

Essence and Modality

The Quintessence of Husserl's Theory

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1 Introduction

Even the most cursory reader of Husserl's writings must be struck by the frequent references to essences ("Wesen", "Essenzen"), Ideas ("Idee"), kinds, natures, types and species and to necessities, possibilities, impossibilities, necessary possibilities, essential necessities and essential laws. What does Husserl have in mind in talking of essences and modalities? What did he take the relation between essentiality and modality to be? In the absence of answers to these questions it is not clear that a reader of Husserl can be said to understand him.

Thus in the first part of Husserl's first major work, the "Prolegomena" to the *Logical Investigations* (*P*, *LI*), he mentions the essence of logic, of knowledge, the rational essence of deductive science (Preface), the essence of truth, falsity, generality, particularity, ground and consequence, affirmation and denial (§ 18), of colours and tones (§ 40), of numbers (§ 46), the essence of theoretical connections (§ 66), of process, cause, effect, time and thinking (§ 71 A). And he continues in this style throughout his later writings (cf. Smith 1989).

Husserl often mentions essences in the course of making claims to the effect that some universal proposition holds in virtue of the essence of this or that. He says that such propositions are grounded in the essence of this or that. We therefore need to understand what expressions of the form "the essence of x" mean, what Husserl took their extension to be, what he understands by "ground" and how modality, essence, grounding and universality or generality stand to one another. Answers to all these questions are

required, it may seem, before we can even begin to understand Husserl's account of the epistemology of essences and essential connections.

2 Essence, Instantiation and Grounding

2.1 *Essence, Species and Instances*

Essences and species are ideal objects. But not every ideal object is an essence or a species. If an ideal object has possible instances it is an essence or a species. Essences and species are named by a peculiar type of singular term. Examples of such singular terms are “red” (“Rot”) and “the tone C”. Such singular terms typically occur in a type of proposition Husserl calls “überhaupt” propositions, for example

Red is a colour,
Orange lies between red and yellow,
Man is rational,
Pleasure is good.

Some “überhaupt” propositions do not have the apparent form of singular predications, for example

A man is rational,
A self-evident judging is good,
An emotion has an intellectual basis,
A proposition contains a concept.

What are the instances of essences and species? What is instantiation? Husserl sometimes talks of “the primitive relation” (“das primitive Verhältnis”) between a species and an individual case (“Einzelfall”), he sometimes says that an individual case is a realisation (“realisiert”) of a species or a “Vereinzelung” thereof (*LI* II, § 1). Sometimes he calls this relation “unterstehen” (*LI* II, § 3). Sometimes he says that an individual case falls under a species (“das unter [die Spezies] fallende Einzelne”; *LI* I, § 31).

What are these individual cases? Husserl often says that what he calls “moments” (“Momente”) are cases of species. A moment is a temporal

particular which is not a substance. Some examples of moments are events or processes, others are not. Thus he says that

In the actual experience of meaning an individual feature, a singular case of [a] species [...] corresponds to the unitary meaning, just as to the specific difference redness [Röte] there corresponds a red moment [Rotmoment] in the object. (*LI* I, § 34; cf. transl. 332; cf. *LI* V, § 2)

Here Husserl distinguishes two species and two moments. One species is what he here calls “redness” (and elsewhere “red”) and its instantiation is something in an object. The other species is a meaning species, perhaps a propositional meaning species, a proposition; its instantiation is an actual experience of meaning. This experience is not only something that takes place, it has a rich internal structure, as rich as that of which it is an instance; it is made up of other moments.¹ One of Husserl’s most careful readers, Ingarden (1996, 301ff.), has pointed to the predominance of qualities in the examples Husserl gives in the *Investigations* of instantiations of species. But, as we have seen, experiences also instantiate essences. Do substances such as trees and women instantiate essences or species? That this is the case is implied by Husserl’s account of identity (*LI* II, § 3) and by his account of material things and of “concreta” in the third *Investigation* (cf. *LI* III, § 12 A). But as important as all these examples are the instantiations of Truth and Law by particular truths and particular laws.

Are moments properties? Husserl sometimes talks of moments as properties (*LU* Annotationen, 820). But he does not think that all moments are properties (*EU*, § 32a). What makes this claim difficult to understand is that Husserl very often treats properties as what have been called “unit-properties”. On this conception of properties and relations they are specific to their bearers. So understood, it is clear that at least some unit-properties cannot be identical with moments. For example, the property of being a number which 2 alone enjoys, which is numerically distinct from the prop-

¹ This part of Husserl’s theory of Meanings and their psychological instantiations is the foundation of his first major anti-psychologistic theory of meaning (cf. Willard 1977). Husserl changed his mind about this theory, but a version of it was to be developed later by Ramsey.

erty of being a number which 3 alone enjoys, could not be identical with any temporal particular. And Husserl's considered view seems to be that no unit-property is ever identical with a moment – even the red moment in a thing, mentioned above, is not identical with the bearer-specific property of being red of the same thing – although he does not always respect his own distinction.

Is talk of instantiation not a rather confused way of talking about the relation between a property and its bearer which is often called “exemplification”? Many philosophers use “exemplifies” and “instantiates” as synonyms. But for Husserl “is a case of” and “exemplifies” express two different relations. On the one hand there is the

conceptual pair, attribute [Beschaffenheit] and bearer or subject of the attribute. The relation of attribution [Zukommen] or the predicative relation corresponds to this pair. (*Logic* 1896, 61)

On the other hand,

This individual red does not have the attribute of being red! It is a case of red. (*Ibid.*, n. 1)

Sometimes Husserl understands by “attribute” or “property” a unit-property, sometimes a multiply exemplifiable property. If no property were ever identical with a species, it would follow that instantiation of a species and exemplification of a property could not be identified. Many passages suggest that this is Husserl's view. But some formulations are perhaps incompatible with this interpretation. Thus he talks of “attributes in specie” (“Attribut in specie”, *LI* II, § 21, heading; cf. §§ 4, 10). Are these multiply exemplifiable properties or species corresponding to attributes (red, the property of being red)?

What is instantiation if it is not predicative attribution? As we have seen, Husserl calls it a primitive relation. As far as I can see, the only other thing he says about it is that it is an “eidetic connection” (*Ideas*, § 7). This perhaps means that it is not a bearer-specific connection.

2.2 *Grounding and Because*

Instances of

x grounds y,
y is grounded in x

are as common in Husserl's writings as are references to species and essences, and we find one wherever we find the other. Such instances invariably consist of "grounds" flanked by nominalizations such as "the fact that p", "the truth that p" and "the essence of x". If we denominalise the singular terms and ask what connective connects the resulting sentences, we see that "ground" and "explain" derive from "because". In his 1896 logic lectures (§ 58) Husserl follows the tradition of calling the propositions formed when "because" takes two sentences "causal propositions". "Causal" here refers not or not only to causal relations between events since, as Husserl knows, many instances of

q because p,

in particular the instances he is after, have nothing whatsoever to do with events. Husserl notes that

If B because A, then A is true & B is true.

He says that

(1) B because A

is equivalent to but not identical with

(2) (If A, then B) & A,

and is equivalent to but not identical with

(3) (If A, then B) & A & B.

Someone might hold (3) or (2) to be true without judging that (1). To judge that (1) is to judge that one truth grounds another, he says. (He does not explain how this fits with another claim he makes, that predications of truth need not be parts of causal propositions). He says that the difference between the meaning of (1) and its equivalents has an exact analogue, the difference in meaning between what he calls universal propositions and

their equivalents. For the thoughts expressed by the sentences on each side of the equivalence

All As are B iff there are As & there is no A which is not B

are not the same. In the thought expressed by the right-hand side, “the inner relation according to which one truth is a fundament for another truth is lost” (*Logic* 1896, 233). Causal propositions enjoy a central role in Husserl’s philosophy of logic, for they form the “objective content of all” of what he calls “inferences” (“Schlüsse”).² As we shall see, they are in fact central to his entire philosophy of essence. Once we have seen how Husserl understands the connection between grounding and essence, we shall return to his account of “because” (section 4).

3 Essentiality and Modality

Many twentieth-century philosophers have used “necessarily” and “essentially” as synonyms. This is surprising. For the multiplicity of the family

possible, necessary, impossible, contingent

differs from that of the family

essential, inessential.

The concept of possibility plays three distinct syntactic roles. It occurs as a functor, as a predicate-forming predicate and as a simple predicate:

It is possible that Sam is sad,

Sam is possibly sad,

That Sam is sad is possible.

It is not entirely obvious that what is true of “possible” is true of “necessary”. But the important point is that at least one member of the family of the alethic modalities is a triple-role concept (as are, for example, “true”, “ought”, “certain”). The concept of essentiality, on the other hand, occurs only in one of these three roles:

Sam is essentially a man.

If we say

It is essential that Sam is a man,

That Sam is a man is essential,

“essential” is elliptic. Perhaps we mean that it is essential for the success of the party that Sam be a man. Or that it is essential to Sam that he be a man, that is to say, that he is essentially a man.

To say of something that it is essentially F is to conceive of essentiality predicatively. A variant on this way of talking about essentiality is to say that something essentially exemplifies a property. Husserl sometimes talks about essentiality in this way. A second way of talking about essentiality, at the heart of Kit Fine’s (1994a, 1994b, 1994-95, 1995) remarkable recent account of essence and modality, employs the primitive expression

x makes it true that *p* in virtue of the essence of *x*.

There is another way of talking about essentiality, one which is central in Husserl’s scheme of things: something instantiates an essence or species. As we shall see, Husserl very often says things of the form

That *p* is grounded in the essence of *x*,

that is to say,

p because *x* instantiates the essence it instantiates.

(And, as we shall see, he does not take such locutions to be primitive.) Thus he says that all objects can stand in two kinds of relation, the part-whole relation and the relation between coordinated parts of a whole, and that these two kinds of relation are “grounded *a priori* in the idea [Idee] of an object” (*LI* III, § 1). Similarly,

The propositions of universal arithmetic – the nomology of arithmetic as we may call it – are laws grounded purely in the ideal essence of the genus number. (*P*, § 46; cf. transl. 181)

² *Logic* 1896, 233; cf. 251; *P*, § 63; *Logic* 1908/09, 206ff.

In addition to such examples of formal essences as grounds, Husserl gives many examples of material essences which play the same role. His favourite is:

[T]he proposition “all material bodies are extended” [...] says what is grounded in the essence of a material thing and in the essence of extension. (*Ideas*, § 6)

Here we have two examples where a universal or general proposition is grounded in the essences of the objects it mentions.³ But Husserl also thinks there are universal propositions grounded not in the essences of the objects the proposition quantifies over but in the essences of the concepts, meanings or categories occurring in the proposition. Thus

What is analytic from the logical point of view [sic] is what has its ground in the essence of the formal analytic categories (what has so to speak its ground in the empty essences). (*Logic* 1917/18, 294)

There are also numerous passages where Husserl gives as examples of essential grounds not the essence of this or that but rather concepts and even properties. Thus

The purely logical laws are truths which are grounded purely in the concept of truth and in the concepts essentially akin to it. (*P*, § 50)

Such propositions are “propositions to the sense of which it belongs to state what lies, in a law-like way, in the concept of truth” (*P*, § 50). What are the concepts akin to that of truth? They are the concepts which are constitutive of the logical laws, e.g. truth and falsity, assertion and denial, generality and particularity, ground and consequence, and so on (*P*, § 18).

In some passages Husserl seems to treat “concept of” or “sense of” and “essence of” as interchangeable:

³ What a proposition mentions is a function of the theory of predication applied to the proposition. Husserl adheres to a version of the two-name theory of predication: the copula takes two names to make a sentence.

By purely logical laws [...] I understand all the ideal laws which are grounded purely in the sense (in the “essence”, “content”) of the concepts of truth, proposition, object, property, relation, connection, law, fact [...]. (*P*, § 37; cf. §§ 67f.)⁴

Part of the hermeneutic problem here is due to the fact that Husserl sometimes uses “concept” for property and sometimes calls the semantic value of a concept a “property” and, as we have seen, does not always respect his distinction between species or essences and properties. In annotations to the *Investigations* he wonders, as well he might, “How is the word ‘Begriff’ used in the *Logical Investigations*?” (*LI* Annotationen, 821).

In all the examples quoted of essential grounding Husserl clearly has in mind only a priori grounding by the a priori essences of objects. This is also what he has in mind when he claims, for example, that the self-identity of an object is rooted in its essence or that the exact, transitive similarity between the possible instances of a species is grounded in the fact that they are instances of the species. Thus the claim mentioned in section 1 above, to the effect that Husserl’s theory of essence must be understood before his account of the epistemology of essence, of a priori knowledge, can be understood, must be qualified. Husserl’s philosophy of logic and of ontology is inseparable from certain epistemological claims and independent only of the ways these are spelled out. Although a priori “knowledge of possibilities must precede knowledge of actualities” (*Ideas*, § 79), Husserl does provide the beginnings of an account of how his theory of essence

⁴ Both Husserl and Frege argue, against formalist theories, that sense or meaning understood as constituted by rules or prescriptions is *grounded* in sense or meaning which is not so constituted. Thus Husserl says that differently shaped and coloured things become chess-figures “durch die Spielregeln, welche ihnen ihre feste Spielbedeutung geben. Und so besitzen auch die arithmetischen Zeichen neben ihren originären Bedeutung sozusagen ihre Spielbedeutung” (*LI* I, § 20), and that meaning of the former sort grounds meaning of the latter sort (*P*, § 9; cf. *Logic* 1902/03, 30f.). And Frege says: “Suchen wir uns das Wesen der formalen Arithmetik noch klarer zu machen! [...] Wie unterscheidet sie sich von einem bloßen Spiele? [...] Wenn man auf die Bedeutungen zurückgehen wollte, so fänden die Regeln in eben diesen Bedeutungen ihre Begründung” (Frege 1903 II, § 90; cf. § 91).

and modality applies to a posteriori knowledge and to “empirical necessity”.⁵ But in what follows this part of his theory is ignored.

As we have seen, there are syntactic differences between “essentially” and “necessarily”. But one may also argue from non-syntactic intuitions to the conclusion that essentiality and necessity should not be identified. Fine (1994a), for example, argues that, if Socrates exists, then he is necessarily numerically distinct from the Eiffel Tower, but that this does not belong to the essence or nature of Socrates. Husserl’s pupils make very similar claims:

From the essence of a sphere with a diameter of 1 meter there follows with absolute necessity its being smaller in comparison with every cube whose edge is 1 meter long, but this does not belong to its essence, for its essence is what it is, whether there are other bodies or not. (Hering 1921, 500)

[O]ne may not confuse two different standpoints: that of the essentiality of a determination for an object and that of the necessity of something for the object. (Ingarden 1965, 402)

How, then, does Husserl understand necessity? In the “Prolegomena” he endorses the two equivalences

It is necessary that p iff it is a law that p

and

It is necessary that p iff it is grounded in a law that p.

Necessity, so understood, “dominates and constitutes all theoretical unity” (*P*, § 39; cf. transl. 53; cf. §§ 23, 63, 68).

Yet Husserl thinks that, strictly speaking, no law, ideal or empirical, is a necessary truth. Only the particularisations of laws are necessary truths or states of affairs:

Necessity as an objective predicate of a truth (which is then called a necessary truth) is tantamount to the law-governed validity of the state of affairs in question. [...] A natural equivocation, of

⁵ Cf. *LI* III, § 12 A, § 25; *P*, §§ 65f.; *LI* II, Introduction, § 7; *Ideas*, §§ 6, 46 n.

course, leads us to call every general truth which expresses a law a necessary truth [...]. [I]t would have been better to call such a truth an explanatory law, a ground, from which a class of necessary truths follows. (*P*, § 63; cf. transl. 227f.)

The equivocation consists in the fact that we call laws which are the source of necessity necessary. (Husserl 1996, § 43, 220)

In § 7 of the third *Investigation* Husserl says in the first edition that

The essence of objective necessity lies in and finds its definition in a particular definite law-like connection. (*LU* III, § 7 A)

In the second edition, he says in the same section that objective-ideal necessity, the not-being-able-to-be-otherwise, and a certain, pure law-like connection are “correlative” and “of the same value”. He repeats the claim that to say of a particularisation of such a law that it is necessary is just to say that it is governed by the law, but not his claim that, strictly speaking, only such particularisations can be said to be necessary (*LU* III, § 7). In § 12 he sharply distinguishes between laws and their particularisations. The particularisations of analytic laws are analytic necessities, the particularisations of synthetic a priori laws are synthetic a priori necessities. Some of these laws are logical, some of them are ontological.

Necessities are particularisations of laws, then, but only of laws of one kind. Husserl sometimes marks the distinction between laws that give rise to non-empirical necessities and other laws by calling the former “pure” laws. He also marks the distinction by distinguishing between general laws and individual laws. A general law is a law grounded in the essences of the objects it mentions or in the essences of the concepts it contains. It mentions no matters of fact as does an individual law. A pure law is a general proposition which contains no reference to temporal individuals (Husserl 1996, § 44, 222). But not every proposition wears on its face its law-like nature. Singular mathematical judgements “are not laws. But they are equivalent to laws”. And the same is true, for example, of judgements about tone types, colours and other species:

[E]very judgement of essence, every purely conceptual judgement, has the value of a law even if it does not always have the form of a law. (Ibid., § 44, 223f.)

Necessities are the particularisations of laws which are grounded in essences. Neither general propositions nor essential propositions are modal propositions. How, then, do essence, generality and modality hang together? The following reconstruction is, as far as I can see, faithful to Husserl's views in all except one respect – it abstracts from the details of Husserl's two-name theory of predication.⁶

Consider any essential proposition which has the apparent form of an atomic proposition. For example, one of Husserl's favourites,

(1) Self-evident judging is valuable.

Since this is an essential proposition, it has the “value of a law”. It implies

(2) $(\forall x) (\text{Self-evident judging } (x) \rightarrow \text{Valuable } (x))$.

But (1) also refers to self-evident judging and, Husserl thinks, tells us that (2) is grounded. “— is a self-evident judging” is a predicate. Self-evident judging is a species or essence. It is an object we will refer to as “SEJ”. (1) therefore says

(3) $(\forall x) ((\text{Self-evident judging } (x) \rightarrow \text{Valuable } (x)) \text{ because Instantiates } (x, \text{SEJ}))$.

Husserl comments on (1):

The essence of such a judgement does not consist in having value; value is no component of the essence, of the idea “judgement” and just as little of the idea “insightful judgement”. But possession of value, of positive value, is grounded in the essence of such judging [...] and this not accidentally but a priori. (Husserl 1996, § 65c, 295)

⁶ Perhaps the clearest and fullest accounts of the relation between essence and modality given by Husserl are at *Logic* 1902/03, 142–183, and in Husserl 1996.

Consider now a “particularisation” of (3). By a “particularisation” or an “empirical particularisation” of a positive universal proposition Husserl refers to the particular or singular proposition the falsity of which would directly falsify the universal proposition (*LI* III, § 12). Suppose, then,

(4) $(\exists x)$ (Self-evident judging (x)).

From (3) and (4), Husserl thinks, it follows that

(5) $(\exists x)$ (x is necessarily valuable).

It seems likely that Husserl also thinks that from (3) and (4) it follows that

(6) $(\exists x)$ (Good (x) because Self-evident judging (x)).

The “because” in (6) might be called the “essential because”. It differs from the “because of essence” in (3), which mentions an essence, and also from the “inessential because”, as in

(7) Sam is sad because Mary did not smile.

The “essential because” is what Husserl and his pupils have in mind when they say things of the form

(8) x makes y true/valuable/obligatory/necessary/probable.

Thus Husserl (1988, 256) says that different non-axiological properties, for example natural properties, may make something valuable. Husserl seems to have thought that the because of essence together with the particularisation of a law give rise to the essential because. The inessential because, as in (7), does not hold in virtue of the a priori essence of anything. And the same is true of

(9) The fact that Mary did not smile makes Sam sad.

(1) is an essential, axiological proposition. Although Husserl thinks that essence, grounding, universality and necessity hang together in the same way in the case of both axiological and of “theoretical” propositions, he does not think that the “because” of axiological essence and the “because” of non-axiological essence should be identified. Normative and non-

normative grounding and necessity are very different things (Husserl 1988, Mulligan 2004).

If the above reconstruction of Husserl's account of necessity and of the essential because is correct, it illuminates his theory of foundation or existential dependence ("Fundierung"), the topic of the third *Investigation*.⁷ For as he points out in 1908, the notion of foundation comprehends two ideas

- 1) being based on something ("sich auf etwas bauen"),
- 2) presupposing it as necessary (Husserl 1988, 252).

What is the bearer of necessity and possibility, for example in our modal particularisation, (5)? In one of the more interesting developments of Husserl's account of modality and essence, Reinach (1989) argues that the primary bearers of modality are states of affairs (cf. Künne 1987, § 8). This claim is part of a larger claim: logical laws are laws which range over states of affairs and only secondarily over truth-bearers. Husserl's position with respect to these claims is not easy to make out.

Thus he says that "possible" and "impossible" belong, with "true, false, general, singular, determinate, indeterminate" to the class of "ideal determinations which are primarily applicable only to meanings" (*LI* I, § 31) and that "what is properly speaking possible is the existence of objects falling under concepts" (*P*, § 66). But he also says that "possibilities are ideal objects" (*LI* II, § 4) and that states of affairs are the bearers of probability:

In the vast majority of cases we lack this absolute knowledge of truth, in whose place we make use [...] of the self-evidence of a higher or lower degree of probability for our state of affairs, with which, if probability levels become high enough, a firm judgement is usually associated. The self-evidence of the probability of a state of affairs A does not ground the self-evidence of its truth, but does ground those comparative and self-evident value-assessments, through which, in accordance with positive or negative

⁷ On the role of "because" in the analysis of dependence, see Correia 2002; Schnieder 2002, Ch. 6.

probability values, we can distinguish the reasonable from the unreasonable. [...] The self-evidence which stamps one presented state of affairs as obtaining, or the absurdity which stamps it as non-obtaining (and the same, likewise, in regard to probability and improbability), occurs in fact only in the case of a relatively quite limited group of primitive states of affairs [...]. (*P*, § 6; cf. § 66)

As the reference to the truth of a state of affairs indicates, this passage is one of many in the early parts of the *Investigations* in which Husserl does not yet distinguish sharply between the obtaining of states of affairs and the truth of propositions.

4 Essence, Modification and Ascent

Husserl employs his account of essential grounding in his theory of modification. This is indeed perhaps the single most important application of his account because it is presupposed by all other applications. By “modification” he refers to two different albeit connected phenomena. It belongs, he thinks, to the essence of intentional states and acts that they can be modified. And it belongs to the essence of propositions and sentences that they and their parts can be modified. One clue to the meaning of “modification” is that, at least in the case of sentences and their parts, modification is or involves the operation of nominalization (cf. on the “law of nominalization”, *Ideas*, § 119).

Consider the difference between judging that *p* and performing the act permitted by the first rule of Natural Deduction, to wit that of supposing that *p*, of make-believedly judging that *p*. The transition from one to the other is an example of act-modification. After the *Investigations* Husserl (2000, § 3, 13) seems to have come round to Meinong’s view that a similar transition is possible in the affective and conative spheres. The counterpart of serious regret that *p* or of serious desire that *p* is make-believedly regretting or desiring that *p*.⁸

⁸ In *LI V*, §§ 39f., *Ideas*, §§ 109-112, and elsewhere Husserl distinguishes between two types of modification of acts, qualitative modification (the neutrality-modifi-

Modifications of acts are distinct from “modifications of meaning, which are rooted in the essence of expressions or meanings” (*LI IV*, § 11, heading) although the two types of modification are connected. Thus he says that “plural consciousness can by its very nature [wesensmäßig] be transformed into singular consciousness” (*Ideas*, § 119). Thus if I judge that

The Channel Islands are wonderful,

I judge plurally. But if I judge that

The Channel Islands, the Alps and the Pyrenees, are the three most favourite tourist destinations,

“the Channel Islands” now refers to a plurality-as-one, whereas before it referred to a plurality-as-many.

By “modifications of meaning and expression” Husserl refers to conceptual, lexical, logical and syntactic transformations:

It naturally happens [...] that certain meaning-changes belong to the grammatical normal stock-in-trade of every language. (*LI IV*, § 11; cf. transl. 513)

[W]e are here dealing with alterations in meaning or, more precisely, alterations in acts of meaning which are rooted in the ideal nature of the meaning-realm itself. They have their roots in meaning-modifications in a certain other sense of “meaning” which abstracts from expressions, but which is not unlike that of arithmetical talk of “transforming” arithmetical patterns. In the realm of meaning there are a priori laws allowing meanings to be transformed into new meanings while preserving an essential kernel. (*Ibid.*; cf. transl. 515)

Suitably adjusted, his main examples of the modifications of

(1) Sam is sad

cation) and imaginative modification. The second but not the first can be iterated. Husserl thinks Meinong failed to grasp this distinction and that it is of immense importance for Husserl’s later philosophy.

fall into two categories, in each of which we find modifications which are truth-bearers and modifications which are merely parts of truth-bearers. In the first category, we find

that Sam is sad,
 Sam's sadness,
 the being sad of Sam (*LI V*, § 33),
 sad Sam (the passing postman, *ibid.*, § 35),

and also the modification of

Sam resembles Mary,

which is

the similarity between Sam and Mary (*Ideas*, § 119).

The second category of modifications comprises:

the proposition that Sam is sad (*Logic* 1902/03, 89f.),
 the state of affairs that Sam is sad (*ibid.*),
 the fact/circumstance that Sam is sad (*ibid.*; *LI V*, §§ 33, 36),
 the property of being sad,
 the concept of sadness,
 the class of the sad,
 the extension of the concept man (*Logic* 1902/03, 92),
 the content of the concept man (*ibid.*),⁹

and

The proposition that Sam is sad is true,
 The state of affairs that Sam is sad obtains,
 The object, Sam, has the property of being sad,

⁹ For a discussion of the view that “the property of wiliness”, for example, is a definite description and an account of its logical form, cf. Schnieder 2002, Ch. 1.

Sam has the property of being sad (Husserl 1987, 98),
 “Sam is sad” [sic] is a statement (*LI IV*, § 11; cf. transl. 514),
 and the modification of part of
 Sam and Mary are sad,
 which is

The group Sam and Mary (“Die Mehrheit ...”, *Ideas*, § 119).

A distinction between two types of predicate allows Husserl to isolate one class of modifications. Predicates such as “is a fiction”, “true” and “exists” have to combine with expressions the meanings of which are modified meanings:

All expressions to which “modifying” rather than “determining” predicates attach, function abnormally in the above described or some similar sense: the normal sense of our utterance is to be replaced by another [...] so that its apparent subject (on a normal interpretation) is replaced by some sort of idea of itself, a logical idea [meaning] or an empirical-psychological idea. [...] E.g. *The centaur is a fiction of the poets*. With a little circumlocution we can instead say: Our ideas (i.e. subjective presentations with the meaning-content “centaur”) are poetic fictions. The predicates *is*, *is not* [*exists*, *does not exist*], *is true* or *false* and the like modify meaning. They do not express properties of the apparent subjects, but properties of the corresponding subject-meaning. E.g. *that $2 \times 2 = 5$ is false* means that the thought is a false thought, the proposition is a false proposition. (*LI IV*, § 11; cf. transl. 514f.)

The second class of modifications, unlike the first, contains expressions of formal concepts, formal common nouns. We may call modification of the second kind examples of *formal ascent*. The semantic values of these formal concepts, propositions, truths, concepts, properties, states of affairs, groups, sets, are, together with their essences, just the subject-matter of formal logic, the different formal ontologies and their philosophies, as Husserl conceives of these disciplines. Modifications provide the “fundamental conceptual material” for these disciplines (*Ideas*, § 119). Thus, if

Husserl's account of modification is successful and if we can understand it, then we will have won the right to refer to and quantify over propositions, states of affairs and their ilk.

What is the form of the definite descriptions to which modification gives rise? Husserl says at one point:

If we take the expression “the proposition $2 \times 2 = 5$ ”, this is not a proposition but a name. What of the constituent proposition? Here it is clear that the propositional expression functions here as a name of the proposition, just as, in the expression “The colour red”, red [sic] functions as a name of red, and the idea red, not red itself, is part of the nominal idea. Thus, in the expression “The proposition $2 \times 2 = 5$ ”, what is underlined is a name of the proposition not the proposition itself. (*Logic* 1902/03, 89)

Here and elsewhere, as far as I can see, Husserl is silent about the first part of “the proposition that $2 \times 2 = 5$ ” and thus about its relation to the second part and to the name of which they are both parts. His two examples, “the colour red”, “the proposition $2 \times 2 = 5$ ”, differ in one important respect. The former but not the latter is the nominal result of ascent from a name:

Orange lies between red and yellow,

The colour orange lies between the colour red and the colour yellow,

and so comparable with the ascent from

2 lies between 1 and 3

to

The number 2 lies between the number 1 and the number 3,

except for the fact that “the number 2”, unlike “the colour red” and “the tone C”, is a result of formal ascent and belongs to the same family as “the object Sam”, “the group Sam and Mary” etc.

Although Husserl says very little about the internal structure of the descriptions resulting from formal ascent, he does add one claim about their semantics. He sometimes claims that “the assertion that the Boers have won” has two objects: the primary and authentic object is the opinion, but

the meant state of affairs is the indirect and secondary object of the sense of the description (*Logic* 1902/03, 94).¹⁰

What is it to be a modification of meaning? In some of my initial examples I referred to transitions possible for me or for you. But this concept of possibility is not the concept of possibility at work in Husserl's account of modification. Even in the case of modifications of acts we are not to understand talk of modification and its origin or starting point

in an empirical-psychological, biological sense but as expressing a peculiar relation of essence grounded in the phenomenological content of the experiences. (*LI V*, § 35; cf. transl. 629)

The relevant sense of "possibility" is that in which

there is a possibility which is a priori grounded in the essence of a geometrical figure that "one" can turn it about in space, distort it into certain other figures etc. (*Ibid.*, § 36; cf. transl. 633)

We are, then, to think of that which is modified and the resulting modifications as ideal entities, essences, each with its own ideal extension of possible instantiations. Just as there ideal proofs so too, there are ideal modifications. Instances of one essence ground the "ideal, essential possibility" (*ibid.*; cf. transl. 633) that another essence is instantiated. This is as hard to swallow as Husserl's parallel claim that every truth-bearer can be verified or falsified where "can" is an ideal possibility (Husserl's ideal verificationism). But in many cases his claims can be given a slightly more palatable form. For example, Husserl accepts

The proposition that p is true iff the state of affairs that p obtains iff p,¹¹

The proposition that p is true because the state of affairs that p obtains

¹⁰ This claim seems to lie behind the view of many phenomenologists that the truth-predicate expresses a relation; it connects the two objects of such descriptions as "the assertion that the Boers have won".

¹¹ "If we take any proposition, 'S is P', it is equivalent to the proposition, 'That S is P is true', or with the further proposition, 'The state of affairs that S is P obtains, is'" (*Logic* 1902/03, 154, cf. 90).

and, if the above reconstruction is correct,

(The proposition that p is true because the state of affairs that p obtains) because (Instantiates (the proposition that p, Proposition) & Instantiates (the obtaining state of state of affairs that p, Fact)).

That certain modifications ground other modifications in virtue of the essences of some of the objects they mention is perhaps acceptable if Husserl's account of essence is acceptable. The problem, however, is to be found in the very first step. Consider the inference

Sam is sad. Therefore, the proposition that Sam is sad is true.

Or the "causal proposition"

The proposition that Sam is sad is true because Sam is sad.

It is obvious that

(The proposition that Sam is sad is true because Sam is sad) because
...

cannot be completed so as to yield a truth by any sentence referring to the essence of what "Sam is sad" refers to. Similarly, no essential ground of the inference is forthcoming.

I suspect that all Husserl has to offer by way of motivating the inference or the causal proposition is of the order of an indirect motivation. It belongs to the essence of any judging that or meaning ("Meinen") that Sam is sad that it is possible to judge or mean that the proposition that Sam is sad is true. Perhaps Husserl did not even take this to be merely an indirect motivation, for, as we have seen, the author of the *Investigations* takes the acts of meaning that p to be instances or tokens of types, namely Meanings. It is noteworthy that Husserl regularly wobbles between saying that modifications of logico-grammatical meaning are grounded in the essence of Meanings ("Bedeutungen") – the ideal entities – and saying that they are grounded in the essence of signifying or meaning ("Bedeutens", *LI V*, § 35; cf. transl. 630 n.) – the intentional acts.

The reason for denying that Husserl's account of modification can get off the ground is that

(The proposition that Sam is sad is true because Sam is sad) because
...

cannot be completed in the right way. The objection presupposes that “because” takes two sentences to make a sentence. But in fact Husserl denies this. In “Because Sam is sad”, “Sam is sad” is not, he thinks, a sentence. What is it? Some of Husserl’s formulations suggest the curious view that it occurs as a name, a positing name, and that in a hypothetical sentence, the antecedent is a non-positing name.

Someone who makes a judgement of the form “if p then q” does not judge that p, Husserl says in the first *Investigation* (LI I, § 11) and goes on to claim that the antecedent is not an “Aussage”, although it “says” something. Later in the same work he says that the antecedents of hypotheticals and of causal propositions (“because S is P”) are not “judgements”, do not have the “meaning of a complete, independent proposition”:

The “because” may point back to a judgement that asserted S to be P, but this judgement is not again enacted within the causal sentence itself. We no longer assert that S is P. Rather, on the basis of a straightforward presenting – which, as an antecedent, is characterised in its very sense as the modification of a judging synthesis – a second thesis, the consequent is grounded [...]. (LI V, § 36; cf. transl. 634)¹²

With “only a little elaboration”, the sense of the causal proposition can be said to be

that the being of the grounding state of affairs grounds the being of the ensuing state of affairs [...]. (LI V, § 36; cf. transl. 634)

But the “little elaboration” is a little too much. Husserl here fails to respect sufficiently the distinction which, as we have seen (section 2), he observes in 1896 between “because” and “grounds”. “Grounds” is flanked by *two*

¹² In a letter to Husserl (30. 10. – 1. 11. 1906) Frege writes that neither the antecedents nor the consequents of hypotheticals are “eigentliche Sätze”, by themselves they do not express thoughts. The same letter also makes very clear that Frege, unlike Husserl, attaches little logical importance to what Husserl calls differences of meaning between equivalent propositions.

names which are the result of modification. In 1896 Husserl notes that the parts of causal propositions need not be predications of truth. The same is true of predications to the effect that states of affairs obtain. In fact, Husserl's claim that the antecedent of a causal proposition is not a sentence looks very like the claim that

Because S is P, q

means

Because of the P-ness of S, q.

In the *Investigations*, as far as I can see, Husserl does not explicitly claim that the antecedents of “because” (and of hypotheticals) are names,¹³ but the language he uses about these antecedent is just the language he consistently uses to describe the way names, as opposed to sentences, function. Elsewhere, he seems to say of the antecedents of causal propositions that these are “not nominal modifications but analogous to these”, “the modification has [...] the character of a non-independent judgement” (Husserl 2002, 158; cf. *Logic* 1908/09, 206ff.). But it is not clear what place there is in the categorical grammar of the *Investigations* for expressions which are neither names nor sentences and which cannot be defined in terms of these. If the antecedent of a causal proposition is a name, whether or not it is a name of the form “the P-ness of S”, then it can occur in a predication of essence, it can be used to say that its bearer instantiates an essence. And then the account given in section 3 of Husserl's theory of grounding and essence must be modified accordingly. But if the antecedent of a causal proposition is neither a sentence nor a name but more like a name than a sentence, in ways remaining to be specified, then it is not clear whether such a modification is required.

Hitherto we have talked of the problem of ascent in terms of how to get to talk of formal entities from ordinary talk which mentions no such entities. Husserl, however, thinks that the origin of our reference to formal

¹³ He says: “...we shall put antecedents of the form ‘Because S is p’...in the same relation to hypothetical antecedents that we have recognised as obtaining between positing and non-positing names” (*LI V* §36, tr. 634). On the “because” of motivation, cf. (*LI I* §2).

entities is not to be found *in* talk at all. Thus although he thinks that ordinary judgments, beliefs and assertions are “directed towards” states of affairs, he does not think that the former involve any conceptual representations of the latter:

We note [...] that a nominal meaning by itself says nothing to the effect that its object exists, that it does not predicate this, just as little as a proposition [Satz] predicates that its state of affairs is a really obtaining state of affairs. This would lead to an infinite regress. If we say “S is P”, then we say about S that it is P, but we do not say that the state of affairs that S is P really obtains; otherwise the last statement would in turn state that the state of affairs that the state of affairs that S is P really obtains really obtains, and so on *in infinitum*. (*Logic* 1902/03, 96, cf. 91)

Thus Husserl could agree with the first of the following two claims made by the author of a later Austrian account of states of affairs, Wittgenstein, but he would reject the second, on one natural reading of it:

The proposition [Satz] *shows* how things stand [wie es sich verhält], *if* it is true. And it *says*, that they do so stand. (*Tractatus*, 4.022)¹⁴

¹⁴ Of course, Husserl does not reject all of logical atomism, as I have pointed out elsewhere: he allows for “simple meanings as elements” (*LI* IV, § 1) and “ultimately foundational absolute elements” (*LI* III, § 22 n.; cf. transl. 479f.) amongst the objects of meanings. As possible examples of the latter he mentions visual elements, just the candidates sometimes put forward as examples of Tractarian simples. He writes: “a logical theory of forms [...] a theory of the forms of propositions [...] is a sort of anatomy of the idea of a proposition. [...] For propositions are so to speak molecules out of which all science is constructed and these molecules combine to form complex molecules, the inferences, the theories, and the simple ones amongst them still have parts, so to speak the meaning-atoms [Bedeutungsatome]. We want to determine the general kinds or forms of such possible molecules and atoms” (*Logic* 1902/03, 80). Nor does Wittgenstein reject all of the early Husserl. Many if not all of the universal modal claims in the *Tractatus* are presented as flowing from the essence of propositions, states of affairs, things etc. One of Wittgenstein’s most distinctive claims is that it belongs to the essence of a proposition to be such that it can be true and it can be false (cf. *NB*, 98). This is not a claim endorsed by Husserl, *au contraire*. But it is formulated in the language of Husserl’s theory. (It may even

Similarly, Husserl notes, if we say that “every judgement claims to be true” this does not mean that

every judgement really contains the thought of truth, hence that it says that what it states is true or that the state of affairs about which it states something exists. Otherwise we would have an infinite regress. (*Logic* 1902/03, 166f.)

What, then, does it mean to say that in judging that it is raining one aims at the truth of propositions and is intentionally directed towards states of affairs and their obtaining although none of this is represented by the conceptual content of the judgement? Husserl provides two elements of an answer to this question. First, the relation between a judging and “its” state of affairs is an example of a much more widespread phenomenon. Consider regret or desire. Sam’s regret that *p* or his desire that *p* stands in the same relation to

That *p* is regrettable,

That *p* is desireable

as his judgement that *p* to

The state of affairs that *p* obtains.

Sam’s regret is right or appropriate iff and because the *Wertverhalt* obtains, as his judgement is right iff and because the state of affairs obtains. Secondly, there is one type of mental state or act in which our relation to obtaining states of affairs is more intimate than in the case of mere judging or regret. In judging and in regret there is the *possibility* of ascent to judgements to the effect that a state of affairs obtains, that it is regrettable that *p*. In cognising (“Erkennen”), on Husserl’s account, we identify a thought fact with a perceived fact and so must already be *actually* aware of these

have its justification in the view that the specification of an essence may be conjunctive but cannot be disjunctive). For Wittgenstein, as for Husserl, essentiality precedes modality and is the source of the fundamental type of generality – essential, logical generality (*Tractatus*, 6.1232). On modality and essence in the *Tractatus*, cf. Plourde 2004.

objects, even if we do not ascend to an explicit identity judgement (*LI* VI, §§ 8, 39).

5 From Bolzano to Aristotle and Plato

The direct ancestor of Husserl's account of essence, modality, generality and grounding is the account of these matters set out in what Husserl calls Bolzano's "admirable book", the *Wissenschaftslehre* (*WL*).¹⁵ Bolzano gives what he calls an "Erklärung" of essentiality, which may be summarised as follows. Suppose that the proposition that A has the attribute b is true. Then

the attribute b, represented by [the attribute b], of the object(s) A, represented by [A], is an essential attribute of this or these objects iff

[A] is a pure concept & the attribute b is exemplified by the objects which stand under [A] by virtue of the mere concept through which we grasp these objects ("vermöge des bloßen Begriffes, unter den wir sie auffassen"; *WL*, § 111; cf. §§ 113.2, 209, 180).

A pure concept is a concept containing no intuitions (*WL*, § 73). But what does "by virtue of the mere concept" mean? Bolzano also uses "folget", "herleiten" and "ableiten" in § 111. His example runs as follows

Thus I call the possession by an organic body of certain limbs an essential attribute of it because this attribute follows from the just mentioned mere concept of the organic body, or because the proposition "Every organic being has limbs" is true and because the idea "every organic being" is a pure concept. (*WL*, § 111)

Attributes which are not essential are "extra-essential", the representation of an essential attribute is an essential representation. Whether a representation represents an essential attribute of an object

depends in part on the object whose attribute the representation is supposed to represent, in part on the concept we form of the object. (*WL*, § 111)

Bolzano mentions that some of his readers may find that the decision whether an attribute is essential or extra-essential turns on a merely arbitrary circumstance and replies in what is, by his if not by Husserl's standards, a somewhat elliptic fashion:

As far as our *knowledge* is concerned, an object is no more than what we represent in our minds, whenever we believe we represent *it*. Thus in logic its *idea* constitutes its *essence*. (Ibid.)

Bolzano, we noted, glossed “in virtue of a concept” in § 111 with “folgen”, “herleiten” and “ableiten”. When he summarises his account of essence at § 502, he refers at first to deducibility (“Ableitbarkeit”) and so to generality: “the *essence* of a thing [is] the totality [Inbegriff] of all the attributes of the thing which are deducible from its mere *concept*”.¹⁶ He goes on to distinguish between a wide and a narrow sense of essence. He says that in the first sense the essence of a thing is opposed to what is contingent and in the second to all deduced (“abgeleitete”) attributes of it. Essence in the narrow sense is a basic essence. In the account of a basic essence Bolzano appeals to the “Abfolge” relation between grounds and consequences, the relation corresponding to the “because” connective, which holds only between truths. The basic essence of a thing is

the totality of all and only the attributes which result [ergebende] from its mere concept, which cannot be inferred *objectively* (that is, as consequences from their ground § 198) from any other concept. In this narrower meaning it is an essential attribute of a creature to be a substance which has the ground of its existence outside itself, but the property of having forces which are merely finite is not a basic essential property of a creature but only a deduced attribute; for that the forces of this substance are finite is a truth which is objectively derivable [herleitbar] from the truth that this substance has the ground of its existence outside itself. (*WL*, § 502)

¹⁵ *LI*, *P*, appendix to § 61. On Bolzano on modality, cf. Textor 1996, Ch. 5; on Bolzano on grounding, cf. Tatzel 2003.

¹⁶ On Bolzano on deducibility, cf. Siebel 2002.

Bolzano notes that “essential attributes are often called *necessary*, extra-essential attributes *contingent*” (*WL*, § 111; cf. § 182). He prefers to reserve “necessity” and “contingent” in the strict sense for what holds of what is real, that is, causally efficacious. The proposition that every proposition is something complex does not therefore attribute a necessary attribute. The attributes of real objects are permanent or transient. The essential, that is to say, necessary attributes of “an object that exists in time are permanent attributes of it”, although not every permanent attribute of an object in time is an essential or necessary attribute of it (*ibid.*). And

one sees that in the strict sense it can be said of all things that have reality that every essential attribute of such things is a necessary attribute and vice versa. (*WL*, § 502)

“In a wider sense” the same holds of all things (*ibid.*), that is, of real and non-real objects.

This very brief sketch of Bolzano’s account of essence and modality¹⁷ suffices, perhaps, to make possible a brief account of the central similarities and differences between what Husserl and Bolzano have to say.

As we have seen, Bolzano notes that it might be objected to his account of the distinction between what is essential and what is extra-essential that it seems to make the distinction look arbitrary. Bolzano’s reply to the objection, as we have also seen, is the claim that

As far as our *knowledge* is concerned, an object is no more than what we represent in our minds, whenever we believe we represent *it*. Thus in logic its *idea* constitutes its *essence*. (*WL*, § 111)

¹⁷ A fuller account would take into account, for example, the following passage: “However, whether a proposition is strictly universal or not, and whether we can say that its predicate belongs to the subject by necessity, these are circumstances which depend on the inner characteristics of the proposition itself and have nothing to do with its accidental relation to our cognitive faculty. [...] Beck (*Logik* § 67) states explicitly that a judgement can be objectively a priori although it is subjectively only a posteriori, and I do not think that much can be said against this” (*WL*, § 133). It would also have to determine just why Bolzano was not entirely happy with his accounts of “Abfolge” and of “determining propositions” in the *Wissenschaftslehre*.

Husserl's own development of this claim runs as follows:

[A]ll actual cognising [...] presupposes meanings that are intuitively fulfilled. Where there is talk of a knowledge "springing from the analysis of the mere meanings of words" more is meant than these words suggest. The knowledge meant is one whose self-evidence calls only for pure representation of the "conceptual essences", in which the general word-meanings find their perfect fulfilments; all question as to the existence of objects corresponding to such concepts, or falling under such conceptual essences, is ruled out. But these "conceptual essences" are not the verbal meanings themselves, so that the phrases "grounded purely in the concepts (essences)" and "springing from a mere analysis of word-meanings" are only by equivocation equivalent. Conceptual essences are rather the fulfilling sense which is "given" when the word-meanings [...] terminate in corresponding, directly intuitive presentations. [...] Such analysis is not therefore concerned with empty thought-intentions, but with the objects and forms by which they are fulfilled. What it therefore offers us are not mere statements concerning mere parts of or relations among meanings, but rather evident necessities concerning the *objects* thought of in these meanings and thought of as thus and thus determined. (LII, § 21; cf. transl. 307)

Husserl's account of knowledge differs in very many ways from that given by Bolzano. But they agree that in logic the essence of an object is an idea of it and that logic gives essential knowledge.

Husserl's account of the roles of grounds and of general laws in his analysis of essence have clear but distant analogues in Bolzano's account of essence and necessity. Bolzano's distinction between essentiality and necessity is not that made by Husserl, but both Austrian philosophers agree that essentiality comprehends necessity. The relations between Bolzano's ideas and their extensions are semantic relations. Husserl's essential laws also contain concepts which are the terms of semantic relations. But the relation of instantiation, which in Husserl's account makes a universal hypothetical an essential law, is not any sort of semantic relation and has no counterpart in Bolzano's account of essence. Yet even in this connection

we find a Bohemian echo. Bolzano distinguishes sharply between ideas or representations which are conceptual and ideas which are intuitions or contain intuitions. Husserl develops this distinction in his account of proper names and demonstratives. These, he argues, often designate “directly” because they have a simple, non-attributive or non-descriptive sense which depends on non-conceptual, perceptual content. Similarly, Husserl claims that the names “white” and “justice” express non-conceptual ideas, are “so to speak proper names” and name “directly” in “überhaupt” propositions such as

White is a colour,

Justice is a virtue (*Logic* 1902/03, 110).

Bolzano thinks it “probable” that his account of essence is just what Aristotle understood by the essence of an object (*WL*, § 117.2). Husserl’s account of “moments” clearly stands in the Aristotelian tradition, as Künne (1983, 76f.) points out. But Husserl’s appeal to instantiation may make us wonder whether his account of essence and explanation is not closer to that given by Plato than to that given by Aristotle.¹⁸

Husserl’s writings on a variety of topics throw a great deal of light on his understanding of essence and modality – for example his accounts of the difference between internal and external relations, of the distinctions between the synthetic a priori and the analytic a priori and between possible and impossible meanings (*LI* VI, § 30). The same is true of his changing views about what essences are and of the different varieties of species and of essence. Thus he distinguishes between exact and inexact essences (*LU* III, § 9), and between essences and empirical types. He came to think that Meanings should not be understood as ideal entities but as entities which begin to exist at a time but are, like many ideal entities, multiply instantiable. He also came to think of the essence of an individual as particular and temporal and came to call what such an essence instantiates an idea (*Ideas*, § 2). Similarly, much is to be learned from the developments of Husserl’s account of essence and modality and of a posteriori necessities by Reinach, Scheler, Schapp, Ritzel, Pfänder, Stein, Hering, Pöhl, Spiegel-

¹⁸ On essence and explanation in Aristotle and Plato, cf. Politis 2004, 42-48, 295ff.; 2005.

berg, Ingarden, Kaufmann and the Hartmanns. Four of the more interesting developments in this tradition are Pfänder's essentialist account and defence of the truth-maker principle, Nicolai Hartmann's arguments in favour of the necessity-maker principle, the thesis that all necessity is relative,¹⁹ the defence by Scheler and Nicolai Hartmann of the distinction between normative and theoretical necessity already mentioned and Ingarden's attempt to set out a philosophy of *idealism* which does not fall foul of the objections by Lesniewski to theories of essence like Husserl's. Here, however, my goal has been to provide the quintessence of Husserl's theory.²⁰

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¹⁹ On these two developments, cf. Mulligan 2005.

²⁰ This paper is based on a talk given in Paris in 2001, "De l'essence, de la nécessité et de leurs rapports chez Bolzano, Husserl et leurs héritiers". Thanks to the editors, Peter Simons and Barry Smith for suggestions and to the Geneva-Lausanne IRIS project on formal concepts.

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