THE CONSTITUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS
A STUDY IN ANALYTIC PHENOMENOLOGY

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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University of Toronto

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Abstract

In this thesis I pursue two major goals. I develop an account of constitution to describe how we can be directed towards objects in our mental episodes. In doing so, I use results of Husserlian phenomenology and put them into the context of contemporary analytic philosophy of mind, thus taking an approach that can be best described as 'analytic phenomenology.'

In the first chapter I argue that a strong emphasis on the differences between mind and world, as we find it in Descartes, for example, creates an unbridgeable gap between them. Two main strategies of contemporary philosophy of mind, reductionism and eliminativism, are reactions to, rather than rejections of, this distinction. I propose that an account of constitution can provide a perspective that acknowledges, but does not overemphasize, the differences between the mental and the physical. In the second chapter I outline the history of the notion of 'constitution.' In contrasting the positions of Husserl and Haugeland I present the main features of constitution.

Then I develop an account of constitution, according to which the objects, towards which we are directed, and the mental episodes, in which we are directed towards them, are constituted. I argue that constitution
requires a holistic background. Using Husserl’s analyses of time consciousness I describe how this background can shape the content of an occurrent mental episode. I show that establishing this background rests on our biological makeup and environment, on passive processes of association, and on the social group in which we grow up.

In the fourth chapter I concentrate on the social aspect of constitution. I argue that we learn to constitute various kinds of mental episodes through social practices, mainly through acquisition of language, and that anti-individualism allows for phenomenological analysis.

Finally, I discuss whether constitution entails idealism. I use a late-Wittgensteinian argument to show that metaphysical realism and idealism are unintelligible positions. I conclude that the claim that constitution implies transcendental idealism depends on the assumption that we can meaningfully distinguish between the object as it is in itself and the constituted object.
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# Table of Contents

Introduction 1

CHAPTER 1
Why do we need a Theory of Constitution? 8

CHAPTER 2
The History of the Notion of 'Constitution': Two Case Studies 29

2.2 Husserl's Notion of 'Constitution': A Short Outline of its Development 33
2.3 Haugeland's 'Constitutive Standards' 50
2.4 Some central features of constitution: Contrasting Husserl and Haugeland 63

CHAPTER 3
Towards a Theory of Constitution 72

3.1 The Fundamental Difference between the Realm of the Mental and the Realm of the Physical 73
3.2 Causal Theories and Holistic Background 82
3.3 Constituting Objects 89
3.4 Developing Constitutive Commitment 115
3.5 The Constitution of Mental Episodes 123
3.6 Conclusion: Some Basic Aspects of Constitution 128

CHAPTER 4
The Social Foundation of the Mind 132

4.1 In What Sense are Mental Episodes Social? 134
4.2 What Kind of Rational Relations are there? 142
4.3 Perceptual Experience vs. the Social Dimension of the Logical Space of Reason: the Brandom-McDowell Debate 147
4.4 The Social Aspect of the Mind and Phenomenological Analysis 157
4.5 Conclusion 164
Introduciton

Philosophers tend to have the bad habit of detecting complex and mind-boggling problems in contexts that seem clear and obvious in everyday life. At every moment of our conscious lives we perceive objects in our environment, sometimes we form beliefs about them or doubt their existence, sometimes we wish they were other than they are, some of them evoke an aesthetic judgment, and so on. When we characterize all these activities in terms of their being about or directed towards an object, it might look as if we were just stating a fact so obvious that it is hardly worth mentioning. As soon as we try to describe the details of this relation, however, things become increasingly complex and less obvious. Some of the objects towards which we are directed do not really exist, which might suggest that we are actually directed towards a mental object. This view, however, becomes problematic in the case of perception, where we are obviously directed towards physical rather than mental objects.

In this thesis I will use Husserl’s notion of ‘constitution’ to develop a position that can address these problems. I hope to achieve two major goals. First, I will sketch a picture of the relation between mind and world that acknowledges, but does not overemphasize, the differences between
the realm of the mental and the realm of the physical. Second, by
developing an account that combines Husserlian phenomenology with
analytic philosophy, I will show that these two traditions are not two
opposite and mutually repellent poles in the history of twentieth century
philosophy.

Descartes's distinction between *res extensa* and *res cogitans* as two different
substances had a major influence on philosophy of mind of the twentieth
century. Many philosophers argued that this ontological distinction was
far too strong. Their reaction was to reduce the realm of the mental to the
realm of the physical or to eliminate it altogether. One of the main factors
that caused this reaction was the idea that all scientific disciplines can be
reduced to more fundamental disciplines, which eventually would allow
us to develop a unified theory of everything. This strategy, however, runs
the risk of ignoring the fundamental difference between the realm of the
mental and the realm of the physical.

In this thesis I will sketch a picture of the relation between mind
and world that acknowledges these differences without asserting that there
are two different kinds of substances. Mind and world are not seen as two
opposite spheres, but rather as parts of a whole. The basic claim of this
account is that we constitute the objects towards which we are directed in
our mental episodes. This does not mean, however, that we create these
objects, nor does it mean that we interpret something as something else.
In perceptual experiences, I will argue, we are immediately directed towards objects in our environment that exist independently of these experiences. The theory of constitution describes how this relation can be established.

The basic notion of the account that I am going to develop stems from Husserl’s phenomenology. By using some of Husserl’s results in the context of contemporary analytic philosophy of mind I combine two major traditions of twentieth century philosophy. In the last three decades, many philosophers have pointed out that these two traditions have far more in common than is generally thought. It was argued, for example, that Husserl’s philosophy, especially his early writings, has many parallels with Frege’s¹. These historical comparisons have shown interesting results that have changed our way of understanding the history of philosophy in the twentieth century.

In this thesis I will use a different approach. Rather than pointing out the historical parallels, I will try to do analytic phenomenology by using some of Husserl’s results in the framework of analytic philosophy. I will set up this framework on the basis of the Sellarsian/McDowellian distinction between the logical space of reason and the logical space of

¹ Dummett, for example, points out that in 1903 Frege and Husserl would have appeared to any German student of philosophy who knew their work “not, certainly, as two deeply opposed thinkers: rather as remarkably close in orientation, despite some divergence of interests.” (Dummett, 1993, 26). For a comparison of Frege’s philosophy and Husserl’s position at the times of Ideas (1913) cf. Fallesdal’s groundbreaking article “Husserl’s Notion of Noema.”
nature. This framework creates the difficulty of explaining how these two logical spaces can be related. I will show that Husserl’s insights can be very fruitful for addressing this problem. The historical goal of this thesis, thus, is to demonstrate that these traditions are not incompatible. Even though I will not discuss the historical parallels between these two traditions, I do not imply that these questions are not interesting, nor that a historical study cannot provide important results. My hope is rather that by showing how we can use Husserl’s results to address problems of contemporary analytic philosophy of mind I can make a strong case for the claim that Husserl’s phenomenology is not merely a chapter in the history of philosophy, but that it is highly relevant in the context of contemporary philosophy of mind.

My interpretation of Husserl is based mainly on his analyses of time consciousness and passive synthesis. I do not pretend that by emphasizing these aspects of Husserl’s thought I can provide an exhaustive interpretation of his overall philosophical system. My goal is not to contribute to Husserl exegesis, but rather to use some of his results in a context where the work of this philosopher still does not get the attention it deserves. In pursuing this strategy, I run the risk of being criticized for drawing on minor aspects of Husserl’s phenomenology or even distorting

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2 I want to point out in this context that Sellars, who hardly refers to Husserl in his philosophical works, mentions in his intellectual autobiography that Husserl had a strong influence on his work. He writes that in his years in Buffalo he was influenced by Martin Farber “whose utter respect for the structure of Husserl’s thought with the equally firm conviction that this structure could be given a naturalistic interpretation was undoubtedly a key influence on my own subsequent philosophical strategy.” (Sellars, 1975, 283).
his philosophy. I believe, however, that the overall goal justifies this strategy.

In the first chapter of my thesis I will introduce the problems that will be addressed by the theory of constitution. I will sketch a rough picture of how Descartes’s distinction between mind and matter — as it was interpreted in twentieth century philosophy — has created an unbridgeable gap between mind and world. I will show that some of the major tendencies in contemporary philosophy of mind, eliminativism and reductionism, are both based on this distinction, and simply react to it in different ways.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the history of the notion of ‘constitution.’ I will give an overview of the role this notion played in the history of philosophy. Then I will outline Husserl’s and Haugeland’s account of constitution. Husserl’s notion underwent some considerable changes over the years; I will show how this development was influenced by the changes in his overall philosophical position. Haugeland is an interesting example of a contemporary philosopher who uses the notion of ‘constitution’ to explain the relation between mind and world. Finally, I will point out the parallels and differences in these two accounts. The contrast of the work of two philosophers of very different backgrounds will allow me to introduce some central features of a theory of constitution.
Then I will develop an account of constitution. I will define mental episodes as positions in the logical space of reason that are directed towards objects, which are positions in the logical space of nature. In order to show how these two logical spaces are related, I will argue that we constitute the objects towards which we are directed in our mental episodes. The process of constitution, I will argue, requires a holistic background. Husserl’s analyses of time consciousness can give us the key to describe the relation between this background and an occurrent mental episode. Then I will address the question of how we come to perform constitution in the first place. I will argue that we establish constitutive commitment by establishing a first, minimal background, which rests on various factors: our biological makeup and environment, the passive processes of association, and the social group in which we grow up. Finally, I will show that not only the objects towards which we are directed, but also mental episodes, in which we are directed towards them, are constituted.

In the remainder of the thesis I will discuss two of the most important consequences of my account of constitution. In the fourth chapter I will elaborate on the idea that mental episodes rest on a social foundation. I will argue that we learn to constitute mental episodes through social practices and that, as a consequence, we cannot have ineffable mental episodes. Then I will show that the thesis that mental episodes rest on a social foundation does not imply that we cannot study
the mind through phenomenological analysis. In the last chapter I will
discuss whether constitution implies a form of idealism. I will adopt an
argument presented by Wittgenstein in his later writings that shows that
metaphysical realism and idealism are both nonsensical positions. This
argument leaves room for the claim that constitution implies
transcendental idealism. I will show that this claim rests on the
assumption that we can meaningfully distinguish between the object as it
is in itself and the constituted object. I will present an ontological position,
natural realism, according to which this assumption leads to an
unnecessary complication.
In his *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* Brentano divides all existing phenomena into the psychological and the physical. In order to distinguish these two kinds of phenomena, he offers six criteria for psychological phenomena. The most important is undoubtedly the notion of 'intentionality.'

"Every mental phenomenon," Brentano argues, "is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction towards an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity." (Brentano, 1874/1995, 88).

Brentano was soon criticized for characterizing the intentional object as a mental entity. While this characterization might help to explain cases like hallucinations, imaginations of fictional objects, or dreams, where the corresponding object often does not exist in the physical world, it runs into problems when we consider the most common cases of

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3 The other criteria are: psychological phenomena—and only those—are presentations or phenomena which are based upon presentation; seem to have no spatial extension; are
perception. When I see a table, for example, it is essential that the actual table, the physical object, is in front of me. In my perception I am directed towards this physical object, and not towards some mental entity. Brentano's account of intentionality, thus, leads to an unnecessary duplication of the object, as Husserl points out in his *Ideas*:

“But if, in *this* way, we try to separate the actual Object (in the case of perception of something external, the perceived physical thing pertaining to Nature) and the intentional Object, including the latter as really inherently in the mental process as ‘immanent’ to the perception, we fall into the difficulty that now *two* realities ought to stand over against one another while only *one* reality is found to be present and possible. I perceive the physical thing, the Object belonging to Nature, the tree there in the garden; that and nothing else is the actual Object of the perceptual ‘intention.’ A second immanent tree, or even an ‘internal image’ of the actual tree standing out there before me, is in no way given, and to suppose that hypothetically leads to an absurdity.” (Husserl, 1982, 219 [Hua III/1, 207f])

Because of these problems Brentano eventually changed his account of intentionality. He never succeeded, however, in explaining the problems concerning the ontological status of the intentional object in a satisfactory way. Husserl, of course, also cannot provide an easy answer to the problems concerning the relation between the act of perception and the perceived object. With his phenomenological reduction he simply

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4 When I quote Husserl, I will add the reference to the original German text. I will quote from the *Husserliana* edition, henceforth Hua, followed by volume and page number.

5 For a discussion of Brentano's later account of intentionality cf., e.g., Kraus (1924/95) or Føllesdal (1978).
brackets the realm of physical objects and develops a position that he characterizes as *transcendental idealism*. I will discuss Husserl’s position in more detail below.

The difficulties in explaining the relation between a perception and the perceived object are not exclusively Brentanian ones. Every philosophical theory of perception that starts out with a distinction between the perceptual experience, which belongs to the realm of the mental, on the one hand, and what is perceived, i.e., the realm of perceivable objects, on the other hand, has to give an account of how the former can be about or directed towards the latter. And very often it is in this part of the theory that problems arise. Yet this distinction seems to be a crucial and commonsensical one, the obvious starting point of any theory of perception.

In the remainder of this chapter I will show that a position that puts too much emphasis on this distinction is confronted with serious philosophical problems. Descartes’s characterization of the realm of the mental and the realm of the physical as two different kinds of substances is a good example. By insisting on the ontological difference between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, i.e., between the mental and the physical, he is creating a gap that is so big that it becomes very difficult to give a satisfactory account of how these two kinds of substances can interact. From all we can tell now, however, it seems that for Descartes this is not a
particularly important problem. He insists that this interaction does take place\(^6\) and even locates it: mind and body interact, according to Descartes, in a special part of the brain, the pineal gland. Descartes’s primary interest is to distinguish mind and body as two kinds of substances. He is thus less interested in discussing the particulars of the interaction between the two substances because this “might have been harmful” (Descartes, 1991, 218) for his main goal.

Many interpreters criticize Descartes for his account of the interaction between mind and body. One of the most common arguments is that such an interaction cannot take place because it contradicts the laws of physics, most notably the principle of the conservation of energy. The idea that physical processes in the brain can act on the mind — and vice versa — is incompatible with the idea that the realm of the physical forms a closed system where the total amount of energy always stays the same.

A common strategy for dealing with the problem of interaction is to state that it simply does not take place. We find this strategy — as a direct response to Descartes — in occasionalism, where all causal interaction is explained away by the intervention of an almighty being. We find it also, and more importantly, in various idealistic and materialistic positions that feel no need to explain how the mental and the physical can interact because they concentrate exclusively on one side of the gap, describing the

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\(^6\) This standard interpretation of Descartes’s position is not without difficulties. For a critique cf. Baker/Morris (1996) who conclude that Descartes actually held a form of
whole picture solely in terms of the mental or the physical, respectively. The main problem that these views have in common, I believe, is that they are a reaction to Descartes's distinction between mind and matter. In what follows I will argue that the main motivation for adopting a monistic position is the assumption that we have to choose between offering a unified account in terms of the mental or the physical, respectively, on the one hand, or fall back on Cartesian dualism, on the other. Since in the twentieth century materialism is much more widespread than idealism, I will concentrate in my discussion mainly on the former. Before I go on with this discussion, however, I will give a clearer formulation of the gap between the mental and the physical.

In Mind and World McDowell gives an interesting characterization of the gap between the mental and the physical in terms of Sellars's notion of the 'logical space of reason' and the notion of the 'logical space of nature,' that McDowell coins by analogy with the former. The concept of knowledge, Sellars argues, belongs to the logical space of reason. This "space" is different in kind from other logical spaces in that it is constituted by normative relations. Any attempt to reduce the logical space of reason to that of nature "is a mistake of a piece with the so-called 'naturalistic occasionalism. Even they acknowledge, however, that Descartes typically uses causal idioms to describe the relation between mind and body.

7 Cf. McDowell, 1996a, xiv: "...to coin a phrase that is Sellarsian at least in spirit". 
fallacy' in ethics.” (Sellars, 1997, 19, § 5). McDowell characterizes this position in the following way:

“Sellars’s thesis is that the conceptual apparatus we employ when we place things in the logical space of reasons is irreducible to any conceptual apparatus that does not serve to place things in the logical space of reasons.” (McDowell, 1998a, 433)

In the logical space of reason we place knowledge and other episodes or states that have conceptual content and stand in rational relations to other episodes. In his attack on the Myth of the Given Sellars argues that these episodes or states, including those of empirical knowledge, cannot stand in rational relations with non-conceptual episodes like sensations, impressions, or sense data. Hence, perceptual judgments cannot be justified by non-conceptual entities. He criticizes various forms of empiricism for having presupposed such a relation. Sellars does not deny that we have such non-conceptual episodes, insisting, rather, that they do not stand in justificatory relations to empirical knowledge; they can only cause certain conceptual episodes.

In the first chapter of Mind and World McDowell attributes this view that there can be only causal, not rational, relations between non-conceptual sensations and conceptual episodes also to Davidson, who he makes the main target of his critique. It is not satisfying, McDowell

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8 In the introduction that was added to the second edition McDowell writes that the point could as well be made against Sellars: “For these purposes, Sellars and Davidson are interchangeable.” (McDowell, 1996a, xvi).
argues, to reduce the relation between mind and world to a causal one because on these lines we cannot explain one of the crucial points of the relation between the mental and the physical, namely that "experience is a rational constraint on thinking." (McDowell, 1996a, p. 18). McDowell, thus, holds that theories of perception must satisfy a "rational constraint constraint" (Brandom, 1996, 245). He insists on the idea that empirical knowledge has to be justified by the sensory input we have. If we define the relation between non-conceptual input and conceptual thought as a merely causal one, we pay a high price: we cannot explain how empirical knowledge is justified. In other words, if we buy into Davidson's idea that "nothing can count as a reason for holding a belief except another belief" (Davidson, 1986, 310) we lose contact with the world. Davidson could reply to this critique that on the basis of his theory of interpretation we can conclude that most of our beliefs are veridical. Even if we were brains in a mad scientist's vat, Davidson argues, our beliefs would be correct, nonetheless. He states that if "anything is systematically causing certain experiences (or verbal responses), that is what the thoughts and utterances are about. This rules out systematic error." (Davidson, 1991, 199). He adds that who holds his position, perceptual externalism, "knows he cannot be systematically deceived about whether there are such things as cows, people, water, stars, and chewing gum." (Davidson, 1991, 199).

McDowell does not accept this reply.
"The response does not calm the fear that our picture leaves our thinking possibly out of touch with the world outside us. It just gives us a dizzying sense that our grip on what it is that we believe is not as firm as we thought. I think, the right conclusion is this: whatever credence we give to Davidson’s argument that a body of belief is sure to be mostly true, the argument starts too late to certify Davidson’s position as a genuine escape from the oscillation.” (McDowell, 1996a, 17)

The problem with Davidson’s reply is, according to McDowell, that he tries to show that one’s beliefs are largely true. Doing so, however, he seems to be taking it for granted that mental episodes have content. But, McDowell argues, “if we do not let intuitions stand in rational relations to them, it is exactly their possession of content that is put in question.” (McDowell, 1996a, 68); hence, Davidson’s argument starts too late.

McDowell concludes that we are left with an oscillation between two positions that are equally problematic: either we adopt a position that is prone to fall into the Myth of the Given, or we give an account that is based on a causal relation between non-conceptual sensations and conceptual thoughts. But in the latter case, he argues, we cannot explain why mental episodes have content. Thus, we are threatened with losing contact with the real world. According to McDowell, the putative gap between mind and world is a putative gap between conceptual thought (including empirical knowledge) on the one side and the non-conceptual world on the other. The challenge for a theory of perception is to explain at what stage in the process of perception concepts are drawn in and in
what relation they stand to the non-conceptual without falling into the *Myth of the Given* or Davidson's coherentism.

In the remainder of the book McDowell tries to show how we can escape this oscillation between the realm of the conceptual and the realm of the non-conceptual. Using some Kantian shoptalk he states that "we need a conception of experiences as states or occurrences that are passive but reflect conceptual capacities, capacities that belong to spontaneity, in operation." (McDowell, 1996a, 23). Rejecting the idea of an interface between the non-conceptual world and conceptual thought he adopts a conception of perceptual experiences that reflect conceptual capacities by extending the realm of the conceptual into nature. Since this move recalls Hegel's philosophy⁹, McDowell expends considerable effort defending his position against the charge of idealism. He tries to give his position a naturalistic spin by taking up Aristotle's notion of 'second nature.' For my purposes it is not necessary to discuss whether he succeeds in his defense against the charge of idealism. For now it is important to see how Sellars and McDowell characterize the gap between the mental and the physical.

On the basis of the Sellarsian/McDowellian distinction between the logical space of reason and that of nature we can characterize idealistic and materialistic positions in the following way: a position is *materialistic* if

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⁹ McDowell is, of course, aware of these parallels. Pointing out the similarities between his position and Hegel's absolute idealism he contends that with his apparatus he is able "to
and only if it holds either that the logical space of reason can be reduced to 
the logical space of nature or that it can be eliminated. It is *idealistic* if and 
only if it holds either that the logical space of nature can be reduced to the 
logical space of reason or that it can be eliminated. A logical space can be 
reduced to another logical space if the laws, regularities, relations, or 
principles that constitute that logical space can be explained in terms of 
those that constitute the other logical space.

Let us take a closer look at the two strategies used to argue for a 
monist position. I will first discuss reductionism, and then turn to 
eliminativism. In order to argue for reductionism one has to account for 
all essential particularities of the respective other logical space in terms of 
the one that one favors. What are the particularities of the two logical 
spaces? According to McDowell, the logical space of nature is constituted 
by natural laws. These laws describe physical objects and the relations 
between them, i.e., causal relations. The logical space of reason, on the 
other hand, is constituted by rational relations that hold between 
conceptual episodes. These rational relations are not based on natural 
laws, but on the laws of logic, which are essentially normative. The 
question whether a conclusion actually follows from a certain set of 
premises is not a question that can be decided by observation or on the 
basis of laws that describe causal relations. It can be decided only relative to

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domesticate the rhetoric of that philosophy [i.e., *absolute idealism*]" (McDowell, 1996a, p. 44).
the axioms and derivation rules of a logical system by determining whether they have been applied correctly.

The reductionist strategy of advocating materialism is to show that we can reduce rational relations to the laws of nature, a strategy that Sellars, as we have seen above, equates with the naturalistic fallacy in ethics. One way to perform this reduction is to reduce the laws of logic to the laws of psychology. This position, which was discussed under the title 'psychologism,' was defeated successfully by Frege and Husserl a century ago.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to give an argument that shows that an overall reduction of the logical space of reason to that of nature is impossible in principle. It might be helpful, however, to consider where the strong urge to perform such a reduction comes from. In the last few centuries, especially in the twentieth century, science has made enormous progress. In addition, special sciences like chemistry could be reduced to more fundamental disciplines like physics. These achievements have supported the idea that we can develop one general explanatory scheme that can account for everything that can be described as physical. The hope is that eventually we will be able to deduce all scientific laws from a handful of very general formulas and maybe some additional premises. This idea of a unified theory of everything physical nourished the fear that

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10 Cf. Sellars (1997, 19, § 5).

if we acknowledge the need of a special science that is not reducible to physics we would be forced to accept that there is something that cannot be described as physical and that is therefore ontologically different. In other words, we are forced to subscribe to dualism. Thus, the main motivation for reduction of the mental to the physical is the contention that we can choose only between reductionism (or eliminativism) and Cartesian dualism.

This dichotomy, however, seems to be popular only in the context of reductionism of the mental to the physical, but loses much of its appeal if one considers the example of the laws of logic: It is a widely acknowledged fact that the laws of logic cannot be reduced to the laws of nature. Nonetheless, no one feels the threat of a "logical dualism."

A reductionist position does not need to be materialistic; we could also imagine a reduction from the physical to the mental. The advocates of such a position would have to show how we can reduce the laws of physics to the rational relations that constitute the logical space of reason. In a century like ours that is shaped by a strong belief in the natural sciences, such a position seems quite exotic: it betrays the very idea of science, namely that there is a world independent of us, the regularities of which we try to describe with natural laws. The main difficulty faced by this position is to explain the necessity of causal regularities in the physical world in terms of rational relations. In our mental life we can choose to infer a certain belief from a set of other beliefs; we are free to make the
move from one position in the space of reason to another one. In nature, on the other hand, the same events in the same circumstances always have to cause the same effects, and necessarily so. Consequently, the idealistic reductionism would run into the same kind of problems as its materialistic version; it would be difficult to show that the rules that constitute the logical space of reason can account for all particularities of the logical space of nature.

The other possible strategy used to argue for monism is to eliminate the logical space of reason or of nature, respectively. Materialistic eliminativists, in general, share the fear of reductionists that any theory that cannot be reduced to physics requires us to adopt some form of dualism. They acknowledge, however, the difficulties of reducing the mental to the physical and prefer to eliminate talk about the mental altogether. However, if we take the doctrine that there is an essential difference between the two logical spaces seriously\textsuperscript{12}, it is difficult to see how one of them can be eliminated in an account that strives to be comprehensive. The eliminativist would have to show why one way of explaining certain phenomena is preferable to any other way. If we grant that the descriptions of the rational relations that hold between various mental episodes are not simply shortcuts for more complex scientific descriptions, but describe genuine phenomena, we have to acknowledge that the eliminativist cannot account for them. Eliminativism, thus,

\textsuperscript{12} I will discuss this doctrine in more detail below, cf. section 3.1.
provides a one-sided view that deliberately avoids seeing the whole picture, a strategy that is not only unsatisfying, but also unscientific.

I have argued that there are good reasons to believe that both idealistic and materialistic positions are insufficient to give a comprehensive account that captures both the law-like causal relations that hold in the realm of the physical and the rational relations that constitute the logical space of reason. The urge to develop a monistic position, and especially a materialistic one, comes from the assumption that if we cannot advance a unified account for mind and body we are forced back to the dark old days of dualism. Thus, monist positions are a reaction to Descartes's characterization of the ontological differences between mind and body. Rather than challenging the Cartesian distinction, they try to avoid the problems of dualism by arguing that there is actually only one kind of substance and that all that has to be accounted for in a scientific theory can be accounted for in terms of the mental or the physical, respectively. This can be done in different ways, and consequently we can find a great variety of idealistic and materialistic positions in the history of philosophy.

At the beginning of this chapter I tried to show that the most basic feature of perception, namely that it is about physical objects, makes the distinction between mind and world attractive for many philosophers. Then I pointed out that Descartes's characterization of this distinction led
to ontological dualism with all the problems associated with it. Monistic positions try to avoid these problems, but they share the assumptions that if we cannot give an account of all there is to explain exclusively in terms of the mental or the physical, respectively, we are doomed to adopt a dualistic position.

There is, I think, another motivation for making a strong distinction between the mental and the physical. This motivation is rooted in a feature of perception that Husserl talks about at the beginning of his course on passive synthesis:

"Outer perception is a continuous pretension to achieve something that it cannot achieve by its own nature. Thus, in a manner of speaking, a contradiction is part of its nature." (Hua XI, 3 [my translation])

The contradiction that Husserl is talking about arises from the following paradox: whenever we perceive an object, we perceive it under a certain perspective. When I see a table, for example, I have only a part of the table, some part of the surface, in my visual field. Nevertheless, I see the table, the object as a whole, and not just its surface. Thus, the contradiction of perception is that it pretends to present objects as they are, but in the process of perception we seem to have to add something to the sensory input in order to perceive objects rather than parts of objects. This line of thought has led some philosophers, among them Husserl, to conclude

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13 "Die äußere Wahrnehmung ist eine beständige Prätention, etwas zu leisten, was sie ihrem eigenen Wesen nach zu leisten außerstande ist. Also gewissermaßen ein Widerspruch gehört zu ihrem Wesen."
that we are directed towards the intentional object under a certain *mode of presentation*. From here it is only a short step to distinguishing the object of experience, i.e., the object as it is given to us, from the actual object, the object as it really is. The problem with this view is that it makes things even more complicated. Instead of a twofold relation between perception and the object perceived we are now confronted with a threefold one: the object as it appears, the object as it really is, and the act of perception. The main difficulties of a position that holds this view are the ontological status of the object as it appears and its relations to the actual object. Are we directed towards the object as it appears or the object itself? To argue that we are directed towards the actual object in virtue of the object as it appears does not provide a remedy for our worries so long as we do not have a clear account of the ontological relation between them.

What would such an account look like? The object as it appears cannot be a mental entity, that would have no explanatory value; we still would have to explain the relation between the mental and the physical object. It also cannot be identical with the physical object: our relation towards the object as it appears would be a relation towards the physical object. Accordingly, we would be directed towards the physical object in virtue of our direction towards the physical object, which is an unnecessary complication. It would, thus, have to be an abstract entity. It has to be a representation of the actual object with respect to the properties that we are directed at in our perception, and only those. Since we can
perceive physical objects under an infinite number of aspects, one would have to postulate that each object has an infinite number of corresponding abstract objects, each of which represents one or a small number of aspects of the object. In addition, one has to explain how the relation of reference between the abstract and the physical object can be established. Faced with these difficulties, the temptation to apply an old, but still most useful tool of philosophy, Ockham’s razor, becomes irresistible.

Furthermore, positions that argue that we are directed towards the actual object in virtue of the object as it appears give rise to sceptical doubts. Since we can know objects only as they appear and not as they really are, it can be argued, we might be wrong or even systematically misled in our beliefs about the world. This leads us to another problem that can stem from a too strong distinction between object of perception and perceptual experience. We know from particular cases of misperception that our knowledge of external objects does not rest on a secure and infallible base. On the other hand it is often argued that the knowledge about our own mental life is infallible and cannot possibly be wrong because in this case both the act and the object of perception are on the same side of the gap, namely the realm of the mental. Descartes can conclude on this basis that the cogito ergo sum is the only secure and indubitable knowledge he has, the foundation for all other knowledge.
Once this priority of the mental is established, we are confronted with an asymmetry between knowledge of one’s own mental life and that of other individuals. Descartes talks only about his own mental life when he says that he cannot be wrong concerning the fact that he is thinking. We can generalize this thought by saying that every thinking person is infallible about his or her own thinking. This stands in a sharp contrast to knowledge about the mental lives of other individuals which is not directly accessible to us. It also stands in contrast to knowledge about physical objects which is equally accessible to all of us, given that we are in sufficiently similar observational circumstances.

It is easy to see how this line of reasoning brings about the problems of intersubjectivity and of “other minds.” Given that I can have secure and infallible knowledge only about my own thoughts, what justification do I have to assume that the people around me have a mental life, too? I can perceive only certain movements of their bodies. Their mental lives might be completely different from mine or they might not even have mental lives, moving around like zombies or sophisticated robots.

This line of reasoning leads eventually to a kind of mental atomism where one takes the world to be inhabited by a number of ego-monads that exist independently from each other. In its most radical form it can lead to the solipsistic view that only my mind exists. Once a non-solipsistic version of this mental atomism is established one can go on to explain how these egos form social groups and cultures. The crucial assumption of
this view is that the formation of a social group and, in consequence, a culture, depends on a number of egos, the existence of which is independent of the existence of the group. In other words, individuals could exist even if there were no social group, while the existence of the latter presupposes the existence of the former. This individualistic view is widespread not only among philosophers, it is also deeply ingrained in our society's understanding of itself. I do think, however, that this position is problematic.

In order to see the difficulties of this view, let us consider the relation between our mental life and language. Various philosophers have argued that language is a necessary condition for having mental episodes. This position has been criticized, but I think it is safe to say that at least a good part of our mental episodes depend on language; various of the most common kinds of mental episodes have propositional structure, like beliefs, knowledge, etc. Moreover, the formation of a complex social structure or culture is unthinkable without the development of a language of some sort. Language, however, is not a faculty that can be achieved by an individual alone, it is essentially a social phenomenon. To learn a language means to grow up into a social group or — to put it in Wittgensteinian terms — into a form of life. Thus, the acquisition of

14 I am not thinking of social structures that we find in some species of animals other than humans, e.g., in ant colonies. From all we know these animals do not have the tools to reflect or reorganize the social structure they live in. And while this might not be necessary for forming a social structure, it certainly is for forming a social structure of a certain complexity or even a culture.
language depends on one's being part of a social group. Since a good part of our mental life depends on the acquisition of language, the individualistic assumption that society depends on a number of ego-monads becomes questionable. It seems rather that the mental life of an individual depends on her being part of a social structure or culture, and not vice versa.

The relation between the mental life of an individual and the social group she lives in will be discussed in more depth in chapter 4. For the moment I want to stress the point that the position of individualism stems from a Cartesian distinction between the mental and the physical in conjunction with the idea of the priority of the mental and that this position is a problematic one.

The above discussion shows that many philosophical worries arise from a too sharp distinction between the realm of the mental and the realm of the physical that widens the gap between the mental and the physical to an unbridgeable abyss. An example of a philosopher who puts too much weight on this distinction is Descartes, who was extremely influential on the philosophy of the subsequent centuries. Many philosophers accepted Descartes's distinction, but even many of those who did not reacted to it by denying that there was a fundamental difference between the realm of the mental and the realm of the physical altogether; I have argued that one of the main motivations for adopting a monistic position is the assumption
that we can only choose between finding a unified theory or falling back on dualism.
Chapter 2
The History of the Notion of 'Constitution': Two Case Studies

In this thesis I will address the problems raised in the preceding chapter by developing an account of constitution that allows us to acknowledge the essential differences between the realm of the mental and the realm of the physical without creating an unbridgeable gap between the two. Before I go on with this project, however, I want to explain why I choose the notion of 'constitution' and where its philosophical roots are. Then I will outline and contrast accounts of constitution of Husserl and Haugeland.

2.1 Why 'Constitution'? Why Husserl? Why Haugeland?

The words 'constitution' and 'constitutive' have a variety of meanings as they are used in contexts as different as law, medicine, or philosophy. In philosophical contexts they were first used by Seneca in the context of the mind-body problem. The terms become part of the philosophical terminology with Boethius's Latin translation of Porphyry's commentary

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15 For a concise overview of the use of the notion of 'constitution' in the history of philosophy cf. Hogrebe (1976).
on Aristotle. Hogrebe points out that in ancient and medieval philosophy the word ‘constitution’ is used in both logical and ontological contexts\textsuperscript{16}. In logical contexts, constitutive differences\textsuperscript{17} are used to characterize definitions of different kinds in the Porphyrian tree. In ontological contexts this expression is used to explain how objects are made out of or constituted from their constituents, namely form and matter. In medieval philosophy the ontological usage of ‘constitution’ becomes more general, as not only form and matter but all kinds of parts are called ‘constituents.’ The difference between the logical and the ontological usage of the word can be found also in the subsequent centuries up to the 20th century.

The notion of ‘constitution’ was taken up by various philosophers. It plays a special role in the philosophy of Kant, the first philosopher to bring up the so-called ‘problem of constitution,’ i.e., the problem whether we can state a number of rules that set out the frame in which cognitive experiences are empirically possible. Kant calls these rules ‘constitutive principles.’ He argues that they are synthetic a priori. They involve the use of the categories and are, thus, the conditions of the possibility of experience.

\textsuperscript{16} Cf. Hogrebe (1976, 993f).

\textsuperscript{17} Differentiae constitutionae. In medieval philosophy, this expression is replaced by the term ‘differentia specifica.’
Hogrebe points out that the big breakthrough of the notion of 'constitution' in philosophy comes with Husserl’s phenomenology. Husserl develops this notion quite independently from his philosophical predecessors. Ingarden states that ‘constitution’ is

“a specifically Husserlian concept which Husserl, in the way he uses it, does not owe to the philosophical tradition.”(Ingarden, 1957/1998, 236 [my translation])

One of the major goals of Husserl’s phenomenology is to give an account of the essential structures of our conscious activities. Husserl thinks that intentionality is one of the main characteristics of our mental acts, and he develops his account of constitution to explain this main feature of our mental life. In the next section I outline Husserl’s notion of ‘constitution’ in its historical development. I will point out some of the main features of Husserl’s account in order to illustrate how ‘constitution’ has been used to solve some of the problems that have been raised in the first chapter.

Husserl, of course, was not the last philosopher to work with the notion of ‘constitution.’ Carnap uses it in his book The Logical Structure of the World. He adopts the word ‘constitution’ in its logical meaning. According to Carnap, constituting an object or a concept means reducing it

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18 “Der eigentliche Durchbruch von Wort und Problem erfolgte aber zweifellos erst bei E. Husserl” (Hogrebe, 1976, 1002).

19 The way Husserl developed his notion of ‘constitution’ over the years, however, was influenced by his reading of Kant. For a detailed discussion cf. Kern (1964, pp. 246-275).

20 “...ein spezifisch Husserlscher Begriff, den Husserl, in dem von ihm verwendeten Sinn, nicht der philosophischen Tradition verdankt.”
to some other, more basic objects or concepts. This reduction is performed
by constitutional definitions. Carnap assumes that there are some basic
objects or concepts that cannot be further reduced and, thus, are not
constituted\textsuperscript{21}. He outlines his program at the beginning of his book:

"By constitutional system we mean a step-by-step ordering of
objects in such a way that the objects of each level are
constituted from those of the lower levels. Because of the
transitivity of reducibility, all objects of the constitutional
system are thus indirectly constituted from objects of the first
level. These basic objects form the basis of the system."
(Carnap, 1967, 6 [italics in the original])\textsuperscript{22}

In the philosophy of the second half of this century the notion of
'constitution' is also used. It was taken up, among others, by Searle,
Chomsky, and Habermas, who use it in the context of philosophy of
language. In addition, it has become a technical term in mereology.

Very recently, John Haugeland has adopted 'constitution' as a
central notion of his philosophical system. He tries to set out a new
understanding of the relation between mind and world in terms of that
notion. Haugeland's notion, strongly influenced by Kant's, is interesting
for two reasons. Firstly, he tries to give an account of how we can be

\textsuperscript{21} Mayer points out that there are significant parallels between Husserl's and Carnap's
notion of 'constitution.' (Cf. Mayer (1991) and (1992)). Mayer, however, discusses mainly
Husserl's \textit{Ideas} (vols. 1 and 2). She does not point out that for Husserl there are no basic
objects that form the basis of the system but she rather states that the basis of constitution
is (for both philosophers) the stream of consciousness. Husserl explicitly argues, however,
that the stream of consciousness is constituted. (Cf. Husserl, 1991, 77 [Hua X, 378]).

\textsuperscript{22} I have slightly changed the translation. The translator of the English edition translates
"Konstitutionssystem" as "constructional system" and "konstitutieren" as "construct." For
my point it is important, however, that in the original German version Carnap actually
uses the words "Konstitution" and "konstitutieren."
directed towards objects in our mental episodes; in other words, like Husserl he uses the notion of 'constitution' to explain intentionality. Secondly, he applies his account to problems that are raised in contemporary philosophy of mind. I will outline Haugeland's account below.\(^{23}\)

The notion of 'constitution,' as I have pointed out, was used by various philosophers to address the problems raised in the first chapter. I will now go on to compare and outline the positions of Husserl and Haugeland, two philosophers who come from very different backgrounds. Even though Haugeland never refers to Husserl, I will point out that there are notable parallels in their accounts of constitution which might give us a better idea of which kind of problems can be solved by adopting this notion. But even where these two philosophers disagree, we will get a feeling of the broad range of usage of 'constitution' and the choices one has when taking up that notion.

2.2 Husserl's Notion of 'Constitution': A Short Outline of its Development

The notion of 'constitution' played a central role in Husserl's philosophical writings throughout his life. As a consequence we find that it changes with all the major changes in Husserl's overall philosophical

\(^{23}\) Cf. section 2.3.
system. The problem in characterizing Husserl's use of that notion is that he never introduces it in a systematic way. Fink points out that it plays the role of an 'operative concept', i.e., a basic, undefined concept that serves to formulate the definitions of other concepts of the theory\textsuperscript{24}. For this reason I will outline Husserl's notion of 'constitution' in a historical way, i.e., I will show how and in what contexts Husserl uses that notion in various phases of his work.\textsuperscript{25}

Husserl interpreters debate whether the notion of 'constitution' is already operative in Husserl's first major publication, the \textit{Philosophy of Arithmetic}. The context in which he might have developed an early version of the notion of 'constitution' is his account of the origin of basic arithmetical notions like 'number,' 'collection,' and 'set.' He explains their origin by going back to the psychological activities of collecting and counting. One masters arithmetical notions by presenting a number of randomly chosen objects in fantasy. Then one concentrates, in a higher-order act, on the relation that holds among these objects. Since the objects are randomly chosen, these relations are psychological rather than physical: the only thing they essentially have in common is that they are objects of the same presentation. Abstracting more and more from the actual objects, one finally arrives at the concept of 'number.' In \textit{Formal and

\textsuperscript{24} Cf. Fink (1976, 203).

\textsuperscript{25} For a detailed historical study on Husserl's notion of 'constitution' cf. Sokolowski (1964) and Ströker (1993).
Transcendental Logic, some 30 years later, Husserl says in retrospect about this strategy that it was already what he later called a phenomenological-constitutive investigation. De Boer, however, points out that there is a very important difference between the constitution of numbers in higher-order acts, as Husserl describes it in Philosophy of Arithmetic, and the notion of 'constitution' he develops later:

"It is true that collective relations are produced by an act (i.e. an act of higher order). But this implies for Husserl in PA [i.e., in Philosophy of Arithmetic] that these relations do not exist on the side of the object. ... the act of higher order has no correlate of its own; there is no object of higher order." (de Boer, 1978, 119)

The basic difference between Husserl's account of higher-order acts in Philosophy of Arithmetic and the notion of 'constitution' as developed later is that in the former there is no object correlating to the act. There are no objects like numbers that are perceived in higher-order acts. Rather, they are created in these acts as subjective entities. Constitution, as Husserl uses the notion later, on the other hand, "implies that the act has a correlate which it constitutes." (de Boer, 1978, 119). According to de Boer this marks an essential difference between these two positions. He concludes that the notion of 'constitution' is not yet operative in Philosophy of Arithmetic. Other interpreters, however, hold that we are faced with an "initial, still deficient execution of a phenomenological

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26 Cf. Husserl (1969, 87 [Hua XVII, 90f]).
constitutive analysis.” (Bernet/Kern/Marbach, 1993, 17)\textsuperscript{27}. For my purposes it is not important to settle this question here. It is of interest, however, that Husserl holds in his early book that higher-order acts in which we are directed towards mathematical entities do not have corresponding objects in the world. They rather create an immanent, mental object. In his later account of constitution, on the other hand, he rejects the idea that constituting an object means creating it.

*Philosophy of Arithmetic* was criticized harshly by Frege for confounding logic and psychology. “In reading this work” he writes in his review “I was able to gauge the devastation caused by the influx of psychology into logic” (Frege, 1894/1972, 337). Husserl took this critique very seriously. Not only does he turn away from a psychologically based understanding of logic, he also formulates a profound and detailed critique of psychologism in the first part of his next book, the *Logical Investigations*\textsuperscript{28}. While it is debatable whether the notion of ‘constitution’ is already operative in *Philosophy of Arithmetic*, there can be no doubt that it is operative in the *Logical Investigations*. It is developed in three contexts, the constitution of meaning, the constitution of perception, and the categorical constitution.

\textsuperscript{27} A similar position is also held by Biemel (1959, 195) and Sokolowski (1964, 35).

\textsuperscript{28} The first part of *Logical Investigations* was published in 1900. In the foreword, Husserl mentions that the text of this part, which deals with psychologism, goes back to a series of lectures given at Halle in 1896, i.e., two years after Frege’s review. Alluding to his alleged psychologism in *Philosophy of Arithmetic* he remarks, quoting Goethe: “There is nothing with which one is more severe than the errors that one has just abandoned.” (Husserl, 1970, 43 [Hua XVIII, 7]).
Sokolowski stresses that Husserl's account of constitution in the *Logical Investigations* is influenced strongly by his distinction between intentional form and sensory matter or, as he calls it, the 'matter-form schema.' In this period Husserl distinguishes between intentional and non-intentional moments of the mental acts. The non-intentional ones are like unstructured, raw sense data that by themselves could not be directed towards an object. Intentionality comes into play only when these moments are apprehended by the intentional moments of the act. Husserl does not hold, however, that we do have raw sensations as independent acts on which the full-fledged acts of perception are based. Sensory matter and intentional form are moments of one and the same act: they could not exist independently from each other.

In *Logical Investigations* Husserl introduces the notion of 'constitution' in the context of meaning. When one reads or hears a word, one is primarily directed towards the physical appearance of this word (the ink on the paper or the sound waves, respectively). One is also directed, however, towards the meaning of the word and, in consequence, to the object it refers to. By treating the marks of ink on the paper as symbols or representations that stand for something else, we are directed, so to speak, through these symbols towards other objects. In these acts the meaning of the word is constituted. Husserl then extends this analysis to perception, where we are faced with a similar situation. When we look at an object,

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29 Cf. Sokolowski (1964, 54ff).
we see only one side of it under a certain perspective, or, to put it in Husserlian jargon, we have only an aspect [Abschattung] of the object. However, we do see the whole object and not only a part of it. The part of the object that we can see stands for the whole object in a similar sense as the material form of the word stands for its meaning. We perceive, so to speak, the full object through the aspect. The object is constituted in a series of perceptions, each of which gives us only one of its aspects.

The main application of the notion of 'constitution' is in the context of the perception of what Husserl calls 'categorical objects.' Apart from simple objects like this table or this book that we perceive in simple perception, we can also perceive relations between objects like the fact that the book lies on the table, for example. Husserl calls these objects to which we predicate form 'categorical objects' or 'states of affairs.' We are directed towards these objects in acts of categorical perception, and in these predication is achieved. "In the case of predicative acts of thinking [like categorical perception] the achievement of predication is an 'inner affair' of the predicative act." (Süßbauer, 1995, 262 [my translation]30). The ontological status of categorical objects, thus, is different from that of simple objects. They are based on simple objects, but they come into existence only when they are constituted, i.e., when the mind uses its predicative power of giving form to the state of affairs. "Thus, the

30 "Im Fall der prädikativen Akte des Denkens ist die Leistung der Prädikation eine 'innere Angelegenheit' des prädikativen Aktes."

categorical formation or creation of the form of the state of affairs means that the state of affairs has its form not independently of the predicative act. It is rather constructed or constituted by it.” (Süßbauer, 1995, 263 [my translation]31). Once they are constituted, however, they can be identified and recognized. Hence, they are created in the process of constitution.

How does this process of constitution work? In order to have categorical perception, Husserl says, we have to have two (or more) acts simultaneously. When I see that the book lies on the table, for example, I have to have two acts, one of which is directed towards the book and the other towards the table. These two acts, however, do not simply take place at the same time like two unconnected experiences. Rather, they are synthesized into one act which is directed towards the fact that the book lies on the table that is created by the act.

It is noteworthy that in Logical Investigations constitution requires an actual object that corresponds to the act in which it is constituted. Husserl allows, however, for an exception from this rule. In some cases, namely in categorical perception, the objects towards which we are directed do not exist independently of the act of perception. Rather they are created in the process of constitution.

31 “Diese kategoriale Formung oder Erzeugung der Sachverhaltsform bedeutet also, daß der Sachverhalt seine Form, seine gegliederte Struktur nicht unabhängig vom prädikativen Akt hat, sondern sie erst durch diesen konstruiert oder konstituiert wird.”
In the following years Husserl extends his notion of 'constitution' to a broader realm of objects. Husserl, who did not publish again for a full decade, presents this new development in his courses, mainly in the ones on Time Consciousness in 1905\(^{32}\) and on Thing and Space in 1907\(^{33}\). He discusses not only the constitution of the objects of outer perception, but also the constitution that takes place in acts of inner perception, i.e., in acts that are directed towards other mental acts, as it is the case when I remember the very act of seeing the tree before my window that occurred some time in the past (as opposed to remembering the tree), for example. This is the first time that Husserl talks not only about the constitution of the objects of our conscious experiences, but also about the constitution of these experiences themselves.

One of the basic assumptions of Husserl's phenomenology of time consciousness is that our mental acts are temporally extended. They consist of various temporal parts or partial intentions, as he calls them. Husserl distinguishes three kinds of these partial intentions: retentions, primal impressions, and protentions. Retentions are the parts of the act that are directed towards the object as it appeared just a moment ago.

\(^{32}\) The last part of Husserl's course *Hauptstücke aus der Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis* from 1904/05 was *On the Phenomenology of Time*. It was published, with some changes and some additions, in 1928 by Edith Stein and Martin Heidegger. This text is reprinted together with other texts on the same topic in Hua X. The English translation was published in 1991.

\(^{33}\) The later part of Husserl's course *Hauptstücke aus der Phänomenologie und Kritik der Vernunft* from 1907 which is often referred to as *Dingvorlesung [thing-lecture]* is published in Hua XVI. The English translation was published in 1997.
Primal impressions are directed towards the object at its present state, and protentions form expectations about the object's future states. Let us take the example of hearing a melody. The primal impressions of that act are directed towards the tone that is played right now, retentions towards the tones that were played just a moment ago. Protentions form the expectations of how the melody will continue. Husserl argues that we can explain the perception of temporally extended objects like melodies only by showing that a part of the act can be directed towards the immediate past and that we form expectations about the near future. If we could perceive only what happens right now, we would only hear a single tone. In order to hear a melody, however, we have to perceive a series of tones as a temporal sequence. The melody, Husserl argues, is constituted in the temporally extended act of perception.

By analyzing the temporal structure of the act, Husserl explains not only how we constitute temporally extended objects like melodies, but also how the conscious episodes themselves are constituted. The act of hearing a melody, for example, is constituted by all the partial intentions (retentions, protentions, and primal impressions) that are directed towards this melody.

If we shift our attention from the object of the partial intentions to these intentions themselves we realize that they are all part of one and the same consciousness; in other words, they form one stream of consciousness. Thus, the stream of consciousness, Husserl argues, is
constituted by the totality of these partial intentions. Consequently, we can find three levels of constitution in Husserl's account of time consciousness, the object of the episode, partial intentions, and the stream of consciousness:

(1) The things of experience in objective time... (2) the constituting appearance manifolds of various levels, the immanent units in pre-empirical time; (3) the absolute, time-constituting stream of consciousness.” (Husserl, 1991, 77 [Hua X, 73])

In the context of his phenomenology of inner time consciousness Husserl brings up a topic that will become crucial for his later account of constitution, namely his critique of the matter-form schema. I will discuss this topic below.

In this period, Husserl also exhibits some major developments of his philosophical position. In 1905\(^\text{35}\) he starts to elaborate a new method for phenomenology, the phenomenological reduction. In all of our conscious experiences, Husserl holds, we are directed towards some object. Normally our attention is fully directed towards these objects. We do not question their existence, we take it for granted. Husserl calls this unreflecting belief

\(^{34}\) In his course on time consciousness in 1905 Husserl distinguishes objective time, “the time of nature in the sense of natural science” (Husserl, 1991, 5 [Hua X, 4]) and immanent time, time as it is experienced. For methodological reasons, Husserl suspends all questions concerning objective time, which is why he speaks of pre-empirical time in this quotation. Sokolowski points out that the strategy of suspending objective time “foreshadow[s] the phenomenological reduction of his later philosophy” (Sokolowski, 1964, 74).

in the existence of the external world the 'natural attitude.' By performing the phenomenological reduction one changes from the natural to the phenomenological attitude. The key idea of the phenomenological reduction is to bracket all these unreflecting beliefs in the external world. At the same time one has to shift one's attention from the objects of our experiences to the experiences themselves. Let us take the example of some mental act like seeing a tree. In the natural attitude we are interested in the tree, we might want to have a picnic under it, give a scientific description of it, etc. In the phenomenological reduction the tree itself is no longer important. The aim is to describe the mental act in which the tree is given. The phenomenologist tries to explain how external objects like this tree (or any other thing) can be the object of our consciousness. The sceptical question whether the tree really exists or not, which might be a problem in the natural attitude, is not relevant. This does not mean, however, that the phenomenologist denies the existence of the world nor that the world does not play a role in phenomenological analysis. On the contrary, it plays an important role, but only insofar as it is object of our conscious experiences. The development of the phenomenological reduction, often described as Husserl's 'transcendental turn,' the outset of his 'transcendental phenomenology,' marks, according to Ströker, "a borderline between two different, although closely related, meanings of the Husserlian concept of constitution." (Ströker, 1993, 105).
It was not until 1913, with the publication of *Ideas I*, that Husserl presented his phenomenological reduction in writing. With this book he aimed to introduce phenomenology to a broader audience. Since Husserl is introducing a very original and complex line of thought, he decides not to discuss some of the topics that become relevant for his account of constitution and that he had developed earlier. He does not consider his critique of the matter-form schema that he began to develop in 1907 and does not talk about time consciousness, "so as to maintain free of confusion what first becomes transparent from the phenomenological standpoint alone" (Husserl, 1931, 236 [Hua III/1, 182]).

After the publication of *Ideas I*, the notion of 'constitution' is given an even more central position in Husserl's thought. This can be seen from the subtitle of the second, posthumously published volume of *Ideas*: *Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*. One of the crucial steps in this development is the distinction between static and genetic phenomenology that Husserl develops from 1917 on. Static phenomenology describes the kind of phenomenology that Husserl has previously developed. It takes for granted that we are dealing with certain realms of objects, like physical or mathematical objects, and certain kinds

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36 In the more recent translation (1982) this passage is translated quite differently and, as I think, wrongly. An even clearer statement of this idea can be found in Formal and Transcendental Logic, where Husserl says in retrospect that he did not discuss the topics of time consciousness in *Ideas I* for pedagogical reasons. Cf. Husserl (1969, 286 [Hua XVII, 292]).
of mental acts, like perceptions or memories, in which these objects are
given. The task of static phenomenology is to describe the regularities and
structures of the experiences in which we are directed towards these kinds
of objects.

In genetic phenomenology, on the other hand, one asks how it
comes about that we are dealing with these kinds of objects. Rather than
assuming that there are certain realms of objects, Husserl argues that they
are constituted. Genetic phenomenology tries to explain how we
constitute these various realms of objects. The question is no longer how
we can perceive physical objects. It is instead: how does it come about that
we constitute the realm of physical (or mathematical or etc.) objects? “The
object is no longer the guidepost as it is in static phenomenology. It is
rather something that has come to be.” (Bernet/Kern/Marbach, 1993, 201)

The aim of genetic phenomenology is to give an account of how we
constitute the objects towards which we are directed by analyzing the
components out of which our experiences are built. Husserl does that by
going back to his analyses of the temporal structure of consciousness. He
argues that both the mental act and its object are constituted from the
temporal parts of the stream of consciousness: retention, protention and
primal impressions. Each of these partial intentions is directed toward
some object, like a tone of a melody. The object itself, the melody, is
constituted by the series of partial intentions that are directed toward a
series of tones. The act of hearing the melody, on the other hand, is also
constituted by these partial intentions. It consists of all those partial intentions that are directed towards the same object, namely the melody.

In order to explain why these constitutional processes take place the way they do we also have to take the history of the subject into account. Husserl argues that whenever someone constitutes an object, this constitution leaves a kind of trace. If one constitutes a certain object very often, one forms a habit that shapes future constitutions:

"That a nature, a cultural world, a world of men with their social forms, and so forth, exist for me signifies that possibilities of corresponding experiences exist for me, as experiences that I can at any time bring into play and continue in a certain synthetic style, whether or not I am at present actually experiencing objects belonging to the realm in question. ... This involves a firmly developed habituality, acquired by a certain genesis in conformity with eidetic laws." (Husserl, 1960, 76 [Hua I, 109f])

Husserl's late account of constitution is shaped by his critique of the matter-form schema that he held in his early writings. When he taught his course on time consciousness in 1905 he argued that the partial intentions are composed of raw data that are apprehended by intentional forms. He held that the same matter that is at one moment apprehended in a primal intention as present will be apprehended at the next moment in a retention as past.

Between 1907 and 1909 he started to criticize this schema. His main argument against the schema is that it presupposes that there is a constant sensory content that is apprehended by different forms. He points out that
an impression of sound, for example, can only be apprehended as present. In the next moment there is no longer the impression of the sound that is just apprehended in a different way, but a consciousness of having had an impression. "In short, there is a radical alteration, an alteration that can never be described in the way in which we describe the changes in sensations that lead again to sensations. ... One must not materialize the contents of consciousness" (Husserl, 1991, 336 [Hua X, 324]).

In later writings, Husserl generalizes this point that he presented in the context of time consciousness in his critique of sense-datum theories. He never explicitly rejects the assumption that there are raw sense data that play a central role in the constitution of objects. He does claim, however, that all parts of consciousness are constituted. Husserl states that "[c]onsciousness consists in nothing but consciousness, and even sensation and phantasma is consciousness" (Hua XXIII, 265 [my translation]37), which means that there cannot be any raw data that are directly given to consciousness. In his study on the phenomenology of association, Holenstein shows that even though Husserl never explicitly drew that conclusion, there are clear passages that show that he overcame the matter-form schema also in the context of the constitution of objects38.

In the context of genetic phenomenology Husserl also develops his transcendental idealism. Since Husserl tries to explain the various realms

37 "Bewußtsein besteht durch und durch aus Bewußtsein, und schon Empfindungen so wie Phantasma ist 'Bewußtsein'."
38 Cf. Holenstein (1972, 110ff).
of objects by constitutional processes that are performed by the subject, it seems that he implies that the existence of these objects presupposes the existence of a subject that constitutes them. The question whether Husserl was an idealist or a realist is the subject of extensive debate which cannot be settled here. In more general terms I will discuss below whether constitution entails a form of idealism.

In his later phenomenology Husserl holds that there are several levels of constitution. Smith characterizes these levels in the following way:

“1.) normal intuitive spatio-temporal nature, the earth and natural things and stuff, both organic and inorganic, having real qualities and states and giving rise to sensations and also to practical motivations of various sorts; 2.) people and animals, moving and behaving in determinate ways, at rest, thinking, working, speaking, writing; 3.) artifacts, goods, implements, cultural objects, which presuppose deliberate, intelligent activity on the part of man; 4.) values and goals affecting our behaviour and at the same time giving sense and structure to our activities over time; 5.) morals and customs, languages, various social units and socially constituted entities with their particular norms and conventions.” (Smith, 1995, p. 415)

Each of these levels is based on the lower ones in the sense that we could not constitute the higher levels if we had not constituted the lower ones. This does not mean that there is a causal connection between these levels, in which the lower levels bring about the higher ones, as Holenstein

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39 Cf. chapter 5.
points out\textsuperscript{40}. In what follows, I will concentrate only on the basic processes of constitution; I will not discuss the various levels of constitution and their interrelation.

In the context of genetic phenomenology Husserl also develops the distinction between active and passive genesis. Husserl defines the difference by saying that in passive constitution the ego is not involved, in active constitution it is\textsuperscript{41}. The first level of constitution is, according to Husserl, passive. We constitute the spatio-temporal world with its basic elements (physical objects etc.) only due to the temporal structure of consciousness and laws of association. These features do not involve the ego. The constitution of cultural objects, abstract entities, etc., on the other hand, cannot be reduced to these basic processes. It does involve an ego that actively constitutes it. Both active and passive constitution can create a habit and shape future constitution. "Not only passive formations of unity but also actively produced configurations of sense become habitual acquisitions of the subject." (Bernet/Kern/Marbach, 1993, 202).

In Husserl’s last texts, kinesthetic experiences play a more and more central role in passive constitution. Together with the temporal structure of consciousness and association they are seen as one of the three levels of passivity.

\textsuperscript{40} Cf. Holenstein (1972, 27).

\textsuperscript{41} At a later stage Husserl mentions that the difference between active and passive is only a gradual one and that no strict borderline can be drawn. This is because he holds at this time that there are no processes where the ego is not involved; it is, however, involved to a greater or lesser degree.
In this section I have outlined Husserl’s account of constitution in the various phases of his work. It is important to see that his notion of ‘constitution’ changes with the major changes in his overall philosophical position. It is also interesting that Husserl put more and more emphasis on this notion in the later periods of his work. In the next section I will outline Haugeland’s account. I will then go on to confront these two positions, concentrating on some central features of their notions of ‘constitution.’

2.3  Haugeland’s ‘Constitutive Standards’

Haugeland introduces his notion of ‘constitution’ with a Dretslian argument against causal theories of perception. According to these theories we perceive objects as objects because our perception is caused by them. I see a bicycle, for example, because there is an actual bicycle in front of me that causes a certain visual experience by reflecting light, etc. Dretske criticizes this argument. He notes that the object cannot cause the experience directly, but only over several steps of a causal chain. When I see a bicycle, the light that comes from the sun is reflected by the bicycle and has to travel through the air until it hits my eyes, where it causes certain neuro-physiological processes that finally cause the visual

\[42\] In what follows I am referring to Dretske (1981, 153-168).
experience of the bicycle. The object itself is only one of many causal antecedents of the perception. Now Dretske raises the question: what allows us to single out this specific part of the causal chain as the object of the experience? Causal theories cannot explain why one of the causal antecedents should play a more special role than the other ones.

Dretske's contention is that in order to single out the object of the experience we have to put our emphasis not only on the causal chain that brings about the experience but also on the informational relationships between the experience and its object. The basic idea is that a state of affairs can carry information about its causal antecedents. However, informational relationships differ in two important respects from the causal ones.

First, a state of affairs can carry information about one of its distant causal antecedents without carrying information about proximal ones. This is the case when a state of affairs can cause another one in various different ways. Let us consider the example of a friend who sends me an email message every week. He writes them on a program that runs on his server and, when he is done, clicks the send-button; the message is sent to my server. It is not sent directly, though, it has to pass through several other computers and possibly a satellite before it arrives at its destination. There is a wide variety of paths from my friend's server to mine, and two messages do not have to take the same path to travel from one server to another. In fact, they typically take different paths. Now, the fact that I
receive an email from my friend carries the information about the server on which he wrote it, but it does not carry any information about the path it has taken from his server to mine. The fact that there is an email in my mailbox thus carries information about a distal cause without carrying information about a more proximal one.

Second, if a state of affairs carries information about one of its causal antecedents, it can at the same time carry information about the causal antecedents of this latter state of affairs. When I hear that the doorbell is ringing, for example, my sensory experience does not only carry the information that the doorbell is ringing, but also that somebody pressed the doorbutton. The experience, thus, carries information not only about its object, but also about causal antecedents of its object. The information that the doorbell is ringing, however, has a special status because we get the information that somebody pressed the doorbutton via this information and not vice versa. Thus, the experience gives a primary representation of the ringing of the bell, but not of the pressing of the doorbutton.

With these two characteristics of informational relationships we can, according to Dretske, explain why the object of experience plays a special role in the causal chain. He states that

"the object of the experience in question (what it is we see, hear, smell and taste) is that object (or set of objects) whose properties the experience represents in a primary way." (Dretske, 1981, 162)
This means that the object of the experience is the most proximal of the causal antecedents about which the experience carries information. When I see a red table, for example, the experience cannot carry information about any of the causal antecedents that are more proximal than the red table. Otherwise, the more proximal cause, e.g., some neurological process, would be the object of the experience. In order to show why physical objects and not some neuro-physiological processes are the objects of our experiences, Dretske has to show that one and the same physical object can cause the same experience in various ways. He argues this point by noting that I can see the same red table at one point in bright daylight and later in dim candlelight. In both cases I have the same experience, I see a red table, but the neurological stimulation differs dramatically. Similarly, when I walk around the table I see it from different perspectives. The image projected on the retina changes continuously, but I always perceive the table as rectangular. In these cases, the same object causes the same experience via different stimulation of the nervous system.

In his article "Objective Perception" Haugeland discusses Dretske’s argument. He shares the concern about causal theories of perception, but criticizes Dretske’s solution of the problem. We have seen that Dretske has to show that an experience cannot carry information about any of its causal antecedents that are more proximal than its object. To support this claim, Haugeland argues, it is not enough to show that the neurological stimuli that cause the experience differ a little. Rather, Dretske has to show
that there is a qualitative difference, i.e., a difference in kind, between the various ways of causing the experience. Otherwise, the experience would carry information, if not about the exact stimulus, at least about the kind of stimulus that caused it. Thus, not the red table, but the kind of stimulus that caused the red-table experience would be the object of that experience. Let me illustrate this point with the previous example. Even though the fact that there is an email in my mailbox does not carry information about the particular path it has taken from the sender’s server to mine, it does carry the information about the kind of path it has taken, namely that it was sent over the internet where it has passed through several computers and possibly a satellite. In a similar way, Haugeland argues, a visual experience carries the information about the kind of neurological stimulation that has caused it. Thus, if Dretske’s account were right, the kind of stimulation and not the red table would be the object of the red-table experience. This shows that we cannot single out the object of experience in the causal chain on the basis of informational relations as defined by Dretske.

Haugeland proposes an interesting idea to solve Dretske’s problem. In order to perceive objects as objects, he argues, one has to be committed to constitutive standards. The object of one’s experience, then, is determined not only by the causal antecedents of the experience, but also by the constitutive standards to which one is committed. He illustrates this point with his favorite example, the perception of chess pieces and
moves. The material appearance of chess pieces can vary immensely. One can play chess with wooden figures on a board or — like Dr. B. in Stefan Zweig’s novel *The Royal Game* — with little pieces of bread, some of them colored with dust, on a chequered bed cover. Chess pieces can even take the form of patterns on a computer screen. Whether we perceive something as a chess piece or not does not depend on its physical form, nor on its material properties, but on the function that is assigned to it according to the rules of chess. Similarly, a move of these pieces qualifies as a chess move if it accords with the rules of the game, or at least (in the case of a mistake) if the player who makes the move generally conforms to these rules and is ready to correct an error when one is pointed out. Chess rules, then, are constitutive standards for the perception of chess pieces. In other words, if one does not know the basic rules of chess, one cannot perceive chess pieces, one cannot see a rook, for example.

Chess perception is a convincing example because it shows nicely how commitment to constitutive standards, namely the rules of chess, enables us to perceive a certain sort of objects and events, i.e., chess pieces and moves. The problem with this example is, however, that it suggests that this holds only in cases where one perceives something, a piece of wood, a bread crumb, or etc., as something else, namely as a chess piece. Haugeland stresses, however, that every experience that is about an object presupposes constitutive standards. When we look at the same object and you see a rook while I see a nicely shaped piece of wood, for example, the
difference is not that you have constitutive standards while I do not. In order to see an object, we both have to be committed to constitutive standards. The difference between your and my visual experience is that your constitutive standards include the rules of chess, while mine don’t. “What the perception is of is that which the constitutive standards govern” (Haugeland, 1996/98, 253).

The example of chess perception is special also in the sense that its constitutive standards, the rules of chess, can be fully spelled out. This is not true, however, for all of our constitutive standards, nor is it a necessary condition for having them. Haugeland states that even in the case of chess perception it is sufficient to have “some grasp or understanding of the game of chess” (Haugeland, 1996/98, 248). For understanding the game of chess one does not have to be able to fully spell out the rules of the game. In fact, many people who play chess are probably not able to do so. Nor is reading a rulebook sufficient for understanding the game. In many cases we have experiences of objects relative to constitutive standards which cannot be spelled out as easily as chess rules (if they can be spelled out at all), for example when we see rocks, sticks, or clouds. Consequently, being committed to certain constitutive standards cannot be equated with holding a certain set of beliefs.43

43 Haugeland argues that being committed to constitutive standards does not even require language capacities, but it does require the having of concepts. This argument is based on the assumption that having concepts does not require language. (Cf. 1996/98, 255ff). Haugeland tries to support this assumption with a rather adventurous thought experiment about super-monkeys that do not master a language but play chess and thus apply concepts.
On the basis of his account of constitutive standards Haugeland can solve Dretske's problem. When I perceive a chess piece, it is essential that my perception is actually caused by this chess piece. But how can I single out the chess piece in the chain of causal antecedents of my chess perception? We do that, according to Haugeland, on the basis of the constitutive standards that we are committed to. In case I have a doubt whether I have actually seen a rook or rather a bishop that I have misperceived as a rook, Haugeland argues, the constitutive standards determine where I have to double-check. Let us, for example, assume that due to a strange perspective and lighting, the retinal patterns that are caused by the rook resemble those that are typically caused by a bishop under normal perceptual circumstances (good light, optimal perspective, etc.). Can we say in this case that I correctly perceive the retinal patterns of a bishop or rather that I misperceive the rook? Haugeland answers that clearly the latter is the case because according to our constitutive standards of chess it is not the retinal pattern but the object on the board that matters. In other words, constitutive standards of chess are about chess pieces rather than retinal patterns.

On the basis of Haugeland's response to Dretske's problem we can see where the normative element of the mental comes in. Haugeland states that

He does not, however, explain what exactly concepts are. Since this argument is not central for the present point, I will not discuss it in more detail.
"the norms governing the perceptions as such, and in virtue of which they can be objective, are inseparable from the standards governing, and indeed, constituting, the chess phenomena as such." (Haugeland, 1996/98, 254)

We have seen how Haugeland responds to Dretske's problem with his account of constitution. But what exactly does it mean to be committed to constitutive standards? In a later article "Truth and Rule Following" Haugeland gives a more detailed account of constitution that he develops in close analogy to the notion of rule following. He distinguishes four aspects of constitution: constitutive regulations, constitutive standards, constitutive skills, and existential or constitutive commitment. These are mere aspects of the process of constitution. Unlike Husserl's layers of constitution they do not allow for distinctions in the realm of constituted objects. Let us elaborate each in turn.

Constitutive regulations are pretty much like the rules of a game, regulations that set out what the agents or players may or may not, must or must not do. If we take the chess game as an example, the constitutive regulations are those that settle what moves are legal in the game and when the players are entitled to make them, etc.

Constitutive standards, on the other hand, govern not only the actions of the players, but all phenomena that occur within a game. They not only determine what moves are legal, but also how the game has to be set up. These standards specify what can and what cannot happen in the game and so determine the various positions and figures of that game. In
the case of chess the constitutive standards define what a rook is or what
castling is, and so on.

The third aspect of constitution, constitutive skills, are “resilient
abilities to tell whether the phenomena governed by some constitutive
standards are, in fact, in accord with the constitutive standards.”
(Haugeland, 1998, 323). While, as I have noted above, chess players need
not be able to spell out the constitutive standards of a game in order to
play it, they have to be in possession of the constitutive skills that are
required by the game. A player, in other words, has to be able to recognize
illegal moves, correct them, and insist on their illegality if performed by
the other player. Apart from constitutive skills we also have, according to
Haugeland, mundane skills that are different from the former, though
interdependent with them. Mundane skills “are the resilient abilities to
recognize, manipulate, and otherwise cope within the game, including
other players, as required and permitted by the rules — in effect, the ability
to engage in the play.” (Haugeland, 1998, 323).

Finally, the most basic of the four aspects of constitution is
constitutive commitment which Haugeland describes as “a dedicated or
even devoted way of living: a determination to carry on.” (Haugeland,
1998, 341). It is a commitment to hold constitutive standards, apply
constitutive skills and behave according to constitutive regulations.
Haugeland argues that constitutive commitment is a governing rule the
authority of which “comes from nowhere other than itself, and it is
brought to bear in no way other than by its own exercise” (Haugeland, 1998, 341). Constitutive commitment, thus, is an attitude to apply rules, a basic rule that cannot be further reduced to other rules.

On the basis of the distinction between these aspects Haugeland sets out his account of constitution. How can he explain that we are directed towards objects? The most basic element of constitution is constitutive commitment, i.e., the commitment to perform constitution in the first place. The objects of perception are constituted according to the constitutive standards that we hold. Chess objects, for example, are constituted because the rules of chess are part of the constitutive standards held by the person who perceives them. Consequently, if the rules of chess had never been invented, chess objects would not exist. Constitutive standards can be applied only on the basis of constitutive skills. In other words, chess players have to be able to see whether a certain move is a legal chess move or not, i.e., whether it conforms to the rules of chess or not. Finally, the constitutive regulations determine what options a player has, what moves he can make and so on.

We have seen that, according to Haugeland, the objects of perception are constituted according to constitutive standards. What does that entail about the ontological status of these objects? Haugeland answers this question in a deliberately provocative way. “To constitute is to bring into being.” (Haugeland, 1998, 325). He argues, however, that this does not mean that ‘constituting an object’ means ‘creating it’ nor does it
mean 'interpreting something as an object'. Constitution, Haugeland states, rather means 'letting be.' He clarifies that slogan by defining objects as loci of potential incompatibilities in a constituted domain. But what exactly are loci of potential incompatibilities? When we look at the chess game, for example, our mundane skills allow us to perceive chess pieces and moves. We can perceive rooks and diagonal moves on the chessboard. The constitutive standards of chess, however, do not allow us to move rooks diagonally. They can only be moved along the vertical and horizontal lines of the board. Consequently, moving the rook diagonally, though conceivable, is incompatible with the constitutive standards of the game. It is, as Haugeland puts it, in the excluded zone. Rooks and moves, thus, are loci where the incompatibilities with the constitutive standards can arise. In consequence, they are objective phenomena of the chess game.

Another example of an incompatibility in a constituted domain is a physical object that does not behave as predicted by the laws of physics. In that case, the behavior of the physical object that is perceived on the basis of our mundane skills is incompatible with the constitutive standards that govern the perception of physical objects. This incompatibility might lead

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45 Haugeland distinguishes between two notions of 'possible': 'Possible' in the narrow or strict sense "includes only that which would accord with the constitutive standards, were it to occur." (Haugeland, 1998, 332). 'Possible' in the wider sense, or 'conceivable,' "comprises everything that the players, qua players, would have the resources to recognize or otherwise cope with, were it to occur." (Haugeland, 1998, 332). The excluded zone is "that
to a change in the constitutive standards, i.e., the laws of physics. The physical object is constituted as an object because this incompatibility can arise.

"Constitutive standards and the zone they exclude give sense to a distinctive sort of potential incompatibility among particular mundane exercises. Constituted objective phenomena are the loci of these potential incompatibilities. Such loci are what constitution lets phenomena be — namely, as we shall see, empirical objects." (Haugeland, 1998, 337)

We can discover these incompatibilities only due to our constitutive skills which are co-constituted with the object. Once an incompatibility has been detected, there are several ways to react. If the phenomenon we perceive on the basis of our constitutive standards is an illegal chess move, for example, we have to correct the phenomenon by insisting on the constitutive standards. If, on the other hand, we perceive a physical phenomenon that is incompatible with the constitutive standards, we have two options: (i) We can either have a better look or adjust our instruments of measurement, i.e., improve our constitutive skills. (ii) In some cases we will have to change or improve the constitutive standards, e.g., the laws of physics.

Haugeland's account of constitution provides interesting ideas. I think, however, that there is a problem with his characterization of constitutive

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zone of the conceivable that lies 'out of bounds' for some domain — that which, though conceivable, is impossible in the strict sense.” (Haugeland, 1998, 333).
commitment. As I have pointed out above, Haugeland's distinction between the four aspects of constitution is closely related to the notion of 'rule following.' His preferred examples are games, mainly chess and baseball. But this strategy leads to the following problem. If Haugeland's characterization of constitutive commitment is right, constitution is something that we can, but do not have to perform. He states that it takes "self-discipline and resolute persistence" (Haugeland, 1998, 341) to perform constitution. Does that mean that I can decide whether I want to have constitutive commitment or not? Can I decide to give up constitutive commitment for a two week holiday after a stressful period and then take it up again, like a chess game? I think that Haugeland does not point out clearly enough that once we are trained to have a certain constitutive commitment, we can no longer step outside it. We might change our constitutive standards, improve our constitutive skills, or etc., but it is impossible to give up constitutive commitment, nor does it take any effort or self-discipline to perform it. I will come back to that problem below.

2.4 Some central features of constitution: Contrasting Husserl and Haugeland

Having outlined Husserl's and Haugeland's account of constitution I will now go on to contrast these two positions. I will point out the similarities

46 Cf. section 3.4.
and differences of these two accounts, concentrating on some central points of their notions of 'constitutions.' In so doing, I want to prepare the field for an account of constitution that can narrow the gap between the mental and the physical.

The basic differences between Husserl’s and Haugeland’s notion of ‘constitutions’ stem from the differences in their overall philosophical position. Husserl’s notion of ‘constitutions’ has to be understood within the context of phenomenology, a position that works with a strict method, the phenomenological reduction, and a clear goal, the description of the essential elements of conscious phenomena from a first person point of view. Husserl uses the notion of constitution as an operational concept, i.e., a basic concept that is not defined and that serves to define the other concepts of the theory. Haugeland, on the other hand, does not share this methodological framework. Even though he refers in several places to the philosophy of Heidegger, his account is not phenomenological. Haugeland does not apply the phenomenological reduction, and his account is not descriptive in Husserl’s sense. His position reflects the discussion of contemporary philosophy of mind, which results in his adoption of holism and the analogy between constitution and rule following. Unlike Husserl, Haugeland attempts to give a clear characterization of the process of constitution by defining the four aspects of constitution.
The central part of both accounts is the constitution of the objects of our mental states and episodes. Both philosophers state clearly that 'constituting an object' does not mean 'creating it'. In other words, objects do not pop into existence in the process of constitution. Husserl, however, allows for exceptions from this principle. We have seen above that he holds that categorical objects come to exist in the process of constitution. These objects, however, are based on other objects that have to exist independently of the process of constitution. The categorical object or state of affairs that the book lies on the table, for example, depends on a book and a table the existence of which does not depend on the constitution of the categorical object.

It is important not to confuse constitution and creation because that would lead to a very crude form of idealism that neither philosopher would accept. Nonetheless, the charge of idealism has been or can be brought up with respect to Husserl's position. The fact that Husserl characterizes his own position as transcendental idealism seems to be a clear sign that it has some idealistic tendencies. In a letter from 1934, however, he writes:

"No ordinary 'realist' has ever been as realistic and as concrete as I, the phenomenological 'idealist' (a word which by the way I no longer use)" (Husserl, 1994, 16 [my translation])

47 "Kein gewöhnlicher 'Realist' ist je so realistisch und so concret gewesen als ich, der phänomenologische 'Idealist' (ein Wort, das ich übrigens nicht mehr gebrauche)". It seems quite important that Husserl made this remark in 1934 and thus in the last period of his
The question whether Husserl really was a realist or an idealist is still the subject of extensive debate among Husserl exegetes. One can find advocates for every conceivable position: it is argued that Husserl is an idealist⁴⁸, that he is a realist⁴⁹, that he is neutral with respect to this question⁵⁰ and even that this question cannot be asked meaningfully in the context of Husserlian phenomenology⁵¹. I will not discuss this exegetical question here. For my purposes it is interesting to see that the charge of idealism has been brought against philosophers who have made significant use of the notion of 'constitution,' most notably Husserl⁵². This leads to the more general question whether an account of constitution necessarily entails a form of idealism. I will discuss this question in chapter 5.

I have noted above that both philosophers agree that the constitution of an object must not be mistaken for the creation of an object. They also agree that constitution does not mean interpreting something as work for sometimes it is argued that Husserl’s early philosophy tends to be realistic, while after the publication of the Ideas in 1913 (or after the transcendental turn in 1905/06) it tends towards idealism. Cf., for example, Ingarden (1939/1998, 183).

⁴⁸ Cf., e.g., Ingarden (1975), or Philipse (1995). Ingarden states explicitly that there is a connection between the development of Husserl’s notion of ‘constitution’ and that of his transcendental idealism, cf. (1975, 21ff).


⁵² A similar point could be made concerning Kant’s transcendental idealism. I have pointed out above (section 2.1) that the notion of ‘constitution’ plays a central role in Kant’s philosophy.
something else. Both Husserl and Haugeland would argue that there cannot be a realm of basic objects that are not constituted and which are interpreted as something else in the process of constitution. According to Haugeland, the thesis that constitution is interpretation of something that is not constituted as something else "is philosophically self-defeating" (Haugeland, 1998, 326). He explains:

"[I]f all constitution were mere counting-as, it would always presuppose, hence never contribute to, an account of objectivity — which would forfeit the point" (Haugeland, 1998, 327)

In addition, one would have to explain how we can possibly perceive these basic objects — be it atoms, sticks, or etc. — that are then going to be interpreted as something else, e.g., as rooks or tables. An account of this kind would have to hold that there are some objects that we do not have to constitute, i.e., that are immediately given and that all other objects are built on.

The two philosophers would also reject the thesis that constituting an object means reducing it to some other, more basic object. This project, proposed by Carnap in *The Logical Structure of the World*, assumes that all objects can be reduced by constitutional definition to some basic objects that cannot be further reduced. Neither Husserl nor Haugeland discuss Carnap’s notion of ‘constitution.’ The idea of reducing objects to other objects of a more basic level by constitutional definition is not compatible with either of their accounts for it presupposes that there are basic objects
that form the basis of the system and, thus, are not constituted (in the sense that they cannot be reduced to other objects by constitutional definition). In addition, the idea of constitutional definition is foreign to both accounts.

We have seen that for both philosophers constitution is not creation, nor counting-as or reducing to. So what is constitution for them and what are objects constituted from? As I have discussed, Haugeland answers this question with the slogan 'constitution is letting be.' He defines objective phenomena in a formal way, namely as 'loci of potential incompatibilities in a constituted domain.' Haugeland does not explain what objects are constituted from. According to his account, we can conceive objects only relative to constitutive standards. This account does not allow for explaining what a table is in terms of the parts that it is composed of, its atomic structure, for example. Seeing something as a table or as a bunch of atoms means only applying different constitutive standards. According to Haugeland we cannot conceive that there is some raw, unstructured matter, i.e., matter that is not constituted, that every object is composed of.

Husserl's account of constitution, as we have seen, explains how we can group a series of moments of the stream of consciousness together and thus have one act of perception of one and the same object. According to Husserl, there are various strata of constitution, some of which can be explained in terms of more basic ones, as we have seen in the example of
time-consciousness and the constitution of temporal phenomena. Like Haugeland, he argues, however, that one cannot arrive at the most basic stratum that is composed of phenomena that are not constituted. No matter how far down we can go in our analyses, we will always find phenomena that are themselves constituted. The question of how the constituted object is related to the 'real object' in the physical world is not relevant for Husserl; he works within the phenomenological reduction and thus brackets the realm of the outer world.

According to Husserl's account, not only the objects that we are directed at in our mental acts, but also these mental acts themselves, are constituted. When I see a table, for example, not only the table, but also the mental act of seeing it is constituted. Conscious phenomena, as we have seen above, are constituted by their temporal moments (retentions, protentions and primal impressions). This move is quite interesting undermining as it does the Cartesian idea that thoughts or mental activities are the basic elements of our mental life that cannot be further analyzed.

Haugeland does not talk about the constitution of mental phenomena, but his account can cover this aspect. All he needs to argue is that there are constitutive standards for the realm of the mental. These might be the rules of folk psychology like 'you can see an object only if this object is actually in front of you' or 'if you believe that Paris is the capital of France you cannot at the same time believe that Vienna is the capital of
France.' According to these rules, there are potential incompatibilities like 'I see a table' and 'There is no table in front of me;' or 'I believe that Paris is the capital of France' and 'I believe that Vienna is the capital of France,' uttered by the same person, one sentence right after the other. The loci of these potential incompatibilities are the mental phenomena 'seeing some object' or 'believing that something is the case.' Thus, they are objective phenomena with respect to the constitutive standards of mental phenomena. In consequence, every change in the constitutive standards that govern the realm of the mental brings about a change in our mental lives.

Another element that we find only in Husserl's account is that every constitution that is performed leaves traces. If we constitute a certain object or kind of object very often, we form a disposition to perform this constitution in the future. With this idea Husserl can account for the conservative character of constitution, i.e., for the fact that we tend to go on constituting the same (kinds of) objects unless there are strong reasons for a change. The more common a certain way of seeing things is, the stronger the reasons for a change have to be. It is, thus, much more unlikely that one would give up the constitution of everyday objects like chairs than that of objects like neutrinos that are posited by scientific theories.
Haugeland does not talk about traces or habits. He just states the conditions for when and how we have to make changes in our constitutive standards or in the constitutive domain. These changes involve considerable reasoning and probably higher-order constitutive standards. These changes, however, can take place also in mental lives of little complexity and in very simple and basic mental phenomena. In these cases we do not need to reason to effect changes; they do not require any intellectual activity. Haugeland's approach, thus, seems to require a strategy that is far too complex.

In conclusion, we can state that both philosophers talk about the constitution of the objects of our mental states. Husserl brings in an additional element by arguing that our mental states are also constituted. Haugeland does not talk about the constitution of mental phenomena, but with his theory he can account for that aspect of constitution. I have pointed out that the charge of idealism has been brought up with respect to Husserl's positions; this raises the question whether or not constitution amounts to an endorsement of form of idealism. I will discuss that question below. Finally, Husserl argues that every constitution that is performed leaves a trace. With this, he can account for the conservative character of constitution.
In chapter 1 I justified the need for an account of constitution. I pointed out that the distinction between the mental and the physical, if it is given too much weight, can lead to serious philosophical problems. The fear of falling back on Cartesian dualism has given rise to reductionist and eliminativist positions which, as I argued, cannot cope with the fundamental differences between the realm of the mental and the realm of the physical.

I proposed that the notion of ‘constitution’ can give us an alternative view of the relation between mind and world that does not run into these philosophical problems. After a short overview of the history of that concept I outlined the positions of Husserl and Haugeland, two philosophers from very different backgrounds who have adopted the notion of ‘constitution.’ Finally, I contrasted these two positions and pointed out some central features of constitution.

In this chapter I want to propose an account of constitution that can provide an understanding of the relation between mind and world that acknowledges, but does not overemphasize, the differences between these two realms. I will argue that in the case of perception, mental episodes
stand not only in a causal, but also in a direct, intentional relation to the perceived object. The notion of 'intentionality' is taken to be a basic notion that cannot be further analyzed. Hence, the account of constitution does not explain why we are directed towards objects, but describes how this relation is established. Then I will take up the idea that not only are the objects of our mental episodes constituted, but so are these mental episodes themselves. On this basis I will argue that one could not have mental episodes if one were not part of a social group of thinking beings. In sum, the notion of 'constitution' will help to advance a perspective on the relation between 'constitution' will help to advance a perspective on the relation between mind and world that follows Putnam's slogan

"...let the metaphor be this: the mind and the world jointly make up the mind and the world" (Putnam, 1981, xi)

3.1 The Fundamental Difference between the Realm of the Mental and the Realm of the Physical

The need for an account of the relation between mind and world comes from an understanding that these two realms are fundamentally different. Sellars acknowledges this difference when he argues:

"Now the idea that epistemic facts can be analyzed without remainder — even 'in principle' — into non-epistemic facts, whether phenomenal or behavioral, public or private, with no matter how lavish a sprinkling of subjunctives and hypotheticals is, I believe, a radical mistake — a mistake of a
piece with the 'naturalistic fallacy' in ethics." (Sellars, 1997, 19, § 5)

The naturalistic fallacy in ethics is the attempt to derive normative ethical conclusions from purely descriptive premises. By mentioning that fallacy, Sellars implies that sentences that express epistemic facts cannot be derived from descriptions of physical facts. Epistemic facts and the logical space of reason, thus, involve some basic property that cannot be reduced to any physical property. What is this property that makes the logical space of reason unique?

One could argue with Brentano that mental phenomena are special because they, and only they, are intentionally directed towards other phenomena. The notion of 'intentionality,' like the notion of 'good' in ethics, one could say, cannot be reduced to any notion of the realm of the physical. The problem with this line of reasoning is, however, that we can find intentionality not only in the realm of the mental. Linguistic entities, written sentences that consist of ink traces on paper, for example, can represent objects or states of affairs as well; in other words, they are intentional, too. Thus, the Brentanist has to show that only mental phenomena have original intentionality and that all other forms of intentionality are derived from the mind's original intentionality, a commitment that some philosophers — among them Sellars — are not ready to make.53

53 For a discussion of this point cf. Chisholm/Sellars (1958).
As I outlined in chapter one, Sellars argues rather that the logical space of reason is based on rational relations between conceptual contents. Thus, there are two respects in which it is different from the logical space of nature. Firstly, the logical space of reason is the realm of the conceptual and secondly, the various positions in that space are justified by or justify other positions within that space. Neither of these holds for the realm of the physical. The positions in the logical space of nature are neither conceptual nor do they stand in rational relations to one another. Rather, they stand exclusively in law-like relations of cause and effect. In addition, these scientific laws hold necessarily.

This does not hold for the logical space of reason. As we have seen in chapter one, the relations between various positions in that space are not physically necessary, but rather normative ones. Making an inference from one position in the space of reason to another one depends on a correct application of the rules of logic. In other words, it can be questioned whether we are actually entitled to perform such an inference or not. In the realm of the physical, on the other hand, the question whether there is a causal connection between two physical events does not depend on the correct application of the laws of physics. These laws rather describe the relations that hold in the realm of the physical.

In addition, there is a second aspect of the normative element of the logical space of reason. Many of the positions in the logical space of reason are about the world. When we believe that something is the case, for
example, the belief can be true or false, depending on how the world actually is. And, again, while it makes sense to ask whether a belief is correct or not, it does not make sense to ask whether a physical phenomenon is correct.

Thus, the Sellarsian statement that reductionism commits a fallacy that is of a piece with the naturalistic fallacy in ethics can be explained in the following way: the logical space of reason, in contrast to the logical space of nature, is governed by normative rules. One cannot develop an account of the logical space of reason in terms of the laws of physics without losing one of its essential aspects, the normative element. Therefore, Sellars is justified in insisting that there is a fundamental difference between the realm of the mental and the realm of the physical.

Sellars's anti-reductionist argument has been criticized by various philosophers. It has been argued that even though there is a difference between the two logical spaces, a reduction might be possible. One day, when neuroscience will have made major developments, it is argued, it will be able to account for that normative element in purely scientific terms. Once this is achieved, we will have a better understanding of the normative aspect of the realm of the mental. Churchland, for example, writes:

"Eliminative materialism thus does not imply the end of our normative concerns. It implies only that they will have to be reconstituted at a more revealing level of understanding, the level that a matured neuroscience will provide." (Churchland, 1981, 84)
The problem with this line of reasoning is, however, that these arguments are based on faith in the future development of science. Since Churchland cannot tell us what this future neuroscience will look like nor how it can reconstitute normativity at a more revealing level, it is difficult to show that he is wrong (as well as it is difficult for him to convince us that he is right). It is quite interesting, however, that in the three arguments concerning the normative element of the realm of the mental that he develops in his article “Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes,” he does not seem to take the problem very seriously. His first argument is that

"the fact that the regularities ascribed by the intentional core of FP [Folk Psychology] are predicated on certain logical relations among propositions is not by itself grounds for claiming anything essentially normative about FP. To draw a relevant parallel, the fact that the regularities ascribed by the classical gas law are predicated on arithmetical relations between numbers does not imply anything essentially normative about the classical gas laws." (Churchland, 1981, 82)

This argument, I think, is based on a confusion of two different levels, namely that of the description of relations and that of the relations described. There is no doubt that there are rational relations between various descriptions of scientific facts. These relations can even be expressed in the language of mathematics or logic. The relations described in science, however, are causal, and not rational. The relations of the logical space of reason, on the other hand, are rational. Sellars's argument
is that the relations in the logical space of reason are rational not because there are logical relations between the descriptions of the various positions in that logical space, but because rational relations hold between those positions that are described. The normative element, thus, is intrinsic to the logical space of reason. It does not enter "because we happen to value most of the patterns ascribed by FP" (Churchland, 1981, 83).

Churchland’s second argument is that “the laws of FP ascribe to us only a very minimal and truncated rationality, not an ideal rationality as some have suggested.” (Churchland, 1981, 83). Folk Psychology can never reach that ideal because we “have no clear and finished conception of ideal rationality” (Churchland, 1981, 83). If we replace Folk Psychology with an exact science, we might be able to eliminate the explanatory failures of the former that stem from its inaccuracies. With this point, however, Churchland can show only that Folk Psychology falls short of an ideal rationality. He does not show that Folk Psychology cannot be improved, nor does he explain why it should even strive for this ideal. After all, we might not be perfectly rational beings. In addition, even if Churchland could prove that Folk Psychology is an imperfect theory, it would not follow that eliminative materialism is correct; he would still have to show that rational relations can be reduced to relations posited by neuroscience. Churchland’s second argument, thus, begs the question.

Finally, Churchland argues that
"even if our current conception of rationality – and more generally, of cognitive virtue – is largely constituted within the sentential/propositional framework of FP, there is no guarantee that this framework is adequate to the deeper and more accurate account of cognitive virtue which is clearly needed." (Churchland, 1981, 83).

Here, again, Churchland shows only that the resources of Folk Psychology might not be adequate to describe in a satisfactory way the rational relations that hold in the logical space of reason. He does not show, however, that they can be reduced to causal relations that hold in the logical space of nature. Most importantly, he does not show that a matured neuroscience can do the job.

With this short discussion of Churchland’s arguments I want to point out that reductive strategies are often based on blind faith in the future development of science. Reductionist philosophers admit that their strategy, as Fodor puts it,

"is bald and insufficiently detailed: but ironing out its wrinkles is what perceptual psychologists are paid to do, and my impression is that they’re getting along with the job pretty well." (Fodor, 1995, 10)

Even though it is difficult, if not impossible, to show that this conviction is wrong, or, at least, too optimistic, I hope it has become clear that there are no convincing reasons for accepting it. Sellars has shown that there is a fundamental difference between the two logical spaces, and as long as reductionists cannot provide a proof that we can actually reduce the rational relations that constitute the logical space of reason to merely
causal relations that hold in the logical space of nature, I think we should be suspicious of these strategies.

I argued in the first chapter that reductionist positions were developed as a reaction to Cartesian dualism. Now I will discuss whether Sellars's rejection of reductionism entails any ontological claims and, especially, whether it leads to a form of substance dualism. The answer to this question, I think, is that it does not entail any ontological claims. This can be shown by considering Davidson's position.

In his defense of anomalous monism54 Davidson has shown that the distinction between the logical space of reason and that of nature does not entail dualism. Davidson argues that there is only one kind of events; but that there are different kinds of descriptions that we might use to identify events. Some events can be described as either mental or physical55. These two levels of description, however, have radically different constitutive principles. If they are described as physical events,
they form a closed causal system that is governed by the laws of physics; described as psychological events, they are governed by principles of rationality. Since these governing principles are radically different, a reduction from the psychological description of events to their physical description is impossible. Nonetheless, Davidson argues, there is only one kind of events. All events that can be described as mental events can also be described as physical events, which qualifies his position as a form of monism.

Davidson’s argument, however, depends on some premises that are not shared by all philosophers. His monism, therefore, does not necessarily follow from the distinction between the logical space of reason and that of nature. One of the additional premises of Davidson’s argument that is not commonly shared is the principle of the nomological character of causality, i.e., the idea that where there is causality, there must be a law. If one drops this principle and replaces it with some arguments for the ontological difference between the mental and the physical, one arrives at an equally tenable position of substance dualism (given, of course, that the arguments for substance dualism are convincing).

Consequently, the Sellarsian distinction between the logical space of reason and that of nature does not entail any ontological claim about the

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(Davidson, 1980, 211f). Davidson shows, however, that this consequence is not harmful for his distinction between mental and physical events.

56 McDowell, for example, suggests dropping the principle that he calls the “fourth dogma of empiricism” (McDowell, 1985, 398).
nature of these spaces and, most importantly, it does not entail a form of mind-body dualism.

3.2 Causal Theories and Holistic Background

The fact that there is a fundamental difference between the logical space of reason and that of nature leads to another philosophical concern. Mental episodes are positions in the space of reason that are directed towards objects (in a broad sense), which are positions in the space of nature. Now the question arises how these two logical spaces can be related. In the following sections I will outline an account of constitution that can provide an interesting perspective on that relation. Before I turn to the positive part of this chapter, however, I will show that causal theories cannot give a satisfactory account of this relation. I will discuss arguments from Dretske, Sellars, and Husserl that show that causal accounts underdetermine the content of mental episodes.

Many contemporary theories of perception acknowledge rightly that there is a causal relation between a perceptual experience and the perceived object. There are, however, several arguments that show that causal accounts cannot fully explain the content of our perceptual experiences. We have seen that Dretske argues that there is a causal chain that eventually brings about the perceptual experience. Causal accounts, he
claims, cannot explain how we can single out the perceived object in the chain of causal antecedents of the experience.\footnote{57}{Cf. Dretske (1981, 153-168). I have discussed this argument above, cf. 2.3.}

Sellars argues for the same conclusion in a different way. According to him, the causal chain that brings about the experience is situated in the logical space of nature. The experience, however, belongs to the logical space of reason, standing in rational relations of justification to other mental episodes. Let me illustrate Sellars's point with an example. One and the same object might cause the experience of a house or that of a facade, depending on my background knowledge concerning that object. A causal account that regards only the causal chain from the object to the stimulation of my sense organs cannot account for this difference.

Finally, one might argue along Husserlian lines that in perceptual experiences we are directed towards objects like tables, chairs, etc. even though only some aspect of them, a certain part of their surface, is given in our visual field. Husserl, as I have pointed out above, states that there seems to be a contradiction in the nature of perception because it pretends "to achieve something that it cannot achieve by its own nature." (Hua XI, 3 [my translation].\footnote{58}{"etwas zu leisten, was sie ihrem eigenen Wesen nach zu leisten außerstande ist."}) In fact, merely causal accounts that regard the causal chain from the perceived object to the stimulation of the sense organ cannot explain why we perceive tables rather than parts of table-surfaces, given that the light waves that cause a visual experience of a table, for
example, are reflected by a part of the surface only and not by the table as a whole.\(^{59}\)

These three arguments show that we need something in addition to a causal account that regards the causal chain from the object to the sensory stimulation to explain the structure and content of our perceptual experiences. The philosophers whose arguments I have discussed do not agree, however, on what it is that we need in addition to or — in Husserl’s case — instead of such an account. Dretske suggests that what is missing “is an appreciation of the way the informational relationships operate to determine what it is that we perceive.” (Dretske, 1981, 157). Sellars argues for a holistic understanding of the logical space of reason in which each position is determined by its rational relations to other positions. Husserl, finally, develops a theory of constitution that explains how an object is constituted from the temporal parts of the perceptual experience which are themselves constituted. While Dretske argues that informational relations exist in the world, Sellars enriches and Husserl replaces the causal accounts with theories that are restricted to the realm of the mental.

Dretske’s account, I think, has two problems. Firstly, as Haugeland has pointed out, even with his account of informational relations Dretske cannot explain how we can single out the object of perception from the

\(^{59}\) I should mention that Husserl does not use this example to present a critique of causal theories. On the basis of his methodological principle, the phenomenological reduction, he brackets the realm of the physical altogether.
long chain of causal antecedents of the experience. Secondly, Dretske’s contention that informational relations are part of the physical world is a strong ontological assumption. In terms of ontological simplicity, Sellars’s and Husserl’s positions are favorable since they do not force us to any ontological commitment, but simply try to explain how the mind works.

Sellars and Husserl address the question of how the content of mental episodes is determined in different ways. Nonetheless, their views have several aspects in common. For my purposes, however, historical considerations concerning the similarities and differences of these two approaches are of only peripheral interest; consequently I will not contrast their positions. I will rather accept the conclusion of their arguments that causal accounts are not sufficient to explain perception of objects (let alone mental episodes of other kinds).

I will now turn to the question of what we need in addition to causal accounts to determine the content of mental episodes. Let me start with considering the example of two persons who stand before the same construction. One of them, who has never been there before, sees a whole house, while the other person, who has often seen the construction in the past and walked around it etc., sees a facade. The difference in the content of their experience cannot be explained by differences in the causal chain from the object to the sensory stimulation. Ideally, this causal chain is

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exactly the same for both: they see the facade from the same position under the same circumstances. The difference is that the person who sees the facade has a much richer background of past experiences about the object perceived than the one who sees the whole house. This example shows nicely that the content of an experience does not depend only on the chain of causes that bring about the sensory stimulus, but also on a holistic background of other mental episodes.

In his texts on the background hypothesis Searle argues that the background not only enriches or alters the content of an experience, but that it is a necessary condition for its having content. In other words, not only the person who sees the facade rather than the whole house has a background. Both of them do, their background is just different in some relevant respects. Searle admits that he knows "of no demonstrative arguments that would prove the existence of the Background" (Searle, 1983, 144), but he motivates the assumption that there is one with the examples of understanding the literal meaning of a word, understanding a metaphor, and physical skills like skiing, all of which, according to Searle, require a background.

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61 Searle first developed the background hypothesis in the context of philosophy of language, cf. Searle (1978). For his discussion of the background of intentional experiences cf. (1983, esp. 141-159) where he distinguishes between a background of non-intentional capacities and a holistic network of other intentional states. In The Rediscovery of the Mind (1992, esp. 175-196) he modifies his background-hypothesis, arguing that the network is part of the background of non-intentional capacities. For my point, these details of Searle's account are not relevant.

Sellars develops an argument for a similar thesis. He points out that perceptual experiences not only justify other positions in the logical space of reason, but they are also justified by them. In other words, the rational relations go in both ways, which means, in the terms I am using, that mental episodes require a holistic background.

"If I reject the framework of traditional empiricism, it is not because I want to say that empirical knowledge has no foundation. ... There is clearly some point to the picture of human knowledge as resting on a level of propositions — observation reports — which do not rest on other propositions in the same way as other propositions rest on them. On the other hand, I do wish to insist that the metaphor of 'foundation' is misleading in that it keeps us from seeing that if there is a logical dimension in which other empirical propositions rest on observation reports, there is another logical dimension in which the latter rest on the former." (Sellars, 1997, 78, § 38)

Sellars argues that the minimal requirement for experiencing that something is green is having the concept 'green' and knowing "the appropriate fact of the form X is a reliable symptom for Y, namely that (and again I oversimplify) utterances of 'This is green' are reliable indicators of the presence of green objects in standard conditions of perception." (Sellars, 1997, 76f, § 37). According to Sellars, perceptual experiences contain propositional claims. Since these experiences stand in rational relations to other positions in the space of reason, they must

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have conceptual structure. I will adopt Sellars’s use of the notion of ‘perceptual experience’ as a conceptual entity. We have seen that both Sellars and Searle argue that the content of an experience is determined by a holistic background. It remains to show how this background can perform this task, how it can actually shape the content of the perceptual experience. Searle does not discuss this problem; he seems to be satisfied with pointing out that we cannot explain the content of the experience without making use of the background hypothesis. 

Sellars’s formulation of there being a ‘logical dimension’ in which observation reports depend on other empirical descriptions suggests that there is a logical relationship, some kind of inference from the background to the current experience. These inferences do not always have to be actively drawn, as the case of perceptual experiences shows, where the content of the experience involuntarily impinges on us. In order to stress the fact that these relations do not have to be active, I will use the term ‘rational relations’ rather than ‘inferences.’ I will discuss the notion of ‘rational relation’ in more detail below.

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64 According to this characterization, animals and small children who do not have concepts cannot have perceptual experiences. This does not mean, however, that they cannot have any form of consciousness or intentionality. It just means that adult human beings who do possess concepts have perceptual experiences that have conceptual structure which, due to this structure, can stand in justificatory relations to other positions in the space of reason, like perceptual judgments, etc.

65 Cf. section 4.2.
With his notion of 'constitution,' Husserl gives a very detailed account of the relation between mental episodes and their holistic background. In the next section I will show how Husserl addressed this problem in his phenomenological analyses and outline an account of constitution of objects along Husserlian lines. My interpretation of Husserl is based mainly on his analyses of time consciousness and passive synthesis. Husserl’s overall philosophical position developed over the years and underwent several changes. As I have indicated, the interpretation I am proposing is not a standard interpretation. It does not try to cover all aspects of Husserl’s thought, but concentrates on what he wrote on a specific topic, time consciousness and passive synthesis, in a certain time period. My main purpose is not to give a comprehensive interpretation of Husserl’s work, but to show how a specific aspect of his thought can give us an interesting perspective on the relation between the mental and the physical.

3.3 Constituting Objects

The discussion so far has shown that causal accounts cannot fully explain the content of our mental episodes, not even of our perceptual experiences, and that a holistic background is needed. I will propose that

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66 Most of the texts that I am consulting are from the early 1920s. My interpretation of Husserl is based on his rejection of the matter-form schema that he developed from 1907 on.
these two aspects have to be complemented by an account of constitution in order to describe the relation between the realm of the mental and the realm of the physical.

The fact that we are directed towards objects in our mental episodes can be described by showing how we constitute these objects. This does not mean that we create objects in the process of constitution. In the case of perceptual experiences, a theory of constitution complements causal accounts; perceptual experiences are caused by the objects that they constitute. Before I go on to show how constitution and a causal account complement each other I will discuss the question whether constituting an object can be characterized as interpreting something as something else.

It might be tempting to think that constituting an object means interpreting raw sense data as objects. A causal account might explain how these raw data are delivered to the mind, and a theory of constitution could show how we apprehend these data and interpret them as objects. The example of seeing a house vs. seeing a facade, that I have used above, might even support this idea: in both cases, one might argue, we have the same raw material that is interpreted differently. This strategy recalls empiricism as well as Husserl’s early distinction between sensory data and the intentional form of an act. This characterization of constitution, however, would presuppose that we can interpret raw data in a way that transforms them into perceptual experiences or, at least, show how they can become part of these experiences. In other words, one would have to
assume that there are rational relations that hold between raw sense data and mental episodes, which are positions in the logical space of reason. Consequently such an account would be committed to the *Myth of the Given*.

Husserl rejects the thesis that constitution is interpretation of raw data in his later work. While he claimed in his early publications that perceptual experiences are composed of two components, non-intentional matter and intentional form, he states later: "when descriptive theory of consciousness begins radically, it has before it no such data and wholes, except perhaps as prejudices." (Husserl, 1960, 38 [Hua I, 77]). I have discussed briefly Husserl's arguments against the matter-form schema above.\(^6\)

The thesis that constitution is interpretation can also be understood in a different way. In the process of constitution, one might argue, we interpret some objects as something else. Haugeland has shown that this position "is philosophically self-defeating. ... The project is to understand the objecthood of objects — their standing as criteria for objective skills — in terms of their constitutedness. But counting-as *presupposes* the objecthood of the objects that are to be counted as something else, and merely adds onto those objects some new relative features (relative to whatever they are counted as)." (Haugeland, 1998, 326)

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\(^6\) Cf. section 2.2. For a more detailed discussion cf. Holenstein (1972, 86-117) and Sokolowski (1964).
An account on these lines could not explain how we can perceive these basic objects, figurines, atoms, rocks, or whatever they might be, as objects. Hence, there would not be any objects that could be interpreted as something else in the process of constitution.

So far I have claimed that constituting an object does not mean creating it — in the case of perception, we are constituting the objects that cause the experience — , nor does it mean interpreting something (raw sense data; other objects) as something else. In addition, I have shown that the constitution of objects requires a holistic background. The question, now, is how a holistic background can shape the content of the occurrent mental episode. This question seems particularly pressing in the case of perceptual experiences because these are essentially passive. We cannot actively determine their content; rather, it impinges on us.

The passivity of constitution can be understood in two ways:\footnote{Holenstein develops a similar distinction between two meanings of 'passive' in (1972, 193f).}

Firstly, constitution is passive in that it depends on the environment of the perceiver. If the perceptual experience in question is caused by an elm tree, for example, the perceiver cannot decide to constitute a palm tree instead. In the case of perceptual experiences constitution is passive in that it is restricted by the objects that cause the perceptual experience. In this context, 'passive' is used in the sense of 'receptive'. Secondly, it is passive
in the sense that we do not have to actively perform constitution. In other words, constitution does not require any effort. If one looks at an elm tree, for example, one does not have to decide to perform constitution in order to have a perceptual experience of that tree. In this context, the word 'passive' means 'inactive.'

Constitution in perceptual experiences is passive in either sense, it is receptive and inactive, as the examples that I have used in the preceding paragraph show. This is not true for all mental episodes, however. If I wish to have a yellow bicycle, for example, the object of my episode is constituted passively in the sense of inactive; I do not have to make an effort to constitute a bicycle, I can draw on my previous experiences about bicycles. It is not passive in the sense of receptive, though. In order to wish to have a yellow bicycle I do not have to perceive one; the constitution of the object is not necessarily triggered by an object that is perceived in the same moment.

In some mental episodes, constitution is not passive in both senses. This is the case in episodes where one is directed towards a new kind of object, for example when a scientist postulates a new kind of particle or when a science fiction author invents a planet that is populated by a form of intelligent life. They do not have experiences of these kind of entities to draw on in the process of constitution; in consequence, it is not passive in the sense of inactive. In addition, they do not perceive the objects they
postulate or describe; constitution is therefore not passive in the sense of receptive.

Let us now turn back to the question of how a holistic background can shape the content of mental episodes, especially of those that are passive in both senses, receptive and inactive. The answer to this question, I think, lies in Husserl's analyses of time consciousness. Husserl's basic contention is that mental acts are temporally extended. This is most obvious in the case of the perception of temporal objects, like hearing a melody. At any moment we can hear only a temporal part of the melody, a tone, for example. Nonetheless, we hear a melody, i.e., we have a mental episode that is directed towards the melody as a whole rather than a succession of mental episodes that are directed towards single tones. This shows that like the perceived object, the act of perception also has to be temporally extended.

Husserl argues that the constitution of the object of the experience depends on the succession of temporal parts of the experience in which we are directed towards this object. According to Husserl, there are three kinds of temporal parts or partial intentions, as he calls them, retentions, protentions, and primal impressions. Primal impressions are directed towards the present temporal phase of the object, the present tone of the melody, for example. Retentions are directed towards the tones that were

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69 This point was not at all obvious at the time. Husserl contradicts his teacher Brentano, for example, whose theory of time-consciousness had a great influence on the development of Husserl's.
played in the recent past, and protentions are expectations directed towards future tones. Retentions and protentions are very different in structure: while the former are directed towards what was actually experienced a moment ago, the content of the latter is not as clearly determined. The more one is familiar with a certain object, the more detailed are one's protentions. When I hear a melody that I have never heard before, I only expect to hear another tone, while in the case of my favorite song, I am expecting a specific tone. In order to underline this aspect, Husserl also uses the term 'horizon' to characterize protentions.

Husserl carefully analyzes the structure of partial intentions and their temporal modification\(^70\). For my purposes it is not crucial to review all these analyses in detail. It is important, however, to see that Husserl's phenomenological analyses of mental episodes show that they are not basic, atomic units of our mental life. They are rather composed of various parts which, in turn, could be further analyzed. These temporal parts are not atomic units, either. In theory, we could go on with our analyses. According to Husserl there is no 'lowest level' that we could reach, there are only practical limitations: the analyses become more and more difficult with every level one goes down. In what follows, I will show that we can adopt Husserl's notion of 'retention' to describe how the holistic background can shape the content of an actual mental episode.

\(^{70}\) Cf. esp. Hua X and Hua XI.
When Husserl developed this notion in his early texts on time-consciousness he was clearly influenced by Brentano’s notion of ‘original association’ or ‘proteraesthesia’\(^{71}\). Retentions are a form of memory that retains what one was aware of in the very recent past, like the tone of the melody that I heard just a moment ago, for example. The retention does not present the tone as a present tone, as primal impressions do, but — in a manner of speaking — transforms it into a “past tone.” At every moment, a primal impression gets transformed into a retention and the other retentions get pushed back into the past, so to speak. With each of these transformations, a retention becomes less and less lively until it eventually “disappears into obscurity, into an empty retentional consciousness” (Husserl, 1991, 27 [Hua X, 26]). Husserl illustrates the retentional modification with the following diagrams\(^{72}\):

71 Brentano develops the notion of ‘original association’ in the early 1870s. From 1890 on he calls these phenomena ‘proteraestheses.’

72 I have taken these diagrams from Husserl (1991, 376 [Hua X, 365]).
The horizontal lines represent the progress of time. A, P, and E are temporal phases of the mental episode, A probably stands for the beginning [Anfang], E for the end [Ende], and P for a temporal phase [Phase] of the mental episode. The diagonal lines represent retentions that "sink into the past." Fig. 1 shows the sinking of the retentions that are part of the occurrent mental episode. Fig. 2 shows that even after the episode is over, there is still a series of retentions that are directed towards this episode. The retentional modification of the mental episodes is represented by the vertical lines.

Husserl, as well as Brentano, insists that having a retention is in a crucial way different from remembering something. Retentions are partial intentions, they are part of a mental act, while remembering something is a mental act on its own that, like every other mental act, is partly composed of retentions. Moreover, retentions are directed towards the
immediate past. One can remember events, on the other hand, that one has experienced a long time ago.

According to Husserl's theory of time consciousness, every mental episode undergoes retentional modification where it becomes less and less lively until it arrives at the zero-point of liveliness. In his early texts on time consciousness, Husserl argues that retentions eventually disappear from consciousness. In later texts, however, he holds that mental episodes that underwent retentional modification and have, thus, reached the zero-point of liveliness, do not completely disappear. They rather form a background for all future mental episodes; they are, thus, "not nothing," as Husserl puts it in course notes that he has written in the early 1920s:

"Every concrete datum of the lively sphere of the present sinks, as we know, into the phenomenal past; it undergoes a retentional transformation that leads necessarily into the zero zone of affection, which it becomes part of and in which it is not nothing." (Hua XI, 167 [my translation])

A few lines later Husserl points out that every mental episode requires a background that consists of past episodes that have sunk in their retentional modification to the zero point of liveliness:

"According to what I have said so far, there belongs a background or underground of un-liveliness, of affective


74 "Jedes konkrete Datum der lebendigen Gegenwartssphäre versinkt, wie wir wissen, in die phänomenale Vergangenheit, unterliegt der retentionalen Wandlung und führt dabei notwendig in das affektive Nullgebiet, dem es sich einverleibt und in dem es nicht nichts ist."
ineffectiveness (zero), to every presence [i.e., to every
occurrence mental episode]" (Hua XI, 168 [my translation])

Husserl concludes that section with a statement that this retentional
background that is formed by all our past mental episodes is void of
liveliness, structure and clarity. In other words, we are not continuously
aware of this background as part of our experience, it needs some
phenomenological analysis to show its existence.

"We can say: all special affections in their zero stadium have
changed into one whole, unseparated affection; every special
consciousness has changed into the one, always present
background-consciousness of our past in general, the
consciousness of a completely unstructured, completely
unclear horizon of the past that concludes the retentional
past that is lively and movable." (Hua XI, 171 [my
translation])

In conclusion, Husserl argues that some parts of our mental episodes that
he calls 'retentions' keep us aware of the immediate past. With every
moment, each of them loses clarity and liveliness. In his early writings on
time consciousness, Husserl holds that after a certain period, when
retentions have become very unclear and nebulous due to their
continuous modification, they disappear altogether. In later texts,
however, he argues that they never actually disappear, they rather become

75 "Nach dem Gesagten gehört ferner zu jeder Gegenwart ein Hintergrund oder Untergrund
von Unlebendigkeit, von affektiver Wirkungslosigkeit (Null)."

76 "Wir können wohl sagen: Alle Sonderaffektionen sind im Nullstadium in eine ungeschie-dene Gesamtaffektion übergegangen; alles Sonderbewußtsein ist übergegangen in das eine,
immerfort vorhandene Hintergrundbewußtsein unserer Vergangenheit überhaupt, das Be-wußtsein des völlig ungegliederten, völlig undeutlichen Vergangenheitshorizontes, der die
lebendige, bewegliche retentionale Vergangenheit abschließt."
part of a holistic background\footnote{Husserl stresses that no part of the background can be understood in isolation, but only in its being intertwined with the rest of the background. Cf. Hua XI, 101.} which is necessary for having mental episodes in the first place.

With this account of a retentional background Husserl provides a useful instrument for describing how a holistic background can determine the content of a mental episode. In order to do so, however, we have to take a look back at Husserl's analysis of the basic level of constitution. I have pointed out above that, according to Husserl, mental episodes consist of several moments or partial intentions, like retentions, protentions, and primal impressions. The flow of consciousness is understood as a series of primal impressions that are continuously transformed into retentions. This retentional modification is understood as a purely formal process, which abstracts from the content of the partial intentions.

When Husserl claims that mental episodes are temporally extended he characterizes them as a series of partial intentions. Now the question arises how a series of partial intentions can form a mental episode. What determines whether a specific primal impression still belongs to the mental episode that I am just having or rather marks the beginning of a new one? The temporal modification does not suffice to group partial intentions together into a mental episode because it is purely formal and
abstracts completely from the content\textsuperscript{78}: every primal impression undergoes retentional modification, no matter what it is about.

According to Husserl, these units of primal impressions are established by association. "The most primitive elements [Gegebenheiten] of consciousness constitute themselves as associative fusions which can affect the I due to their contrast to a different background" (Holenstein, 1972, 112 [my translation]\textsuperscript{79}). Consequently, these units are a "function of the three laws of association: similarity, contrast, and contiguity." (Holenstein, 1972, 49f [my translation]\textsuperscript{80}). Accordingly, a series of primal impressions that form a temporal sequence and the content of which stays constant (or undergoes only gradual changes) are grouped together, while an abrupt change, a contrast, marks the beginning of a new unit. Let me illustrate this point with an example. When I look at a tree, I have a series of primal impressions that have the same content. After some time, I might turn my eyes and look at the roses that grow next to the tree. In this moment, there is a sudden change in the content of the primal impression that is followed by a new series of primal impressions that have the same content.

\textsuperscript{78} Cf. Hua XI, 128: "Aber was dem jeweiligen Gegenstand inhaltliche Einheit gibt, was Unterschiede des einen und anderen inhaltlich ausmacht, und zwar für das Bewußtsein und aus seiner eigenen konstitutiven Leistung, was Teilung und Teilverhältnis bewußtseinsmäßig möglich macht u. dgl. — das sagt uns die Zeitanalyse nicht, da sie ja eben von dem Inhaltlichen abstrahiert."

\textsuperscript{79} "Die primitivsten Gegebenheiten des Bewusstseins konstituieren sich als assoziative Verschmelzungen, die dank ihres Kontrasts gegenüber einem andersartigen Hintergrund das Ich zu affizieren vermögen."

\textsuperscript{80} "eine Funktion der drei Assoziationsgesetze der Ähnlichkeit, des Kontrasts und der Kontiguität".
content. Accordingly, the primal impressions I had during my looking at the tree form a unit, and so do the ones I have now, looking at the roses. The sudden change between these two series marks the end of the first unit of primal impressions and the beginning of the next. The processes of establishing these units are passive in the sense of inactive; they do not require any effort. Before I go on to show that these units play a central role in the constitution of objects I will discuss their structure in more detail. In doing so I will address the question whether Husserl is committed to the *Myth of the Given*.

Husserl characterizes these units as sense data [*Empfindungsdaten*]. He also suggests that they evoke processes of association that are based on similarity, continuity, and contrast. To put it in Sellarsian terms, they stand in rational relations to other positions in the space of reason. Hence, Husserl seems to argue that sense data stand in rational relations to positions in the logical space of reason and, consequently, to fall into the *Myth of the Given*. Before accusing him of committing this fallacy, however, we have to take a closer look on his notion of 'sense data,' and its development over the years.

Holenstein shows that Husserl uses the terms 'sense data,' 'hyletic data,' 'affection,' 'impression,' etc., in an ambiguous way81, he uses them for raw sense data that are part of the logical space of nature as well as for

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81 Cf. Holenstein (1972, 88f).
mental episodes that are positions in the logical space of reason. In his early writings, Husserl claims that there are raw, unstructured, and non-intentional sense data that are part of the mental act. In this phase of his work he clearly appeals to the Myth of the Given. Between 1907 and 1909, however, he starts to criticize the matter-form schema in the context of his analyses of time consciousness. In his later philosophy, Husserl extends this point to a more general critique of sense datum theories, although he never arrives at the point of rejecting explicitly the notion of 'raw sense data' in the context of the constitution of objects.

In his study on Husserl's notion of 'association,' Holenstein shows that Husserl actually develops an alternative to the notion of 'raw sense data' in his discussion of the units of partial intentions. He points out, however, that Husserl was not aware of this development. Hence, according to Holenstein, Husserl in fact rejects the notion of 'raw, unstructured, and non-intentional sense data,' even though he never explicitly draws this conclusion. This change in Husserl's position finds its expression in the use of terminology. In his later works, Husserl increasingly uses the word 'affection' rather than 'sense datum.' In analogy to this terminology I will call the units of partial intentions that are

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82 This critique is not immediately reflected in his writing, however. In Ideas I, published in 1913, he still holds up the distinction between matter and form. I say more about the development of Husserl's critique of his early matter form schema above, cf. section 2.2.


84 Cf. Holenstein (1972, 110ff.).
formed by association 'affective units,' adopting an expression that Husserl uses at some places.

In his late philosophy, Husserl presents two main arguments that show that affective units are different from raw sense data\(^\text{85}\). Firstly, affective units are constituted. They have temporal structure and, thus, consist of a series of partial intentions. In consequence, they are not ready-made objects that are given to consciousness. Secondly, sense data are supposed to be immediately given, affective units are not; we can know about them only through reflective analysis. According to Holenstein, these two arguments show that Husserl actually gave up the notion of 'raw sense data.'

The main difference between raw sense data and affective units is that only the latter have intentional structure. This does not mean, however, that they are directed towards full-blown objects. They are intentional because they are units of partial intentions that are grouped together according to the 'laws of association.' Holenstein argues that consequently affective units have a certain 'gestalt-structure'\(^\text{86}\). "Without making it explicit, Husserl replaces in his phenomenology of association the notion of 'sense data' with gestalt-psychological notions" (Holenstein,\(^\text{1972}50\).

\(^{\text{85}}\) Cf. Holenstein (1972, 107ff.). In his analyses of time consciousness, Husserl presents other arguments against the matter-form schema that center around the temporal structure of mental episodes. As I have pointed out earlier in this section, Husserl does not make the move to apply these arguments to the constitution of objects.

\(^{\text{86}}\) "It is due to the three constitutive laws of similarity, contrast, and continuity that every affection has gestalt-structure" (Holenstein, 1972, 50 [my translation: "An diesen drei
The intentionality of affective units is pre-objective, though. In a late, hitherto unpublished manuscript, Husserl distinguishes between "primal association [Urassoziation] of non-objects, of intentional units (pre-objective) and later affections of apperceived units and eventually of object-units." The constitution of affective units is a necessary prerequisite for the constitution of objects.

In conclusion, even though Husserl uses words like 'sense data' for affective units in his later writings, he is not prone to fall into the Myth of the Given. If we have a closer look at the structure of affective units and the role they play in Husserl's later philosophy, it becomes clear that they belong in the space of reason. If this interpretation is correct, Husserl (in the reconstruction of Holenstein) clearly rejects the idea that there are raw, unstructured sense data that justify mental episodes, even though he never explicitly says so.

Let us now come back to the question of how affective units figure in the constitution of objects. We have seen that these units are intentional in a pre-objective sense. Husserl states that they are indispensable for the constitution of objects: "Affective units have to constitute themselves, so..."
that in subjectivity a world of objects can be constituted.” (Hua XI, 162 [my translation]). In addition to affective units, the constitution of objects also depends on the retentional background which functions as a “reservoir of objects.” In order to draw on the retentional background, affective units have to establish a connection to past experiences in which we have constituted the same object. This can be achieved in virtue of association, which picks out past episodes that involved affective units sufficiently similar to the occurrent ones. The problem, now, is that the notion of ‘sufficient similarity’ is rather vague, since any two affective units are similar in an indefinite number of respects. In consequence, this account does not explain why we constitute certain kinds of objects rather than others; why, to use Quine’s famous example, we constitute rabbits rather than undetached rabbit parts.

The relevant respects in which two affective units have to be similar are determined by association. It is impossible to explain why the similarity of certain respects of affective units is relevant in the process of association while others are not. Thus, ‘association’ is a basic notion in the

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89 “Affektive Einheiten müssen sich konstituieren, damit sich in der Subjektivität überhaupt eine Gegenstandswelt konstituieren kann.”

90 Cf. Hua XI, 177: “Es ist das beständige Reservoir der in dem lebendigen Gegenwartsprozess zu lebendiger Stiftung kommenden Gegenstände.”

91 This point was made by Goodman in his article “Seven Strictures on Similarity.” Goodman argues that “[s]imilarity, ever ready to solve philosophical problems and overcome obstacles, is a pretender, an impostor, a quack. It has, indeed, its place and its uses, but is more often found where it does not belong, professing powers it does not possess.” (Goodman, 1972, 437).
account of constitution that I am proposing that cannot be further analyzed or explained in other terms. Even though this strategy does not allow us to explain why a certain respect of similarity is relevant, it is sufficient to describe how we actually perform the constitution of objects. This leaves us with the possibility that people from other cultures constitute different kinds of objects; their process of association might involve respects of similarity that are not relevant in ours. Given, however, that the relevant respects of similarity are constrained by our evolutionary history and by the fact that all human beings encounter the same kinds of objects, we can expect that there are no radical differences in the kinds of objects that are constituted by human beings of different cultures.

Once one has established the connection between the present affective unit and the retentional background, one constitutes not only the object, but also the mental episode in which we are directed towards this object. This requires that one has established what Haugeland calls ‘constitutive commitment,’ i.e., the habit of constituting objects under these circumstances. I will discuss this aspect of constitution in more detail in the next section.

I will now show how we can adopt Husserl's theory in order to give an account of how mind and world are related. I should mention that with this move I am going beyond Husserlian phenomenology. Husserl's main
methodological principle, the phenomenological reduction, requires one’s bracketing of all beliefs in the physical world. The relation between mind and world, therefore, is out of reach for the phenomenologist.

I will fit the Husserlian account of constitution into the Sellarsian/McDowellian framework that is based on the distinction between the logical space of reason and the logical space of nature by arguing that there can be two kinds of relations between physical objects and mental episodes, namely causal and intentional ones. Husserl’s account of constitution explains how we can be directed towards objects in our mental episodes. In perceptual experiences, one constitutes the objects that are perceived, i.e., physical objects in the environment of the perceiver. The account of constitution does not propose that mental images are created that represent physical objects in our environment. It rather establishes a direct connection to these objects, namely the intentional relation between a perceptual experience and the object perceived. We can say, with McDowell: “there are no images ... in the phenomenology of vision: it is the relevant tract of the environment that is present to consciousness, not an image of it.” (McDowell, 1994, 191).

In the case of perception, we have two different kinds of relations between the experience and the perceived object. On the one hand, there is a causal relation between the object that is perceived and the sensory
apparatus of the person who has the perceptual experience. This relation explains the effects the object has on the sensory organs of the perceiver. On the other hand, there is an intentional relation: the perceptual experience is directed towards the perceived object. The latter is a direct relation between the two entities, namely the experience and the object; it cannot be subdivided into several parts like a causal chain.

Like Husserl, I think that 'intentionality' is a basic notion that cannot be further reduced to any other notions. Most importantly, it cannot be reduced to merely causal processes on the neuro-physiological level. The causal relation between the object and the mental experience can be described with the laws of science, it belongs to the logical space of nature and, thus, cannot account for the pre-objective intentionality of partial intentions, nor for the intentionality of mental episodes, both of which belong to the space of reason. This does not mean that the causal relation is completely irrelevant for our having mental episodes. As I have pointed out above, we could not have perceptual experiences if they were not caused by the objects perceived. The causal relation, however, cannot explain the fact that mental episodes are directed towards objects.

92 Even though this modification undermines the main principle of phenomenology, there are some places where Husserl makes a similar move, as Holenstein points out. He refers to a quotation of Ideas II where Husserl writes "Sense data can occur only if there are sense organs, nervous systems, etc. in objective reality" (Hua IV, 289 [my translation: "Empfindungsdaten können nur auftreten, wenn in objektiver Wirklichkeit Sinnesorgane sind, nervöse Systeme usw."])). Holenstein points out, however, that already a few years later, in Formal and Transcendental Logic, Husserl calls these considerations a "perfect counter-sense" [perfekter Widersinn] (Husserl, 1969, 230 [Hua XVII, 238]) because it requires us to combine results that can be achieved only in the phenomenological attitude, with others that one can have only in the natural attitude. Cf. Holenstein (1972, 99).
As McDowell puts it, merely causal accounts, as they are developed in cognitive science, offer "what may be an enabling explanation of consciousness, but not a constitutive one." (McDowell, 1994, 203).

I have claimed that intentionality is a direct relation that holds between perceptual experiences and the physical objects towards which they are directed. This position presupposes that all the objects towards which we can be directed in perception, like tables, roses, clouds, etc. exist in the actual world. There are, thus, strong parallels between the account of constitution that I am proposing and the position that Putnam calls 'natural realism.' He describes this position in the following way:

"A natural realist, in my sense, does hold that the objects of normal, 'veridical' perception are usually 'external' things. ... The natural realist ... holds that successful perception is just a seeing, or hearing, or feeling, etc., of things 'out there,' and not a mere affectation of a person's subjectivity by those things." (Putnam, 1994, 454)

Putnam states that in perception we stand in direct, cognitive contact to the objects perceived. According to this view, we do not perceive raw, unstructured matter — that would be an appeal to the Myth of the Given — but objects like rocks, computers, and bicycles, etc., that are part of the physical world.

Putnam lists a series of philosophers who, according to him, have shared this position; he names James, Wittgenstein, Austin, and, interestingly enough, Husserl. I think, however, that the interpretation of Husserl as a natural realist is far-fetched. Due to the phenomenological
reduction, Husserl cannot make any assumptions about the ontological status of the intentional object in the context of phenomenology. In addition, Putnam gives very little textual evidence, he quotes only one of Husserl’s books, the *Crisis of European Sciences*. He does not mention the fact that Husserl describes his own position as ‘transcendental idealism,’ does not discuss Husserl’s phenomenological method, nor does he acknowledge that there is an extensive discussion concerning the question whether Husserl was a realist or an idealist.

Even though there are serious doubts about going so far as claiming that Husserl actually was a natural realist, I think that it is not wrong to adopt this position in the attempt to use Husserl’s account of constitution in order to explain the relation of the realm of the mental to the realm of the physical. After all, I have already made a step beyond Husserlian phenomenology by discussing this very problem.

With this account of constitution we can address Dretske’s problem. Dretske criticizes causal theories according to which the perception of objects can be explained in virtue of the causal relation between the perceptual experience and the perceived object. We have seen that he

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93 Moreover, he concentrates on two aspects of this book only. He refers to Husserl in his discussion of the mathematization of nature and quotes his “important idea that the ‘primary qualities’ of physics are not a set of ‘properties’ that we have discovered things to have, but a set of *idealized abstractions*” (Putnam, 1994, 469).

94 I have outlined Dretske’s problem concerning causal theories of perception above, cf. section 2.3.
counters that the causal chain that eventually brings up a perceptual experience is very long and that the causal theorist cannot explain how we can single out the object of our experience from the chain of its causal antecedents. He argues that the object of experience is determined by informational relationships between the object and the experience. According to the account that I am proposing, on the other hand, we do not have to single out the object of experience from a long list of causal antecedents; rather our experiences are immediately directed towards its object. In consequence, I can share Dretske's concern about causal theories without having to assume that there are informational relations in the world.

Furthermore, the account of constitution that I am proposing can do without the distinction between actual and intentional object. When we are directed towards an object, it is always given under a certain aspect which depends on the retentional background of the perceiver. Let us consider an example of a perceptual experience. When I see my PowerBook, the constitution of the object towards which I am directed, a portable computer, involves computer-related experiences I had in the past. Imagine that we find a way to send this computer back in time, let's say to the 1950s. If someone looks at the PowerBook, she cannot see a portable computer, because she has no computer-related experiences to draw on in the process of constitution. She rather sees a machine of a certain color and shape that has a keyboard and a screen. We can go even
further back in time, let's say to the early 1800s. In that period people will not even see a machine that has a keyboard and a screen, neither having been invented then. Their experience will be about a grayish object of rectangular shape, etc.

In all these cases, the perceivers are directed towards the same object; the differences in their retentional backgrounds determine under which aspect the object is perceived. This example shows that there is not one single 'correct' way of constituting the object. There are many ways to get it wrong, though; one cannot constitute a book when one really looks at a computer, etc. In that case, one would merely have a misperception. In his *Dewey Lectures*, Putnam makes a similar point, describing an example that was presented by William James95:

"[James] employs the example of someone choosing how to describe some beans that have been cast on a table. The beans could be described in an almost endless variety of ways, depending on the interests of the describer, and each of the right descriptions will fit the beans-minus-the-describer, and yet also reflect the interest of the describer." (Putnam, 1994, 447)

If we replace the words 'describe' by 'constitute,' 'the interests of the describer' by 'the retentional background of the perceiver,' and 'describer' by 'the person who performs the constitution' in the second sentence of the quotation, we arrive at a description of the position that I am arguing

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95 James develops this example in a letter to Dickinson S. Miller, dated August 5, 1907, printed in James (1920, 295f).
for. The sentence, then, would read: "The beans could be constituted in an almost endless variety of ways, depending on the retentional background of the perceiver, and each of the right constitutions will *fit* the beans-minus-the-person who performs the constitution, and yet also reflect the retentional background of the perceiver." There are many ways to describe the beans, consequently there is not a single correct description. That does not mean, of course, that we can say about the beans whatever we want. Some descriptions just get things wrong. And similarly in the constitution of objects: due to the normative element of perception we can distinguish between veridical perceptions and misperceptions, but nonetheless the object can be constituted quite differently in two veridical perceptions.

I have pointed out that due to the methodological principles of phenomenology, the relation between physical objects and mental episodes lies out of reach of the phenomenologist. With the discussion in the last few paragraphs I have clearly broken these principles and, as Husserl would put it, fallen back into the natural attitude. I hope the discussion has shown that it can be nonetheless very fruitful to adopt Husserl's account of constitution for describing the relation between physical objects and mental episodes. There are, I believe, two major points that make this strategy interesting. Firstly, it provides an account that is not prone to fall into the *Myth of the Given*, nor does it run into the problems of coherentism that, as McDowell has argued, cannot
account for the fact that our mental episodes have content. Secondly, it aims to describe how a holistic background can shape the content of an occurrent mental episode.

So far I have discussed mainly the constitution of objects of perceptual experiences. The account of constitution that I have outlined, however, can easily be generalized to other mental episodes like remembering, imagining, wishing, dreaming, and so on. They all draw on the reservoir of objects that is provided by the retentional background. The constitution of objects of these experiences does not involve a causal relation between a physical object and the episode, but only rational relations to other positions in the logical space of reason. Mental episodes that do not stand in a direct relation to a physical object, like my wish to own a yellow bicycle, are parasitic on perceptual experiences: I can constitute the object only because I had perceptual experiences of bicycles and of yellow things in the past. The discussion of the development of constitutive commitment and the constitution of mental episodes in the next two sections will give a better understanding of the priority of perceptual experiences.

3.4 Developing Constitutive Commitment

In the second chapter I showed that Haugeland distinguishes four aspects of constitution, the most basic of which is constitutive commitment. He
does not explain, however, how we develop constitutive commitment; and Husserl also does not discuss the question of how we come to perform constitution. In this section I want to discuss this question. I will start out with an infinite regress argument that might be brought up against my account of constitution. Then I will outline how one comes to have mental episodes by learning a pattern of behavior that depends on the biological makeup of the perceiver, the physical and social environment, and passive processes of association.

The hypothesis that every mental experience requires a holistic retentional background might be challenged by an infinite regress argument. The background, I have argued, consists of mental episodes that underwent retentional modification. These mental episodes, however, required another background that consisted of other mental episodes that underwent retentional modification themselves, and so on ad infinitum.

This regress is not unavoidable, though. It can be argued that the creation of a first, minimal background does not require past experiences, but does "involve a long history of acquiring piecemeal habits of response to various objects at various circumstances" (Sellars, 1997, 44f, § 19). Husserl argues that we cannot think of a 'first mental episode,' i.e., one that does not require any background but will provide a background for future mental episodes. He states "not only that every now [i.e., every

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96 In this passage, Sellars does not talk about acquiring a background, but of a battery of concepts that we need in order to have observational knowledge.
occurrent mental episode] leaves retentions behind, but also that we cannot even think of a now that does not already have retentions.” (Hua XI, 378 [my translation])

The beginning of one’s having mental episodes, he continues, is only thinkable as part of a process, but not as the beginning of a process. And, using strong metaphors, he says that before the beginning of our mental lives there has to be something, an emptiness, an undifferentiated, silent dozing. Husserl continues by stating that “the transcendental life and the transcendental ego cannot be born, only the human being in the world can be born.” (Hua XI, 379 [my translation])

Husserl uses these metaphors to argue that we cannot conceive of a first mental episode. Since every mental episode requires a background that consists of past mental episodes that underwent retentional modification, we cannot conceive of a first episode that does not yet have a background. The beginning of our mental life is seen as a slow awakening from an undifferentiated, silent dozing rather than a sudden start that takes place in a specific moment, like birth. In another place, Husserl argues that children have to learn to have mental episodes. He states: “With good reason it is said that in infancy we had to learn to see physical things, and that such modes of consciousness of them had to precede all

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97 “...nicht nur, daß jedes Jetzt Retentionen zurückläßt, es ist kein Jetzt denkbar, daß nicht schon Retentionen hat.”

98 “...kann das transzendentale Leben und kann das transzendentale Ich nicht geboren werden, nur der Mensch in der Welt kann geboren werden.”
other genetically." (Husserl, 1960, 79 [Hua I, 112]). Husserl does not discuss how we learn to have mental episodes, nor does he explain how we are to imagine this period of undifferentiated dozing and how the awakening comes about.

I believe that Husserl’s expression of a dark, unstructured period of dozing, or better, the slow process of awakening from such a period of dozing, can be a useful metaphor. It can be understood as the period where one has to develop constitutive commitment. In order to do so, one has to establish a first minimal background that enables us to have our first mental episodes. With every additional episode, this background becomes richer until we can talk of a full-blown mental life. But how can a first minimal background evolve from an undifferentiated state of dozing? In other words, how do we develop constitutive commitment?

In the period of awakening from the state of dozing one does not have mental episodes. One does have, however, the potentiality to establish constitutive commitment. We can explain this potentiality by claiming that one does already have primal impressions that are intentional (in a pre-objective sense) and undergo retentional modification. At this level, the passive processes of association are already operative and group together partial intentions to affective units in the way described in the preceding section. However, since one does not have a retentional background yet, there is no constitution of objects or mental episodes. In other words, one does not experience objects at this stage of
the development. However, since primal impressions and affective units are intentional and, thus, have some form of content, we can respond to them differentially.

During the process of growing up we are trained by the social group in which we grow up to react to certain of these affective units in systematic ways. The process of learning these patterns of behavior depends on various factors. For one, it depends on the physical environment and the biological makeup of our sense organs, the latter determining what aspects of the objects in the environment can cause primal impressions. It also depends on the laws of association that determine what affective units are formed. Finally, it depends on the social group in which we grow up, which enforces a certain kind of behavior in reaction to associative units.

For the development of the mental life of human beings, the most important aspect of learning a pattern of behavior is the acquisition of language. During the phase of developing constitutive commitment, all the moves one can make in the logical space of reason are based on association. All moves, therefore, are passive, one does not yet actively perform them. In the process of growing up, we are trained to use words to react to affective units. We learn that various affective units can be named by the same word. Hence, the acquisition of language presupposes that we can detect that affective units are similar in some relevant respects. Language, then, goes on to teach us what respects of similarity are relevant
in our culture. In addition, the acquisition of language is important in another respect. The language we learn has a certain structure. By learning what grammatical role nouns, verbs, and adjectives play in our language, we learn, roughly speaking, to constitute objects, predicates and events. Thus, by acquiring a language we are trained to see the world in a certain way. The structure of language does not come from nowhere. It has evolved in a long history of human beings interacting with the world. This evolutionary history can indicate some constraints on what kinds of similarity can be relevant in the process of constitution; it cannot, however, explain why in our development we constitute the kinds of objects we do and not other ones.

In sum, we are trained to develop a pattern of behavior in reacting to affective units that allows us to understand what respects of similarity between affective units are relevant in our culture. This pattern enables us to constitute objects. We could say, thus, that this pattern functions as a first, minimal background; and even though this background cannot account for the complexity of our mental lives, it does provide a background rich enough for some basic mental episodes which undergo retentional modification and eventually become part of the background. With every additional episode that undergoes retentional modification, the background becomes more and more fine-grained and thus gradually reaches the complexity and structure necessary for explaining the mental life of a full-grown human being. Since we establish this first background
in interaction with our environment, perceptual experiences play a privileged role in the process of establishing constitutive commitment. As Husserl points out, perceptual experiences "precede all other [kinds of mental episodes] genetically." (Husserl, 1960, 79 [Hua I, 112]). In the next section I will show how we come to constitute other kinds of mental episodes.

We have seen that the establishment of a first, minimal background can be explained without referring to mental episodes. The only kind of rational relation that is involved in this process is association, which is a purely passive process at this level. At this point we do have, one could say, a retentional background of pre-objective associative units that underwent retentional modification.

A similar line of reasoning (that, of course, does not involve the idea of a retentional background) can be found in Sellars who also argues that in order to set up a first, minimal background, we do not have to have mental episodes yet:

"Thus, while Jones' ability to give inductive reasons today is built on a long history of acquiring and manifesting verbal habits in perceptual situations, and, in particular, the occurrence of verbal episodes, e.g. 'This is green,' which is superficially like those which are later properly said to express observational knowledge, it does not require that any episode in this prior time be characterizeable as expressing knowledge." (Sellars, 1997, 77, § 37)

Since one does not have a background that is necessary for having mental episodes in the period of setting up this first, minimal background, the
state one is in can be no more than a slow awakening from a state of
dozing in which we do not yet have mental episodes. This state, however,
is a necessary prerequisite for our mental life, since it is in this state that a
minimal background is set up.

I am aware that this sketch of establishing constitutive commitment
is very crude and superficial. It is not my goal, however, to work out an
account of developmental psychology. My goal was merely to show that
the account of constitution presented above does not fall into an infinite
regress.

If this outline of the development of a first, minimal background or
establishing constitutive commitment is correct, it follows that one does
not actively choose to develop this commitment, but that it is rather
enforced on us by our biological makeup and the social group in which we
grow up. We have seen in the second chapter that Haugeland
characterizes constitutive commitment as “a dedicated or even devoted
way of living: a determination to carry on.” (Haugeland, 1998, 341). I think
that this characterization does not express the fact that we do not have the
choice of establishing this commitment, nor can we decide whether we
want to go on with it or not. Once one has developed a certain retentional
background, it might be changed or refined by future experiences, but one cannot give it up altogether, at least not by active choice

3.5 The Constitution of Mental Episodes

So far I have argued that we constitute the objects towards which we are directed in our mental episodes. Now I want to go on to show that not only the objects, but also the mental episodes themselves are constituted. This move is not new nor original. As I have pointed out above, Husserl already claims that we constitute conscious phenomena.

I have described the constitution of objects in terms of associative processes that have affective units as their subjects. According to this account affective units are intentional (in a pre-objective sense). In virtue of association, they establish a connection to the retentional background, which is a central part of the process of constitution. Now I will go on to argue that in addition to their role in the constitution of objects, affective units also constitute sensory fields.

"The extension and merger to field-forms is analyzed \[by Husserl\] as a special kind of intentional constitution, as passive association. 'Sense data' extend and melt into units because it obviously belongs to their nature as affection to

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99 There might be some cases of severe brain damage that do not allow one to carry on with one's constitutive commitment. One cannot, however, decide to look around and not constitute objects for a couple of days or so.
refer intentionally beyond themselves.” (Holenstein, 1972, 103 [my translation])

Holenstein uses scare quotes for the expression ‘sense data’ to remind us that he is not talking about raw data but rather intentional units.

I have argued above that when we establish constitutive commitment we learn to detect relevant similarities between affective units. One of them is the similarity between affective units that belong to the same sensory field. In consequence, when we develop constitutive commitment we not only start to constitute objects, we constitute them in different ways as seen object, heard object, felt object, etc. These different ways of constituting objects account for the different kinds of perceptual experiences like seeing, hearing, or touching something, etc. Thus, we learn that there are various positions in the logical space of reason.

From here it is only a small step to understand that we can make moves from one position to another. At a certain moment one might realize, for example, that when one sees a green apple and then touches it, one will feel a smooth, solid surface. Thus, one learns that one can make a move from a certain kind of visual experience to a certain kind of tactile experience. This move is closely connected with bodily movements,

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101 In this context, Holenstein points out that Husserl’s contention that affective units constitute sensory fields — a process that requires that affective units are intentional — was one of the reasons that made Husserl give up the notion of ‘raw sense data;’ cf. Holenstein (1972, 101ff.).
suggesting that the body plays a central role in the development of constitutive commitment. In addition, the temporal modification accounts for the fact that we can move from being directed towards the present aspect of the object to being directed towards a past aspect of the object.

In the process of establishing constitutive commitment we learn to constitute various kinds of mental episodes. In order to do so one also has to learn to constitute objects that do not stand in a causal relation to the episode, as it happens in episodes like wishing or imagining something. The process of learning to move to these positions requires enforcement from the social group in which one grows up, especially through the acquisition of language. We learn, for example to constitute empirical beliefs by being trained to react to certain kinds of affective units with the utterance "There is an apple!", and similarly for other affective units and other positions in the language-game. By the time one has grasped a fuller understanding of the language-game, one understands that this utterance is actually justified by a perceptual experience. In addition, one learns that it is an expression of an empirical belief which is a position in the logical space of reason that is justified by perceptual experiences and that stands in other rational relations to other positions in that logical space.

In this way one acquires a large repertoire of positions. Other than just seeing an apple and believing that it is there one can desire or remember it. While the constitution of the object of the empirical belief
draws on a perceptual experience that takes place at the same time, the episodes of remembering or desiring draw on one or more past experiences. With time, and with further competence in language, one learns to vary the way in which one is directed towards the object; eventually one can move to even more complex positions like feeling sympathy, doing calculations, etc. These examples show that by developing constitutive commitment, one starts not only to constitute objects, but also the mental episodes in which we are directed towards these objects.

I do not want to suggest that one can literally acquire positions in the logical space of reason one by one. In order to have mental episodes, one has to have a full battery of positions and know in which rational relation they stand to other positions in the logical space of reason, i.e., which moves one can make. This does not mean that in order to have a mental episode, one has to have a full and stable knowledge about all positions and possible moves that, once it is established, will always stay the same. The retentional background is rather subject to continuous change. With growing experiences, our concepts become richer which goes hand in hand with discovering that there are new moves that can be legitimately made and new positions that can be taken. When I learn that apples are edible, for example, I realize that I can make the move from believing that there is an apple to believing that there is an edible object.
Moreover, when the concepts become richer, there are changes in
the retentional background which, in turn, bring up changes in the way
we constitute certain objects in our perceptual experiences. When I see an
apple now, after having learnt that apples are edible, I do not see any
longer merely a green, solid object; I rather see an edible, green, solid
object. As Sellars points out, perceptual experiences not only justify other
positions in the logical space of reason, there is also a logical dimension in
which the former rest on the latter\textsuperscript{102}.

This aspect can also explain how we can come to constitute new
objects. After a period of training one might start to perceive objects that
one could not see before. Let's take the example of a doctor and a patient
who are analyzing the pictures of an ultrasound scan. On the screen,
where the patient can see only different shades of gray without clear
boundaries, the doctor actually sees a pictorial representation of the
kidney, the liver, etc. Both look at the same screen, but only the doctor can
see the organs. She does not see gray shades and then interpret them as
pictures of kidneys, etc., but rather has a visual experience of a (pictorial
representation of a) kidney. Similarly, a trained chess player can see at one
glance whether white is in a good position or not, while it takes an
average person a lot of time and hard thinking to find out. Also in this
example, the difference between the chess expert and the laymen is that
the former sees the actual position where the latter only sees a group of

\textsuperscript{102} Cf. Sellars (1997, 78, § 38).
chess figurines. These examples demonstrate how changes in the retentional background can lead to changes in the way we constitute things.

3.6 Conclusion: Some Basic Aspects of Constitution

In this chapter I sketched an account of constitution. My starting point was to argue that there is a fundamental difference between the realm of the mental and the realm of the physical. This difference, I argued, makes the assumption that one of the two realms could be reduced to the other highly improbable. Then I showed that causal accounts underdetermine the content of perceptual experiences. Based on the work of Sellars and Searle I argued that in order to explain the content of those experiences, we have to complement a causal account with a holistic background.

The claim that we need a holistic account to explain the content of perceptual experiences cannot be satisfactory as long as one does not show how this background can actually perform its task. In order to do so, I have adopted Husserl's notion of 'retentional background' that he develops in his *Analyses of Passive Synthesis* (Hua XI). Husserl argues that a mental episode does not just disappear from consciousness the moment after it ends, but undergoes retentional modification in which it becomes continuously less clear and lively. At a certain point, these retentions reach the zero-point of liveliness. This does not mean, however, that they.
disappear from consciousness; rather they become part of the retentional background. According to Husserl, every conscious experience requires a retentional background. Having mental episodes, thus, presupposes the having of such a background.

The actual process of constitution takes several steps. At the lowest level, we have partial intentions which are intentional and undergo temporal modification. Due to passive association, which is based on the regularities of similarity, continuity, and contrast, these partial intentions form affective units. In order to constitute objects, we have to establish a connection between the occurrent affective unit and the retentional background. We can describe this feature on the basis of association. The retentional background figures in the process of constitution as a reservoir of objects. The constitution of the object establishes the intentional relation of the mental episode to the actual object. In the case of perceptual experiences, there is a direct, intentional relation between episodes and physical objects (in a broad sense). When we have perceptual experiences, we stand not only in intentional, but also in causal relation to the object; the object triggers our sense organs and causes neurological processes. However, this causal chain can give only enabling conditions, but cannot account for the intentional relation between the experience and the physical object.

This account of constitution presupposes that there are objects like tables, clouds, or bicycles in the world and that we are intentionally
directed towards these objects rather than towards raw sense data or some mental presentation of these objects.

The assumption that every mental episode requires a retentional background might be criticized with an infinite regress argument. In order to undermine this argument, I sketched how we develop constitutive commitment. I argued that in order to have our first mental episodes, we need to establish a minimal background that is based on three elements: one's environment and biological makeup; the enforcements of the social group in which we grow up, mainly through the acquisition of language; and, finally, the processes of passive association.

In the last section I argued that not only the objects at which we are directed, but also the mental episodes themselves are constituted. I have argued that affective units constitute sensory fields. This process of constitution allows us to differentiate various affective units that, eventually, will play a role in the constitution of perceptual experiences (seeing, hearing, smelling etc.) as different positions in the logical space of reason. In the process of developing constitutive commitment, one acquires a large repertoire of positions and possible moves. This development is strongly influenced by the social group in which one grows up, and by one's learning a language.

In the following chapters I will discuss some of the consequences of this account of constitution. I think that the very fact that we have mental episodes, i.e., that we can be intentionally directed towards objects,
depends on our social environment. Consequently, I will discuss the social aspect of constitution in the next chapter. Then I will go on to consider the ontological implications of that account. The expression 'to constitute objects' can easily be misunderstood with 'creating objects,' which brings constitution into the vicinity of idealism. This impression intensifies if we consider that two of the philosophers who work with a notion of 'constitution,' namely Husserl and Kant, characterize their position as transcendental idealism. Hence, I will discuss the possible connection between constitution and the idealism/realism debate in the last chapter.
Chapter 4
The Social Foundation of the Mind

In the preceding chapter I have argued that every mental episode requires a holistic background of mental episodes that have undergone retentional modification. This position is not threatened by an infinite regress argument if we assume that there is a first, minimal background which emerges from a complex stimulus response pattern, and which is continuously enriched with every additional experience that undergoes retentional modification. I have pointed out that there is a strong social element in the formation of this first background as well as in the constitution of mental episodes in general.

The social aspect of constitution is an element that clearly does not play a central role in Husserl’s account of constitution. What is more important, it seems to stand in opposition to Husserl’s overall philosophical position, which is based on the first person authority over one’s own mental episodes. In the account of constitution that I have outlined in the third chapter, however, I have used Husserl’s results to outline an account of constitution. Since there might be a tension between the Husserlian elements and the social aspect of this account, I want to
discuss this dimension of the realm of the mental in more depth in this chapter.

I will start with a discussion of the social foundation of mental episodes. I will argue that in order to have various kinds of mental episodes we have to take part in social practices. Consequently, we could not have mental episodes if we did not grow up in a social group. Next I will discuss what kind of rational relations hold between various mental episodes. I will argue that these relations are characterized by the fact that they cannot be described by scientific laws. I will point out that there is a large variety of rational relations and that, consequently, we have to give a quite general characterization of this kind of relation in order to adopt Sellars’s metaphor of the logical space of reason. Then I will go on to discuss the notion of ‘perceptual experience.’ I will argue that Brandom’s critique of McDowell’s account, according to which that notion stems from a residual individualism, cannot be raised against the account of constitution that I have outlined above. Finally, I will show that we can reconcile the emphasis on the social dimension of the logical space of reason, and thus an anti-individualistic position, with Husserl’s phenomenological method based on the first person authority over one’s own mental episodes.
One of the central aspects of the account of constitution that I have proposed above is that not only objects but also mental episodes are constituted. There are various kinds of mental episodes (or mental kinds), like seeing, wishing, remembering, imagining, believing, appreciating something etc. I have argued above\(^\text{103}\) that in a process of social formation we learn to distinguish these mental kinds and to occupy various positions in the logical space of reason. One of the consequences of this account is that not only the object but also the kind of mental episodes depend on the environment of the individual.

This position presupposes a distinction between the content and the mental kind of an episode, a distinction that is mirrored by the one between the illocutionary force and propositional content of a speech act. Accordingly, we can also distinguish between rational relations in the logical space of reason that hold in virtue of the content and those that hold in virtue of the mental kind of the episode. An example of the former is the move from believing that there is an apple on my plate to believing that there is an edible object on my plate. An example of a rational relation that holds in virtue of the mental kind, on the other hand, is the move from seeing that there is an apple to believing that there is an apple.

\(^{103}\) Cf. section 3.5.
Mental kinds are characterized by the rational relations of mental episodes to other positions in the logical space of reason that do not hold in virtue of the content of that episode. In order to acquire new mental kinds one has to learn which moves one can make to and from these positions in virtue of their being of a certain mental kind. I have argued above\(^{104}\) that — apart from some basic mental episodes — one learns about these possible moves through social practices, mainly by learning how the word that describes a specific mental kind is used in language. In order to constitute the episode of holding an empirical belief, for example, one has to understand that this is the kind of position that is justified by empirical experiences. Similarly, a position that is justified by past perceptual experiences (and also stands in rational relations to other positions, more about which later) is constituted as remembering something.

There might be a temptation to assume that one has had various kinds of mental episodes already before one learns about their rational relations in the logical space of reason. When somebody learns that holding an empirical belief is a mental episode that is justified by a perceptual experience, she does not learn to constitute it, one might argue; she rather learns that the kind of mental episode that she already had before is called 'holding an empirical belief.' This line of reasoning is based on the assumption that one can experience various kinds of mental

\(^{104}\) Cf. section 3.5.
episodes without knowing what they are called and in which rational relations they stand to other mental episodes. It might even be argued that there are some episodes that cannot be described or communicated in any other way, and that only artists, composers, or poets can come close to expressing the inexpressible.

The account of constitution that I am proposing has indeed no place for mental episodes that cannot be expressed in language or manifested in other social practices. Since mental kinds are defined by their rational relations to other positions in the space of reason, one can experience an episode of a certain kind only if one has at least a rough understanding of what moves one can make to and from this episode in virtue of its being an episode of this kind. Similarly for the content of the episode: in order to have an experience of a certain object, one has to have at least a rough understanding of which moves one is entitled to make in virtue of the content of experience. In order to acquire this knowledge, these rational relations have to be manifested in language or other social practices. Hence, it is possible in principle to describe the kind and the content of mental episodes by showing their rational relations to other positions in the logical space of reason or by referring to the social practices through which we have mastered these relations.

So far I have argued that we need social practices, mainly language, to acquire a set of various mental kinds. Does that mean that if our social practices were different, our mental lives would be different as well? Let
us imagine an isolated community in a hidden and secluded valley deep in the Alps which has never been in contact with any person from outside the community. Let us assume further that the community’s language and social practices are quite different from ours. If it is correct that the acquisition of mental kinds depends on social practices, these people must have mental kinds quite different from ours, i.e., they must have kinds of experiences we do not know and miss some of the kinds we do.

I think that this assumption is quite reasonable. I want to point out, however, that the differences between their mental lives and ours are not as radical as it might at first seem. We can expect to find a similar distinction between different kinds of perceptual experiences in all communities of human beings; they all will probably distinguish between seeing, hearing, smelling, and feeling something. In addition, some mental kinds emerge from one of the basic aspects of language, namely describing the world. Exclamations like “There is an apple!” and their respective counterparts in other languages express mental episodes that are justified by perceptual experiences. It is, thus, very likely that we will also find the notion of ‘holding empirical beliefs’ in all language communities. The mental lives of all human beings will therefore include various kinds of perceptual experiences and episodes like holding empirical beliefs.

It is, however, possible that language communities differ with respect to other, more complex mental kinds. There might be a
community that does not know the mental episodes of being jealous, of performing mathematical calculations, or of doubting something, for example. The point is not that people merely do not have a word for jealousy, calculations, or doubt in their vocabulary, but that they never actually experience these kinds of mental episodes. This means, of course, that their social practices differ from ours in some relevant respects. I do not want to argue that they can have a conceptual scheme, a way to see the world, that is radically different from ours and that we cannot translate into our scheme. Given that people from this community come in touch with our culture and learn to speak our language, they will be able to understand the notion of 'jealousy,' 'doubt,' and 'calculation' and might, eventually, even doubt, have the experience of being jealous, and perform calculations\textsuperscript{105}. As long as the members of this community do not get in touch with members of our community, however, their mental lives will not include these kinds of experiences.

The account that I have outlined above might still be criticized for holding that we can have only mental episodes that can be manifested in social practices. It might be argued that many people report that they had a feeling or experience that they could not describe or communicate in some other way. Hence, there must be some mental episodes that cannot be manifested in social practices. It sometimes has been claimed that mystical

\textsuperscript{105} I am assuming here that their language can be translated into ours. For a discussion on that topic and a rejection of the distinction between conceptual scheme and empirical content, which he calls the third dogma of empiricism, cf. Davidson (1984).
experiences are of that sort. When Dante comes to describe the highest spheres of paradise in the *Divine Comedy*, for example, he writes:

> "From that point on, what I could see was greater than speech can show: at such a sight, it fails — and memory fails when faced with such excess." (Dante Alighieri, 1982, 292, [Par. XXXIII, 55])

Dante reports that during his visit to paradise he had visual experiences that were so particular that the means of language do not suffice to describe them, nor can memory cope with them. This stands in contrast to the account of constitution that I am proposing. I have argued that we can have mental episodes only if they can be manifested in language or some other social practice. Dante states, on the other hand, that he had ineffable experiences.

One way to resolve this tension is to distinguish between feelings or sensations on the one hand, and experiences on the other. Feelings and sensations are impacts on the nervous system that, ideally, can be fully explained and predicted by scientific laws and, therefore, are standings in the logical space of nature. Experiences, on the other hand, are constituted mental episodes that stand in rational relations to other mental episodes. They are positions in the logical space of reason and, thus, cannot be explained by the laws of science, but follow the rules of rationality. While experiences are directed towards something as an object, sensations are not.

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106 For a similar distinction between feelings and mental episodes cf. McDowell (1989, 288).
intentional. In some cases mental episodes are caused by feelings, like perceptual experiences that are caused by sensory stimulation. This does not mean, however, that feelings become a part of the experiences, as McDowell points out:

"The fundamental point is the distinction between foundations and (mere) causal antecedents: non-conceptual pain (in pre-linguistic infants) is a causal antecedent of the ability to have conceptual pain episodes, not a continuing ingredient in them which grounds the conceptual structures involved." (McDowell, 1989, 288)

Thus, we can distinguish the feeling of pain from the experience of pain, for example. In order to experience pain, one has to know its rational relations to other positions in the logical space of reason; in other words, one has to have constitutive commitment. One has to know that from experiencing pain one can move to believing that one is injured and wishing to see a doctor, for example. The experience of pain is caused by a feeling of pain. Once constitutive commitment is established, however, one cannot have a mere feeling of pain, but one automatically constitutes the pain-experience; one cannot give up constitutive commitment, as I have argued above.\textsuperscript{107}

An organism that has not established constitutive commitment, on the other hand, can feel pain simply if it has a nervous system that is complex enough to process a certain kind of stimulus. This stimulus

\textsuperscript{107} Cf. section 3.4.
might even cause the reflex to move away from the source of the pain. This movement, however, is not an intentional action, but a mere stimulus-response pattern that can be fully described in terms of scientific laws. It is, thus, not a move in the logical space of reason. While it might be difficult, if not impossible, to describe the feeling of pain, there must be some social practice on the basis of which we can express the experience of pain; otherwise we could not constitute it in the first place. If there is no word for a specific experience in our language, one could still describe it in virtue of its rational relations to other mental episodes: mystical experiences must be describable. Similarly, the goal of poetry cannot be to describe the indescribable, but rather that which is difficult to express with words.

Thus, when Dante writes “How incomplete is speech, how weak, when set/against my thought” (Dante Alighieri, 1982, 196 [Par. XXXIII, 121f]) he merely points out that he had experiences that are difficult to describe, but describing them cannot be impossible in principle. In fact, after pointing out the difficulties of expressing what he has seen, Dante goes on to describe the ineffable, i.e., his experience of God, using a geometrical metaphor of three circles of different colors that are of the same dimension.

In sum, I am proposing that experiencing different kinds of mental episodes depends on a process of acquiring various positions in the logical space of reason which, in turn, depends on mastering the rational
relations that hold between these positions. I have argued that we learn about these relations by growing up in a social group and adopting social practices. Consequently, having mental episodes depends on growing up in a social group. If one were missing that social foundation, one could still have feelings or sensations. In order to have experiences, however, one has to be able to perform moves in the logical space of reason, which requires one’s adaptation of social practices.

4.2 What Kind of Rational Relations are there?

I have argued that mental episodes are positions in the logical space of reason that are defined by their rational relations to other positions. So far I have not discussed, however, what kind of rational relations hold between mental episodes. Using the term ‘rational relation,’ I want to stress that these relations — unlike causal relations — cannot be described on the basis of scientific laws. Sellars, who originally developed the metaphor of the space of reason, talks about the relations between different positions in that space mainly in terms of justification. According to him, positions in the space of reason are judgments that justify and are justified by other judgments. The only exceptions are perception or language entry transitions, and action or language exit transitions.\(^{108}\)

\(^{108}\) Sellars distinguishes between intralinguistic moves, language entry transitions and language exit transitions in (1963).
Perceptual experiences are not inferred from other positions in the logical space of reason; according to Sellars they are justified by reliability conditions\textsuperscript{109}. Perception is, thus, a transition from something that is not a position in the logical space of reason to a position in that space. Intentional actions, on the other hand, are transitions from a position in the space of reason to a bodily movement that is not a position in that space. All other positions in the logical space of reason, however, justify and are justified by other positions. I think that Sellars's notion of 'justification' has to be understood in a broad way that goes beyond the strict meaning of 'justification' as valid inference from true propositions to another proposition in order to cope with the variety of moves we can make in the logical space of reason\textsuperscript{110}.

Let me illustrate that point with two examples. First, one can move to the mental episode of (i) imagining a pink elephant from the positions of (ii) seeing (or remembering) an elephant and (iii) seeing (or remembering) something that is pink. The move from these two positions to the first requires us to apply the predicate of (iii) to the subject of (ii). In addition, positions of imagining are not true or false; we are thus required to transform the two judgments into a position that does not have a truth-value. To put it less formally, we have to modify the mental kind and merge the contents of the two positions to move to the third. Now, we

\textsuperscript{109} Cf. Sellars (1997, 73ff, § 35).

\textsuperscript{110} A similar point is made by Brandom, cf. (1997, 192f, fn. 3).
could say that the episode of imagining a pink elephant is justified by the other two episodes. I think, however, that this characterization does not well describe our actual move. The point is not that (i) is justified (in the strict, logical sense), but that we could not move to this position had we not had an experience that was about an elephant and one about something that was pink. Imagining a pink elephant, thus, does not require us to make a valid inference, but a move that is better described in terms of creative thinking or fantasy.

Second, in the preceding section I have pointed out that episodes of remembering something are justified (in the strict sense) by past perceptual experiences. If we only think in terms of logical justification, this should be sufficient to characterize this mental kind. It is, however, not enough to show how we actually move to positions of this kind. We move to episodes of remembering something from other experiences which strictly speaking do not justify them. Listening to a song, for example, might remind me of the day when I first met my partner. In what follows, I might remember the dress she was wearing, the first words she said to me, etc. The episode of remembering is justified (in the strict sense) by the fact that I had certain experiences in the past. The actual move I perform to the episode of remembering that moment, on the other hand, is made from the mental episodes of hearing the melody.

These examples show that the rational relations that hold in the logical space of reason go far beyond valid inferences; they also include
moves that are best described as association, creative thinking, or fantasy, etc. Nonetheless, all the positions in the space of reason are part of a rationalizing account that shows why it is reasonable to make the actual moves we do. Moving from hearing a melody to remembering the first time I met my partner, for example, can be accounted for by the fact that I heard that very melody when I first saw my partner.

I cannot give a full list of all the kinds of moves one can make in the space of reason. There are, however, some characteristics that can help to distinguish various groups of moves. The above examples have shown that there are moves that change what Searle calls the 'direction of fit,' like the move we make from perceptual experiences to episodes of imagining or wishing something. The former have a world to mind direction of fit, i.e., they can be true or false; the episode of imagining something has the null direction of fit, it does not have a truth value, nor can it be fulfilled by the world. Wishing something, finally, has the mind to world direction of fit.

In addition, we can distinguish between moves that require a certain effort, like making logical inferences or imagining something, and moves that don't, like an association that brings about an episode of remembering something. The latter kind of moves include passive processes that Husserl calls 'passive synthesis' and 'association' and that,

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according to him, establish the first level of constitution. These passive processes of association also take a central place in the account of constitution that I have outlined in the third chapter, they bring about affective units and establish the associative connections between these units and the retentional background.

The fact that we do not have to make an effort to establish these passive relations does not imply that they are causal relations. It is in our power to change these passive processes; we can constitute different objects even though the causal chain that leads to the experience stays the same. Of course, it is not easy to bring about these changes, and in general one needs a good reason to do so; our habits that guide the process of constitution are very strong. There are some examples, however, where we can make these changes quite easily. When one comes to a city, for example, one tends to see houses. If one is told, however, that this is not an actual city, but only a group of facades built for the sole purpose of shooting movies here, one switches to constituting facades rather than houses, even though the visual experiences are caused by the same objects. There are even some cases where we can switch back and forth between constituting two different objects. This can be the case when we look at a picture puzzle like the duck-rabbit (fig. 3): once one has discovered the ambiguity of the picture, one can switch back and forth from constituting a

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112 Cf. above, 2.1.

113 This example was made famous by Wittgenstein, cf. (1958, 194, § xi) who gives reference to Jastrow’s Fact and Fable in Psychology.
visual experience of a picture of a duck to constituting a visual experience of a picture of a rabbit.

![fig. 3](image)

### 4.3 Perceptual Experience vs. the Social Dimension of the Logical Space of Reason: the Brandom-McDowell Debate

In recent years Robert Brandom and John McDowell have engaged in a debate concerning the social dimension of the logical space of reason.\(^{114}\) One of the central topics of this exchange was Brandom’s critique that McDowell’s notion of ‘prejudgmental perceptual experience’ reflects a residual individualism in his position. Since the notion of ‘perceptual experience’ as prejudgmental episodes also takes a central place in the account of constitution that I am proposing, I will now go on to discuss whether there is a tension between that notion and the social aspect of the

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\(^{114}\) This debate followed the publication of their books, *Mind and World* and *Making it Explicit*, respectively, in 1994. It started out with a *Symposium in Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (McDowell (1995) and Brandom (1995)) and continued with several Book Symposia on their books that contain a review article and the author's reply (McDowell (1996b), (1997), (1998b) and Brandom (1996), (1997), (1998)).
space of reason. I will first outline the debate between the two philosophers and then apply it to the notion of 'perceptual experience' that I am working with. This discussion will show that my account of constitution does not imply individualism.

The debate begins with an argument by McDowell against a deformation of the Sellarsian picture of standings in the logical space of reason which consists in an "interiorization of the space of reason, a withdrawal of it from the external world. This happens when we suppose that we ought to be able to achieve flawless standings in the space of reason by our own unaided resources, without needing the world doing us any favors." (McDowell, 1995, 877). McDowell argues against positions like Davidson's coherentism, according to which there is only a causal, but not a rational relation between mental and physical events. McDowell criticizes these positions by pointing out that the only way in which we can make sense of positions in the space of reason is by acknowledging that some of them are justified by facts. He holds that there is a "direct figuring of manifest fact in the space of reason" (McDowell, 1995, 890, fn. 24). Consequently, the world is part of the logical space of reason, which is, as McDowell notes, identical with "the space of concepts" (McDowell, 1995, 888).

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115 I have discussed McDowell's critique of Davidson's position in more detail above, chapter 1.
In his reply to McDowell, Brandom states that he is in general agreement with McDowell's argument but thinks that it should be supplemented with a stronger emphasis on "a crucial dimension of the space of reason that McDowell never mentions: its essentially social articulation." (Brandom, 1995, 895). He argues that McDowell is individualizing the space of reason, a deformation as bad as its interiorization. According to Brandom, there is a residual individualism in McDowell's position that has its roots in his notion of 'perceptual experience' that he defines as a "conscious experience that is prejudgmental, but nonetheless through and through conceptually contentful." (Brandom, 1998, 369). Brandom holds that there is a gap between McDowell's diagnosis and the therapy he recommends which becomes visible in his "move from the need for rational constraint by the world ... to rational constraint by experience." (Brandom, 1996, 255). McDowell's individualism consists in his view that one's perceptual judgments are justified by one's own perceptual experiences. Insisting on that notion of 'perceptual experience,' McDowell is "overlooking other alternatives" (Brandom, 1998, 374) that could solve the problems that concern McDowell.

One of the alternatives that Brandom has in mind is his own account that defines standings in the space of reason in terms of commitments and entitlements to these commitments. Occupying a position in the space of reason, Brandom suggests, is "staking a claim, that
is, undertaking a commitment of the sort that might be expressed by making a claim or assertion.” (Brandom, 1995, 898). One has to be entitled to undertake such a commitment. In addition, a commitment can inherit or derive its entitlement from another. “Together this means that commitments can serve as a stand in need of reasons.” (Brandom, 1995, 898).

According to Brandom, knowledge “incorporates and depends on the social difference of perspective between attributing a commitment (to another) and undertaking a commitment (oneself).” (Brandom, 1996, 904). In the case of non-inferential knowledge, the knower might be unable to give justification for committing to a judgment. The justification for my position can come from another person who attributes the commitment to me. According to Brandom, there “is an inferential connection between a suitably noninferentially acquired commitment attributed to you and a corresponding commitment that I undertake. It is treating your commitment as a (defeasible) reason for my own.” (Brandom, 1995, 906). Non-inferential knowledge, thus, is justified by the fact that reliability conditions are met, a fact that is attributed to the knower by the interpreter. While McDowell holds that every knower can arrive on her own at perceptual knowledge, Brandom argues that in order to know one depends on an interpreter who justifies one’s knowledge.

“The externalist epistemologist who takes reliability to warrant the attribution of knowledge in the absence of justification relies precisely on this essentially interpersonal
pattern of inference. ... although it is enough that the subject of knowledge be reliable to be entitled to a belief (without having to be able to cite that reliability as a reason for it), the attributor of knowledge has to be able to cite that reliability as such a reason.” (Brandom, 1995, 906)

According to Brandom, positions in the space of reason are judgments that stand in justificatory relations to other judgments or facts. Some of these relations, however, are interpersonal. I might hold a position that I cannot justify myself, but that could be justified by someone else. The fact that I am reliable with respect to observational judgments in specified circumstances, which is attributed to me by an interpreter, makes them likely to be true in those circumstances. Brandom concludes that this position meets the rational constraint constraint: “That reliability (in specified circumstances) as a reporter is likelihood of truth (in those circumstances) of reports ensures that the connection envisaged by reliabilists between reported facts and reports of them is not merely causal, but also rational.” (Brandom, 1996, 251f). With this strong emphasis on the social aspect of the logical space of reason Brandom can do without the notion of prejudgmental ‘perceptual experiences’ that justify perceptual judgments and still hold the principle that there must be a rational relation between mind and world. He claims that with this theory of a perspectival interplay he avoids McDowell’s residual individualism.

McDowell criticizes Brandom’s conception of the social space of reason. He argues that with his interplay of perspectives Brandom does not succeed in demonstrating that there is a rational relation between facts
and observational reports. "From the point of view of the responder, the response Brandom wants to be entitled to see as an observational report degenerates, just because of the picture's externalism, into a blind reaction to she knows not what." (McDowell, 1996b, 294). That is, the observation report is not justified by the facts, but is only a blind reaction. Moreover, the observer does not even know what she is reacting to. Brandom's position "eliminates the perceivable facts from what was supposed to be the perspective of the perceiver" (McDowell, 1997, 161) and consequently fails to show that there is a rational relation between facts and observation reports.

Brandom replies to this critique by pointing out that the rational connection is established by the interpreter who can provide the justification for the observer's statement. McDowell counters that this does not suffice to establish a rational relation between facts and observation reports because, according to Brandom's theory, neither the observer nor the interpreter can stand in direct rational relations to facts. He states "that the supposed interpreter's observational hold on reality is in turn made unintelligible by the picture's externalism." (McDowell, 1996b, 295). He argues that at least some observers have to stand in direct rational relations to facts, which can be achieved only through perceptual experiences. Thus, one cannot replace the notion of 'perceptual experience' with the social dimension of the space of reason to establish that rational relation. In other words, Brandom cannot meet the rational constraint
constraint which, however, is part of conceptualism, the view that the space of reason extends into the actual world, which, according to Brandom, is "a defining point for Pittsburgh neo-Hegelians" (Brandom, 1996, 259).

In his reply, Brandom rejects the conclusion of McDowell's argument. According to his account, the interpreter does not have to stand in direct, rational contact to the world in order to attribute the meeting of the reliability conditions to the perceiver. "Those who keep deontic score take interlocutors to be entitled only to those noninferential reports that arise by exercise of (what they take to be) reliable reporting capacities." (Brandom, 1997, 191). It is sufficient for the interpreter to know that I am trained in making a kind of non-inferential reports, in order to attribute commitment to the perceiver. Brandom goes on:

"From the point of view of such a scorekeeper, I may be entitled to my claim that the potsherd in front of me is Toltec rather than Mayan if I in fact have become reliable in distinguishing them — even if I am still so uncertain of my newly learned skill in this regard that I am not disposed to claim such reliability as a justification of my noninferentially acquired beliefs." (Brandom, 1997, 191)

It is, thus, sufficient that the interpreter knows that I am in general reliable in distinguishing Toltec from Mayan potsherds to justify my non-inferential belief.

Finally, McDowell rejects Brandom's critique that his notion of 'perceptual experience' is the result of residual individualism. He states
that "the very idea of a thinker is unintelligible except in the context of the idea of initiation into a shared language, conceived as a repository of tradition." (McDowell, 1996b, 295f). The notion of 'perceptual experience,' thus, is anti-individualistic; it acknowledges that there is a social dimension of the logical space of reason.

The root of the disagreement between Brandom and McDowell is their respective views concerning justification of perceptual judgments and the extent of the social dimension of the space of reason. While McDowell argues that every single perceptual judgment has to be justified by a perceptual experience that stands in direct rational relations to the world, Brandom suggests that I can hold perceptual judgments without being able to justify them, as long as there is somebody who interprets my judgment and is able to justify it for me.

This discussion has some interesting implications for the account of constitution that I am proposing. Like McDowell, I use the notion of prejudgmental 'perceptual experience' and think that once constitutional commitment is established, one does not need an interpreter to justify a perceptual judgment. I have argued that perceptual experiences stand in direct, intentional relations to the objects that are perceived. Brandom could object that this characterization of perceptual experiences amounts to individualizing the space of reason and, as in his critique of McDowell's
position, he could argue that this individualization is a symptom of a residual individualism.

I do not think that this critique is justified. Brandom is right when he points out that the space of reason is a shared space\textsuperscript{116}; one position in that space can be occupied by several persons at the same time. Nevertheless, this social conception of the space of reason does not imply that my perceptual judgments can be justified only through an interpreter who justifies the fact that I am meeting the reliability conditions. I think that Brandom does not put enough emphasis on the fact that in order to have observational knowledge one has to stand in direct contact with objects in one's environment. Individuals have perceptual experiences, each of them standing in direct contact with its object. The relation between experience and object is based on a particular causal chain, it is an impact from a particular object on a particular person's sense organs.

I have argued above that we can establish constitutive commitment only on a social basis. Once one has established constitutive commitment, however, one does not need an interpreter to constitute the object and the perceptual experience, which, in turn, can justify perceptual judgments. This transition is made by the person who stands in a causal relation to the object perceived. In some respects, therefore, occupying a position in the space of reason is an individual achievement.

Does that mean that there is a residual individualism in the position I have adopted? I do not think so. I have argued that perceptual experiences are caused by the objects that are perceived and that the process of constitution is shaped by the social group in which one grows up. There is, thus, a strong anti-individualistic element in that account. Burge characterizes individualism as a position according to which "the nature and individuation of an individual's mental kinds are 'in principle' independent of the nature and individuation of all aspects of the individual's environment." (Burge, 1986, 117). Individualism, then, is a position according to which the content and kind of a mental episode is independent of the individual's physical and social environment. The fact that individuals have perceptual experiences and that they can occupy this kind of position in the logical space of reason without the help of an interpreter does not imply that my position is individualistic according to Burge's definition. I have argued above that in perceptual experiences one stands in a direct contact with objects in one's environment. The content of the experience, therefore, is not independent of one's environment.

Brandom might still argue that the assumption that a person can stand in direct contact with objects in her environment is the result of a different form of individualism that he calls 'residual individualism.' In that case, however, he has to show what exactly he means by 'residual individualism' and, most importantly, why this form of individualism is problematic.
4.4 The Social Aspect of the Mind and Phenomenological Analysis

The use of Sellars's notion of the 'logical space of reason' might cause a tension in the account of constitution that I have outlined above. I have argued that we can master moves in the logical space of reason only through social practices and have concluded that one can have mental episodes only if one has grown up in a social group. According to this view, positions in the space of reason are shared positions which can be occupied by several persons at the same time. This characterization, however, seems to undermine an aspect of mental episodes that is quite essential: mental episodes are private, in the sense that they are experienced by the person who has them. Moreover, this person has a special authority with respect to the mental episodes she experiences. This authority stems from the asymmetry between ascribing mental episodes to oneself and ascribing them to someone else. Yet, if mental episodes are shared positions in the space of reason, it seems to be difficult, if not impossible, to explain that asymmetry.

Burge discusses in several places the connection between Descartes's view that we have direct knowledge of our own mental episodes and individualism. He points out that Descartes argues that from the fact that he has "a clear and distinct idea of himself only as a thinking and
unextended thing” (Burge, 1988, 650), it follows that the mind can exist independently of the body.

“One can argue in analogy that, since one can ‘shut off’ these thoughts from all corporeal substance, they are independent for their natures from physical bodies in the environment, and presumably from other thinkers. This line of argument implies that knowledge of one’s own thoughts guarantees the truth of individualism.” (Burge, 1988, 651)

Thus, Burge argues that individualism can be a consequence of first person authority. The problem is that Husserl’s phenomenological method is also based on one’s authority of one’s own mental episodes. Everything that concerns the physical world, and thus the relation between perceptual experiences and perceived objects, are bracketed in the phenomenological reduction. Burge even names Husserl in a list of philosophers who hold an individualistic position. It seems, therefore, that there is a tension between the anti-individualistic account of constitution that I am proposing and Husserl’s philosophical method, a tension that might be pressing since I have used some of Husserl’s results to formulate that account.

Burge criticizes Descartes’s position using an argument that was first brought up by Arnauld. He points out that our having a clear and distinct idea about our current mental episodes does not necessarily entail individualism because it does not provide us with “sufficient clarity about

118 Cf. Burge (1988, 651), for Arnauld’s argument cf. (1641/1984, 141ff.)
the nature of mental events to justify him [i.e., Descartes] in claiming that their natures are independent of relations to physical objects.” (Burge, 1988, 651). This argument shows that Descartes's conclusion does not follow from his premises, but it does not explain why many philosophers found individualism appealing. Using Putnam's twin-earth example, Burge discusses why we have the strong intuition that by introspection we could not tell the difference between a mental experience about water on earth and one about water on twin-earth. He acknowledges that these two episodes are exactly the same with respect to their "pure phenomenological feels" (Burge, 1988, 653). We can individuate these episodes, however, by having them while we form second order episodes that are directed towards them:

"We 'individuate' our thoughts, or discriminate them from others, by thinking those and not the others, self-ascriptively. Crudely put, our knowledge of our own thoughts is immediate, not discursive." (Burge, 1988, 656)

Accordingly, I can individuate the episode about water as the episode that I have now, even though I might not be able to distinguish this episode from one about water. Burge holds that knowledge about one's own thoughts is a second-order episode that includes a first-order episode. The cognitive content of the second-order episode "is logically locked (self-referentially) onto the first-order content which it contains and takes as its subject matter." (Burge, 1988, 660).

119 Cf. Putnam (1975, 223ff.).
Burge holds that even though we are infallible about having a certain mental episode, we might not know what this episode is about or how its content could be explicated:

“One clearly does not have first-person authority about whether one of one's thoughts is to be explicated or individuated in such and such a way. Nor is there any apparent reason to assume that, in general, one must be able to explicate one's thoughts correctly in order to know that one is thinking them.” (Burge, 1988, 662)

Thus, Burge argues, like Descartes, that we can know our own mental states and that this self-knowledge is infallible. Their positions differ, however, in the way they characterize self-knowledge. While Burge holds that this kind of knowledge is self-referential, Descartes is “construing self-knowledge as a perfected perceptual knowledge.” (Burge, 1988, 660). For Descartes, episodes that lead to self-knowledge are directed towards an object, just like perceptual experiences, with the only difference that the objects that they are directed at are mental episodes rather than physical objects. The difficulty of this position is, according to Burge, that one has to explain where the infallibility of self-knowledge comes from. In addition, Burge states that this strategy is misconceived: “Justification lies not in the having of supplemental background knowledge, but in the character and function of the self-evaluating judgments.” (Burge, 1988, 660).

The analogy between perception and self-knowledge is the root of Descartes's individualism. Descartes argues that we have complete and infallible knowledge about our mental episodes. The problem arises when
anti-individualists like Burge point out that the content of a perceptual experience depends on the object that caused it. Accordingly, the experience of water and that of twater have different contents, even though we might not be able to tell the difference. This example suggests that our self-knowledge, conceived in the Cartesian way, might not be as infallible as it first seemed and that we need further justification for it. One way to react to these worries is to argue that knowing about the relation to the actual object is not relevant for self-knowledge and to deny that the content of the experience depends on the object that is perceived; in other words, to fall back on individualism.

Burge’s account of self-knowledge has striking similarities with Brentano’s account of inner perception. Brentano distinguishes between inner observation and inner perception. Inner observation is a mental episode that is directed towards another mental episode that one experiences simultaneously. Brentano holds the principle of the unity of consciousness, though, according to which we can have only one mental episode at a time. If we are directed towards more than one object in different ways, for example if we hear a melody and see a violinist at the same time, these mental episode form a unity, they form one single mental episode. Consequently, we cannot have an episode of inner

\[120\] Cf. Brentano (1874/1995, 29ff.) and (1874/1995, 127ff.).

\[121\] Cf. Brentano (1874/1995, 94ff.).
observation and another one that is observed at the same time. In inner observation we could, thus, only be directed towards past mental experiences. In consequence, one cannot actually observe, but only remember one's own mental episodes. Memory, however, is not infallible and cannot therefore lead to infallible self-knowledge. Hence, Brentano would agree with Burge that the Cartesian position according to which self-knowledge is based on mental episodes that are directed towards other mental episodes cannot lead to infallible self-knowledge.

Inner perception, on the other hand, is infallible. According to Brentano, every mental episode is directed towards an object. Besides that, however, every mental episode is incidentally also directed towards a secondary object, namely itself. Brentano explains the notion of 'secondary object,' using the example of an auditory experience:

"In the same mental phenomenon in which the sound is present to our minds we simultaneously apprehend the mental phenomenon itself. What is more, we apprehend it in accordance with its dual nature insofar as it has the sound as content within it, and insofar as it has itself as the content at the same time. We can say that the sound is the primary object of the act of hearing, and that the act of hearing itself is the secondary object." (Brentano, 1874/1995, 127)

Thus, Brentano's notion of 'inner perception' is very similar to Burge's notion of self-referential self-knowledge, although there is one crucial difference between the two notions. While Brentano holds that every single mental episode has to be directed towards itself as a secondary

122 Cf. Brentano (1874/1995, 34ff.).
object, Burge does not state that self-knowledge is part of every mental episode. Both philosophers agree in denying that infallible self-knowledge can derive from mental episodes that have other mental episodes as their objects, though.

What consequences has this discussion for the phenomenological method of describing mental episodes from a first-person point of view? The Arnauld/Burge argument shows that from first person authority and the fact that we can introspect our own mental episodes, it does not follow that our mental episodes can exist independently of our physical environment or other thinkers. This shows that phenomenology is not necessarily incompatible with anti-individualism. It might seem, however, that Burge's position allows only for a very impoverished version of phenomenology: our knowledge about our current mental episodes is infallible, but we might not even know what they are about nor be able to explicate them. Husserl's phenomenological method, on the other hand, is based on the principle that we can describe our own mental episodes with a high degree of accuracy.

I think, however, that this does not pose a serious problem to the phenomenologist. This becomes clear when we remind ourselves that the phenomenologist is interested in the structure of mental episodes, and not in the physical objects towards which we are directed in our perceptual experiences. Since self-knowledge, according to Burge, stems from second
order episodes the content of which is self-referentially locked to that of the first-order content, it does not even create a difficulty that we might not be able to explicate the first-order episode. We can individuate the episode on the basis of the self-referential relation between the second-order and the first-order episode. We might not know whether a specific perceptual experience is about water or twater, and still have a second-order episode that is about that experience and, thus, indirectly directed towards water or twater, respectively.

In sum, the fact that phenomenological analysis is based on first-person descriptions of one’s mental episodes does not imply that it is an individualistic position or that one could have mental episodes independently of their social foundation. Burge’s anti-individualism, on the other hand, allows for first-person descriptions of one’s own mental episodes, as the parallel between his account of self-knowledge and Brentano’s account of secondary consciousness shows: Brentano’s method of descriptive psychology is based on the fact that mental episodes are incidentally directed towards themselves.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the mind rests on a social foundation and that, accordingly, we could not have mental episodes if we did not grow up in a social group. Then I characterized the kinds of rational
relations that hold in the logical space of reason. I argued that in order to adopt Sellars's notion of 'the logical space of reason,' we need a rather broad definition of rational relations that covers not only valid inferences, but also moves like creative thinking or fantasy. In the next section I outlined a debate between McDowell and Brandom concerning the social dimension of the logical space of reason and prejudgmental perceptual experience that are nonetheless conceptual. I showed that Brandom's critique of McDowell's position cannot be raised against the account of constitution that I am advocating. In the last section I argued that phenomenology does not necessarily imply individualism.
Chapter 5
Constitution and Idealism

The word 'constitution' has a wide variety of meanings in everyday language. The main problem in adopting this notion in the context of philosophy of mind is that it can have the flavor of creating or establishing reality; the expression 'to constitute objects' might suggest that the existence of objects depends on an activity of the mind; thus, it might seem that the adoption of this notion invites a form of idealism. Indeed, as I have pointed out above, there is an affinity between the notion of 'constitution' and transcendental idealism in the work of Husserl. Kern shows that Husserl's turn towards transcendental idealism was made possible by his account of genetic constitution\(^{123}\). A similar point is made by Ingarden who characterizes the fundamental thesis of transcendental idealism in the following way:

"what is real is nothing but a constituted noematic unit (individual) of a special kind of sense which in its being and quality results from a set of experiences of a special kind and is quite impossible without them." (Ingarden, 1975, 21)

\(^{123}\) Cf. Kern (1964, 276ff.). He points out, however, that the account of genetic constitution was not the only aspect of Husserl's thought that lead to his transcendental idealism.
Since the account of constitution that I have outlined above is strongly influenced by Husserl's phenomenology, I will now go on to discuss whether my account also implies a form of idealism. I will show that it neither necessarily implies nor invites idealism; rather it provides an interesting perspective on the realism-idealism debate. First I will outline an argument that was developed by Wittgenstein in his later writings, according to which the position of the idealist or idealist sceptic, who has a general doubt concerning the existence of physical objects, cannot be formulated meaningfully. Then I will show that this Wittgensteinian argument is fully compatible with the account of constitution that I am proposing. Finally, I will discuss an argument according to which Wittgenstein's late philosophy, as well as my account of constitution, amounts to transcendental idealism. I will show that this argument depends on the ontological assumption that we can distinguish between the object as it really is and the constituted object. The question of whether constitution implies transcendental idealism, I will conclude, depends on whether one is ready to accept this assumption.

5.1 A Wittgensteinian Argument

In his last book *On Certainty* Wittgenstein discusses problems of knowledge. He develops an argument against positions that can be characterized by their giving different answers to the general question "Do
physical objects exist (independently of the mind)?," namely metaphysical realism on the one hand and idealism or scepticism on the other. Wittgenstein's contention is that these positions cannot be formulated meaningfully. He says about the metaphysical realist's basic assumption: "And yet 'There are physical objects' is nonsense." (Wittgenstein, 1969, 6, § 35). The same holds for the negation of this phrase that characterizes the idealist's position. In this section I will outline Wittgenstein's line of reasoning that leads him to this radical conclusion. Wittgenstein presented his considerations in his characteristic style; he did not try to press them into the structure of an argument, they are more like philosophical musings. My presentation of Wittgenstein's argument in several steps is therefore a reconstruction of the argument rather than an outline that inherits its structure from the original text.

When Wittgenstein makes scepticism and idealism the main targets of his critique, he is really talking about one and the same position. If we characterize metaphysical realism by its basic assumption that physical objects exist and that their existence does not depend on the existence of the realm of the mental, then idealism can be characterized as the position that rejects this claim, thus holding that the existence of res extensa depends on the existence of res cogitans.

"It could be said of the latter's [i.e., the idealist's] position that it is sceptical with regard to his opponent's (the realist's) position, and this accords with the customary use of the term 'sceptical'. Hence, whoever denies our everyday belief in the existence of physical objects, is sceptical with regard to this
one particular postulation, and Wittgenstein calls this view 'idealist scepticism'." (Haller, 1988, 100)\textsuperscript{124}

Hence, in the argument that I am going to reconstruct, the words 'scepticism' and 'idealism' are used interchangeably.

The first premise of Wittgenstein's argument is that the truth value of any given sentence can be determined only relative to a picture of the world, i.e., a background of further assumptions and practices. In order to determine the truth value of the sentence "I know that this is my hand," for example, one has to understand not only the meaning of the words of which the sentence is composed, one also has to know the truth-criteria of the sentence. According to Wittgenstein, the proposition is part of a language-game, which determines both the meaning of the words and the truth-criteria. The language-game is part of a background or picture of the world. Even though we can describe several aspects of that background by making some of our tacit assumptions explicit, by stating, for example, "I have two hands," "I have never been on the moon," etc., the background is not a clearly defined, homogenous set of propositions. It is rather

"an agglomeration of a huge number of sub-systems, each with a fluctuating boundary and a 'mixed' content. These subsystems are related to what Wittgenstein calls language-games. One could say that every language-game has a foundation which is a fragment of the player's Vor-Wissen [pre-knowledge]." (von Wright, 1972, 57)

\textsuperscript{124} Wittgenstein uses the expression 'idealist scepticism' in (1969, 7, § 37).
Since it is the background that determines the truth value of any given proposition, we cannot meaningfully say about the background itself that it is true or false. It is rather a picture of the world that is taken to be accurate. Wittgenstein states:

"But I did not get my picture of the world by satisfying myself of its correctness; nor do I have it because I am satisfied of its correctness. No: it is the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false." (Wittgenstein, 1969, 15, § 94)

Even though we cannot attribute a truth value to the background as a whole, we can consider the tacit assumptions it contains in isolation. If we do so, we can attribute a truth value to them. This can eventually lead to one's changing the background altogether and adopting a different picture of the world. In order to illustrate this point, Wittgenstein discusses the proposition "The earth had existed ... for many years before my body was born" (Moore, 1959, 33), which is one of the propositions that Moore added to the

"whole long list of propositions, which may seem, at first sight, such obvious truisms as not to be worth stating: they are, in fact, a set of propositions, every one of which (in my opinion) I know, with certainty, to be true." (Moore, 1959, 32)

Wittgenstein objects that the truth of this proposition is not obvious, it rather depends on the language-game which it is part of, like the truth value of any other proposition. We can imagine people or communities, who have a different picture of the world, for whom the proposition is
false. Wittgenstein illustrates this point with the example of a king who has been told for all of his life that the world started to exist with his birth. All his education was based on this assumption, which was compatible with, or even explained by everything he was ever taught. For him, the proposition "The earth had existed for many years before my body was born" is not at all an obvious truism, it is simply false; it contradicts everything the king has always taken for granted. Due to the differences in the background, the king and Moore play different language-games. In consequence, the words they utter have different meanings; different truth criteria are applied. Strictly speaking, the king and Moore seem to use the same words, but they really speak two different languages. Moore, thus, cannot list this proposition as an obvious truth without specifying the role it plays in his language-game.

What happens if Moore meets the king and tries to convince him of the truth of this proposition? The king would not accept any evidence that Moore can provide. When Moore points out that there are houses that are more than 100 years old, for example, the king could reply that they have been created together with the rest of the world when he was born, and they were designed to trick people about their actual age. The only way that Moore could convince the king of the truth of the proposition, Wittgenstein claims, is to get him to adopt a different picture of the world; the king would have to change his background, as it were. "I do not say that Moore could not convert the king to his view, but it would be a
conversion of a special kind; the king would be brought to look at the world in a different way.” (Wittgenstein, 1969, 14, § 92).

Moore’s strategy to show that the idealist or the sceptic are wrong consists in providing a list of sentences that are obviously true. Wittgenstein states that this strategy fails because it does not take into account what role the word ‘to know’ plays in our language-game. “Moore’s mistake lies in this—countering the assertion that one cannot know that, by saying ‘I do know it’.” (Wittgenstein, 1969, 68, § 521). This move, of course, cannot be very convincing for the idealist sceptic. Moore should rather have pointed out what role the expression ‘I know’ plays in our language-game and in which situations one is entitled to use it. Providing a list of propositions that seem to be obvious truisms without showing that their truth depends on a background does not help, since for every one of these propositions we can imagine a background according to which they turn out to be obviously false. This shows that the propositions listed by Moore are not obvious truisms; Moore’s strategy, thus, misses the point. He should have rather pointed out that the king, who claims that Moore does not really know (some of) the propositions listed, is obviously applying a different set of truth-criteria, and, thus, playing a different language-game. “‘I know’ often means: I have the proper grounds for my statement. The other, if he is acquainted with the language-game, must be able to imagine how one may know something of the kind.” (Wittgenstein, 1969, 4, §18).
Let us now turn to the question of how this background or picture of the world is acquired and what it consists of. Wittgenstein describes the acquisition of a background as part of the process of growing up and learning to play a language-game. The background is not a set of beliefs that one can learn one by one; we rather acquire a whole set of beliefs at once. "When we first begin to believe anything, what we believe is not a single proposition, it is a whole system of propositions. (Light dawns gradually over the whole.)" (Wittgenstein, 1969, 21, § 141). In addition, the background does not only consist of propositions, it also involves certain forms of behavior and practices.

"But is it wrong to say: 'A child that has mastered a language-game must know certain things'? If instead of that one said 'must be able to do certain things', that would be a pleonasm, yet this is just what I want to counter the first sentence with." (Wittgenstein, 1969, 71, § 534).

The basis of the child's background is not her acquisition of the knowledge that there are chairs and cups, for example, but her learning that she can sit on chairs and drink from cups, etc. She can learn to play a language-game that attributes meaning and truth-criteria to propositions like "I know that there is a chair" only on the basis of this kind of background that can be described as a practice rather than as a set of propositions. "The child, I should like to say, learns to react in such-and-such a way; and in so reacting it doesn't so far know anything. Knowing begins at a higher
level.” (Wittgenstein, 1969, 71, § 538). Consequently, the basis of every language-game consists in a practice rather than a set of propositions: “it is our acting, which lies at the bottom of the language-game.” (Wittgenstein, 1969, 28, § 204).

Wittgenstein, thus, allows for a hierarchy of different parts of the background, some of them being more basic than others; but, as von Wright points out, there is “no rigid order among language-games, neither logically nor from the point of view of genetic development.” (von Wright, 1972, 57). In other words, we cannot have a strict and stable hierarchy that describes different levels of the background or of language-games. Even though some language-games can be acquired only on the basis of others, this does not mean that there is a logical hierarchy between them, nor that the acquisition of a specific language game that is more basic is a necessary condition for the acquisition of a more complex one.

We have seen that according to Wittgenstein the background is not just a set of propositions, it rather reaches down to the actual world: our acting lies at the bottom of language-games, as he puts it. At one point Wittgenstein even goes so far as to say that the background contains facts. After pointing out that it is hard to imagine that we could be wrong in our knowing that water boils and does not freeze under such and such circumstances, he states: “This fact is fused into the foundations of our language-game.” (Wittgenstein, 1969, 73, § 558). In another place, Wittgenstein states that “the possibility of a language-game is conditioned
by certain facts. In that case it would seem as if the language-game must 'show' the facts that make it possible. (But that is not how it is.)" (Wittgenstein, 1969, 82, §§ 617f). These passages suggest that Wittgenstein does not accept the view that there is a gap between language and reality. World and language rather form one whole, it does not make sense to draw a strict demarcation line between the two. Wittgenstein, thus, gives up the view that meaning is independent of what in fact is the case. Rather he holds that if the facts were completely different from what we thought, our language game would change.

"If we imagine the facts otherwise than as they are, certain language-games lose some of their importance, while others become important. And in this way there is an alteration—a gradual one—in the use of the vocabulary of a language.” (Wittgenstein, 1969, p. 10, § 63)

A few paragraphs later, Wittgenstein adds “When language-games change, then there is a change in concepts, and with the concepts the meanings of words change.” (Wittgenstein, 1969, 10, § 65). Hence, according to Wittgenstein’s later views, language is not merely representing facts that are on the other side of a gap. Rather facts determine what language-games we can play, they form the very basis of the latter. Hertzberg characterizes this position in the following way: “On Certainty emphasizes what we might call the ‘this-worldliness’ of our language: our language-games are tied to the actual world we live in.” (Hertzberg, 1976, 151)
So far I have shown that according to Wittgenstein we can attribute a truth value to a proposition only relative to a background or a picture of the world. It would be wrong, however, to characterize this background merely as a set of propositions; it also contains actions and facts and, thus, reaches down to the physical world. Let us now turn to the question of how this can shed light on the realism-idealism debate.

The idealist's position is characterized by its general doubt concerning the question whether physical objects exist (independently of the mind). Wittgenstein argues that this general doubt cannot be formulated meaningfully. He claims that in order to doubt any assumption, one has to accept a series of other ones. "If you tried to doubt everything, you would not get as far as doubting anything. The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty." (Wittgenstein, 1969, 18, § 115). Wittgenstein illustrates this point with the example of a pupil who doubts everything the teacher tells him, the existence of physical objects, the meaning of words, etc. He would interrupt the teacher in the history class, for example, and express his doubts whether the world existed a hundred years ago. In this situation the teacher can only react by telling his sceptical pupil that in this context his doubts do not make sense. First the pupil has to learn, he has to acquire a picture of the world in order to play the relevant language game. Only then he can go on to doubt some of the propositions he has been taught, one by one. "The child learns by

Metaphysical realism, idealism, and idealist scepticism are positions that try to come up with an answer to the general question “Do physical objects exist?” This question, however, can be understood only if it is part of a language-game that determines its meaning.

“The idealist’s question would be something like: “What right have I not to doubt the existence of my hands?” (And to that the answer could be: I know that they exist.) But someone who asks such a question is overlooking the fact that a doubt about existence only works in a language-game. Hence, that we should first have to ask: what would such a doubt be like?, and don’t understand this straight off.” (Wittgenstein, 1969, 5, §24)

Wittgenstein’s point is not that the idealist or the metaphysical realist are wrong, he rather shows that they cannot even formulate their concerns without undermining the very language-game they play, which is part of a bigger background that determines meaning and truth-conditions for the statements that characterize their positions. Wittgenstein argues, as we have seen above, that this background reaches down to the actual world. The very fact that we are playing language-games, thus, forces us to accept the existence of (at least some) physical objects. Hence, the general question whether physical objects exist undermines the basis of the language-game which it is part of, in other words, it undermines the background that determines its meaning. In consequence, this general question is meaningless, and so are all positions that try to answer, rather
than reject it. Therefore, both idealism and metaphysical realism are positions that cannot be formulated meaningfully\textsuperscript{125}.

While it makes sense to question whether a particular object exists, it is the generalization of that question that turns doubt into nonsense. I might, for example, ask whether the American continent really exists. The answer to that question will influence my behavior: if a European reader believes the story-teller in Peter Bichsel's short story *America Does Not Exist*, for example, she will go to the travel agency and cancel her trip to New York, etc. The idealist's and the metaphysical realist's answer to the sceptical question, on the other hand, does not influence their behavior at all.

"What the realist and the idealist say, whether it be a realism or idealism of the transcendental or of the empirical type, differs *in toto* not only from what they do, but also from the ground on which they play out their language game. Accordingly, if either one tries to teach a child the use of the expression 'chair', the differences will not be differences between the facts that are taught, nor will they be differences of languages used; they will rather, as Wittgenstein says, be differences between 'battle cries'.” (Haller, 1988, 112)\textsuperscript{126}

In conclusion, we can reconstruct Wittgenstein’s argument in the following way: The truth value of any proposition can be determined only in a language-game which rests on a background or picture of the world.

\textsuperscript{125} I should mention at this point that Wittgenstein's argument does not show that all forms of idealism and realism are nonsensical. I will show in the next section that his position allows for natural realism.

\textsuperscript{126} Haller refers to Wittgenstein (1967, 74, § 414).
The background consists not only of propositions, but also of actions and facts and thus reaches down to the actual world. In order to play a language-game, one consequently has to presuppose the existence of (at least some) objects. The general doubt concerning the existence of physical objects undermines this presupposition and thus undermines the very basis of the language-game of which it is part. Both metaphysical realism and idealism have this general doubt as a starting point, but react to it in different ways. Therefore, both positions cannot be formulated meaningfully. Thus, if Wittgenstein's argument is correct, the "problem of the existence of the external world ... is in fact solved, before it can be raised." (von Wright, 1972, 53).

5.2 Constitution and the Realism-Idealism Debate

I will now turn to the question whether the view that we constitute the objects towards which we are directed in our mental episodes implies a form of idealism. I will use Wittgenstein's argument to show that there is no such connection and that the account of constitution that I have outlined in the third chapter allows us to argue with Wittgenstein that the metaphysical realist's and the idealist's positions are unintelligible. Then I will turn to arguments that claim that Wittgenstein's position implies transcendental idealism. This discussion will show that Wittgenstein's
point that metaphysical realism is a nonsensical position does not imply that the existence of objects depends on language or on mental episodes.

In the second chapter I argued that we can explain the fact that mental episodes are intentionally directed towards objects with an account of constitution. The basic assumption of that account is that both the objects towards which we are directed and our mental episodes are constituted. I have argued that having mental episodes requires a holistic retential background that consists of past mental episodes that underwent retentional modification. In perceptual experiences we stand in direct, intentional relation to the perceived object. In addition, perceptual experiences play a special role in our mental life: the intentionality of all other mental episode is based on the former's direct, intentional relation to the perceived object.

There is a parallel between Wittgenstein's late theory of meaning and the constitution of objects. While Wittgenstein argues that the meaning of words depends on their use in language-games which rests on a holistic background, I have claimed that the constitution of objects depends on a retentional background. Perceptual experiences undergo retentional modification and, eventually, become part of the retentional background. In consequence, the retentional background contains retentionally modified experiences that stood in direct contact to the object towards which they were directed. Thus, the retentional background,
reaches down to the actual world. Accordingly, there is no gap between mind and world; we can rather speak of the 'this-worldliness' of mental episodes.

The thesis that perceptual experiences stand in direct contact to physical objects, which implies that the retentional background reaches down to the actual world, has an important implication for the question whether my account of constitution necessarily involves idealism. If what I have said so far is right, having mental episodes presupposes that there are (at least some) physical objects that exist independently of our having mental episodes. Thus, the account of constitution that I have outlined above is incompatible with the main thesis of idealism, according to which the existence of the physical objects towards which we are directed depends on the existence of mental episodes.

We can even go a step further and argue with Wittgenstein that idealism and metaphysical realism are positions that cannot be formulated meaningfully or better — to put it into the context of the account of constitution — that they are unintelligible. The retentional background reaches down to the actual world; it contains retentionally modified episodes, in which we were immediately directed towards actual objects. Consequently, when the metaphysical realist or idealist consider the general question whether physical objects exist, they undermine the basis of the retentional background. Thinking about the sceptic's challenge, thus, is a mental episode that questions the basis of the retentional
background which is a necessary prerequisite for having mental episodes; in other words, if there were no physical objects, we could not have mental episodes and consequently could not come to wonder whether physical objects exist. Mimicking Wittgenstein's way of speaking, we can state that the question whether physical objects exist cannot be meaningfully thought. The very fact that we have mental episodes, thus, renders the realism-idealism debate unintelligible.

A short look at the history of philosophy, however, should make us suspicious about whether these few remarks can actually silence both the metaphysical realist and the idealist. In fact, we do not have to go further than considering some interpretations of Wittgenstein's argument to find out that this suspicion is justified: Wittgenstein's position, it has been argued, does not reject, but rather implies a form of idealism. Let us have a closer look at the line of reasoning that was proposed by Williams\textsuperscript{127}. In his early philosophy Wittgenstein stated that the "limits of my language mean the limits of my world." (Wittgenstein, 1961, 115, 5.6). Williams argues that there is a continuity in Wittgenstein's thought with respect to this statement. He acknowledges that Wittgenstein turned away from the solipsistic aspects of the Tractatus in his later work, but still holds that the limits of our language mean the limits of our world\textsuperscript{128}. In his later

\textsuperscript{127} Cf. Williams (1974).

\textsuperscript{128} Cf. Williams (1974, 82).
philosophy Wittgenstein claims, according to Williams, that "what the world is for us is shown by the fact that we can make sense of some things and not of others" (Williams, 1974, 84). And a few lines later Williams states:

"Since the fact that our language is such and such, and thus that the world we live in is as it is, are, as presently construed, transcendental facts, they have no empirical explanation; anything that can be empirically explained, as that certain external features of the world are this way rather than that, or that we (as opposed to Hopi Indians, or again as opposed to cats) see things in a certain way, or deal with things in one way rather than another – all these fall within the world of our language, and are not the transcendental facts." (Williams, 1974, 84)

Our language determines how we see certain facts. People who grow up in other cultures might see the world in a completely different way. However, we cannot step outside of language, we cannot explain why the structure of our language is how it is; it might be completely different, as are the structures of languages of different cultures, like that of Hopi Indians. Even if we learn to speak the language of the Hopi Indians, our picture of the world is still determined by a language (just that it is now determined by a different language with a different structure). In other words, we cannot know whether language provides an accurate picture of the world because we cannot compare the world as we refer to it in our language-games to the world as it is independently of language; we can see the world only through the lenses of a language, so to speak. On the basis of these observations, Williams draws the conclusion that Wittgenstein
held a form of idealism not only in the *Tractatus*, but also in his later work:

"The fact that in this way everything can be expressed only via human interests and concerns, things which are expressions of mind, and which themselves cannot ultimately be explained in any further terms: that provides grounds, I suggest, for calling such a view a kind of idealism." (Williams, 1974, 85)

Williams's argument could easily be adopted to formulate an argument according to which the account of constitution that I am proposing implies a form of idealism. The constitution of objects depends on the retentional background that one has established, i.e., it depends on one's constitutive commitment. In other words, we can know objects only as they are constituted in our mental episodes; we know them only through the lenses of constitution. If somebody has a retentional background that is sufficiently different from ours because, for example, she grew up in a different culture, this person would constitute objects in a different way. However, we cannot step outside of constitutive commitment to compare the object as it is in itself with the constituted object. Even if we try to have an empirical or scientific understanding of why we constitute objects in the way we do, every explanation we could come up with would lie within the limits of our constitutive commitment\(^{129}\), it could be argued. To use Davidson's metaphor, "we can't get outside of our skins to find out

\(^{129}\) I am paraphrasing Williams "such an explanation would, once more, have to lie within the limits of our language." (Williams, 1974, 93).
what is causing the internal happenings of which we are aware.” (Davidson, 1986, 312).

This line of reasoning is based on what I will call the ‘transcendental assumption’ that we can distinguish between the (raw, unstructured) world, the world as it is in itself, on the one hand, and the world as it figures in our language-games or in our mental episodes, on the other. Williams does not provide any textual evidence, however, that Wittgenstein shared this transcendental assumption. In addition, this assumption is based on the premise that “there are physical objects independently of how we refer to them in our language-games” which, for Wittgenstein, is a proposition that cannot be formulated meaningfully. Rather than arguing for or against transcendental idealism, Wittgenstein would rather point out that this problem is a nonsensical one. Williams, thus, cannot prove that Wittgenstein held a form of idealism.

These considerations only show, however, that Wittgenstein did not draw the conclusion that his position implies a form of idealism. Williams could still argue that he should have drawn this conclusion, and that his later philosophy in fact does imply transcendental idealism. On similar lines it might also be argued that the account of constitution that I am proposing implies this kind of idealism. Whether the idealistic interpretation of Wittgenstein and of the account of constitution that I have outlined is convincing depends on whether the transcendental assumption is correct or not. In other words, it depends on whether we
can meaningfully distinguish between the constituted object (or, in Wittgenstein's case, the object as it is given in the language-game) on the one hand, and the object as it is in itself, on the other. Once one has accepted the distinction between empirical reality, which has a certain structure, on the one hand and raw, unstructured reality, which lies behind the former, as it were, on the other, it can be argued that the structure of empirical reality is a product of subjectivity, and that the raw, unstructured world is not accessible to us. McDowell, who calls that perspective the sideways-on picture\textsuperscript{130}, describes its basic assumption in the following way:

"We are asked to suppose that the fundamental structure of the empirical world is somehow a product of subjectivity, in interaction with supersensible reality, which, as soon as it is in the picture, strikes us as the seat of true objectivity." (McDowell, 1996a, 42)

The transcendental assumption has been subject of extensive discussions in the history of philosophy; hence this is not the place to show that a position with that historical dimension is wrong. However, since Wittgenstein's later philosophy as well as the account of constitution that I have outlined above only imply transcendental idealism if one accepts the transcendental assumption, I will sketch an alternative position that can do without that assumption.

\textsuperscript{130} Cf. McDowell (1996a, 34f).
According to this position the structure of the empirical world is not a product of subjectivity that is imposed on a supersensible reality, but rather a feature of the world that exists independently of human beings. The basic idea, thus, is to reject the distinction between constituted object and the object as it is in itself. A position that holds this view has been proposed recently by Putnam under the title ‘natural realism’ and by McDowell, who calls his position ‘naturalized platonism.’ We find expressions of a position along these lines also in Wittgenstein’s later philosophy: “When we say, and mean, that such-and-such is the case, we—and our meaning—do not stop anywhere short of the fact; but we mean: this is so.” (Wittgenstein, 1958, 44, § 95).

According to these philosophers, there is no raw, unstructured reality. The world rather consists of objects and facts towards which we are directed immediately in our mental episodes. Perceptual experiences, thus, do not impose a structure on the world as it is in itself, but rather provide ‘glimpses of reality,’ as McDowell puts it. Putnam characterizes natural realism in the following way:

“A natural realist, in my sense, does hold that the objects of normal, ‘veridical’ perception, are usually ‘external’ things. ... The natural realist ... holds that successful perception is just a seeing, or hearing, or feeling, etc., of things ‘out there,’ and not a mere affection of a person’s subjectivity by those things.” (Putnam, 1994, 454)

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131 I have discussed Putnam’s position above, cf. 3.3.
According to this view, we can stand in direct cognitive contact to the actual objects of our perceptual experiences. To put this point differently, we do not perceive sense data, impressions, or other representations of the objects, but the objects themselves. When Putnam states that we perceive ‘things out there’ he rejects the claim that “perception involves an interface between the mind and the ‘external’ things we perceive” (Putnam, 1994, 488) and that our perception has to be mediated by a causal relation between the object and the perceptual experience. This position entails a common-sense realism according to which whatever we can perceive (objects, facts, or events) exists in the actual world, independently of our mental episodes. In consequence, the structure of the world we perceive is not imposed by us on a supersensible reality, but is part of the world. Putnam argues that the fact that we can describe the world differently in various language-games does not mean that objects are different from how they are described in these language-games; in other words, it does not endorse the distinction between the world as it is in itself and the world as it figures in the language-game. Different descriptions of one and the same object or event can be true, given that their meaning and truth criteria are determined by different backgrounds. In short, there is no need for a realm of constituted objects that figures as an interface between the mind and the actual world.

In conclusion, the charge of idealism depends on an ontological premise, the transcendental assumption, that is rejected by natural
realism. Hence, if Putnam’s position is correct, we can reject the argument according to which the account of constitution that I am proposing implies transcendental idealism.

Earlier in this chapter I argued that idealism and metaphysical realism are unintelligible positions. Now I am using natural realism to show that constitution does not necessarily imply transcendental idealism. Does that mean that I have to accept an unintelligible position, namely natural realism to avoid another one, namely idealism or metaphysical realism? The answer to this question is ‘no.’ Natural realism is the attempt to acknowledge the fact that in some of our mental episodes we are immediately directed towards physical objects, it is, in other words, “insisting that ‘external’ things, cabbages and kings, can be experienced.” (Putnam, 1994, 464). Unlike metaphysical realism, it is not a reaction to the general doubt whether physical objects exist. Rather than theorizing about the ontological dependence between mental episodes and physical objects, it contents itself with showing the role physical objects play in the process of constitution. Hence, the

“natural realist account urged on us by Austin and Wittgenstein, is, in the end, not an ‘alternative metaphysical account,’ … Winning through to natural realism is seeing the needlessness and the unintelligibility of a picture that imposes an interface between ourselves and the world.” (Putnam, 1994, 487)
5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the question of whether the account of constitution that I am proposing implies a form of idealism. I presented a Wittgensteinian argument according to which idealism and metaphysical realism are positions that cannot be formulated meaningfully. Then I showed that this argument is fully compatible with the position that I am proposing. Finally, I discussed an argument according to which both Wittgenstein’s later philosophy and the account of constitution that I outlined in this thesis imply transcendental idealism. I argued that this claim presupposes that we can meaningfully distinguish between the constituted object and the object as it is in itself. This assumption, however, is not at all obvious, nor is it generally accepted among philosophers, which I have shown by discussing the positions of Putnam and McDowell. The charge of transcendental idealism, thus, rests on an ontological assumption that is not commonly shared. To show that constitution implies transcendental idealism, one would first have to prove that the transcendental assumption is correct.
Conclusion

In this thesis I tried to achieve two major goals. First, I developed a position that provides a perspective on the relation between mind and world that allows us to acknowledge that there is a fundamental difference between the realm of the mental and the realm of the physical without creating a gap that becomes unbridgeable. Second, I adopted some of the results of Husserlian phenomenology and put them into the framework of contemporary analytic philosophy of mind. This shows that phenomenology and analytic philosophy do not have to be seen as two incompatible traditions of twentieth century philosophy, and that a reconciliation is possible.

I started out by showing that the great influence of Descartes’s distinction between res extensa and res cogitans has created a gap between the realm of the mental and the realm of the physical that has become unbridgeable. Two dominant strategies in philosophy of mind in the twentieth century, reductionism and eliminativism, are only reactions to, rather than rejections of, Descartes’s distinction. In consequence, they cannot explain the relation between mind and world other than by denying that there is a fundamental difference between the mental and
the physical. I suggested that by adopting the notion of 'constitution' we can develop a perspective that acknowledges the difference between the realm of the mental and the realm of the physical without creating an unbridgeable gap between them.

Then I introduced the notion of 'constitution' by showing how it was used by philosophers in the past. First I gave a short outline of the role that the notion of 'constitution' played in the history of philosophy. Then I concentrated on the accounts of Husserl and Haugeland, two philosophers from very different backgrounds who have adopted the notion of 'constitution.' Husserl was the first philosopher who used 'constitution' as a basic notion in his philosophical system. He argued that we constitute both the objects towards which we are directed and the mental episodes in which we are directed towards them. Since his notion of 'constitution' changed with his overall philosophical system, I gave a historical outline of this development. Haugeland, on the other hand, has recently developed an account of constitution to explain the relation between mind and world. His account of constitution, that is closely related to the notion of 'rule following,' distinguishes between four aspects: constitutive regulations, constitutive standards, constitutive skills, and constitutive commitment. Finally I contrasted these two positions, which allowed me to point out the central features of constitution. Doing so, I prepared the field for the third chapter, in which I outlined an account of constitution.
The account of constitution uses some of Husserl's and Haugeland's results and puts them into the Sellarsian/McDowellian framework that is based on the distinction between the logical space of reason and the logical space of nature. The main assumption of this account is that both the objects towards which we are directed and our mental episodes are constituted. As a first step I outlined some arguments that show that causal theories cannot determine the content of mental episodes. I argued that this can be achieved only by a holistic background. In order to describe the relation between this background and the occurrent mental episode, I adopted the Husserlian notion of a holistic 'retentional background.' Husserl argued that mental episodes do not disappear from consciousness once they are over. Rather they undergo retentional modification, which makes them 'sink down into the past' and gradually lose their clarity and liveliness. Eventually they become part of the retentional background, which functions like a reservoir of objects from which we draw in the process of constitution.

Using Husserl's analyses of the temporal structure of consciousness, I argued that mental episodes are not basic, atomic units of our mental lives, but rather are composed of temporal parts. The constitution of objects can be explained on the basis of these temporal parts of the stream of consciousness: we have primal impressions which form associative units. These units are not only a product of, but also subject to the laws of association which establish connections between them and the retentional
background. These connections enable us to constitute the objects towards which we are directed in our mental episodes.

Constitution, thus, requires a retentional background of past mental episodes that have undergone retentional modification. We did not originally have such a background for our first mental episodes, though. In order to develop constitutive commitment, I argued, we have to develop a first, minimal background, which is based on three elements: primal impressions and the laws of association; our biological makeup and physical environment; and the social group in which we are acculturated.

Finally, I argued that not only the objects towards which we are directed, but also mental episodes, are constituted. I showed that due to the laws of association we constitute sensory fields, which eventually allow us to constitute objects in different ways as seen objects, heard objects, etc., in our perceptual experiences. I argued that due to the process of growing up in a social group, especially through the acquisition of language, we learn to constitute a large variety of mental episodes.

In the remainder of the thesis I discussed some of the consequences of this account of constitution. First I turned to the social aspect of constitution. I argued that we learn to constitute various kinds of mental episodes through social practices. I showed that this position has two important consequences. First, different cultures might have (some) different kinds of mental episodes. Second, there cannot be ineffable
mental episodes. Since I define mental episodes as positions in the logical space of reason that is based on rational relations, I also discussed what kind of rational relations there are. Then I argued that constitution does not entail individualism. Finally I showed that phenomenology is compatible with anti-individualism.

In the last chapter I argued that constitution does not necessarily imply a form of idealism. I used a late-Wittgensteinian argument to show that metaphysical realism and idealism are unintelligible positions. My account of constitution might still be charged with implying transcendental idealism — as it happened in the case of Wittgenstein's later philosophy — but I showed that an argument along these lines rests on the assumption that we can meaningfully distinguish between the object as it is in itself and the constituted object. With Putnam's natural realism I outlined an ontological position according to which this distinction creates an unnecessary complication, which shows that the transcendental assumption is problematic.

The account of constitution that I have developed in this thesis combines elements of positions of several philosophers, most importantly Husserl, Haugeland, Sellars, and McDowell. This strategy allowed me to present a perspective on the relation between mind and world that acknowledges, but does not overemphasize, the differences between the realm of the mental and the realm of the physical. In addition, the mere fact that we
can combine elements of philosophers from such different backgrounds proves an important claim, namely that these positions are not incompatible. This is especially interesting in the historical context of the relation between phenomenology and analytic philosophy, two main tendencies of philosophy in the twentieth century that were often held to be incompatible. The most important result of this thesis, I think, is that it gives an example of how phenomenology and analytic philosophy can be combined in analytic phenomenology, an approach that can provide interesting insights to some of the major problems of contemporary philosophy of mind.
Bibliography


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