrid of *sui generis* linguistic and psychological constituents, neither of which can exist except as bound up with the other in a whole of just this sort.²⁰

What Husserl actually means in the passage quoted can now more properly be elucidated as follows. The 'physical phenomenon' is an utterance, a certain concrete phenomenon which we can conceive, abstractly, as a complex of articulated sound. To say that this utterance is 'animated by sense' is to affirm however that it is a merely dependent moment of a larger whole in which it is bound up with certain other moments which can be conceived abstractly as having the nature of acts or act parts. A concrete phenomenon of language use is not a mere heap or sum of separate parts. Rather, the *utterance as animated* and the *animating act components* are each such as to exist only as bound up with the other in the framework of a single whole: the dependence in question is reciprocal. Hence there can be no question of a chunk of language as it were sitting around waiting to be animated by acts in this way or that, along the lines which Dummett fears. Act moments and language moments are rather such as to constitute a single entity; they are triggered by the same external events, they rest on identical underlying dispositions, and a similar developmental story is to be told in relation to each (we learn meanings as we learn to speak). The act moments do however at least in this sense have the upper hand, that it is through them that consciousness is channelled, and therefore also, in Husserl's eyes, connection to our other acts and to external reality.

Recall that the immanent content of an act is that dependent part of the act in virtue of which it is directed towards this or that object. The meaning of 'white', for example, is that species to which belong acts which are directed toward the quality *white* (as this is given in experience). Not every act directed to this quality belongs to the species which is the relevant meaning however. The acts instantiating this species are rather only those which are structured by a corresponding and complementary language-component in the way just indicated. Each linguistic meaning is accordingly a special sort of *dependent* species (a species of

dependent part), in the sense that any instantiating act must stand in the correct sort of reciprocal dependence relation with the language which articulates it. If, for present purposes, we can be allowed to take Frege's theory of unsaturatedness purely in its mereological aspect, then it is as if Husserl has generalised and refined this theory in such a way as to allow not merely one-sided but also mutual unsaturatedness, and in such a way as to allow unsaturatedness relations to embrace termini drawn from a much wider range. Above all, Husserl goes beyond Frege in allowing entities of one sort to be saturated by entities of other, sometimes quite different sorts, as for example when animating acts are saturated by the linguistic components which articulate them (so that we might refer here to something like a transcategorial saturation). Moreover, just as acts and act parts can be divided into dependent and independent (the former being able to exist only in a context which includes the latter), so the corresponding meanings (species) are divided into syncategorematic and categorematic (and the various possible combinations thereof which arise through concatenation).²¹ And because acts and language here constitute one single concrete phenomenon, the part-whole and dependence relations on the side of the acts will be mirrored in similar relations among the corresponding units of language. It is this which makes it possible for us to *express* complex meanings by means of sentences.

INDEXICALITY

One problem in relation to which the species theory of meaning might seem to face insuperable difficulties is the problem of indexical expressions. Certainly Husserl's theory cannot cope straightforwardly with the meanings of such expressions by characterising them as the ideal species of the relevant animating acts. For if meaning is always a matter of certain sorts of universal species, then it is in this sense also always general, where the meanings associated with indexical uses of language must surely in some sense participate in the individuality of the corresponding referents.²²

In the account of perceptual judgment sketched in the sixth Investigation, Husserl does however suggest a way round this problem.²³

Suppose I look up into the sky and say, 'That blackbird is flying high.' What is the mental act which gives meaning to this utterance? Not the perceptual act, for this may vary constantly in such a way as to exhibit continuous qualitative differences which are irrelevant to the meaning of the given statement. The perceptual act has the wrong kind of articulation for the purposes in hand. It can even vanish altogether and my statement will still be meaningful. Husserl argues, therefore, that the act involved here must be of a different kind, an act which is not affected by changes of these sorts. This act is similar in form to an act of judgment. But it manifests an important difference when compared to judgments of the more usual (non-indexical) sort. For where the latter are, when taken *in specie*, sufficient of themselves to supply a full meaning for the corresponding sentence, the act under consideration here is in this respect incomplete. It has, as it were, the mere torso of a meaning and depends upon the (past or present) perceptual act to supply, as Husserl puts it in his customary Aristotelian language, 'determinateness of objective reference, and thereby its lowest difference.' (1970, II, p. 683) Once again, Husserl is working with a theory of wholes and parts and of what we might call 'integrity of structure' whose range of application is wider than that of Frege's theory of unsaturatedness: thus he allows that the linguistic act that is here incomplete as far as meaning is concerned — as if someone were to utter 'This rose is white' in a completely flowerless room — may come to be saturated or made complete by acts of other sorts, in this case by acts of perception.

STRUCTURES OF THE *SACHVERHALT*

What, now, is to be said about the part-whole structures in the field of reference? Consider an act of judgment or assertion. The objectual correlate of such an act is a *Sachverhalt* or state of affairs, which on Husserl's view is something that is external to the mind yet reflects the structure of the sentence-using act in the sense that it is put together out of parts in a way which reflects the structure of the act and thereby also of the corresponding sentence. It is in this context that Husserl comes closest to providing an equivalent of Frege's account of the way in which the reference of a sentence-whole is related systematically to the

reference of the sentence-parts. As the reference of a sentence-constituent is for Frege determined by the contribution made by this constituent to determining the truth-value of the sentence as a whole, so for Husserl this reference is determined by the contribution made by the given constituent to determining the integrity of what would be the corresponding *Sachverhalt*. Consider, for example, prepositions such as 'in', 'on', 'above', 'beside'. Expressions of these sorts have as their objectual correlates certain sorts of relations. The preposition *on*, for example, has as its objectual correlate a certain real relation, which is to say an entity standing in a pair of one-sided dependence relations to real objects falling within material categories of certain restricted sorts. The logical particle 'and' has as its objectual correlate a relation obtaining not between objects but between *Sachverhalte*. Its objectual correlate is, if you like, a doubly unsaturated *Sachverhalt*, i.e. an entity standing in need of completion by a pair of further *Sachverhalte*.²⁴

A *Sachverhalt* is a certain sort of complex whole which is grasped through a veridical sentence-using act and which is such as to manifest an integrity of its own while at the same time embracing *inter alia* the objectual-correlates of the part-acts corresponding to the components of the relevant sentence. For this reason, too, therefore, a complete account of the object-directedness of acts in general and of acts of assertion in particular must recognise that they may enjoy objectual directedness on a plurality of different levels.

HUSSERL'S SECOND THEORY OF MEANING

It is above all as a result of concentrating his attentions rather narrowly on the interpretation of Husserl's thinking that derives from Dagfinn Føllesdal's work that Dummett has failed to appreciate the force of the arguments set forward by Husserl in his earlier theory. For Føllesdal's interpretation, which has been elaborated by David Woodruff Smith and others, concentrates overwhelmingly on the later doctrine of the 'noema' outlined by Husserl in the first book of the *Ideas*.

Husserl was responsible, with Frege, for banishing thoughts from the mind. We can now recognise however that, in contrast to Frege, he was in his earlier theory able to arrive at a non-psychologistic conception

of thoughts which yet preserves a natural tie (instantiation – a relation tighter than which one cannot hope to find) between ideal meaning-entities and cognitive activities. But what of Husserl's later theory, the theory of noemata? On the interpretation of Husserl defended by Føllesdal, the noema is best understood as something like the Fregean sense 'generalised to the sphere of all acts'.²⁵ The Fregean sense consists, as we have seen, in the way the reference of the expression is determined, and this is for Frege in every case a step in the determination of the truth-value of a sentence in which this expression occurs. A sense thereby stands in the most intimate relation to truth. Dummett himself accordingly sees reason to object to the Husserlian noema theory, because to acknowledge noemata (senses, meanings) across the whole space of acts would be to break the connection between meaning and the sentence and this would bring the conclusion, anathema to Dummett, that the concept of meaning would have to be elucidated independently of the concept of truth.²⁶ A more serious objection to the theory, however, is that, with the conception of intentionality in terms of noemata, the (two-fold) linkage problem once more presents itself. For now meanings (i.e. noemata) are seen as intermediaries, falling (somehow) *between* the act and its (putative) object. The noema theory seems thereby also (like Brentano's immanentism and all forms of representationalism) to threaten us with a slide into idealism. For if it is the noema that is responsible for the intentionality of the act, and if, as Husserl supposes, it is possible that every act should have its noema even in the absence of any external object, then the sceptical question must arise as to what justice we have in supposing that there are external objects at all.²⁷

CONCLUSION

Husserl's first theory of meaning sees meanings as ranged above the act-parts which are their instances. A Frege-type theory, sees meaning-entities as falling *between* the act (or some equivalent) and the object (if any) to which the act is referred. It is in this way that it gives rise to the linkage problem and so also to the metaphor of 'grasping'. Of course this is not to argue that Frege held that we generally grasp thoughts as objects.²⁸ Thoughts serve rather as the means by which we come to be

directed towards objects proper. What is crucial is that these means constitute an objective realm that is interposed between our acts and the world of referents.

Husserl's earlier theory is not subject to the linkage problem (and thus not subject either to the associated threat of idealism). This is because linguistic acts are conceived on this theory as being built up in every case on the basis of the low-grade intentionality of sensory acts, and the latter are guaranteed objectual correlates from the very start. The linkage to reality is thereby established before meaning and language come into play. This notion is surely more commonsensical than any theory to the effect that directedness to reality is secured only via sense or meaning, and it is above all for this reason, I would argue, that Husserl's account of these matters is of more than merely antiquarian interest.

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NOTES

¹ My thanks go to Michael Gorman for helpful comments.

² See e.g. Bell and Cooper 1990, Coffa 1991, Willard 1984.

³ See Dummett 1988, p. 7. What follows is based in part on my review of this work (see Smith 1989b).

⁴ See my 1989a and also Woleński 1989 and Simons 1992.

⁵ See his 1988, p. 132ff.

⁶ See 1988, p. 39. The passage quoted by Dummett on p. 40 to support his reading of Brentano is dated 1909 and is thus irrelevant to the interpretation of the *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*. Dummett partially rectifies this error in the revised English version of his book (p. 32). Cf. Brentano 1973, p. 385 and Føllesdal 1982.

⁷ See Brentano 1973, pp. 88f. Aristotle's view appears more sensible when we recall that for him the object of knowledge is a *form*, something which can exist both in the object known and in the mind of the knowing subject. See e.g. *De anima*, 424 a 18, 432 a 4.

⁸ See Brentano 1982, esp. pp. 10–27, and compare my 1988 and also Runggaldier 1989.

⁹ This holds even for that sort of directedness to objects which is involved in perception, since on Frege's view the way in which an object is given to us is always a sense. See Dummett 1988, ch. 9.

¹⁰ See my 1987, which contains a criticism of the views of Woodruff Smith and McIntyre 1982 in this respect.

¹¹ Note, however, that as Dummett points out (1981, p. 482), Frege quickly saw that it had been wrong for him ever to have maintained any sort of parallelism between the mereological structures of referring expressions and those of the corresponding referents.

¹² See, on this, the papers collected in Smith (ed.), 1982.

¹³ See Husserl 1970, vol. I, 309ff.

¹⁴ Husserl introduces the term 'objectifying act' to cover acts which have this property, and it is to such acts that our attentions will be confined in what follows. Objectifying acts are to be contrasted with, say, emotions, whose object-directedness is according to Husserl taken over from other acts, as when I am angry at what I see. See 1970, II, 636ff.

¹⁵ See Smith 1989, Rosado Haddock 1987.

¹⁶ There is an air of the 'dormitive properties' gambit in Husserl's account of matters here (a usefully generalized treatment of which is to be found in Johnston 1991). Husserl's defence against this charge might run as follows: the dormitive effects of for example morphium are to be explained by appeal to one sort of mereological analysis, namely an analysis into chemical parts. Morphium simply has chemical parts; they are not invented for the purposes of providing the (appearance of) an explanation of how it puts people to sleep. The workings of acts, too, are to be explained by appeal to a certain sort of mereological analysis, though not in this case via an analysis into chemical parts. And here again, Husserl would claim, acts as complex entities simply have the parts (quality, content, etc.) which he distinguishes. The latter are not invented for the purposes of explanation.

¹⁷ The question arises in regard to Dummett's own Wittgensteinian account of meaning as dependent upon the social institution of language use (see 1988, ch. 13) as to how he avoids the parallel pitfall of sociologism in his account of logical necessity.

¹⁸ Dummett 1988, pp. 45f. In the revised English version of this work, Dummett moderates his imputation to Husserl of a view of this

sort (pp. 44ff.).

¹⁹ Dummett 1988, pp. 115ff.

²⁰ Husserl himself was less than fully clear as to the consequences of admitting hybrid dependence-structures of this and related types. It was left to his student Adolf Reinach to draw these consequences in the theory of speech acts he expounded in his "The A Priori Foundations of Civil Law" of 1913 (see Reinach 1989 and also my 1987).

²¹ The power of Husserl's analysis of the different possibilities here is shown in the fact that it inspired Leśniewski (and following him Ajdukiewicz) to work out that formal approach to the analysis of language which we now call 'categorical grammar'.

²² See Küne 1983, Philipse 1982, and Mulligan and Smith 1986.

²³ See §§ 4–5 and compare also Dummett's discussion on p. 94f.

²⁴ See my 1987a, for an account of the details of the view of *Sachverhalte* along these lines developed by Husserl's student Adolf Reinach.

²⁵ Husserl himself occasionally employs a phraseology of this sort, and I shall for present purposes assume, with Dummett, that the Føllesdal interpretation of Husserl's later doctrine is correct. See however Mohanty 1984 and also my 1987.

²⁶ 'Truth and meaning can only be explained *together*, as part of a single theory.' (Dummett 1988, p. 24) So convinced is Dummett of the rightness of this view, that he does less than justice to the thinking of those like Husserl – as also Twardowski, Leśniewski, Tarski, and the early Wittgenstein – who in different ways deny it.

²⁷ Cf. Dummett, pp. 55ff.

²⁸ On the contrary, both Frege and Husserl developed sophisticated theories of the way in which senses or noemata have a different ontological role from that of objects of the usual sort. For there is a sense in which they cannot serve as the targets of our acts. See, on this, my 1978.

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