1. INTRODUCTION: LANGUAGE AS THE UNIVERSAL MEDIUM AND LANGUAGE AS CALCULUS

In this paper I want to outline a new interpretation of the central tenets of Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology, of Heidegger’s ontology and of the differences between the two. A fresh attempt to interpret Husserl’s and Heidegger’s conceptions of meaning and language seems to be possible due to recent developments in Frege- and Wittgenstein-scholarship, especially to Merrill B. and Jaakko Hintikka’s book *Investigating Wittgenstein*.² The cornerstone of the Hintikkas’ interpretation is a conception of meaning that the authors call “language as the universal medium”.² The core of this conception is the claim that semantical relations between language and the world are inexpressible. As the Hintikkas’ put the central point:

... one cannot as it were look at one’s language from outside and describe it. . . . The reason for this alleged impossibility is that one can use language to talk about something only if one can rely on a given definite interpretation, a given network of meaning relations obtaining between language and the world. Hence one cannot meaningfully and significantly say in language what these meaning relations are, for in any attempt to do so one must already presuppose them.

The corollaries of this general point can be summarized in the following argument – here I follow more the spirit than the letter of *Investigating Wittgenstein*:

(UM-1) Semantical relations are inaccessible; therefore
(UM-2) we cannot imagine different semantical relations; therefore
(UM-3) model theory (and talk of possible worlds) is impossible (since model theory is based on the systematical variation of meaning relations); and (due to 1)
(UM-4) linguistic relativism is inevitable (we are trapped in our language); for (due to 1 & 2)
(UM-5) we cannot grasp reality without linguistic (distorting) interference; and (due to 1)
(UM-6) the construction of a metalanguage is impossible; therefore
(UM-7) truth as correspondence is inexpressible, therefore (and due to 1)

(UM-8) we have to limit ourselves to syntax, i.e., formalism.

This argument, let us call it the UM-argument for brevity, can be identified not only in Wittgenstein, but also in Frege, as earlier work by Jaakko Hintikka, 4 Jean van Heijenoort 5 and recent studies by Leila Haaparanta 6 have shown. One of my aims in this paper is to make plausible the claim that central elements of the UM-argument can also be found in Heidegger. 7

In the case of Husserl, the UM-argument is present only via negationis, that is to say, in his writings we can identify a position that is directly opposed to at least the first seven theses of the argument. Thus we can interpret Husserl’s theory of meaning as a variant of what the Hintikkas call “language as calculus”, a stand which they construct as negating the central points of “language as the universal medium”. (Hintikka has suggested already some time ago that in Husserl we can find this calculus conception. 8)

2. HUSSERL’S REDUCTIONS

Here I can only discuss some central tenets of Husserl’s theory of meaning and language. Let us start with the phenomenological method as he employs it in almost all of his works after 1905, the “phenomenological reductions”. This method is meant to help clarify the so-called “natural attitude”, i.e., the attitude through which we are related towards the world in prescientific and most of scientific experience. In this attitude we assume that there exists a world of physical, psychological and cultural states of affairs, i.e., a world that is for the most part independent from our consciousness. From a language-perspective, a perspective that makes an occasional appearance in Husserl, too, we can say that the natural attitude corresponds to ordinary language with all its ontological commitments.

However, already in everyday life we sometimes leave this attitude behind, and psychology has made this step its special mark. That is to say, sometimes we are not directed towards objects and events in the world but rather towards our own directedness, e.g., instead of (just) seeing a tree, we can reflect on our seeing (the tree). In Husserl’s terminology this turn towards our doing is a “reduction” of our