

# Presentations and evaluations: A new look at Husserl's distinction between objectifying and non-objectifying acts

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## Abstract

In this paper, I take a fresh look at Husserl's key distinction between objectifying and non-objectifying acts, which roughly amounts to a distinction between presentational and evaluative experiences. My goal is to provide a clear and unified reconstruction of Husserl's argument for the thesis that non-objectifying acts are necessarily founded in objectifying acts, a thesis that is highly controversial in and beyond Husserlian scholarship. In the first section, I reconstruct Husserl's view in the *Logical Investigations*, according to which only objectifying acts establish an independent intentional relation to their objects, and argue that it is justified by the positing function of objectifying acts. In the second section, I address two problematic interpretations of this view and, after criticizing them, I present what I take to be Husserl's core argument for his position. In the third section, I turn to the revision of the view of the *Logical Investigations* that Husserl proposes in the wake of his transcendental turn, especially in *Ideas I* and *II*. On Husserl's revised view, all acts are objectifying, including emotional acts [*Gemütsakte*]. This revision has led scholars to consider Husserl's view aporetic. I propose an alternative interpretation that dispels the purported *aporia*. I conclude with some

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remarks on the costs and benefits of my reading, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of Husserl's view in general.

The distinction between objectifying and non-objectifying acts is arguably the centerpiece of Husserl's theory of value, or, in phenomenological idiom, axiology. As a preliminary definition, we can anticipate that objectifying acts are, roughly, presentational acts, that is, experiences in which an object is consciously present to us. Perceptions, acts of imagining, and judgments are examples of objectifying acts. Husserl sometimes also labels them “intellectual” or “theoretical” acts to distinguish them from non-objectifying acts, which are emotional and volitional and, therefore, fundamental for our awareness of the value of things over and above their natural properties. Desires, hopes, wishes, acts of rejoicing, enjoying, and admiring are examples of non-objectifying acts.<sup>1</sup> In what follows I will use the expressions “emotional-volitional” and “evaluative” interchangeably, although a more fine-grained analysis would have to take the differences between feeling and willing into account. For Husserl, however, these different kinds of experience all fall under the broad category of *Gemüt*, which designates the emotional capacity of our subjectivity.

Despite a growing interest in the evaluative dimensions of Husserlian phenomenology and their normative implications, the distinction between objectifying and non-objectifying acts has received comparatively little attention. A quick review of the sparse existing literature reveals that even among Husserlian scholars the distinction is viewed as either aporetic (Benoist, 2004; Melle, 2019), or in need of revision (Drummond, 2005, 2010, 2013; Rinofner-Kreidl, 2013, 2022).

In the present paper, I revisit Husserl's distinction between objectifying and non-objectifying acts and correct some widely spread misunderstandings in the existing literature. I want to show that Husserl has a rather compelling argument for his thesis that non-objectifying acts owe their intentional reference to objectifying acts. The argument revolves around the underappreciated notion of positing, which, on Husserl's account, only objectifying acts can accomplish. I corroborate my reconstruction of Husserl's argument with some helpful remarks found in the second volume of the recently published *Studien zur Struktur des Bewusstseins* (Husserl, 2020). These texts, as I understand them, should not be read as stand-alone contributions but as integrations to more polished and official texts, particularly, for the topic under consideration, the Fifth *Logical Investigation* (Husserl, 2001), the two books of *Ideas* (Husserl, 1989; Husserl, 2014), and the 1908–1914 lectures on ethics (Husserl, 1988). In Section 1, I reconstruct Husserl's view in the *Logical Investigations* that only objectifying acts establish an independent intentional relation to their objects and argue that it is justified by the *positing* function of objectifying acts. In Section 2, I address two problematic interpretations of this view and, after criticizing them, I present what I take to be Husserl's core argument for his position. In Section 3, I turn to the revision of the view of the *Logical Investigations* that Husserl proposes in the wake of his transcendental turn, especially in *Ideas I* and *II*. On Husserl's revised view, all acts are objectifying, including emotional acts [*Gemütsakte*]. This revision has led scholars to consider Husserl's view aporetic. I propose an alternative interpretation that dispels the purported *aporia*. I conclude with some remarks on the costs and benefits of my reading, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of Husserl's view in general.

## 1 | HUSSERL'S TWO INTERPRETATIONS OF BRENTANO'S PRINCIPLE

The context in which Husserl introduces his distinction between objectifying and non-objectifying acts is the discussion of Franz Brentano's famous principle that all psychical phenomena are either presentations [*Vorstellungen*] or they are based upon presentations (Brentano, 1995, p. 61). Husserl points out that Brentano's principle is “remarkable” (Husserl, 2001, p. 129) and that it is “evident, that every intentional experience has a presentation as its foundation” (Husserl, 2001, p. 136); however, the evidence of the principle needs to be vindicated by a correct

interpretation of the highly polysemic term *Vorstellung* and the introduction of a more specific model of foundation. What complicates things is that Husserl does not propose just one interpretation of Brentano's principle, but two. The first interpretation is important in that it provides the descriptive framework for the second interpretation, but considered in its own right the first interpretation *fails* as an account of the evidence that attaches to Brentano's principle. This point needs to be kept in mind: what Husserl says in the context of the first interpretation must be considered as provisional. It is not his last word on the matter at hand.

Before we delve into the details of Husserl's interpretations of Brentano's principle, a couple of general remarks about his approach and his conceptual toolkit are apropos. To start with, Husserl's work in the *Logical Investigations* is an exercise in descriptive psychology; however, the subject-matter of descriptive psychology is *not* the psychological subject who has certain experiences and for whom, say, there is something it is like to perceive, judge, feel, and so on. Rather, the subject-matter of descriptive psychology as Husserl (and Brentano before him) conceive of it are the lived-experiences themselves viewed as robust objects in their own right.<sup>2</sup> The goal is, on the one hand, to provide a descriptively adequate taxonomy of different kinds of lived-experiences, and, on the other, to analyze correctly the different components that constitute a lived-experience, in particular, an *intentional* lived-experience or *act*. Intentional acts are characterized by the descriptively accessible feature of having an object to which they refer, something absent in other kinds of lived-experience such as raw sensation. To say that an act has an object, however, does not mean that the object is a real part of the act. If I imagine a centaur, this particular act of imagination is a real occurrence with a number of distinctive features that can be described, but the centaur is nowhere to be found *in* the act itself. While the intentional object is not part of the act, the act of imagining a centaur has a certain structure that distinguishes it, say, from the act of perceiving a tree or remembering an old tune. Centaurs do not exist, the tree I perceive could turn out to be a hallucination and the old tune I believe I remember might actually be some commercial music I heard at the grocery store. No matter how things stand with the actual objects these acts refer to, there is something *in the act itself* that qualifies it as the imagination of centaur, the perception of a tree or the recollection of an old tune. Husserl labels the inherent components of an act that determine what act it is *act-matter* and *act-quality*. Act-quality is, in Husserl's definition, "the general character of the act, which distinguishes it, on each occasion, as mere representation, or as judgment, as feeling, as desire, etc." (Husserl, 2001, p. 119, translation modified), whereas act-matter is the act's "content, which characterizes it as a representation of this represented object, as a judgment of this judged state of affairs, etc." (Husserl, 2001, p. 119, translation modified). As Husserl goes on to explain: "Quality only determines whether what is already presented in definite fashion is intentionally present as wished, asked, posited in judgment, etc. The matter, therefore, must be that element in an act which first gives its reference to an object, and reference so wholly definite that it not merely fixes the object meant in a general way, but also the precise way in which it is meant" (Husserl, 2001, p. 121). Take the perception of a birch tree in the garden. In this case "perception" would be the act-quality and the very specific, wholly definite content presenting this particular birch tree would be the act-matter. The tree itself is not *part* of the perceptual act. In the act itself we find all the sensory materials that present the specific features of the tree, precisely in the way that they are experienced when the act occurs. The act-matter of a visual perception, then, is not merely raw sensory material considered as such, but rather sensory material insofar as it presents definite features of the intentional object. Finally, act-quality and act-matter cannot exist independently. Their distinction amounts to a *distinctio rationis* drawn within the act, which alone enjoys independent existence.

Based on the distinction between act-matter and act-quality as two non-independent components of an intentional experience, Husserl first considers the possibility to interpret Brentano's principle as saying that one act-quality, that of "*bloße Vorstellungen*" or mere presentations has a special status: all other act-qualities would only obtain their intentional relation to an object by grafting onto a mere presentation, which, in turn, would be the only intentional act whose act-quality does not need to graft onto another act-quality in order to be connected to an act-matter. On this account, say, the act-quality "judgment" would only receive intentional reference to a judged object via the mediation of an act of merely presenting the object. But what does *merely* presenting mean? A mere presentation, Husserl explains, would be an intentional act characterized by the lack of *positing*, that is, *belief-*

character or, in contemporary idiom, existential commitment, such as the act of imagining or the act of merely understanding a proposition before issuing an affirmative or negative judgment.

Based on this assumption, Husserl considers two possible scenarios: “mere presentations” forming the basis of all other kinds of intentionality could be either simple, or complex. Husserl justifies the idea that mere presentations could be simple, that is, that the distinction of act-quality and act-matter may not apply to them, arguing that the very distinction only makes sense in order to separate the presentive component from the kind of intentionality of a particular act, say, the presentation of a piece of cake (matter) and the desire to eat the piece of cake (quality) in the act of desiring a piece of cake (Husserl, 2001, p. 130); however, if mere presentations form the basis of all other kinds of intentionality precisely because of their simple presentive function, then the distinction between quality and matter seems to be redundant for them. On this account, mere presentations would be presentations, full stop, that is, they would be nothing over and above their presenting function. There wouldn't be an act-matter that presents an object in a definite manner and then, in addition, an act-quality of *merely* presenting the object that the act-matter has already presented in a definite manner. And yet, on this account, mere presentations should be considered as full-blown acts in their own right, rather than mere components of full-blown acts. The special status of mere presentations would explain their ubiquitous presence in all other kinds of intentionality.

Alternatively, one could conceive of mere presentations as complex, that is, as unities of act-matter and act-quality as much as any other intentional act. In this case, the situation would be that while mere presentations are a simple conjunction of an act-matter and the act-quality “mere presentation,” all other kinds of intentionality would involve two act-qualities attaching to a given act-matter. The act of desiring a piece of cake would then consist of: “desire” [act-quality] + “mere presentation” [act-quality] + “piece of cake” [act-matter]. Both possible conceptions, however, lead to unsolvable difficulties.

1. If mere presentations were simple, that is, if they were not formed, like all other acts, by the conjunction of act-quality and act-matter, then this would create a strange imbalance, or better, a disanalogy in the genus-species ramification of intentional experiences. While all other act-qualities, such as perception, judgment, wish, and so on are lowermost differences within the class “intentional quality” and therefore can only form a concrete intentional act by uniting themselves to an act-matter, the act-quality “*Vorstellung*,” being simple, would continue to differentiate itself in the myriad concrete *Vorstellungen* with different content. For example, while the difference between “desiring a piece of cake” and “desiring a glass of wine” would be simply explained by the reference to a different act-matter while retaining the same act-quality, things would be radically different for mere presentations. “Desiring a piece of cake” and “desiring a glass of wine” are not two further specifications of the species “desire,” no more than “red flag” and “red strawberry” are two further specifications of the species “red.” By contrast, since the distinction of act-matter and act-quality would be unavailable in the case of mere presentations, the relationship between “presentation” and “presentation of the Pope” as opposed to “presentation of the king” would be the same as the differentiation of the species “color” in “red” and “blue,” rather than the conjunction of “red” and “strawberry” or “red” and “flag.” This would be odd, to say the least (see Figure 1).
2. If, by contrast, mere presentations were complex, that is, if they were formed by a conjunction of the quality “*Vorstellung*” and a particular content (act-matter), then it is unclear why this could not be the case with other qualities, too, such that, for instance, a judgment could be simply a “judgment of this particular content” without the mediation of a presentation to unite itself to a particular act-matter (see Figures 2 and 3)

In sum, Husserl argues, it seems that on the first interpretation Brentano's principle revolves around an equivocal use of the term *Vorstellung*. In the first part of the statement, “every intentional act is either a presentation...,” *Vorstellung* means a full-blown intentional act, that is, the conjunction of the act-quality

# Husserl's Interpretation I (LU V, §§22-31)

If mere presentations are simple, then MERE PRESENTATION = act-matter

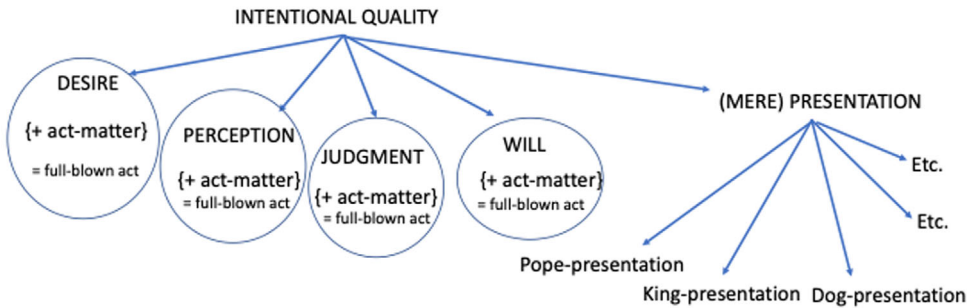
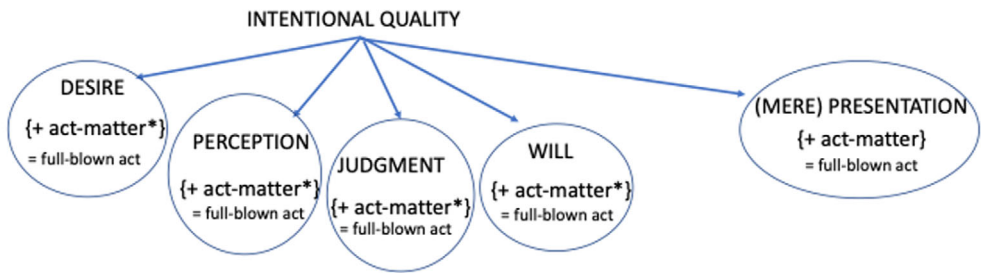


FIGURE 1 The specification of the genus “intentional quality” if mere presentations were simple acts.

# Husserl's Interpretation I (LU V, §§22-31)

If mere presentations are complex, then: (MERE) PRESENTATION  
{+ act-matter} = act-matter\*  
= full-blown act



But then why postulate: act-matter\* ≠ act-matter

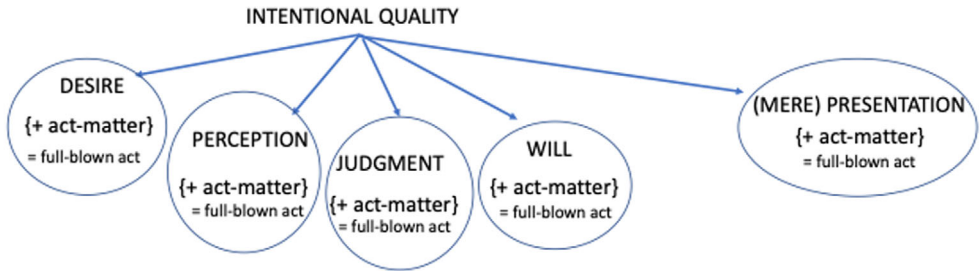
FIGURE 2 The specification of the genus “intentional quality” if mere presentations were complex acts and they were the necessary foundation of all other acts.

*Vorstellung* with some particular act-matter. In the second part of the statement, however, “...or is founded on a presentation,” *Vorstellung* simply means “act-matter,” that is, a non-independent part of a full-blown intentional act. But if this is what the first interpretation boils down to, then it fails to do justice to the undeniable evidence of Brentano's principle because it renders it confusing and equivocal.

Before we turn to the second interpretation, let us notice some interesting details in the way Husserl characterizes the rendering of Brentano's principle on the first interpretation. Right at the beginning of section 23 he provides a first sketch of what the first interpretation is supposed to mean, which is worth a full quote:

## Husserl's Interpretation I (LU V, §§22-31)

The following seems more simple and intuitive, but then presentation loses its special status:



**FIGURE 3** A more intuitive version of the specification of the genus “intentional quality” if mere presentations were complex acts and they were NOT the necessary foundation of all other acts.

We can, in other words, interpret our proposition as saying that an intentional experience only gains objective reference by incorporating an experienced act of presentation in itself, through which *the object is presented to it*. The object would be nothing to consciousness if consciousness did not set it before itself as an object, thereby making it possible for the object to become an object of feeling, of desire, etc. These new intentional characters are plainly not to be regarded as complete and independent acts: they cannot be conceived apart from the act of objectifying presentation, on which they are accordingly based. That an object or state of affairs should be desired, without being presented in and with such desire, is not merely not the case in fact, but is entirely inconceivable, and the same holds in every case. [...].

(Husserl, 2001, p. 129; translation modified, my emphasis)

Remarkably, Husserl introduces here the term “objectifying presentation” without further explanation. This term was neither employed nor defined in earlier sections. It is then plausible to interpret these lines as a kind of precis of what is going to be introduced only with the second interpretation of Brentano's principle, namely, the key concept of objectifying act. The descriptive model that provides the criteria to distinguish between two classes of acts, objectifying and non-objectifying, in the following chapter is already articulated clearly from the start. There is a class of acts whose act-qualities connect directly with their act-matters and there are act-qualities that require another *complete act* as their basis (which, in turn, is formed by the conjunction of an act-quality and an act-matter) in order to be able to refer intentionally to their object. The former class of acts is labeled “objectifying” and the latter is labeled “non-objectifying” in the following chapter. The problem with the first interpretation of Brentano's principle, then, is *not* that it introduces a class of acts whose quality has the privilege of connecting with matters immediately. That, in fact, is precisely what turns out to be the case along the lines of the second interpretation. Rather, the problem is twofold: (1) the first interpretation assigns this privileged role to an act-class that is too narrow, “mere presentation,” that is, acts of simple perceptual imaginings and acts of mere reception of a judgment without belief in the state-of-affairs that the judgment presents; (2) the first interpretation argues that the model just presented holds in every case; by contrast, the result of Husserl's analysis is that the model only holds for a specific class of acts, namely non-objectifying acts.

Thus, at the end of the first interpretation Husserl does *not* express his support for the view that *all* act-qualities can simply connect to their act-matters. By contrast, all he has established is that there *can* be other act-qualities, besides “mere presentations,” that connect directly to their act-matters. As he puts the point:

The particular structure [*Besonderheit*] of certain types of acts may require, by law, a mediation; it may be the case that some act-qualities can only occur within a complex structure [*Komplexion*], such that, in the act considered as a whole, they have necessarily as their basis other act-qualities that refer to the same matter, for instance, a presentation of this matter. Their connection to the matter thus has to be mediated. That this is the case always and everywhere [...] does neither appear to be obvious, nor probable.

(Husserl, 2001, p. 135, translation modified)

Let us then turn to the second interpretation of Brentano's principle in the Fifth *Logical Investigation*.<sup>3</sup> It is found in section 33 and it revolves around a completely different interpretation of the notion of *Vorstellung*. On the basis of *this* notion, the intuitive evidence of Brentano's principle is vindicated. By *Vorstellung*, Husserl argues, we should now mean “acts in which something becomes an object to us in a certain narrower sense of the word, one borrowed from the manner in which perceptions and parallel intuitions grasp their objects in a single snatch, or in a single ray of meaning...” (Husserl, 2001, p. 148, translation modified). In the remainder of the chapter, Husserl places a lot of emphasis on the difference between single-rayed intentionality and synthetic intentionality, such as the kind of intentionality that is operative in the carrying out of a judgment. The single-rayed intentionality that is usually expressed by nouns, however, can be also directed to whole states of affairs that were previously articulated in a synthetic, and thus multi-rayed, act of judgment. It is key to distinguish between nouns as grammatical items and names as logical items, that is, parts of speech that can function as a subject in a categorial judgment. By the end of his analysis, Husserl establishes that single-rayed acts such as perceptions, imaginings, recollections, and so on and multi-rayed acts such as judgments do not differ in terms of their act-quality, but rather in terms of their act-matter. In the case of perceptions, and so forth the act-matter is simple, whereas in the case of judgments, the act-matter is categorially articulated. The difference between seeing a red rose and judging that the rose is red is not so radical as to require a distinction at the level of act-classes, rather, as Husserl argues, if we focus on the quality that both simple perception and judgment have in common, we thereby circumscribe a wholly unitary act-quality, that of objectifying acts, whose common trait is to present their object directly and in some modality of being: positing or non-positing. Single-rayed perceptual intentionality retains a priority vis-à-vis the multi-rayed intentionality of judgment, such that, for instance, the judgment “this rose is red” must have single-rayed perceptual presentations of “rose” and “red” as its foundation; however, seeing a red rose and judging that the rose is red share a more fundamental feature that makes them part of a unitary class of intentional experiences: they both posit something as being. The objectifying function of the class of acts thereby circumscribed, however, does not limit itself to positional intentionality. When I imagine a rose, or merely suppose that the rose is red, I am engaging in a different mode of experiencing, but, crucially, I am still objectifying. To imagine a rose is to be explicitly directed toward a rose and to intend it in a specific way, which Husserl labels “non-positional.” What matters here is, so to speak, the kind of comportment that an act shows toward its object: both positional and non-positional intentionality are ways to qualify an object with regard to its being. Arguably, an act cannot have its object if it doesn't qualify it according to the fundamental alternative between positing and non-positing. “Object” [*Objekt*] is thus a specific concept that only applies to the intentional content of an act insofar as it receives a positional status. By contrast, *Gegenstand*, which is the generic German term for “object,” is a purely formal concept that applies to anything to which we can meaningfully refer. An imagined centaur, a perceived red rose, a remembered tune, and a merely supposed state of affairs are all *Objekte* qua intentional contents of objectifying acts, while, for instance, a raw sensation of red that occurs as non-independent component of my perception of a red rose, is certainly a *Gegenstand*, but not an *Objekt* in the specific sense.<sup>4</sup>

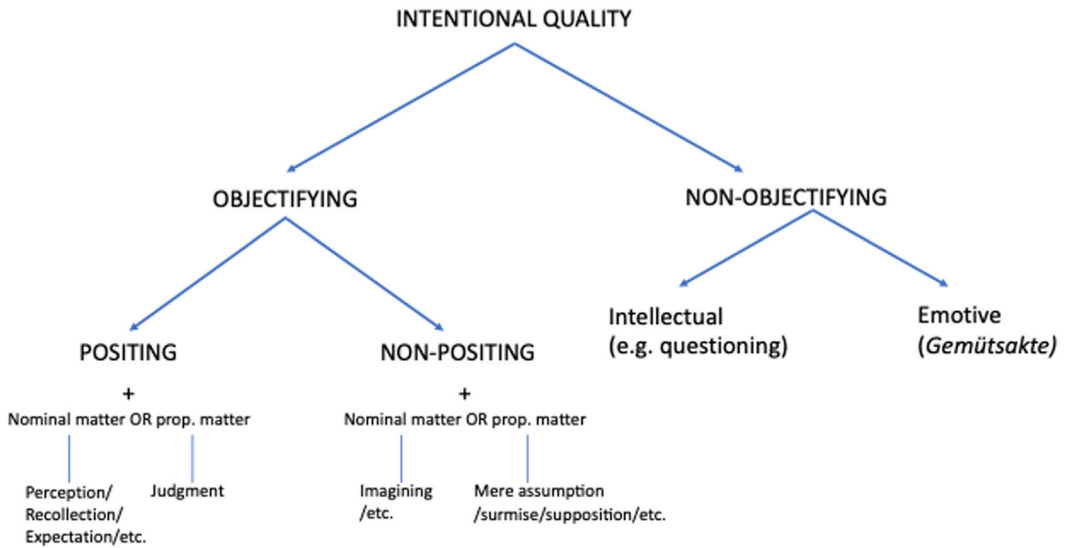
This is, then, the reformulation of Brentano's principle on the basis of the new notion of presentation and the ensuing re-classification of the genus "intentional quality" (see Figure 4).

Each intentional experience is either an objectifying act, or has such an act as its basis. In the latter case it must contain an objectifying act among its constituents, whose total matter [*Gesamtmaterie*] is individually the same as its total matter.

(Husserl, 2001, p. 167)

Surprisingly, in the final sections of the Fifth *Logical Investigation*, where the second interpretation is further articulated and defended, one finds very little on non-objectifying acts. Partly, this might be the case because Husserl had already characterized such acts, although not under this explicit label, in the context of the first interpretation and in earlier sections of the Fifth *Logical Investigation*, particularly in section 15 where he discusses the intentionality of feeling; however, what he does write is quite explicit and entirely consistent with the remarks I quoted earlier from the initial stages of the first interpretation: "The founding of non-objectifying acts such as joys, wishes, volitions on objectifying acts (presentations, assertions): here one act-quality has its primary foundation in another act quality, and is only mediately founded on matter" (Husserl, 2001, pp. 169–170). In a lecture on *Urteilstheorie* held just a few years after the *Logical Investigations* the same principle is restated even more clearly: "There are classes of acts that gain access to their matters, so to speak, mediately, that is, the matters are first of all conjoined with objectifying qualities and further qualities are founded in such objectifying qualities, such as joy, desire, will" (Husserl, 2002, p. 114). These formulations, as explicit as they are, still require some further elaboration before we can correctly grasp the relations that hold together objectifying act-quality and act-matter in an objectifying act, on the one hand, and non-objectifying act-quality and full-blown objectifying act on the other.

## Husserl's Interpretation II (LU V, §§32-43)



**FIGURE 4** The correct specification of the genus "intentional quality" based on the second interpretation of Brentano's principle.

## 2 | TWO PROBLEMATIC READINGS AND HUSSERL'S ARGUMENT FOR THE FUNDAMENTALITY OF OBJECTIFYING ACTS IN THE LOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

How are Husserl's claims to be understood? Let me first turn to two renditions of Husserl's view that I find problematic. Subsequently, I will reconstruct the argument that I believe supports his claim about non-objectifying acts only connecting to their matter mediately.

In an important paper, John Drummond offers the following paraphrase of Husserl's distinction of objectifying and non-objectifying acts:

For Husserl, a presentation can be a complete experience—a perception or a judgment—that presents the object in a determinate manner, that is, with a particular set of descriptive properties. Husserl calls such experiences “objectifying acts.” But the term “presentation” can also refer more narrowly to the content or “matter” of an experience that accounts for the object being presented in a determinate manner by that experience. The significance of this narrower sense of “presentation” is that experiences that are not themselves objectifying acts must be founded not on another act, but on a matter—a presentational or descriptive content—of the sort that belongs to an objectifying act. Put another way, then, the foundational claim states that any act founded on a presentation comprises a matter identical to that of the objectifying intention that presents the merely descriptive features of the object in just that determinate manner present in the founded act as well.

(Drummond, 2005, pp. 363–364, my emphasis)

Drummond restates his view a few years later using the exact same wording: “acts that are not themselves purely objectifying must be founded on a presentational or descriptive content of the sort that belongs to a purely objectifying act” (Drummond, 2010, pp. 445–446). In the same vein as Drummond, Sonja Rinofner-Kreidl writes in a recent contribution about non-objectifying acts: “Acts of this type necessarily require a supplement in terms of an intentional content (‘act matter’) that functions as a dependent moment within their unity although the very same content could also occur as part of an independent objectifying act” (Rinofner-Kreidl, 2022, p. 379).

Now, in light of what Husserl writes in the context of the second interpretation of Brentano's principle, it seems clear that for him non-objectifying acts are not merely founded on a matter of the sort (Drummond) that belongs to an objectifying act or that could occur as part of an independent objectifying act (Rinofner-Kreidl), but in fact doesn't. Husserl's claim is not a counterfactual claim, nor is it a claim about types or sorts of act-matters as non-independent components of an act. *Contra* Drummond, for Husserl non-objectifying acts are founded precisely on another act, namely, an objectifying act. To back his claim, Drummond invokes the notion of *Vorstellung* as mere act-matter in Husserl's first interpretation of Brentano's principle and he characterizes Husserl's view as one about types of act-matters (“the sort” that belongs to an objectifying act). This, however, is misleading because when Husserl says that non-objectifying acts need an objectifying *Vorstellung* as their basis he is clearly not referring to *that* notion of *Vorstellung* as mere act-matter, which is part of the first interpretation, the one that has been discarded because it renders Brentano's principle equivocal. Nor is the matter of a non-objectifying act merely a matter that could occur as part of an independent objectifying act. The foundation of a non-objectifying act is a full-blown objectifying act, whose matter is individually the same as the matter of the non-objectifying act founded upon it. Moreover, it is a full-blown objectifying act that, despite the intentional complication in which it occurs, *retains its mereological independence*. This second point is crucial and it stands in contrast to another line of interpretation proposed by Sonja Rinofner-Kreidl. In another paper, after presenting two evaluatively-laden examples of intentional experience, that is, witnessing a fight at the train station and tasting a sweet apple, she writes:

In both cases, according to Husserl's concept of foundation, a presentational or judgmental content is involved. From an ontological standpoint, such presentational or judgmental content could certainly feature in another context of experience as an independent experiential accomplishment, i.e., as act-unity in its own right; however, in the actually realized experiential whole it is entailed as a **non-independent moment**.

(Rinofner-Kreidl, 2013, pp. 69–70)

This view is re-stated in the more recent contribution from which I quoted above:

In the case of complex (i.e., founded or multiply founded) act unities, the objectifying function cannot be realized except by means of a presentational or judgmental content that is built into the act's unity as a dependent part. For this reason, the presentation or judgment does not occur as a full-fledged and independent act on its own.

(Rinofner-Kreidl, 2022, p. 379)

The idea that the occurrence of an objectifying act as the basis of a non-objectifying act would *modify its mereological status*, transforming it, so to speak, into a non-independent component of an experiential whole, however, stands in contrast with Husserl's explicit remarks on this issue. Since mereology (the theory of parts and wholes) is a chapter of formal ontology, its principles do not depend on the specific kind of objects under scrutiny. If an object is mereologically independent, that is, if it has all it needs in order to exist as a whole in its own right and not necessarily as a non-independent part of some overarching whole, then the fact that the object occurs in one context or another is mereologically irrelevant. A mereologically independent object will retain its independence in whatever context it occurs, and this is not a merely counterfactual claim (it *could* occur as independent, if the context were different), but rather a claim about an eidetic state of affairs that holds necessarily in every conceivable context. Thus, a whole is either mereologically independent or non-independent. Its factual occurrence as a part of another whole cannot, a priori, affect its independence. Therefore, if an objectifying act occurs as part of an experiential whole in which it provides the foundation for a non-objectifying act, it cannot lose its mereological independence just for that reason. It stays independent, but occurs in a broader whole, in which it is integrated. Integration, however, cannot mean loss of mereological independence.

Husserl states as much in a passage from a manuscript in the second volume of the *Studien*:

A content (matter) is not a moment and the position-taking a second moment standing on its side. Rather, “content” (matter) is what it is only as a moment of intellectual acts. Only by way of comparison, in the switch of intellectual act-characters do we find something that they ideally have in common, that cannot be separated in any way. The wish, the liking stand in relation to this “content” in a completely different way than the intellectual act-character. The emotional act is unthinkable without a content—in the following way: unthinkable without a full intellectual intention (full meaning with positional character, but mostly modified!). The merely perceptual content is not a determination of the emotional character in the same way in which it is a determination of the intellectual character. The perceptual content only belongs to the emotional character through the fact that it is an immediate determining moment of an intellectual act, which, in turn, is a **determining moment in the emotional act—but an independent one!**

(Husserl, 2020, p. 336, my emphasis)

For Husserl, thus, there is no such thing as a “situative amalgamation [*situative Verquickung*] of descriptive and evaluative aspects” (Rinofner-Kreidl, 2013, p. 69). The structured whole of a *Gemütsakt* qua non-objectifying is one in which the descriptive aspects are part of a mereologically independent objectifying act that, in turn, comprises an

intellectual act-quality and a corresponding act-matter. The evaluative aspects are grafted onto the underlying objectifying act, but at any moment they can be suspended or removed without any loss of unity for the objectifying intention.

Similar to Drummond, Rinofner-Kreidl invokes in a footnote the notion of presentation as mere act-matter that Husserl introduces in the first interpretation of Brentano's principle, but as we pointed out, that is not the relevant notion of *Vorstellung* in the present context. Objectifying acts are, indeed, the presentational basis (*Vorstellungsgrundlage*) of non-objectifying acts, but precisely as full-blown, mereologically independent acts and not merely as act-matters that *could* be part of such full-blown acts, or that lose their independence when they occur as the foundation for other acts.

But, and this is the key question here, does Husserl have something like an argument to back his claim? Why couldn't the act-quality, say, "joy" unite itself to a mere act-matter *qua* non-independent moment in the same way as the act-quality "perception" or "mere imagination" do? Husserl's argument is that non-objectifying acts are incapable of bestowing upon matters a *positional* qualification, that is, they lack the capacity to activate, so to speak, the intentional directedness of an act-matter by assigning to it a qualification as real or imaginary, merely supposed, and so on. Drawing again on the same text from the *Studien*:

Emotional acts are founded in intellectual acts. [...] An object-consciousness lies at the basis of each emotional act, each emotional position-taking is position-taking toward something posited as real or true, or to something that is presented, or, which amounts to the same: each emotional position-taking values an object, a state of affairs. "Content" is not something that could enter into a direct relationship with "pleasantness" etc. It is impossible for the emotional act-character to unite itself directly and exclusively with the moment of conceptual or perceptual meaning (abstracting from the intellectual positional character).

(Husserl, 2020, pp. 335–336)

Drummond's and Rinofner-Kreidl's attempt to interpret Husserl's view in a way that connects the non-objectifying act-quality with an act-matter *without* the actual mediation of an objectifying act-quality seems to be motivated by a worry of intellectualism. Drummond summarizes what he takes to be the problems with this view in another paper: (1) Husserl's descriptions might seem to suggest that "there is no genuine unity in the emotional act"; (2) Husserl's layered conception of non-objectifying acts is counterintuitive since "our experience from the beginning has an affective dimension, and this affective dimension is not experienced as something added onto the presentational" (Drummond, 2013, p. 250). These problems, however, can be easily dispelled without conceding too much to the charge of intellectualism by emphasizing that the structure of experiences revealed by phenomenological analysis does not need to be experienced *as* a structure in our first-hand, unreflective experience. It bears recalling that, as I pointed out in the previous section, Husserl's descriptive psychology is not about the qualitative aspect of the experience of a human subject. It may very well be the case that, for instance, it is psychologically impossible for a human subject to have experiences that are not somehow emotionally connoted.<sup>5</sup> In this case, there would be no such thing as an objectifying act occurring on its own, that is, without being part of some non-objectifying act. Nonetheless, from a Husserlian standpoint, which is interested in acts as objects in their own right, the distinction between the two classes of acts, as well as the foundational priority of objectifying acts would continue to be justified. It is also very plausible to argue that if we try to describe what it is like, say, to desire a piece of cake, no distinction between the presentational basis (the objectifying act) and the desiring intentionality built upon it (the non-objectifying act) seems to be immediately felt. Again, however, Husserl is not interested in the first-personal feel that different kinds of experiences may or may not exhibit. Once we accept the idea that our experiences are objects with their own structures and features, regardless of the fact that it is we as human psychological subjects who have them, then the legitimacy of a distinction or a foundational relation has to be justified exclusively in terms of these structures and features, as Husserl consistently does.

To conclude this section, it seems more pressing to understand why Husserl insists that non-objectifying act-qualities cannot graft directly onto act-matters. Regrettably, Husserl never offered a schematic argument for his view, but based on the considerations presented up to this point, I believe an argument for the foundational priority of objectifying acts could run as follows<sup>6</sup>:

1. All non-objectifying acts are intentional and as such they involve an act-matter and an act-quality.
2. In order to refer to an object the act-matter needs to be completed by a positional qualification (reality, fantasy, supposition, etc.).
3. Act-qualities of the emotional-volitional kind (rejoicing, desiring, wishing, hoping, etc.) do not provide such positional qualification to a matter.
4. The matter that enters into a non-objectifying (emotional, volitional) act must receive its positional qualification from another quality of a different kind.
5. Emotional-volitional acts cannot entail a positionally incomplete matter, because they are unfit to complete it. Therefore, they are founded on objectifying acts that provide an incomplete matter with its positional qualification, which is necessary in order for acts to refer to an object in the first place.

If one wants to disagree with Husserl, one needs to attack either (2) or (3). Attacking (2) does not seem to work. Let us recall that an act-matter is nothing for itself. It can only be identified through a *distinctio rationis* within a concrete intentional act. It is an a priori truth that an object as correlate of an intentional act must be intended either in some modality of being, and hence as real, or as unreal, such as the objects of fantasy. Consider, again, the example of a piece of cake. If we examine the matter of an act that is intentionally directed to a particular piece of cake, we can easily realize that the same piece of cake can be perceived, remembered, and so on or merely imagined. There is nothing in the sensory material that presents the piece of cake (its color, size, smell, etc.), that is, in the corresponding act's matter that determines automatically whether the piece of cake is being posited as real or merely imagined. Clearly, then, it is up to the act-quality to determine whether the piece of cake is posited as being (perception, recollection, etc.) or not (imagination, picture-consciousness, etc.). If we just take together all the sensory materials that present the piece of cake and think away the positional component provided by the act-quality, we do not yet have a full-blown act and hence an intentional reference to an object. It is, therefore, only *positionally qualified matter* that refers intentionally to an object. This might be the reason why Husserl, in his formulation of the second interpretation of Brentano's principle quoted above, insists on the fact that the *total matter* [*Gesamtmaterie*] (Husserl, 2001, p. 167) of an objectifying act must be identical with the total matter of a non-objectifying act built upon it. *Total* here includes the positional qualification provided by the objectifying act, that is, it signals that it is not just the act-matter considered as an abstract component of the objectifying act that enters into the non-objectifying act as its basis, but rather the act-matter as positionally qualified by the objectifying act quality, and then, by necessity, the whole objectifying act as such.

Attacking (3) does not work, either. In other words, act-qualities of the emotional-volitional kind cannot provide by themselves a positional qualification to their act-matter. Suppose you rejoice at a beautiful sunny day. That can happen in a context of reality, say, when you wake up and open the window in sun-bathed Italy, or in the context of fantasy, say, when you are fully absorbed in a daydream of a pleasant sunny day after 2 weeks straight of rain in Belgium. The mere act-matter "sunny day," again, does not refer to anything unless it occurs in a context of reality or unreality. You can rejoice at a sunny day that you are perceiving, remembering, and so on, or else at one that you are daydreaming about or that you are seeing in an old picture. If we try to think away the perceptual (or, more generally, positional) or imaginative (or, more generally, non-positional) context in which our consciousness of the sunny day occurs, the rejoicing has nothing to latch onto. One could reply that certain kinds of non-objectifying acts seem to carry a positional qualification with them. For example, while I can wish I were Napoleon, I cannot hope to be Napoleon. Hope seems to imply the actual positing of a future state of affairs, while wish does not. This, however, does not mean that it is hope as a non-objectifying act-quality that immediately provides a positional qualification to

its object. If I hope my favorite soccer team wins the championship, I am positing the corresponding state of affairs in a specific objectifying act, namely, future-directed anticipation and I am building the act of hope upon it. It would be a thoroughly interesting and fruitful task in its own right to study the compatibility and incompatibility of different kinds of non-objectifying acts with positional and non-positional objectifying acts, but it would far exceed the scope of the present paper. What matters here is that (3) in the above argument holds its ground and therefore the whole argument is successful.<sup>7</sup> In a nutshell: Husserl has established that non-objectifying (emotional-volitional) acts must be founded in objectifying (intellectual) acts because non-objectifying acts cannot provide a positional qualification to their act-matter and such qualification is necessary in order for an act to refer intentionally to its object.

### 3 | OBJECTIFYING ACTS IN TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE CONCEPT OF VALUE-CEPTION [WERTNEHMUNG]

In the years following the publication of *Logical Investigations*, Husserl developed his phenomenology into a transcendental philosophy, that is, he introduced the fundamental idea of *constitution*. Transcendental phenomenology holds that the intentional objects to which acts of consciousness refer are not something fundamentally foreign to consciousness, whose consideration falls outside the area of competence of phenomenological inquiry. Rather, the objects that we experience are what they are precisely as correlates of conscious acts, and phenomenology takes it upon itself to study the different modes of such correlation. The idea of a thoroughgoing correlation between consciousness and its objects implies that there is nothing in consciousness that does not have a counterpart in the object to which consciousness is directed. Husserl does not interpret this correlation in terms of a static mirroring, rather, “consciousness” names a complex array of operations and synthetic functions whose work *constitutes* the object, that is, holds it together as such.

In *Ideas I*, where the new transcendental understanding of phenomenology is presented in writing for the first time, Husserl states, apparently rejecting his foregoing argument in *Logical Investigations*, that “all acts in general—including acts of emotion and acts of willing—are ‘objectifying’, [i.e.,] ‘constituting’ objects originally” (Husserl, 2014, p. 234). The inverted commas attaching to the words *objectifying* and *constituting*, however, are a warning that this way of speaking is just a first pass at describing the state of affairs under scrutiny. In *Ideas II*, which was penned immediately after *Ideas I*, we find a more precise formulation of the same thought, by reference to a distinction between explicit and implicit objectification:

Theoretical acts are the ones that are properly or explicitly objectifying; to have an object [*Objekt-haben, Gegenstand-haben*] the characteristic grasping and positing attitude of the theoretical subject is required. Every non-objectifying act allows objectivities to be drawn for itself by means of a shift, a change in attitude. Essentially, therefore, every act is implicitly objectifying at the same time. By essence, it is not only built, as a higher level, upon objectifying acts, but is also objectifying itself according to what it adds as something new.

(Husserl, 1989, p. 18, translation modified)

Clearly, while Husserl has now learned to describe the phenomena of emotional-volitional consciousness in a new way, which involves specific objects, the key insight from *Logical Investigations* is retained: in order for an act to have an intentional object, a positing attitude, that is, an act-quality that provides an act-matter with a positional qualification as real or unreal is necessary; however, Husserl now argues that non-objectifying acts add something new to the total intentional correlate of experience and that this surplus, so to speak, is only accessible by means of a shift, which implements a positing attitude to replace the originally evaluative attitude of the non-objectifying act. The “something new” Husserl takes non-objectifying acts to constitute is what he calls *value*. The new idea, then, is that non-objectifying acts accomplish the constitution of new objects, that is, values. Values, however, remain

unobjectified, or better, only implicitly objectified in the simple execution of an emotional-volitional act. When we implement the corresponding shift of attitude, the non-objectifying (i.e., implicitly objectifying) emotional-volitional turns into an (explicitly) objectifying act and reveals, so to speak, the object that it has been constituting all along, that is, the value.

This new account has left scholars puzzled as to how exactly to interpret the shift at issue and the implications of the claim that all acts are, implicitly or explicitly, objectifying.

In line with his transcendental correlationism, Husserl urges us to distinguish two types of objects that correspond, respectively, to the implementation of an evaluative act *qua* only implicitly objectifying and the implementation of a theoretical shift that makes the objectification explicit and turns the evaluative act into a positing “intellectual” act: “We must correspondingly distinguish [on the one hand] the objects, things, qualities, and states of affairs that stand there in the valuing as [...] and, on the other hand, the values as objects themselves, the values as states of affairs [*Wertverhalte*] themselves [...]” (Husserl, 2014, p. 190). In an earlier section of *Ideas I*, Husserl sketches out the model he has in mind in the context of distinguishing between merely having an intentional object in focus in an actual *cogito* and apprehending the object, which is the distinctive way of targeting an object in order to carry out some categorial operation on it (distinguishing, relating, explicating, etc.). To apprehend an object is to turn toward it in the way we do when we set out to explore the object in thought. In order to clarify the distinction between mere having in focus and apprehending, Husserl proposes precisely the example of value-consciousness as involving a double intentionality, whereby a value is part of the full intentional content of evaluative experience but is not apprehended as such, unless the previously described shift to theoretical positing is implemented. The relevant passage is worth a full quote:

In the act of evaluating, however, we are turned toward the value, in the act of joy we are turned toward what is enjoyable, in the act of love we are turned toward the beloved, in acting toward the action, without apprehending any of that. The intentional object, the value, the enjoyable, the beloved, the hoped for as such, the action as action is only made into an apprehended object in a unique “objectifying turn.” We are turned to some subject matter in the course of valuing something, that co-entails, to be sure, the apprehension of it; yet it is not the mere subject matter but instead the subject matter of value or the value (about which we will speak in still more detail) that is the full intentional correlate of the act of valuing. Thus, “being turned toward a subject matter in the sense of valuing it” does not mean “having” the value “as an object” in the particular sense of an apprehended object, such as we must have it in order to apply predicates to it—and so, too, in all logical acts that refer to it. In acts of this kind, such as acts of valuing, we thus have an intentional object in a double sense. We have to distinguish between the mere “subject matter” and the full intentional object and, correspondingly, a double *intentio*, a twofold way of being turned toward something. If, in an act of valuing, we are oriented to some subject matter, then the orientation to the subject matter is a case of paying attention to it, of apprehending it; yet we are also “directed” at—only not in the manner of apprehending—the value. Not merely presenting a subject matter but also valuing it (a valuing that encompasses that presenting) has the mode of actualization.

(Husserl, 2014, p. 65)

The picture that emerges here might seem paradoxical, but it is the only one that simultaneously preserves the fundamental idea from the *Logical Investigations* about the necessity of positing and the impossibility for emotional-volitional consciousness to provide a positional qualification to an act-matter, on one hand, and the new conception of values as objects following from the transcendental reformulation of phenomenology, on the other. What Husserl is proposing is that when we are immersed in an emotional-volitional experience we do have values as part of the full intentional content of the object in focus, but our objectifying regard is not turned toward them. To echo terminology that we clarified in Section 1, in evaluative consciousness values are part of the *Gegenstand* we have in focus,

but they are not *Objekte* in their own right. In order for values to become apprehended as such, and thereby objectified, the evaluative consciousness must be superseded by a theoretical shift that makes the implicit explicit and draws out of the foregoing evaluative consciousness objects of a new kind, namely, the values themselves. The *apprehending consciousness of value*, that is, a theoretical act implemented through a shift of focus within an already occurring evaluative act is what Husserl calls *Wertnehmung* or value-ception. Let us clarify the difference with an example: suppose I am looking at the Mona Lisa at the Louvre in Paris and admiring its beauty. According to Husserl what is happening is that I am having an evaluative act, whose object is the painting hanging on the wall but whose full intentional content includes a value, which is presently un-apprehended and hence only implicitly objectified. While I am immersed in the evaluative appreciation of the painting's aesthetic beauty, this beauty is part of my experience, but it is not apprehended as an object. The object which is given to me is the painting itself as suffused with an aesthetic quality, whose correlate on the subject-side is not an apprehending consciousness, but rather an emotional mode of experience (a non-objectifying act-quality, as per *Logical Investigations*) that is entirely built upon the underlying perceptual objectification of the painting and shares its total matter, as we pointed out in the previous section. In this kind of consciousness, there is, so to speak, a presentment of objectivity, but no actual objectivity is seized upon. At any time, however, I can implement a corresponding shift of attitude and turn my regard toward the value itself, that is, the Mona Lisa's beauty (perhaps, the distinctive aesthetic quality of Renaissance art as masterfully exemplified in Leonardo da Vinci's paintings) and turn *that* into an object. The new apprehending act built upon the foregoing simple evaluative act is a theoretical transformation of the evaluative act itself that grasps attentively and in a positional-objectifying mode an object that the previous act may have entailed in its full intentional content but was not in a position to grasp as such. The *Wertnehmung*, or value-ception, comes with an entry fee: it can only have its object *qua* object by giving up the purely evaluative mode of the experience upon which it was built. We can either *enjoy* values, that is, evaluate objects and states of affairs that possess value, but then renounce values as objects, or we can have values as objects, but then we have to give up the simple evaluative mode of experiencing and transition to a theoretical comportment that posits the value as such and bestows objectivity upon it. We can't have our value-cake and eat it, too. Granted, the experience in which and through which values are originally given (i.e., in transcendental idiom, constituted) is evaluative, not theoretical experience. But *given* does not amount to *apprehended as such*, that is, *posited*. The experience in which values are originally apprehended and posited as such, that is, grasped as objects in their own right and made available for further operations of thought is theoretical, not evaluative experience.

To conclude this section and test the viability of the interpretation I just proposed, let us take a look at two seminal contributions by Jocelyn Benoist and Ullrich Melle and see how the difficulties they point out can be alleviated. In a concise contribution to an edited volume on Husserl and practical reason, Benoist rightly points out that the evolution of Husserl's position in the wake of his transcendental turn does not give up the foundational structure established in the *Logical Investigations* (Benoist, 2004, p. 167). He also argues, correctly in my view, that "the extension of the notion of objectifying act is admitted only through the idea of possible theoretical revisiting [...] of the act's content" (Benoist, 2004, p. 168). Benoist, however, sees a difficulty emerging in Husserl's lectures on ethics of 1908–1914. He argues that for Husserl, despite the difference between objectifying and non-objectifying acts, "it is legitimate to concede an objectivity (if not an object) to so-called non-objectifying acts" (Benoist, 2004, p. 171) in order to keep them within the scope of reason and be able to interpret them, too, as teleologically ordered toward intuitive fulfillment. However, Benoist focuses on a passage where Husserl writes that "evaluative acts as authentic acts are directed toward something, but not toward objects (*Objekte*)" (Husserl, 1988, p. 340). Accordingly, Benoist writes that evaluative intentionality is "affected by diplopia, it looks elsewhere, beyond its object and toward something which is not an object [...], it is barely intentionality" (Benoist, 2004, p. 173). For Benoist, then, Husserl's attempt to generalize the notion of objectification to include evaluative acts pushes the very idea of intentionality to its limits and revolves around the paradox of "simultaneously insisting on the fact that the evaluative intention refers to something that is not an object, and on the fact that it is nonetheless intentional" (Benoist, 2004, p. 174). The good is indeed, as Benoist claims echoing Plato at the beginning of his essay, beyond being, after all.

To a closer, and more prosaic look, however, what Benoist considers a paradoxical conclusion in Husserl's view can be clarified by reference to the distinction between *Gegenstand* (object in general) and *Objekt* (posited object) and a correct interpretation of the distinction between having in focus and apprehending. The fact that evaluative consciousness does not have value as its *Objekt* does not mean that it does not have it as part of its *Gegenstand*, namely, as part of its full intentional content, as the above quote from *Ideas I* makes clear. Evaluative consciousness is, indeed, teleologically ordered toward intuitive fulfillment, but when we are in the evaluative mode the *Gegenstand* toward which that teleology is ordered is not yet an *Objekt*. That does not make evaluative consciousness any less intentional or barely intentional, as Benoist argues. Being directed toward a non-apprehended, and hence non-posited object, does not make an act of consciousness any less intentional, unless one conflates apprehending intentionality and intentionality in general. The teleology of evaluative acts only reaches its *telos* when the theoretical shift and the corresponding objectification of value is carried out, but that does not mean that before the shift it lacked a proper object. What it means is that before the theoretical shift evaluative acts have as objects [*Objekte*] just the empirical things and states of affairs that their underlying objectifying acts make available for them. However, they simultaneously have as their full *Gegenstände* the values that can be grasped on the basis of those empirical things and states of affairs through the theoretical shift. In simple evaluation these *Gegenstände* are given but not seized upon. Their presence is documented in the sort of aura of value that suffuses the empirical things and states of affairs that constitute the only *Objekte* of evaluative acts before the theoretical shift. Husserl claims as much in a footnote right on page one of the volume of the *Studien zur Struktur des Bewusstseins* from which I quoted in Section 1:

This can only mean that only grasping, predicative positing, positing as subject, etc. “objectifies.” Obviously, this is not an act of liking [*kein Gefallen*]. I am “turned toward” an object in an act of liking—what does that mean? The object [*Gegenstand*] is objectified in the sense of posited (object [*Objekt*] of a turning-toward and positing) and thanks to the liking something is constituted in the object [*am Gegenstand*], but not grasped, posited. For that a new turning-toward is necessary. The liking constitutes, but does not posit.

(Husserl, 2020, p. 1)

In another concise paper on the subject, Ullrich Melle points out that Husserl's phenomenology of objectifying and non-objectifying acts ends up with two incompatible models for evaluative consciousness and never comes to an actual decision about which one better suits the things themselves. Melle argues that the new theory after Husserl's transcendental turn “now requires a revision of *Logical Investigations*' understanding of non-objectifying acts as act-qualities founded in objectifications. Now the non-objectifying act of valuing is a founded apperception and no longer just a founded position-taking. The founded apperception, however, unlike the founded position-taking, is not directed to the object of the founding presentation but rather to its own object” (Melle, 2019, p. 203). Husserl, however, at this point faces a dilemma. Either he continues to hold fast to his description of non-objectifying acts by analogy with position-takings, and hence as merely new kinds of position-takings directed at an object that is already fully presented by the underlying objectifying (or, in later terminology, doxic) position-takings, or he has to adopt a perceptual model for evaluation, which, however, would amount to an “intellectualistic theory of reason” (Melle, 2019, p. 204) and fail to do justice to axiological reason as a domain in its own right. As Melle writes at the beginning of his essay, “objectifying reason, the reason of the understanding, [would threaten] to engulf the non-objectifying types of reason” (Melle, 2019, p. 195).

While Melle is certainly right that “the different analyses and descriptions that Husserl undertook in research manuscripts concerning value-apperception are in no way unified” and that “they are full of problems” (Melle, 2019, p. 202), I believe that full appreciation of the difference between the two levels of evaluative consciousness, before and after the theoretical-objectifying shift, can dissolve the tensions between the two models. On the reading I proposed, which is based on the view Husserl articulates in his less experimental texts, in simple evaluation the

emotional-volitional act-qualities are best described as only implicitly objectifying and hence entirely dependent, as additional position-takings, on the underlying explicitly objectifying position-takings. The idea of *Wertnehmung* or value-ception, therefore, *cannot be used to describe simple evaluative experience in which values are given but neither posited nor grasped. To evaluate is not to perceive a special object but to perceive an ordinary object in a special, evaluative light.* Even if Husserl in some of his manuscripts (but not in his published texts) does sometimes use *Wertnehmung* for simple evaluation, the job of scholarship, I take it, is not to reenact his own hesitations and terminological imprecision, but rather to replace undisciplined with disciplined usage of a key concept, which, if properly applied, proves extremely fruitful. Value-ception, therefore, should only be used to designate the evaluative experience *after* it has gone through the theoretical shift that turns the value from mere un-apprehended *Gegenstand* to a fully grasped and posited *Objekt*. If this is correct, then the two models, position-taking and perception, are not to be understood as two rival conceptions of the same experience, namely, simple evaluation, but rather as the descriptions of two different modes in which evaluation can take place, first as simple, and then as theoretically transformed through the shift in attitude Husserl introduces in *Ideas I* and *II*.

#### 4 | CONCLUSION

In this paper, I revisited Husserl's key distinction of objectifying (intellectual) acts and non-objectifying (emotional-volitional or evaluative) acts and I attempted to show that *Logical Investigations* provide a sound argument for the distinction. Furthermore, I have argued that Husserl is not committed to any objectionable form of intellectualism and that the view according to which objectifying acts lose their mereological independence when they occur as parts of overarching non-objectifying acts is untenable. Moving on to Husserl's later writings, I have shown that the extension of the notion of objectification to emotional-volitional acts does not undermine Husserl's previous distinction and that it hinges on the distinction between *Gegenstand* and *Objekt* as well as the distinction between merely having in focus and apprehending in order to make full sense of the idea that all acts are either implicitly or explicitly objectifying. Finally, I have argued that Husserl's later view does not imply any particular difficulty for the intentionality of non-objectifying acts and that in light of the theory we find in *Ideas I* and *II*, it would be advisable to limit the usage of the notion of value-ception [*Wertnehmung*] to characterize evaluative experiences that have been transformed through the theoretical shift of attitude which turns values from merely implicit *Gegenstände* in the full intentional content of simple evaluation to explicitly posited and perceptually grasped *Objekte* in their own right.

To conclude, a few words about the promise of Husserl's theory as well as the costs and benefits of my interpretation are apropos. First of all, it is dubitable that the notion of non-objectifying act captures the full spectrum of our emotional life. It seems that some emotional-volitional experiences cannot be aptly described in terms of non-objectifying intentionality built upon an underlying objectifying intentionality. Melancholy, for example, does not seem to be aptly described as directed toward a particular object presented by an underlying objectifying act. This is a valid point, but one could reply that Husserl's ambition is not to capture the whole spectrum of our emotional life, but only of emotional-volitional acts. It is therefore perfectly fair, and even necessary, to develop different lines of description to capture dimensions of our emotional life that are not acts.<sup>8</sup> As for my interpretation, if it is correct, then it provides a coherent and paradox-free account of Husserl's view. Unless one believes that the discovery of paradoxes is the ultimate goal of philosophical thinking, this should be considered a benefit. I am aware, however, that there are costs, too. Limiting the notion of value-ception to a theoretically transformed mode of evaluative experience flies in the face of Neo-Aristotelian theories of emotions like Nussbaum's (2003) and Tappolet's (2016). It makes it harder, therefore, to recruit Husserl in the ranks of contemporary philosophers of emotion of realist-cognitivist bent. According to the proposed interpretation and hence, if it is correct, according to Husserl the emotions as simple evaluative experiences are neither perceptual, nor quasi-perceptual. What they perceive are ordinary objects and states of affairs as suffused with value, rather than special value-objects or value-properties in their own right. Granted, at any time simple evaluative experiences can be *transformed* into perception-like experiences or

value-ceptions, but only by renouncing their original evaluative quality and becoming theoretical experiences. Theoretically transformed evaluative experiences, or value-ceptions, are the only venue where values show up as objects and become available for further operations of thought. Before they are theoretically transformed evaluative experiences are intentionally directed toward values (they constitute them), but they do not posit them. Accepting Husserl's theory has a variety of consequences for metanormative theory and for our general understanding of phenomenology, its promise and its limits, but discussing these would far exceed the scope of the present paper. Its goal was solely to get Husserl right and defend the plausibility of his theory of objectifying and non-objectifying acts.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> This distinction is not entirely precise because for Husserl there are also non-objectifying intellectual acts, such as questioning or doubting. For the purpose of the present paper, however, I will leave non-objectifying intellectual acts aside and talk about non-objectifying acts as roughly equivalent to emotional and volitional acts.
- <sup>2</sup> This, of course, doesn't mean that for Husserl there *isn't* something it is like to perceive, judge, feel, and so on. Some remarks about *Zumuten* in various places of *Logical Investigations* could be considered close to what is now called phenomenal character or property as a necessary or essential feature of all (intentional) experiences; however, this should be the topic for a different paper and it does not change phenomenology's central task of describing and classifying experiences as objects in their own right. My gratitude to an anonymous referee for calling my attention on this issue.
- <sup>3</sup> For a full-fledged and informative presentation of Husserl's second interpretation of Brentano's principle and its implications for a theory of judgment and categorial representations see Mayer and Erhard (2019).
- <sup>4</sup> Of course, I could make the raw sensation an *Objekt* if I turned toward it an objectifying intention, for instance, in an act of reflection.
- <sup>5</sup> In later texts Husserl goes as far as to argue that no experience comes without an emotional coloring and this seems to have more than just psychological relevance. I address this important point in various publications, most recently in Staiti (2022, pp. 64–65).
- <sup>6</sup> I presented an earlier version of this argument in my Italian monograph Staiti (2020).
- <sup>7</sup> As an anonymous referee pointed out, a thorough discussion of this argument would have to address, for example, Max Scheler's view that intellectual experiences are not responsible for our positing of reality, which is grounded in drives and conation in general. Scheler's view is intriguing, and there would probably be ways to reconcile it with Husserl's once the deeper layers of constitution in his transcendental phenomenology are brought to light. On Husserl's later account act-intentionality is grounded in the passively unfolding intentionality of drives and tendencies, but that does not entail that objectifying acts are somehow grounded in non-objectifying acts. Drives and tendencies are not non-objectifying acts, in fact, they are not acts at all. I reconstruct the view that volition grounds our awareness of reality in a forthcoming paper on Wilhelm Dilthey, arguably the most articulate proponent of that view in Husserl's time and an important source for Scheler, too (Staiti, [forthcoming](#)).
- <sup>8</sup> My gratitude to Tony Steinbock for impressing the importance of this point on me.

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