

Husserlian Phenomenology of Meaning : Across Language Boundaries

VERONICA CIBOTARU

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to investigate whether Husserl's theory of meaning can be applied to all human, natural languages, and if so, whether it can be considered as being universal. Husserl's theory of meaning of linguistic expressions is supposedly valid for all possible natural languages since it aims to discover the "*a priori* laws which determine the possible forms of meaning" as Husserl argues at the beginning of the fourth chapter of the *Logical Investigations*. I would like to examine whether Husserl's analysis and results, which he considers as being *a priori*, can be universalized to all human languages and whether, contrary to what Husserl claims, they are not indeed implicitly dependent on an empirical, *a posteriori* presupposition, which is the presupposition of one certain type of language that is characteristic of European languages.

My approach consists in juxtaposing Husserl's theory of meaning with an analysis of meaning modalities of languages that use ideograms, as for instance Chinese or Japanese. For this purpose I will draw mainly on the *Logical Investigations* since we find in this work the groundings on his theory of meaning. As I will show, the theory of meaning of *Logical Investigations* is based on a distinction between meaningful expression and expression considered as a pure sensitive phenomenon. Yet, this distinction appears to be less obvious in languages that use ideograms. In the *Logical Investigations* the simplest meaning unity is considered to be a linguistic expression (*Ausdruck*) that is not composed and cannot be divided in other expressions, but only to "sounds and syllables". Those sounds and syllables are not signifying parts of the expression but "parts of the expression as sensitive phenomenon". This distinction between expression as meaning unity and expression as a sensitive phenomenon is crucial since meaning arises through what Husserl calls an "essential phenomenal modification" (*wesentliche phänomenale Modifikation*) of a sensitive phenomenon.

However, when we consider linguistic expressions, i.e. words that are formed with ideograms, we realize that the distinction between meaning expression and sensitive phenomenon becomes less obvious since they are mostly formed by means of several ideograms which are not simple sounds or letters. Thus, they are not mere sensitive phenomena, but possibilities of meaning. Can we thus still describe the way those types of languages signify through Husserl's phenomenology of meaning? Or does it suggest that we would need to search for a different type of phenomenology? In order to answer this question, I will first show the main characteristics and principles of Husserl's theory of meaning. Then I will juxtapose Husserl's theory with the signifying modus of languages that are based on ideograms and show why they cannot be described through the strict framework of Husserlian phenomenology of meaning. Finally, I will suggest how we could describe phenomenologically the way those languages signify, and examine if we could, for this purpose, still take some elements of the Husserlian phenomenology of meaning though in a reconsidered way.

THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF HUSSERL'S PHENOMENOLOGY OF MEANING

One of the most fundamental grounds of Husserl's theory of meaning¹ can be found in the ninth paragraph of the first part of *Logical Investigations* called "The phenomenological distinctions between the phenomenon of physical expression, the meaning-conferring and meaning-fulfilling act".² Husserl

¹ By talking in the context of this work of a Husserlian theory of meaning we do not refer to meaning as such, which is, as Husserl shows it in the *Postscriptum* of the *Logical Investigations*, an ideal entity independent of consciousness, but rather to the relationship of consciousness to meaning, i.e., to the way words acquire meaning for consciousness.

² Husserl uses in this work the German notion of *Bedeutung* for the concept of meaning. However, starting from his lessons about the theory of meaning from 1908 and the *Ideas I* (par. 12-4), he clearly distinguishes *Bedeutung* from *Sinn* (sense), maintaining however in its fundamental lines the meaning of the concept of *Bedeutung* which he develops in the *Logical Investigations*. For our present study it is the concept of *Bedeutung* which is of interest since it allows us to understand how language conveys meaning, while the concept of *Sinn* is situated already on an extra-linguistic ground since it allows us to understand how meaning grounds every concrete act of perception.

Speaking And Meaning The Phenomenology Of Language

JG Myers



Speaking And Meaning The Phenomenology Of Language:

Speaking and Meaning James M. Edie, 1976 *Speaking and Semiology*, 1991 No detailed description available for Speaking and Semiology **Proto-Phenomenology, Language Acquisition, Orality and Literacy** Lawrence J. Hatab, 2019-10-25 Through his innovative study of language noted Heidegger scholar Lawrence Hatab offers a proto phenomenological account of the lived world the first world of factual life where pre reflective immediate disclosiveness precedes and makes possible representational models of language Common distinctions between mind and world fact and value cognition and affect miss the meaning laden dimension of embodied practical existence where language and life are a matter of dwelling in speech In this second volume Hatab supplements and fortifies his initial analysis by offering a detailed treatment of child development and language acquisition which exhibit a proto phenomenological world in the making He then takes up an in depth study of the differences between oral and written language particularly in the ancient Greek world and how the history of alphabetic literacy shows why Western philosophy came to emphasize objective representational models of cognition and language which conceal and pass over the presentational domain of dwelling in speech Such a study offers significant new angles on the nature of philosophy and language **Signs** Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 1964 Merleau Ponty was one of the few philosophers of today who never lost contact with brute reality and it may be that Signs will be read with regret in bringing to mind his untimely death yet with gratitude for the humanity and depth of philosophical insight into the world of lived reality which it offers *Journal of Individual Psychology* **Speaking and Semiology** Richard L. Lanigan, 2013-02-06 No detailed description available for Speaking and Semiology **The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary** Donald A. Landes, 2013-06-06 Maurice Merleau Ponty 1908 1961 is one of the central figures of 20th century Continental philosophy and his work has been hugely influential in a wide range of fields His writings engage in the study of perception language politics aesthetics history and ontology and represent a rich and complex network of exciting ideas The Merleau Ponty Dictionary provides the reader and student of Merleau Ponty with all the tools necessary to engage with this key thinker a comprehensive A to Z that provides summaries of all his major texts and articles clear and straightforward explanations of his terminology and innovative concepts and detailed discussions of the figures and philosophies that influenced his work The book also includes a philosophical introduction a chronology of Merleau Ponty's life and works and suggestions for further reading This dictionary is the ideal reading and research companion for students at all levels [The Collected Works of Edward Schillebeeckx Volume 5](#) Edward Schillebeeckx, 2014-09-25 *The Understanding of Faith* 1974 is certainly Schillebeeckx's most incisive English publication on theological hermeneutics It contains his principal ideas on this subject in which he progressively evolved the hermeneutic thinking that he was to apply in due course in his famous Jesus books The book centres on two issues how should the Christian message of God's kingdom be read in our day and age and can a present day interpretation of that message still be considered Christian In short what are the possibilities and limits of

the understanding of faith in our modern age Of course hermeneutics as such was not new to Christian theology Exegetes had been exploring interpretive processes for some time Schillebeeckx's innovation was to extend hermeneutic thinking to the possibilities and limits of interpreting the entire Christian tradition including its definition in systematic theology Inspired by the early Jürgen Habermas's new critical theory Schillebeeckx also expands criticism of ideology in various directions This was to influence generations of theologians after him right up to the present day

Phenomenological Approaches to Popular Culture Michael Thomas Carroll, Eddie Tafoya, 2000 Within popular culture studies one finds discussions about quantitative sociology Marxism psychoanalysis myth criticism feminism and semiotics but hardly a word on the usefulness of phenomenology the branch of philosophy concerned with human experience In spite of this omission there is a close relationship between the aims of phenomenology and the aims of popular culture studies for both movements have attempted to redirect academic study toward everyday lived experience The fifteen essays in this volume demonstrate the way in which phenomenological approaches can illuminate popular culture studies and in so doing they take on the entire range of popular culture

Merleau-Ponty Rosalyn Diprose, Jack Reynolds, 2014-12-05 Having initially not had the attention of Sartre or Heidegger Merleau Ponty's work is arguably now more widely influential than either of his two contemporaries Merleau Ponty Key Concepts presents an accessible guide to the core ideas which structure Merleau Ponty's thinking as well as to his influences and the value of his ideas to a wide range of disciplines The first section of the book presents the context of Merleau Ponty's thinking the major debates of his time particularly existentialism phenomenology the history of philosophy and the philosophy of history and society The second section outlines his major contributions and conceptual innovations The final section focuses upon how his work has been taken up in other fields besides philosophy notably in sociology cognitive science health studies feminism and race theory

Metalinguage and Identity David Evans, Manel Herat, 2025-09-18 How does language attain to rear view reflection and then timeless analysis How does language garner its conceptualisation in order to do this This book is an exploration of the process in which everyday narrative language can become reflective and then analytical Narrative language is viewed as a way of becoming within the flow of time and therefore life Evans and Herat show that there are levels in language that correspond with conceptual structures existing in the mind and in wider society which shape the formation of a metalanguage They explore how metaphor is an important creative tool in raising language to a more conceptual level in the constitution of a metalanguage The book considers the development of different strands of metalanguage for example mind based logic physically based metaphor and universal grammar to provide a fuller account of language and identity by challenging sweeping existential accounts of language By studying the formation and application of metalanguage the authors show it can help develop a more questioning dialogic critical pedagogy in education to accustom students to develop critical awareness

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