

The Relationship of Thought and Language in Husserl's Phenomenology

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Die Sprache ... bietet überhaupt und in vieler Hinsicht feine und wundersame Probleme¹

The relationship between thought and language was without doubt one of the most discussed topics in twentieth-century philosophy. Much attention was devoted to it both in the so-called continental and the analytical tradition. However, it is a rather widespread opinion that the importance of this question was underestimated and the problem was ignored at the beginning of the phenomenological movement, namely in the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl.

The aim of the present paper is to show that and how Husserl dealt with the relationship of thought and language and to discuss some of the questions that arise from the historical investigation. The first section does the groundwork by sketching Husserl's concept of thought and by explaining the fundamental distinctions within this concept and it also argues for the restriction of the issue of this paper to the concept of "signitive thought." The following three sections are devoted to three main approaches of Husserl's to the problem in question. First, it will be shown how his early work, *Logical Investigations*, argues for the unity of "signitive" thought and linguistic sign, then, I will consider Husserl's idea of the parallelism between structures of thought and language, and finally, the fundamental importance that Husserl ascribes to language with regard to scientific and intersubjective thought will be discussed.

1) Husserl's concept of thought

For the purpose of addressing Husserl's view of the relationship between thought and language, it seems to me very useful to begin with the question: What does Husserl actually have in mind when he speaks of *thought*?

¹ Edmund Husserl, *Gesammelte Werke (Husserliana)*, vol. XVII, 358 (= *Hu XVII*, 358) (As elsewhere in this paper, the emphasis is my own.)

According to his *Logical Investigations (LI)* the acts of thought are all “categorical acts” and all acts that are able to function as their parts (*Hu XIX/2*, 722). In other words, it is the entire group of intentional acts, which in the Fifth Logical Investigation Husserl refers to as “objectifying acts.” (§ 37) It is a distinctive feature of an objectifying act that “fulfilment” of its intention has a character of identification, thanks to which it can take on functions for cognition (*Hu XIX/2*, 585). This is precisely what distinguishes the objectifying intentions from the intentions of willing and wishing, for their fulfilment cannot have the character of cognition. *Ideas I* then adopts this approach and refers to “doxic acts” in contrast to “acts of emotion” and “acts of willing,” while only the former are also called “acts of thought.” (*Hu III/1*, 225)² To put it briefly, *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas* consistently separate the realm of thought from the realm of feeling and willing and characterise it primarily as a realm of “synthetically-categorially” formed acts (and their parts), i.e. as a realm of acts that are qualified to fulfil the function of cognition.

Then, among the acts of thought themselves, Husserl draws another important distinction. He contrasts the acts of categorial intuition (and their parts) with the acts of empty categorial meaning or categorial signification (and their parts), while the first are called “proper acts of thought” and the second “improper acts of thought” (*Hu XIX/2*, 722). Among the improper acts of thought Husserl includes “meaning-intentions of statements” and all “signitive acts” in the widest sense, whereas among the proper acts of thought he includes “intuitions of state of affairs,” and all “intuitions” in the widest sense (*Hu XIX/2*, 722). It is well known that the main difference between “signitive acts” and “intuitive acts” lies in the fact that signitive acts merely intend their objects in an empty way, while since intuitive acts have their objects given in bodily or imaginative presence, they are enriched by a certain extent of “fullness” of their objects.

Of Husserl’s later writings it is particularly the *Formal and Transcendental Logic (FTL)* that examines the concept of thought most closely. Here, the scheme is slightly modified. The act of thought is delimited as “every mental process in which the sense that is to become expressed becomes constituted in the manner peculiar to consciousness ... The process is called thinking, whether it is a judging, a wishing, a willing, an asking, or an uncertain presuming.”³ From this widest (Cartesian) concept of thought Husserl then separates “judicative thought” as thought in the specific logical sense. The delimitation of judicative thought corresponds broadly to the characterisation of the acts of thought from *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas*. Furthermore, in accordance with his earlier writings,

² The same distinction is made in *Ideas II* (cf. *Hu IV*, 181).

³ Edmund Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969) 23-24 (= *FTL Eng.*, 23-24). “...jedes Erlebnis, in dem sich bewusstseinsmässig der Sinn konstituiert, der zum ausgesrückten werden soll ... Es heisst Denken, möge es ein Urteilen sein oder ein Wünschen, Wollen, Fragen, Vermuten.“ (*Hu XVII*, 27-28).

Husserl distinguishes within this narrower concept of thought between “real thought” (“erkennend-prädizierendes Denken,” “eigentliches Denken”) and “verbal thought” (“begreifend urteilendes Denken,” “vages Urteilen”) (*Hu* XVII, § 16, § 42a). The difference between both types of thought is now conceived as a difference of modes of evidence. Verbal thought can merely demonstrate “distinct evidence,” in which an object is originally constituted as itself, but it is still missing “fullness of clarity,” whereas this fullness can be acquired only in the “real thought” that is marked out by “evidence of clarity” and that realises the adequacy of the things themselves (*Hu* XVII, 167).

For the purpose of the present paper, I will take into consideration only the concept of thought in the sense of doxic or objectifying acts. However, exploring the relationship of thought and language in this entire field would have necessarily exceeded the limited framework of an article, since Husserl’s concept of “proper” thought includes all intuitive givenness of categorially formed objectivity, and thus the topic would broaden to the extensive problem of the epistemological and ontological function of language in Husserl’s phenomenology. This question will be touched upon only marginally, while the main focus will be on signitive thought, the thought that intends its object without any intuitive givenness. First, I believe that the concept of signitive thought coincides broadly with the common understanding of the word “thought.” Second, this dimension of thought is for Husserl by no means a peripheral one; on the contrary, he claims that we think “to an incomparably major extent”⁴ signitively and that this kind of thought is of eminent importance for our psychic life.

2) Unity of signitive thought and language

Let us begin with the discussion of the first serious point of how Husserl addresses the relationship between thought and language. This is to be found in the *Logical Investigations*. As is well known, the series of the six *logical* investigations (the entire second part of *Logical Investigations*) begins with analyses of language (the title of the first investigation is “Expression and Meaning.”) In the Introduction, Husserl attempts to justify this methodical procedure by claiming that there is a certain inevitability of linguistic analyses for the exploration of logic and thought: “*only by their aid* can the true objects of logical research – and, following thereon, the essential species and differentiae of such objects – be refined to a clarity that excludes all misunderstanding.”⁵ Why is it so? Husserl suggests: “The objects which pure logic seeks to examine are, in the first instance, therefore given to it in

⁴ Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, Volume II, trans. J. N. Findlay (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970) 829 (= *LI II*, 829). “Zu unvergleichlich grösstem Teile” (*Hu* XIX/2, 727; *Hu* XII, 193).

⁵ Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, Volume I, trans. J. N. Findlay, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970) 249 (= *LI I*, 249). “...*nur durch ihre Mithilfe / der sprachlichen Erörterungen / sind die eigentlichen Objekte der logischen Forschung und, in weiterer Folge, die wesentlichen Arten und Unterschiede dieser Objekte zu unmissverständlicher Klarheit herauszuarbeiten.*“ (*Hu* XIX/1, 6)

grammatical clothing. Or, more precisely, they come before us embedded in concrete mental states which further function either as the *meaning-intention* or *meaning-fulfilment* of certain verbal expressions – in the latter case intuitively illustrating, or intuitively providing evidence for, our meaning – and forming a *phenomenological unity* with such expressions.“ (LI I, 250)⁶

Now let us investigate more closely the peculiar nature of this relation. Husserl's belief in an intimate connection of signitive thought and linguistic expression is already indicated by his use of the word “signitive” (mostly employed in the *Sixth Logical Investigation*⁷) and by its synonymous variant “meaning-conferring” (mostly employed in the *First Logical Investigation*). However, the description of the acts of signitive thought as acts that confer meaning to linguistic expressions does not intend to imply that there are two separate units, sign and meaning that appear independently; on the contrary, Husserl repeatedly emphasises that the act that constitutes the sign and the act that constitutes the meaning make up “*an intimately fused unity*.” (LI I, 282)⁸

What kind of unity is this? Husserl conceives of it as a “unity of founding“: “meaning is a variously tintured act-character, presupposing an act of intuitive presentation as its *necessary foundation*.” (LI I, 310)⁹ This thesis is developed in the *Sixth Logical Investigation* through an argument that the “empty thought” needs a sign as an “intuitive support.” The argument goes as follows: “A purely *signitive* act would be a mere complex of quality and matter, if indeed it could exist by itself at all, i.e. be a concrete experiential unity 'on its own.'

⁶ “/die Objekte der Logik/ sind gegeben sozusagen als Einbettungen in konkreten psychischen Erlebnissen, die in der Funktion der Bedeutungsintention oder der Bedeutungserfüllung ... zu gewissen sprachlichen Ausdrücken gehören und mit ihnen eine phänomenologische Einheit bilden” (Hu XIX/1, 8)

⁷ Husserl explains his terminology in a footnote: “I use this expression without specially introducing it as a term, since it is the mere translation of ‘meaning’. I shall accordingly often speak of *significative* or *signitive acts*, instead of acts of meaning-intention, of meaning, etc. ‘Meaning-acts’ can scarcely be referred to, since *expressions* are used as the normal subjects of meaning. ‘Signitive’ also provides us with a suitable terminological antithesis to ‘intuitive’. A synonym of ‘signitive’ is ‘symbolic.’” (LI II, 695) “Ich benütze diesen Ausdruck /*Signifikation*/ ohne besondere terminologische Ankündigung, weil er die bloße Übersetzung von Bedeutung ist. Ebenso werde ich öfters von *signifikativen* oder auch kurzweg *signitiven Akten* sprechen statt von Akten der Bedeutungsintention, des Bedeutens, u. dgl. ... *Signitiv* gibt auch einen passenden terminologischen Gegensatz zu *intuitiv*. Ein Synonym für *signitiv* ist *symbolisch*.” (Hu XIX/2, 567).

⁸ “eine *innig verschmolzene Einheit*” (Hu XIX/1, 45).

Formal and Transcendental Logic says in a similar way: “The latter (meaning), however, does not lie externally beside the words; rather, in speaking we are continuously performing an internal act of meaning, which fuses with the words and, as it were, animates them. The effect of this animation is that the words and the entire locution, as it were, *embody* in themselves a meaning, and bear it embodied in them as their sense.” (FTL Eng., 22) “/Meinung, Bedeutung/ liegt nicht äusserlich neben den Worten; sondern redend vollziehen wir fortlaufend ein inneres, sich mit Worten verschmelzendes, sie gleichsam beseelendes Meinen ... die Worte und die ganzen Reden in sich eine Meinung gleichsam verleiblichen und verleiblicht in sich als Sinn tragen” (Hu XVII, 26-27).

⁹ “Das Bedeuten ist ein so und so tingierter Aktcharakter, der ein Akt anschaulichen Vorstellens als *notwendiges Fundament* voraussetzt” (Hu XIX/1, 81).

This it cannot be: we always find it clinging to some intuitive basis.” (*LI II*, 738)¹⁰ This argument presupposes that every concrete realisation of an objectifying act has to consist of three components: intentional quality, intentional matter and intuitive content (*Hu XIX/2*, 620). Since the purely signitive act has no intuitive content of its own, it needs to be linked to the intuition of a sign. Thus, it comes as no surprise when Husserl simply states that “all thought ... is carried on by way of certain ‘acts,’ which occur in a context of expressive discourse.” (*LI II*, 667)¹¹

According to *Logical Investigations*, is there really no “realisation” of thought without language? I will attempt to demonstrate that a positive answer to this question would have to count with several fundamental restrictions.

In his analysis, Husserl discovers that the possibility of signitive thought is realised not by the founding intuition as a whole but only by its “representing” or “intuitive” content (*Hu XIX/2*, 619), since everything that exceeds mere intuitive content of intuition of a sign, i.e. all manner of apprehension and interpretation of this content, “can be varied at will without disturbing the sign’s signitive function.” (*LI II*, 739)¹² This can be seen as a claim of the arbitrariness of the sign, but on the other hand it obviously implies that Husserl does not attach any importance to the linguistic “material” for the functions of thought.¹³

Furthermore, not only do the shape and form of the sign not matter, but also the very existence of the sign. Husserl is convinced that signitive thought does not require the intuition of spatiotemporally existing linguistic signs, but it makes do with mere imagined signs:

In der Phantasie schwebt und ein gesprochenes oder gedrucktes Wortzeichen vor, in Wahrheit existiert es gar nicht. ... Die Nicht-Existenz des Wortes stört uns nicht. Aber sie interessiert uns auch nicht. Denn zur Funktion des Ausdrucks als Ausdruck kommt es darauf gar nicht an (*Hu XIX/1*, 42-43).¹⁴

Now, Husserl never states that imagined signs have to be derived from any factual language, that they are only the fantasy variation of pre-given existing signs.

¹⁰ “Der rein *signitive* Akt bestände als eine blosser Komplexion von Qualität und Materie, wenn er überhaupt für sich sein ... könnte. Das kann er nicht; wir finden ihn immer als Anhang einer fundierenden Anschauung” (*Hu XIX/2*, 619).

¹¹ “alles Denken ... vollzieht sich in gewissen ‚Akten‘, die im Zusammenhange der ausdrückenden Rede auftreten“ (*Hu XIX/2*, 537).

¹² “willkürlich variieren, ohne die signitive Funktion zu stören“ (*Hu XIX/2*, 619).

¹³ “Significative matter has a general need for supporting content, but between the specific nature of the former and the specific being of the latter no bond of necessity can be found” (*LI II*, 741). “Die signifikative Materie bedarf nur überhaupt eines stützenden Inhalts, aber zwischen seiner spezifischen Besonderheit und ihrem eigenen spezifischen Bestande finden wir kein Band der Notwendigkeit” (*Hu XIX/2*, 622).

¹⁴ “In imagination a spoken or printed word floats before us, though in reality it has no existence... The word’s non-existence neither disturbs nor interests us, since it leaves the word’s expressive function unaffected.” (*LI I*, 279).

The third restriction considers Husserl's conviction that there are signitive acts that may be realised without any connection to the sign. Husserl speaks of cases of "wordless cognition" in which "trains of thought sweep on to a large extent without bondage to appropriate words, set off by *a flood of intuitive imagery or by their own associative interconnections.*" (LI II, 716)¹⁵ It is also emphasised in a similar vein that "the reproduction of imaged words often lags quite far behind the trains of thought revived by each present intuition." (LI II, 716)¹⁶ The underlying argument implies that as inevitable intuitive support of the signitive thought "*any content* can function in this fashion, just as any content can function as the intuitively presentative content of an intuition" (LI II, 739)¹⁷. Hence, the intuitive content offered by the intuition of a sign may be fully substituted by the intuitive content of any other intuition, and thus in every case of the realised connection between the signitive thought and its fulfilling act there can be no talk of the inevitability of a sign for the signitive thought.

Let us briefly summarise the meaning of the restrictions mentioned above. It became apparent that Husserl takes only a certain realm of signitive thought as necessarily connected with language (with the intuition of the linguistic sign), namely the "purely symbolic" thought, i.e. the thought that appears without any connection to its fulfilling acts. Furthermore, the linguistic signs in question do not have to be the signs of any existing language, since the required function can be sufficiently fulfilled by a mere imagined sign, the origin of which in the framework of a factual linguistic community is of no interest as far as Husserl is concerned; hence, there is no necessary connection between linguistic material and thought.

But how shall we understand the claim quoted above that all thought appears in connection with the speech used to express it? Is it an "essential statement" or merely an expression of "matters of fact"? In the Introduction to the second part of *Logical Investigations*, Husserl describes the goal of his analyses as "a complete clearing-up of *the essential phenomenological relations* between expression and meaning, or between meaning-intention and meaning-fulfilment." (LI I, 258)¹⁸ Moreover, in the first edition of *Logical Investigations*, the phenomenology that is introduced in order to perform this

¹⁵ "...sich die vorwärts stürmenden Gedankenreihen zu sehr erheblichen Teilen nicht an die zu ihnen gehörigen Worte binden, sondern *durch den Fluss anchaulicher Bilder* oder *durch ihre eigenen assoziativen Verfelchtungen* erregt werden." (Hu XIX/2, 593)

¹⁶ "Reproduktion der Wortbilder hinter den *durch die jeweilige Anschauung reproduktiv erregten Gedanken* oft recht weit zurückbleibt." (Hu XIX/2, 593)

Cf. *Ideas I*: "/Das Wortbedeuten/ ja auch unabhängig vom Wortlaut (wie wenn dieser ‚vergessen‘ wäre) vorhanden sein kann." (Hu III/1, 285-286)

¹⁷ "...kann *jeder beliebige Inhalt* fungieren, wie ja auch *jeder* als darstellender Inhalt einer Anschauung fungieren kann." (Hu XIX/2, 620)

¹⁸ "...volle Klarlegung des phänomenologischen *Wesensverhältnisses* zwischen Ausdruck, Bedeutung, Bedeutungsintention und Bedeutungserfüllung." (Hu XIX/1, 19)

“Klarlegung“ is already characterised as “generally clearing up the ideal essence and valid sense of cognitive thought... Its aim is not to *explain* knowledge in the psychological or psychophysical sense as a *factual* occurrence in objective nature, but to *shed light* on the *Idea* of knowledge in its constitutive elements and laws.“ (LI I, 264-265)¹⁹ All this might support the opinion that Husserl speaks here of an essential connection of thought and language. On the other hand, if it is true that even signitive thought does not always need to be connected with language, then the unity of thought and language simply cannot be an “essential” one.

I suggest that Husserl avoids resolving this question and that throughout his entire philosophical career he obviously evades the issue of the essential necessity of a connection between thought and language. Thus, we can read in *Logical Investigations*:

Ob die Verbindung von Denken und Sprechen, ob die Erscheinungsweise des abschliessenden Urteils in der Form der Behauptung eine *aus Wesensgründen notwendige* ist oder nicht, soviel ist jedenfalls sicher, dass Urteile, die der höheren intellektuellen Sphäre, insbesondere der wissenschaftlichen angehören, sich ohne sprachlichen Ausdruck *kaum* vollziehen lassen (Hu XIX/1, 7-8).²⁰

And thirty years later, in such a mature work as *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, he continues to use similarly ambivalent diction: “*human* thinking is *normally* done in language, and all the activities of reason are *as good as entirely* bound up with speech.” (FTL eng., 19)²¹ Although Husserl always believes that our thought in fact normally goes hand in hand with speaking, he never furnishes serious proof of the radical inseparability of language and thought as such.

3) A priori parallelism between thought and language

Apparently in sharp contrast to the conclusion just drawn is the fact that from *Logical Investigations* to his latest writings Husserl stresses the “universality of overlapping of

¹⁹ “...allgemeine Aufklärung über das *ideale Wesen* oder über den Sinn des erkennenden Denkens. ... Sie will nicht die Erkenntnis, das zeitliche Ereignis, in psychologischem oder psychophysischem Sinn erklären, sondern die *Idee* der Erkenntnis nach ihren konstitutiven Elementen, bzw. Gesetzen aufklären” (Hu XIX/1, 26-27)

²⁰ “Whatever the connection of thought with speech may be, whether or not the appearance of our final judgements in the form of verbal pronouncements has a necessary grounding in essence, it is at least plain that judgements stemming from higher intellectual regions, and in particular from the region of science, could barely arise without verbal expression.” (LI I, 250)

²¹ “...das *menschliche* Denken sich *normalerweise* sprachlich vollzieht und alle Betätigungen der Vernunft *so gut wie ganz* an die Rede gebunden sind.” (Hu XVII, 23)

language and thought²² and speaks of an *a priori* correspondence between structures of language and structures of thought. On the one hand, Husserl strongly rejects the hypothesis that the structures of thought and language go absolutely hand in hand. On the other hand, he is firmly convinced that certain *a priori* structures and laws of thought have their parallel correlates in certain *a priori* structures and laws of language.²³ In the case of thought (logic), it is a matter of *a priori* laws of combining meanings into meaningful wholes, which serve to set “the *a priori* patterns in which meanings belonging to different semantic categories can be united to form one meaning, instead of producing chaotic nonsense.” (*LI I*, 493)²⁴ In the case of language, it is a matter of *a priori* laws, which Husserl calls “pure grammar“ or “purely logical grammar,” in order to distinguish them from empirically grammatical laws of factual language. In our context, it is very significant that Husserl conceives of this connection as an “unconditionally necessary”: “no *speech* is *conceivable* that is not in part essentially determined by this *a priori*... each is bound to this ideal framework.” (*LI I*, 525-526)²⁵ A sign system that is not endowed with the grammatical forms capable of expressing basic forms of possible meanings (i.e. basic logical forms) and does not subordinate to the purely-logical laws, is according to Husserl not worthy of the title “language” because it is missing what makes language language. Equally, thought that is not submitted to the purely logical laws is not what thought *ex definitio* has to be: “An understanding governed by other than the purely logical laws would be an understanding without understanding.” (*LI II*, 828)²⁶ The fact that both language and thought have to subordinate to the purely logical laws, is according to Husserl not something merely depending on “allgemein-menschliche ‘psychische Organisation,’” but something that involves the “ideal essence” of thought and language as

²² E.g.: “Thus we retain at the same time the universality of the coincidence between speech and thinking. These terms now designate for us, accordingly, two parallel realms, corresponding to one another as the realm of possible verbal expressions (locutions) and the realm of possible senses, possibly expressible meanings. In their intentionally combined unity they yield the two-sided realm of actual and concrete, sense-filled locutions.” (*FTL Eng.*,24). “Damit halten wir zugleich die Universalität der Deckung von Sprache und Denken fest. Das bezeichnet jetzt also für uns *zwei parallele Reiche*, einander entsprechend als Reich möglicher sprachlicher Ausdrücke (Reden) und Reich möglicher Sinne, möglicherweise ausdrückbarer Meinungen. Sie ergeben in ihrer intentional verflochtenen Einheit das zweiseitige Reich der aktuellen und konkreten, der sinnerfüllten Reden.” (*Hu XVII*, 28) Or elsewhere: “To the *unity of the locution* there corresponds a *unity of sense or meaning*; and to the verbal articulations and forms of the locution there correspond articulations and formations of the sense or meaning.” (*FTL Eng.*, 22) “Der Einheit der Rede entspricht eine Einheit der Meinung, und den sprachlichen Gliederungen und Formen der Rede entsprechen Gliederungen und Formungen der Meinung.” (*Hu XVII*, 26) Cf.: (*Hu XIX/1*, 18)

²³ Cf. *Hu XIX/1*, 4. Untersuchung; *Hu XIX/1*, Einleitung, § 4.

²⁴ “...nach welchen apriorischen Formen Bedeutungen der verschiedenen Bedeutungskategorien sich zu einer Bedeutung vereinen, statt einen chaotischen Unsinn zu ergeben“ (*Hu XIX/1*, 302).

²⁵ “...*keine Sprache ist denkbar*, die durch dieses Apriori nicht *wesentlich* mitbestimmt wäre ... an dieses ideale Gerüst ist jede gebunden.” (*Hu XIX/1*, 347)

²⁶ “Ein Verstand mit anderen als den reinlogischen Gesetzen wäre ein Verstand ohne Verstand.” (*Hu XIX/2*, 726).

such (*Hu XIX/2*, 726-727; *Hu XIX/1*, 348). Language is in its very essence a parallel to thought and thought is in its very essence a parallel to language.

However, it would surely be mistaken to conclude now that Husserl ascribes “equal originality” to both language and thought, so that they might be regarded (in a Saussurean way) as two sides of a paper sheet. Husserl’s description of the parallelism in question implies a certain hierarchy and teleology that disturbs the idea of “equal originality.” In *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I*, Husserl illustrates the relationship of language and thought (particularly of their structures) using a metaphor of “mirroring.” According to this image, there are not two intertwined layers reflecting each other, standing face to face, but there is only one mirror, namely language, that ought to “mirror faithfully” the structures and materials of thought (meanings) (*Hu XIX/1*, 4. Untersuchung, § 4; *Hu III/1*, § 124).²⁷ The essential core, which is to be mirrored, is the purely logical structures and laws. According to Husserl, non-logical grammatical structures and regularities of factual languages are mere empirical “clothing,” in which the ideal logical grammatical framework comes more or less obviously into play.²⁸ Husserl even speaks of an ideal case as a factually unfeasible end: “The ideal of logically adequate language is that of language which can give unambiguous expression to all possible matters and all possible categorial forms.” (*LI II*, 824)²⁹

This evident hierarchy, as presented by *Logical Investigations*, seems to be radically reverted in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, as thirty years later Husserl explicitly comes back to the idea of the purely logical grammar. Now, in seemingly striking contrast to *Logical Investigations*, he writes:

Der ganze Halt der Formenbildung / der reinen Formenlehre der Urteile / ist die Rede mit ihren an die sinnlich abgehobenen Zeichen und ihre sinnlichen Konfigurationen sich heftenden und wohl unterschiedenen Indikationen und Sinnverweisungen. ...

²⁷ “soll ... die Sprache in ihrem verbalen Material die *a priori* möglichen Bedeutungen *getreu widerspiegeln*, so muss sie über die grammatischen Formen verfügen, welche allen unterschiedbaren Formen der Bedeutungen einen unterscheidbaren ‚Ausdruck‘ ... zu verleihen gestatten.” (*Hu XIX/1*, 313)

²⁸ “Considered from the standpoint of grammar, it must lay bare an ideal framework which each actual language will fill up and clothe differently, in deference either to common human motives or to *empirical motives that vary at random*... They prevail over their empirical-grammatical expressions, and resemble an absolutely fixed ideal framework, more or less perfectly revealed in *empirical disguises*.” (*LI II*, 525-526) “Vom Standpunkt der Grammatik aus betrachtet, legt sie /die reine Formenlehre der Bedeutungen/ ein ideales Gerüst bloss, das jede faktische Sprache, teils allgemein menschlichen, teils zufällig wechselnden empirischen Motiven folgend, in verschiedener Weise *mit empirischem Material ausfüllt und umkleidet*. ... Gegenüber den empirisch-grammatischen Ausprägungen sind sie /apriorische, im idealen Wesen der Bedeutungen wurzelnde Bestände/ also das an sich Erste und gleichen in der Tat einem absolut festen, sich *in empirischer Umkleidung* mehr oder minder vollkommen bekundenden ‚idealen Gerüst‘“ (*Hu XIX/1*, 347-348).

²⁹ “Das Ideal der logisch angemessenen Sprache ist dasjenige einer Sprache, welche allen möglichen Stoffen und allen möglichen kategorialen Formen eindeutigen Ausdruck verschaffen würde.” (*Hu XIX/2*, 721)

*Ohne die bestimmte Artikulation der vagen Urteile mittels der sinnlichen Artikulation der Wortzeichen wäre eine Formenlehre und eine Logik überhaupt nicht möglich, wie selbstverständlich auch keine Wissenschaft (Hu XVII, 75-76).*³⁰

Husserl sees no coincidence and no absurdity in the fact that the formal logic lets the grammar be its lead because “a distinctness merely in the rhythmic of a verbal indication”³¹ suffices for evident “self-giveness” of judgements in the sense of a purely logical theory of forms (*FTLeng*, 179).

Is there a significant shift in Husserl’s view of hierarchy in the parallelism of thought and language? Does Husserl come to the opinion that the primary and determining element is language? This would be a hasty conclusion. *Formal and Transcendental Logic* agrees with *Logical Investigations* in the conviction that it is not the grammar in the sense of grammatical descriptions of factual languages, but the “grammatical itself” that shall lead the logic. In both works, this “grammatical itself” is conceived as a purely *logical* element, as a logical core of every thinkable language. The passage from *Formal and Transcendental Logic* quoted above merely expresses Husserl’s constantly growing interest in the role of language within the very usual manner of thinking, in which we passively join the already existing thought formations and let the traditional ways of articulation lead us.³² While in *Logical Investigations* Husserl notes that the reproduction of words often still lags behind the reproduction of thoughts, in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, on the contrary, he emphasises that in our everyday life we are used to listening and reading passively, i.e. we are used to associatively following empty indications of words, without any explicit intention with respect to what we listen to and read (*Hu* XIX/II, 593; *Hu* XVII, 61 nn., 223 n., 323 nn.). Habitual associative ways of connecting words and speeches can and often do serve us as indications of thoughts, thought formations and whole thought connections, which we do not

³⁰ “The whole support of form-construction is speech, with its well-differentiated indications, its references to sense, which attach to the sensuously differentiated signs and their sensuous configurations... Without the definite articulation of vague judgments by means of the sensuous articulation of verbal signs, no theory of forms, no logic whatever would be possible – and, of course, no science either.” (*FTL Eng.*, 70-71)

³¹ “...eine bloße Deutlichkeit in der Rhythmik sprachlicher Indikationen.” (*Hu* XVII, 187)

³² “Very often we judge on the basis of judgment-apperceptions, passively received categorial thoughts that come to our mind, but do so indirectly, on the basis of our similar earlier formations... Like things that come to mind memorially, they are formulated by us, for our action of predicative judgment, at first in words that offer themselves associatively, without our performing, on that account, the explicit action of judgment implicitly referred to.” (*FTL Eng.*, 325) “Sehr gewöhnlich urteilen wir auch auf Grund von Urteilsapperzeptionen, von passiv, aber indirekt auf Grund unserer früheren ähnlichen Bildungen uns zukommenden, uns einfallenden, kategorialen Gedanken ... So wie Erinnerungseinfälle erfassen wir sie für unsere prädikative Urteilsaktion zuerst in sich assoziativ darbietende Worte, ohne darum die explizite Urteilsaktion herzustellen, auf die hierbei implizite verwiesen ist.” (*Hu* XVII, 323)

even yet perform in an active original manner.³³ But in spite of all this, it is obvious that Husserl's later writings preserve the primacy of thought (logic, meaning) over language: "regardless of whether an act is functioning to bestow meaning on words or may have the capacity to do so, it has in itself a sense-content. Thus we need to liberate the concept of sense from the relation to expression."³⁴

4) Scientific thought and language

In *Logical Investigations* it is already clearly stated with regard to science that "only *in written work* has it a rich relational being limited to men and their intellectual activities: in this form it is propagated down the millennia, and survives individuals, generations and nations." (LI I, 60)³⁵

Alle theoretische Forschung ... terminiert doch zuletzt *in Aussagen*. Nur in dieser Form wird die Wahrheit und speziell die Theorie zum bleibenden Besitztum der Wissenschaft, sie wird zum urkundlich verzeichneten und allzeit verfügbaren Schatz des Wissens und des weiterstrebenden Forschens. (*Hu* XIX/I, 7)³⁶

However, this historical or genetic point of view has been systematically eliminated from Husserl's analyses for a long time. The objectivity of scientific thought-formations was initially investigated only in its static correlation to corresponding intentions. After the genesis of sense and the genesis of scientific objectivity had become a real issue in Husserl's philosophy, he began to increasingly take into account the fact that the sense of intersubjective and scientific thought is essentially bound to tradition and to the process of communication, i.e. to something that is broadly dependent on language.

Hence, *Logical Investigations* mentions the importance of language for scientific thought, but still interpreting language as a mere auxiliary and external performance for scientific reasoning and as an empirical aspect that is essentially related to the "specific

³³ "Was in unserem praktischen Horizont liegt, als das zu Gestaltende, ist die noch unbestimmte Vorstellung eines Gebildes, das schon sprachliches Gebilde ist. Der Gedanke, der uns vorschwebt und den wir innerlich zur Aussprache bringen, ist schon doppelseitig, aber noch unvollkommen bestimmt." (*Hu* XVII, 359)

³⁴ "Gleichgültig, ob ein Akt in solcher Funktion steht, Worten Bedeutung zu verleihen und vielleicht verleihen zu können, hat er in sich selbst einen Sinnesgehalt. Den Begriff des Sinnes müssen wir also von der Beziehung auf Ausdrücke befreien." (*Hu* XVII, 374) Or (with regard to the objective side of thought): "das Sprachliche daran, etwa nach nationaler Sprache wechselnd, ist dabei irrelevant. Es hebt sich in dieser Variationen des bloss Sprachlichen der reine Gedanke, die reine Bedeutung ab." (*Hu* XVII, 374)

³⁵ "...nur *in der Form von Schriftwerken* ... pflanzt sie sich durch die Jahrtausende fort und überdauert die Individuen, Generationen und Nationen." (*Hu* XVIII, 27-28)

³⁶ "All theoretical research... nonetheless terminates in a *statement*. Only in this form can truth, and in particular the truth of theory, become a lasting possession of science, a documented, ever available treasure for knowledge and advancing research." (LI I, 250)

human side of sciences.” (*Hu XVIII*, 230, 167)³⁷ They tie the inevitability of language for scientific thought to the limitedness of human understanding that is declared to be an empirical fact *a fortiori* (*Hu XVIII*, §§ 54-55).

However, in Husserl’s later writings, it is precisely the limitedness of human capacities and the need for language that becomes constitutive for the intentional life of transcendental subjectivity (intersubjectivity).³⁸ Thus, in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, Husserl speaks of “linguistic expression” as an “essential presupposition” of intersubjective and scientific thought: “The problem of constitution is again broadened when we recall that verbal expression, which we excluded from our considerations of logic, is an essential presupposition for intersubjective thinking and for an intersubjectivity of the theory accepted as ideally existing.” (*FTL Eng.*, 188)³⁹ In *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, Husserl does not further develop this idea, but he devotes attention to it in the famous manuscript that has become known as *The Origin of Geometry (OG)* (*Hu VI*, *Beilage III*).

This text, very interesting in many other respects, attempts to demonstrate that the objects of scientific thought are what they are, i.e. have the sense of objects that are accessible in their validity or invalidity for everyone and for all time, only thanks to linguistic communication and interpersonal understanding. Only in a linguistic “body” can a thought enter interpersonal communication and become objectively valid. *The Origin of Geometry* can be seen as a climax of a rising tendency in Husserl’s philosophy, a tendency to regard objectivity as essentially bound to intersubjectivity and on a certain level also to linguistic communication. However, it seems to be undisputed that Husserl counts on language only for the constitution of “higher” objectivities (and thought formations) and that for the wide “basic” level of intersubjective constitution, pre-linguistic “empathic understanding” suffices.⁴⁰

The Origin of Geometry also develops the idea of “habitualisation of thought formations,” which has already been touched upon in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*. Language fulfills a very important function, as it makes possible “the unavoidable sedimentation of mental products in the form of persisting linguistic acquisitions, which can

³⁷ “It has its roots in our general human constitution, in the main, in our mental constitution, since this is more important for logical technology, but also in part in our physical constitution.” (*LI I*, 174) “Sie /blosse Hilfsverrichtungen der Wissenschaft/ gründen also in der allgemeinen Konstitution des Menschen und zwar nach dem einen ... Teile in der psychischen und nach dem anderen Teile sogar in der physischen Konstitution.” (*Hu XVIII*, 167)

³⁸ E.g.: *Hu VI*, 373-375.

³⁹ “Das konstitutive Problem erweitert sich abermals, wenn wir daran denken, dass der von unserer logischen Betrachtungen ausgeschlossene sprachliche Ausdruck für ein intersubjektives Denken und für eine Intersubjektivität der idealiter seiend-geltenden Theorie *Wesensvoraussetzung* ist.” (*Hu XVII*, 195)

⁴⁰ Cf. *Ideas II* (*Hu IV*), *Cartesian Meditations* (*Hu I*); for further discussion, cf. Dan Zahavi, Husserl and Transcendental Intersubjectivity: a Response to the Linguistic-Pragmatic Critique (Ohio: 2001).

be taken up again at first merely passively and be taken over by anyone else⁴¹. It is an “essential intuition“ that scientific thought (particularly in the framework of deductive sciences) requires sedimentation through language because a constant “reactivation” of all foregoing steps would have to put a stop to any scientific progress. Limitedness and finality of both individual and collaborative capacities is no longer a mere empirical fact (as it was in *L/I*) but it is a constitutive moment of the sense of science as such. Hence, language is no longer “external auxiliary performance” but it is a necessary condition of constituting scientific thought formations and their complex connections as such.⁴²

⁴¹ Edmund Husserl, The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970) 362. “...die *unvermeidliche* Sedimentierung der geistigen Erzeugnisse in Form verharrender sprachlicher Erwerbe, die zunächst nur passiv wieder aufgenommen und von beliebigen Anderen übernommen werden können.” (*Hu VI*, 372)

⁴² For further discussion of OG, cf.: Jacques Derrida, Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: an Introduction, (New York: 1978).