

INDEXICALITY AS A PHENOMENOLOGICAL PROBLEM¹

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The following investigation raises the question of indexicality's phenomenological sense by tracing the development of this problem in Husserl's phenomenology, starting with its emergence in the first of the Logical Investigations. In contrast to the standard approach, which confines the problem of indexicality to its treatment in the Logical Investigations, I argue against Husserl's early solution, claiming that, from a specifically phenomenological perspective, the so-called "replaceability thesis" is unwarranted. I further show that Husserl himself unequivocally rejected his early solution in his revisions of the Logical Investigations, although, admittedly, he never replaced his old conception with a new one. Thus, my central task here is that of reconstructing the main contours of Husserl's new approach to indexicality. Following Husserl's suggestion that the discovery of the horizon puts phenomenology in the position to actually solve the problem of indexicals, I trace the development of the horizon-intentionality in Husserl's writings and show how the dynamic structure of the horizon invites the question of the genesis of expressibility. At the beginning of this reconstructive story lies Husserl's discovery of the noema in Ideas I: this notion, whose discovery goes hand-in-hand with that of the horizon, recasts the problem of indexicals in a new light and brings the realisation that both subjective and objective expressions have the same subjective origins of sense. Yet for Husserl, the horizon is not only the horizon of objects, but also the horizon of the world. In the final analysis, the presence of indexicals in scientific discourse proves to be a faint echo of the life-world from which scientific discourse springs.

Why should one ask whether indexicality constitutes a problem for phenomenology? Has this question not already been answered? And by raising it again, can one do anything more than indicate the conceptual basis that underlies the problem of indexicality in Husserl's phe-

nomenology? Clearly, when so much ink has already been spilled over indexicality in phenomenology, an inquiry into what constitutes its phenomenological sense comes too late, and thus, at the end of the day, such an analysis can only say too little.

Yet such a hasty judgement fails to grasp that these are loaded questions. Such a judgment presupposes that the sense in which indexicality constitutes a *phenomenological* problem has been fixed from the start. In what follows, I want to question this presupposition. I want to argue that, in fact, *indexicality does not emerge in phenomenology in its genuine problematic*; that Husserl's initial analysis of indexicality is primarily driven by concerns extrinsic to phenomenology; and that even though Husserl's early account is often interrupted by genuinely phenomenological counter-evidence, this counter-evidence is too lenient to counteract or resist the problem's exclusively epistemological resolution. Given the awkward fact that Husserl's early resolution constitutes almost exclusively the context within which his critics tackle indexicality as an allegedly phenomenological theme,² the question of indexicality's phenomenological sense, far from being superfluous, proves to be more than ever requisite, for in spite of, and even because of, the myriad of "readings of Husserlian indexicality," the question of what makes indexicality a phenomenological problem is not even raised.

Two central tasks will guide the following investigation. After describing Husserl's early view on indexicals in the *Logische Untersuchungen*, my first task will be that of demonstrating that Husserl himself unequivocally rejected this view in his later works, thus making clear that what is often considered to be the phenomenological problem of indexicals is by no means Husserl's last word on this issue. Yet no matter how unambiguous Husserl's rejection of his early analysis of indexicality might be, nowhere did he expound his new conception of indexicals. This state of affairs will bring me to my second task, that of reconstructing Husserl's novel conception of indexicality.

² See, for instance, Kevin Mulligan and Barry Smith, "A Husserlian Theory of Indexicality," *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, vol. 28 (1986), 133–63; Peter Simons, "Meaning and Language," in *Cambridge Companion to Husserl* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 106–38; Quentin Smith, "The Multiple Uses of Indexicals," *Synthese*, vol. 78 (1989), 193–215; Aaron Gurwitsch, "Outlines of a Theory of 'Essentially Occasional Expressions,'" in *Readings on Husserl's Logical Investigations*, (ed.) J. P. Mohanty (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978). Gurwitsch's essay is a praiseworthy exception to the otherwise general manner of engaging in occasional expressions, which hardly leaves any room for the question of the *phenomenological* sense of indexicality to be posed.

¹ In a slightly different form, this article has appeared as the opening chapter in my *The Origins of the Horizon of Husserl's Phenomenology* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012).

The Emergence of Indexicality in Phenomenology and the Immediate Suppression of Its Phenomenological Sense

By indexicals, or occasional expressions, we are to understand terms such as “you,” “it,” “here,” or “then,” that is, terms which essentially depend upon some kind of pointing or indicating. Consider, for instance, the following phrase: “Remember that coffee I used to make while living here? It had a flavour similar to the one he offers you now.” Clearly, the meaning of the noun “coffee” or of the verb “make” is established differently than that of the occasional expressions “that,” “he,” “here,” or “now.” In the case of the former, the meaning of the term is largely the same when employed by different subjects at different times and places; in the case of the latter, the meaning depends upon subjective contexts of use. So, if the noun “coffee” or the verb “make” is uttered by you or by me, in Europe or North America, at a coffee-shop or at a departmental meeting, its meaning remains largely the same; yet the meaning of the whole sentence, due to the presence of occasional expressions, varies accordingly.

Occasional expressions emerge as problematic in Husserl’s phenomenology in the context of clarifying the use of language in scientific discourse. This clarification is geared toward the apprehension that language employed in such contexts can be objective despite its palpable fusion with the contingent contexts within which scientific claims emerge. The task is to show that, even though scientific propositions are *context-emergent*, they nonetheless are not *context-dependent*. For such a purpose, the distinction between an *act of meaning-intention*, which is irreducibly contingent, and the *meaning of this act*, whose sense is independent of this contingency, proves crucial. That is, my *judging* that $2+2=4$ is in countless ways contingent and merely subjective; yet notwithstanding this contingency, the *judgement* itself is ideal and objective. Husserl believed that only if this distinction stands each and every test can one safeguard the objectivity of science by showing that it rests on a firm logical foundation. This foundation must secure the sense of the objective components of discourse as interrelations of meanings (rather than meaning-intentions) and show how they can enter into logical relations, which in turn would serve as a ground for scientific statements.

Yet, even though in countless cases the distinction between *meaning-intention* and *meaning* is indubitable, it is not trouble-free, and it is far from obvious that one can establish this distinction as universal. In fact, the perils are numerous, and the greatest threat is posed by indexicals.

Let me spell out what this threat amounts to with the help of the Aristotelian genus/differentia distinction. In the case of objective expressions, genus and differentia are determined attributively and, therefore, the meaning of the expression is independent from the context of its use. Yet in the case of occasional expressions, a determinate differentia is missing, and therefore their meanings are dependent upon the context within which such expressions emerge. Whether occasional expressions refer to times (“now,” “then”), places (“here,” “there”), persons (“she,” “he”) or things (“it, that”), their meanings rest upon the *familiarity with the contexts of their employment*. But if so, then the meaning of these expressions must be subjective rather than objective. We see thereby why occasional expressions emerge as problematic: (1) they limit the range of logical reason by indicating a domain that lies outside the logical grasp; (2) more important, if occasional expressions prove necessary for the knowability and application of scientific propositions (which they do, as will soon become clear), then they introduce doubts into the very plausibility of scientific reason.

Threatened by these hazards, Husserl unhesitatingly abolishes the very distinction between subjective and objective expressions. He does so by proclaiming that the content of each occasional expression constitutes an ideal meaning just as much as the content of an objective expression. Husserl claims that the viability of such a view is already established by the possibility (which admittedly remains always open) of replacing subjective expressions with objective ones. Let me identify this solution as “the replaceability thesis.” With this solution, Husserl proclaims the meaning of occasional expressions secured and the problem solved.

Yet as soon as the issue seems to be settled, Husserl voices his own uncertainties in regard to its plausibility, and in these uncertainties lurks the germ of the genuinely phenomenological counter-evidence to the problem’s all-too-quick resolution. Husserl remarks that the “replaceability thesis” is *only ideal* and, in fact, *practically unfeasible*. Just try to erase all occasional words from our language, just try to express each subjective experience in definite and objectively fixed terms; all such attempts, claims Husserl, are futile:

Freilich müssen wir dabei zugestehen, daß diese Ersetzbarkeit nicht nur aus Gründen des praktischen Bedürfnisses, etwa wegen ihrer Umständlichkeit, unterbleibt, sondern daß sie in weitestem Ausmaße faktisch nicht ausführbar ist und sogar für immer unausführbar bleiben werden.... Von diesem Ideal sind wir unendlich weit entfernt.... Man streiche die wesentlich okkasionellen Worte aus unserer Sprache heraus und versuche irgendein subjektives Erlebnis in eindeuti-

ger und objektiv fester Weise zu beschreiben. Jeder Versuch ist offenbar vergeblich.³

Thus, the ideal solution to the problem of occasional expressions is coupled with its practical impossibility. *Yet while the emergence of such counter-evidence was abrupt and unexpected, its disappearance is even more sudden and unforeseen.* Without providing any reasons, Husserl brushes off the doubts raised by the solution's practical unfeasibility, asserts the puzzle to be solved, and, with unbending obstinacy, proclaims the boundless range of objective reason (*Schrankenlosigkeit der objektiven Vernunft*). He declares: "*Alles, was ist, ist 'an sich' erkennbar, und sein Sein ist inhaltlich bestimmtes Sein, das sich dokumentiert in den und den 'Wahrheiten an sich.'*" (Hua XIX/1, 95)

Can such a conceptual framework be said to qualify indexicality as a *phenomenological* problem? Yes, insofar as this position is found in a text that belongs to the phenomenological canon. No, insofar as this problematic does not release, but rather suppresses indexicality's genuinely phenomenological sense. Leveling the difference between subjective and objective expressions for the purpose of securing the objectivity of scientific discourse should not be called phenomenological, unless, however, the plain fact that this view appears in a text by the founder of phenomenology is sufficient reason to characterise it as phenomenological. Such reasoning, however, is counter-phenomenological.

The Emergence of the Horizon and the Modification of the Distinction Between Meaning-Intentions and Meaning

Yet the crossroads at which we find ourselves is not that of either following Husserl or taking a different path. The confidence with which Husserl asserts the spelled-out conclusion in the first of the *Logische Untersuchungen* is no greater than the resolve with which he rejects it in his revisions to this work. Thirteen years after its first appearance, Husserl characterises his earlier treatment of occasional expressions and his defence of the boundless range of reason as *an act of violence* (*Gewaltsreich*):

³ Edmund Husserl. *Logische Untersuchungen. Band II/1. Husserliana XIX/1*, (ed.) U. Panzer (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983), 94–95. Henceforth referred to as Hua XIX/1.

Die Art, wie sie sich mit den okkasionellen Bedeutungen (zu denen doch, genau besehen, diejenigen aller empirischen Prädikationen gehören) abfindet, ist ein Gewaltsreich—die notgedrungene Konsequenz der unvollkommenen Fassung des Wesens der 'Wahrheit an sich' in den Prolegomena.⁴

Unfortunately, Husserl does not elucidate the reasons for his unambiguous change in perspective, and, even worse, neither here nor in any other of his works does he clarify his new perspective. Fortunately, however, he provides us with a few clues, which, if we follow them, hold the promise of disclosing indexicality in its phenomenological problematic.

Arguably, the most significant clue can be found in *Formale und Transzendente Logik*, in which Husserl remarks that the reason his early analysis of occasional expressions was inconclusive stems from the fact that in the *Logische Untersuchungen*, phenomenology was not yet in possession of the concept of the *horizon*:

In den Logischen Untersuchungen fehlte mir noch die Lehre von der Horizont-Intentionalität, deren allbestimmende Rolle erst die Ideen herausgestellt haben. Darum konnte ich dort mit den okkasionellen Urteilen und ihrer Bedeutung nicht fertig werden.⁵

However, just as in the revisions of the *Logische Untersuchungen*, so here as well, Husserl does not explain how the emergence of the horizon transforms the problematic of indexicals. We thus need to take a detour into the problematic of the horizon so as to see why its discovery is of such outstanding significance for indexicality as a *phenomenological* theme.

Let me begin by addressing how this notion is employed in everyday speech. My purpose is to single out three dimensions of sense that belong to this common word. On this basis, I will then show how phenomenology transforms this everyday word into a phenomenological notion.

The horizon is the line at which the ocean or the sea meets the sky. The horizon is the limit that constrains our visual field. Such a notion is of great interest to phenomenology, because it indicates that any

⁴ Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen. Erster Band. Prolegomena zur reinen Logik. Husserliana XVIII*, (ed.) E. Holenstein (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), Vorwort zur 2. Auflage, xiv.

⁵ Husserl, Edmund. *Formale und transzendente Logik. Versuch einer Kritik der logischen Vernunft. Husserliana XVII*, (ed.) P. Janssen. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 177.

phenomenon, if it is to appear at all, must exist within a horizon. Such belonging to the horizon as a necessary condition of manifestation is in no way restricted to perceptual phenomena. Not without reason do we speak of the horizons of knowledge, experience and interest. The Greek *horizein*, from which our notion of the horizon is derived, corroborates such an expansive use of the term: *horizein* means *to delimit*. We thereby obtain the first sense of the horizon: *the horizon is what delimits, i.e., what determines each and every phenomenon*; it is what allows objectivities to manifest themselves as meaningful.

The horizon, I remarked, is a line that marks the intersection of the sea and the sky. It is, however, a peculiar line: neither is it drawn, *nor can it be drawn*. If we were to draw it, we would already see what lies beyond it. By positing a limit, consciousness immediately removes it. However, the horizon is a limit that in principle evades determination: the more we approach it, the more it recedes. The outermost limit of the horizon draws back from us exactly to the extent that we advance toward it. This is the second sense of the horizon I wish to highlight: *the horizon is a limit that is in principle unsurpassable*.

Even though the horizon is unsurpassable, our concrete awareness of it can always be modified and enlarged. We enlarge our horizons by changing the situation in which we find ourselves: by drawing nearer to the indeterminate line, or by moving away from it. We thereby obtain the third sense of the horizon: *the horizon is relative to our current position*.

This brief analysis of how the notion of the horizon manifests itself in everyday speech generates three central dimensions of its sense: (1) the horizon is inseparable from delimitation and thus from the sense of appearing phenomena; (2) the horizon is a versatile limit, which is in principle unsurpassable; (3) the horizon is essentially relative in that it is dependent upon our situatedness. All three dimensions of sense are crucial for the phenomenological appropriation of this everyday word. Yet precisely because the phenomenological employment of this term is an attempt to expose “the logical instinct inscribed in everyday speech,”⁶ it cannot be only an uncritical adoption of how this notion figures in common usage. Therefore, the next step I wish to take is that of singling out two central dimensions of sense that belong to the horizon as a philosophical notion.

Consider the arresting example Merleau-Ponty provides in his *Phenomenology of Perception*:

⁶ See Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Hegel und die antike Dialektik,” in *Hegels Dialektik: Fünf hermeneutische Studien* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1971).

When I look at the lamp on my table, I attribute to it not only the qualities visible from where I am, but also those which the chimney, the walls, the table can “see”.... I can therefore see an object in so far as objects form a system or a world, and in so far as each one treats the others round it as spectators of its hidden aspects.... The completed object is translucent, being shot through from all sides by an infinite number of present scrutinies which intersect in its depths leaving nothing hidden.⁷

This example forcefully reveals what is distinctive about the phenomenological notion of *appearance*. While it belongs to the very sense of objectivity in that it can *appear*, an appearance itself is possible *only within a system of appearances*, within which each mode of appearance refers to others. This reference that each appearance draws to the system of appearances is precisely what constitutes the horizonality of the horizon. We thereby obtain the first sense of the horizon as a philosophical notion: *the horizon is the implicit system of reference (Verweisungshorizont) that embraces all appearances, according to which an actual appearance is an appearance of a particular objectivity*.

Yet, as we take a closer look at what this system of reference entails, we notice that it is primarily the presence of *potential* modes of appearance that are given along with the actual ones. To return to Merleau-Ponty's example, the manner in which the lamp on the table “appears” to the chimney or the walls is not merely entailed in my actual perspective; rather, these non-actual “appearances” *determine* the sense of what it means to see this particular object in front of me as a lamp. The implication of potentiality within actuality reveals the second sense of the horizon as a philosophical notion: *the horizon is the horizon of validity (Geltungshorizont)*. That is, the implicit reference to potential modes of appearance embraces the actual appearance; and only thus does the actual appearance become an appearance of a particular objectivity.

Yet the horizon does not exclusively belong to appearances; *the intending of these appearances* is just as much horizontal. For instance, not only does the sunset I see through my window appear within a horizon; my *seeing* of the sunset also has its own unique horizons. These horizons are of a temporal nature: each “now” carries with it the horizon of the past and the future. And just as the horizons proved to be not only systems of reference but also systems of validity in the case of appearances, so here, also, the co-presence of potential experi-

⁷ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (tr.) Colin Smith (New Jersey: The Humanities Press, 1976), 68–69.

ences (*Erlebnisse*) co-determines the sense of the actual ones. I do not know of a better illustration of this type of horizontality than the one we find in William James:

Into the awareness of the thunder itself the awareness of the previous silence creeps and continues; for what we hear when the thunder crashes is not thunder *pure*, but thunder-breaking-upon-silence-and-contrasting-with-it. Our feeling of the same objective thunder, coming in this way, is quite different from what it would be were the thunder a continuation of previous thunder.... The feeling of thunder is also a feeling of the silence just gone; and it would be difficult to find in the actual concrete consciousness of man a feeling so limited to the present as not to have an inkling of anything that went before.⁸

This is far from being an unusual experience. One colour succeeding another is modified by the contrast; silence sounds delicious after noise; in music, one set of sounds alters the feeling produced by others; and consciousness itself retains, as James has it, “a kind of soreness” as a condition of present experience.

At this point, my excursus into some of the central aspects of horizontality might seem more like a digression than a clarification of how the phenomenological sense of indexicality might possibly be unveiled. Yet this apparent digression significantly enriches the distinction between meaning-intention and meaning—a distinction which lies at the heart of Husserl’s early analysis of indexicality. As we have seen, the reason occasional expressions are problematic stems from the fact that their meaning appears to be permeated with subjective dimensions of sense which threaten to relativise the objective status of particular meanings. For this reason, Husserl found himself compelled to show that the relativity in question belongs only to meaning-intentions and not to meanings themselves. Yet the fact that the horizon embraces both appearances and lived-experiences means that the subjective dimensions are to be found at both levels. By this I do not mean to suggest that the subjective dimensions are present in the same way in occasional and non-occasional expressions. Yet the notion of the horizon forces us to recognise that the differences in question are of a *secondary* nature in that the subjective dimensions are always already *pre-given*, before the question of how expressions obtain ideal objectivities can even be posed. The emergence of the

⁸ William James, *Principles of Psychology, Volume I* (New York: Dover Publications, 1950), 240–41.

horizon thus signifies that the subjective dimension of sense envelops *all* expressions and is irreducible.

The transformation of the problematic of indexicality inaugurated by horizon-intentionality places us at the threshold of what I would like to call *phenomenology’s unique contribution to the problematic of the indexicals*. Commonly, our philosophical interest in indexicality rests upon the tacit assumption that occasional expressions constitute a different set of problems from non-occasional expressions.⁹ The possibility that the analysis of indexicals might reveal something essential about expressibility as a whole is dismissed from the start, although the grounds for such a dismissal remain unexplained. Phenomenology, particularly in its Husserlian variant, stands out as a tradition that aims to overcome this form of unhappy consciousness by inquiring into what occasional and non-occasional expressions share. Within this philosophical tradition, to thematise occasional expressions is nothing less than to question the origins from which all expressions spring.¹⁰ The emergence of the horizon places us at the

⁹ A detailed engagement with the widespread discussion of indexicals in the analytical literature lies beyond the scope of this investigation. Yet it needs to be acknowledged that this discussion, both in its classical as well as its more recent and most influential variants, has almost exclusively been motivated by the need to show what distinguishes indexicals from non-indexical expressions, rather than by the aspiration to reveal what all expressions share. See, for instance, Bertrand Russell’s analysis of the “egocentric particulars” in *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (New York: Norton Comp., 1940), ch. 7; David Kaplan’s analysis of indexicals in “Demonstratives,” in *Themes from Kaplan*, (ed.) J. Almog, J. Perry, H. Wettstein (Oxford University Press, 1989), 481–563; John Perry, “Indexicals and Demonstratives,” in *Companion to the Philosophy of Language*, (ed.) R. Hale and C. Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997); as well as Quentin Smith, “The Multiple Uses of Indexicals.”

¹⁰ Such a strategy is characteristic not only of Husserl’s phenomenology, but also of Paul Ricoeur’s hermeneutical phenomenology. Ricoeur engages the problematic of indexicals under the heading of “shifters.” His analysis serves a twofold purpose. First, it provides one with a criterion to distinguish between language as discourse and as a linguistic code. As Ricoeur puts it, “the system or code is anonymous to the extent that it is merely virtual. Languages do not speak, people do.” See Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 12–13. Second, the analysis of shifters enables one to provide a non-psychological account of the utterer’s meaning, without any mental entity being hypothesised or hypostatized. This is accomplished in virtue of the realisation that discourse itself entails a dimension of self-reference, which becomes particularly clear in the case of indexicals: “[T]he utterance meaning points back towards the utterer’s meaning thanks to the self-reference of discourse to itself as an event.” (*Ibid.*, 13) Ricoeur’s analysis of indexicals in Strawson’s works leads to the further realisation, which brings his analysis very close to Husserl’s, that: “Language is not a world of its own. It is not even a

threshold of such an undertaking. We now need to proceed further and see how the discovery of the noema provides such an enterprise with a more precise orientation.

Noematic Intentionality and the Rejection of the Early Analysis of Indexicals

Can the horizon safeguard objectivity from the threat of being reduced to something that is “merely subjective”? An inquiry into the problematic of the *noema* as thematised in *Ideen I*, in relation to the concept of the intentional act as addressed in the *Logische Untersuchungen*, will enable us to derive an answer to this question. I should emphasise from the start that by following such a path, I do not abandon the guiding thought that the horizon offers a new way to resolve the problem of indexicals. As we will soon see, *the noema fixes conceptually what has already been revealed phenomenally in Husserl’s analysis of horizon-intentionality*.

Such is the case because, in *Ideen I*, within the sections that mark the emergence of the noema (§§87–96), the fundamental problem that confronts phenomenology is that of obtaining the means to *fix* and *analyse* objectivity as a phenomenological residuum. That is, the question is *not* that of *showing* that objectivity does not lose its sense as objectivity after the performance of the *epoché* and the reductions. That objectivity persists as a necessary element of transcendental experience has already been determined in earlier sections of *Ideen I*, viz., in the sections which uncover the horizontal framework of *consciousness*. For this reason, when the noema is introduced in the third part of *Ideen I*, it emerges as an intrinsic dimension of horizon-intentionality.

Husserl had introduced the basic conceptual distinction which underlies the doctrine of the noema as early as the fifth Logical Investigation: “In Beziehung auf den als Gegenstand des Aktes verstandenen intentionalen Inhalt ist folgendes zu unterscheiden: der Gegenstand, so wie er intendiert ist, und schlechthin der Gegenstand, welcher intendiert ist.” (Hua XIX/1, 376) However, the manner in which this

world. But because we are in the world, because we are affected by situations, and because we orient ourselves comprehensively in those situations, we have something to say, we have experience to bring to language.” (*Ibid.*, 20–21) It is this recognition of the pre-givenness of the world as the ultimate source of expressibility that I would like to qualify as phenomenology’s contribution to the problematic of indexicality.

two-sidedness is interpreted in the works from 1900–01 and 1913 is significantly different. In the Investigations, everything that phenomenology has to say about the distinction between the object which is intended and the object as it is intended pertains to the description of intentional acts.¹¹ By contrast, *Ideen I* broadens the phenomenological field beyond the real immanence of phenomenological data: In the wake of the reduction, not only intentional acts but also their intentional correlates are shown to belong to the phenomenological reflection. In order to recognise the significance of this broadening, let us briefly turn to the manner in which Husserl thematises intentional acts in the fifth Logical Investigation.

Of central significance is the distinction Husserl draws between an act’s *matter* and its *quality*. Matter is the moment of the act which makes the object count as *this* object and no other; it determines that the act presents *this* object in *just this way*, i.e., in *these* particular articulations and forms.¹² While the matter of the act, also called the “interpretive sense,” is that element which first gives it reference to an object, the quality of the act determines its character: It determines whether what is given is intentionally presented as wished, asked, posited, etc. Husserl identifies quality and matter as indispensable moments of the act: Act-quality is unthinkable without act-matter, just as act-matter is unthinkable without act-quality. (Hua XIX/1, §21) Taken alongside each other, quality and matter compose the act’s *intentional essence*.

Although the intentional essence is indispensable for each and every objectifying act, it does not exhaust the act’s phenomenological description. One must also take into account the act’s *intuitive fullness*. Each and every presentation, be it perceptual, memorial, or imaginative, alters the object’s manner of appearance, depending on the act’s

¹¹ Thus the distinction in question is immediately coupled with another distinction: “die Unterscheidung zwischen der Gegenständlichkeit, auf die sich ein Akt voll und ganz genommen richtet, und den Gegenständen, auf die sich die verschiedenen Teilakte richten, welche denselben Akt aufbauen.” (Hua XIX/1, 377) Such a strategic move betrays the methodological decision to account for the different manners of the object’s givenness by taking into account only the acts of consciousness. Husserl expresses this unambiguously when, after introducing the mentioned distinctions, he proclaims that “Ihre weiteren Bedeutungen werden uns in den folgenden Untersuchungen erwachsen, in welchen wir einige wichtige Eigentümlichkeiten des phänomenologischen Inhalts der Akte ins Auge fassen und die in ihnen gründenden idealen Einheiten klären wollen.” (Hua XIX/1, 379)

¹² Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen. Ergänzungsband. Zweiter Teil. Texte für die Neufassung der VI. Untersuchung: Zur Phänomenologie der Ausdrucks und der Erkenntnis (1893/93–1921)*. *Husserliana* XX/2, (ed.) U. Panzer (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 2005), §25. Hereafter referred to as Hua XX/2.

intuitive vividness. Phenomena are given to us differently depending on the clearness and definitiveness of their manifestation, or on their becoming “pale in color or lost in the mist.” (Hua XIX/1, §21) And even though such intuitive differences are inessential as far as the givenness of objects is concerned (whether I am *vividly* aware of the back side of the birch tree in front of my window is irrelevant to my consciousness of it as a tree), they nonetheless directly modify the *manner* of the object’s givenness.

Having distinguished between the act’s matter, quality and intuitive fullness, let us turn back to Husserl’s guiding concern—the two distinct manners of being-conscious of an object. *While the act’s matter accounts for our consciousness of the object which is intended, the intentional essence of the act, taken along with the act’s intuitive fullness, accounts for our consciousness of the object as it is intended:* Such is the answer that the *Logische Untersuchungen* provides to the distinction which, a decade after the publication of this work, gives rise to the doctrine of the noema.

It is widely acknowledged that the problematic of the noema is conceivable only on the basis of the *epoché* and the reduction. Such is the case because the reduction announces a broadening of the phenomenological domain without which noematic considerations simply could not emerge. The reduction signifies that the intention directed toward the object and the object itself, *when taken as it lies within the intention*, are not only correlated with each other but also given with equal evidence within a phenomenologically legitimate framework.¹³ Husserl introduces the notion of the noema so as to cover that side of the correlation which remained unthematized in the *Investigations*: The object, *as far as it lies within the intention*, is nothing other than the noema itself. More particularly, the noema is that in virtue of which consciousness relates to objects, even though it itself, *stricto sensu*, is not the object of consciousness. The noema is the sense (*Sinn*) from which the objective directedness of the intentional act is inseparable.

To this day, the question of how this “transcendence within immanence” is to be determined remains a contestable issue. Is the noema, as an immanent entity in consciousness, a part of the occurring thought? Or does it refer to objects beyond thought? Or is it an abstract ideal meaning (*Sinn*) through which the object is given?¹⁴

¹³ See Rudolf Bernet, Iso Kern, Eduard Marbach, *An Introduction to Husserlian Phenomenology* (tr.) Lester Embree (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 95–101.

¹⁴ See Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London: Routledge, 2000),

A detailed engagement with this set of questions would take me too far afield. This problematic, which at times has almost led a life of its own, has generated two lines of interpretation, generally known as the West Coast (Føllesdal, Dreyfus, Smith and McIntyre) and the East Coast (Gurwitsch, Sokolowski, Drummond, Cobb-Stevens) positions. According to the first view, the noema is not what consciousness is directed toward, but rather, much like the Fregean *Sinn*, it is an abstract entity by virtue of which consciousness is directed toward objectivities. According to the second perspective, the noema is the object-as-it-is-intended, i.e., it is not an abstract entity, but the object itself, conceived only in terms of its givenness within the phenomenological framework. The attempt to mediate between these positions is just as old as these positions themselves.¹⁵

My central concern is not to express sympathies or antipathies with respect to any of these interpretations, but rather to show how the noema provides a new conceptual framework to thematise occasional expressions. Thus, in what follows, I will stay clear of this conflict of interpretations.

In *Ideen I*, precisely in the sections that introduce the problematic of the noema, Husserl critically engages with his account of intentional acts as presented in the *Investigations*. Here, he proclaims that his foregoing analysis of acts was *one-sided* in that it lent itself to both a noetic and a noematic interpretation:

*Kritisch ist hier zu bemerken, daß die in den ‘Logischen Untersuchungen’ festgestellten Begriffe des ‘intentionalen’ und ‘erkenntnis-mäßigen’ Wesens zwar korrekt, aber noch einer zweiten Deutung fähig sind, sofern sie prinzipiell als Ausdrücke nicht nur noetischer, sondern auch noematischer Wesen verstanden werden können, und daß die noetische Auffassung, wie sie dort einseitig durchgeführt wurde, für die Konzeption des reinlogischen Urteilsbegriffes...gerade nicht die in Betracht kommende ist.*¹⁶

155–60.

¹⁵ See Robert Solomon, “Husserl’s Concept of the Noema,” in *Husserl: Expositions and Appraisals*, (ed.) F. Elliston and P. McCormick (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977). An earlier version of this paper was presented in 1969 at the American Philosophical Association meeting as a response to Føllesdal’s “Husserl’s Notion of the Noema,” which appeared in print the same year.

¹⁶ Husserl, Edmund. *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie. Husserliana III*, (ed.) W. Biemel (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950), 195.

Husserl's critique does not consist in the rejection of the foregoing view as unwarranted, but rather in the realisation that the earlier analysis needs to be expanded so as to cover not only the noetic but also the noematic side of consciousness. Only by means of such a broadening can the analysis presented in the *Investigations* do justice to the distinction between the object *that* is intended and the object *as* it is intended. The introduction of the noema¹⁷ is thus meant to counteract the shortcoming with which the *Investigations* left us.

Of central significance is the distinction between three noematic components. The object given just as it is given in consciousness is what Husserl characterises as the *noematic sense* (let us say, a flock of geese flying over the river, *just as it appears*). Yet each noematic sense, due to its *horizontal* framework, co-intends other manners of the object's appearance, the totality of which is covered by the notion of the *full noema* (e.g., all other non-actual appearances of the flock of geese co-intended in each and every appearance). Finally—and here we touch upon yet another element of *horizontal* consciousness—each and every appearance of objectivity is itself intentionally related to the *noematic core* (the flock of geese as the pure “objective sense,” which remains identical in perceptual, memorial or pictorial acts). The latter is a noematic moment despite its *transcendence* in regard to particular noematic senses and to the full noema. In virtue of this transcendence, intentionality shows itself as a title which covers not only the essential feature of the conscious acts, but also of appearances themselves. We thus obtain the means to speak not only of *noetic*, but also of *noematic intentionality*—a notion of central importance for our purposes.

We need not overlook that these three noematic components closely relate to Husserl's earlier account of the act's matter, quality and intentional essence. First, the *noematic core* is the noematic correlate of the notion of *matter*. That is, just as I can, in virtue of the act's matter, perceive, remember or phantasise one and the same birch tree, so the perceived, remembered or phantasised birch tree can be one and the same in virtue of its noematic core. Second, the *noematic sense* is the noematic correlate of *intentional essence*, conceived as the unity of the act's matter and quality. Thus perceiving or imagining the birch tree has its noematic correlate in the birch tree as perceived or imagined. Finally, the notion of the *full noema* is the noematic correlate of the manner in which conscious acts intend the *object as it is given* in manifold presentations, i.e., while tacitly co-intending all the other modes of the object's givenness.

¹⁷ This concept was first used by Husserl in a pencil draft of *Ideen I* in 1912. See Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 156.

For the purposes of this investigation, it is of essential significance that the distinction between the noematic sense, the full noema and the noematic core reveals how consciousness, despite the subjective elements of sense that permeate the noema, can have an *identical* objectivity as its correlate. In virtue of objectivity's transcendence in regard to the noematic fluctuations of sense, one can characterise the object's identity in terms of its *ideality*: The *noematic core* is given to consciousness as an idea which is always correlatively related to the other noematic elements. Having obtained different dimensions of the noema, we are in the position to see that the subjective dimensions of sense, even when they are inseparable from *meaning* (rather than meaning-intentions), cannot corrupt the identical and ideal nature of those objectivities that *these meanings* intend. Thus, even if I were to exclaim, “Look at these birds flying there,” the subjective dimensions of sense which permeate this expression would not relativise the status of objectivity—the flock of geese itself. For such to be the case, these subjective dimensions would also have to relativise the noematic core—the flock of geese taken in a purely objective sense. Yet such simply cannot be the case: Appearances are relative not only in regard to subjective *Erlebnisse*, but also in regard to the objective sense which they perspectively intend.

One now sees that Husserl's rejection of his early solution to the problem of occasional expressions is not exhausted by the need to admit that not all subjective expressions can be replaced by objective ones. The reason is much more radical. The notion of noematic intentionality indicates that the very opposition between subjective and objective expressions, as it was employed in the *Investigations*, had not been thought through to its end. With the notion of noematic intentionality, we face a reversal of the standpoint from within which phenomenology finds itself compelled to address and thematise expressibility. Whereas in the *Investigations*, as we have seen, phenomenology starts with the assumption that expressions are for the most part objective and then proceeds to the recognition that there is a class of expressions that falls outside this general characteristic, *Ideen I* forces us to recognise that *all* expressions have an irreducibly subjective origin of sense. The discovery of noematic intentionality signals the exposure of a subjective dimension that equally envelops subjective and objective expressions. Since the noematic core itself is a necessary correlate of the other noematic moments, the subjective dimensions of sense that envelop the latter emerge as necessary conditions in bringing forth the ideality of objectivity. Thus the reversal of the standpoint of the *Investigations* is no longer threatening, because the opposition between noematic sense, the full noema and

the noematic core indicates that even though each and every expression necessarily has a subjective dimension of sense, its mere presence cannot corrupt the ideality of objectivity.

Seen from the perspective of *Ideen I*, just as formal logic is interested only in the noematic core and not in the fuller noemata of judgement (e.g., what makes one judgement evident and the other one blind is *meaningless* from the perspective of *formal* logic), so the objective expressions are those expressions which relate only to the noematic core and remain indifferent to the other noematic moments from which their emergence is inseparable. And just as formal logic calls for a transcendental grounding, can the objective expressions not also be said to be in need of an investigation directed at the phenomenological resources from which they spring?

The problematic of the noema reveals that the distinction between subjective and objective expressions cannot be employed as a presupposition in clarifying the ideality of scientific discourse. The source of this distinction must itself be located within subjectivity. Yet what exactly does this pre-givenness of subjectivity mean? And more important, how does it recast the very problematic of indexicals?

The Hidden Dimension of Horizon-Intentionality and the Sense of Indexicality as a Phenomenological Problem

In my attempt to reconsider indexicality as a phenomenological problem, I have shown that the emergence of horizon-intentionality gives rise to far-reaching transformations that pertain to occasional expressions. Of central significance was the realisation that the noema is an element of horizon-intentionality and that the different noematic elements reconfigure the relation between subjective and objective expressions. Keeping these transformations in mind, let us ask: Does horizon-intentionality generate a novel understanding of what constitutes indexicality's phenomenological problematic?

In order to answer this question, let us turn back to the above-quoted passage from *Formale und Transzendente Logik*. When Husserl argues that horizon-intentionality is indispensable for solving the problems caused by occasional expressions, his claim can be interpreted in a twofold way. It can be taken to mean that the notion of horizon-intentionality, as it unfolds in *Ideen I*, generates this new solution. Or it can mean that *this solution only lies within the notion of the horizon itself*, a notion which only emerges in the text from 1913, and is thus, as things in their emergence usually are, premature. There are a number of reasons that motivate one to choose the second alternative: (1) because of the absence of the notion of the horizon in those

parts of *Ideen I* on the basis of which I have offered a reconstruction of Husserl's solution to the problem of occasional expressions; (2) because of the absence of the theme of occasional expressions in *Ideen I* in general; (3) and most important, because the notion of the horizon, as analysed in *Ideen I*, is simply not robust enough to account for all the implications that horizon-intentionality, as a solution to the problem of occasional expressions, generates. Thus what has been said so far only intimates how the notion of the horizon needs to be deepened for the sake of engendering a novel phenomenological perspective on indexicality.

Indeed, soon after the publication of *Ideen I*, Husserl realised that his early analysis of horizon-intentionality was far from conclusive. Its fundamental weakness consisted in the fact that here the horizon was thematised exclusively on the levels of appearance and lived-experience (hence the inseparable bond that ties it to the noema). *The world-horizon*, as a necessary counterpart of these dimensions, remained unexplored within this text. Within the present context, I will characterise the world-horizon only in its most general features.

When we watch the sunset across the sea, we are aware that the horizon that limits our visual field is relative to our current situatedness. Yet we are also aware that we can occupy any other position within the horizon. Moreover, we are also aware that each change of position would bring about the expansion of the horizon. So our consciousness of being able to occupy a vast variety of different positions carries with it the awareness of a horizon that is no longer limited by our actual situatedness. To be sure, the horizon still remains *relative* in that it remains bound to our concrete position. Yet this bond no longer indicates its limit. The horizon reveals itself as *limitless*. This consciousness of a horizon that extends beyond all limits underlies our basic *world-experience*.

The world as horizon, as the *total-horizon*, entails dimensions of sense that remain hidden in *Ideen I* in that it can in no way be equated with mundane horizons that embrace particular objectivities. Rather, the world-horizon accounts for how each of these objectivities is already pre-given within the unity of experience, which is why we always feel "at home" in the world. To describe the world in its unique horizontality is thus to thematise its dynamic structure in its pre-givenness, to thematise it in a manner that reveals how the world itself underlies and gives rise to logical categories employed in scientific discourse, which in its turn transforms the world into the subject matter of its manifold undertakings. Such a thematisation of the world reveals how the subjective ambit of sense can obtain an objective dimension. The question of the pre-givenness of the horizon is there-

fore not merely that of realising how, for instance, the surface of a planet, composed of numerous atomic and chemical particles, derives its sense from the more rudimentary givenness of a landscape; or how the waste of salt water, composed of hydrogen, oxygen, sodium and about seventy other chemical elements, obtains its sense from a much more elementary appearing of the sea. The question of the pre-givenness of the horizon must also account for how our pre-scientific experience can be of such a nature that it lends itself to scientific analyses, and thus to scientific language.

Such a deepening of sense that qualifies horizon-intentionality at long last allows me to offer an answer to what I see as indexicality's *phenomenological* problematic. The horizon, conceived as the world-horizon, forcefully reveals what *Ideen I* already hints at: *Both subjective and objective expressions have the same origins, which lie in subjectivity's pre-predicative experience of the world.*¹⁸ The fact that the language employed in scientific discourse has not been able to dispel all subjective components should not be conceived as a threat to the objectivity of scientific propositions, and phenomenology should certainly not try to conceal this truly remarkable fact by generating theories that suppress the subjective dimension. Rather, this fact should be conceived as a faint echo of the hidden subjective origins from which scientific discourse springs. Indexicality should not be thought of as a peril, but rather as a continuously present clue that can direct phenomenological investigations into the pre-givenness of the world. Occasional expressions have such powers.

The soil of the earth may well be ignored when our interests exclusively pertain to why autumn leaves change colour, yet it nonetheless remains the source of life from which different types and shapes of plants and trees emerge. Similarly, even when our attention is exclusively absorbed by the differences between subjective and objective

expressions, these differences should not overshadow the much more basic fact that *all* expressions have subjective origins of sense. Indexicality as a phenomenological problem is first and foremost the problem of releasing the forcefulness with which indexicals reveal the common origins that all expressions share, and as such it is nothing less than the problematic of how scientific discourse emerges from, and within, the life-world.

While the question of how science emerges from the life-world is central to Husserl's phenomenology, nowhere in his works, to the best of my knowledge, did Husserl address this fundamental question by following the clue of indexicals. Even though it remains unclear how far Husserl followed the indicated path, I would nonetheless like to suggest that the set of issues outlined herein constitutes the phenomenological problem of indexicals with which his phenomenology has left us.

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¹⁸ The emergence of such a position can be traced back to Husserl's revisions of the sixth *Logische Untersuchung*. In these revisions, the relativity that in the original drafts of this work was claimed to pertain only to occasional expressions, is now further broadened so as to absorb all empirical claims. Significantly, Husserl does not merely speak of *okkasionelle Ausdrücke*, but also of *das Okkasionelle* as such—a subtle shift in terminology that announces the recognition of the significance of the surrounding world. Thus, already in 1908–10, Husserl writes: “Jede Bestimmung eines individuellen Objekts dieser Welt setzt voraus eine Beziehung der Bestimmung auf den okkasionellen Bestand.” (Hua XX/2, 373) In regard to the relation between indexicality and horizonality, consider also Husserl's following remark: “Jede individuelle Vorstellung hat einen Hintergrund, und dieses Bewußtseins-hintergrund, dem die Möglichkeit der Setzung eines Sachhintergrunds entspricht, hat gewisser Wesenseigenschaften. (374)