



**INTUITION AND
PERCEPTION IN THE SIXTH
LOGICAL INVESTIGATION
OF EDMUND HUSSERL**

Susi Ferrarello

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Abstract: In this paper I would like to focus on the phenomenological definition of perception and on its relationship with intuition. Insofar these two ideas seem to play a pivotal role in the process of knowledge, we wonder if intuition has its own property or if it is a part of perception. In short we would like to understand if there is an actual difference between intuition and perception and how they work. As for the philosophical and bibliographical references, we will cite mostly the sixth Logical Investigation of Edmund Husserl. In this place Husserl sketches out *Anschauung* (intuition) and *Wahrnehmung* (perception) as two (different?) kinds of seeing and collecting reality. Both are aimed to the understanding of reality. Nevertheless, intuition seems to be posed on an higher stage than perception, since it seems to translate its *Reinheit* in the perceived datum.

Key words: Consciousness (*Bewusstsein*), Perception (*Wahrnehmung*), Intuition (*Anschauung*), Intentionality (*Intentionalität*), Presentification (*Vergegenwärtigung*), Apprehension (*Aufassung*), Objectifying acts, Phenomenology (*Phänomenologie*).

INTUICIÓN Y PERCEPCIÓN EN LA SEXTA INVESTIGACIÓN LÓGICA DE EDMUND HUSSERL

Resumen: en este artículo nos concentraremos en la definición de la percepción y en su relación con la intuición. Nuestro artículo pretende investigar si existe una diferencia entre estos dos conceptos y cómo éstos trabajan. En este estudio, nos haremos uso sobre todo de Husserl, en particular de la sexta *Investigación Lógica*. Aquí el filósofo distingue entre *Anschauung* (intuición) y *Wahrnehmung* (percepción) como dos (¿diferentes?) formas de ver y de tomar la realidad. Ambos conceptos apuntan al entendimiento de la realidad. Sin embargo, la intuición parece ser más importante que la percepción.

Palabras clave: Husserl, conciencia, intuición, percepción, intencionalidad.

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Susi Ferrarello: Is an Italian Lecturer at the University of Rome, La Sapienza. She earned her Phd in the Universities of Sorbonne and Cassino. She is the author of "Il progetto etico e l'idea di scienza in Husserl", LibreriaUniversitaria, Padova; "Ethical Project and Intentionality in Husserl", *Analecta Husserliana*, Springer, 2009, pp.161-177; "L'idée de science éthique husserlienne et ses implications dans le cadre de la phénoménologie", *Etudes Phénoménologiques*, 2007-2008.

Correo electrónico: ferrarello.susi@tiscali.it

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INTRODUCTION

One of the pivotal concepts of philosophic research is the understanding of *archē*: “How do we reach the *archē* and the truth it discloses?”. The beginning point, by which we can reason on this issue, is perception. Every philosophic problem is linked up to our way of perceiving ourselves or the outside world. Being perception the source of any given experience, it can explain the relationship between subject and an external world. The statements philosophy contends on this relationship can be summed up following these two positions: idealism and realism.

According to the former, the world is not independent from our knowledge. We perceive things which are processed and projected by our rules. Ideas exist as a spiritual projection of a representation, worked out on the basis of our perception. As Bergson remarks the brain yields representations which are then projected and do not meet up with external things. On the other hand realism holds that the phenomena, we perceived, are neurologically contained by simulations of an observer’s mind and conceive perception as a representative one. Differently the French philosopher Descartes proposed that sense-data are transmitted via sensory nerves to the pineal gland *in the brain* wherein they are perceived by the soul as an image of the world. In other words, the perceived world is merely an image in the brain of the real world outside the brain. Additionally, in the Seventeenth-century, John Locke purported that the object of perception is produced and experienced in the mind. Also, Bertrand Russell advocated representative perception and observed not only that “all my percepts are in my head, even the most distant star as *I see it*,” he further observed: “My percept of a table is outside my percept of my head” (Russell, 1927: 138). In other words, according to Russell, both your perceived environment and your perceived body are simulations within your real brain. Finally phenomenology summarizes these two views. In fact according to this perspective, percepts are ideas processed by the instruments of our mind and come from an adequate image of the outside object.

In this paper I would like to focus on the phenomenological definition of perception and on its relationship with intuition. Insofar these two ideas seem to play a pivotal role in the process of knowledge, we wonder if intuition has its own property or if it is a part of perception. In short, we would like to understand if there is an actual difference between intuition and perception and how they work.

Therefore, I am going to argue out this issue exploiting Husserlian work, namely the sixth *Logical Investigation* of the second German edition (1913). With this work, I am going to gain an explanatory and theoretic aim. I would like to follow Husserlian argumentation of the sixth *Logical Investigation* on one hand, to show the bounds of the meaning of intuition on the other one. Albeit Husserl sets out his statements about this point in many places, such as in the *Lectures on the Theory of Meaning* (1908), in the first volume of *Ideas* (1913), in the second volume of *First Philosophy* (1923), in the *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis* (1918–1926) and also in *Experience and Judgment* (1939), or again in a whole set of early manuscripts from 1904–1905, published as a volume edition in the series of the *Husserliana* under the title *Wahrnehmung und Aufmerksamkeit*, I will relate to the most complete and well planned of his works. In this *Investigation*, Husserl sketches out the concepts of *Anschauung* (intuition) and *Wahrnehmung* (perception) from a phenomenological perspective. Albeit there are two words (*Einsicht* and *Anschauung*) Husserl uses to express the idea of intuition, the translator of English *Investigation* translates *insight* the former and *intuition* the latter (Findlay, 2001: XXXIII). At large, both mean a specific kind of seeing (*schauen* and *seen*). Namely intuition as *Anschauung* denotes the ability to see (*schauen*) things and process them in a meaningful way. On the contrary, perception means the skill to take (*nehmen*) a truth (*Wahrheit*), which exists independently from our seeing. So, what is the actual difference between *schauen* and metaphorically *nehmen* a truth? Both are aimed to the collection and understanding of reality, but the intuition seems to be posed on an higher stage than perception. It seems to have a strategic role in the translation of the perceived datum.

1. THE OBJECTIFYING ACTS

In *Logical Investigation* phenomenology is sketched out as a method useful to clarify the roots of knowledge. Thereof, since logic is depicted as the science of knowledge (*Wissenschaftslehre*), it is assumed as the main topic of phenomenological research. Logic is thought as a subjective science, settled in a sheer realm called consciousness. On account of its subjectivity, the main constitutive parts of this science are the lived (*Erlebnisse*) of consciousness. According to Husserl, any cognitive datum is yielded by a subjective experience and any acquaintance is grounded in the pure consciousness. By the adjective ‘pure’, he means the original and very first flow of consciousness’ lived. Indeed, the analysis of general and universal acts of

consciousness can clear up the overall structure of our knowledge. Accordingly, as Husserl writes, this kind of research is “concerned with discussions of a most general sort which covers the wider sphere of an objective *theory of knowledge* and, closely linked with this last, the *pure phenomenology of the experiences of thinking and knowing*. This phenomenology, like the more inclusive *pure phenomenology of experiences in general*, has, as its exclusive concern, experiences intuitively sizable and analysable in the pure generality of their essence, not experiences empirically perceived” (Husserl, 2001: 86).

Thereby Husserl tackles the problem of knowledge by zeroing in on the analysis of lived and namely, of *intentional acts*. They differ from the common meaning of lived experience and acts, since they do not relate to an empirical experience but, so to speak, to a ‘purified’ one. To explicate this point, Husserl gives the following example: I can live the war of 1866 and that of 1870 in two different ways (Husserl, 2001: 209). Indeed, my lived can be tied into a very external event or it can consist in the reflection on the lived itself. It is possible to live following a complex of perceptions, evaluations and various acts by which the events change. On the contrary, we can live following a pure phenomenological stream. That means we can live again our acts in a reflexive way. The acts, considered from a phenomenological point of view, are a sort of a second experience lived by consciousness. In the previous example, the intentional act ‘translates’ the empirical content of the war lived in 1866 and 1870, in a pure network of acts. Thereby the sheer structure of consciousness is made up of a flow of acts, which brings out the objects already lived in a first psychological experience. “The conscious intentional relation of the ego to its objects means for me simply that intentional experiences whose intentional objects are the ego body, the personal ego-mind and therefore the entire empirical ego-subject or human person, are included in the total phenomenological being of a unity of consciousness, and that such intentional experiences also constitutes an essential phenomenological kernel in the phenomenal ego” (Husserl, 2001: 362). Thereof, we can distinguish two kinds of ego and acts, respectively: the psychological or empirical and the phenomenological or pure ones.

Subjectivity and intentionality belong to a pure stage of consciousness. Indeed, intentionality represents the movement of consciousness towards what it has already lived. This is not an actual movement, but a sort of will to recollect its objects in an epistemological, emotional, evaluating way and so forth. Namely, the intentional acts are called also ‘objectifying’, because they are able to present the objects to the consciousness. Accordingly, the intentional essence leads to a ‘presentification’ of the content of any empirical lived.

“Intentional essence is made up of the two aspects of *matter and quality*” (Husserl, 2001: 251). Quality stands for the way by which a content is given and matter corresponds to the content of the act. “Quality may remain identical – so much

has guided us since we formed the Idea of matter – while the same object remains differently present to consciousness. One may think, e.g., of equivalent positing presentations, which point by way of differing matters to the same object” (Husserl, 2001: 252). In short, consciousness can live the same content in different ways: Its life represents intentionality, its way of living stands for the quality of its acts and what it lives corresponds to the matter.

The main purpose of the phenomenological questioning is the analysis of these acts, according to their structure and contents. They constitute the main instrument to gain an access to the problem of knowledge. As for intuition and perception, Husserl reckons them as two objectifying acts. “Objectifying acts – Husserl writes – are signitive and intuitive acts– and, under the latter rubric, acts of perception and imagination” (Husserl, 2001: 314). Every intuitive act is an objectifying one and it encompasses the act of perception and imagination. At the first glance, intuition and perception seem not to be firmly distinguished. Indeed, intuition is a part of perception and it has not its own meaning. Both provide consciousness the contents of what it lives. Both deed according to a specific quality and matter. By inference, we wonder why Husserl mentions them as two different properties. In the following paragraph, we are going to find the discriminating factor between the two.

2. THE REPRESENTATIVE CONTENT

The objectifying acts can account for the connection between consciousness and ‘truth’. Yet, perceptions and intuitions are not sufficient to explain how an object could be perceived and presented to the consciousness. In fact, previous description is lacking of the representative side of the objectifying act. Then, how is it possible to give an aware subject the matter and the quality of what we know? To answer this question, Husserl introduces a third component of the objectifying act, e. g. the representative content. “Each concretely complete objectifying act has three components: its quality, its matter and its representative content” (Husserl, 2001: 312). It is not easy to figure out what Husserl means with this third component.

Every objectifying act, perception and intuition included, is able to perceive, to see or to imagine several external objects. These acts bring forth a representation of their matter thanks to the representative content. Generally speaking, this content can be a signitive or intuitive one. “To the extent that this content functions as a purely signitive or purely intuitive representative, or as both together, the act is a purely signitive, a purely intuitive or a mixed act” (Husserl, 2001: 321). “Representational content (...) really assists the signitive act. For what goes beyond this content, what pins down the sign as a natural object, *can be varied at will* without disturbing the sign’s signitive function” (Husserl, 2001: 321). Thereby, this content can work as

a purely intuitive, signitive or mixed content, because an object can be given to a consciousness in a meaningful or just morphological way. We can grasp an object as it is by intuition or as it looks like or still following both ways. "A purely *signitive* act would be a mere complex of quality and matter, if indeed it could exist by itself at all, *i.e.* be a concrete experiential unity 'on its own'" (Husserl, 2001: 320). On the contrary "the work of intuition will be shown to be that of contributing to the intended act, when authentically fulfilled, a genuinely novel element, to which the name 'fullness' may be given" (Husserl, 2001: 314). A signitive representation has nothing of essential. It gives a specific meaning of what it has been perceived. On the other hand an intuitive representation supplies a signification to the perceived content. The signitive representation can be thought as an empty box and the intuitive one as its content.

As Lévinas remarks in his well-known analysis of these passages, intuition encompasses perception, imagination and memory (Lévinas, 2002: 83). Thence it can present the object and enlivens it (Lévinas, 2002: 85,87). Owing to this, the content of its acts has not to be thought just as a reproduced object in the brain, but as a meaningful content.

Nevertheless, as it concerns this content, the role of intuition seems to fall in a sort of vicious circle. Indeed, Husserl explains intuition by intuition itself. He assumes the argument which has to be proved. He marks out its meanings by its functions. In fact, intuition is an objectifying act and its meaning is explained by the description of an objectifying act. Its skill of representing objects is defined by its function. Husserl reckons that intuition is an objectifying act and it is useful to provide objects to the consciousness. Nevertheless as an objectifying act, it works by quality, matter and a representational content, *e. g.* by intuition. The meaning of intuition is explained by the objectifying act and this latter is described by the former.

Besides, this kind of analysis is applied on perception too. Intuition and perception play a similar role, that is they take the object and give it to the consciousness by a representation. Perception (*per-capio* from Latin) in fact takes the object and intuition (*tueor* from Latin) sees inside it and gives it a sense. "Each total act of intuition has either the character of a percept or an imagination: its intuitive substance is then either *perceptual* or *imaginative* substance or content" (Husserl, 2001: 317). That discloses a sort of *petitio principii*: perception and intuition are a whole, which can be explicated by their activity; their activity can be explained by perception and intuition. The objectifying acts consist above all in this activity.

To avoid this difficulty, Husserl lingers on the description of the representational content and he adds new elements for describing it. He writes indeed that the fullness of representation consists in a system of determinations. By these determinations, representational content can reproduce its object. These determinations are addressed toward the matter of the objectifying acts. Despite

of different qualities and matters, the representative determinations give origin to a unique representational content. But, in what do these determinations consist? Husserl answers: "This designation expresses the relation between representing and represented content (...). When a content functions representatively, we are always differently 'minded', we may speak of a change in *interpretation* (*Auffassung*). We may also call the form of representation the interpretative form. Since the matter after a manner fixes the sense in which the representative content is interpreted, we may also speak of the *interpretative sense*. If we wish to recall the older term, and at the same time indicate an opposition to form, we may also speak of the *interpretative matter*" (Husserl, 2001: 321). The *representational content sic et simpliciter* is that form constituted by the object as it is 'felt' by us (*Auffassung*) and its apprehensional sense. In each interpretation we must therefore distinguish phenomenologically between: *interpretative matter or sense, interpretative form and interpreted content*; this last is to be distinguished from the *object of the interpretation*" (Husserl, 2001: 321). Therefore in any apprehension we have to distinguish between the apprehensive matter or sense and the apprehensive form or content. "The term 'apperception' is unsuitable despite its historical provenance, on account of its misleading terminological opposition to 'perception'; 'apprehension' would be more usable" (Husserl, 2001: 321).

Therefore the representative content of any objectifying act, intuitive and perceptive acts included, is made up of signitive, intuitive and apprehensive form and sense. The former gives the experiential unity of quality and matter of what we perceived. Intuitive act assigns the sense by its seeing and confirms what is perceived. The latter construes all the data and provides a coherent pattern about them. It is not considered in opposition with the perceptive act, since it is described as a form of comprehension (*fassen*). "*Signitive representation* institutes a *contingent, external* relation between matter and representative content, whereas intuitive representation institutes one that is *essential, internal*. The contingency of the former consists in the fact that an identical signification can be thought of as attached to every content whatsoever. *Significative matter* has a *general need for supporting content, but between the specific nature of the former and the specific being of the latter no bond of necessity can be found*. Meaning cannot, as it were, hang in the air, but for what it means, the sign, whose meaning we call it, is entirely indifferent. The case of *purely intuitive representation* is quite different. Here there is an *internal, necessary connection between matter and representing content, fixed by the specific stuff of both*. Only those contents can be intuitively representative of an object that resemble it or are like it. Phenomenologically put: we are not wholly free to interpret a content as this or as that (or in this or that interpretative sense) and this has more than an empirical foundation – every interpretation including a significative one is empirically necessary – since the content to be interpreted sets limits to us through a certain sphere of similarity and exact likeness, *i.e.* through its specific substance. The internality of the relation does not merely forge a link between *the interpretative matter as a whole* and the

whole content: it links their parts on each side *piece by piece*. This occurs in the presupposed case of pure intuition" (Husserl, 2001: 323).

If we come back to the difference, posed before, between signitive and intuitive act, we have to remark that the signitive representation establishes an accidental or external relationship between matter and representational content, while the intuitive one an essential and inside link. "We shall say that two intuitive acts have the same *essentia* (*Essenz*), if their pure intuitions have the same matter. A percept, and the whole possibly existent infinity of imaginative presentations, which all present the same object with the same breadth of fullness, have one and the same *essentia*. All objectively complete intuitions with one and the same matter have the same *essentia*. A signitive presentation has no *essentia* in its own right" (Husserl, 2001: 326). The same signitive representation can be applied on many contents, but an intuitive representation corresponds just to a sole content. The apprehension is necessary for both signitive and intuitive part of any representational content, since it can collect the pieces of the object we perceive as a unit.

Hitherto, the *essentia* perceived and translated by intuition, can be the discriminating factor which can make possible to find out a difference between intuition and perception. As Lévinas said, perception is the main key of experience and intuition of knowledge (Lévinas, 2001: 35, 89). The former gives us the contents without explaining them and the latter grants them a sense in an ideal way. Yet, we can still ask if there is a distinction between perception and intuition or if the former is just a part of a same process and how this essence is seen.

2.1 Perception and intuition

In the sixth *Logical Investigation* Husserl seems to construe intuition as a distinct and particular property of perception and vice versa. "Talk of an *intuition* and, more precisely, of a *perception of the universal* is in this case, therefore, well-justified" (Husserl, 2001: 358). Intuition is a sort of perception of universal and then a way of perceiving. It is exploited in order to account for the fullness of meaning, the truthfulness of our perception and the possibility of its representation. At large, it is posed on the same stage of perception, even if it seems to work just from inside consciousness.

"Perception and intuition are two determinant parts of our knowledge. Intuition as perception (...) – it is irrelevant whether categorial or sensuous, adequate or inadequate – is opposed to *mere thinking*, as *merely significative reference*. Our parenthetically noted differences are, of course, generally ignored. We consider them very important" (Husserl, 2001: 375). Both intuition and perception can be addressed to an ideal or empirical object and their representation can

be respondent or not to the object. They are different from a thought or an expression, because they are what makes significant any expression or thinking. They represent the fullness of any expression. Perception takes the object we refer to and intuition translates what we perceive. This translation can be categorial or sensuous, adequate or inadequate. That means the object can be taken in an epistemological or sensitive way and it can correspond to the outside object completely or just in some features. In substance Husserl retains that intuition can *perceive* the world in these different ways.

As for perception, he sketches out it as an inside and outside perception (Husserl, 2001: 346, 441). "In the *narrower* sense of perception (to talk roughly and popularly) we perceive everything objective that we see with our eyes, hear with our ears or can grasp with any 'outer' or even 'inner sense'. In ordinary speech, no doubt, only *external* things and connective forms of things (together with their immediate qualities) can count as 'perceived by the senses'. But once talk of an 'inner sense' had been introduced, one should in consistency have widened the notion of sense-perception suitably, so as to include 'inner perception', and so as to include under the name 'sense-object' the correlated sphere of 'inner objects', the ego and its internal experiences" (Husserl, 2001: 345). "The 'purely perceptual' content in 'external' perception is what remains over when we abstract from all purely imaginative and symbolic components: it is the 'sensed' content to which its own, immediate, purely perceptual interpretation is given, which evaluates all its parts and moments as self-projections of corresponding parts and moments of the perceptual object, and so imparts to its total content the character of a 'perceptual picture', a perceptual adumbration of the object. In the ideal, limiting case of adequate perception, this self-presenting sensed content coincides with the perceived object. This common relation to the object 'in itself', e. g. to the ideal of adaequation, enters into the sense of all perception, and is also manifest in the phenomenological mutual belongingness of the manifold percepts pertaining to a single object" (Husserl, 2001: 307).

Every internal or external perception is confirmed by an adequate, or not, intuition. Besides, every intuition is confirmed by a perception. We can have an external or internal perception by which we perceive an outside object as an actual (sensuous) or an ideal (categorial) one and intuition 'translates' its meaning for our consciousness, making evidence the level of adaequation between perception and object. "Plainly the connection between the wider and narrower, the *supersensuous* (i.e. raised above sense, or categorial) and *sensuous concept of perception*, is no external or contingent matter, but one rooted in the whole business on hand. It falls within the great class of acts whose peculiarity it is that in them something appears as 'actual', as 'self-given'" (Husserl, 2001: 349). Perception is an objectifying act which gathers what is given to consciousness. "The intentional character of perception, is that of direct presentation. This is, as we know, an *internal* difference of acts, more precisely of their interpretative form.

But 'direct' presentation does not in general amount to a true being-present, but only to an appearance of presence, in which objective presence, and with it the perfection of veridicity (*Wahr-nehmung*) exhibits degrees" (Husserl, 2001: 328). Both perception and intuition intend to give the object to the consciousness. This representation can be posed on different levels of truth and actuality. Indeed, we can perceive an object and reproduce it in our mind or we can work on it and give consciousness a different degree of information. It seems that just intuition can be adequated thanks to its *Abshattungen* (adumbraments). It can see all the objects by the intuitive perception of what this object can be.

In this sense, intuition is a problematic instrument to sense what we perceive. In fact, it is not completely explained how these adumbraments and the interpretation of the object (without reasoning on it) are possible. Nevertheless, the discriminating factor between perception and intuition seems to be just linked up to the interpretation of the data. Indeed intuition is the way by which the perception can contain completely and construe what it has perceived. Husserl gives the example of Madrid. "*The capital of Spain, e.g., is called (i.e. has the proper name) 'Madrid'*". A person unacquainted with the town Madrid itself, thereby achieves both knowledge of its name and the power to name it correctly, and yet not thereby the individual meaning of the word 'Madrid'. Instead of the direct reference, which only an actual seeing of the city could arouse, he must make do with an indirect pointing to this reference, operating through characteristic ideas of properties and the conception of 'being called' such and such" (Husserl, 2001: 289). Madrid can be a city about which I have perceived something, but it can be for me an empty representation, if my intuition does not translate this ideal object in a meaning. "Intuitive acts have fullness, in graded differences of more and less, and this is already the case within the sphere of imagination. The perfection of an imagination, however great, still leaves it different from a perception: it does not present the object itself, not even in part, it offers only its image, which, as long as it is an image at all, never is the thing itself. The latter we owe to perception. Even this, however, 'gives' us the object in varied gradations of perfection, in differing degrees of 'projection'" (Husserl, 2001: 328). The activity of intuitive translation is defined by Husserl as a proper or improper, as an adequate or lacking translation and it can work on several grades of clearness or actuality.

In substance the mechanism of representation, supported by apprehension and then by perception, makes possible a progression of fullness of what I have picked by my sense. Intuitive filling is supported not only by perception, but also by imagination or analogy or adumbraments and many different qualities of act. Once again the features of objectifying acts are clarified by the features of the acts. Intuition and perception are two important components of the third layer of the objectifying act and they can be understood by what they should clarify, that is the qualities and representational matters of the acts. The differences between intuition and perception concern above all the interpretative part of intuition.

Intuition can give consciousness all the parts of the perceived object and following Levinassian interpretation, it represents that 'sentiment' by which the object is completely given to the consciousness (Lévinas, 2001: 93).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we can remind the critics moved by Pradines on Husserlian theory of intuition. Pradines wrote in his *Le problème de la sensation* that intuition is a concept not able to explain its enigma (Pradines, 1928: 11). We agree with his interpretation. We believe that intuition is not independent from perception and it is its most problematic part. According to our analysis, it is a specific moment of perception, which can give the object in a pure or essential way. Nevertheless being a part of perception, it is not completely clear how intuition goes over the limits of empirical data to reach the pureness of the essential object. Just to drop an hint, this could also involve problems in the domain of intentionality. In fact, if intuition is a part of perception, it cannot be completely pure and then the objectifying act cannot be the bearer of a pure truth. Intuition and perception are two objectifying acts and they are a part of the structure of objectifying acts. Indeed, they made up the representative content. Both work thanks to the reciprocal support and seem to have similar features. The most important difference between them consists in the ability of intuition to give sense to a signitive act in an adequated way. Yet, also this ability is linked up to the data provided by perception. In this sense intuition seems to encompass the obscure quality of an immediate and not reasoning interpretation Φ

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