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SEMIOTICS IN HUSSERL’S LOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Husserl begins the first of his Logical Investigations¹ by examining what he calls “The Essential Distinctions.” The first distinction he makes is between two kinds of sign, indications and expressions, Anzeigen and Ausdrucke. Notice how he proceeds here at the start of his phenomenology, at the point where he is analyzing consciousness and defining his terms for the very first time. He does not begin his philosophy by looking inward at consciousness. His access to intentional acts is not by introspection. Rather, his access is through the public, palpable, and worldly phenomena of signs, both indicative and expressive. Signs are public things, they are “outside” the mind: they are sounds, marks, arrangements of objects, a wave of the hand, a pile of stones. It is by examining such public things that Husserl gains access to intensionality and makes distinctions within it.

However, signs are not simple public things like rocks or trees; besides being material things, they involve the presence of mind, they involve and therefore reflect the activity that lets them be signs. By starting with signs, Husserl begins his philosophy in the most felicitous way possible, with something that is a material entity but is also saturated with the presence of thinking.

To describe how things can become signs for us, Husserl appeals to a concrete, ordinary experience. Both in the Fifth Investigation and in an essay he wrote in 1894, Husserl presents the following situation: we are looking at some arabesques and admiring their intricacy. Suddenly we realize that these elegant marks actually are words; they spell out someone’s name or make some statement.² For this change to occur, we must have begun to “intend” differently; we no longer simply perceive, we now read or interpret the marks as saying something. Our new intention is different from the one we were engaged in until that change occurred: the new intention goes beyond what is immediately present; it begins to intend not just these marks but, say, Winston Churchill or the Gare St. Lazare, and this same new intention changes the marks from being fascinating curlicues to being words.

The new kind of intention that establishes a sign as such is not something we feel; we do not somehow palpate the difference between signifying and perceiving. Signifying and perceiving are two kinds of intentionality, but they become visible in what they do, not in themselves. When we try to analyze, philosophically, the difference between a sign and a percept, we do not look at the intentions directly; we do not look at the signitive act and then the perceptual act, we do not introspectively discover

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qualitative differences among our intentionalities. We get at the intentionalities by looking at signs and contrasting them with ordinary perceived objects; the differences between signs and perceived things allow us to discover differences in the intentionalities that are correlated with them. I put it into Husserl's later terminology, we first register a noetic difference and thereby become able to discover a noetic difference. This approach remains with Husserl throughout his philosophical career and it also remains with phenomenology throughout its history. Contrary to widespread opinion, phenomenology is not introspective. It gets at the mind, not directly, but through the mind's presence in and with things.

After he distinguishes between indication signs and expressions, Husserl spends the first pages of Logical Investigations talking about indication. I will not follow him in this. I will begin with the study of the other branch of the distinction, with expression, and will turn to indication later on.

1. Words and what they express

The paradigm of expression is the linguistic sign, the word. When we recognize some sounds or marks as really being words, many new dimensions come into play. Let us suppose that we are surrounded by mere background noise and suddenly realize that somebody is saying something in that noise; or, let us say that we are looking at what seem to be random marks on paper and suddenly we realize that there is a message written into them. The physical sounds or marks now "contain a meaning," and they are being used to "refer" to something. They embody both meaning and reference, but they do so not by themselves, by their own material weight or by their own independent being. They contain a meaning and exercise a reference because we are signifying and referring through them, and because we realize that someone else has signified and referred through them. The change from being a mere sound or mark into being an expression thus involves the presence of a signifying activity, along with the introduction of a meaning and a reference. Thus, the sign is not just there all by itself; it could not stand alone; surrounding it, radiating from it, are three essential components: the signitive act that makes it a sign, the meaning, and the reference.

Incidentally, Husserl's doctrine of the signifying act as establishing meaning is elegantly confirmed by Paul Bloom in his book, How Children Learn the Meanings of Words. Bloom shows that association alone is not sufficient to explain how children learn to use words. If a mechanical sound were to be regularly produced when a child experiences a certain kind of object, the child would not take the sound to be the name of the thing. Instead, children learn what words are and what they mean when they grasp the fact that someone is intending the object through the use of the sound: "young children will make the connection [between sound and object] only if they have some warrant to believe that it is an act of naming—and for this, the speaker has to be present." Bloom speaks of "the child's own ability to infer the referential intentions of others." In Husserl's terminology, the child accepts certain sounds as words when he takes them to be animated by a speaker's signitive intentionality.

One of the first points that Husserl makes concerning expressions is that they can occur in the absence of the thing to which they are used to refer. I might look out the window and say, "There's a police car in the driveway" I perceive the police car, but you, who hear me say these words, may not be looking out the window; you don't see the car, and yet you understand what I have said. You can possess the meaning even if you don't perceive the referent. The meaning, therefore, cannot be located in the perceptual or intuitive activity associated with the expression. The meaning must lie in another act, in what Husserl calls the signifying or meaning-bestowing act. In this way, he works out another of his "essential distinctions," that between the signifying act and the intuition, or between the empty intention and the fulfillment. He says, "Let us take our stand on this fundamental distinction between meaning-intentions void of intuition and those which are intuitively fulfilled." (1, 281) Bloom, How Children Learn the Meanings of Words, 54

Once again, a distinction is achieved not by somehow looking at two different kinds of acts and seeing differences among them, but by looking at what the acts have done or accomplished or achieved. Husserl looks at how we interact with the world and how we communicate with one another, and in this wider context he distinguishes between empty and filled intentions.

The next step is to investigate the expressions themselves and to ask how they are structured. Husserl insists that the expression is not just the physical sound or mark; rather, it is the composite made up of the physical phenomenon and the meaning. He says, "The word 'expression' is normally understood as the sense-informed expression." (1, 281) Thus, the expression four legged animal is made up of both the phonemic stratum and the meaning contained in it.

Expressions, therefore, according to Husserl, are composed of both sound and sense. Let us go on to ask one more question, one that will play a strategic role in our argument. The question is: What do expressions express? At first glance, the answer to this question might seem obvious. We would probably be inclined to say that expressions express their meaning, the meaning that informs them. But Husserl does not accept this reply; he explicitly rejects it, even while recognizing how natural and obvious it might seem: "One should not, therefore, properly say (as one often does) that an expression expresses its meaning (its intention)" (1, 281)

If an expression does not express its meaning, what does it express?

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4. P. Bloom, How Children Learn the Meanings of Words, 54

5. P. Bloom, How Children Learn the Meanings of Words, 84

6. This contrast is more clearly drawn in the Sixth Investigation (1, 680)

7. Ferdinand de Saussure has a similar idea, claiming that the sign is composite, and the significi¢ and the signified are its two components. However, he works primarily not with the public expression but with the mental image and hence with a private language or mental speech. For him, it is the image acoustique that is the signifier, not a publicly uttered sound, and the concept is the signifi¢. See F. de Saussure, Cours de linguistique générale, ed. C. Daily and A. Sechehaye, Paris: Payot, 1962, 99
An expression does not express its own meaning; an expression expresses the content of the perception or intuition that would present the thing or state of affairs corresponding to the meaning of the expression. That is, an expression expresses something we can find in the world; it expresses an object as it can be given in a certain way. An expression expresses not a meaning but a part of the world, as that part can be given to us through a perception or intuition. If I say, “A police car has driven into the driveway,” my expression expresses a small — but important and perhaps even urgent — part of the world, the police car’s being in the driveway, the state of affairs that you would see if you turned around and looked out the window. My expressions, my words, do not form a closed circle of signifiers and signifieds, they do not live only in intertextuality or interverbosity. They express something that is not merely verbal; they bring something in the world to light. They articulate a part of the world.

This expressive function occurs even when we are not in the presence of the thing being expressed. The words still express the world even when we are in the absence of that part of the world that the words are used to refer to. Expressions always keep their teleological ordering toward the way things are, toward the evidencing of things, even when they are just passed back and forth among speakers in the total absence of the things being spoken about. The signifying acts that establish the expressions as such remain always geared toward the intuitive acts that saturate them.

Husserl further spells out this realistic understanding of words in the Sixth Investigation, where he describes how we intuit things we have named. He says that “the expression seems to be applied to the thing and to clothe it like a garment” (I, 688). He also says that when I call something my inkpot, “the name ‘my inkpot’ seems to overlay the perceived object, to belong sensitively to it” (I, 688). He then adds the remark, “This belonging is of a peculiar kind.” Husserl insists, however, that in such recognition, we do not just have the word and the thing or the word and the intuition; we also must have the signitive act that enlivens the word and finds fulfillment in the intuition and is blended with it. The signifying act, the act that makes the word to be an expression, comes between the word and the intuited thing, between the formation of the word and the intuition. Husserl also says that recognition does not mean that we somehow stand back and register a relationship between the thing named and the expression; nor do we merely associate the name and the thing. Rather, recognition is more elementary and more direct; we go right through the expression to the thing and we recognize or classify the thing immediately. As Husserl says, “In this mode of naming reference, the name appears as belonging to the named and as one with it.” (I, 690) He says that the word and the intuition are not just two things added to one another: “Phenomenologically we find before us no mere aggregate, but an intimate, in fact intentional unity...” (I, 691) And of course, although names belong with things and can “clothe them like a garment,” they can also function in the absence of things, when they are supported only by their signitive acts, and hence we can speak about things in absence as well as in presence. To prolong the metaphor, you can have the garment just hanging in the closet and not clothing anything, but still it belongs to what it clothes, and it longs to clothe it. The garment may be just hanging there in an empty,
signifying intention, but the empty intention longs for fulfillment in intuition.

These descriptions of Husserl bring out the special mode of being of words. They show that words are transparent, that when we hear someone speak or when we read a text or even when we see someone using sign language, we go right through the words to the things being signified and expressed by them. The word, as Husserl says, "is one with" the thing it names, it fits that thing, it belongs with it in a special kind of belonging that is not like any other relationship. Some people have even thought of a person's name as containing that person's soul, and they would keep the name secret lest someone use the name to gain power over the person or to injure him. Our sense of the being and manifestation of things is more subtle and less credulous, but there is something to that primitive belief. When the name is spoken the thing comes to light, the looks of the thing arise, whether in the thing's presence or absence. This transparency of words will be even more vividly shown when we discuss, in the third section of this paper, not just simple words but words pervaded by syntax.

II. Words and what they indicate

Let us now turn to the other branch of Husserl's original distinction, to indication-signs, Anzeigen. I would like to introduce another English word as a translation of this German term; besides 'indication' I will use the term "signal" to name this kind of sign. Indications, like expressions, have a bodily dimension. Examples of indications are a whistle that signals a foul in a basketball game, a gesture that indicates that I am going to turn left, a blinking yellow light that signals caution, a gunshot that indicates the start of a race. A flag flown at half mast indicates that someone has died, a flag flown upside down signals distress. In contrast with expressions, such signs do not articulate the thing they signal; they merely show its presence, its proximate existence. They turn our minds to the thing in question, they make us aware of it, but they do not say anything about it.

Husserl says, furthermore, that indication is established by association, and this claim allows him to comment on the nature of association. He says that association establishes a relationship between two things, so that when one of the things appears, we are led to think of the other. He says, "If A summons B into consciousness, we are not merely simultaneously or successively conscious of both A and B, but we usually feel their connection forcing upon us, a connection in which the one points to the other and seems to belong to it." (I, 274) He speaks of the "felt mutual belongingness" between the associated items and speaks of the "new phenomenological character" that we experience in such cases. He says, "That one thing points to another, in definite arrangement and connection, is itself apparent to us." (I, 274).

The only kind of indication signs Husserl talks about are those based on association or convention. He does not want to include the stronger kind of relationship that occurs when one thing is a sign of another because it is caused by that other thing, as smoke is seen as a sign of the fire that causes it, or wet streets are a sign that it has rained. Such things, according to Husserl, could be considered as indication signs only if their causal connection were left out of consideration. The sign and object must be connected just by association. Husserl does not want his indication signs to be based on reasoning, inference, or insight of any kind. He wants to exclude the case in which we might think, "The streets are wet everywhere in the city, so it must have rained." Indication signs must be based on the more external relationship of mere association. Husserl says, "When one says that the state of affairs A indicates the state of affairs B, one's mode of speech implies no objectively necessary connections between A and B, nothing into which one could have insight." (I, 272). Wet streets could be an indication that it has rained, and smoke could signal that there is a fire, but only if we take these relations as mere associations, as mere signs, not as effects from which we can infer a cause.

Let us explore the difference between indications and expressions. Indications or signs obviously have a significatory—the pistol shot "means" the start of the race—but they do not have meanings in the way that expressions do. Signals do not possess a meaning that can be quoted, paraphrased, or communicated to someone else by the use of other signs; there is something abrupt and concrete and singular about signals. They just bring something to mind, they just show that it is present in some way. They don't say anything about it. It is true that signals can be explained, but when that happens we are not paraphrasing them; we merely turn them into objects to be expressed. Furthermore, signals or indication signs do not possess a meaning that could be fulfilled by an intuition. We do not try to verify or falsify them as we do statements made by a speaker. Truth and falsity mean something else in the case of signals: they mean the genuine versus the fake, not the correct versus the erroneous or the mendacious.

But although indications and expressions are different, they become related in an important and interesting way in the case of speech. Expressions, as we have seen, contain a meaning and express a state of affairs, but they also serve to indicate something. The physical aspects of speech, the sounds or marks of, in the case of sign language, the gestures, besides expressing something and putting it on record as what is said, also serve to indicate, to a listener, that the speaker is carrying out the intentional acts that establish the expressions as expressions. As Husserl says, "... One sees that all expressions in communicative speech function as indications. They serve the hearer..."

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9 Many interesting questions arise. Suppose we have a flag of something that no longer exists, such as a flag of the Soviet Union. It is still a sign, but no longer an actualized one. It is something like a dead body. It might be seen as a latent or potential sign, one that could come back to life again if the Soviet Union were to be revived. The phenomenon of retiree the colors of a regiment would be an interesting intermediate case.

10 The exclusion of proof and reasoning occurs in §3 of the First Investigation, where Husserl says indications should involve Anzeigens but not Beweise.

11 Speaking about signs such as facial movements or gestures, Husserl says, "Such utterances" are not expressions in the sense in which a case of speech is an expression. They 'mean' something to an onlooker in so far as he interprets them, but even for him they are without meaning in the special sense in which verbal signs have meaning: they only mean in the sense of indicating." (I, 275).
as signs of the ‘thoughts’ of the speaker, i.e., of his sense-giving inner experiences. ... This function of verbal expressions we shall call their *intimating function* (LI, 277).

Husserl also says that “the hearer intuitively takes the speaker to be a person who is expressing this or that, or as we certainly can say, *perceives* him as such.” (LI, 277). He says that when I hear someone speak, “I perceive him as a speaker, I hear him recounting, demonstrating, doubting, wishing, etc.” (LI, 278).

We should try to appreciate the full and rich picture that Husserl offers us here. The center of focus is the living word, the spoken sound. When words stream by, the things that they express are being manifested and parts of the world are coming to light. Whether the issue is important or trivial, the world and the things in it are being disclosed: we are being told about the condition of a house, the health of a patient, the status of the stock market, the legal significance of what someone has done. Parts of the world are flashing on and off as the words move by. But while a part of the world is being expressed in a speech, something else is also coming to light, namely the speaker whose words the words are hearing. He and his performances, his more or less responsible speaking and thinking, are being manifested, but not in the way the world is shown up by him; he appears in another, more oblique manner. He and his thinking are not being expressed but signified or indicated. While we focus on what he expresses (say, the water overflowing the sink), we also marginally and perceptive that he is expressing this, that he is the responsible manufacturer, the agent of truth thanks to whom the thing is being shown as it is. He brings the thing to light, and he shows it precisely as the one who is doing so, as the agent of disclosure. His minding appears on the margin of what he minds, but not as part of it. The interplay of expression and indication, all occurring within the words that are being spoken, achieves this double manifestation of the world and speaker, through the functions of expression and indication. Husserl here presents a very dynamic, appealing description of how language works.

I have one more point to make about the interaction between expressions and indications. Expressions, such as the names of persons and things, are different from indications. Expressions express the things they refer to. However, expressions do possess within themselves a layer of indication. Even in their referential function, they retain a level of association or indication. The name Peter Quince is an expression and it is used to name Peter Quince, but it could also degenerate into being a mere signal for Peter Quince, a mere indication associated with him. If Peter Quince suddenly appears and I am jolted by his presence, I might blurt out the sounds, “Peter Quince!” My words may be more an exclamation than a name. A phrase like, “Here’s Johnny!” signifies more than a name with reference, or at least it oscillates between the two modes of semiotic being. This level of indication in names comes to the fore when we have forgotten someone’s name and are trying to remember it. We try to bring the name to mind by means of association; we think of the person, we imagine meeting him and saying, “Hello...” We hope that the image or even the actual presence of the person will call up the name for us. This is sheer association and sheer indication. It shows us that the “name” could come to mind not really as a name but only as an associated sound. Now, this same sound, this associated signal, can be turned into a name and an expression. What turns it into a name is the use we make of it; we have to activate a signifying, meaning-bestowing act, we have to use the sounds to refer to Peter Quince, and then—and only then—the sounds become a word and a name with a meaning. Until that transformation happens they are more a response to a stimulus than a name of a person or thing. They are something we are simply used to uttering when this entity appears. This indication layer remains operative in all words as a substrate for their verbal functioning, and sometimes, perhaps in moments of emotional distress, this lower layer breaks through and disrupts the expressive function of the words. Association takes over and smoothes both the meaning and the logic involved in it.

III. Syntax and Articulated Displays

It is time to speak about syntax. We have been discussing words, but we have not distinguished the grammatical aspects of speech from the merely appellative aspects. Syntax, whether found in particular words, in inflections, or in word placement, is what changes animal sounds and cries into human speech. Syntax ensures that we make complete, discrete statements, statements that can be true or false, that can be quoted, repeated, and communicated, and that can be tested for meaningfulness, consistency, and coherence. Syntax allows definite wholes to be built up out of specific parts. It enables us to achieve sentences and propositions. It allows articulation in the speech itself, in the meaning contained in the expression, and in the state of affairs disclosed in the world. It allows us to signify relationships of all sorts. Syntax permits the Chinese-box kind of enclosing that only language can achieve: where one statement or term can be embedded in another, where statements can be moved from one part of an argument to another, where extremely complex wholes of sense can be built up, not only in science and mathematics but also in literature, journalism, history, and law, as well as in ordinary discourse, story-telling, rhetorical arguments, and emotive articulation.

Before discussing syntax, which Husserl examines under the rubric of categoriality, I would like to mention its involvement with the two kinds of signs we have discussed, indications and expressions. Syntax is essential to expressions. It is only because expressions have syntax, and their meanings have logical form, that expressions can be what they are. Words are made to be words by the presence of syntax; there are no single words just by themselves. Words don’t come one by one. When we do find a name just by itself, it is recognizable as a name only because it normally comes with syntax. It is a name only on the margins of grammatically articulated speech. When we name a thing, we normally do so in view of saying something about it; we are prepping it for predication. When we say that words are transparent and serve to express things in the world, we imply that the words have been articulated into linguistic wholes and parts, and that correspondingly the things being displayed—the contents of the fulfilling act, in Husserl’s terminology—are being articulated into wholes and parts as well.

Although syntax is essential to expression, it is not found in indication signs. Signals are abrupt and single, they are one-shot affairs, and they are not coordinated into
larger wholes that could be formulated in many different ways. We don’t say anything when we signal something; we don’t set up a referent and assert something about it. One signal might follow another—the gunshot at the start of the race is followed later on by a flag’s being waved to signal the winner—but this sequence is not grammatical. To make use of Husserl’s terminology, there is categoriality in expressions but not in indications, not in signals. Husserl himself recognized this fact. He writes in a manuscript, “Im Reich der Signale gibt es keine Grammatik,” “In the domain of signals there is no grammar.”

How then does syntax or categoriality function in expressions? There is no systematic treatment of categoriality in the First Investigation, even though the term is used here and there, especially in relation to some remarks about formal logic. Categoriality is treated in the Sixth Investigation, specifically in the second section, entitled, “Sense and Understanding.” Chapter 6 in that investigation is entitled, “Sensuous and Categorial Intuitions.” I should mention that the theme of categoriality makes much use of the Third and Fourth Investigations, entitled respectively “On the Theory of Wholes and Parts” and “The Distinction between Independent and Non-independent Meanings and the Idea of Pure Grammar.”

Let us distinguish different levels in the combinatorics of speech. The first, easiest, most obvious, and least controversial level is that of linguistic expression itself, where the ordinary grammar of the various languages serves as the organizing element in words. The second level is that of the meaning or the propositions, where logical grammar functions. The third and most controversial level is that of the things or states of affairs being presented through language. Are there syntactic elements here? What is it in the states of affairs or relationships among things that corresponds to logical syntax and linguistic grammar? If I say, “This paper is white,” is there anything in what I perceive that corresponds to the grammatical parts of speech? I obviously can perceive the paper and I can perceive the whiteness, but is there anything else corresponding to the joining of the terms paper and white, and to the words this and is?

If we were to limit perception just to the sensible qualities that are presented to us, we would have to say that there is nothing in the thing that goes beyond the paper and the whiteness. Husserl writes, “It is hopeless, even quite misguided, to look directly in perception for what could give fulfillment to our supplementary formal meanings” (LI, 779). And yet we are not limited to saying that we see only the paper and the whiteness; we do say that we see that the paper is white. We do claim to perceive or intuit states of affairs, relations, and groups, and not only things and features. As Husserl puts it, “We do not merely say ‘I see this paper, an inkpot, several books,’ and so on, but also I see that the paper has been written on, that there is a bronze inkpot standing here, that several books are lying open, and so on.” (LI, 773).

In a famous phrase, Husserl says that “a surplus of meaning remains over” in the signitive intention, something more than the mere sensible percepts (LI, 775). The syntactic dimension is that surplus, and we must ask what corresponds to it in the things we express. As Husserl observes, “The ‘a’ and the ‘the,’ the ‘and’ and the ‘or,’ the ‘if’ and the ‘then,’ the ‘all’ and the ‘none,’ the ‘something’ and the ‘nothing,’ the forms of quantity and the determinations of number, etc.—all these are meaningful propositional elements, but we should look in vain for their objective correlates in the sphere of real objects, which is in fact no other than the sphere of objects of possible sense-perception” (LI, 782).

What then do the categorial parts of speech express in things? They express the modalities of presence in the things being presented or intended. They correspond to the way things and features are related, presentationally or intentionally, to one another. They express the dimensions of articulation in things, the formal-ontological relationships that are also given when things are given. Here are some formulations of Husserl. He says that the categorial parts of speech “relate to the object itself in its categorial structure” (LI, 782). He says that the object “is set before our very eyes in just these forms,” and that “aggregates, indefinite plurals, totalities, numbers, disjunctions, predicates, states of affairs, all count as ‘objects’” (LI, 785). Categorial articulation is the work of intelligence as opposed to sensibility, and so Husserl says, “the working of synthetic thought, of intuition, has done something to our objects, has shaped them anew, although, being a categorial function, it has done this in categorial fashion, so that the sensuous content of the apparent object has not been altered” (LI, 796). In a similar vein, he says, “Categorial forms leave their primary objects untouched” (LI, 820).

Another way of describing what categorial acts establish is to say that they explicitly articulate wholes and parts in the things we experience: “It is clear that the apprehension of a moment and of a part generally as a part of the whole in question, and, in particular, the apprehension of a sensuous feature as a feature, or of a sensuous form as a form, point to acts which are all founded. This means that the sphere of ‘sensibility’ has been left, and that of ‘understanding’ entered” (LI, 792). Husserl speaks about objective categorial structures as being “specific forms of the relation between a whole and its parts. All such relationships are of categorial, ideal nature” (LI, 794). We could also describe categorial intentions as bringing out various kinds of identity within the objects of consciousness, various realizations of the old Platonic forms of “sameness” and “otherness.” In a categorial object, a thing is identified in a special way with one of its features, several objects are collected into one identifiable group or number, or a thing is recognized in its identity with itself under alternative descriptions. In all such cases, to use Husserl’s phrase, “The identity itself is now made objective.” (LI, 791).

One of the best passages about categoriality in Logical Investigations is the following. It expresses in a colorful way how intuition differs from sensibility. Husserl turns to the phenomenon of picturing things. He says that when I paint or draw two things together, “I can paint A and I can paint B, and I can paint them both on the same canvas: I cannot, however, paint the both nor paint the A and the B. Here we have only one possibility which is always open to us: to perform a new act of conjunction or collection on the basis of our two new single acts of intuition, and so mean the

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aggregate of the objects A and B” (L.I, 798). In both the real world and the painting, the
categorical form cannot be the target of a sensory perception; in both cases, I must think
the two things together, I must execute the intellectual activity of conjoining them if I
am to have the objective correlate of the terms both and and presented to me. The
syntactic parts of language, the parts that make speech human and differentiate it from
animal sounds and cries, has as its correlative the part-whole compositions, the
recognized identities, and the categorial objects that make up an intelligible and
intellected world. The syntactic parts of speech express the presentational combinatorics
of the things we thoughtfully articulate, whether in their presence or their absence.

The objective side of intellection are the categorial objects that we present or
intend. The subjective side is the execution of higher-level intentional acts that
constitute such objects. The acts are complex and consist essentially of various
identifications and part-whole intentionalities. We will not follow Husserl as he carries
out his descriptions of these acts and their interlacement, but we will emphasize one
point. We have seen that the syntactic parts of speech can be said to express the
categorial formation of the objects being presented to us. These same syntactic parts of
speech serve as signals of the categorial acts that are the substance of human
intellection. That is, when we listen to someone speak, and when we follow the speech
and turn our minds to the things and states of affairs being disclosed in that speech, we
also experience, obliquely, the speaker as carrying out acts of intellection, and his
thoughtful, categorial activity is indicated to us by the very grammatical terms that help
express the objects of his discourse. We accept the speaker who addresses us as
thinking, as carrying out categorial intentions, as articulating the things he is speaking
about, and his thinking is signaled to us specifically by the grammar of his speech.

Discussing the word or, Husserl says, “The word or is accordingly no name, and
likewise no appellation of disjoining; it merely gives voice to this act” (L.I, 838). The
grammatical term does not name the thoughtful act of conjoining, it just gives voice to,
or signals, that act. The exquisite interplay of expression and indication, the semiotics
of Logical Investigations, thus reaches its apogee in categorial intentionality and in the
speech that publicizes it. The one stream of words manifests parts of the world and
simultaneously brings to light the thoughtful activity of the person responsible for the
manifestation.

There is, however, one item in the treatment of signs that Husserl overlooks.
He shows that expressions signal the intentional acts of the speaker and thus make the
speaker visible as such. But he does not notice that these same expressions also serve
as signals to the listener to perform the same thoughtful acts himself. The expressions
serve not only as signals of but also as signals to. Husserl focuses on the speaker but
overlooks the audience. Syntax does not only disclose the speaker and his thinking but
also leads the listener to think in concert with the speaker; words link the speaker and
listener in one common train of thought. What the speaker thinks—the way the world
appears to him—is made public because it is shared with the listener through the
presence of words. The receptivity of the listener should be added to the dimensions of

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