

Book Proposal

Making Sense: A Phenomenological Investigation of the Depth of Meaning

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Synopsis

Is all meaning linguistic? In recent years, both Continental and Anglo-American philosophers have questioned the dominant focus on language resulting from the twentieth century's linguistic turn. Philosophers spanning the "divide" have increasingly endorsed views according to which our ways of making sense of the world are not governed exclusively or even predominantly by language, concepts, or propositions but also include, for example, sensorimotor or affective dimensions, non-conceptual content, or forms of non-propositional, embodied knowing.

So far, however, philosophers have shied away from extending these claims to *meaning as such*. Contemporary philosophers radically rethinking linguistic prejudices concerning intentionality, perception, mind, and knowledge continue to treat the theory of meaning as an essentially linguistic concern. In the later twentieth century, as work in the philosophy of mind, epistemology, and the philosophy of language was increasingly subdivided among specialists as part of the scientific project of (post-)analytic philosophy, and as Continental philosophers turned more and more toward poststructuralist concerns with the text, the task of connecting a theory of meaning to experience was either ignored or outsourced to linguistic and deconstructive analysis. And while the main topic of interest in both traditions has shifted yet again in recent years—a turn away from the linguistic turn—that outsourcing remains in place.

Making Sense: A Phenomenological Investigation of the Depth of Meaning defends the claim that *a theory of meaning consistent with contemporary work on the embodied, lived character of meaningful experience necessitates an account of the dimension of significance. Significance is a normative pre-condition for experience at the deeper level of sense, a level not reducible to the terms of linguistic or conceptual analysis in the "space of reasons" or to third-personal empirical accounts in the "space of causes."* The book identifies the problem with reducing meaning in this way and develops the account of sense and significance in response.

The book synthesizes work in a variety of contemporary domains and in the history of 20th-century philosophy on both sides of the Anglo-American—Continental divide. Using the phenomenology of the later Husserl, which historically coincided with but remained resistant to the turn to language in both traditions, I rehabilitate and refine an oft-neglected alternative to narrowly linguistic accounts of meaning. This view locates a deep level of "sense" and "significance" directly in our everyday experience by indexing the theory of meaning primarily to intentionality and only secondarily to language, propositions, signifiers, or concepts. Work on intentionality provides a rigorous framework for the analysis of meaning outside the bounds of language, and allows me to clarify the founding role of embodied sense-making in what Husserl called *the lifeworld*. At the same time, taking a cue from the pragmatics of the later Wittgenstein, I reject conceptions of meanings as fixed, pre-linguistic, *a priori* entities or simple givens—the very sorts of misconceptions the linguistic turn helped to expose—arguing instead for a transcendental, historically mediated conception of meaning as *significance within a form of life*.

Outline of Contents

Part One consists of four short chapters that further delineate the problem and introduce key theoretical considerations through forays into different contemporary debates. Collectively, these chapters 1) show ways in which each debate is moving beyond the presuppositions of the linguistic turn; 2) introduce key concepts employed in Part Two; and 3) demonstrate a problematic gap in the literature due to lingering presuppositions about the exclusively linguistic nature of meaning. Whereas much recent philosophy is characterized by an obsession with close analysis of narrowly defined topics or single authors, the purpose of these chapters is primarily *synthetic*—demonstrating how a similar problem arises across different domains of research rarely considered in relation to one another. These chapters are designed to have wide appeal and to demonstrate that the need to rethink meaning is not a narrow problem limited to the philosophy of language, but a general concern with broad implications for a variety of contemporary areas of research.

Part Two develops an account of sense and significance in response to the issues identified in Part One. I develop this account through engagement with contemporary issues in epistemology and mind, particularly work concerned with intentionality, normativity, and the contested status of representationalism, propositionalism, and the given. My core systematic claims are developed through engagement with Husserl's later work and with important critical insights from the later Wittgenstein that help to limit and refine phenomenology's speculative tendencies. The book as a whole provides a fresh, holistic approach—both systematic and historical—to a fundamental issue that lies overlooked in the background of contemporary areas of the discipline.

Market

The book will appeal primarily to an academic market: professional philosophers working in both analytic and Continental traditions, as well as intellectual historians, graduate students and advanced undergraduates, and academics in other disciplines interested in phenomenological contributions to the study of meaning. The book will have broad appeal within this demographic due to the connections it draws between the theory of meaning and a wide variety of contemporary work spanning the Continental-analytic divide, its focus on embodiment, its appeal to work in race and gender theory, and its historical claims concerning the linguistic turn and the turn's effects across different domains of contemporary work in philosophy and theory. The overall tone of the book and selective rather than exhaustive treatment of contemporary debates in Part One will make it approachable and informative for any philosophically interested reader beginning at the advanced undergraduate level, and its fresh take on core systematic issues in Part Two connects with current concerns in the literature without requiring extensive specialist knowledge.

Similar recently published single-author books

- Barber, *The Intentional Spectrum and Intersubjectivity: Phenomenology and the Pittsburgh Neo-Hegelians* (Ohio UP, 2011)
- Braver, *Groundless Grounds: A Study in Wittgenstein and Heidegger* (MIT Press, 2012)
- Crowell, *Normativity and Phenomenology in Husserl and Heidegger* (Cambridge UP, 2013)
- Engelland, *Ostension: Word-Learning and the Embodied Mind* (MIT Press, 2014)
- Hopp, *Perception and Knowledge: A Phenomenological Account* (Cambridge UP, 2011)
- Inkpin, *Disclosing the World: On the Phenomenology of Language* (MIT Press, 2016)

Montague, *The Given: Experience and its Content* (Oxford UP, 2016)
Romano, *At the Heart of Reason* (Northwestern UP, 2015 (translation from French))

While several recent books have taken up the theme of meaning and language in relation to the phenomenological tradition, attesting to a growing interest in this area, my book is unique in several respects. Unlike many of the works noted above, its primary historical touchstone is Husserl, rather than Brentano (Montague and other recent analytic work in this area), or later phenomenological thinkers such as Heidegger or Merleau-Ponty (Braver, Engelland, Inkipin). Whereas in the past the latter thinkers have had more appeal in Continental scholarship, and Brentano in analytic philosophy of mind, in recent years the rigor and depth of Husserl's treatment of systematic topics has won him increasing admiration from analytic and Continental philosophers alike. Hopp's rigorous analytic treatment of Husserl with regard to epistemology and perception is a case in point.

My book offers a similar rigorous intervention with regard to the theory of meaning, but from a self-consciously *synthetic* approach that bridges the sub-disciplines of epistemology, philosophy of language and philosophy of mind. The book will be of special importance in this regard for helping to bring Husserl's later work on topics related to meaning, mind and epistemology to the attention of analytic philosophers who have tended to focus their engagement with Husserl on early writings such as the *Logical Investigations*, and to construe intentionality more narrowly as a concern primarily in the philosophy of mind.

As distinct from the majority of the works listed above (Barber, Braver, Crowell, Inkipin, Romano), the book focuses specifically on meaning in relation to embodiment, and thus better accords with the recent and widespread philosophical interest in theorizing the role and importance of the lived body. Whereas recent literature on Husserl has looked increasingly toward his account of embodiment, there is as yet nothing in the literature that focuses explicitly the relationship between embodiment and problems of meaning and significance.

Additionally, (contra Barber, Braver, Engelland, Inkipin), while it similarly appeals to Wittgenstein alongside traditional phenomenologists, the book is not primarily oriented to a linguistic or discursive conception of meaning, and thus seeks to open up new pathways of scholarship beyond the now well-worn approach of interpreting Continental figures using concepts and methods from the analytic tradition. Finally, my book puts historically informed work directly into dialogue with contemporary core areas of analytic philosophy, whereas many of the other works in this area (Braver, Engelland, Romano) remain primarily or exclusively historical and exegetical in orientation.

Draft Preface

This is a book about meaning. It is not, however, primarily a book about language. It is after something deeper. If this sounds strange to you, you are not alone. There is a common and very widely held presupposition in philosophy that a treatment of meaning *simply must* bottom out in some sort of analysis of language or at least of linguistic entities such as concepts, representations, or propositions. This is the presupposition this book *rejects*. It does so by resurrecting a deeper conception of meaning, one with roots that reach beneath the linguistic turn, and with the potential to bear fruit for a variety of debates that branch out beyond it.

In recent years, philosophers across Continental and Anglo-American traditions have questioned the dominant focus on language resulting from the turn. Philosophers spanning the divided traditions have increasingly endorsed views according to which our ways of making

sense of the world are not governed exclusively by language, concepts, or propositions but also include, for example, sensorimotor or affective dimensions, non-conceptual content, or forms of non-propositional, embodied knowing. But they have shied away from extending these insights to *meaning as such*, often because of the presumed impossibility of doing so without abandoning the systematic rigor we have come to associate with philosophy as a practice of (linguistic or conceptual) analysis.

This book argues for a deeper ground of meaning beyond language, synthesizing contemporary work on both sides of the Anglo-American-Continental divide through an appeal to resources in the history of twentieth-century philosophy. Using the phenomenology of the later Husserl, who never fully subscribed to the linguistic turn, it rehabilitates and refines an oft-neglected alternative to narrowly linguistic accounts of meaning, locating a basic level of “sense” and “significance” directly in our everyday, embodied experience. At the same time, taking a cue from the pragmatics of the later Wittgenstein, it rejects accounts of meanings as fixed *a priori* entities or simple givens—the very sorts of misconceptions the linguistic turn helped to expose—arguing instead for an historically mediated conception of meaning as *lived significance*.

This conception is rigorously and systematically defended, but in an account that is indexed not to language but to the more fundamental structure of embodied intentionality, and in a way that does not aspire to greater rigor than the subject matter allows. The approach is more *synthetic* in orientation than *analytic*, and appeals to both contemporary and historical sources. I argue that there is a problem with reducing meaning to language in a current philosophical landscape that has turned away from the linguistic turn, and use historical resources to develop a novel account of sense and significance in light of that problem. At stake in this investigation is the ability to account more fully for not only the meaning of our words but the basic meaningfulness in our lives—the very depths of sense.

Length

80,000 words, including notes and references:

Preface and Introduction: approximately 5,000 words

Chapters 1-4: short article length (approximately 7,500 words each) = 30,000 words

Chapters 5-8: slightly longer (approximately 9,500 words each) = 38,000 words

Notes and references (Intro + Chs. 1-8): approximately 7,000 words

Inclusion of Previously Published Material

The book includes ideas and arguments worked out in a series of recent essays, some of which have been published, but the material presented in the book is extensively reconceived and developed in a different context, and previously published material makes up less than 15% of the manuscript. Some of the ideas originated from consideration of these themes in my unpublished 2013 doctoral dissertation, but the corresponding material in the book is heavily re-written—the original dissertation treated related topics but in a different context and in the form of a comparative account of Husserl and Wittgenstein with limited attention to contemporary literature and without explicit development of an original account of meaning beyond that explicated in the studied authors.

Author Information

I am an Assistant Professor of Philosophy (tenure-track) at Creighton University, where I research and teach in the areas of epistemology, philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, and the history of philosophy—especially phenomenology and the history of and relationship between twentieth-century analytic and Continental traditions. My recent published work engages contemporary topics in epistemology, mind, and language from a Husserlian phenomenological perspective, and this book project is the natural outgrowth of that work. I previously held a post-doc at Boston University, and received my PhD from Emory University, where my dissertation was a comparative study of developments in the theories of meaning of Husserl and Wittgenstein, under the direction of phenomenologist and philosopher of history David Carr. That research included a year as visiting scholar at the Husserl Archive in Cologne (sponsored by a Halle Foundation Fellowship and the *Journal of the History of Philosophy* Jan Wojcik Memorial Prize) and extensive study of Wittgenstein in graduate summer schools and advanced seminars in Austria. I was a seminarist in the 2019 *Journal of the History of Philosophy* Master Class, “The Lesser-known Frege in Kantian Context,” and have presented peer-reviewed work related to this book project there, on the main program of the American Philosophical Association, and at meetings of the Society for the Study of the History of Analytic Philosophy, the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, the International Wittgenstein Symposium, and the Husserl Circle. My CV is included along with this proposal.

Chapter-by-chapter Overview

Introduction: Turning Away from the Linguistic Turn?

The introduction briefly introduces the approach, main themes, and thesis of the book as discussed in the synopsis above.

Part One: Motivating an Account of Significance

Chapter 1. How Low Must We Go? Embodiment, Affectivity and Motivations Beyond Words

This chapter engages recent work on embodiment and affect in the philosophy of race and gender. In critical response to cognitivist analyses of emotion in terms of, for example, propositional attitudes, and to the paradigm of deconstruction once dominant in literary theory (themselves approaches with roots in different strands of the linguistic turn), recent theorists have argued that affective or emotive bodily responses to the world—such as shame, disgust, or joy—are best seen as non-signifying or autonomic processes. These ideas have figured prominently in one strain of recent work in feminist philosophy and theory, where such “non-signifying” embodied structures have been examined using the resources of phenomenology and the theory of affects developed by the psychologist Silvan Tomkins in order to theorize forms of oppression not limited to the linguistic or representational parameters of dominant discourses. These ideas have also featured prominently in recent phenomenologically oriented work in the philosophy of race, such as that of Alia Al-Saji and George Yancy, on the non-discursive, embodied nature of racialized habits of comportment and perception.

But if the non-signifying or non-representational status of such structures and embodied habits is taken to imply that they are not bearers of meaning, I argue, it is not clear how studying them could be useful for resisting modes of oppression. Accounts of affect and

embodiment that take a radically non-representational stance have rightly moved beyond the linguistic turn by recognizing the ways in which significance extends “all the way down” to our affectively charged interactions in the world. But, outside the representational paradigm, those accounts lack a conception of meaning that reaches “high enough” to explain how such interactions function as phenomena of oppression (and resistance) that are inherently *meaningful* in a way that still falls within the purview of human action and is not merely physical, chemical, or biological. If racism or sexism were reducible to brute physical facts or biological functions, we could no more work to eradicate them as theorists and philosophers than we can to eradicate gravity or digestion. An account that recognizes only discursive or representational phenomena as meaningful fails to take account of the embodied and affective aspects of our lives on their own terms.

Chapter 2. Setting Our Sights Too High: Non-conceptualism, Non-propositionalism, and Content

Chapter Two turns to a different set of contemporary ideas that might be thought to work against the problem raised in Chapter One by complementing “bottom up” affective and embodied approaches with an account that works from the “top-down”: recent work, especially that influenced by the phenomenological tradition, that argues for the non-conceptual content of perceptual experience. On these accounts, however, I argue that a problem arises that is the inverse of the problem of meaning discussed in the previous chapter: whereas those accounts lacked a conception of meaning that reached “high enough” to distinguish it from the purely physical or biological, non-conceptualist accounts, while they are right to insist that our experience is not exhaustively conceptually mediated, do not allow for a conception of meaning “low enough” to fully escape the preconceptions of conceptualism and propositionalism. While non-conceptualists have moved beyond the implicit conceptualism of the linguistic turn, they fail to say much about what non-conceptual content *does—non-conceptually*, beyond explaining it away as the fodder for epistemic relations occurring exclusively at the conceptual or propositional level. This chapter engages with recent work on non-conceptual content, especially the work of phenomenologist Walter Hopp (see “Competition” section).

Chapter 3. Possibilities and Temporalities of Sense-making: Embodiment and Significant Know-how

I turn in Chapter Three to recent work on knowing-how and sensorimotor knowledge, especially that stemming from “enactivist” approaches at the intersection of phenomenology and analytic philosophy of mind. The analysis of knowing-how as an embodied, non-propositional phenomenon helps to further specify the “depth” at which Part Two’s theory of sense and significance will be located, and offers an improvement to the “too high vs. too low” schematic of Chapters One and Two by clarifying how knowledge can be seen to extend across both linguistic and non-linguistic, intellectual and embodied registers of experience. Recent accounts along these lines, such as Alva Noë’s, tend to maintain the traditional conceptualist and propositionalist notion of meaning while extending it to embodied knowing in terms of possibilities or possible meaning. I argue that Noë is right to extend the notion of *meaning* to a conception of knowledge below the propositional level, and to lodge an important (and influential) critique of intellectualism in epistemology and the philosophy of mind. But he accomplishes this through a problematic stretching the notion of the concept, broadening its scope so widely that it becomes close to unrecognizable, and baptizing structures as conceptual that—in their striking dissimilarity from linguistically mediated experience—are precisely those non-conceptualists have insisted are non-conceptual. He similarly stretches the

notions of the understanding and judgment in a way that ultimately relies on, rather than moving beyond, the paradigm of linguistic meaning.

I argue that, instead, an adequate conception of meaning as an embodied phenomenon must take account of the way in which meaning is *made*—what Husserl calls the *constitution* of meaning. This will involve not only differentiation between conceptual and non-conceptual functions of the understanding and a corresponding distinction in forms of judgment, but also recognition of the interplay between conditions of possibility as determined in part by our direct bodily involvement in the world (which my account identifies as *significance*), and the actualizations of meaning in the course of lived experience, even when they do not reach the level of exactness of linguistic meaning (actualizations that I term instances of making *sense*). I argue, in the terminology of Husserl, that an adequate account of the *constitution* of meaning will require an approach that is both *transcendental* (focused on conditions of possibility with regard to the meaning-making subject), and *genetic* (taking account of the role of history in determining the parameters of lived experience).

Chapter 4. Significance and History

Chapter Four takes a cue from the genetic considerations introduced at the end of Chapter Three, and argues for the inclusion of an historical dimension in the theory of meaning to be developed in Part Two. I look to recent attempts to move beyond representationalist paradigms in the philosophy of history to show how the phenomenon of historicity (the lived experience of history and the way in which our experience is historically structured) offers further insights concerning the need for an account of meaning *qua* sense and significance. In dialogue with recent work in the philosophy of history by Frank Ankersmit and David Carr, I argue that such an account can help us avoid the pitfalls of a notion of historical meaning limited to linguistic representations of the past, but only if we remain attuned to the way in which our historical situatedness extends to the structures of the lived body. This fourth lesson concerning the need for a “deeper” account in the theory of meaning thus connects back to the claims about embodiment and meaning introduced in Chapter One, and rounds out Part One’s survey of recent themes in philosophy that, I argue, point to the need for the more robust conception of meaning as sense and significance laid out in Part Two.

Part Two: Sense and Significance: A Phenomenological Account

Chapter 5. Act-first Epistemology: Beyond Propositionalism and Representationalism

Part Two begins, in Chapter Five, with considerations that go to the historical and theoretical roots of the problems diagnosed in Part One. These problems arise from the piecemeal theoretical approach to core philosophical issues that arose alongside the scientifically modeled project of analytic philosophy in the twentieth century. Since the problems arise precisely at the intersection of concerns in epistemology, mind, and the theory of meaning (as that theory is traditionally conceived within the philosophy of language), they are not handled adequately in any one of these domains treated separately. I outline a different model for treating these issues, which takes the paradigm of intentionality, and specifically Husserl’s account of the intentional act, as the starting point for a theory of meaning. By reversing the commonly assumed direction of priority that explains intentionality in semantic terms (for example, in the literature on propositional attitudes), I argue for an opening up of

the space of the theory of meaning: on this view, while language remains a paradigmatic form of meaning, it is treated as one species of a broader, deeper-seated genus.

In contrast to the dominant, content-first approach, I advocate an “act-first” approach to epistemology that begins from the intentional act and accounts for meaning content in light of the more primitive notion of intentionality. This approach to epistemology (or, more properly speaking, to a range of concerns that overlap the traditional sub-disciplinary boundaries between epistemology, mind, and meaning) can be found in Husserl’s work, but traces of it are also evident in contemporary philosophers such as Tim Crane and Michelle Montague. This chapter outlines an act-first epistemology using these contemporary authors and an historical discussion of differences in the theories of meaning of Husserl, Frege, and the early Wittgenstein. Further attention to similarities and differences in these historical accounts—especially concerning the role assigned to representation (*Vorstellung*)—allows me to sketch a position that draws from but is also contrasted with these contemporary approaches: I share the recent critical attitude toward propositionalism, but I reject these authors’ excluding from the non-propositional domain all logical-epistemological concerns, which they continue—along with mainstream analytic philosophy generally—to associate with the project of semantic analysis.

Instead, I argue that there is an important level of genuinely *logical* inquiry—what Husserl, echoing Kant, calls transcendental logic—that arises from the consideration of meaning in line with act-first epistemology. Such an account of meaning countenances non-semantic, pre-predicative aspects experience as logical by demonstrating the ways in which they are governed by what Husserl calls “motivations,” rule-like relations that are neither *causal* nor semantically *inferential*, thus escaping the traditionally conceived binary between a space of causes and a space of reasons. I argue that meaning arises at a deeper level of significance, which is best conceived in terms of a *sui generis* “space of motivations” separate from both the “space of causes” and the “space of reasons.” Whereas the traditional content-first approach to epistemology relies on a broadly *representationalist* framework to account for the structure of intentionality, I go beyond recent non-propositional accounts to endorse a *presentationalist* account, according to which representation is a species of but not exhaustive of a broader genus of presentation—a claim that parallels the view that language is only one species of meaning. By removing these propositionalist and representationalist presuppositions, I clear the ground for a phenomenological account of intentionality that is properly speaking neither externalist nor internalist, but at once a synthetic accomplishment of consciousness and always already in the world.

Chapter 6. Sense Significance, and Life

Chapter Six further develops this account through a closer engagement with Husserl’s appeal, after his phenomenology’s transcendental turn, to the notion of sense (*Sinn*)—a level of meaning he distinguishes from *Bedeutung*, or linguistic meaning—and discussions in his later work of what he calls significance (*Sinnhaftigkeit*). (The relevant distinctions here do not neatly map on to Frege’s *Sinn-Bedeutung* distinction—a point that is clarified in Chapter Five.) Sense and significance function in a middle position between blind intuition and reflexively conscious predicative judgment—precisely the sort of view—reaching both “low enough” and “high enough” to account for the full breadth of ways in which meaning arises in our experience—that was shown in Part One to be missing from a variety of contemporary debates. By developing Husserl’s limited remarks on the relationship between sense and significance, I clarify the notion of a “deeper” conception of meaning not limited to the paradigmatic case of language: significance consists of a set of parameters for possible meaning

as such, and the notion of sense, following Husserl, can be understood as a level of the realization (or actualization) of possibilities that does not yet rise to the determinacy or exactness of linguistic or conceptual meaning.

The rest of Chapter Six links this account to an historically embedded and normative conception of rationality, which I explain with reference to recent work by Hannah Ginsborg on “primitive normativity.” Focusing on her retrieval of the broader conception of the faculty of judgment identified by Kant in the third *Critique*, I develop an idea implicit in Husserl’s later work (especially the posthumously published *Experience and Judgment*): the notion of a pre-predicative form of judgment that correlates, on the side of the intentional subject, with the basic, non-self-conscious, embodied sense-making discussed earlier in the chapter. I connect this notion to Husserl’s conception of the lifeworld and the ideas about the historical situatedness of meaning introduced in Chapter Four, and to the problematic of constitution and judgment from Chapters Two and Three.

Chapter 7. Rule-following, Significance, and the Limits of Language

In Chapter Seven, further treatment of Ginsborg’s intervention in debates about rule-following and normativity surrounding Kripke’s *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* leads to some considerations of the later Wittgenstein: I argue that, despite his limitation of the consideration of meaning to contexts of linguistic usage (What Jaakko Hintikka, echoing Jean Van Heijenoort’s delimitation of two conceptions of logic in the twentieth-century, calls the “language as universal medium” view), his reliance on the notion of “forms of life” and his rejection of internalist, mental-state-based accounts of meaning put him much closer to the later Husserl’s lifeworld-based account, in that both interpret meaning as something always already in the world.

This similarity is instructive despite an important difference: whereas for Wittgenstein we cannot step outside of language to depict the language-world relation from beyond its limit, in my account the limit is extended to significance itself (in the technical sense outlined in the previous chapters). Since this is a broader notion of meaning than that of language, we can indeed use language to address something that goes beyond *its* limits. Hintikka and, more recently, Martin Kusch have called the latter claim the “language as calculus” view and have ascribed it to Husserl specifically. My endorsement of such a view is characteristic of the book’s general approach to rethinking the theory of meaning beyond the linguistic turn. While doing so involves rejecting Wittgenstein’s limitation of meaning to linguistic usage, I argue that we can hold onto many of the more general insights about meaning that his later work (primarily *Philosophical Investigations* and *On Certainty*) entails—especially the notion of a non-rule-based, normative, logical constraint on judgment. In this sense the epistemology I offer is broadly Wittgensteinian in spirit, despite a departure from the letter of his pragmatics in favor of a Husserlian phenomenological approach more directly focused on intentionality and the lived body.

Chapter 8. The Given and the Significance of Significance

The final chapter draws together the systematic considerations of Part Two, beginning from an important objection to my theory of sense and significance: in advocating an account of meaning that presumes to go below the “objective” level of the proposition and to locate aspects relevant to epistemology at a pre-predicative level and in subjective intentional acts, do we not invite the specter of the “myth of the given”? Are we not asserting, against some of twentieth century philosophy’s hardest-learned lessons, the existence of a sort of non-inferential and direct knowledge of the empirical world, entering the “space of reasons” from

without?

I argue that the account of sense and significance I have developed does not qualify as a “myth of the given” in any pernicious sense: while it does imply an epistemic picture in which the structure of justification extends below the propositional and below predicative judgment, the account of sense developed in Chapter Six shows that judgment and justification are still governed by the structures of transcendental logic in the guise of significance. In effect, the epistemically relevant bounds of sense on this picture are not drawn by semantics or even by pragmatics, but by the structuring arising from lived experience itself. As Chapter Seven shows, while such bounds cannot be construed in terms of pre-existent rules, they are nonetheless a form of logical constraint on the possibilities of meaning—a claim further reinforced by the account of a *sui generis* “space of motivations.” The given no longer appears problematic once we endorse the intentionality-focused, act-first account of epistemology outlined in Chapter Five, and thereby reject the propositional and representational prejudices that underlie the traditional critique as found in Sellars and later Sellarsians such as Brandom, Millikan, and McDowell.

The chapter concludes by summarizing Part Two’s systematic, historically rooted account of a non-linguistic dimension of *sense and significance* in everyday, embodied life—the very sort of account that Part One shows is lacking in a variety of areas of contemporary philosophical inquiry. It also briefly clarifies the way in which my account can be taken as an addition to, and not in direct competition with, accounts of linguistic meaning: while it has important ramifications for our thinking about semantics and pragmatics, the account of sense and significance that I develop is, in principle, broadly compatible with more orthodox contemporary work on linguistic meaning from both Anglo-American and Continental traditions. But it supplements this account by grounding it in a deeper, phenomenologically robust framework that does not presuppose that meaning is exclusively linguistic, and that accounts for the phenomenon of sense-making that pervades not only our words but our very lives. The significance of significance is found ultimately in this depth of meaning.