Husserl and Frege:  
A New Look at their Relationship

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Husserl's explicit rejection of psychologism as a theory of the origin of the logico-mathematical entities and his advocacy of a conception of pure logic as a science of objective meanings were first expounded in the *Prolegomena to Pure Logic* (1900), and Husserl tells us that the *Prolegomena*, in its essentials, is a reworking of lectures he had given at Halle in the year 1896.1 Føllesdal, in his careful study of the relation between Frege and Husserl during these years, asks the question, at what point of time between 1890 (the year of publication of the *Philosophie der Arithmetik*) and 1896 did this change in Husserl's mode of thinking take place?2 The papers published during 1891-93 do not, according to Føllesdal, bear testimony to any such change. In the paper "Psychologische Studien zur elementaren Logik" of the year 1894, Husserl is still found to believe that the foundations of logic can be clarified with the help of psychology. Accordingly, the change must have occurred between the years 1894 and 1896. Frege's famed review of the *Philosophie der Arithmetik* appeared in the year 1894. Føllesdal therefore conjectures that it is Frege's review which must have led Husserl to a complete revision of his prior mode of thinking.3 This view about the Frege-Husserl relationship is shared by many writers. A recent writer even speaks of Husserl's "traumatic encounter with Frege."4

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3 Ibid., p. 25.
In this paper I wish to argue that the basic change in Husserl's mode of thinking which by itself could have led to the Prolegomena conception of pure logic had already taken place by 1891. This change may be discerned in Husserl's review of Schröder's Vorlesungen über die Algebra der Logik. It also underlies the program of Inhaltslogik worked out in "Der Folgerungscalcul und die Inhaltslogik" of the same year. If pure logic is defined in the Prolegomena in terms of the concept of ideal objective meanings, then already the 1891 review of Schröder's work contains this concept. If the major burden of Frege's 1894 review of the Philosophie der Arithmetik is the lack of distinction, in that work, between the subjective and the objective, then Husserl already had come to distinguish between Vorstellung and Begriff and between both and the object, then Husserl must have arrived at it independently of Frege.

Published in Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen, 1, 1891, pp. 243-278.

Published in Vierteljahrschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie, 15, 1891, pp. 168-189, 351-356.


Thus writes Frege: "First of all, everything becomes presentation. The references of words are presentations... Objects are presentations... concepts, too, are presentations." A little later on: "Everything is shunted off into the subjective." (Frege, G. "Review of Dr. E. Husserl's Philosophy of Arithmetik" Etr. by E. W. Kluge, Mind, LXXXI, 1972, pp. 321-337; esp. 323-324.)

Embree, Lester E. Life-World and Consciousness, Essays for Aron Gurwitsch, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972, pp. 139-140 (in H. Dreyfus, "The Perceptual Noema: Gurwitsch's Crucial Contribution"). In a footnote on p. 140, Dreyfus rejects Gurwitsch's claim that Husserl discovered the distinction between real mental states and ideal meanings and refers to "Husserl's explicit attribution of this distinction to Frege" in the Logical Investigations I (Findlay edition), p. 292. This reference however is misleading. First, this is not the place where Husserl first introduces the distinction. The distinction is introduced, first, in the 1891 Schröder review as this paper will argue. Secondly, at this place, Husserl is only referring to Frege's different terminology.

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