

# Fulfilment\*

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It seems reasonable to say that the basic problem of Husserl's phenomenology is the possibility for the mind to get *related* to the world. In Brentano's view, intentionality was a universal characterization of the mental. In Husserl's, it becomes as well the framework of the possible contact of the mind with the world. As Hilary Putnam observes:

“‘Brentano's thesis' was meant by him to serve as a way of showing the autonomy of mentalistic psychology ('act-psychology') by showing that the mental was separate from the real (external) world. Brentano himself, to my knowledge, never used the word 'intentionality', nor did he use the terms 'intentional inexistence' and 'intentional existence' to refer to the relation between mind and the real world, as philosophers have come to use the word 'intentionality' after Husserl.”<sup>1</sup>

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\* I owe my understanding of what Wittgenstein says on 'intentionality' to Bouveresse 1987, p.279-302. My further criticism of 'intentional objects', and my present conception of intentionality, was also deeply influenced by Vincent Descombes's realist strand of intentionalism. See Descombes 1995 and 1996. John McDowell (see "Intentionality and interiority in Wittgenstein", reprinted in McDowell 1998a, 297-321, among other papers) gave me the decisive clue as to the problem of the basic 'harmony' between thought and reality in Wittgenstein, and illuminating discussions with Jean-Philippe Narboux, in particular on the occasion of a lecture in which he presented a sharp criticism of Husserl's conception of indexicality, helped me to measure up all the difficulty of a comparison with Husserl. See Narboux 2008. As to my awareness of the trouble one may have 'meaning' and sticking to a use, I owe it to Stanley Cavell's radical reading of Wittgenstein that shows that realism makes room for scepticism, far from extinguishing it, and Sandra Laugier's sensitive research in the field of moral philosophy, following in the footsteps of Cora Diamond, drew my attention to the role some experiences play in overcoming such difficulty (as the lack of such experiences can make it a dead-end). I would like to thank all of them for the help they gave me to make sense of Wittgenstein, of Husserl, and of their difference.

<sup>1</sup> Putnam 1988, 129. In the same note, Hilary Putnam thanks Lloyd Carr for having brought that point to his attention.

Husserl calls such a contact, when intentionality really gets grip on what there is, ‘fulfilment’<sup>2</sup>. Now, the possibility of such a grip seems to be central in the way Wittgenstein takes up the theme of intentionality in the criticism of Russell’s philosophy of mind he developed in the late 20’ / early 30’, when he came back to philosophy. Wittgenstein, then, defends intentionality against Russell’s attacks, but he insists also on the fact that a correct account of intentionality must allow for it to find some counterpart in reality – apparently exactly what Husserl called ‘fulfilment’.

There seems, thus, to be a noteworthy similarity between the conceptions of intentionality that both authors endorse, although obviously on different methodological bases. How far does that similarity go? To which extent does the Husserlian ‘fulfilment’-clause meet the requirements that Wittgenstein discloses in our ordinary way to speak, as far as the relation between intentionality and reality is concerned?

## 1. The case for intentionality

The intentionality thesis as Brentano coined it (‘Brentano’s claim’) amounts to the idea that every mental phenomenon as such has an *object*:

“Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on.”<sup>3</sup>

So, one cannot describe any mental attitude without specifying its ‘object’, one love without indicating the beloved, one hatred without the

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<sup>2</sup> It is by the way interesting to observe that, in the early stage of phenomenology and of Husserl’s thinking, in the *Logical Investigations* (1900-1901), that notion is, in the context of the Brentanian school, whose themes Husserl’s book mostly looks like a huge patchwork, *the only really Husserlian discovery*. That notion of ‘fulfilment’ (*Erfüllung*) in the strict Husserlian sense (experience of *a way for the things to be given that corresponds exactly to a definite intentionality*) is indeed to be found by no other Brentanian before.

<sup>3</sup> Brentano 1995, 88.

hated, one desire without the desired, etc. The object is, each time, an *internal feature* of the attitude in question. It is impossible to separate the attitude from that ‘object’: there is an *internal relation* between both – which is exactly called ‘intentionality’.

Russell, in *The Analysis of Mind* (1921), contests that picture of mental life. Sticking up for a philosophy of external relations, he understands our mental attitudes on the model of ‘expectation’. ‘Expectation’ can, in Russell’s view, serve as a model of mental life because it entails some kind of structural *incompletion*. If I *had* the thing, I would not wait. And, as far as I wait, that means that I have not yet the thing, and that remains open to some extent what might happen. Now, Russell’s point is that the characterization of expectation as ‘expectation of something’ exactly depends on what will happen. As I cannot know (or *not absolutely* know) what will happen, I must wait until it happens in order to know what I waited for. As long as I wasn’t having it, how could I have known that it was what I was waiting for? “How can I expect the event, when it isn’t yet there at all?”<sup>4</sup>

On the other side, then, arises the question: how can we know, when we get something, that it was what we were waiting for? Russell sees only one possible criterion for that: the fact that a given thing arouses a feeling of satisfaction that accompanies, so to speak, our being relieved from waiting. In fact, more than a criterion, this is a *symptom*: the symptom that we have indeed gotten something that makes our waiting stop.

Obviously (and this is Russell’s point) there might be more than one thing in position to produce such effect. If I am hungry, I can eat an apple or I can eat a pear; but, failing that, a punch in my stomach can suppress my hunger as well. There is no *intrinsic* object of the hunger, and we are not hungry ‘of’, notwithstanding what children or lovers say – but these are ‘secondary’ uses, that do not make sense independently of the primary, unintentional use of the phrase ‘to be hungry’ nor of the uses of other superficially parallel running expressions, that are properly intentional. At that level – that is the one of *needs* – the object seems to be to some extent indifferent, mostly variable, and, as such, *external* to the nature of the need, that can be structurally satisfied by an object or another.

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<sup>4</sup> Wittgenstein *PG*, 1974, 1st part, §90, 137.

“But expectation isn’t like that!”<sup>5</sup> By dealing with the latter as some kind of hunger, Russell is, in Wittgenstein’s view, grammatically mistaken. If I say that I am waiting for an apple, and you give me a pear, the latter can possibly satisfy my hunger, but does not become an apple for all that, and it would be really strange to say that it was ‘what I was waiting for’. My initial expectation has just been dropped; no one would ever say that it has met ‘its object’.

Much less in the case of the punch in the stomach: who would seriously claim that it was what I was waiting for when I said that I waited for an apple? This is a strange definition of an apple, one would say. Nevertheless, the punch might have the very same *effects* as the apple – and even, contextually, arouse the same subjective feeling.

So, in our normal use of the verb ‘to wait’, we seem to *presuppose* that it entails a constitutive reference to its object, an object that is not at all indeterminate, but whose determination is a part of the expectation itself. The object is not externally added to the expectation, but an *internal feature* of it, exactly as Brentano would have said. Of course, that analysis applies only to some canonical, central use of the verb ‘to wait’. It is clear that there might be other uses of it, as, for instance, when I say ‘wait and see’. In this case, another sense of expectation is involved, in which it is definitely not an expectation ‘of’ anything definite, but much more of a mere openness to the future and the possibilities that will turn up (even if that mere openness, one more time, is usually not neutral, but *oriented*). When Wittgenstein insists on the fact that expectation is constitutively expectation ‘of’ something, he makes clear that that observation does not concern, as he says, “expectation in the void” (*Erwartung ins Blaue*)<sup>6</sup> – a phenomenon whose reality he does not contest. That, however, diminishes his point for nothing, if we rephrase it this way: whenever expectation is of such a kind as to be directed toward an object, that object can be of its, ‘object of expectation’, only *intrinsically*, and never only extrinsically, as Russell would have taken.

Of course, we might also happen to say to have waited for something, without knowing what, or, differently, though believing that we were waiting for something else, and to have discovered what we really had been waiting

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<sup>5</sup> Wittgenstein *PR*, 1975, §29, 68.

<sup>6</sup> Wittgenstein *PG*, 1974, 68.

for only when we got it. However, that complex and literary use is possible only as far as one structurally waits *for something* determinate and far from contradicting that structure, takes advantage of it, making a paradox of our uncertainty about what we were waiting for.

So, Wittgenstein discloses the intentional structure entrenched in the very grammar of some of our ‘mental verbs’<sup>7</sup>, and, on that original basis (different from the Brentanian direct psychological one), seems to go in support of the Viennese philosopher, against Russell.

## 2. Satisfaction and ‘Fulfilment’

One will observe, however, that, in Wittgenstein’s view, the gist of the idea that to wait in some canonical sense of the term is ‘to wait *for something*’ is that, for a given expectation, if what I wait for was given, then, it would be possible to know that it is exactly the thing I waited for. This is not enough to say that every expectation includes in itself the picture of what it expects as its own ‘object’, but one must absolutely add that proviso that a corresponding *recognition* be possible. *Representation cannot just stand idle: it must be able to apply.*

As Wittgenstein puts it, the recognition in question would consist in “seeing an internal relation”<sup>8</sup> (and not just “an external relation”, as in Russell’s conception). Expectation is not connected to the happening that fulfils it by the presence of a third, ‘external’ element, as such independent of that happening and that might arise failing the latter as well, as the so-called ‘feeling of satisfaction’, but *intrinsically*. To know if something fulfils an expectation, it is just required to look at that expectation, and at nothing else.

Here Wittgenstein’s ideas are pretty akin to Husserl’s. In his *Prolegomena to pure logic*, Husserl criticized the conception, endorsed by Mill and Sigwart among others, according to which

“Judgement (...) is only recognized as true when it is inwardly evident. The term ‘inner evidence’ stands, it is said, for a peculiar mental character, well-known to

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<sup>7</sup> That is to say the verbs we use in the reports we make on our mental attitudes. I owe that expression to Vincent Descombes, who follows Wittgenstein’s strand of analysis.

<sup>8</sup> Wittgenstein *PR*, 1975, §21, 63.

everyone through his inner experience, a peculiar feeling which guarantees the truth of the judgement to which it attaches.”<sup>9</sup>

Such a ‘feeling of evidence’ would play, on a theoretical ground, a role quite analogous to the one played by the ‘feeling of satisfaction’ in Russell’s construction of practical attitudes of the kind of expectation.

Husserl establishes that such a feeling, as such, cannot have anything to do with truth. As a state, it might be present in my mind even when nothing is given that corresponds to my thought. And the mere fact of its presence is not enough to qualify what is given to me as object as the object of that thought of mine. The feeling, as such, is superfluous, and cannot spare us to ask about the *match* between our meaning and what is given, that is what is really at stake in truth. Here, some more substantial, more *internal* link is required.

That kind of linkage is exactly what Husserl calls ‘fulfilment’, that, as such, has nothing to do with ‘satisfaction’. To some extent, the example of expectation might be misleading in that. The Russellian strand of analysis takes advantage of the fact that, usually, expectation seems to be associated with some kind of tension, which seems to be discharged at the time of ‘fulfilment’. “When someone has his expectation fulfilled, there’s always a relaxation of tension”<sup>10</sup>.

Wittgenstein, however, questions that ostensible triviality: “– How do you know that?”<sup>11</sup> In his view, what is essential to expectation is not any strain but the fact that what would fulfil that expectation is exactly *represented* in that expectation. In that sense, the relation between expectation and fulfilment is merely *logical*, and not economical. Intentionality, as such, is unconcerned by tension, nor is fulfilment by ‘discharge’.

It is exactly the same with Husserl, maybe even more, because his own concept of ‘fulfilment’ is *directly* set down on a purely logical ground. Husserl, when he introduces his concept of fulfilment, emphasizes that intentionality, as far as it might be ‘fulfilled’ (and so is an ‘intention’ [*Intention*], in the technical sense that Husserl gives to that term) need not for anything be an ‘expectation’ (*Erwartung*):

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<sup>9</sup> Husserl, *Prolegomena*, §49, in Husserl *LU*, 1970, vol.1, 115.

<sup>10</sup> Wittgenstein *PG*, 1974, I, §108, 158. Someone speaks who might be Russell.

<sup>11</sup> Wittgenstein *PG*, 1974, I, §108, 158.

“It would (...) be quite wrong to think (...) that every relation of an intention to its fulfilment was a relationship involving expectation. Intention is not expectancy, it is not of its essence to be directed to a future occurring. If I see an incomplete pattern, e.g. in this carpet partially covered over by furniture, the piece I see seems clothed with intentions pointing to further completions – we feel as if the lines and coloured shapes go on ‘in the sense’ of what we see – but we expect nothing.”<sup>12</sup>

Of course, one must note that, here, ‘intention’ is not what Wittgenstein analyzes under that title. Husserl definitely takes the word ‘intention’ in a sense other than its ordinary sense – a *technical sense* – whereas the “being-directed to a *future* occurring” seems to be intrinsic to what we usually call intention.

What Husserl tries to isolate under that term, by extracting it from its strictly temporal use, is some timeless sense of ‘intention’, that is present in what we ordinarily call ‘intentions’ (which are temporal), but also elsewhere, in fact in any kind of attitude in which we *represent* reality. Even where I do not expect anything, and I am not specifically oriented toward the future, there might be, in that sense, an ‘intention’, in the exact sense in which *I project the real*. Expectation, in that sense, is only an attitude among a whole family of mental attitudes.

Now, Wittgenstein does not say anything else:

“Isn’t it like this: My theory is completely expressed in the fact that the state of affairs satisfying the expectation of p is represented by the proposition p?”<sup>13</sup>

So, in some sense, Husserl is right: the problem of ‘intentionality’ and fulfilment in general does not depend on the problem of expectation and the latter must not be read into the former. It is quite the opposite: the problem of expectation must be construed as a special case of the general problem of ‘intentionality and fulfilment’.

The basic issue, thus, is: what does it mean, in general, that we *represent* something? And how can our representing, whether accompanied by a feeling of ‘satisfaction’ or not, ever meet reality?

The latter possibility has definitely nothing to do with the resolution of any ‘tension’ or with any further happening that may come or not. It is a mere

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<sup>12</sup> Vith LI, §10, Husserl *LU*, 1970 (we are correcting the English translation slightly here), vol.2, 211.

<sup>13</sup> Wittgenstein *PR*, 1975, §25, 66.

*logical possibility*, and, as such, *necessary*. ‘Fulfilment’ just means that the way the things are objectively fits our way to represent them. If that representing of ours is about the future (as it is the case in expectation), the fit will hinge on future happenings, but it is, in that case as well, something about the representing itself (which tells us *which* future happenings would fulfil it) and not about any external factor that would stitch that previous representing with some piece of occurring reality at last.

If it is possible for the things to be given *as they are meant*, it is, according to both authors, that, to mean them, in some sense, is to mean *how they would be given if they should be given*, or, at least, it entails that. In other words, in Husserl’s as in Wittgenstein’s view, *intentionality itself*<sup>14</sup> *must allow fulfilment*, and is not to be conceived independently of it<sup>15</sup>, to the effect that the structure of intentionality must entail at least the *logical possibility of such a ‘fulfilment’*.

### 3. The pseudo-problem of ‘intentional objects’

An obvious difficulty, however, arises then. If intentionalities – or at least some distinguished intentionalities, which we are concerned with for the time being – are constitutively oriented toward ‘fulfilment’, so as to allow its *logical possibility* systematically, to which extent is that structure compatible with the widespread fact of the non-fulfilment? What to say about all the non-fulfilled expectations, or, to make it simpler, all the false statements or beliefs?

This point, of course, concerns the structure of the logical relation between intention and fulfilment. As we have put it, the intention says what would be the case if it was fulfilled. In some (ordinary) sense, it is certainly true. The problem is that philosophers are prone to take the turns of phrase of ordinary language excessively literally so as to extract from them a whole metaphysics that there isn’t. So, to understand what that phrase exactly means, we must consider accurately the case where the intention is *not*

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<sup>14</sup> Or at least, in Husserl’s case, some distinguished intentionalities (which constitute the core of his doctrine of intentionality): the ones that are ‘intentions’ in the technical sense of the term. As to that important distinction, usually neglected by Husserl’s commentators, see Vth LI, §13, Husserl *LU*, 1970, vol.2, 102.

<sup>15</sup> As it was by Brentano.



fulfilled. Does it mean that, in that case, there 'is' still what fulfils it, but, so to speak, unreal, as a mere 'intentional object', as would say a tradition of which Wittgenstein obviously knows? So,

“one may say of the bearer of a name that he does not exist; and of course that is not an activity, although one may compare it with one and say: he must be there all the same, if he does not exist. (And this has certainly already been written some time by a philosopher)”<sup>16</sup>

The allusion to Meinong is transparent:

“...there are objects of which it is true to say that they do not exist.”<sup>17</sup>

So, my naming would still refer to something even if there is nothing that really bears that name. Isn't it a logical consequence of the claim about the unconditional possibility of 'fulfilment', that seems to entail that, so to speak, the object of the intention is 'in' the intention itself, ready to get identified with a real object or not? As if the problem of fulfilment was the problem of a possible identity between *the intended object* and *a given object*? Wittgenstein shows, however, that such a description is inappropriate and relies on an illusion.

“I see someone pointing a gun and say “I expect a report”. The shot is fired. - Well, that was what you expected, so did that bang somehow already exist in your expectation? Or is it just that there is some other kind of agreement between your expectation and what occurred; that that noise was not contained in your expectation and merely accidentally supervened when the expectation was being fulfilled? But no, if the noise had not occurred, my expectation would not have been fulfilled; the noise fulfilled it; it was not an accompaniment of the fulfilment like a second guest accompanying the one I expected. - Was the thing about the event that was not in the expectation too an accident, an extra provided by fate? - But then what was not an extra? Did something of the shot already occur in my expectation? - Then what was extra? for wasn't I expecting the whole shot?

“The report was not so loud as I had expected.” “Then was there a louder bang in your expectation ?”<sup>18</sup>

The sense of these reflections is clear. The bang might be not as loud as I expected. However, in that case, that does not mean that there is, on the one side, the bang I expected, and, on the other side, the real bang that has to be

<sup>16</sup> Wittgenstein *PG*, 1974, I, §91, 138.

<sup>17</sup> Meinong 1960.

<sup>18</sup> Wittgenstein *PG*, 1974, I, §88, 134-135.

compared with the other: there is just *the real bang and my expectation*, the real bang that has to be measured, so to speak, by the ruler of my expectation. Expectation is nothing but a way to measure reality, which provides a standard for it. The mistake would be to reify the standard, and to take it for an object: exactly so arises the shadowy being of so-called “intentional object”<sup>19</sup>.

All the point in that is to understand that *my expectation meets the reality no less when it is “not fulfilled” than when it is*. One understands what expectation is only if one deals with it “as something that is necessarily either fulfilled or disappointed”<sup>20</sup>. That means that, anyway, expectation is applied to what really happens. In some cases, what happens ‘fulfils’ that expectation; in others, it does not. But expectation does not concern what happens (and exactly what happens) less in the case the latter does not fulfil it than in the case it does. As such, expectation is not about any imaginary happening that would ‘stand in’ for the reality in the expectation, but about the reality itself, whatever the latter might turn out to be.

So, on such a conception, intentionality, where it is confronted with reality, can never miss it, standing by the so-called ‘intentional object’. There is no intentionality to which reality wouldn’t reply in some way – by being as it is intended *or not*. This picture of intentionality seems to be at odds with the reading of intentionality traditionally ascribed to phenomenology. Wouldn’t Husserl say that there are meanings that can find ‘fulfilment’ – and, therefore, whose objects are ‘real’, or at least ‘true’ objects (*wahre Gegenstände*), as he would put it – and there are that cannot – and whose objects remain, therefore, merely ‘intentional’?

The widespread traditional view about Husserl’s position is however really questionable. It is, *in the first place*, because the founder of phenomenology is not the unconditional friend of ‘intentional objects’ that a lot of people take him to be, but in fact shares most part of Wittgenstein’s misgivings about them. He rejects the ascription of any shadowy being to them, and, insisting on the distinction to be made between ‘referring’ and

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<sup>19</sup> About which we should say, with Elizabeth Anscombe: “All such questions are nonsensical” (G.E.M. Anscombe, “The Intentionality of Sensation”, in: Anscombe 1981, 11).

<sup>20</sup> Wittgenstein *PR*, 1975, §28, 68.

‘having an object’ (in which case intentionality is a real relation), he warns against the risk to understand by ‘intentional objects’ any genuine kind of ‘objects’<sup>21</sup>.

It seems to follow from that that we must paradoxically allow the possibility of some kind of ‘objectless’ intentionalities: intentionalities that do not find any object of theirs in reality, or at least in the realm of what there is. There are intentionalities that meet the given and others that do not.

It is, nevertheless, more complicated than that. Because, *second*, exactly as Wittgenstein, Husserl thinks also that every intentionality (at least, as far as intentionality is to be identified with *meaning*, or belongs at least to the class of the ‘intentions’ in general) can in some extended sense meet any given, to the effect that, *as to any given, it is possible to apply any intentionality to it and to check whether there is or not the ‘match’ between them.*

To make sense of that, we must take a closer look at Husserl’s doctrine of ‘fulfilment’ in its relation to ‘meaning’. Husserl is certainly perfectly clear about the fact that there are, in some sense, ‘unfulfilled intentionalities’. How could it be otherwise?: things cannot definitely always be as I mean them to be, and, even if they are, I may not have the opportunity nor the desire to verify it. But, Husserl adds that, whatever, to every meaning as such is linked a ‘*fulfilling sense*’, to be contrasted to the meaning itself as ‘*sense simpliciter*’. Meaning, as we have seen, even if it is not ‘fulfilled’, determines *what it would be for it to be fulfilled*. Now, how must we conceive that ‘fulfilling sense’? As the shadow of how the object would look if it were given? Such an interpretation seems to suppose that there is only one way for an intention to be fulfilled, that is to say: to find an object that would exactly be ‘as intended’. However, it just misses a decisive point in Husserl’s construction, that is to say that, according to the phenomenologist, the case of the ‘perfect match’ is only *one case of fulfilment among the others*: this is the case of what Husserl calls ‘adequate fulfilment’. Not every intentionality can reach an adequate fulfilment, as a matter of fact. But that lack of ‘adequate’ fulfilment does not amount to the lack of *any* fulfilment, to the contrary.

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<sup>21</sup> See the sharp criticism of the notion of ‘intentional object’ in the appendix to §§11 and 20 of the V<sup>th</sup> *Logical Investigation*, Husserl *LU*, 1970, vol. 2, 127. On that, see Benoist 2001.

What is, then, ‘fulfilling sense’? The shadow of a chimeric adequate fulfilment even in intentions for which such an adequate fulfilment would be *a priori* impossible (as an intention directed at the Bolzanian ‘round square’)? – Certainly not, it has a much more general import: ‘fulfilling sense’ is rather to be identified with *the demands that a given intention, a priori, places on any possible intuition*. The idea is that I can try to synthesize any given intuition with any given meaning, making as if that intuition would match that meaning. Then, ‘fulfilling sense’ determines *the exact way of such a synthesis*: that is to say it tells what we must pay attention to in the intuition in order to know whether it matches that specific intention *or not*, and *how far* the match goes. So, ‘fulfilling sense’ constitutes a framework for the conflict (‘incompatibility’) as for the fit, and turns out to be the format of some kind of general *applicability* of intention to reality. This sounds, on the whole, pretty similar to Wittgenstein.

#### 4. Demystifying the synthesis

There remains, however, one difficulty – the major difficulty in this comparison. In his clarifying analysis of the grammar of expectation, Wittgenstein insists on the fact that we “cannot confront the previous expectation with what happens. The event replaces the expectation, is a reply to it.”<sup>22</sup> He observes: “you wouldn’t normally say ‘This is the same as I expected’, but ‘This is what I expected’.”<sup>23</sup>

Now, the way Husserl describes ‘fulfilment’ as ‘a synthesis of identity’, seems to clash directly with those observations. It is as if, according to Husserl, in ‘fulfilment’, the given would have exactly to be identified as ‘the same’ (or ‘not the same’, respectively) as what was intended.

This is certainly a problem. We must not exaggerate it by a hasty, inaccurate interpretation of Husserl, but we must not either underestimate it, trying to explain it out as a mere difference of phrasing.

Why is a ‘synthesis’ necessary, in Husserl’s view? One might reconstruct Husserl’s picture of the relationship between ‘intentions’ and

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<sup>22</sup> Wittgenstein *PR*, 1975, §28, 67.

<sup>23</sup> Wittgenstein *PR*, 1975, §30, 69.

‘intuitions’ this way: Intuitions are not, by themselves, fulfilments<sup>24</sup>. They are just what they are: intuitions, and we *have* them as such.

Intuitions might nevertheless turn out to fulfil some intentions. However, in that case, it is not the whole of the intuition that fulfils my intention, but only *the relevant part of it*. For instance, the blackbird that is settling on the branch of the tree in front of the window of my study might be big or small, its perception fulfils the report according to which ‘I am seeing a blackbird’ by the simple fact that it is the perception of a blackbird. The part of it that concerns the size of the bird is, so to speak, left aside and does not seem to take any part in the ‘fulfilment’. It, however, belongs to the same perception. So, how does the ‘adjustment’ proceed? An intuition does not fulfil an intention by itself, but only *from a certain point of view*, as far as it answers the demands of that intention.

On Husserl’s conception, ‘fulfilment’ is the *act* necessary to organize intuition accordingly to that ‘point of view’ which belongs to an intention, and so to put intuition in position to effectively reply to that intention.

It is worth noticing, from that point of view, that, contrary to a widespread belief about Husserlian phenomenology, it never takes *perception or ‘intuition’ to be forms of knowledge by themselves*. As Husserl insists, in order to know something, I do not need only it to be given, but to be given *as I mean it*<sup>25</sup>. What fulfils (or not) my cognitive meaning, as any other intention, is not intuition itself, but intuition, so to speak, stencilled by meaning.

Now, that conception seems to get in an obvious predicament. Does not it sound as if our truths weren’t about ‘reality’ *simpliciter*, but *about it only inasmuch as they are true of it*? As if our expectations would be fulfilled by

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<sup>24</sup> Although they are, by themselves, *intentionalities* (but, if they are pure intuitions, not ‘intentions’ for all that). It is, however, another story, about which we cannot say anything in this context.

<sup>25</sup> In that sense, Husserl’s theory of ‘evidence’ is definitely not one in the sense criticized by John McDowell in “Criteria, Defeasibility, and Knowledge”, reprinted as chapter 17 of McDowell 1998b, 345: “But it would be a confusion to take it that I am postulating a special, indefeasible kind of evidence, if evidence for a claim is understood-naturally enough-as something one’s possession of which one can assure oneself of independently of the claim itself.” On the whole, Husserl seems to be in line with McDowell. The only problem, however, is to know how the meaning’s bearing on what is given is secured – is this anything about the meaning itself, or not?

reality, but by it only inasmuch as it is ‘expected’? That would be really weird, as, on the one hand, usually we – and Husserl certainly does – take truth to be just about ‘the things themselves’, and, on the other hand, as Wittgenstein emphasizes, when expectation meets reality, it certainly meets the very same kind of reality that might be experienced independently of that expectation as well.

Thus, Husserl does not endorse such a fantastic conception. In his view, ‘fulfilment’ is not *another intuition* beside the primary one. In fact, it leaves the latter untouched, and feeds on it just as it is. It consists just in imposing a *perspective* on it, but what is given through such a perspective remains quite the same intuition, the intuition itself, with all what it is. In some sense, this is the intuition as a whole that ‘fulfils’ my meaning, my seeing of that blackbird, with its particular size, and its particular hopping, etc., that fulfils my simple belief: “I am seeing a blackbird”. What else might be given?

There remains, however, then, so to speak, to *appropriate* that given to my meaning, to effectively consider it from the point of view of my intention. This is exactly what ‘fulfilment’ as an act, in the Husserlian perspective, is supposed to perform.

It is probably difficult not to find some appeal in such a view, as it certainly does not make any sense to deal with some event as ‘fulfilling’ or not an expectation as long as we have not considered it by the standard of that expectation.

The only problem is that it might just be the case that... it is not such a problem. One must ponder what Husserl’s logic of a ‘synthesis of identity’ presupposes. Husserl derives from the basic indifference of the given to our intentions (Austin’s famous ‘silence of the senses’<sup>26</sup>?) the alleged necessity of some act of ‘appropriation’ in order to make our intuitions assessable by the standard of our intentions. As if our intentions as such hadn’t yet any contact with our bare intuitions, but had to acquire it each time, by securing a grip on any particular intuition – as the bareness of intuitions make them really difficult to grip!

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<sup>26</sup> As Charles Travis taught us to read it. See Travis 2004.

Husserl's whole conception comes down to the basic hunch of some *incommensurability* between intention and intuition.<sup>27</sup> That incommensurability has to be compensated by allowing some kind of act that, so to speak, makes intuition commensurable to intention: this is what 'fulfilment' is.

On the contrary, in Wittgenstein's view, there is no need (nor room) for such an act. Wittgenstein takes the experience of reality to be as independent of our intentions, and untouched by them, as Husserl does. He thinks, however, that those intentions of ours are not at all independent of that experience, but always already connected to it. It is perfectly true that the things that are concerned by our intentions, as a rule, play many other roles than to fulfil or not to fulfil them, as finally, *as such*, they play *no role*; but it is exactly with those indifferent things that the intentions in question deal, with those things themselves, and there is no need to make those things able to 'reply' in a way or another to these intentions, because *it has all times already be done*: it is a part of the definition of those intentions to be structurally exposed to a reality that is indifferent to them (and *the exact way* in which they are exposed to that reality is also a part of that definition).

In that sense, what is characteristic of Wittgenstein's perspective on intention is that, in his view, that synthesis of which Husserl emphasizes the ongoing necessity has always already been done.

"It is in language that it's all done"<sup>28</sup>

In language, thought has already been adjusted to reality as it is, so as to be able to represent it, either correctly or incorrectly. Thus, there is no need of a converse adjustment of the reality as it is 'given' to our abilities to represent, in order to make the former 'representable' by the latter.

To make as if there was each time a synthesis to make, it is to pretend intentions were basically detached from reality and should so have to 'get in touch with it'. But it is just to ignore what intentions are, that have sense only *within reality*, and suppose that some kind of basic 'agreement' with that

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<sup>27</sup> An incommensurability that is, in Husserl's view, partially compensated by the fact that intuitions themselves are supposed to be 'intentionalities'. Some adjustment is nonetheless required between the two kinds of intentionalities – the ones that are intentions and the ones that are not, or, at least, that, contextually, do not play that role.

<sup>28</sup> Wittgenstein *PG*, 1974, I, §95, 143.

reality (Wittgenstein would call it ‘harmony’) has already been reached<sup>29</sup>. It is on the basis of that ‘agreement’, and within its limits, that the things can be said to ‘fulfill’ or not our intentions. If the agreement should not have been yet found, the question of ‘fulfilment’ would not even arise.

By putting back intentions into the world, Wittgenstein therefore demystifies the Husserlian problem of ‘synthesis’. One does not need to make the intuition assessable by the standard of intention, because, if that is a real ‘intention’, it has been designed so as to be able to assess the intuitions as they are. When we cannot see how to assess an event, we must rather ask ourselves about our intention: we might not have been clear enough in our minds about it.

## 5. The art of fulfilment

To return to Wittgenstein’s own phrasing, what is it to “recognize” (*wiedererkennen*) that the things are or are not how I said them to be? – Nothing but to apply to them the normative framework provided by my statement. In such an application, no further ‘synthesis’ is required, because the statement is immediately about the reality itself, the ‘picture’ it makes is already connected to the reality in a certain way, that leaves open the possibility for it to be applied correctly or incorrectly. To ‘represent’ is just to make use of such a pre-established connection.

For it to be true that I see a blackbird, it is enough that I see a blackbird. There is no need for that that I see it ‘as a blackbird’. And, as strange as it might seem, for me to *know* that I see a blackbird, there is no need either of a special kind of seeing that would be called ‘seeing it *as a blackbird*’. I need just to be *used to* see blackbirds. The connection between thought and reality needs just to have been already secured, in a way or another.

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<sup>29</sup> As John McDowell puts it: “The need to construct a theoretical “hook” to link thinking to the world does not arise, because if it is thinking that we have in view at all -say being struck by the thought that one hears the sound of water dripping-then what we have in view is already hooked on to the world; it is already in view as possessing referential directedness at reality.” (“Putnam on Mind and Meaning”, reprinted as ch. 13 of McDowell 1998b, 288)



If our ways to represent the world are so structurally rooted in experience, there is definitely no need of a mysterious ‘synthesis’ in order to connect them to experience. No mediating ‘act’ is required in order to apply the standard of intention to experience<sup>30</sup>: the former applies to the latter directly, because it is just a way we have to sort the latter out, a way we have to *do* that.

To check whether something fulfils or not our intention is just as to make a *calculation*, that is to say, to implement a way to do whose rules (including whose connections to reality) have already been settled:

“From expectation to fulfilment is a step in a calculation.”<sup>31</sup>

What to say, then, in defence of the Husserlian sense of ‘fulfilment’, as an *act*, that is to say as something that has not been all done already when we are presented with what happens? How might there remain anything to *do*, then?

It seems that there remains that, if any intention is just a way to sort experience out, and so a definite game with reality, the notion of an ‘act’ or a ‘synthesis’ of fulfilment may perhaps help us to conceive of *the trouble one might have participating in that game*.

There are particular situations that the Russellian account seems to fit, after all: it is only when I am experiencing the thing itself that I get the impression to know that it was ‘what I was waiting for’. What does it mean?

It would be certainly mistaken to take it, as Russell seems to do, for the general equation of ‘expectation’. *Normally*, to expect supposes that one knows what one expects: the conditions of determination of the adequacy of happenings to the standard of expectation are, so to speak, internal features of the expectation in question. We play the game of an expectation or another, so to speak, *as those games are given to us, in our lives*<sup>32</sup>, and the determination of what is expected is a part of each game.

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<sup>30</sup> In that sense, there is no ‘schematism’: our concepts are always already schematized.

<sup>31</sup> Wittgenstein *PG*, 1974, part I, §111, 160.

<sup>32</sup> See the famous observation in Wittgenstein *PU*, 1953, IId part, ch.11, 226: “What has to be accepted, the given, is – one could say – forms of life”, which shifts the meaning of the phenomenological ‘given’.

However, as we mentioned it at the beginning, what might happen is that we are unclear about *our expectation itself* – about which game we are playing now or even about whether we are playing or not. Suddenly something happens, and it becomes obvious: we have been waiting for *that!* But the point is that, in such a case, the discovery is not as much that it was *that* (and not anything else) for which we have been waiting, as that so far, *we-have-been-waiting-for-that*. What we discover is our expectation, and not its object. Or: we discover our expectation at the same time as ‘its object’ – which makes perfectly sense, as one thing is inseparable from the other: there is no expectation without object, and as far as we weren’t able to indicate the object in any way, we did not have a real understanding of the expectation either. It is as if my expectation was *disclosed and resolved* at the same time.

What is ‘synthetized’, in such a moment, is not that the situation is ‘the same as I expected’ (this is a question to which the answer lies purely and simply in my way to expect), but *that I expect this way*. In other words, it is not that I have to add ‘the real situation’ to an empty pre-existing expectation in order to *know* eventually what I have been expecting, but that I have to add an expectation to the given situation in order to see the latter as fulfilling (or not) that expectation, *from the point of view of that expectation*.

That kind of experience exists definitely. It is not limited to the dramatic case of ‘expectation’, but pertains to all kind of intentional attitudes, wherever is involved anything like a *representing*. It is never necessary that things, as they are given, be represented in a way or another. To represent them, we must make an effort, there is something to *do* – some synthesis to operate?

To sum up what we have to say, we can extrapolate from the marvellous reading Vincent Descombes proposed of Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*<sup>33</sup>.

In *The Guermantes Way*, the narrator confesses his disappointment about his time: the aristocracy is not what he believed it to be. He envies Balzac or Chateaubriand, who seemed to have had a much more interesting world to describe at their disposal. He feels as if literature would want another reality than the one that is given to us in order to be possible. At the

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<sup>33</sup> See Descombes 1987.

beginning of the last volume of the *Search*, he is completely baffled when he reads a passage of the *Diary* of Brothers Goncourt that describes exactly the world he knows. All what the Goncourts say strikes him as false, inadequate: the world they are speaking of, that Marcel knows, does not seem to him as interesting as they put it. He, then, has misgivings about the power of literature: maybe it is not the world that is not fit for literature, but the literature that is not fit for the world. It seems that the former is unable to represent the latter.

Now, at the end of the work, when his vocation becomes obvious for him, Marcel realizes that what literature speaks about is exactly *this* world, as it is – that is to say as unconcerned by literature as well. What else might it be? Far from taking us away from the experience we actually have of the world, it has no other object. The people of whom the *Diary* of the Goncourts speaks are those real people who move in the circles Marcel knows, and not only some ‘image’ of them.

The problem is, then, to be able to *use* that form of representing that literature is, as any form of representing – to see it as relevant for the real situations we experience, but it is exactly the same as to know how to use it. And that might take a life.

To that, some moment of ‘revelation’ might be necessary, as the one the narrator experiences in the final party at the Guermantes town house, at the end of *The Past Recaptured*. Suddenly the truth comes to him: it is about *them*, those very same people he believed to know. However, those people have not changed, nor have the tools of literature (those are the very same words as they used to be). But *he* has changed: he is now able to make the connection between them, that is to say, to *use* the connection there is between both.

In that, one must be there – it is something that one *does*, and no one can substitute for anyone in doing it – and, maybe, Husserl’s emphasis on a ‘synthesis’ to be made can finally help to make sense of that necessary *participation*. The problem would not be, then, as much to synthesize the given experience with our intention, as to *synthesize the intention as ours on the occasion of that experience*. Which supposes something on the part of the world, obviously, but also something on the part of the subject, as it, in the world, is.

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