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THEORY OF INTENTIONALITY *

by Ronald McIntyre and David Woodruff Smith

1. INTENTIONALITY

Intentionality is a central concept in philosophy of mind and in Husserl's phenomenology. Indeed, Husserl calls intentionality the "fundamental property of consciousness" and the "principle theme of phenomenology".

Although 'intentionality' is a technical term in philosophy, it stands for something familiar to us all: a characteristic feature of our mental states and experiences, especially evident in what we commonly call being "conscious" or "aware". As conscious beings, or persons, we are not merely affected by the things in our environment; we are also *conscious of* these things – of physical objects and events, of our own selves and other persons, of abstract objects such as numbers and propositions, and of anything else we bring before our minds. Many, perhaps most, of the events that make up our mental life – our perceptions, thoughts, beliefs, hopes, fears, and so on – have this characteristic feature of being "of" or "about" something and so giving us a sense of something in our world. When I see a tree, for example, my perception is a perception *of* a tree; when I think that $3 + 2 = 5$, I am thinking *of* or *about* certain numbers and a relation among them; when I hope that nuclear war will never take place, my hope is *about* a possible future state of the world; and so on. Each such mental state or experience is in this way a *representation* of something other than itself and so gives one a sense of something. This representational character of mind or consciousness – its being "of" or "about" something – is "intentionality".

* This discussion of Husserl's theory of intentionality derives from our book, *Husserl and Intentionality: A Study of Mind, Meaning, and Language* (Dordrecht and Boston: D. Reidel, 1982), where our interpretation is developed in greater detail.

Husserl's interest in intentionality was inspired by his teacher, Franz Brentano, who himself picked up the term 'intentional' <148> from its use in medieval philosophy. 'Intentionality' derives from the Latin verb 'intendere', which means "to point to" or "to aim at", and Brentano accordingly characterized the intentionality of mental states and experiences as their feature of each being "directed toward something". (Intentionality in this technical sense then subsumes the everyday notion of doing something "intentionally": an action is intentional when done with a certain "intention", i.e., a mental state of "aiming" toward a certain state of affairs.) Brentano is most famous for a very strong doctrine about intentionality. He claimed that intentionality is the defining characteristic of the mental, i.e., that *all* mental phenomena are intentional and *only* mental phenomena are intentional. This claim has come to be known as "Brentano's Thesis". But almost all philosophers, including Husserl, consider the first half of Brentano's Thesis too strong. Moods such as depression or euphoria are not always "of" or "about" something; and as Husserl notes, sensations such as pain or dizziness are not obviously representational or "directed toward" some object. Husserl's interest is in those mental states or experiences that *do* give us a sense of an object, and those mental phenomena *are* intentional; he calls them "acts" of consciousness. Husserl seems to have thought that only states of conscious awareness are intentional, but we need not be that restrictive: if there are unconscious beliefs and desires, for example, they too should be counted as intentional mental phenomena.

Today, the more interestingly controversial part of Brentano's Thesis is the second half, the claim that *only* mental phenomena are intentional. Is it true? Photographs are photographs "of" their subjects, symbols "stand for" or "represent" things other than themselves, and the languages we speak are representational systems. Yet none of these things is itself a mental state or experience. Nonetheless, examples such as these do not really falsify the spirit of Brentano's Thesis. Although these sorts of things do have an intentional or representational character, they have that character only *for* some person and by virtue of that person's intentional mental states. Photographs, symbols, and words, in themselves and apart from the meanings and interpretations given them by persons or other creatures possessing mentality, are only so many marks on paper. Their intentionality – their "representing", or being "of" or "about" things other than themselves – is therefore not a character they have intrinsically, insofar as they are merely the physical objects that they are, but <149> is derivative from their relation to intentional mental states. It is then easy to exclude such apparent counter-examples by modifying Brentano's Thesis thus: all and only mental phenomena are *intrinsically* intentional.

Brentano's Thesis, even so modified, remains highly controversial. Many philosophers have thought that its being true would have an important implication for the philosophy of mind: the implication that mental phenomena cannot be explained in terms of such physical phenomena as brain states or overt bodily behavior. That may be too strong, but at the very least Brentano's Thesis would put a heavy burden of proof on those who attempt such explanations: it would obligate them to show how the physical phenomena that explain the mental can themselves be intrinsically intentional. To make good the claim that computers can actually duplicate intentional mental states, for example, one would have to show how running a program (or something else that computers can do) can produce states that are intrinsically intentional; and many think that cannot be shown.

Whether either half of Brentano's Thesis is actually true is by no means settled. But Husserl certainly agrees with Brentano in one important respect. He thinks intentionality poses problems of a unique sort that make the study of mind or consciousness different in kind from other studies. To see why this is so, we need to take a closer look at the nature of intentionality itself.

2. HUSSERL'S PHENOMENOLOGICAL CONCEPTION OF INTENTIONALITY

At first thought, the intentionality or representationality of an experience seems to be a *relation*: a relation between the mental state of the experiencer and, in typical cases, some extra-mental thing, event, or state of affairs (let's call all of these "objects"). If it is, one might try to show that Brentano's Thesis is false by explaining this relation of intentionality in terms of other relations that are not themselves intentional and not inherently or exclusively involved with the mental. In a typical perception, for example, the object the perception is "of" or "about" – the one to which it is "intentionally related" – is the very same object that *causes* the visual experience to come about – the one to which the experience is causally related. Consequently, one might think, the intentionality of the perception is nothing but this <150> causal relation. (A sophisticated version of this view is the so-called "causal theory of perception".) Intentionality would then be nothing peculiarly mental or "internal" to mental states or acts but a matter of how the mind is "externally" related to ordinary sorts of extra-mental objects. But there are many problems with this sort of view. For one thing, although it could perhaps be extended to other experiences, such as memory, that involve causal transactions between mental states and the extra-mental world, the causal account seems inapplicable to the many kinds of experiences, such as imagination and hope, that are

not causally related to their objects. And there are more serious problems even in the case of perception, problems that led Husserl to reject this whole way of thinking about intentionality.

The most obvious problem with this relational view of intentionality is that the object of an intentional mental state or act is *not* always some actually existing extra-mental object. If one imagines Pegasus, the flying horse of Greek mythology, for example, that act is an imaginative representation “of” Pegasus; but there is no actually existing object to which the act is externally related. The child who comes to believe that Santa Claus does not exist has a belief “about” Santa Claus; but such a true belief that something does not exist cannot be “about” any object that actually *does* exist. And as Descartes noted, not even our perceptual experiences are always perceptions of real objects: vivid dreams and hallucinations can provide us the same kinds of experiences, although they fail to relate us to anything that actually exists. Indeed, Descartes held that all our experiences could have just the subjective or phenomenological features they do have – including their intentional “ofness” or “aboutness” – even if there were no world outside our minds at all. What Husserl concludes, from examples such as these and from Descartes’ reasoning, is that the intentionality of an act is independent of the existence of its object – even when it *is* related to something extra-mental. Let us call this feature of intentionality its “existence-independence”.

The existence-independence of intentionality means, Husserl believes, that intentionality is a *phenomenological* property of mental states or experiences, i.e., a property they have by virtue of their own “internal” nature as experiences, independently of how they are “externally” related to the extra-mental world. And this view is reinforced by a second feature of intentionality that creates problems for the opposing “external-relation” view: even <151> where an act is directed toward an object that does exist, the intentionality of the act changes with its internal character in ways that are independent of what is actually true of its object.

Consider the plight of poor Oedipus Rex. Oedipus despised the man he killed on the road from Delphi although he did not despise his own father; he desired to marry the Queen although he did not desire to marry his mother; and he loathed the murderer of King Laius before he came to loathe himself. But of course the man he killed *was* his father, the Queen was his mother, and he himself was the King’s murderer. How shall we describe the intentionality of these acts? Oedipus’ desire, for example, seems to have been directed toward Queen Jocasta but not toward his mother. But Queen Jocasta and Oedipus’ mother were the very same person. So, did he desire to marry her or not? The answer seems to lie within Oedipus’ mental states themselves (indeed, that gives the story its enduring psychological

significance). Oedipus desired Jocasta when he thought about her as the Queen, when that was how he conceived of her or represented her to himself, but not when he came to think about, conceive of, or represent her as his mother. Oedipus' desire was therefore not simply "for" Jocasta: it was for Jocasta *as conceived* in a particular way. And the same sort of thing is true, not only of Oedipus' other mental states, but of everyone else's as well. But ordinary sorts of relations simply do not behave this way. If Oedipus married the Queen, and the Queen was his mother, then he therefore married his mother; if he killed King Laius and King Laius was his father, then he therefore killed his father; and so on. The intentionality of a mental state – an act's property of representing, or being "of" or "about" some object – differs in this way from the ordinary property of being related "to" some object. For the intentionality of an act depends not just on which object the act represents but on a certain conception of the object represented. Let us call this feature the "conception-dependence" of intentionality.

These two features of intentionality, its existence-independence and its conception-dependence, pose tremendous problems for all attempts to explain intentionality from a purely objective, external point of view: to explain it causally, or behavioristically, or neurophysiologically, and so on. For they seem to indicate just what Husserl thinks: that intentionality is something we know about first and foremost from our own, "first-person" knowledge of our experiences and their "internal" character; that it is a <152> property our experiences have *in themselves*, as subjective experiences, and independent of any of their actual relations to the external world; and that therefore intentionality cannot be explained from a purely objective, "third-person", point of view if such a viewpoint cannot accommodate this internal and subjective character of our experiences. In so thinking, Husserl holds a *phenomenological* conception of intentionality.

We can now see that there are two different kinds of problems about acts and their intentionality. One kind concerns how our acts, and their intentional character, are actually related to the "external" world of nature. Of the objects that our acts represent, which (if any) exist independently of us? Are these objects actually the way our minds represent them as being? Moreover, how are our mental states and experiences related to our bodies – to our sensory organs and to the neurophysiological processes in our brains, for example? Husserl calls these "naturalistic" problems. "Phenomenological" problems, by contrast, involve questions of a different sort: questions about an act's intentional character – about what it represents and how – regardless of what is actually true of the object it represents; questions about the act's own internal structure, however it may be related to the extramental world; questions about how a particular act relates to other mental states and experi-

ences; and so on. In order to focus our attention on problems of this second kind, Husserl proposes the methodological tactic he calls “phenomenological epoché”: the investigation of these phenomenological problems, he says, should begin with an “epoché” – i.e., a withholding – of judgment about the truth or falsity of all our naturalistic beliefs, including even the fundamental belief that a natural world does in fact exist. The purpose of this tactic, which is quite similar to what some contemporary philosophers have called “methodological solipsism”, is not to get us to believe that nothing *does* exist outside our own minds. Rather, its purpose is to force us to explain the phenomenological features of acts, including their intentional character, by appealing only to what is intrinsic to acts themselves: to the *internal* structures of acts that make them the mental states or experiences that they are.

<153> 3. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN CONTENT AND OBJECT

Those “internal”, or phenomenological, features of an act that make it the particular state or experience it is, distinct from other mental states and experiences, Husserl calls the “phenomenological content” of the act. According to Husserl, every act has such a content, which can be articulated independently of how the act is actually related to the extra-mental world of nature. And according to his conception of intentionality, intentional character is itself a phenomenological feature of acts. The goal of a “phenomenological” theory of intentionality, then, is to articulate those aspects of an act’s “content” that explain how the act has this intentional character.

In Chapter 2 of *Logical Investigations* (1900), V, Husserl discusses his view of content and distinguishes it from another. Husserl himself sharply distinguishes the *content* of an act from its *object*. But according to the other view, the content of an act – what makes it intentional – just *is* the object toward which the act is directed. Since many of the traditional theories of intentionality at least implicitly assume this “object-view” of content, a closer look at it will help us begin to see what is new in Husserl’s theory.

The turn to content is motivated by the recognition that an act has an intentional character that is independent of any relation between the act and an “external” object. Nonetheless, object-theories of content insist that this intentional character *itself* is basically relational in structure: that what makes an act intentional *in phenomenological character* is its being related to some object, the object that the act represents or is directed toward. If I imagine Pegasus or wonder whether Santa Claus exists, my acts are not relations to real, physical objects external to my mind. But, according to these theories, that only means they are related to objects of some *other* kind – not “real” objects, such as horses or people, but

“intentional” objects, objects that are themselves a part of the phenomenological content of the acts that represent them. Such intentional objects – my “idea” or “conception” of Pegasus or Santa Claus, for example – can exist in my mind and its acts even though Pegasus and Santa Claus themselves do not exist in extra-mental reality. If these intentional objects are what such acts are “about”, then the non-existence of appropriate *extra-mental* objects seems <154> irrelevant. So existence-independence is unproblematic. And the same goes for conception-dependence. We wondered how Oedipus could desire the Queen and not desire his mother, since the Queen and his mother were the same person. But if the intentional-object view is correct, the solution is simply that the second desire would not have the same object as the first: Oedipus’ desire for the Queen is directed toward his “idea” of Jocasta as the Queen, and that is a different object than his “idea” of Jocasta as his mother.

This kind of theory of intentionality has a venerable history. The traditional “theory of ideas”, suggested by Descartes and developed by Locke, Berkeley, and Hume; Brentano’s notion of “intentionally inexistent” objects; Meinong’s theory of “Objects beyond Being”; and the “sense-datum” theories of perception dominant in early twentieth-century British philosophy – all may plausibly be seen as variations on this “intentional-object” theme.

But tradition and history notwithstanding, object-theories of intentionality fail on three counts. First, they are in many ways counter-intuitive. When I imagine Pegasus, I imagine a horse that flies. But since my *idea* of Pegasus is not a horse and it does not fly (and I do not even *imagine* that my idea is a horse that flies), how can my imagination be *about* that idea? Similarly, what I wonder about Santa Claus is whether he exists, but I do not wonder whether my *idea* of Santa Claus exists. Second, the history of the tradition itself reveals its major failure. All these theories seem to lead inevitably to one or the other of two results: the view that *only* intentional objects exist, exemplified by Berkeley’s subjective idealism, or the view that we can never *know* of the existence of any other sorts of objects, exemplified by Hume’s skepticism. For they all face the same problem: if the *objects* of our mental states and experiences are always merely intentional objects, then we have absolutely no experiential access to any other sorts of objects; and in that case the world of nature must either *consist* of such objects, *à la* Berkeley, or it must forever be *unknowable*, *à la* Hume. Third, as Husserl notes, those who would resist either of these traditional conclusions must face yet another problem. If our acts are, at least sometimes, directed toward objects that are “real” in the ordinary sense, then object-theories explain this in a way that leads to an infinite regress. According to these theories, an act can be “about” such an object only by being first and foremost “about” an intentional object that somehow represents that object. But if <155> intentional “aboutness” is to be explained by an appeal to intentional objects,

then there must be a second intentional object that explains that first “aboutness”, a third that explains the second, and so on *ad infinitum*. (Cf. *Ideas*, §90.)

An important reason for studying Husserl’s theory of intentionality is that it marks a major break with this unsatisfactory tradition. Object-theories of intentionality try to combine two views: (1) the view that the object of an act is essential to its being intentional, and (2) the Husserlian view that only what is inherent in the phenomenological content of an act itself is essential to its being intentional. This combination of views forces one to conclude that the *object* of an act must itself be a part of its content and so something that is “internal” to the act. Husserl rejects both this conclusion and the first premise in the reasoning that produces it. An act’s object, if there is one, is always something distinct from the act’s content; but it is the act’s content, and so *not* its object, that makes the act intentional.

According to Husserl, then, the content of an act – the internal, phenomenological, constituents that give the act its representational character – is not something that is itself “intended” or represented in the act: the act is not “of” or “about” its content. Indeed, Husserl thinks, we are ordinarily not even aware of this content; rather, the content is what makes our act a representation of an object, and this object is what we are aware of. These objects – the things we desire, perceive, have beliefs about, and so on – are usually quite ordinary sorts of entities. When I see a tree, for example, the object of my perception is almost always an actual tree, a physical object that others can see and that exists independently of its being perceived. Of course, we do sometimes think about our ideas or conceptions of things or reflect on our own mental states and experiences; but even then, Husserl holds, the object one is thinking about or reflecting on is something distinct from that very act of thought or reflection. And in some instances, as when my act of perception is hallucinatory, there is no ordinary object that my act is directed toward. But that does not mean I am perceiving or otherwise experiencing an intentional object – an “idea” or a “sense-datum”, for example; it simply means that, in actual fact, the act has no object at all. Still, even a hallucinatory perception is intentional: it is a visual experience with an intentional content, the same content it would have if there <156> *were* a tree that I perceived. Because of this content, the act has the internal character of being *as if* it were related to an actual tree, even though there is no *object* to which it is actually related.

By distinguishing content and object, then, Husserl can explain the existence-independence of intentionality in a new way: an act’s being intentional depends only on its content, and an act’s content is independent of the existence of anything external to the act. And the distinction also provides him a new explanation of conception-dependence: *different* contents can give acts the character of being directed toward the *same* object, although

those contents will represent that object differently. Oedipus' desire for the Queen, for example, has a content that represents Jocasta but represents her "as" the Queen. This desire is not the same as a desire for his mother – but not because that desire would have a different *object*; rather, it would have a different *content* – one that represents the same person, Jocasta, but represents her "as" his mother rather than "as" the Queen.

Husserl presents only a rudimentary account of an act's content in *Logical Investigations*. There he distinguishes two fundamental "parts" or constituents of content, each of which requires further development. One part he calls the "quality" of an act. Quality is that inner feature of an act that distinguishes it phenomenologically from acts of other *kinds*. A perception of something, for example, is phenomenologically different from the experience of hoping for something, or the experience of fearing something. There is thus something different in the phenomenological content of these acts, something that makes them different in phenomenological kind. This constituent of an act's content is what Husserl calls the "quality" of the act. A far more important constituent of content, as far as intentionality is concerned, is what Husserl calls the "matter" of an act. (The term will seem less strange if we think of 'matter' as in 'subject-matter'.) The matter in an act's content is that in the act which gives it its specific *representational character*. This constituent of content is complex, for representational character can vary in two different ways from act to act: it differs in acts that represent different *objects* and it differs in acts that represent the same object in different *ways* (i.e., under different conceptions). An act's "matter", then, consists of those aspects of content that determine just *which* object an act represents and <157> precisely *how* it is represented in that particular act. (*LI*, V, §§20-22.)

Distinguishing and labeling these various aspects of an act's content falls far short of what we should want from a *theory* of intentionality, however. Husserl has told us that there is something in an act's content – called its "matter" – that accounts for its representational or intentional character. But we want to know just *what* the matter of an act is and just *how* it succeeds in making the act a representation of something other than itself. It took Husserl almost twelve years to work out a fully developed theory that would answer these questions. For that theory, we have to turn to his *Ideas*.

4. HUSSERL'S THEORY OF CONTENT: NOESIS AND NOEMA

By the time of *Ideas* (1913), Husserl's notion of content has developed into two distinct, but closely related, notions: the *noesis* and the *noema* of an act. (The terms 'noesis' and 'noema' both derive from 'nous', the Greek word for mind or intellect. Their

plurals are ‘noeses’ and ‘noemata’.) Roughly speaking, the noesis is an interpretive or “meaning-giving” part of an act, while the noema is an act’s “meaning – basically what we earlier called the subject’s “sense” of an object. Husserl’s discussions of these crucial notions (in *Ideas*, §§84-99, with important elaborations in §124 and §§128-33) are unfortunately far from clear and unambiguous, and there is disagreement among phenomenologists about just how they should be understood. It is in fact hard to grasp either of these notions on the basis of *Ideas* alone, for Husserl’s discussion there assumes the reader is already familiar with two other key notions previously elaborated in *Logical Investigations*: the notions of *content* (in *Investigation V*) and *meaning* (in *Investigation I*).

We have already discussed Husserl’s important distinction between the content and the object of an act; this distinction carries over into *Ideas*, although not in the simple way one might be tempted to suppose. In particular, the distinction between noesis and noema is not the same as the distinction between content and object. Neither the noesis nor the noema of an act is the *object* toward which the act is directed. Rather, *both* noesis and noema are kinds of *content*. To understand this we need another distinction made in the *Investigations*: the distinction <158> between what Husserl calls the “real” and the “intentional”, or “ideal”, content of an act (see *LI*, V, §16).

An act itself is an experience, one of the temporal events that make up a person’s stream of consciousness. Such an experience is surely a complex event, consisting of various phases or experience-components. What Husserl calls the *real content* of an act is just the sum total of these component parts of an experience, which go together in such a way as to make up the complete experience. Realcontent, then, consists of the temporal parts that compose, and so are literally found in, an intentional experience; these will include the act’s “real” quality, which makes it an experience of a particular kind, and its “real” matter, which gives it its particular intentional character.

The real content of an act is something that necessarily belongs to that act alone: just as different acts are numerically distinct events, occurring at different times or even in different streams of consciousness, so are the component events that make up these different acts. Nonetheless, there is a sense in which two persons, or the same person at different times, can be said to have the same experience, i.e., experiences with the same content. In that sense, we can speak of acts of the same kind, e.g., two perceptions, as having the *same* quality and acts with the same intentional character as having the *same* matter. But then we are speaking of quality and matter, not as components of an act’s *real* content, but as constituents of what Husserl calls its *intentional content*. This intentional content is not literally “in” the act as its actual constituents are; rather, it is an abstract or

“ideal” structure that different acts can “share”. The real content specific to a particular act, Husserl believes, is in every case a particular and individual exemplification or realization of such an abstract structure, which can also be realized in the real contents of other acts of the same phenomenological type.

Now we can see how, in *Ideas*, Husserl is able to characterize both the noesis and the noema of an act as kinds of “content”. The noesis of an act, he says, is part of its “real” content, while the noema is the act’s corresponding “intentional” content (see §88 and §97). The noesis, then, is literally a temporal part or constituent of an act’s specific phenomenological make-up. As we shall see in a later section, the real content of an act may include more than its noesis, but we will ignore that complication for now: the noesis, Husserl says, is that part of an act’s real <159> content that “brings in the specific character of intentionality” (§85). The noema, by contrast, is an “ideal” or abstract structure common to different acts of the same type. But “noesis” and “noema” are not simply new labels for Husserl’s earlier notions. Husserl now has much more to say about how the real and intentional content of an act give it its intentional character.

Just as real and intentional content were each conceived in the *Investigations* as consisting of two basic components, real quality and matter and intentional quality and matter, respectively, so Husserl now conceives the noesis and the noema as having that same basic structure. Thus, corresponding to what was earlier called (real) “quality”, the noesis includes a component that determines the act’s kind. Husserl now calls this the “thetic” component or “thetic character” of the noesis; and there is a corresponding (intentional or ideal) “thetic” component in the noema. Husserl still has little to say about just how this component works, and we shall pretty much ignore it. What is really new in *Ideas* is Husserl’s treatment of the “matter” of an act, that component of an act’s content that determines its intentional character. As a component of the noesis, or real content, of an act, an act’s matter is now characterized as the act’s “meaning-giving” or “sense-giving” (“*Sinngebung*”) component. It is this part of the noesis that gives the act its directedness toward a specific object and determines just how that object is represented in the act; and it does so by giving the act a “*Sinn*”, i.e., a “meaning” or “sense”. Correlated with this “real” constituent of the noesis is the *Sinn* or meaning itself – the subject’s “sense” of an object. This meaning or sense is the main constituent of the act’s noema; it corresponds to the earlier notion of matter as a constituent of an act’s intentional or ideal content. This meaning-component of the noema, or “noematic *Sinn*” as Husserl calls it, is then an “ideal” or abstract entity, whose role is to determine just which object an act represents and precisely how it represents it.

Thus, the noesis of an act consists of two “real” or temporal components: a “thetic” component and a “meaning-giving” component. And the act’s noema consists of two corresponding “intentional” or ideal components: a “thetic” component and a “Sinn” or “meaning”. Like Husserl, we shall focus on an act’s noema, especially its Sinn; for, on the *Ideas* theory of intentionality, it is by virtue of being related to such a Sinn or meaning that an act has its particular intentional character.

<160> Why would Husserl have thought the notion of meaning could help explain the intentional or representational character of an act? One answer lies in a quick observation we made earlier when discussing Brentano’s Thesis: *languages* are representational systems, by virtue of the fact that conscious beings can give *meanings* to various sounds and marks. We use language to speak *about* extra-linguistic things, events, and states of affairs: we use a name or a definite description to *refer to* some individual thing, a declarative sentence to *assert that* a certain state of affairs obtains, and so on. This kind of linguistic aboutness turns out to have features very like those of mental representation or intentionality, including those features that we have called existence-independence and conception-dependence. We can use language to describe or otherwise talk about things and states of affairs that do not actually exist. For example, although there is nothing to which ‘Pegasus’ or ‘the largest integer’ actually refers, these expressions can be used just as if they did have some actual referent; in that sense, they have the same sort of referential character that genuinely referring terms, such as ‘Secretariat’ or ‘the smallest prime number’, have. And different expressions can refer to or represent the same referent in different ways. For instance, ‘the victor at Jena’ and ‘the vanquished at Waterloo’ both refer to Napoleon – the one by representing him as victorious at Jena, the other by representing him as vanquished at Waterloo. These features of linguistic reference, which Husserl discusses in *Investigation I*, lead him to conclude about reference essentially just what he concludes about mental representation or intentionality: the referential or representational character of linguistic expressions is not dependent on the *objects* to which they refer, but on something else. And what is this “something else”? Their *meanings*. Husserl uses the German word ‘*Bedeutung*’ for this notion of linguistic meaning. And in *Ideas* (§124) he says that this same notion, if suitably extended and modified, can be applied to all acts, whether they involve linguistic expression or not. This wider notion of meaning, he says, is just what he has been calling the ‘*Sinn*’ – the noematic meaning – of an act.

Given this correlation of linguistic with mental representation and the essential role of meaning in each (*Bedeutung* in linguistic representation, *Sinn* in mental representation or intentionality), Husserl’s theory of how noematic Sinn determines intentional character can

be explained by analogy with his theory of linguistic <161> reference. (We should note that not all philosophers of language agree with Husserl's views on linguistic reference.) (1) It is the meaning of a linguistic expression, Husserl says, that makes it capable of referring to anything at all. As we observed earlier, if it were not for their meanings, the words you are reading now would be nothing but marks of ink: these particular ink marks refer to or represent things only because they mean something to you and others who use them. Similarly, as we have already seen, Husserl believes that an act is intentional only because the "noesis" of the act gives it a meaning, a noematic Sinn. (2) Just *which* thing an expression refers to depends on the particular meaning it has. The German expression 'die erste Primzahl', for example, refers to the number two because it means the same as the English expression 'the first prime number': if it meant something else it might very well refer to something different, but so long as it means just what it does it cannot refer to anything else. Similarly, it is the meaning, the noematic Sinn, of an act that determines just *which* object the act is about or directed toward. (3) Since the meaning of an expression is distinct from the object to which the expression refers, an expression can have a meaning even though it refers to nothing at all. In such a case, Husserl holds, that meaning will give the expression the very same referential character that it would have if it did actually refer to something, so that it can function linguistically just as genuinely referring expressions do. Similarly, since the noematic Sinn of an act is distinct from the act's object, an act can have such a Sinn even though it is actually related to no object at all. In that case, the Sinn gives the act the very same intentional character that it would have if it did actually have an object. (4) Different meanings can determine the same referent in different ways. Thus, 'the victor at Jena' and 'the vanquished at Waterloo' refer to the same object in different ways because they express different meanings, one of which represents Napoleon as victorious and the other as vanquished. Similarly, intentionality is conception-dependent because different noematic Sinne can determine the same object. Oedipus' desiring the Queen is a quite different act than his desiring his mother, not because they are acts with different objects, but because they are acts with different noematic Sinne. Each Sinn determines Jocasta as the object of its act, but because these Sinne are different the acts represent her in different ways, one representing her as the Queen and the other as Oedipus' mother.

<162> The key to understanding both linguistic and mental representation, then, is the notion of meaning. Nonetheless, we would emphasize one huge difference between these two kinds of representation. Linguistic expressions are representational because of their meanings, but a linguistic expression cannot give meaning to itself. As we said earlier, the representational or intentional character of language is "derivative", derivative from the

fact that we conscious beings can give meaning to various sounds and marks. Thus, the meanings that make linguistic expressions representational come to them from the “outside”. By contrast, Husserl holds, the representational or intentional character of our mental states and experiences comes to them from the “inside”. The noesis of an act is an intrinsic part of the (“real”) phenomenological content of that act itself, and the chief role of the noesis is to “give meaning” to the act. Linguistic expressions, by contrast, have no such “noesis”. A mental state or experience is *intrinsically intentional*, then, because it itself includes – as an essential part of the phenomenological content that makes it the experience it is – an intrinsically “meaningful”, or “meaning-giving”, component.

5. NOEMA AND OBJECT

The noema and the object of an act are completely distinct entities. For one thing, they are usually not even the same kind of entities: an act’s noema is the act’s intentional content, its ideal or abstract structure; whereas the objects of acts, in typical cases, are ordinary physical objects in the world of “nature”. Moreover, while every act has a noema, not every act actually has an object: an hallucination, for example, has a noema and so is intentional in character, although no object actually stands before the perceiver at all. And of course the noema and the object of an act play entirely different roles: the object, if there is one, is what the act is “of” or “about”, while the noema is what gives the act its phenomenological character of being of or about that object.

Unfortunately, some of Husserl’s terminology in *Ideas* invites confusion about this most crucial distinction between noemata and objects. In particular, Husserl sometimes refers to the noematic Sinn (or the whole noema) of an act as the “intended as such”; more specifically, he calls the Sinn of a perception the “perceived <163> as such” (i.e., “as perceived”), the Sinn of a memory the “remembered as such” (i.e., “as remembered”), and so on. These phrases in themselves are not very clear, and a misunderstanding of them may lead one to blur the distinction between noemata and objects and so to misunderstand Husserl’s views about both.

Take perception, for example. One would suppose, quite rightly, that by “the perceived” Husserl means the *object* that one perceives. But then, one might think, the “perceived as such” or the “perceived as perceived” must also be the perceived object, though modified or considered in some special way: for example, the thing perceived considered as having just those properties that the subject, in that one particular act of perception, perceives it as having. This would be a fairly natural way of reading Husserl’s “as such” terminology,

and some of his interpreters take it to be the correct reading. But since Husserl identifies the noematic Sinn of a perception with the “perceived as such”, that reading leads to an interpretation of the Sinn – and of Husserl’s theory of intentionality – that is quite different from the one we have been expounding. The noema or Sinn would then itself *be* the object, or some part of the object, that an act is directed toward; and Husserl would not have made any significant break with “object-theories” of intentionality. Husserl’s theory of noema and intentionality has in fact been interpreted along these lines, especially in the writings of Aron Gurwitsch. Although we shall not directly address that interpretation here, we do need to indicate how we understand Husserl’s terminology and why this point of interpretation is important.

Husserl introduces his “as such” terminology in an attempt to overcome a certain problem in talking about the noema and its role in intentionality. By virtue of the Sinn in an act’s noema, we have said, the subject of the act has a “sense” of an object. And, as we have been stressing, one can have a sense of an object even when there actually is no such object. Nonetheless, it is almost impossible to describe this sense or Sinn, and to distinguish it from other Sinne, without speaking of “the object” that it gives the subject a sense “of”. Consider, for example, the difference between hallucinating a dagger and hallucinating a tree. It would be natural to say that this difference lies in “what” the subject perceives: a dagger in the one case, a tree in the other. But since the acts are hallucinatory, there is no dagger or tree – or, Husserl insists, any other object – that the subject perceives in either case. This difference in “what” is perceived, on Husserl’s analysis, is therefore not a difference in the *objects* of perception, for here there are no such objects. Rather, it is a difference in *noematic Sinne*: the one act has a Sinn that gives the subject a sense of a dagger; the other, a sense of a tree. And so the expression ‘what is perceived’ is ambiguous: if one is speaking “naturalistically” about the *relation* between a perceiver and the thing she perceives, it refers to the *object* of the perception; but if one is speaking “phenomenologically” about the intentional or representational *character* of a perception, it refers to the intentional content of the perception, i.e., to the *noema* or the *noematic Sinn*. Husserl’s “as such” terminology is introduced to resolve this ambiguity: thus, Husserl calls the object of a perception “the perceived”, “the perceived object”, or sometimes “the object *simpliciter*”; and he calls the noema or Sinn “the perceived as such”.

This terminology may not have seemed as unusual to Husserl’s contemporaries as it does to us today. For example, Kasimir Twardowski (in a book that Husserl reviewed) had earlier noted the ambiguity in the expression ‘what is perceived’, and he and others also used the addendum ‘as such’ to distinguish the content from the object of an act. And Husserl

also uses another, currently more standard, device to mark the same distinction: when he wants to use an expression to refer to the sense of an object – i.e., a Sinn – rather than to the object itself, he simply places the expression in quotation marks. A phenomenological description of perceiving a tree, for example, will then use such expressions as “tree”, “blooming”, and the like. But these expressions, Husserl says, do not refer to the tree itself; they refer to components of the Sinn, which give the perception the intentional character of being about a tree in bloom. The perceived *as such*, Husserl then says, is not the blooming tree itself but the sense or Sinn “the blooming tree” (see *Ideas*, §§88-89). The quotation-device is much less likely to mislead, and fortunately it is the one Husserl most employs in his more detailed discussions of the structure of noematic Sinne.

‘The perceived as such’, like an object-phrase in quotation marks, thus refers to the noematic Sinn of an act of perception in *contradistinction* to the perceived object and any of its parts. Husserl says: “The *tree simpliciter*, the thing in nature, is anything but this *perceived tree as such*, which as perceptual Sinn belongs inseparably to the perception. The tree can burn, can break down into its chemical elements, etc. The Sinn, however, <165> . . . cannot burn, it has no chemical elements, no powers, no real properties” (*Ideas*, §89).

Still, there is an important relation between noemata and objects. Husserl says that all objects, including those we call “real” or “actual”, are “constituted” in consciousness by the noemata of our acts (*Ideas*, §135). But this does not mean that our acts *create* objects or that objects are somehow *composed* of noemata – as one would suppose if noemata were themselves the objects of consciousness or parts of those objects. Rather, it means that even where an act is related to a real object, such as a tree, it is the noematic Sinn of the act that gives the subject a sense of that object and so places him in an intentional relation with it. And where there is no such object, the Sinn still makes the act as if it were so related to an object. Accordingly, Husserl says, “an object – ‘whether it is actual or not’ – is ‘constituted’” in any experience with the appropriate intentional or noematic structure (*Ideas*, §135). We shall say that the Sinn, in every case, “prescribes” an object. But, because noemata and objects are distinct, to prescribe an object is not to give it being. At least in the case of natural objects such as trees, it is *extra-mental* reality that determines whether there really exists any object that “fills” a Sinn’s prescription.

6. THE SENSORY CONTENT OF PERCEPTION

According to Husserl, the (real) phenomenological content of every intentional experience includes a noesis, for it is the noesis that gives meaning or Sinn to the experience

and so makes it of or about something. But the content of a *perception* includes more than a noesis, for perceptions are *sensory* experiences. Merely thinking about a red tomato is quite different from actually seeing it, for example: the visual experience has a certain sensory character, whereby the redness of the tomato is not merely represented but seems actually present to the perceiver. In Husserl's terms, a perception is not just an "empty signification" or representation of its object but an "intuition", in which the object is presented with a character of sensory "fullness". Accordingly, Husserl says (*Ideas*, §§85, 97), the real content of a perception consists of *two* fundamental components: a *noetic* component, or noesis, which gives the act its intentional character; and a *sensory* component, a sensation or complex of sensations, <166> which gives the act its sensory character. With the interaction of noesis and sensation, I do not merely represent a tomato in my mind; I *see* a tomato.

Husserl leaves it open whether there can be experiences that have only sensory content, without any interpreting noesis. But he makes it clear that any such experiences would not be intentional and so would not be perceptions. A complex of sensations alone, without a noesis that "animates" it by giving it meaning, Husserl says, cannot be an experience of anything. Adapting Aristotle's distinction between matter and form, Husserl calls the sensory component of a perception its *hyle* ("matter", or sensory "stuff") and the noetic component of the perception its *morphe* ("form"). For Aristotle, a thing cannot exist without both matter and form; and similarly, for Husserl, a perception cannot occur without both sensation and noesis. I cannot see a tomato, for instance, unless my experience includes both: a noesis that calls in the Sinn "tomato" and so makes the experience a presentation of a tomato; and a mass of sensation that makes it a sensory presentation of a tomato.

Husserl sometimes uses the terms 'sensation-data' and 'hyletic data' for the sensory content of a perception, but his account of perception is very unlike the "sense-datum" theories of such British Empiricists as Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore. According to those theories, seeing a tomato involves two acts: a purely sensory, non-interpretive, act of "sensing" or "directly seeing" red (or perhaps a red round patch), and a non-perceptual act of judging or inferring that a tomato before one is causing that sensation. But for Husserl, the sensory content and the noesis in a perceptual experience are bonded together to make just one act: the sensory-*and*-intentional experience of *seeing* the *tomato*. Thus, the constituent sensations are not elementary acts of seeing or sensing anything, not even a color or a colored patch. Nor are they the objects of any such experiences of sensing, as traditional "sense data" are often conceived to be. Sensations or hyletic data are not themselves colors or colored patches, for instance. Husserl says that "sensation-data" are in principle

different from such things as colors and shapes, because colors and shapes are components of material things (e.g., tomatoes) while hyletic data are components of sensory experiences (*Ideas*, §41). Indeed, since they belong to the *contents* of perceptual experiences, hyletic data are not perceived at all: the sensory, <167> noetic, and noematic contents of a perception are all distinct from the object of the perception. (Cf. *LI*, I, §23.)

On Husserl's theory of perception, moreover, the object that one perceives is ordinarily not just a sense datum, such as a colored patch, but is a full-blown physical object, such as a tomato. Only a few of the many properties of an object are sensuously presented in a perception, presented with the support of hyletic content or intuitional "fullness". Those properties (e.g., the object's color and shape as seen from a particular perspective) are said by Husserl to be presented "self-evidently": the hyletic content of the act "fills" the corresponding components of the Sinn and so provides evidence that the object actually does have those properties. But the sensory content in the perception is not what prescribes the object that the perception is of or about: the Sinn given by the act's noesis prescribes the object. And in a normal perception, Husserl holds, the Sinn prescribes the object as having many properties in addition to those that are evidently or sensuously given – including not only sensory properties, such as being colored on its other sides, but even "theoretical" or non-observable properties, such as being composed of atoms. Thus, the subject of a perception has a sense of the object as something distinct from and independent of the act, having a certain nature in itself – as something that "transcends" that particular act of perception and what its sensory content supports. Still, in perception one is not completely free to posit just any object at all as being the thing one perceives: the noesis must give a Sinn that is compatible with the sensory evidence in the perception. The sensory content of perception thus places certain constraints, or boundary conditions, on the Sinn and what it can prescribe. And such constraints contribute much to our sense of the "reality" of those objects that we perceive.

7. THE INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF NOEMATIC SINNE

In a typical experience, the subject's sense of an object is quite complex: an act does not simply represent some object or other; it represents a *particular* object, and it represents it as having various properties and standing in various relations to other objects. Since it is the noematic Sinn of an act that determines what it represents and how, this means that the Sinn itself is <168> not a simple sense or meaning but a complex pattern or structure of meanings. In *Ideas*, §§128-131, Husserl adds detail to his theory of intentionality by

analyzing the structure of the Sinn in a noema. It is not clear whether the analysis is meant to apply to all types of experience, but it is well suited to Husserl's paradigm of perceiving an individual thing.

Suppose I see an apple tree. Exactly what is the structure of the Sinn of my visual experience? We might describe the intentional character of the experience phenomenologically – characterizing the perception just as I experience it – in the following way:

I see this blooming apple tree.

Given Husserl's quotation-mark device for referring to meanings or noematic Sinne (*Ideas*, §89), the Sinn of my experience would then be the sense or meaning referred to by the noun phrase:

“this blooming apple tree”.

Clearly, this sense is complex, consisting of the simpler senses “this”, “blooming”, and “apple tree”. In the later sections of *Ideas*, Husserl articulates the structure that he finds in such a complex of senses.

On Husserl's analysis, the Sinn is structured into two basic components of sense. One component plays the role of making the act of or about a particular object: in our example, it is the sense “this” (or perhaps “this object”). The second component prescribes the properties I see this object as having: in our example, the senses “blooming” and “apple tree” belong to this component of the Sinn. This structure of the Sinn can be made more apparent with a revision of our phenomenological description of the perception:

I see this object \underline{x} such that \underline{x} is an apple tree and \underline{x} is blooming.

Then the Sinn of my experience is the sense:

“this object \underline{x} such that \underline{x} is an apple tree and \underline{x} is blooming”.

<169> Here the two components of sense – “this object \underline{x} ” and “ \underline{x} is an apple tree and \underline{x} is blooming” – are clearly separated. The first component Husserl calls the X, or the “determinable X”, in the Sinn. It picks out the object that the experience represents, but it does not itself determine what that object is represented as being. Husserl says the X represents the object of the experience “*simpliciter*”, or “in abstraction from all predicates”. Just what that object is represented “as” is determined by the second component, which Husserl characterizes as a complex of “predicates” or predicate-senses (e.g., the sense of the predicate ‘is an apple tree’). Thus, the X prescribes the object itself, the “bearer” (Husserl says) of various properties, and the predicate-senses prescribe certain properties borne by the object. As we shall see, Husserl allows for a good deal of complexity in the predicative part of the Sinn.

Husserl sometimes refers to the X as the “object” in the Sinn and to the whole Sinn as the “object in the manner of its determinations”. His use of quotation marks here is crucially important, for with them neither expression denotes the *object* of an experience. The first expression denotes the subject’s bare *sense* of the object; the second denotes the subject’s complete sense of that object as being “determined” or propertied in a certain way.

On Husserl’s account, the X works independently of the predicative content in a Sinn – or at least relatively so. For instance, as I perceive an object while walking around it, I am continuously aware of the same object; yet the properties I perceive it as having are continuously changing. Here my experience correlates with a sequence of noematic Sinne, in which the predicate-senses change while the X must remain the same (or, more precisely, the sequence of X’s must present the same object). The properties I am given of the object may in fact change quite drastically, so much so that the predicate-senses in my unfolding Sinne may even characterize different kinds of things. For instance, as I walk around what I first saw as a tree, I may come to realize that it is just a stage prop. In that case, Husserl says, my perception “explodes”. Even so, I continue to see the same object: the X, or sequence of X’s, in my unfolding perception continues to prescribe the same object.

Thus, the object of a perception seems to be determined just by the X in the Sinn, not by the properties prescribed by its companion predicate-senses. But then how does the X specify a particular object? Husserl does not say. However, in successful perception the object is itself before the perceiver, and the Sinn of the perception must pick out that very object. So the X, we might propose, is fundamentally the *demonstrative* sense “this”, which in effect simply points to the object appropriately before the perceiver. The X could not pick out the object by appealing to its *property* of being present before the perceiver, for then the X would not differ from the *predicative* content of the Sinn. But we propose that it is a fundamentally different kind of sense or content, a *demonstrative* content, which indicates the object by “demonstrating” or pointing to it rather than by describing it. (There are hints of this in Husserl: e.g., in *LI*, VI, §5.) The Sinn of a perception would then include an X, giving the perceiver a sense of *this* object, and a complex of predicate-senses applied to the X, prescribing the properties this object is perceived as having.

This analysis of Sinn-structure illuminates the phenomenology of seeing an object, but it would not apply to all types of experience. Seeing this tree is one kind of *singular* presentation or representation of its object: specifically, an “intuition” of the object “itself”. But this kind of singular presentation is quite different from *descriptive* representation.

Consider my thinking that the author of *Waverley* was a Scot, where my thought is not about some particular person but only about whoever wrote the *Waverley* novels. Part

of this act is my *descriptive* representation of the author of *Waverley*, whose Sinn is the sense “the author of *Waverley*” or, more formally, “the object x such that x authored *Waverley*”. Such a descriptive sense specifies an object in a quite different way than an X does. It prescribes whichever object uniquely has the property of having authored the *Waverley* novels. And this it does only by appeal to the property prescribed by the predicate-sense “authored *Waverley*”.

The Sinn of a descriptive representation thus differs in structure from the kind of Sinn that Husserl specifically analyzes. By virtue of the X in its Sinn, a singular presentation presents an object directly, without appeal to its properties. If you will, the only feature of the object that interests the X is the bare identity of the object itself. For this reason, it is the recurrence of the same X (or a sequence of co-referential X's) that keeps track of the same object through the unfolding phases of a continuing perception of the same object. But a descriptive representation <171> presents an object only by virtue of certain of its properties. Accordingly, a descriptive Sinn does not have an X of the type Husserl describes, an X that independently prescribes an object and is only contingently tied to a particular predicative content. Rather, a descriptive Sinn (e.g., “the author of *Waverley*”) is formed from a predicative sense (“authored *Waverley*”), so that its function is to prescribe whatever uniquely “satisfies” that predicative sense. Since not all types of experience are singular, then, we should bear in mind that Husserl's analysis of a noematic Sinn – featuring an X plus predicate-senses – is not general but focussed on such experiences as seeing a discrete object.

There is another important type of Sinn that Husserl often discusses but never completely analyzes: the Sinne of *propositional* experiences. Consider, for example, my experience of perceiving *that* the apple tree is in bloom. According to Husserl, such experiences are representations of “states of affairs” rather than of individual things. Thus, whereas the tree itself is the object of my perceiving this blooming apple tree, the object of the propositional experience is not the tree but the state of affairs that-it-is-a-blooming-apple-tree. Presumably, the Sinne of both these experiences are quite alike in their constituent predicate-senses, and these predicate-senses may be tied to an X that presents the object before me. But the predicate-senses are tied to the X in a different way in the propositional act: the properties they prescribe are not presented as “modifying” the object but as “predicated” of it, so that the whole Sinn is the propositional structure “this is a blooming apple tree” rather than the “nominal” structure “this blooming apple tree”. But then the X in the Sinn does not prescribe the whole object of the act, the state of affairs, but only one part of that state of affairs. And so, unlike the case of singular presentations, the represented object is here not prescribed by the X alone but by the whole Sinn.

Although Husserl does not explicitly endorse this analysis of propositional acts, it fits well with what he does say about them. But it too is a departure from his paradigm analysis of the structure of a Sinn. And there are other kinds of propositional acts that it does not fit, for reasons we have already cited. Implicit in the analysis we gave of the propositional perception is the assumption that its Sinn includes an X that gives a singular presentation of some individual thing – the tree – that is a prominent part of the state of affairs that the whole Sinn represents. <172> But my thought that the author of *Waverley* was a Scot, for example, is a propositional act that is not based on any such singular presentation.

Clearly, there are as many forms of Sinn as there are forms of mental representation, and Husserl's only fault is in giving the impression that the form he analyzes is more general than it really is. It is actually rather remarkable that his insights about the structure of Sinne for singular presentations are so suggestive of further ways of understanding additional forms of intentionality.

8. NOEMA AND HORIZON

Beyond the noema of an experience, Husserl says, lies “another fundamental trait of intentionality”: what he calls the *horizon* of the experience. Acts directed toward certain sorts of objects – paradigmatically physical objects – represent their objects as “transcendent”, as being “more” than what the Sinn of the act explicitly prescribes. Such an intentional experience thus points toward a “horizon” of further possibilities regarding the object, and hence toward a corresponding “horizon” of further possible experiences of that object. And it is thanks to a certain “indeterminacy” in the noematic Sinn of an act that it has such a horizon.

Trees, for instance, are transcendent objects. When I see a tree, there are many features of its back side that are hidden from my view and not specified in my perception. Moreover, I know little of the internal chemistry of the tree, and even less of this particular tree's history. Nonetheless, the tree itself has a back side, an internal chemistry, and a history; and so the tree I see outruns or “transcends” my perception of it. In this sense, as Husserl says, the tree as presented in my perception is incompletely “determined”, or partly “indeterminate”. Or better, there is an “indeterminacy” in the predicative content of the Sinn of my perception: the Sinn prescribes certain of the tree's properties but leaves open, or indeterminate, the full nature of the object it prescribes. (*Ideas*, §44; *CM*, §§19-20; *EJ*, §§8, 21c.)

We are familiar with such indeterminacy in everyday experiences with physical objects; that is why we walk around objects to see their back sides. Moreover, Husserl says, whenever an object is presented as a material or physical thing (or a more specific <173> kind of material thing such as a tree), the sense “material thing” (or “tree”) in the Sinn implies, or “predelineates”, an indefinitely large number of further properties of the object prescribed. That sense implies that the object so prescribed is a three-dimensional object and so has a back side, that it has a history, etc., and that it thus has further and more specific properties than are evidently presented in the perception. (Cf. *Ideas*, §§142-143, 149; *CM*, §§19-20.) Thus, the predicative content in the Sinn implies or predelineates more properties than it explicitly prescribes. Furthermore, the Sinn includes an explicit sense of its own indeterminacy, of leaving open an unspecified range of further properties: I see “this object x such that x is an apple tree and x is blooming and . . .”. As Husserl says, “the ‘and so forth’ is an . . . absolutely indispensable element in the thing-noema” (*Ideas*, §149). By including a sense “and so forth” or “and x is . . .”, the predicative content of the Sinn explicitly specifies that there are further, unspecified properties of the object prescribed. And so the Sinn “self-consciously” prescribes its own indeterminacy.

By virtue of the sense of indeterminacy in its noematic Sinn, an experience like perception “predelineates” an array of further possible properties of its object, which may be given in further possible perceptions of that same object. These further properties of the object – left open, yet delimited, by the Sinn – Husserl calls the *horizon* of the *object* as represented in the experience. Correspondingly, he calls the further possible perceptions – compatible with and “motivated” by what is prescribed in the experience – the *horizon* of the *experience*. Although this notion of horizon, or pair of notions, may be generalized, Husserl expounds it for the case of perception. (Cf. *CM*, §§19, 20; *EJ*, §8).

Consider again my seeing this blooming apple tree. As Husserl stresses, a thing can be seen only from one side at a time, or “in one aspect”. Yet what is “genuinely given”, or given with sensory evidence, is experienced as surrounded by a “horizon” of what is “co-given” without sensory evidence – such as the leaves and their colors that I expect might be found on the tree’s back side. This horizon of further aspects or properties of the tree is itself indeterminate: the exact shapes, colors, and density of leaves on the back side of the tree, for instance, are not precisely predelineated by the Sinn of my present experience. And the horizon is open-ended: as I walk around the tree and discover more precisely what its further properties are, the Sinn of each new <174> experience will predelineate still further possibilities not motivated by preceding perceptions. (Cf. *Ideas*, §44; *CM*, §19.)

The horizon of the tree, as given in my perception, includes what Husserl calls an “internal” and an “external” horizon (*EJ*, §§8, 22). The internal horizon consists of possible further nonrelational properties of the object. It includes properties that could be given in further perceptions, such as colors of leaves and blossoms on the back side of the tree, and also – if we go beyond the strictly perceptual part of the horizon – non-observable properties such as those concerning the tree’s chemical composition. The external horizon consists of the object’s possible relations to other things, including things not explicitly represented in the perception. The external horizon is important, for it reflects the fact that objects are not perceived as solitary things but as things existing in the natural world and as therefore being related to every other natural thing. Thus, the external horizon could include many kinds of relational properties: being next to the peach tree, being over the hill from another blooming apple tree, harboring a pair of mourning doves, having been planted by Johnny Appleseed, and so on – the ‘and so on’ denoting the tree’s ultimate external horizon, its relations to “the world” as very vaguely and indeterminately predelineated in the perception.

The notion of horizon is importantly related to Husserl’s notions of “constitution” and “evidence”. By predelineating a horizon, the Sinn of an act prescribes or constitutes its object as transcendent, as having further properties that further experience may or may not confirm. By the same token, though, an object is not completely or fully constituted by what the Sinn of any one act prescribes, for it is further constituted by what is prescribed by the Sinne of the other experiences that belong to the horizon of that act. Thus, Husserl says, an object is constituted in certain “connections of consciousness” or “syntheses of experiences”, in which the same object is represented in all the different ways compatible with its remaining “self-identical” (*Ideas*, §135; *CM*, §§17, 18). We confirm the real existence of the object, and discover what properties it truly has, by actually having some of the further perceptions in the original act’s horizon; the *hyle* in those perceptions will provide evidence that the object has some of the further properties we have constituted it as having. And we disconfirm the object’s existence by discovering that further perceptions of it, as constituted, are not to be had. But because <175> physical objects are constituted as being transcendent, and because their horizon is open-ended, we can never *completely* confirm that any physical object we constitute actually does exist. This inadequacy in our cognitive or perceptual powers is no cause for skepticism about the reality of an extra-mental world, and even less cause for thinking that the things we call real are only creations of our minds, however. We ourselves constitute the physical world as transcendent of our experiences and independent of our consciousness of it. What better proof could we have that we have correctly constituted it so than that we can never experience it completely?

On Husserl's account, the horizon of an experience consists of further possible experiences of *the same* object, paradigmatically, further possible perceptions of the same object (cf. *Ideas*, §131; *CM*, §§19, 20). Here Husserl can assume his analysis of a noematic Sinn as structured into an X and a complex of predicate senses: the X in the Sinn of a perception represents a particular object, and the horizon of the perception includes further perceptions whose Sinne have different predicate-senses while having X's that represent that same object. However, we would note that even the identity of an object as represented in an experience may be indeterminate, left open by the Sinn of the experience. For instance, when I think that the author of *Waverley* (whoever that is) was a Scot, the sense "the author of *Waverley*" in my thought's Sinn leaves open exactly who the represented author is: as we have seen, that is the force of such a descriptive sense. Moreover, identity can be indeterminate even in perception. When I approach one of the Tweedle twins, I see "this fellow \underline{x} such that \underline{x} is one of the Tweedle twins". Even though the X in the Sinn of my perception prescribes a particular object "itself", the predicative content in my Sinn either will further specify the identity of that object (" \underline{x} is Dum Tweedle") or will leave the identity indeterminate (" \underline{x} is one of the Tweedle twins, either Dum or Dee [I can't tell which]"). And the parenthetic phrase "I can't tell which" is one way of ascribing to the experience a sense of indeterminacy with regard to the identity of its object. A completely general account of Husserl's notion of horizon would need to address this sort of indeterminacy, which Husserl's own account tends to ignore.

The notion of horizon extends Husserl's phenomenology and his theory of intentionality via noema. In effect, Husserl constructs a ramified theory of intentionality: the first level of <176> theory concerns acts, intentional character, and intentional relations; the second level concerns the noema and the Sinn's prescription of an object; and the third level concerns the horizon of possibilities for the object that are left open by the Sinn. To explicate the intentionality of an experience, then, we must address not only the experience, its intentional character, and its noematic Sinn, but also its horizon of further possible experiences of the object as constituted in the experience.

9. HORIZON AND BACKGROUND BELIEFS

Although the horizon of an object, as constituted in an experience, is indeterminate and open-ended, there are limits on what can belong to any given horizon. These limits are imposed in part by the noematic Sinn of the experience in question, for the possibilities in the object's horizon must be compatible with what the Sinn prescribes of the object. But the

structure of a horizon is further constrained by certain beliefs that the subject brings to an experience. These beliefs are the subject's background presuppositions about the object, or about objects of its type; we shall call them "background beliefs". As beliefs presupposed by the experience, their meanings or Sinne are not explicitly included in the Sinn of the experience but are presupposed by it; yet the possibilities that belong in the object's horizon must be compatible with these presupposed meanings as well as with the experience's own Sinn. (Cf. *Ideas*, §§142, 149-150; *CM*, §§21-22, 38; *EJ*, §§25-27, 33, 67a, 83a.)

Consider again my seeing this apple tree. It is not compatible with this perception that the object I am seeing should have no back side at all; that possibility is excluded from the horizon of the object as I now experience it. And it is so excluded because it is incompatible with some of my most fundamental beliefs: I believe that trees are material objects, that material objects are three-dimensional, and that trees therefore have back sides. But surely none of these beliefs – or their Sinne – is actually wafting through my mind as I perceive the tree. Rather, they are part of my repertoire of general conceptual knowledge, part of the conceptual background against which all my specific perceptions take place. The belief that material objects are three-dimensional is no doubt an *a priori* belief, a definitive part of the very concept of a material object. But my perception also presupposes <177> beliefs that are purely the products of previous experiences. Having seen many trees, I have learned that any one tree bears only one kind of fruit. My perception presupposes this belief, and it is therefore incompatible with my perception that the tree I am now seeing should have oranges on its hidden branches. Moreover, the acquired, or empirical, beliefs presupposed by my perception can be of any degree of particularity. If I believe that I planted this tree myself, the possibility that it was planted by someone else is excluded from the tree's horizon, as I now constitute the tree; if I just saw a nest in one branch of the tree, its having no nest is now incompatible with my perception of the tree even though I can no longer see the nest; and so on.

Such presuppositions of my perception – background beliefs about material objects, or apple trees, or even this particular tree – help define the boundaries of the horizon of the object I perceive, the bounds of what is left open by the Sinn of my perception. The horizon is "predelineated", then, not just by the Sinn of my perception alone, but by that Sinn together with the background beliefs, or their Sinne, presupposed by the perception. Thus, Husserl says, the possibilities left open by the Sinn of an experience are not "empty", merely logical, possibilities but "motivated" possibilities: possibilities motivated by one's prior experiences and the associations or inductions one bases on them. It is logically possible that the writing-desk I see here has ten legs. But, Husserl says, that is an "empty" possibility: empty

because experience has taught me that desks normally have four legs (and rarely have ten), and in seeing the desk I presuppose this belief about desks. And even if I can only see two of the desk's legs, the possibility that it has two more is a "motivated" possibility: motivated by that same belief. (Cf. *Ideas*, §§47, 140; *EJ*, §24a; *LI*, I, §§2-3.)

By unearthing the background presuppositions of an experience, horizon-analysis carries Husserl's phenomenology beyond noema-analysis. For the horizon of the object of an experience, and hence the object's constitution in the experience, is not determined by the noematic Sinn of the experience alone but also by the Sinne of the beliefs presupposed in the experience. Moreover, the move from noema-analysis to horizon-analysis carries Husserl from "static" to "genetic" phenomenology. Where the former focuses on the structure of a given experience at a given time, "genetic" phenomenology explores the genesis of the meaning <178> or Sinn of a particular experience by unearthing its origins in past experience. (Cf. *FTL*, Appendix II.)

But Husserl's own concerns stay pretty much at the level of "static" phenomenology and the most general, *a priori*, background presuppositions of an intentional experience. He is only moderately interested in how I come to constitute this *particular* tree, the one I planted ten years ago. But he is intensely interested in how I come to constitute it as a *material object* of any sort at all, and in how that constitution differs from my constituting something as, say, a mathematical object or an aesthetic object. Physical, mathematical, and aesthetic objects are objects of what Husserl calls different ontological "regions", and as a philosopher he is concerned about how such "regions" differ from one another. They differ, Husserl thinks, in the different *a priori* background beliefs that we bring to bear when we experience an object as belonging to one of these regions rather than another: these different beliefs impose different "rules" on the constitution of objects and the structure of their horizons. For instance, Husserl says, the horizon of an object experienced as something "physical" must conform to rules such as these: that physical objects are continuous in time, that variations in their shapes must be compatible with the laws of geometry, and that they must be capable of entering into causal relations with other physical objects (*Ideas*, §§149, 150). Such rules are "rules of constitution", and to articulate them is to articulate what Husserl calls a "theory of constitution" for objects of the type in question (cf. *CM*, §§21, 22).

Let us emphasize once again, however, that Husserl's interest in such rules and theories of constitution does not indicate an anti-realist metaphysical point of view. Husserl explicitly rejects Berkeley's form of idealism: the view that objects *exist* only by virtue of their being experienced. But he does accept a version of what Kant calls "transcendental idealism": the view that we *experience* objects as we do only because our minds organize

experience according to certain “rules”. “Transcendental” philosophy – whether Husserlian or Kantian – studies the fundamental principles of the mind, which lay down the rules by which we can represent any objects of any particular kind. But this kind of “transcendental idealism” is completely consistent with an everyday sort of realism, as Kant himself insisted. We have interpreted Husserl as sharply distinguishing mental acts from noematic Sinne and both from such ordinary objects as trees. On this interpretation, <179> to say that an object is “constituted” in an experience means, not that the experience gives the object *being*, but that the experience gives it *meaning*. Objects are constituted in consciousness according to certain rules because objects are experienced only through noematic Sinne, by virtue of which our experiences are rendered meaningful and coherent. Without noematic Sinne, we can have no consciousness of objects and objects can have no meaning for us. (Cf. *CM*, §§40-41.)

Husserl’s “transcendental idealism”, then, is not an ontological theory about the being of objects; it is a phenomenological, or an epistemological, theory about how we experience objects. And that theory, in effect, is just Husserl’s theory of intentionality via noematic Sinn.