Husserl on Impersonal Propositions

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Abstract. The young Edmund Husserl stressed that the success of his philosophy hinged upon his ability to determine the subject and the predicate of impersonal propositions and their expressions, such as 'It is raining'. This essay accordingly investigates the tenability of Husserl's early thought, by executing the first study of his analysis of impersonal propositions from the late 1890s. This examination reshapes our understanding of the inception of phenomenology in two ways. First, Husserl pinpoints the subject by outlining why impersonal expressions are employed during communication. This contravenes interpretations of the early Husserl as uninterested in intersubjectivity. Second, by studying how Husserl determines the predicate by investigating existential propositions, I show that Husserl , in the late 1890s, came to his final view on the concept of being.
Keywords: Existential propositions, judgment, intersubjectivity, communication, impersonal propositions, descriptive psychology

Husserlis apie beasmenius teiginius

Santrauka. Jaunystėje Edmundas Husserlis pabrėžė, kad jo filosofijos sėkmė priklauso nuo jo gebėjimo nustatyti beasmenių teiginių bei jų išraiškų, tokių kaip „Lyja", veiksnį ir tarinį. Taigi šiame straipsnyje analizuojamas Husserlio ankstyvosios minties pagrįstumas, remiantis jo pirmuoju beasmenių teiginių tyrimu, atliktu XIX a. paskutinio dešimtmečio pabaigoje. Šis tyrimas dviem būdais keičia mūsų suvokimą apie fenomenologijos pradžią. Pirma, Husserlis veiksnį nustato apžvelgdamas, kodėl komunikacijoje pasitelkiami beasmeniai teiginiai. Tai kertasi su ankstyvojo Husserlio interpretacijomis, pagal kurias jam nebuvęs įdomus intersubjektyvumas. Antra, išnagrinėjus, kaip Husserlis nustato tarinį tirdamas egzistavimo teiginius, atskleidžiama, jog XIX a. paskutinio dešimtmečio pabaigoje Husserlis suformavo savo galutinį požiūrį į būties sąvoką.
Pagrindiniai žodžiai: egzistavimo teiginiai, intersubjektyvumas, komunikacija, teiginys, beasmeniai teiginiai, aprašomoji psichologija

1. Introduction

In his seminal 1901 *Logical Investigations* (hereafter – LU) and in manuscripts from that time period, Edmund Husserl develops his theory of judgment via a critique of Franz Brentano. Brentano infamously claimed that all judgments are existential. For Brentano, judgments are a stance-taking with regards to the existence of the presented object. I execute a judgment once I accept or reject a simple or complex presented referent and thereby make a claim regarding its existence or non-existence.[1] In contrast, Husserl observes that *all* acts involve a stance taking towards or positing of the existence of the intended object (Hua XIX: 429–430/1970: 121).[2]

Accordingly, that which distinguishes judgments from simpler single rayed intentions cannot be that the former affirms the latter. Rather, Husserl concludes that the defining feature of judgments is that they are categorical. A foundational tenet of Husserl's theory of judgment is that all judgments ascribe a predicate of the subject (Mat II: 174. See Ierna 2008: 58–65; Moran 2000). In other words, categorical (*kategorial*) judgments express categorical (*kategorisch*) propositions.

Even though Husserl's account of judgments seems slightly more convincing to the contemporary phenomenological eye, Brentano's theory was enticing in his day, because it allowed for him to solve a difficulty that has always plagued the theory of judgment. Specifically, this difficulty concerns how we can understand the expression of 'impersonal propositions' or so-called 'impersonalia'. The defining feature of these linguistic expressions, which I call impersonal expressions, is that they have predicates, but appear to lack subjects. To provide some examples, common impersonal expressions would be, in English, 'It is raining', and 'It is snowing' and in German, "*Es regnet*", and, "*Es schneit*". These impersonal linguistic expressions respectively express the same impersonal logical propositions or *Sätze*.

On the basis of his claim that all judgments are existential, Brentano can easily conclude that the corresponding proposition of the impersonal linguistic expression, 'It is raining', is simply an affirmation of the subject, rain. Robin Rollinger writes, "the Brentanian view [was] that subjectless propositions (also called 'impersonalia'), such as 'It is raining', are equivalent to existential ones" (Rollinger 2003: 210. See also Peter Varga 2016: 230–240).[3] Husserl's theory, in contrast, seems unable to account for these

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[1] Brentano writes, "What distinguishes the case, where I not only present, but also judge? – Here there is added to the presentation, a second relation to the presented object, that of affirming or rejecting" (Brentano 1889: 15/1902: 14). See also, Brentano 1874: 266–289/1989:156–172; Mat II: 155; Ierna 2008: 52–55; Simons 1987: 27.

[2] All references to Husserl's works are made following the style of Husserlian scholarship. "Hua" refers to Husserliana– the complete works project (ongoing) of Edmund Husserl, published by The Husserl Archives, KU Leuven. Similarly, "Mat" refers to the Materialien, which are companions to the Husserliana. Quotes from the *Logical Investigations* always come from the First Edition, published in Hua XIX. I provide references to the corresponding English translation where available following the German pagination.

[3] Anton Marty, clearly under the influence of Brentano, puts forward a very similar thesis in his 1884 essays. Marty argues that impersonal statements are the expressions of judgments, where something is simply affirmed or rejected – that is, recognized as existent or as non-existent. I especially recommend the reader to examine the first article of the three. One should also note that this conclusion was already proposed by Franz Miklosich in his 1883 text.

linguistic expressions. If impersonal linguistic expressions and their corresponding meant propositions actually do lack subjects, as appears to be the case, a central contention of Husserl's theory of judgment – that all judgments ascribe a predicate to a subject – would be wrong. If Husserl's project is to succeed, he must uncover the meant subject of such meant impersonal propositions or provide another way to understand them.

The early Husserl was well aware of the importance of the enigma of the impersonal 'it' for his philosophy. He wrote that discovering the subject of the impersonal proposition, "is not only a mere question regarding grammatical interpretation. We are concerned here with a fundamental question of logic and descriptive psychology" (Mat I: 207–208). Husserl emphasized that the success or failure of his descriptive science hinged upon his answer to the difficulty of impersonal propositions.[4] As Varga writes, "the challenge posed by subjectless sentences remains for any philosophy that, akin to Early Phenomenology, harbors the ambition of establishing a descriptive philosophical science of consciousness" (Varga 2016: 234).

Despite the fact that the problem of impersonalia poses a critical challenge to the project of LU – to establish a theory of judgment that can stand in contrast to and as more accurate than Brentano's – there is not a single comment throughout the text that addresses impersonal expressions. The contemporary literature, following Husserl's lead, has also frequently overlooked the importance of the difficulties concerning impersonal expressions and meant propositions for the early Husserl (See Rollinger 1993: 210, 1999: 227–228; Staiti 2015: 818; Varga 2016). Yet, in lectures and manuscripts Husserl composed both directly before and after LU, he did outline an extensive theory of impersonal propositions and expressions and thereby revealed what the meant subject and meant predicate of these linguistic expressions are. As this often-overlooked tenet of Husserl's philosophy is – as Husserl himself states –critical for the success of his thought and indeed, for the phenomenology of meaning, judgment, and knowledge as a whole, the objective of this essay is to provide the first study, which is exclusively dedicated to analyzing Husserl's early observations about impersonal propositions and their linguistic expressions.

By executing this analysis, I will be able to further show that the evolution of Husserl's philosophy can be reinterpreted in light of his insights about impersonalia from his early manuscripts and lectures. In sections two and three, I discuss Husserl's description of the meant logical subject of the linguistic impersonal expression. I disclose that Husserl's method for analyzing impersonal expressions shows that he was – contra some currently popular interpretations (Cf. Buungard 2010: 368; Carr 2016: 161) – deeply concerned with examining intersubjectivity and communication in his early writings. Specifically, I reveal how Husserl substantiates his observations about the meaning of impersonalia by studying the everyday communicative use of impersonal expressions. Via that investigation, in fact, Husserl ultimately concludes that language has its genetic origin in

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[4] Husserl writes that "In the opinion of most current logicians, the theory of [existential and impersonal] propositions is factically the battlefield, where the fundamental questions of the descriptive psychology of judgments are decided" (Mat I: 208).

communication. In section four, I examine Husserl's pinpointing of the meant logical predicate of the impersonal logical proposition. I thereby show that Husserl had, in the late 1890s, come to his final view on the concept of being. Finally, in the conclusion, I reveal that, even though Husserl's theory may not be entirely convincing, his account of these anomalous expressions forces us to reconsider the evolution of his thought. I reveal how Husserl, when confronted with the monumental problem of impersonalia, reacted by stretching, if not breaking the bounds of his early philosophy and that it was out of these fissures in his descriptive psychology that his phenomenology emerged.[5]

2. Subject

Husserl's analysis of the logical subject of the impersonalia assumes conclusions about the relationship between language and meaning, which were developed previously, but first systematically laid out in LU. The initial guiding tenet of Husserl's examination here is that there is not a one to one relationship between logical meanings and grammatical linguistic expressions. Different (grammatically structured) words can express the same logical proposition and the same words can express different logical propositions (Hua XIX: 48–51/1970: 194–196. See Byrne 2017b). Even more radically, he believes that the logical meaning of judgments is not essentially tied to language. I can meaningfully judge without employing any linguistic signs at all via a "wordless recognition" (*wortlose Erkennen*) (Hua XIX: 592/1970: 223; Cf. Byrne 2021a: 19–20, 28–29).On the basis of this recognized distinction between logical thought and grammatical language, Husserl asserts, in the Fourth Investigation, that meaning and language have different structures, that is, different forms. There are grammatical forms, such as the noun and the predicate. And there are meaning or logical forms, such as the nominal and the predicative forms (Hua XIX: 310–316/1970:53–56).

On the one hand, Husserl claims that grammatical forms of the expression are often isomorphic to the logical forms of the meaning. We can conceive of the "grammatical distinctions as reflecting certain essential distinctions of meaning" (Hua XIX: 313/1970:54). On the other hand, these forms do not always have to parallel each other. There can be a difference between the grammatical forms of the expression and the logical forms of the proposition. *So long as the expression does not fall apart, whenever the grammatical forms are misaligned with the logical forms, the expression is "inadequate" to its meaning.*

Husserl believes that the debate surrounding the impersonal 'it' and the subject of the impersonalia can be divided up into two camps. One camp believes that the grammar of the impersonal statement is aligned with the logical forms of the impersonal proposition and the other camp concludes that it is not. Husserl notes that scholars have often adopted the former position. They take the grammatical forms to correctly reflect the logical mean-

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[5] To be noted is that this article has a companion, which focuses exclusively on Husserl's descriptive analyses of existential propositions and their expressions (Byrne 2022). I recommend reading this current essay in tandem with that work, as they together present a comprehensive picture of Husserl's early perspectives on impersonal and existential propositions.

ing forms. These thinkers conclude that the, 'it', which is grammatically expressed as a noun, does have a nominal meaning. The expressed 'it' is not inadequate to its meaning, because of its grammar, but simply because the word choice hides the actually meant logical subject. By substituting the grammatically nominative 'it' with another grammatical noun, which customarily has the correct logical nominal meaning, the expression can thus become adequate to its logical meaning.

The scholars who have come to this conclusion; however, disagree on what actual subject is meant. Husserl outlines three ways other thinkers have replaced the expressed grammatical 'it' to make the whole expression adequate. First, some philosophers have concluded that the 'it', "here means 'something' (*Etwas*). 'It rains', then means, 'Something rains'. The subject here is left entirely indeterminate" (Mat I: 210). Second, the ancient grammatician Priscian replaced the 'it' with the nominalized verb of the impersonal expression, such that, "'It rains', means, 'A rain rains' or 'The rain rains'" (Mat I: 210). Finally, Husserl states that Schleiermacher, Ueberweg, Lotze, and Prantl all claim that the 'it' refers in some way or other to the totality of being (Mat I: 211). In this case, 'It rains', would mean, "The all-encompassing reality rains", a conclusion that Husserl explicitly calls laughable (*lächerlich*. Mat I: 211).

Husserl observes that all of these attempts to clarify or determine the logical subject of the genuine impersonal expression by replacing the expressed 'it' with another grammatical noun, "must necessarily fail" (Mat I:211). While these thinkers are correct to assume that the impersonal proposition does have a grammatical subject, they are wrong when they assert that there is some meant logical subject that is originally expressed by the grammatically nominative 'it', of which I am predicating 'to be raining'. In fact, Husserl believes that the expressed 'it' does not mean or refer to a logical subject at all. There is, Husserl affirms, nothing meant here that rains, snows, or burns.[6] The expressed grammatically nominative 'it' thus does not have (and hide) a determinate or indeterminate nominal logical meaning. Husserl even goes so far as to state that simply asking if there is a meant subject of the expressed 'it' is a senseless and futile task. He writes that, "for 'It rains', there is no sense [in asking], 'what is it, that rains?'" (Mat I:210).

In contrast to these groups of thinkers, Husserl asserts that the subject of the impersonalia can be found once one recognizes that there is a misalignment between the grammatical forms of the impersonal expression and the logical forms of the meant proposition. He concludes that the impersonal expression involves a grammatical category mistake. While the 'raining' is expressed as the grammatical predicate of the impersonal expression, it is actually the case that, in the meaningful proposition, the rain occupies a logical nominal category (Mat I:211–213). The rain is the subject, of which is ascribed

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[6] Husserl certainly does not deny the fact that, in particular cases, one could correctly understand, "the statement, 'it is cold' in the same sense as the statement, 'the weather is cold'; the statement, 'it burns', in the same sense as 'the house burns'" (Mat I: 209). Yet, this is only possible in the case of *non-genuine impersonalia*. For Husserl, the meaning of the genuine impersonal expression, 'It is cold', and the meaning of the non-genuine impersonal expression, 'The weather is cold', are so different from each other that one cannot be swapped out for the other without great distortion.

a predicate. Accordingly, the adequate impersonal expression would seem to start as, 'A rain is …'.

This solution, however, creates another problem. By taking that which was assumed to be the grammatical predicate of the proposition and claiming that it is the logical nominal meaning, there now seems to be no logical predicative meaning. While there was a hidden subject, there now seems to be a missing predicate. Husserl writes that, "The previous conundrum was: Where is the subject? But now it is: Where is the predicate?" (Mat I: 212).

Husserl's answer to this question (which I discuss in detail in section four) is most curious, as he claims that the impersonal linguistic expression actually expresses a logical existential proposition, which ascribes to the rain that it exists. As such, Husserl can at least initially claim that the impersonal expression, 'It is raining', can be made more (but not fully) adequate, by replacing it with the existential expression, 'A rain is' or 'A rain exists' (Cf. Rollinger 1999:302). Husserl writes that, "The attempt, which seems the most promising, is based upon the replaceability (*Ersetzbarkeit*) of the impersonal statement through the existential statement" (Mat I:211). On this interpretation, which Husserl claims is the "right answer" (Mat I: 212), the impersonal logical meaning, expressed, 'It is blazing', is the same as the existential logical meaning, expressed as, 'A blaze is'. This replacement is possible because, as Husserl exclaims, the meaning of the impersonal statement, "obviously possesses identically the same thought as the corresponding existential statement and this view rests on the fact that impersonalia are abbreviated existential propositions" (Mat I: 211). Because the impersonal and existential expressions have equivalent and in fact "identically the same" logical meaning, the former can be switched out for the latter. This replacing, which Husserl takes to be justified, allows for him to provide an initial, but not a final (or even entirely correct) account of the logical meaning of the impersonal expression: The ostensible grammatical predicate, which is often expressed by the verb (or gerund) in English, is not predicated of the 'it'. *Instead, the seeming grammatical predicate is the logical subject of the impersonal proposition, of which is seemingly logically predicated that it exists.*

3. Communication

This outlined interpretation of impersonalia is naturally controversial and raises just as many difficulties as it solves. While I discuss these enigmas and Husserl's solutions to them in the next section, it is important to show in more detail why Husserl found this view appealing. I discuss how Husserl, in his manuscripts and in his 1902/03 Logic Lectures, provides additional justification for his conclusion that impersonal expressions have "identically the same thought" as existential expressions.

Husserl's 1902/03 study proves the same point as his 1896 lectures, but works in the reverse direction. *Rather than claiming that impersonal grammatical expressions have existential logical meanings, Husserl demonstrates how existential logical meanings are often stated via impersonal grammatical expressions*. To substantiate this conclusion, Husserl interestingly studies the expression of existential propositions during everyday

intersubjective communication. Husserl affirms, in these1902/03lectures and in other contemporaneous manuscripts, that one can understand the nature of these meaningful expressions by pragmatically examining their use in intersubjective communication. To be certain, Husserl is not suddenly shifting his early position on meaning wholesale. Yet, he here does draw from and work beyond his insights about communication from LU to show how these impersonal expressions – despite their peculiar character – are easily used in intersubjective discussion.

Husserl begins to substantiate his insight that existential logical meanings are often expressed by impersonal grammatical statements, by discussing the reasons why we talk about existence in our everyday lives. We almost never talk just about an object's existence as such. He writes that in our discussions about existence, "It must be highlighted that often more is expressed than mere existence; that existence can be stated in the proposition, which contains more than simple existence-positing" (Mat II: 167). What is this 'more' that is expressed? Husserl claims that most statements of existential propositions have the pragmatic purpose of communicating that some object or occurrence exists "in a space, in a place, or in time" (Mat II:168). He writes these expressions communicate that, "The existent (*Existierende*) is here or there, in this or that context, actuality, givenness, or presence" (Mat II:168).To confirm this idea, Husserl provides one example where, in normal conversation, we speak about the existence of an animal. He writes that, "[W]e naturally mean that it exists on the earth and in the present, and even if we do not mean this, the thought is still linked to some terrestrial environment" (Mat II: 169).On the basis of these insights, Husserl asserts that "the most common class of existential statements … in the incomparable majority of cases, are concerned not merely to express being (*Sein*) simply, but rather to express being in reference to some context, [that is], in reference to a sphere of existence, which is already defined and known concerning its character" (Mat II: 168).

By working from these conclusions, Husserl can accomplish the goal of his study, to describe how existential logical propositions can be expressed via impersonal grammatical statements. He concludes that, in everyday communication, we almost always express and always can express the existential logical proposition, which addresses the existence of the object or occurrence in some sphere, via the impersonal grammatical expression, 'There is', or, in German, '*Esgibt'*, which also begins with the impersonal 'it'. He writes, "The [existential] 'is' can always be replaced by the [impersonal] 'there is' ('*Esgibt'*), where we speak of an object in a space, in a place, or in a time" (Mat II:168). For example, I would normally not state, 'The table exists in that room', but rather, I employ the impersonal and assert, 'There is the table in that room' ('*Esgibtein Tisch in diesem Zimmer'*).

To develop and improve this conclusion, Husserl digs even deeper down into our practical use of such expressions in everyday communication. He asserts that when I employ the impersonal, 'There is', to discuss the existence of the object or occurrence in this or that sphere, I often mean, but do not express that sphere. I frequently would not state, 'There is the table in that room', but rather just, 'There is the table', because the context within which I utter the statement normally makes it obvious to my listener which sphere I mean. Husserl writes, "In very many cases, this reference to this sphere, in which the object is located, is so self-evident, that it is not stated" (Mat II: 169). The

meaning of my statement is obvious to my listener, because the expression is dependent upon the context in which I utter it (Mat II: 169). While one might think that Husserl is here describing these statements as essentially occasional, it is more accurate to claim that he is rather trying to account for them as cases of – to use contemporary terminology – restricted quantification, although naturally his account is less than sophisticated. Simply, by turning to the situation within which the impersonal statement is made, my listener can clearly grasp which space, place, or time I refer to the object or occurrence as existing in.

Husserl cashes out all of these conclusions about intersubjective communication, to provide a concrete and common example of an existential proposition being expressed via an impersonal statement. Specifically, he focuses on elucidating, "meteorological existential-statements of factual life" (Mat II: 169), such as, 'It is raining'! Here, the existential logical proposition, which meaningfully ascribes existence to the rain, is – as most existential logical propositions are – stated via the impersonal grammatical expression that employs the impersonal 'it'. Moreover, in this case, I do not express the sphere within which the raining is ongoing, because the context makes it self-evident to my speaker what I mean. Husserl writes, "It is raining, naturally does not mean that there is, in general, rain, or that there is rain somewhere in the world. Rather, it means that it is raining, outside and right now" (Mat II: 169). In sum then, Husserl has shown how existential logical propositions can be sufficiently expressed via impersonal grammatical statements, by having described how 'It is raining', as a case of restricted quantification, employs the impersonal form to express the existential logical proposition.

4. Predicate

While these conclusions about intersubjectivity and communication show why Husserl found his view to be convincing, the discussion of his theory is not yet complete. As stated, Husserl claims that the impersonal grammatical expression is inadequate, as it expresses an existential logical meaning, or equivalently, an existential logical proposition can be inadequately expressed via an impersonal grammatical statement for pragmatic communicative reasons. The impersonal expression, 'It is raining', can thus be replaced with the existential expression, 'A rain is' or 'A rain exists', as those latter statements more adequately express my actual logical meaning. With this substitution, the original grammatical predicate, 'raining', is adequately placed into the grammatical noun position as 'Rain'. By switching the predicate for the subject; however, Husserl's burden counter intuitively shifts from determining the logical subject of the impersonal grammatical expression to discovering the meant logical predicate of the existential grammatical expression.[7]

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[7]   One might initially jump to the conclusion that Husserl is simply readopting Brentano's theory of impersonalia. Indeed, Husserl does conclude, like Brentano, that impersonalia are actually abbreviated existential judgments. Yet, because they have different theories of judgment, this conclusion means *fundamentally different* things for these two thinkers. For Brentano, when I utter the impersonal expression, 'It is raining', this does not mean that I am predicating anything of the rain, but rather that I am simply affirming the presented rain. In contrast, because Husserl believes that all propositions are categorical, he concludes that when I utter the impersonal expression, I am meaningfully predicating something of the rain, *where Husserl's difficulty concerns determining what is predicated*.

On the basis of grammar alone, it would initially appear as if the predicate of the expressed existential proposition is existence. When I state 'A Rain is' or 'A Rain exists', it seems as if I here mean rain as the subject of which I predicate existence. Yet, this cannot be the case. The difficulty with that conclusion is that even though the grammatical *expressed* predicate of the existential statement is 'exists', existence cannot be the real logical *meant* predicate. This is because – *and this is the critical problem* – Husserl knows that existence cannot be a real predicate at all. In line with Kant, he writes that, "Being is no real predicate. Being is no real part (*Teil*), no real side (*Seite*) of a real object. Being is absolutely nothing (*überhauptnichts*), which could be constitutive of an object" (Mat II: 165. See Hua XL: 69). As being cannot be the real meant predicate, the expression, 'A Rain exists', is inadequate. The expression belies the true logical meaning of the statement, which does not and cannot have existence as its real logical predicate. These insights in mind, Husserl's question can be more precisely stated as; When I express the words 'A rain is' or 'A rain exists', what is the meant predicate, which is inadequately expressed by the words 'is' or 'exists'?

Husserl can begin to answer this question once he realizes that the existential judgment is distinct, as it is (but is also more than) an identifying judgment. He claims that the existential judgment means an identity. He writes, the fact that "existential being is also referred to via, 'is', points to the fact that 'is' here also expresses an identification" (Mat II: 174). In the case of a simple identifying judgment, I identify the subject with the self-same subject, where that subject is presented differently in each case. The object-as-it-is-presented here and the object-as-it-is-presented there are identified as the same object-that-is-presented. The identification synthesizes the different perspectives of the subject to recognize its unity. For example, to simply identify a table, I first see the table from this one angle, before then looking at the table from a different perspective. The simple identification brings together these two different presentations of the table to judge the table as one self-same object.

Even though the existential judgment is an identifying judgment, *it naturally does more than just simply identify the subject with itself.* When I express the existential proposition, 'The rain exists', while I do mean the rain as an identity with itself, I also mean *more* than this. Straightforwardly stated, the existential identifying judgment does *more* than a simple identifying judgment does.

To pinpoint the difference between simple identifying judgments and existential identifying judgments, background knowledge concerning Husserl's descriptions of the *non*-predicative experience of existence is required. Husserl concludes that during any act, I take a stance with regards to the existence of the object or synonymously, I execute a doxic position-taking (*Stellungsnahme*). There are two fundamental ("objectifying") positions that I can take concerning the existence of an object; I can take either a positive or a "neutral" stance (Mat II: 173, 178–179, 181. See Płotka 2017: 110–114). During perception, I normally assume a positive position, where I take the object, which I see, to exist. To be clear, during this simple perception, when I take the stance that the object exists, my positive position-taking is not a predication or judgment about the existence of

the object. It is rather a pre-predicative and a pre-categorial stance towards it (Hua XIX: 427–429, 468–470/1970: 120–121, 143–144. See Byrne 2017a). In contrast, if I were to imagine or, what Husserl calls, "merely present" the same object, I would take a neutral position concerning the object's existence. When I take that neutral position while imagining or merely presenting the object, its existence is left in suspense, as I do not take a stance one way or the other regarding its existence.

These insights in mind, Husserl can now clarify how the existential identifying judgment is distinct from and does more than the simple identifying judgment. He begins by outlining how the rain is intended in two different ways for the existential judgment. First, I intend the rain via a mere presentation and here I take no stance regarding its existence. Second, I intend the rain via a perception. In this case, I take the stance that this perceived rain does exist. I take the (non-predicative and non-categorial) position that the rain, which I see, exists (Mat I: 223).

Husserl's key insight is that the existential judgment (or rather, the categorial intuition that verifies that judgment. Cf. Byrne 2020a: 368–374) identifies the merely presented rain, which was not taken as existent, with the perceived rain, which I take to be existent. On the one hand, this judgment does identify the rain with itself, such that it can be classified as an identifying judgment. On the other hand, I *additionally* realize during this existential identification that the merely presented rain is identical with the perceived rain, which I take as existent. In other words, via this identification, *I come to know that this rain is a rain that exists* (Mat I: 223). When I execute this existential identifying judgment, I no longer just take the pre-predicative position that the rain exists, but actively, categorially, and explicitly predicate of the rain that it does exist (Mat I: 223; Mat II: 180–183).

On the basis of these observations, Husserl can claim that the grammatical statement, 'A rain is', also inadequately expresses the logical existential proposition. The logical existential proposition could instead more adequately be grammatically expressed as 'The presented rain corresponds to the actual rain'. Moreover, when formalized, the more adequate expression of existential propositions would be, "The presented object S corresponds to an actual object" (Mat I: 224). From this, Husserl can finally pinpoint the actual logical predicate of the existential *and* impersonal expressions by writing that, "What is predicated is, that there is affirmed of object S, that there is an object that stamps it as an existing truth" (Mat I: 224). When I judge and express *either* the grammatical impersonal *or* existential expression, I am predicating of the meant logical subject that it corresponds to truth, that is, to a perceptually given subject, which is taken as existent.[8]

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[8] I briefly mention here that Husserl's early theory of existential propositions was largely maintained throughout his philosophical career. Specifically, I contend that Husserl believed – from these early lectures up until his death – that the existential proposition signifies the state of affairs. For both the early and later Husserl, the existential proposition predicates of the *meant and signified object itself* that it exists. Emphasis on Husserl's preservation of this conclusion is necessary, because in the only other article that addresses Husserl's theory of existential propositions in detail, Christian Breyer argues that Husserl concludes that the existential proposition signifies the state of affairs *only after* his 1908 discovery of the noema and noematic meaning. Breyer asserts that in his early works, Husserl believed that existence, that is, correspondence to truth is not predicated of the signified subject, but rather of the ideal meaning (or as Breyer calls it, the "idea") of the expression. Breyer writes, "[Husserl] states that in such

5. Conclusion

Husserl's conclusions about the meaning of impersonal propositions and their expressions are naturally unconvincing. The contortions of thought that Husserl must perform in order to claim that the logical meaning of the impersonal expression is categorical and has a subject and a predicate, reveals that he fares no better in the face of these anomalous expressions than those many thinkers before him who have attempted to account for them. Yet, it was not the goal of this paper to claim that Husserl's theory actually does solve the difficulties surrounding impersonal expressions. Rather, the paper sought to explore how Husserl transformed his philosophy to respond to the monumental and ancient problem of impersonalia.

By doing so, it was revealed that Husserl substantiates his theory by studying impersonal expressions as they are employed during intersubjective communication. On the basis of that descriptive analysis, Husserl, while not stepping far beyond the bounds of the First Investigation, does come to recognize that the function of words in communication is worthwhile to study. In fact, this analysis allows for him to even go so far as to make the genetic claim that, "The original vocation of speech is communication" (Mat II: 53). These insights pave the way for his study of sign usage in his 1913/14 Revisions to the Sixth Logical Investigation. Husserl there works from his early observations about impersonalia to conclude that intersubjectivity is the condition of possibility for the use of meaningful language, as I have discussed elsewhere (Cf. Hua XX-2: 96–98; Byrne 2020b, 2021b).These brief indicating remarks must suffice here, as any attempt to present a systematic reinterpretation of the development and evolution of Husserl's late philosophy in light of his observations from his 1896 and 1902 Lectures would naturally be the task of a much larger project. Instead, it was the more modest goal of this paper to provide the first analysis exclusively dedicated to Husserl's theory of impersonalia and to thereby show how Husserl reacted when he was forced to stretch, if not break the bounds of his early philosophy to confront these enigmatic expressions.

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sentences 'exists' functions as a 'modifying' predicate, to be applied to the respective idea in itself expressed by the preceding singular term rather than (as surface grammar suggests) to the object (if any) satisfying that idea in itself" (Breyer 2004: 74). In contrast to Breyer's interpretation; however, in his early works, Husserl repeatedly denies that the existential proposition predicates existence (correspondence to an actual object) of the meaning or proposition of the expression. He writes that when we judge about existence, "We are not only not judging about the subjective presentation or conviction, but also not about the meaning-content, that is, about the logical presentation or proposition" (Mat II: 164. See Hua XL:75, 116–117). And again, Husserl claims, "The phenomenological analysis shows entirely clearly that, when we state the result of a verification in the form of a proposition about being or obtaining, we are not judging about the act or its meaning-content, but rather about the thing itself" (Mat II: 164). In another early manuscript, Husserl writes, "When we say, 'Jupiter doesn't exist, what doesn't exist is not the concept 'Jupiter' … but rather, the object' (Hua XL: 68). At another point, concerning the expression of the existential proposition, Husserl observes, "What is here meant is the existence of the intuited and presented object as such" (Hua XL: 79). In sum, Husserl's conclusion, that existence is predicated of the object and not the ideal meaning is maintained in both his early and later works. Husserl's discovery of the noema and noematic meaning did not change this insight about the concept of being, but rather seemed to solidify it. This becomes even clearer when one compares Husserl's descriptions of existential judgments from his 1908/09 Logic lectures (Mat VI: 153–173) to these earlier accounts of such judgments.

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