2nd Annual Meeting Seminar in Phenomenology & History of Philosophy

'Phenomenology & philosophy in the 19th century'

October 19-20, 2013 UC SAN DIEGO  HSS 7077

SATURDAY OCT 19  9-9:15 coffee / introduction
9:15-10:30 Ben Sheredos (UCSD): Mental acts in Brentano & Husserl
10:45-12:00 Chad Kidd (Auburn): Husserl on Logical Form after Brentano & Frege
12-1:30: lunch break /walk to the cliffs
1:30-2:45 Michael Roubach (Hebrew University of Jerusalem): Husserl, Bolzano, & the notion of mathesis universalis
3-4:30 keynote: Pierre Keller (UC Riverside): Had We But World Enough & Time: Transcendental Philosophy & the Historical A Priori
3-4:30 keynote: Pierre Keller (UC Riverside): Had We But World Enough & Time: Transcendental Philosophy & the Historical A Priori
5-6:00 drinks  6-8:30 conference dinner

SUNDAY OCT 20  9-9:10 coffee
9:10-10:25 Michael Stevenson (Columbia/CUNY): Heidegger's Modest Fichteanism
10:30-11:45 Ingvild Torsen (Marquette): What was abstract art? (from the point of view of Heidegger)
12-1:15 Rebecca Longtin Hansen (Emory): Factual life & the rehabilitation of the sensuous in Dilthey & Heidegger
1:15-2:00: lunch / conclusion

organizers:
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Mental Acts in Brentano and Husserl

ABSTRACT (750 words)

Early 20th century historians of psychology identified Brentano and Husserl as proponents of “Act Psychology” (“AP”). Historians disputed other authors' status as members of AP (including Lipps, Meinong, James, Stumpf, Ward, and Stout). Likewise, AP's relation to other movements was unclear – historians disagreed over (a) whether AP represented a return to 19th-century faculty psychology and (b) whether AP was best regarded as forerunner to Gestalt psychology, phenomenology, personalistic psychology, or American functionalism. Further, historians never radically clarified the precise doctrines of AP. The following claims represent the core of historians' conceptions of AP:

(i) “The very datum of psychology is the unique kind of activity which constitutes a psychic event.”

(ii) Intentionality and intentional in-existence “become intelligible only when it is realized that psychical phenomena are to be thought of as acts.”

(iii) Mental acts are “dynamic creations of the mind.”

(iv) With his intentionalism, Brentano was “emphasizing the dynamic component of such psychological 'acts' as perceiving or judging.”

Roughly, the view seems to have been that when Brentano and Husserl spoke (as they often did) of “mental acts,” they were genuinely committed to viewing them as really acts, i.e., active doings or performances, as opposed to events which just happen.

Turning to the primary sources, there are indications that this sketch of AP misrepresents the views of Brentano and (early) Husserl. Brentano never directly addressed the issue – a puzzling oversight if this were his view. Oskar Kraus (editor of the 1924 edition of Brentano's Psychologie) explicitly rejected this reading, saying that Brentano's notion of mental activity (Tätigkeit) “is to be understood simply in the sense of an event, not in the sense of action.” Meanwhile, when Husserl in his Logische Untersuchungen raised the question of how we should think of “mental acts,” he declared that “In talking of ‘acts’… we must steer clear of the word’s original meaning: all thought of activity [Tätigkeit] must be rigidly excluded.”

Despite these interpretive difficulties, this talk will show that pursuing the question of whether Brentano and Husserl considered “mental acts” to be (really) acts yields valuable insights regarding the split between descriptive psychology and phenomenology, and raises puzzles regarding the historians' construct of “Act Psychology.” For on the one hand, I argue that Brentano's empirical psychology offers no support for viewing “mental acts” as (really) acts. On the other hand, I argue that in Husserl's mature phenomenology, the pure ego is indeed the mentally active subject who genuinely performs all
mental acts – yet the pure ego is not at home in any empirical science, being approachable only through the eidetic science of pure phenomenology. Husserl's early work in Logische Untersuchungen represents an intermediate position.

First, I review Brentano's conception of “mental acts,” arguing that: (i) Brentano's claims about “acts” are best understood as emphasizing varieties of unity in mental phenomena; (ii) Brentano provides no argument for thinking that such unity cannot simply happen, and must instead be constituted in an active performance; and (iii) in fact, Brentano rules out one plausible way of trying to understand such activity. Since Brentano holds that the mental “subject” just is an overarching unity of mental “acts,” there is no substantive sense in which mental acts could be viewed as done by or performed by a mental “actor.” There is no “actor” behind mental “acts.”

Second, I review Husserl's conception of “mental acts” in Logische Untersuchungen. Like Brentano, Husserl here denies the independent reality of a mental subject “behind” mental phenomena. Nonetheless, I argue that Husserl goes beyond Brentano by allowing us to clarify a sense in which some mental acts (unities of fulfillment) have a structure which is also involved in paradigmatic bodily acts. That is: Husserl enables us to articulate a conception of acts, considered in abstraction from the typical concomitants of bodily acts, which genuinely characterizes some mental acts. Further, Husserl's account of the interpretive sense (or “matter”) of mental acts clarifies a basic sense in which any instance of intentionality involves mental activity.

Finally, I argue that in his mature phenomenology (Ideen I & II) Husserl's conception of the pure ego and the polarity of all mental acts in fact constitutes a rich account of a mental actor who performs all mental acts – including, importantly, the complex mental acts involved in the work of phenomenology itself. The earlier notion of some mental acts as actions, considered abstractly re-appears in phenomenology's fundamental concept of motivation. The result is an important clarification of the active character of Husserlian, transcendental subjectivity.

REFERENCES (136 words, not included in wordcount):
This paper presents Husserl's doctrine of the 'force' and 'content' or, in Husserl's terminology, "matter" and "quality" of an intentional experience. It presents Husserl's view as an answer to problems that beset two prominent doctrines of logical form: the blatantly anti-psychologistic doctrine developed by Frege, and the then prominent psychologistic doctrine developed by Brentano. The logical form of an intentional content is understood to be the way in which an experience's elements are joined to yield an intentional experience, i.e., an experience that presents the world as being a certain way. It is widely recognized that intentional experiences have two aspects, which are indicated by the terms 'force' and 'content'. For example, "It is raining" and "I doubt it is raining" are two expressions which have the same 'content', but differ in 'force'. While "It is raining" and "The girl is crestfallen" have the same 'force' (assertion or judgment), but different 'contents'. The question pertaining to this distinction that Frege, Brentano, and Husserl address concerns how these two aspects come together in the constitution of the intentional directedness of intentional experience to its object, i.e., in the constitution of the logical form of intentional experience. Frege holds that this directedness is constituted solely by the 'content'-side of an intentional act, completely independently of 'force'. So the fundamental logical form of intentional acts—the pure content that they express—can be formulated without consideration of the way in which this content is entertained by the subject, i.e., abstracting completely from considerations whether the subject asserts, doubts, or merely entertains the content without attending to its truth or falsity. Brentano holds that the directness of all intentional acts is constituted by a combination of 'content' and 'force'. So there is no conceivable way to articulate the logical form of an intentional experience without explicit consideration of the force with which the content is presented by a subject. In particular, Brentano holds that the force that pertains essentially to intentional contents is that of "mere presentation" or "mere imagination"—a way of entertaining 'contents' that abstracts from consideration of the being or non-being, truth or falsity of the content. Therefore, at the most fundamental level of logical form, there is no distinction, real or conceptual, to be drawn between the merely presentative force and the content of an intentional act. And the distinctions between the varieties of force combinable with varieties of content, which grammarians, psychologists, and logicians often mark, are actually distinctions extraneous to the fundamental logical form of experience. I present Husserl's arguments against both of these views. And I show that Husserl develops a conception of logical form that forges a path between the pitfalls of Brentano's and Frege's views, but which still maintains links with the wellsprings of correct insight in each. Like Frege, Husserl maintains a clear distinction between the 'force' and 'content' of an intentional act. However, Husserl finds a way to maintain this distinction without denying the mutual dependence of force and content. And so, like Brentano, Husserl holds that there is no real distinction to be drawn between the force and content of an act—one cannot cleave the one from the other without losing both. Yet, unlike Brentano, Husserl recognizes a conceptual distinction between the force and content of an intentional experience that construes each as essential, but sui generis elements, of intentional experience. I attempt to elucidate the possibility of Husserl's ambition to develop a develop a explicitly descriptive phenomenological doctrine of the 'content'- or matter-side of the essentially binary structure of intentional experience by extending Anton Ford's recent discussion of three varieties of generality. I argue that Husserl's concept of the pure matter of an act, abstractly considered in isolation from quality ('force'), is the concept of a determinable genus, whose species are further 'differentiated' only by the addition of elements from other genera (e.g., as in the differentiation of 'red' from
the species ‘fuzzy red,' instanced in this carpet). I conclude by indicating how Husserl's doctrine of logical form gives new life to the Fregean project of developing a completely explicit doctrine of the “conceptual content” of judgment, and how it expands this project to include the intentional matter of every intentional experience.
Husserl, Bolzano, and the notion of a *mathesis universalis*

One of the major influences on the development of Husserl's phenomenology was the work of the eminent mathematician, logician and philosopher, Bernard Bolzano. Yet as Husserl himself maintained, his phenomenology also represented a sharp break with all previous philosophy. In this paper, I argue that the break with Bolzano reflected divergent conceptions of the formal sciences, and specifically, very different approaches to the notion of a *mathesis universalis*.

The influence of Bolzano's philosophy of logic and mathematics is evident principally in Husserl’s *Logical Investigations*. Husserl asserts that the views presented in this work were "crucially stimulated by Bolzano" (*LI* 1:142). He also affirms the importance of Bolzano's influence in his 1913 introduction to the *Logical Investigations*, referring primarily to the treatment of logical notions such as propositions and truths-in-themselves in Bolzano's *Theory of Science*. This line of influence has been discussed in the literature.

But in these same texts, Husserl also points to some important issues on which his position diverges from Bolzano’s. According to Husserl, one important such difference is related to the notion of a *mathesis universalis*. In the third volume of the *Ideas*, Husserl declares: "My way to phenomenology was essentially determined by the *mathesis universalis,*" then adds parenthetically: "Bolzano did not see anything of this."

What is the significance of these statements? In what sense was Husserl's phenomenology determined by the *mathesis universalis*, and what was it that Bolzano, who had himself put forward a concept of a general *mathesis*, did not see?
Before assessing the role played by the notion of the *mathesis universalis* in the emergence of phenomenology, its meaning must be clarified. In the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl characterizes the *mathesis* as "including all *a priori*, categorial knowledge in the form of systematic theories" (*LI* I:178). There are, I contend, three main ways in which the link between this notion of a *mathesis* and Husserl's phenomenology can be understood. First, the historical context of the emergence of phenomenology is Husserl's development of the notion of a *mathesis universalis* in the course of his work on the foundation of mathematics in the 1890's. During the second half of the 1890's, Husserl also began developing his theory of knowledge, that is, phenomenology. Second, it could be argued that in the *Logical Investigations*, the *mathesis* provides the inspiration for the tenets of Husserl’s emerging theory of knowledge. Husserl's idea of pure logic, presented in the last chapter of the *Prolegomena*, suggests that as a theory of all possible theories, the *mathesis universalis* would also include theories about the basic notions of objective knowledge (e.g., the notions of concept, proposition, and truth). Third, it might be claimed that the notion of the *mathesis universalis* enables Husserl to develop the notion of the formal and the process of formalization, and to distinguish them from the notions of abstraction and generalization. This distinction, which, though crucial for phenomenology, has not received much scholarly attention, is articulated at the beginning of *Ideas* I. Specifically, the concept of an object is not something that is abstracted from given objects. Hence forming that concept does not require capacities that Husserl sees as psychological. The notion of the formal enables Husserl to construct a non-psychological theory of knowledge, namely, phenomenology.

It is, I will show, the latter understanding of the link between the notion of the *mathesis universalis* and phenomenology that is decisive vis-à-vis Husserl's
distancing himself from Bolzano. In *Formal and Transcendental Logic* (§26d) Husserl states that Bolzano does not distinguish between the formal notion of an object and the universal region of possible existents. Husserl is referring to Bolzano’s 1810 *Contributions to A Better-Grounded Presentation of Mathematics*, where Bolzano defines mathematics as "a science which deals with the general laws (forms) to which things must conform in their existence" (§8). This definition is very close to Husserl's characterization of the *mathesis universalis*. The main difference concerns the notion of a thing or object. Bolzano does not set out a formal notion of what an object is, but speaks of genera of things as the domains of the laws of mathematics. Husserl, however, takes the notion of an object to be arrived by formalization, not by abstraction and generalization.

I argue, then, that it is the lack of formal ontology in Bolzano’s thought that renders his position inadequate as a basis for a theory of knowledge that can be strictly differentiated from empirical psychology. Phenomenology could emerge only from a *mathesis universalis* that encompasses formal ontology.
Proposal Abstract for SIPHOP 2013
Working Title: “Heidegger’s Modest Fichteanism”

The influence of German Idealism on Heidegger’s early project of fundamental ontology has been under-appreciated. This is perhaps largely due to the fact that the Idealists were interested in elaborating metaphysically robust theories of subjectivity inspired by Kant’s Copernican Revolution, while it is commonly believed that Heidegger intended to displace or even eliminate the category of subjectivity altogether. I believe, however, that Heidegger’s fundamental ontology can be profoundly illuminated by considering its relationship to the Idealist “ontologizing” of the Kantian conception of transcendental subjectivity. As is well known, immediately after publishing *Being and Time*, Heidegger seems to reassess his relationship to Kant and even re-appropriates him as a fellow fundamental ontologist, most notably in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. But, I contend, Heidegger’s specific understanding of Kant shares important affinities with the early Idealists’ perspective on Kant’s significance. In a telling footnote in the latter work, Heidegger admits that his insights into Kant’s importance were shared by the Idealists, but then enigmatically asserts that his reading “moves in the opposite direction from that of German Idealism”.

In this paper, I provide a schema for understanding the ways in which Heidegger’s conception of subjectivity is both profoundly influenced by early German Idealism, as well as the ways in which he rejects an essential tendency in the latter.

I begin with a discussion of Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre* as characterized by two different desiderata or tendencies. Both are responses or intended corrections to perceived inadequacies in the unity of Kant’s conception of subjectivity and of reason. Firstly, Fichte wants to claim that the Copernican Revolution requires us to understand subjectivity as absolutely *sui generis*. It is characterized by a pure self-relating and self-constituting activity (self-positing), which cannot then be understood as the activity of some underlying noumenal substratum. The whole being of subjectivity is the spontaneous activity of self-determination itself, so that there is a fundamental asymmetry between the being of subjectivity and the being of *things*. The second claim is that this activity, and rationality as such, must be understood then to be *self-sufficient* [*selbständig*]. This means that the basic demands of rationality, namely, for a concept of nature (the being of *things*) on the one hand, and for a proof of the reality of a moral order on the other, can be simultaneously fulfilled. The claims of reason both to know nature and acknowledge the moral law as absolutely binding and motivating of itself are *self-legitimating*.

I argue that although Fichte thinks these two desiderata of his theory are satisfied in one stroke through the theory of self-positing, these two claims are quite separable and distinct, and exist rather in uneasy tension with each other. My central claim is that Heidegger recognizes this tension within Idealist conceptions of subjectivity, and that rather than rejecting the important task of understanding the being of subjectivity altogether, what is decisive for his own re-conception of the latter is the desire to preserve the insights of the first while avoiding the pitfalls of the second tendency. Briefly put, Heidegger’s theory of finite human existence in *Being and Time* begins with the
fundamentally Idealist insight that Dasein’s mode of being, “existentiality”, must be understood as sui generis and ontologically distinctive, and never assimilated to the being of things (either ready-to-hand or present-at-hand). Furthermore, this distinctive mode of being is, in the essential Idealist sense, self-constituting. Dasein’s being as existentiality is constituted by its understanding, both of its own being and of the being of innerworldly things, and the ability-to-be [Seinkönnen] to which its understanding essentially amounts.

In his interpretation of Kant, Heidegger locates this self-constituting structure in Kant’s faculty of productive imagination, which was the key locus for Fichte and the early Schelling as well, as the so-called “common root” and as the faculty of the “self-forming of Dasein’s transcendence”. In this paper I demonstrate the structural isomorphism between Heidegger’s Idealist conception of the role of transcendental imagination and what he calls Verstehen in Being and Time.

But the claim of the self-constituting character of subjectivity becomes divorced from the further Idealist claim of self-sufficiency, and herein, I believe, lies Heidegger’s original contribution to and correction of the classical tradition. As Heidegger says in the famous formulation in Being and Time, while the being of entities depends on Dasein and its understanding, entities themselves do not. Heidegger restores the equally essential moments of receptivity, finitude, and dependence on things which Fichte had wanted to explain away. Dasein’s understanding is of course fundamentally a “thrown” understanding. But this does not mean that the concept of Selbständigkeit is eliminated altogether either. In fact, it importantly reemerges in Division II, not as an essential characteristic of Dasein’s being, but rather as a standing existentiell possibility, namely the possibility of “authentically being-a-self” in “anticipatory resoluteness”.
What Was Abstract Art? (From the Point of View of Heidegger)

The overarching goal of this paper is to answer the question “What is modernist art, according to Heidegger’s philosophy of art?” In order to understand the question and begin to answer it, I suggest comparing Heidegger’s position to Hegel’s, since the two appear structurally similar and since Heidegger is explicitly indebted to Kant and the Post-Kantian legacy in aesthetics, which he thinks culminates with Hegel’s aesthetics and its declaration that art has reached an end half a century before modernism develops as a movement in art.

This paper borrows its title from a paper by Robert Pippin, which sets out to articulate the “logic” of Hegel’s philosophical history of art in order to answer the question what abstract art could be, from Hegel’s point of view. The paper aims to answer the same question, but from the point of view of Heidegger. I make use of Pippin’s work not merely for the sake of comparison, but because situating Heidegger’s philosophy of art in relation to Hegel in particular is necessary in order to articulate the “logic” of Heidegger’s understanding of art, which is also importantly historical. The body of the paper is devoted to articulating Heidegger’s philosophical project in relation to Hegel’s; on that basis, I argue that abstract art has the potential to play an important role on Heideggerian grounds. Unlike the Hegelian view argued for by Pippin, modernist art should not be understood as a supplement to the project of self-realization and self-determination that characterizes freedom as it is lived in high modernity, but rather as a disruptive event that could potentially, hopefully, challenge the constraining instrumentalist mindset that characterizes what Heidegger designates the nihilist, technological era of the last century.

My paper has four sections. In section I, I introduce abstract art as a problem for Hegel’s and Heidegger’s respective thinking about art. Section II makes use of four features that Pippin uses to articulate the logic of Hegel’s thought as a contrast, in order to bring out the logic intrinsic to Heidegger’s treatment of art. Section III uses the former account to make sense of Heidegger’s many scattered remarks about abstraction and argues for there being space to grant abstract art a positive role on Heideggerian grounds. In section IV I try to fill this theoretical space with some concrete content, by offering brief interpretation of Heidegger’s engagement with two modernist artists, Paul Klee and Eduardo Chillida.
Bibliography


--- *Besinnung* (GA 66), Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1997


Factual Life and the Rehabilitation of the Sensuous
in Dilthey and Heidegger

In his article, “Heidegger’s ‘Appropriation’ of Dilthey before Being and Time,” Robert Scharff argues that we have failed to appropriate Heidegger’s thought fully because we have not developed an adequate account of his relation to Dilthey. Drawing from Heidegger’s early Freiburg lectures, Scharff presents a provocative interpretation in which he argues that Dilthey was even more important to the young Heidegger than Husserl and that “the Dilthey appropriation taught the young Heidegger how to philosophize.” Yet while Dilthey’s significance for Heidegger’s early thought is indisputable, Heidegger’s turn to art is considered a move away from his early thought and his appropriation of Dilthey. In this paper I argue that Dilthey’s significance for Heidegger’s thought extends beyond his early Freiburg lectures by examining how the problem of factual life requires a rehabilitation of the sensuous that compels both thinkers to take up poetry. In particular, I trace the problem of facticity through Dilthey’s and Heidegger’s treatments of the poet Hölderlin to demonstrate (1) how these thinkers’ attempts to interpret life from out of itself rely upon poetry and (2) how this relation to poetry develops a new approach to both phenomenology and aesthetics.

Dilthey’s and Heidegger’s treatment of the problem of factual life describes the need for philosophy to engage sensuous phenomena in its complexity and historicity without reducing it to concepts. The term ‘facticity’ describes the incomprehensibility of lived experience, or its resistance to conceptualization, which is nonetheless given in a concrete and tangible way. Facticity denotes the qualitative characteristics of experience as well as its givenness in terms of the here and now, the very concrete particularity of experience, its thisness. This qualitative particularity eludes abstraction and thus cannot be subsumed into concepts. Moreover, for Dilthey life provides both the ground for and limit of thought. As we are always within life, we can never get beyond it to analyze it from the outside. We are always caught up within it. Philosophizing from the standpoint of life thus problematizes philosophical method, which Heidegger notes in Phenomenology of Intuition and Expression. Dilthey’s description of factual life reveals the need for a new approach to philosophy. For Dilthey and Heidegger, poetry plays this role by articulating life without abstract concepts and in a manner that can preserve the facticity of life, i.e. its qualitative characteristics and contextuality as well as our participation in it.

Dilthey’s and Heidegger’s accounts of poetry describe how art is factual and entangled in the world, not simply a representation of the world or ideas impressed onto sensuous material. In bringing Dilthey’s aesthetics into conversation with Heidegger’s philosophy of art through factual life, my paper explores how this dialogue transforms the history of German aesthetics and creates an approach to phenomenology that emphasizes the sensuous.

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2 According to Heidegger Dilthey’s thought pursued the “ultimate philosophical motive: to interpret life from out of itself, primordially.” See Heidegger, Phenomenology of Intuition and Expression, trans. by Tracy Colony, (London: Continuum, 2010), 119.
3 In his Imagination of the Poet: Elements for a Poetics (1887), Dilthey describes facticity as a “surplus” and ascribes it to poetry as well as to life. The surplus of facticity describes not only the felt aspect of lived experience,

4 Scholars have treated Dilthey’s aesthetics as peripheral to his philosophy, whereas Makkreel considers Dilthey’s aesthetics to be central in the formation and development of his philosophy. Rudolf A. Makkreel has argued, Dilthey’s aesthetic theory does not simply exemplify his theory of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, his aesthetics transforms his way of philosophizing. See Makkreel, *Dilthey: Philosopher of the Human Studies* (New Jersey: Princeton, 1975). Also see Giovanni Matteucci, *Dilthey: Das Ästhetische als Relation* (Würtzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004).