

**ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEM OF REFERENCE :
PHENOMENOLOGY, HERMENEUTICS AND
DECONSTRUCTION (1)**

Introduction

The present studies seek to explore some aspects of the problems of intentionality and reference. After an initial formulation of the emergence of the thesis of intentionality in Franz Brentano, I seek to mark out the specific ways in which Husserl develops the theme of intentionality in the form of his celebrated theory of noesis and noema. Distinguishing Husserl's phenomenological approach from that of Brentano, I next raise the question of the status of the noema in Husserl's theory. I now follow the recent suggestion of Follesdal and others and sketch out the interpretation of noema modelled on the Fregean distinction of sense and reference. I then explore the relationship between a phenomenological theory of act meanings and a semantic theory of linguistic meaning.

But the Fregean semantics of sense and reference does not significantly depend on the distinction between speech and textual discourse. At the next level, I introduce this distinction by way of Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory and then consider the problem of intention and reference at the level of speech and at the level of writing.

While Ricoeur's hermeneutics does clearly distinguish the phenomena of speech and those of writing and also recognises

the specific functionalities and privileges of writing or textual discourse, yet it does not undermine this distinction itself.¹ Hence, in the last movement of these studies, I take up the deconstructionist argument concerning the opposition of speech and writing and following Derrida, I try to show what happens to the ideas of sense and reference and to the idea of intending subject within the deconstructionist critique of phenomenology and transcendental hermeneutics.²

PART I

The Preparation in Brentano

It is almost universally claimed that Brentano's formulation of the intentionality of mental phenomena in *Psychology from an Empirical Point of View* inaugurates a new turn to realism in contemporary philosophical thought. But the text, brief as it is, is, as it were, fractured from within at the same time, including two entirely different perspectives on the relationship of the mind to the object. I shall try to indicate the different strata of thought implicitly held in solution, as it were, in the passage and then try to show, how, out of this density and polysemy of the text from Brentano, different configurations of intentionality may be said to emerge.

To quote the celebrated text: "Every psychical phenomenon" Brentano writes, "is characterized by what the scholastics called intentional and (also mental) inexistence of the object and what we would call, a relation to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood here as something real) or immanent objectivity. Each psychological phenomenon includes something as object within itself although not always in the same way. In a presentation, something is presented,

in a judgement something is affirmed or denied; in love, something is loved; in hatred, something is hated, in desire, something is desired etc.”³

In order to study the concealed problematics of this passage, I would like to offer a few preliminary orienting remarks. First of all, it may be noticed that Brentano gives cognitive as well as affective and volitional examples in the same format; judgement, perception, feeling, willing — all mental phenomena are presented as conforming to the same pattern of intentional structure. This may be important, for, when we explore the scholastic background of the doctrine of intentionality, we shall see that the scholastics distinguish two paradigms of intentional reference—in the order of knowing and in the order of willing.

In Brentano's text, two different conceptions of intentionality are juxtaposed, as if they are homogeneous. The first may be called immanent existence; this idea is expressed by such terms as 'mental in-existence', 'intentional inexistence', 'immanent objectivity' etc. The second may be called relational, insofar as it suggests relation to a content, direction towards an object etc. These two give rise to very different conceptions of intentionality and hence they may be called different paradigms or models of intentionality. But the point I want to make immediately is that both the models of intentionality have a scholastic background, only in two different philosophical contexts.

As Brentano himself points out, the language of intentional or mental inexistence is a scholastic usage. The scholastics used intentional and objective interchangeably. Objective, for them, meant the mode of being in consciousness which the cognitive image or species has. The idea that the intentional object is immanent as the object present in the knower is found in

Aristotle. Later Aristotelian tradition distinguished intentional or objective being from real being. This theory of Aristotelian intentionality arose in the epistemological context – in order to explain how the knower can, in a certain sense, be the object he knows, without becoming like that object ‘physically’. The intentional object is the representative in the knower; this representative image the Aristotelians called the cognitive species; they also called it the ‘*intentio*’.⁴ The species makes possible the *intentional identity* of the knower and the known. Thus, for the Aristotelian tradition, intentionality is a mode of being. Furthermore, for Brentano, intentionality distinguishes the non-physical from the physical, whereas for the Aristotelian tradition, it is a bond of union between reality and the knowing mind. The intentional object is that through which the real object is known, rather than that which is known in itself. We know the real object via the medium of the intentional object. This is closer to Husserl’s idea of the noema as that which directs the act to its object.

But what about the second sense of intentionality in the form of directedness to an object? Does this also have an Aristotelian source? If we look at Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, where he discusses will, desire, appetite etc., there is something very similar to the second sense distinguished by Brentano. Here ‘*intentio*’ is the form of striving after, grasping, or an impulse towards something.⁵

To sum up: The first sense of intentionality as presence in consciousness is an Aristotelian idea but it occurs in the order of knowing, whereas the second idea as a direction toward something is also Aristotelian but it is functional in the order of willing. Hence in Aristotle, the intentionality of knowing is

different from the intentionality of willing, but Brentano brings them together.

A second issue which is implicit in the passage is the access to the characteristic in question, whether it is taken as an immanent presence or a relation to something outside. The essence of the mental, Brentano suggests, is this characteristic of intentionality. But how do we prove this? Since intentionality appears to be a simple unanalysable characteristic, in a sense, there can be no proof possible here. Only an attentive inspection of mental states can show us this. But an attentive inspection of mental states is a psychological description. But the claim about intentionality is a claim about proper or valid psychological statements, and must be meta-psychological, rather than itself a psychological statement. In response to this, we can say that Brentano's appeal is not merely psychological, i.e., what he calls an attentive description of mental states is not really introspection; on the contrary, it may be claimed that what he is doing is phenomenological and not psychological description. Or, we can take Brentano's claim to be, not about mental phenomena, but about the logical features of sentences about such phenomena. Using Quine's notion of 'semantic ascent' and Carnap's distinction between formal and material mode, we can reformulate Brentano's thesis as a thesis about *language* rather than about facts.⁶ The problem here would be to have a proper account of the relationship between the phenomenological and semantic levels of description.

But even prior to this issue of the modes of presentation of the theory, either as phenomenological or linguistic, one may ask what is it that a theory of intentionality is supposed to explicate, what are the problems or issues for which we require a theory of intentionality. Since MacIntyre and David Woodruff-Smith discuss this question of the explicandum of a theory of

intentionality most elaborately and insightfully, I propose to briefly summarise their discussion at this point.⁷ They show that intentional relations are peculiar and are radically different from ordinary relations in two ways, which they call *existence independence* and *conception dependence*. Compare an intentional relation like 'X believes P' with a non-intentional relation like 'X hits P'. Like an intentional relation, a non-intentional relation also relates a person to an object. But a non-intentional relation like 'X hits P' can obtain only when both X and P exist. In this sense, a non-intentional relation is existence dependent. But X can believe P even though P does not exist. We may therefore say intentional relations are *existence independent*. (But it may be noted that it is independent, only of the object, P, and not of the subject X).

Suppose X is taller than Napoleon. 'Taller than' is a non-intentional relation and it relates X to Napoleon irrespective of any conception or idea X may or may not have about Napoleon. Now, Napoleon was, in fact, the lover of Josephine but X may not know this. But irrespective of this, if "X is taller than Napoleon" is true, then "X is taller than the lover of Josephine" also is true. In fact, the non-intentional relation would obtain even if X does not even know that there was a person named 'Napoleon'. We may say that a non-intentional relation relates the terms between which it holds under all descriptions of the terms i.e., it does not depend upon any particular conception or description of the objects related; in this sense, non-intentional relations are *conception independent*. But the case is different with intentional relations. X may fear the man who makes threatening phone calls and it may be the case that it is X's neighbour who makes the threatening calls, but X may not know this. If so, "X fears the man who makes threatening phone calls" may be true, but "X fears his neighbour"

may not be. The intentional relation relates X to the object only under a certain concept or description "the man who makes threatening phone calls". It is the way that X thinks of the object or has a conception of it that is important. Hence, intentional relations are conception dependent.

Incidentally, it may be noted that literature sometimes exploits this feature for effect. Consider the play *Oedipus Rex*. Oedipus hates the man he met at the cross roads (= his own father). Oedipus loved the woman he married (= his own mother). Oedipus loathed the man who brought the curse upon Thebes (= himself).

MacIntyre and Woodruff-Smith argue that the basic task of a theory of intentionality is to satisfactorily account for these two features of existence independence and conception dependence of intentional relations and also to show up connections between these two features as well as other implications of these.⁸

We may now proceed to distinguish different configurations or shapes such theories of intentionality may take. For this purpose, Brentano's characterization provides a convenient point of departure. It may be remembered that Brentano's description emphasises two aspects of the intentional relation; on the one hand, there is the aspect of relation or directedness and on the other, there is the idea of the object on which the relation is focussed. Accordingly, we may make a distinction between object theories of intentionality which emphasise the object aspect and relational theories which emphasise the relational aspect. Both types of theories, in one sense, accept that intentionality involves a relation between an act and its object. But the difference between the two types of theories—object theories and relational theories—arises in their respective accounts of

the two features of existence independence and conception dependence.

From this point of view, one could say that the object intended is just the ordinary sort of entity; for instance, when I perceive a tree, it is the physical object out there in the real world independent of me that I am intending. However, the intentional situation is peculiar because the intentional relation is peculiar and unlike any real relation. According to this way of looking at the situation, intentionality involves a unique or non-natural relation.⁹ As we shall see, Husserl's theory of intentionality may be described as a version of such a relational theory, but apart from Husserl, Twardowski and Frege, among the moderns, and Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas among the classics, are examples of such a relational conception of intentionality. The fundamental features of such a theory would be :

1. Intention involves a referent (i.e., the object intended) and a sense (the way of intention).
2. The sense or the intentional object only mediates the reference to the object; it is not itself the object referred to. In Aristotelian term, it is '*id qua cognoscitur*' and not '*id quod cognoscitur*'.
3. The referents are independent of the mind.
4. The intentional object functions like sense or meaning which prescribes the aspects or characteristics under which the object is referred to. It is because of this directive function of the intentional object that intention has the feature of concept dependence.¹⁰
5. It is also because of this that intentionality is existence independence, since the sense or intentional object may point to something that does not exist.

As against such a relational theory, which is perhaps better called a mediated theory, since for such a theory intentional reference is mediated by way of the intentional object, an object theory of intentionality would seek to explain both existence independence and conception dependence by way of the peculiarities of the object. Consider, for example, Brentano's claim that the intentional object is an immanent object, having mental inexistence. Here the intentional object is mental and because it is immanent or mind dependent, it is constituted by the attitude of the subject. Hence, the object is conception dependent. But because it is immanent, its existence depends only upon the act and not on whether outside the mind, there is anything at all. Hence, it is also existence independent.

But there could be another version of the object theory, where the intentional object need not be seen as mental, in Brentano's sense. For example, in Meinong, there are three types of object – concrete objects (physical or mental), which may be said to exist, abstract objects like propositions or states of affairs which subsist and objects which neither exist nor subsist, but are beyond being and non-being. Meinong makes a crucial distinction between "what is in the mind" in intention and what is intended. The former he calls the content and the latter the object of intention. The object is not immanent in Brentano's sense, but these objects are of a peculiar sort. They are independent of existence in the ordinary sense; in other words, an object need not exist in order to be an object of consciousness. Another peculiarity of these objects is that they are incomplete. For example, when X thinks of a winged horse, the object, 'the winged horse' is neither black nor brown nor white, because such characteristics have not been thought in the act and it has only those properties which are thought in the act. For every other property, it neither has it nor lacks it. In

this sense, it is incompletely determined.¹¹ The idea of incompleteness is Meinong's way of recognising conception dependence.

Now, whatever may be the difference between these three theories, they all seem to hold that intentional phenomena should be analysed in terms of a relation to something. But we can have a fourth type of theory which rejects the schema of 'relation to something' altogether. For this view, 'thinking of Pegasus', for example, is not a relation of thought to an object at all, but a characteristic of the thinker i.e., the expression 'thinks of Pegasus' is grammatically a relational expression, but its logical form is that of a predicate i.e., 'Altekar thinks of Pegasus' really means 'Altekar is a Pegasus-thinker', where the hyphenated expression 'Pegasus-thinker' is a predicate which applies to Altekar. This seems to have been Brentano's later position, according to which intentionality is a characteristic and not a relation.¹²

This fourth type of theory seems to suggest that the clue to the solution of the enigmas of intentionality lies in the logical analysis of act-sentences. In other words, we can explain the features of intentional phenomena only by shifting to the linguistic level where we deal with intentional sentences. The logical behaviour of these sentences is the key to the solution of the problems of intentionality. In other words, intentionality is not really an epistemological but a semantic issue.

But the linguistic or semantic turn has a more disturbing implication. For, what the later position of Brentano suggests is that the act-object schema is mistaken in principle. This would suggest a dissolution *a la* Ryle and A. J. Ayer, rather than a solution of the problem of intentionality.¹³ In fact, once the shift to language is made, the dissolution can be taken one

step further. If the notion of 'mental acts' is given up, there does not seem to be any longer any real need for the subject either. One may hope to explain epistemic situations without postulating a subject of knowledge, as suggested by Popper's programme of 'Epistemology without a subject'.¹⁴

But one could go even beyond Popper and hold that the notion of the subject could be dismantled, along with the notion of the sense and reference as well as the signifier – signified coupling. With the shift to discourse or language, it, therefore, appears that we release a veritable flood tide of ever more disturbing dislocation. In the subsequent sections of the present study, I shall attempt to follow through one particular path of this deconstruction of the problematics of intentionality. As this programme takes its point of departure from Husserl's phenomenology, upon which it turns back in its undermining project, in the next section, I shall present the basic features of Husserl's theory of intentionality and intentional reference.

Husserl's Theory of Intentionality

In this section, after a brief stage-setting presentation of Husserl's theory of intentionality in terms of the distinction between noesis and noema in the *Ideas*,¹⁵ I shall follow the suggestion of Follesdal that the noema functions as sense in directing the act to its object.¹⁶ This suggestion opens up the exciting comparison of Husserl's theory with that of Frege's distinction between sense and reference. Following recent discussions of this issue, I shall formulate the basic claims of Husserl's theory of intentional reference.¹⁷ The comparison with Frege's theory of linguistic sense and reference allows us to distinguish two levels of Husserl's theory of intentionality, as a phenomenological theory of act-meanings and as a semantic theory of linguistic meanings. I shall explore the relationships

3. If the intention is successful, the act reaches an existing object and not any other because it is this object to which the content directs it.
4. But even if the intention is unsuccessful, even if there is no such object prescribed by the content, the prescribing or 'pointing' character of the content is unaffected. The act's intentional character is independent of the existence or non-existence of the object.
5. On the other hand, the content of the act is closely connected with the conception or ways of conceiving the object.
6. The object of the act is transcendent in the sense that it has further properties than what are included in the content.¹⁹

From the above summary presentation of the theory, it must be already clear that the centre piece of the entire theory is the notion of the content or the noema. What exactly is the noema and what status can we ascribe to it? Unfortunately Husserl's explicit and direct exposition of the noema in the *Ideas* is brief and far from clear. The notion is given further refinements in his later work, particularly the *Cartesian Meditations* but the nucleus is to be found in the *Ideas*.²⁰

From these discussions, we may distill the following characterizations :

1. Every act includes, as a constituent part, a noesis which is meaning-giving.
2. The noesis of an act entertains exactly one noema which is a sinn or meaning.
3. Although for every noesis, there is one noema, the same noema may be entertained by different noeses. The relation between noeses and noema is a many - one relation.

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4. Different noeses and hence different acts may entertain the same noema.
5. The noema is an ideal entity; it is not a real event either in consciousness or in the external world. Noema are meanings or 'sinne'.
6. Since noema are not real components, they can be grasped only after all 'real' elements are suspended by the epoche.
7. The noema is distinct from the object.
8. But although distinct, yet there is an intimate relation between the two, for intentional reference to the object takes place by way of the noema.
9. The noema prescribes the object by way of the determinations contained in it e.g. 'the author of Waverley prescribes Scott as determined in a certain way, or as having a certain property.
10. But the same transcendent object could be referred to by different noema in the sense that it could be identified as having other properties. Hence, different noema may converge upon the same object.

For Husserl, the noema determines the reference of the intentional act. The basic question to be answered is how exactly the noema fulfils this directive function. We are offered a highly significant clue when we are told that the noema is a sinn or meaning. We remember that Frege also uses 'sinn' for the sense or meaning of a linguistic expression; but for Husserl, sinn is the meaning component of an act and hence *non linguistic*. Husserl's term for linguistic meaning is 'bedeutung' which is Frege's term for referent of an expression. Hence, there are terminological disparities between Husserl and Frege, which we must first sort out.²¹

Frege

Sinn = linguistic meaning or sense

bedeutung = referent of an expression.

Husserl

Sinn = meaning of an intentional act i.e. noema

bedeutung = linguistic meaning; this is the noema expressed in language; therefore, in a sense, for Husserl, sinn = bedeutung

object = referent of an act
referent of an expression }

But the fundamental similarity between Husserl and Frege rests upon two features :

1. For both of them 'sinne' or meanings are abstract or ideal entities which are neither physical nor mental.
2. Reference, i.e. the relation of an expression to the object for which it stands is a function of sense. In Husserl this takes the form (i) noema determines the intended object, (ii) Bedeutung (linguistic meaning) is the expression, at the level of language, of act meanings. Hence, (ii) at the linguistic level also, the meaning of an expression (Frege's sense), determines the reference of the expression.

The basic presupposition of the above is the identification of linguistic meaning with noematic sinn.

act - meaning
(Phenomenological)

Linguistic meaning
(Semantic)

For Husserl as well as for Frege, linguistic meanings are different from the objects to which the expressions refer. Husserl develops this idea in two ways :

1. an expression could be meaningful although there is no object for which it stands ;
2. even where an expression does have a reference, the meaning of the expression is not the referent.

However, the fact that meaning cannot be identified with the object, it does not follow that reference is unrelated to meaning or sense. On the contrary, Husserl believes that sense determines reference or more properly reference is a function of sense.

For Husserl, as for Frege, meanings are also different from mental states or events. This was the effect of Frege's critique of Husserl's earlier attempt in the *Philosophy of Arithmetic* to explicate the meaning of logical and mathematical concepts by means of a psychological analysis of their origins. Frege had pointed out that such a procedure violates the distinction between image and concept, imagination and thought. Subjective ideas are peculiar to individual thinkers or speakers but the meanings are shared and common. Husserl accepted Frege's major criticism that psychologism cannot account for the intersubjectivity of knowledge. The proper way of formulating the problem of knowledge, for Husserl, after Frege, would be : what is the proper way of understanding the relationship between the subjectivity of knowing and the objectivity of what is known ?

Under the influence of Frege in the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl took meanings to be essences exemplified in act. This, roughly Aristotelian position, may be explained somewhat as follows :

When I think of a red ball, there is a mental state which may be called thinking of the red ball, on the one hand, and the red ball in the outer world, on the other. Both are particulars, one a mental and the other a physical particular. In the

red ball, the property redness is instantiated; this property is the essence of the object. But in the mental particular, the meaning of red is instantiated. This is the essence of the act; hence meanings are *act essences*. But in the *Ideas* meanings or noema are taken to be abstract *sui generis* entities, and not essences – meanings are abstract particulars

As we saw, at the semantic level, both Husserl and Frege share the view that meanings determine reference. But in Husserl, this theory of linguistic reference is grounded on a phenomenological theory of intentional acts. But in Frege, there is only a concealed or implicit phenomenology, insofar as he also holds that language is an expression of thought. Similar remarks may also apply to Wittgenstein, for it is only this implicit or rudimentary phenomenology that prevents his position from lapsing into behaviourism.

Since, following Follesdal and others, I am presupposing that Husserl's theory of intentionality is, in a sense, equivalent to Frege's theory of reference, it may be useful, at this stage, to briefly sketch the fundamentals of Frege's theory of sense and reference.

Frege's fundamental distinction is between intentions or meanings and extension or referents of expressions. In his essay "On Sense and Nomination" Frege holds that meaningfulness of referring expressions is to be distinguished from their having a reference.²² An expression is meaningful if and only if it expresses something as its sense. To put this in Dummett's formulation, we can say "for any term *t* and any person *p*, there is a sense *s*, such that *p* understands *t*, if and only if *p* attaches *s* to *t*".²³ On the other hand, a term has reference

only if it stands for something as its *bedeutung*. The sense of an expression is always distinct from its referent.

The distinction between sense and reference can be applied to other types of expression also. Thus, Frege holds that the 'bedeutung' of an one-place predicate is a concept and of a many place predicate, a relation.

The distinction between sense and reference is used by Frege to clarify three features of the use of referring expressions—

1. **Meaningfulness of expression**, such as 'Pegasus', which have no referents. The meaningfulness of the sentence 'Pegasus is a winged horse' cannot be a function of the reference of its parts, but a function of their senses.
2. **Significant identity** : The statement 'The morning star is the evening star' is an identity statement, since both expressions have the same reference. But this identity is different from that of 'the morning star is the morning star'. We can explain this difference by saying that although the referents of 'morning star' and 'evening star' are the same, their senses are different
3. **The failure of the principle of substitution in intensional contexts** : The principle of substitution holds that if two expressions e_1 and e_2 have the same reference, i.e., if they are extensionally equivalent, then we can substitute either in the place of the other, without changing the truth value of the sentence

Thus, 'the victor at Jena' and 'the vanquished at Waterloo' have the same reference i.e., Napoleon. Thus, we can substitute the second in the place of the first, in the context 'the victor at Jena was a morose and haughty French man' and get 'the vanquished at Waterloo was a morose and haughty French

man'. S_1 and S_2 have the same truth value. But in intentional contexts such substitutions may fail.

S_1 : 'P believes that the victor of Jena was a morose and haughty French man'.

But P may not know that the victor at Jena was the same as the vanquished at Waterloo. Hence if we now substitute into this context, S_2 , 'P believes that the vanquished at Waterloo was morose and haughty French man' it may be false. Among other things, Frege's distinction between sense and reference was used to preserve the principle of substitution in intentional contexts. What Frege proposed was that in S_1 and S_2 , the referents are not the same; for, in intentional contexts such as 'P believes that', 'P knows that' etc., the expressions do not have their ordinary referents. In such contexts, the expressions refer to their customary senses and these senses are different. Hence, the principle of substitution is not really violated.

4. *Existential generalization* : From 'the neighbour's dog bit him' we can infer 'there is something which is a dog and which bit him'. But from 'Jones is looking for the golden mountain in Mexico' we cannot infer 'there is something which is a golden mountain and Jones is looking for it in Mexico'.

Here, again, Frege's distinction between sense and reference comes to the rescue; for, Frege holds that in intensional contexts, expressions do not have their customary reference but that in such contexts, they refer to their customary senses.

Although sense and reference are distinct, they are intimately related. Frege holds that sense determines reference, for the sense of an expression illuminates an aspect of the referent. Hence, it follows that expressions with different senses may

yet refer to the same object. From this point of view, a sense may be described as a mode of presentation of the object. Indeed, Gareth Evans interprets the sense as a way of thinking about the object.²⁴

Husserl and Frege seem to share the following two major claims :

1. meanings are abstract, ideal, non-physical and non-mental entities;
2. meanings or senses mediate reference.

But beyond these points of similarity, for Husserl, linguistic meanings are expressions of the noema of acts. Hence, for Husserl, to say that a person expresses some meaning implies that certain acts of his consciousness confer or lend his words their meanings. These acts are meaning-giving acts and because of them, the expression is more than merely a sound – it means something and is constituted as significant.

We may represent the situation as follows :

Linguistic level : Utterance → Meaning → Reference

↑

Intentional level : Act → Noema → Object

The noema of the intentional act is lent to the speech-act and thereby the utterance becomes capable of expressing a linguistic meaning.²⁵

Husserl is suggesting that the concept of meaning which is first given in the linguistic context may be extended to the level of acts. In one sense, act meanings are derivatives of expression meanings, but in another sense phenomenologically, it is the act meaning which is primary.

Husserl says that the phenomenon of a meaningful expression is a function (i) of certain vehicle i.e., a sound pattern is perceived as an object. This formation of the linguistic object is the result of a perceptual act for it is perception which constitutes a perceptible datum as an object. In this sense, all linguistic acts are founded upon a perceptual act. But (ii) the pattern of sound becomes a word with meaning because the noema of a simultaneous act of thinking is lent to the act of speech. In this sense, in all linguistic meaning, there is a double intentionality, perceptual and semantic.

But with regard to the parallelism between act meanings and linguistic meanings, two kinds of interpretation may be possible ;

1. Intentional meanings explain the possibility of linguistic meaning. It is because of this that we can subsume linguistic meaning under the broader concept of act meaning

2. Act meanings are really analogical extensions of linguistic meaning. This is how a Fregean like Dummett would look at Husserl. From a Fregean point of view, the extension of meaning to acts is philosophically mistaken. The reason for this is easy to see : a noema is dependent on an act ; but for Frege, meanings or 'sinne' are self-sufficient ; it would appear to a Fregean that Husserl's theory of noema calls into question the objectivity of meanings. Dummett puts this in a different way ; he holds that by extending the concept of meaning to mental acts, Husserl relapses into psychologism²⁶. But as we have seen, the noema is not a mental state or process. In fact, Husserl claims that the noema is grasped only after the reduction. It is obvious that Dummett does not really accept the claim that phenomenology is not a kind of descriptive psychology. But apart from this, we can note a certain problem which arises for a position like that of Frege. Frege says that senses are independent of even whethe-

they are expressed or not; but at the same time, he also holds that it is only through words that we grasp the sense. How should we understand this indispensability of language for meaning? Frege seems to be suggesting two ways of understanding this principle :

1. Sometimes he seems to be suggesting that there is a kind of necessity. But if this is a necessary principle, then it also looks as if Frege is really close to Husserl i.e., the act of expression constitutes meaning.

2. But at other times, Frege seems to be suggesting that as a matter of fact, human beings require language as the medium of access to meanings, although other kinds of rational beings may grasp the same senses without language. But then we require some further explanation of this i.e., what is it about human beings that makes language constitutive of human nature ?

In Husserl also there is a principle of expressibility; since, for him, linguistic meanings are the expressions of noematic act-meanings, it would follow that every noematic meaning is, in principle, expressible in language. This may be called Husserl's expressibility thesis. "Every meaning in the noematic sinn of any act whatsoever is expressible through linguistic meanings."²⁷

But we must take the principle of expressibility with some qualifications :

1. Husserl is not claiming that every noematic meaning has actually been expressed in language; it is a thesis of expressibility in principle.

2. Expressibility is restricted to the noematic sinn rather than to the whole noema. The noema includes other components, which Husserl calls 'ways of givenness' e.g. clarity, distinctness,

attentiveness etc., are also components of noema. But when the act is expressed, these components are not included in the linguistic meanings

Noema and Intentional Reference

The basic idea in the above discussion is that in Husserl's theory, the noema of the act directs it to the object intended and hence intentional reference takes place by way of the noematic meaning. The reference here is to a singular or unique object. We may call such reference singular intentional reference. The point which now has to be clarified is how noematic meaning guides such singular reference.²⁸

For this purpose, we must first clarify the inner structure of the noema of an act. Husserl first distinguishes two moments within the noema – a noematic nucleus, which he calls the *sinn* or meaning and the *thetic* phase. The *thetic* component is the way of presentation of the noema, as presentational, memorial, assertional, presumptive etc. But the distinction within the noematic nucleus or meaning is, for our present purposes, more important.²⁹

The *sinn* or meaning component of a noema is a sense which prescribes an object as such and such. This is comparable to the manner in which a definite description such as 'the so and so' determines the referent as the object having such and such characteristics. This analogy with definite descriptions provides a first model for intentional reference. But the noema, apart from its characterising component, also has a demonstrative component which Husserl calls the *X* component. The *X* component of a noema is not a predicative sense; it does not characterize the object but rather refers to it, somewhat as a proper name or a pure demonstrative expression does. This *X* component, it may be said, is what carries singular reference; if we

take this view, we would be having a second model of demonstrative reference.³⁰

The noema, therefore, has two components (i) an aggregate of predicate senses, which prescribe, the object may be thought of as having, and (ii) another component, which Husserl calls the X component which is purely indicative. The predicate senses ascribe properties to the object indicated by the X component. It is this coupling of the X component and the predicate senses that enables the act to refer to a specific object as having various properties. The predicate senses prescribe the properties or the *what* of the object. These properties are thought of as unified in a certain specific individual bearer of these properties. This sense of properties belonging to an object is given the X component. The X component has two main functions :

1. to indicate the unifying centre of all predicative determination, and
2. to serve as the basis for co-directed acts i.e., other intentional acts which refer to the same object but under different senses. All such acts which characterise the object as having different properties bear upon the same object; this is expressed by their having the same X component.³¹

Within this structure, we could say that the function of intentional reference is performed by the X component alone, independently of the predicative component. This may be called the model of Direct Reference. At the semantic level, this would correspond to Kripke's theory of *Rigid Designation*.³² The relation of noema to the object, for this theory, would be like the relation of proper name to its referent. The chief problem for such a theory would be what kind of sense may be attributed to the X-component. For the second type of theory, the real work of reference is performed by the predicative component.

It is the descriptive content which determines which object is being referred to. This may be called the Definite Description model of Intentional Reference.

It seems to me that as far as Husserl's theory is concerned, the first model seems to be more appropriate i.e. I suggest that in Husserl, the uniqueness of reference is a function of the X component rather than of the predicative sense.³³ If this is so, Husserl's theory is immune to the criticism of the Frege-Russell model of reference by way of definite descriptions. But the problem for this would be what kind of non-descriptive sense could be attributed to the X component. It is a non-descriptive sense in the sense that it presents the object directly rather than by way of properties. As to the kind of sense which may be attributed to the X component, we have a clue in Husserl's theory of perception; Husserl says that the sense of a perception can be expressed by means of a demonstrative pronoun such as 'this'. This seems to suggest that the X component functions like a demonstrative expression. But what kind of a sense do demonstrative expressions have?

The sentences in which demonstrative expressions such as 'this' occur may be called occasional sentences in the sense that to determine their meaning and truth value, we must consider the occasions in which they are used. Now, Husserl distinguishes two aspects of the meaning of occasional sentences. The *indicating sense* of 'this' is roughly what we may call its semantic function - "the object is the speaker, is pointing to". This is common to the speaker and hearer. But the *indicated sense* depends on the specific context, hence the indicated meaning varies from context to context.³⁴

The commonly held view is that the reference of demonstrative expressions is determined by the context of their utterance by

the speaker's *de facto* physical relation to the referent. At first it appears that Husserl's account also is such a contextualist theory of demonstrative reference. But, on a closer look, there appears to be an important difference, for Husserl distinguishes the situation of the speaker and that of the hearer. The hearer must consider the factual circumstances of utterance but the speaker is already given the referent in his perception. The indicated meaning is directly available to him in intuition.³⁵

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NOTES

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