

DEHYPOSTATIZING THE SENSE IN SENSE-MAKING *ZIXUAN Liu**

Abstract

The concept of sense or meaning is purported to distinguish Husserlian phenomenology from other schools of thought. However, it is also the most controversial notion, as few interpretations can preserve both the atemporality and singularity of meaning. I meet this challenge by rejecting a key assumption in previous interpretations: that the sense made of an entity by an intentional experience is itself an entity. The dehypostatization of sense in sense-making, following Lask, explains why Husserl's concepts of constitution, transcendental subject and epoché differ from their counterparts in Cartesianism and Neo-Kantianism. It helps diagnose where Husserl and Heidegger converge and diverge, and assigns different roles to art and philosophy in the research on meaning.

Keywords: *meaning, intentionality, sense-making, transcendental subjectivity, Lask.*

Introduction

If Husserlians were to compile a list of their most critical concepts, the notion of “sense” or “meaning” arguably occupies the highest position.

On the one hand, the study of sense-making is supposed to *distinguish Husserlian phenomenology from other schools of thought, including Cartesianism and Neo-Kantianism*. Although Husserl borrows terms and procedures from these schools, his interpretations are very innovative. For Husserl, “‘intentionality’ is not an ontological concept, but a ‘transcendental’ one: it has nothing to do with ‘being’ but rather with ‘sense’.”¹ Ontology studies what exists and how they exist, whereas Husserlian phenomenology questions how an entity obtains its meaning “as existent/non-existent” or “so existing” via intentionality.

This distinction in tasks differentiates Husserlian epoché from Cartesian skepticism. It also allows Husserl to exchange the Kantian question

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¹ D. De Santis, *Transcendental idealism and metaphysics: Husserl's critique of Heidegger. Volume 1*, Springer 2023, p. 200.

of transcendent knowledge with “the problem of the meaning of knowable objectivity as such.”²

On the other hand, “sense” or “meaning” is *one of the most controversial notions in Husserlian phenomenology*. To preserve its *atemporality*, Husserl characterized meaning as the universal of intentional experience in *Logical Investigations*, but soon, he became critical of this view because it seems to betray our first-person experience of meaning-extraction in reflection. An extracted meaning need not be a type, neither of intentional experiences nor of intentional objects.³ We can extract the *singular* meaning obtained by a proposition via a particular judgmental intentionality, without subsuming this extracted meaning under any type.⁴ Accordingly, Husserl distinguishes between “eidetic” and “transcendental reduction,” and between “eidetic essence-phenomenology” and “transcendental phenomenology as a factual science.”⁵ This reveals the origin of the interpretative controversies around “noema,” which, according to Husserl, is “nothing more than the generalization of the idea of meaning [from the linguistic realm] to the entire realm of acts.”⁶ For Husserl, meaning is “an ideal (*ein Ideales*) but not a universal.” The ideality of meaning is not “the universality of a genus, species [and] difference.” Meanings are supposed to “belong as particulars to intentional experiences [...]. They are ideal onta, but singular, one-off (*einmalig*) onta.”⁷

² E. Husserl, *Phänomenologische Psychologie. Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1925* (Hua IX) herausgegeben von Walter Biemel, 2. Auflage, Springer 1968, p. 311. Repeated citation of Husserliana will take the form of “Hua” in this paper.

³ Husserl attempted to explain meaning as the universal of intentional objects, but he gave up this option because it amounts to confusing phenomenology (which studies sense-making) with ontology as an eidetic science (which thematizes “how things in general are”). Cfr. Id., *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Zweites Buch: Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution und Wissenschaftstheorie* (Hua IV/V), herausgegeben von Dirk Fonfara. Springer 2025, pp. 9, 146-150, 173, 179.

⁴ Id., *Vorlesungen über Bedeutungslehre Sommersemester 1908* (Hua XXVI), herausgegeben von Ursula Panzer, Martinus Nijhoff 1987, p. 214. Edmund Husserl, *Wahrnehmung und Aufmerksamkeit (1893–1912)* (Hua XXXVIII), herausgegeben von Thomas Vongehr und Regula Giuliani, Springer 2004, p. 246.

⁵ Id., *Einleitung in die Philosophie. Vorlesungen 1922/23* (Hua XXXV), herausgegeben von Berndt Goossens, Springer 2002, pp. 98, 251, 344.

⁶ Id., *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Drittes Buch: Die Phänomenologie und die Fundamente der Wissenschaften* (Hua V), herausgegeben von Marly Biemel, Martinus Nijhoff 1975, p. 89.

⁷ Hua XXXVIII, pp. 246, 302; Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen. Ergänzungsband. Zweiter Teil*, herausgegeben von Ulrich Melle, Springer 2005, p. 311.

How can Husserl maintain *both atemporality and singularity* as *non-trivial* properties of meaning in a *unified* account? Few, if any, interpretations of Husserl can meet this demand. Option 1 is to give up the non-trivial reading of meaning's ideality. For Salius Geniusas, the "ideality" of meaning amounts to being constant among various subjective modes of presentation.⁸ For instance, a table is a constant for various "tables-in-how," i.e., tables perceived from a specific perspective with a specific shape and color.⁹ "Ideality" of meaning is not atemporality on this reading. Option 2 is to abandon a unified theory of meaning: meanings involved in perception, imagination, etc., are temporal, while those involved in mathematical thinking are atemporal.¹⁰ If we are not willing to trivialize meaning's ideality or endorse a disjunctivist theory of meaning, the only available options seem to be the West-Coast and East-Coast interpretations. As Option 3, the former sacrifices the singularity of meaning for its atemporality by defining meaning as a Fregean mediator.¹¹ The latter, being Option 4, sacrifices the atemporality of meaning for its singularity as it depicts noema as an entity encompassing the intentional object as a constituent.¹²

This puts Husserlian phenomenology in an awkward situation. The notion of meaning/sense is extremely central for Husserlians, but they can hardly agree on what meaning really is. Without a robust account of meaning, the task of phenomenology and its distinctive characteristics would be underdefined.

This paper aims to meet this challenge by rejecting a hidden assumption in the above options: that when we study the sense-making in an intentional experience, the sense extracted by reflection is an entity existing pre-reflectively in the reflected intentional correlation. In other words, we hypostatize the sense in sense-making. This assumption creates the interpretative trouble. If "sense" were an entity in the reflected intentional

⁸ Salius Geniusas, *The Origins of Horizon in Husserl's Phenomenology*, Springer 2012, p. 34.

⁹ Husserl calls them "objects-in-how" (*Gegenstände im Wie*), Smith uses "qua-entity," and Castañeda speaks of "guises": "thin object[s], exhausted by the properties contained in the description." Cfr. Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen. Ergänzungsband. Erster Teil* (Hua XX/1), herausgegeben von Ulrich Melle, Springer 2002, p. 168; David W. Smith, *The Circle of Acquaintance: Perception, Consciousness, and Empathy*, D. Reidel, 1989, p. 89; Hector-Neri Castañeda, *Thinking, Language, and Experience*, University of Minnesota Press 1989, p. 195.

¹⁰ E. N. Dzwiza-Ohlsen, *Die Horizonte der Lebenswelt*, Wilhelm Fink 2019, p. 148.

¹¹ D. W. Smith & R. McIntyre, *Husserl and Intentionality*, D. Reidel 1982.

¹² John J. Drummond, *Husserlian Intentionality and Non-Foundational Realism*, Kluwer 1990.

correlation, it would be either (1) a particular constituent of the intentional experience, (2) a particular constituent of the intentional object, or (3) the species of (1) or (2) as the universal mediator between them. None of these interpretative possibilities can retain both atemporality and singularity of meaning.

For this reason, I propose *dehypostatizing the sense in sense-making*.¹³ An intentional experience makes sense of the intended entity, but this does not imply the existence of an entity called “sense” in that intentional correlation. Rather, philosophers postulate meaning as a theoretical entity in reflection to analyze the sense-making experience. Call the pre-reflective sense “meaningfulness” and the product of reflection “meaning.” On the one hand, meaningfulness, as the condition for the sense-maker to understand the intentional object, is not an entity. This implies the atemporality of meaningfulness. On the other hand, philosophers individuate meaning based on the reflected intentional correlation. Depending on whether they are dealing with a particular intentional correlation or a type of intentional correlations, the postulated proxy entity called meaning is correspondingly a particular or a universal. So long as meaning is extracted from the pre-reflective intentionality, it derives atemporality from meaningfulness. For this reason, the extracted meaning can be both atemporal and singular.

This proposal might appear too bold for many Husserlians, but it has supporters. Jocelyn Benoist argues that “this ‘sense’ is, however, unlike an entity.”¹⁴ Waldenfels endorses an *Urdifferenz* between entity (“something”) and meaningfulness (“as something”); the latter “functions before it is thematized and handled as a quasi-something.”¹⁵ The most prominent proponent of dehypostatizing the sense in sense-making is arguably Emil Lask, on whom my discussions will mainly rely (Section 2).

Why should a Husserlian endorse the dehypostatization of sense in sense-making (Section 3)? Besides providing a unified account of meaning that retains both atemporality and singularity, this proposal allows a reinterpretation of classical concepts and procedures in Husserlian phenomenology, such as “constitution,” “epoché” and “transcendentality.” This reinforces the boundary between Husserlian phenomenology and other schools of thought mentioned at the start.

¹³ This talk of “dehypostatization” originates from Castañeda op. cit., p. 194.

¹⁴ J. Benoist, *Von der Phänomenologie zum Realismus: Die Grenzen des Sinns*, Mohr Siebeck 2022, p. 134.

¹⁵ B. Waldenfels, R. Erfahrung, in H.-D. Gondek, T. N. Klass and L. Tengelyi (eds.), *Phänomenologie der Sinnereignisse*, Wilhelm Fink 2011, pp. 22-23.

The dehypostatization proposal is also valuable beyond Husserlian scholarship (Section 4). It might reveal where Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology converge and diverge. It has interesting implications for the hard problem of consciousness. Last but not least, it implies a distribution of work for art and philosophy in the research on sense-making.

A Laskian Account of Husserlian Meaning

In his groundbreaking work *The Logic of Philosophy and the Category Theory* (and especially in the introductory part of the book), Lask makes a clear distinction between what is valid (*Geltendes*) and what is there (*Seiendes*). This “gap between *Seiendes* and *Geltendes*” should not be confused with the Platonic distinction between particular and universal. For Lask, “the difference between the individual and the universal has nothing to do with that between *Seiendes* and *Geltendes*,” and the mistake of Platonism consists in “blurring the boundary between ametaphysical *Geltung*-philosophy and metaphysics of the ultrasensorial (*Übersinnlichen*).”¹⁶ Platonism “repress[es] the realm of *Geltung* [and] orient[s us] exclusively to the alternative of sensorial and ultrasensorial,” with “the realm of *Geltung* drawn into the metaphysical realm and ‘hypostatized’ to the latter.”¹⁷ For this reason, Lask warns philosophers against “allowing the metaphysical to spread excessively to *Geltendes*” and “desiring to press all philosophical problems into the sphere of *Geltung* out of the expulsion of the ultrasensorial.”¹⁸

What is the *Geltendes* if it is not any sort of entity at all? Lask’s positive description is “clarity moment” (*Klarheitsmoment*), i.e., what allows an entity to “stand in clarity,” to “trans-appear” (*durchscheinen*).¹⁹

How should we explore *Geltendes* if it plays such an important role? One way is to “directly experience,” as “a direct devotion to” the *Geltendes*, and another is to “know” the *Geltendes* by thematizing it. The first mode is to “lose oneself” (*Sichverlieren*) in “simply ‘living’,” which is characteristic for enjoying artworks, while the second mode needs “transporting the direct to the indirect and distant,” which is typical for philosophical investigation that “makes [the *Geltendes*] into an object.”²⁰

¹⁶ E. Lask, *Die Logik der Philosophie und die Kategorienlehre* (Gesammelte Schriften II). Herausgegeben von Herrigel, J. C. B. Mohr, 1911/1923, pp. 6, 79, 270.

¹⁷ *Ivi*, pp. 12, 268.

¹⁸ *Ivi*, p. 15.

¹⁹ *Ivi*, pp. 75-77, 103.

²⁰ *Ivi*, pp. 189-193.

Why should a Husserlian find this useful for developing a theory of meaning? To begin with, Lask considers his account as a critique of Husserl's theory of meaning in *Logical Investigations*. According to Lask, Husserl and Bolzano's divide between object and sense/meaning falls prey to the Platonic dichotomy; they understand meaning/sense as the universal of particulars, but according to Lask, "there is no 'ultra' (*über*) relation [characteristic for the particular/universal divide] between the two regions [=entity and meaning]." ²¹

This gives us a reason to treat the Laskian *Geltendes* as the dehyposatized sense in sense-making. As the sense-maker pre-reflectively enjoys his sense-making experience, meaningfulness (the sense made of an entity) is not yet an entity, but what allows the sense-maker to understand the entity as such an entity. This corresponds to the "clarity moment" above. In philosophical reflection, a higher-order sense-maker postulates a theoretical entity called "meaning" – the objectified *Geltendes* in Lask – to analyze the merely enjoyed pre-reflective sense-making experience.

A caveat: although Lask should identify his use of *Geltendes* with the Husserlian meaning if he considers his critique as relevant, his positive definition of meaning/sense deviates. This reveals the residue of Neo-Kantianism in Lask that betrays his insight. In subsequent parts of his book, Lask invokes the Neo-Kantian form/material divide to explain the *Geltendes/Seiendes* distinction proposed in the introductory part. Being valid (*gelten*) is interpreted as being valid for an entity (*hingelten*), and Lask concludes that *Geltendes* is the "form 'on' [the entity] (*daran*)," just like a token of color on a visual object. ²² But this implies that *Geltendes* is just another sort of entity. Accordingly, Lask's own use of "sense" – "the in-one-another, the interlock (*Verklammerung*) of form and material, the entirety [of them]" – implies a mereological relation between *Geltendes* and *Seiendes*. ²³ This betrayal of his *Geltendes/Seiendes* divide originates probably from Lask's mentor Heinrich Rickert, who interprets Lask's divide by saying that "should (*Sollen*) and being valid (*Gelten*), just like existing and the real being (*das reale Sein*), stand under the broadest concept of being." ²⁴ If this held,

²¹ *Ivi*, p. 42. Lask wrote Husserl a letter on this, but it is unclear whether Husserl has taken that seriously. Cfr. Edmund Husserl, *Briefwechsel* (Hua Dok III), herausgegeben von Karl Schumann in Verbindung mit Elisabeth Schumann, Springer 1994, Bd. 5, p. 31.

²² Lask op. cit, pp. 31-32

²³ *Ivi*, p. 34

²⁴ H. Rickert, *Der Gegenstand der Erkenntnis*, historisch-kritische Ausgabe, herausgegeben von Rainer A. Bast, De Gruyter 1928/2018, p. 250.

Geltendes would be a just subtype of *Seiendes*, contradicting Lask's original claim.

Suppose we purify Lask from this Neo-Kantian residue. His *Geltendes/Seiendes* divide then allows Husserlians to preserve both the atemporality and singularity of meaning. The dehyponatized sense is not any sort of entity at all and thus has no temporal determinations. If the postulated theoretical entity "meaning" is not a complete fiction, it should be a proxy for the dehyponatized sense, i.e., it should capture the sense-making experience while allowing us to analyze this experience in a way that we are used to (decomposing an entity into constituents). Because of this connection to meaningfulness, meaning can inherit its atemporality. Since meanings are postulated by philosophers to analyze sense-making experiences, they can be flexibly individuated. If philosophers are interested in particular intentional correlations, the meanings obtained by the intentional objects are singular. They are individuated by each particular intentional correlation. If philosophers are interested in a type of intentional correlations, the corresponding meaning is universal. In short, the Laskian account of Husserlian meaning implies an *experience-first strategy* to individuate meaning. This contrasts with the mainstream meaning individuating procedure in linguistics, which can be termed *expression-first*: expression type/token maps one-to-one to context-invariant linguistic meaning/context-sensitive extralinguistic content.²⁵

The Laskian account of Husserlian meaning reveals an ambiguity in phenomenological reflection. Husserl's positive characterization for the extracted meaning in reflection is "the Intended as Such" (*das Vermeinte als solches*), but this can be understood in two ways.²⁶ Phenomenological reflection might aim to capture (1) *the entity made sense of* by being intended, or (2) *the sense in which* the entity is being intended, viz., *the sense made of an entity*. Husserl did not make a clear distinction between these two. Most of the time, he and his interpreters assume the first reading. However, there is also evidence that Husserl sometimes endorses (2). In the original context where he says "noema is nothing more than the generalization of the idea of meaning to the entire realm of acts," Husserl describes the intentional object as "the in noema meant objectivity" (*im Noema bedeutete*

²⁵ Cfr. F. Recanati, *Direct Reference: From Language to Thought*, Blackwell 1993.

²⁶ E. Husserl, *Logik und Allgemeine Wissenschaftstheorie. Vorlesungen 1917/18 mit ergänzenden Texten aus der ersten Fassung von 1910/11* (Hua XXX), herausgegeben von Ursula Panzer, Kluwer 1996, pp. 49-50.

Gegenständlichkeit).²⁷ This suggests that the dehypostatized meaningfulness is precisely “the sense in which” the intentional object is intended, and philosophers want to capture this via the theoretical entity meaning. However, one should refrain from reading the “in” in “the sense in which” mereologically, as if meaningfulness were an entity encompassing the intentional object. Unfortunately, this is what Husserl sometimes did himself, which misled the East-Coast interpreters.²⁸

Why Husserlians Should Prefer the Dehypostatization of Sense

I argued that the Laskian account of Husserlian meaning can preserve both the atemporality and singularity of meaning. This gives it an advantage over competing interpretations. Apart from its power in solving the interpretative debate, this Laskian account can also better explain what distinguishes Husserlian phenomenology from other schools of thought.

“Transcendental” and “constitution” are two terms that Husserl arguably borrows from Neo-Kantianism. “Transcendental” means what is not empirical but makes empirical knowledge possible. In this sense, “transcendental” is “ultra-empirical” for Kantians. The Kantian solution to the possibility problem of empirical knowledge follows this pattern: how can the transcendental subject obtain knowledge about the transcendent world if he is sharply isolated from it? The transcendental subject has to insert himself (*hineinlegen*) into the world as a sensation-organizing form if his empirical knowledge is possible.²⁹ Consequently, the transcendent world is co-constituted by the sensation and the subjective form.

Although Husserl uses the same terms, he gives them very different interpretations. “Transcendental” no longer means “ultra-empirical” since Husserl explicitly speaks of “transcendental empirics” “transcendental fact,” and “transcendental experience (*Erfahrung*).”³⁰ Rather, by “transcendental subjectivity,” Husserl means “ultramundane” (*überweltlich*): the sense-maker does not become part of the world by making sense of the world via intentionality. This contrasts with the embodied psychological subject as an “intramundane” (*innerweltlich*) entity.³¹ Consequently, when Husserl describes the transcendental subject as “constituting the world,” he does not

²⁷ Hua IV/V, pp. 150, 154.

²⁸ Hua XXVI, p. 212.

²⁹ Rickert op. cit., p. 371

³⁰ Hua XXXV, pp. 111, 344.

³¹ Hua IX, p. 345.

mean that the sense-maker inserts himself as a material-organizing form into the world. Rather, the Husserlian “constitution” only means that the sense-maker is the subject “in whose functioning the world obtains meaning” or “in whose unknown achieving (*Leisten*) this world obtains meaning for us.”³² In short, constitution as sense-making does not imply any ontological role of the sense-maker.

The Laskian account of meaning fits nicely into this picture. If the sense made of an entity is not an entity at all, the sense-making experience does not add anything to our ontological catalogue, although we might postulate a theoretical entity called meaning in reflection. For this reason, intentionality is a unique type of relation. Unlike other relations discussed by ontology (causal, mereological, etc.), intentionality holds even if one of its relata is impossible to exist (say, a round square) because intentionality does not integrate the two sides of the correlation into a whole, with the largest whole being the world.³³ The sole function of intentionality is sense-making. Given the dehyposatized status of meaningfulness, the sense-maker does not have an immediate ontological role to play because of intentionality.³⁴

Accordingly, the Husserlian epoché differs from the Cartesian methodological skepticism despite the apparent similarity. While Descartes wishes to find an infallible epistemic foundation from which the existence of the world might be inferred, Husserl suspends the judgment of mundane existence for another reason. To decide what exists and how they exist is the job of ontology. Phenomenology has another concern: how entities obtain meaningfulness as existent/non-existent. Husserlian phenomenology wants to “clarify the sense of this world [...], its ground of legitimacy” rather than providing support for realism or anti-realism about the intentional object.³⁵ Engagement in the ontological task could distract from the phenomenological research on sense-making. For this reason, Husserl needs to bracket the existence of the world. This echoes the Laskian distinction between ametaphysical *Geltung*-philosophy and metaphysics.³⁶

³² Hua Dok III/3, pp. 377, 498.

³³ Hua IV/V, p. 544

³⁴ I said “immediate” because the sense-maker could play an ontological role, as an ontologically relevant fact needs sense-making as an ingredient. Say, if performing an action requires making sense of the motivating reason, then the sense-maker plays an ontological role in virtue of its connection to agency. The sense-maker alone does not have immediate ontological implications.

³⁵ Hua IV/V, p. 624

³⁶ Cfr. Section 2.

Similarly, one should refrain from assimilating the Husserlian transcendental subject with any other conception of subject with a clear ontological implication. Take Fichte's absolute ego as an example. As understood by Fichte, the absolute ego is a striving to identify everything with himself, "to fill in the infinity, [...] to encompass it," as if the absolute ego has an impulse to conquer.³⁷ This striving encounters resistance, which leads to the distinction between (cognitive) ego and non-ego within the absolute ego.³⁸ In contrast, the Husserlian sense-maker does not interfere with the entity made sense of.

To conclude, the dehypostatization of sense in sense-making urges a purification of the Husserlian transcendental subject (the sense-maker *simpliciter*) from the mixture with ontologically relevant subjects (the Kantian form, the Cartesian foundation, the Fichtean conqueror, etc.). This does not preclude the possibility of a certain sense of subject with ontological relevance in phenomenology. In fact, Husserl himself speaks of a subject *qua* ultimate individuator, who is supposed to confer individuality to spatiotemporal positions.³⁹ The lesson is what Susanna Schellenberg calls "the polysemy of 'I'."⁴⁰ The first-person pronoun is ambiguous, incorporating more basic notions of subjects in the course of historical sedimentation. If a Husserlian wants to maintain the distinctiveness of phenomenology from other disciplines, he is obliged to disambiguate "I" into functionally distinct concepts, such as the Husserlian transcendental subject, and then ask why they *de facto* converge.

Why Non-Husserlians Should Also Prefer the Dehypostatization of Sense

I argued above that Husserlians should prefer the dehypostatization of sense in sense-making, given its explanatory benefits for Husserlian phenomenology. Is this proposal also attractive for non-Husserlians? I would like to say yes.

³⁷ J. G. Fichte, *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, Felix Meiner 1794¹, 1802², 1956, p. 83; Johann G. Fichte. Grundriss des Eigentümlichen der Wissenschaftslehre, in I. M. Fichte (ed.), *Fichtes Werke. Band I: Zur theoretischen Philosophie I*, Walter de Gruyter 1795¹, 1802², 1971, p. 359.

³⁸ Id., *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, p. 186

³⁹ Hua IV/V, p. 231; Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität, Erster Teil (1905–1920)* (Hua XIII), herausgegeben von Iso Kern, Martinus Nijhoff 1973, p. 3.

⁴⁰ Susanna Schellenberg, The Polysemy of "I", "Mind and Language", 2025, No. 41(May 26), pp. 2-20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mila.12551>

First of all, it helps diagnose where Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology converge and diverge. As shown by Steven Crowell, Lask has deeply influenced Heidegger.⁴¹ For Heidegger in *Being and Time*, “sense is an existential (*Existential*) of Dasein, not a property which adheres to the entity, lies ‘behind’ it or floats somewhere as an ‘intermediary realm’.”⁴² This resonates with the dehypostatization of Husserlian meaningfulness. Nevertheless, Heidegger takes another lesson from Lask, who writes “the being of the entity already belongs to *Geltendes*, and thus to non-entity.”⁴³ This is a probable origin of the Heideggerian ontological difference between being and entity. In short, although both Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology emerge from purifying the Neo-Kantian residue, Heidegger parts from Husserl as he identifies *Geltendes* with being.

Another value of the dehypostatization proposal is an explanation of why the hard problem of consciousness is so hard. The easy problem of consciousness is to find out what physiological activities *de facto* correlate with consciousness. This does not tell us whether there are necessary connections between consciousness and physiological activities and if so, what they are.⁴⁴ Why is this problem so hard? If we assume that a mental state is conscious in virtue of intentionality (intentionalism in the weakest sense), the dehypostatization proposal might provide an answer: since the sense made of an entity is not yet an entity, making sense of an entity via consciousness need not produce anything ontologically relevant. This makes it difficult to make a stable association of conscious experiences with other types of entities, such as physiological activities.

Finally, the dehypostatization proposal implies a work distribution between art and philosophy in the research on meaning. Recall that Lask distinguishes two approaches to *Geltendes*.⁴⁵ One is an immersed devotion typically experienced in enjoying artworks, and another is philosophical reflection. Art allows the preservation of the dehypostatized status of sense, but it cannot provide an articulated account of sense-making. This is the job of philosophy. Still, philosophers should know in the first place that the

⁴¹ Cfr. S. G. Crowell, *Husserl, Heidegger, and the Space of Meaning: Path toward Transcendental Phenomenology*, Northwestern University Press 2001.

⁴² M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Gesamtausgabe Band 2, herausgegeben von F.-W. von Herrmann, Vittorio Klostermann 1977, p. 201.

⁴³ Lask op. cit., p. 46

⁴⁴ D. J. Chalmers, *The conscious mind: In search of a fundamental theory*, Oxford University Press 1996.

⁴⁵ Cfr. Section 2.

theoretical entity meaning that they postulate to analyze the sense-making experience is a mere proxy for the dehypostatized sense. This does not devalue philosophical thinking. To use the words of Fichte, boundary and infinity presume one another.⁴⁶ One cannot talk about the boundary of philosophy in the research on meaning without already going beyond that boundary via art, and cannot characterize the dehypostatized sense preserved by enjoying artworks as an infinite target without engaging oneself in a philosophical reflection on meaning. In short, artistic enjoyment of sense-making experience is blind without philosophical articulation of sense-making, and philosophical research on meaning is empty without direct devotion to meaningfulness in artistic enjoyment.

Conclusion

Husserlian phenomenology argues that our intentional experiences are responsible for sense-making. Should we take literally from this description that there is an entity called “sense” in the sense-making experience? This paper argues for a negative answer, as a positive reply creates interpretative trouble. Besides, the dehypostatization proposal, developed via a critical interpretation of Emil Lask’s distinction between *Geltendes* and *Seiendes*, can better account for the boundary between Husserlian phenomenology and other schools of thought, despite their similarities in terminology and procedure. Dehypostatizing the sense in sense-making also has interesting implications beyond Husserlian phenomenology, including a distribution of work between art and philosophy in the research on meaning.

⁴⁶ Fichte, *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, p. 286.

Pio Colonnello,
ESISTENZA E TRASCENDENZA. SAGGIO SU JASPERS,
Mimesis, Milano-Udine 2025 (111 pp.)
BIUSO Alberto Giovanni

Il Novecento è stato per la filosofia un secolo di trionfo e di tragedia.

Trionfo per aver mostrato come la troppo superficiale previsione della sua morte sia stata clamorosamente smentita da un pensiero plurale, critico e profondo, quale di rado si è avuto dopo i Greci. Soprattutto *critico* verso le contraddizioni delle società umane e dei loro apprendimenti e *plurale* nella metodologia di approccio alla comprensione dell'accadere.

Tragedia per le faglie di conflitto e di incomunicabilità che la violenza del XX secolo ha creato tra pensatori tutti consapevoli dell'amara complessità del divenire ma per varie ragioni viventi in luoghi interiori e culturali diversi e persino incompatibili.

Il rapporto tra Martin Heidegger e Karl Jaspers è un esempio tra i più chiari di questo dramma ermeneutico ed esistenziale. Di tale relazione Pio Colonnello indica i momenti chiave, i documenti fondamentali, l'intricato e sinuoso percorso. E lo fa con grande equilibrio critico ed ermeneutico, al quale si aggiunge una vera e propria *pietas* che si percepisce in ogni pagina nei confronti dei limiti e degli slanci delle persone coinvolte in tale plesso storico e intimo.

Sono soprattutto i sentimenti e i giudizi di Jaspers a essere indagati, sia perché a lui il libro è dedicato sia perché egli fu assai più esplicito del suo interlocutore, anche se non poche delle lettere con le quali si rivolgeva a Heidegger portano l'annotazione di sua stessa mano 'non spedita'. In ogni caso non soltanto negli anni Venti ma lungo tutta la loro vita "aumenta comunque la tensione tra affetto ed estraneità, tra ammirazione e indifferenza, tra disapprovazione e consenso"⁴⁷.

L'apprezzamento verso molti contenuti del *Discorso di Rettorato* che Heidegger tenne nel maggio del 1933 si coniuga allo stupore e all'amarezza per il silenzio heideggeriano su quanto andava accadendo in Germania; il severo giudizio su Heidegger trasmesso alla Commissione di epurazione

⁴⁷ Pio Colonnello, *Esistenza e trascendenza. Saggio su Jaspers*, Mimesis, Milano-Udine 2025, p. 19.

alleata nel 1945 si unisce alla consapevolezza che comunque negli anni precedenti Heidegger aveva attivamente agito per proteggere alcuni professori ebrei o per aiutarli a trovare sede e lavoro fuori dalla Germania (Werner Brock, Eduard Fraenkel, Georg von Hevesey, Elisabeth Blochmann, Paul Kristeller, Karl Löwith).

Il documento forse più emblematico e davvero significativo di questa relazione sono le parole che si possono leggere in una lunga nota del 1964, nella quale Jaspers scrive “così è andata tra me e Heidegger. Per questo trovo insopportabili, senza alcuna eccezione, tutte le critiche che egli ha subito: lassù, infatti, su quell’altopiano, non avrebbero trovato posto”⁴⁸. Il lassù, l’altopiano e le altre intense metafore spaziali enunciate da Jaspers in questo testo indicano lo spazio della filosofia, che per Heidegger e per Jaspers è evidentemente lo stesso spazio di Nietzsche, e dunque non “*ein Ruhebett oder der Weg zu einem Ruhebett, oder eine Unterhaltung, oder ein Müsiggang, — für mich ist sie eine Welt der Gefahren und Siege, in der auch die heroischen Gefühle ihre Tanz- und Tummelplätze haben*”. Un giaciglio di riposo o la via a un giaciglio di riposo, oppure uno svago o un ozio; ma per me essa è un mondo di pericoli e di vittorie, in cui anche i sentimenti eroici trovano le loro arene per la danza e per la lotta”⁴⁹. Le parole di Jaspers, nota con finezza Colonnello, costituiscono “un invito che eleva l’amicizia filosofica con Heidegger, attraversata da luci e ombre, da estraneità e affinità, su un piano nobilissimo, carico di pathos”⁵⁰.

Nell’intenso capitolo (il secondo) dedicato al rapporto davvero totale tra Jaspers e la moglie Gertrud Mayer - “una storia d’amore in tempi oscuri”⁵¹ - si trova una nota rivelatrice della dimensione anche politica che attraversa tutta l’opera di Jaspers e tutte le sue relazioni. Il 3 ottobre del 1942 Jaspers scrive che data l’identità e la fede ebraica di Gertrud, “la causa degli ebrei doveva diventare anche la mia causa”, aggiungendo con chiarezza “non però il nazionalismo ebraico, non il sionismo, che mi appariva pernicioso”⁵².

La seconda parte del volume analizza e discute con altrettanta chiarezza i temi della corporeità, della fenomenologia, della psichiatria, tutti posti sotto la luce di una distinzione fondamentale, “di una concezione di ‘corpo vivente’ (*Leib*), ben distinto dal corpo-cosa, di cui si occupano le scienze sperimentali, dal corpo inteso come ente tra gli enti, di cui è possibile fornire una

⁴⁸ Ivi, p. 34.

⁴⁹ F. Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, tr. it. *La Gaia Scienza*, af. 324.

⁵⁰ P. Colonnello, op. cit., p. 63.

⁵¹ Ivi, p. 37.

⁵² Ivi, p. 44.

spiegazione anatomica e fisiologica”⁵³. Da qui sorge la consonanza con le prospettive dell’antropoanalisi esistenziale di Ludwig Binswanger e della psicopatologia fenomenologica di Eugène Minkowski, alle quali si aggiunge una complessa e dinamica “assonanza, pur nella diversità delle posizioni teoriche, tra la ‘fenomenologia dell’esperienza religiosa’ in James e la fenomenologia dell’*Erleben* patologico in Jaspers”⁵⁴.

In ogni caso il filosofo e lo psichiatra Jaspers è del tutto consapevole della “necessità di guardare la malattia mentale da diversi punti di vista, in nome di un pluralismo metodologico” e su una “linea di confine che collega e, al tempo stesso, distingue la normale vita psichica dalla sua insorgenza patologica, dal momento che assai rilevante è l’attenzione alla questione della soggettività nelle sue molteplici tonalità psichiche e patologiche”⁵⁵.

Di tale plesso esistenziale e teoretico, che è la vita e l’opera di Jaspers, il libro restituisce per intero, come si vede, la natura, il dolore, il rigore.

⁵³ *Ivi*, p. 67.

⁵⁴ *Ivi*, p. 80.

⁵⁵ *Ivi*, p. 96.

