

HOW TECHNOLOGY SHAPES OUR EXPERIENCE

BLAUSTEIN ON MEDIATED PHENOMENA

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Abstract

The article aims to interpret Blaustein's phenomenology of aesthetic experiences from the perspective of the philosophy of technology. In order to do this, I sketch some parallels between today's inquiries into the nature of technology and Blaustein's accounts of experiences of the cinemagoer or the phenomenon of listening to the radio. The study is divided into 5 sections. In section 1, I explore the question of why the framework of the philosophy of technology can be useful in reading Blaustein's

writings. Section 2 presents Blaustein's two main research strategies, while analyzing the phenomenon of technology, i.e., the humanistic and phenomenological methods. Moreover, the question of the compatibility of both approaches is examined. Next, in section 3, different phenomena from the field of the aesthetics of media are analyzed, in order to show to what extent technology mediates one's conscious experiences. Section 4 turns toward the question of the body and environment in technologically determined experiences. Finally, in section 5, the main elements of Blaustein's philosophy of technology are examined.

Keywords: technological artefacts, aesthetic experiences, embodiment, *quasi-space*, Leopold Blaustein.

Kako tehnologija oblikuje naše izkustvo. Blaustein o posredovanih fenomenih

Povzetek

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Članek želi Blausteinovo fenomenologijo estetskega izkustva interpretirati z vidika filozofije tehnologije. S takšnim namenom načrtam nekaj vzporednic med današnjimi raziskovanji narave tehnologije in Blausteinovimi obravnavami izkustva obiskovalca kina ali fenomena poslušanja radia. Študijo sestavlja 5 razdelkov. V razdelku 1 se ukvarjam z vprašanjem o tem, zakaj je okvir filozofije tehnologije lahko uporaben pri branju Blausteinovih del. Razdelek 2 predstavi dve Blausteinovi poglobitni raziskovalni strategiji pri analizi tehnoloških fenomenov, tj. humanistično in fenomenološko metodo. Obravnavam tudi vprašanje združljivosti obeh pristopov. V razdelku 3, nadalje, analiziram različne fenomene s področja medijske estetike, da bi tako pokazal, do kolikšne mere tehnologija posreduje pri zavestnih izkustvih. Razdelek 4 se spoprime z vprašanjem telesa in okolja znotraj tehnološko determiniranih izkustev. Nazadnje, v razdelku 5, raziščem temeljne elemente Blausteinove filozofije tehnologije.

Ključne besede: tehnološki artefakti, estetsko izkustvo, utelešenje, kvazi-prostor, Leopold Blaustein.

1. Introduction

The present article attempts to determine the conceptual and methodological framework for a reading of Blaustein's writings from the perspective of the philosophy of technology. Since ancient Greece, the question of technology has been addressed by philosophers, including Plato, Aristotle, Bacon, or, more recently, Comte, mainly at the margins of ongoing debates (e.g.: Dusek 2006, 39–52, 114–116; Franssen, Lokhorst, and van de Poel 2024). Nonetheless, starting with the industrial age, and now in the middle of the digital age, scholars are perfectly aware that technology is an important factor that shapes human beings, our world(s), social structures, not to mention policy (e.g.: Fellows 1995; Olsen, Selinger, and Riis 2009; Olsen, Pedersen, and Hendricks 2009; Vallor 2022; Bouabdeli 2024). Without exaggeration, one may claim that the philosophy of technology is one of the mainstream trends in the humanities today.¹ Generally, the subject matter of this philosophical subdiscipline is the phenomenon of technology in its different manifestations; the thematic scope here is very wide, and includes such issues as the nature of technology, the manifold meanings of what we understand by technology or technological artefacts, the relation between technology and science or design, technological knowledge, not to mention ethical and social problems connected to technology (e.g.: Ihde 1993; Dusek 2006; Irrgang 2008; Franssen, Lokhorst, and van de Poel 2024). In this paper, I refer to this discipline, in order to deepen our understanding of Blaustein's ideas.

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¹ Contemporary philosophy of technology has a strong institutional background, as in the 1970s the Society for Philosophy and Technology was established (Ihde 1995, 8; 2004; Dusek 2006, 2), providing a great boost to new inquiries into the nature of technology.

82 Blaustein's central focus was what we might call philosophy of mind; more precisely, he adopted the methodological tools of descriptive psychology in examining the intentional structures of our experiences, especially aesthetic experiences.² His approach can be classified as phenomenological in the broad sense, i.e., he attempted to describe what it is like to experience certain (aesthetic) phenomena. His writings were published in the 1920s and 1930s, and they explored, among other things, the following problems. What is the intentional structure of experiences, such as contemplating a painting or watching a theater play? How can we describe the perceptual basis of aesthetic experiences? What is it like to watch a movie or listen to the radio? In the literature, scholars—including Rosińska (1999, 207–218; 2001, 22–23), Miskiewicz (2009, 182, 187), Brudzińska (2010, 11), and Ciccotti (2014, 147–161)—agree in emphasizing Blaustein's pioneering achievements in the field of philosophy of media, film, and radio. But media are generally technologically constituted phenomena.³ Thus far, however, there is no study of how Blaustein's analysis of mediated experiences or phenomena can be read from the viewpoint of the philosophy of technology. The present study aims to fill this gap, and by doing so, my ambition is to show that Blaustein's ideas concern technologically mediated phenomena; this approach was hitherto not discussed in the scholarly literature.⁴ Additionally, given that a large part of contemporary philosophy of technology refers to Husserl's phenomenology and Heidegger's hermeneutics (e.g.: Ihde 1990; 2004; Verbeek 2005), Blaustein,

2 For more on Blaustein's philosophical approach, see: Miskiewicz 2009; Pokropski 2015; Płotka 2020b; 2021; 2023a; 2023b; Nuccilli and Lewandowski 2024; Jakha 2025. For more on the issue of the Lvov–Warsaw School and descriptive psychology, see Citlak 2019; 2023; 2025. For an overall discussion of Blaustein's philosophy, see Płotka 2024.

3 For a critical assessment of such attempts, see Łastowiecki 2016, 167–185.

4 A marginal yet important remark is necessary here. When Blaustein formulated the basics of his approach and when he later adopted it in the field of media, i.e., in the 1920s and 1930s, philosophy of technology was not a separate discipline within philosophy as it is today. For this reason, the article draws parallels between Blaustein and today's examinations, but it has to be noted that Blaustein cannot be classified as a philosopher of technology *tout court*. Rather, this article attempts to determine an interpretative framework to present Blaustein's phenomenology as part (in a loose sense) of contemporary philosophy of technology.

who formulated his theories in the 1920s and 1930s, may be regarded as a blind spot in the history of the phenomenology of technology. To be clear, I do not wish to show to what extent Blaustein's philosophy can be regarded as a precursor or innovative in respect to the later philosophy of technology. Instead, the aim of this study is a reconstruction of Blaustein's philosophy as focused on the issue of technology, which is understood mainly as tools that shape our experiences as mediated experiences.

In order to explore parts of Blaustein's philosophy and phenomenology of technology, the article is structured as follows.⁵ In section 2, I examine the basics of two methodological approaches toward technology described by Blaustein, namely, the humanistic approach and the phenomenological approach. Whereas the former conceives technology first and foremost as artefacts, the latter focuses on experiences. In section 3, I discuss Blaustein's thesis that technology mediates our experience. In this regard, I also explore his descriptions of how technology shapes our experience, e.g., in regard to theater, cinema, and radio. Following that, in section 4, the idea that technology shapes our environments is analyzed. What is crucial here is Blaustein's idea that technology changes our experience of the lived body. Finally, in section 5, I summarize parts of Blaustein's philosophy that can be read in the key of the question of technology.

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2. Exploring technology: Two methodological approaches in Blaustein

Blaustein works out *two* research strategies to study technology, which can be classified as (1) humanistic and (2) phenomenological methods, respectively.⁶ The central difference between these two approaches lies in their

⁵ It should be noted that some questions regarding Blaustein's philosophy of technology cannot be addressed in this study. For instance, Ellul (1990) considers patterns of rule-following behavior or rule-governed systems to be the very nature of technology; to put it briefly, one can adopt Ellul's approach and ask to what extent Blaustein's use of rules of descriptive psychology, its aims, and detailed procedures can be regarded as technological in their nature. Furthermore, given that Blaustein was a student of Stumpf who made use of experimental methods, one may interpret Blaustein's experiments as technologically engaged practices. These questions, though important, are not my concern here.

⁶ Importantly, these categories are not used by Blaustein himself, as he prefers to write

focus: whereas the former method investigates technological artefacts (broadly understood), the latter enables one to examine first and foremost experiences, and only secondarily objects correlated with these experiences. Interestingly, the humanistic approach is widely discussed by Blaustein (1935; 1935/37), and he explicitly claims that it is worth examining the phenomenon of technology; however, he does not use this approach and leaves it as a methodological framework. In turn, the phenomenological approach is not only discussed in regard to its aims, phases, and subject matter, but it is also broadly used by Blaustein in regard to many technological phenomena. In what follows, I will discuss both approaches, and against this background, I will inquire into their possible compatibility.

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Generally, the *humanistic* method consists in describing reality as studied by the humanities. It has a clear subject matter, i.e., the real world; nonetheless, it is comprehended from a specific anthropocentric viewpoint (Blaustein 1935/37, 143a–143b). This means that the world is in the focus of this approach, insofar as it is a product of or the material (of other products) for human actions. In short, the humanistic approach accounts for the world as understood through the lens of the action–product correlation: the world is a universal *milieu* of human actions that functions as correlated with their products (Blaustein 1935, 55–56). The accent put by Blaustein on the action–product correlation goes back to Twardowski (1999, 104) who in his 1911/12 essay on this topic noticed an uncontroversial linguistic correlation between certain verbs and nouns, for instance, “to think” and “the thought” or “to lie” and “the lie,” etc. Verbs in these, and similar, pairs designate an activity (action), whereas nouns designate a product of the related activity. Twardowski’s idea is to generalize this distinction, and as a result he divides actions and products into three classes: (1) *physical* (e.g., “to run” and “the run,” etc.); (2) *psychical* or *mental* (e.g., “to think” and “the thought,” etc.); and (3) *psychophysical* (e.g., “to note” and “the note,” etc.). Next, Twardowski (1999, 116–120) differentiates between (1) *enduring* and (2) *non-enduring* products as follows: enduring products

about “the humanities” (Blaustein 1935/37, 143a), “humanistic psychology” (Blaustein 1935, 33–34), or “descriptive psychology” (Blaustein 2011, 209–210). The latter label can be understood as an equivalent for a broadly understood phenomenology; for more on this classification, see Płotka 2024, 133–137, 291–298.

last longer than the respective action, which originates the product (e.g., a remark as a product of the action of noticing), while non-enduring products stop existing with the actions themselves (e.g., the run happens only, if one is running). Blaustein makes broad use of these distinctions.

Blaustein's humanistic approach enriches the researched field by accounting for the world as the field of action–product correlations. Thus, one can describe different levels of the world constituted by, and through, human actions. Indeed, for Blaustein (1935/37, 143b), the humanistic approach opens a rich field that includes (1) human individuals, (2) (organized or unorganized) groups of human individuals, (3) products of human individuals, (4) products of groups of human individuals, and, finally, (5) sets of such products. The last group is also very broad, and it includes everyday objects (e.g., tools), meaningful products (e.g., poems, theories, paintings), aesthetic (non-practical) products (e.g., a literary work of art), customs (which are understood by Blaustein as types of actions of human individuals), and structures of social organizations (e.g., political systems) (Blaustein 1935/37, 143b–144a).⁷ In this very context, Blaustein (1935/37, 144a) explicitly holds that technology is a set of different types of products. He adds that the organization of products in a certain set can vary depending on tasks and viewpoints adopted as governing rules. Moreover, thus understood sets of products can form a kind of hierarchy. With these ideas in mind, Blaustein's key insight regarding the humanistic approach toward technology lies in comprehending technology as *physical*, *mental*, and *psychophysiological* products that may endure or not, depending on the relevant action. As a result, Blaustein's view on technology seems to be nuanced, not limited to physical artefacts, but comprehending, e.g., plans, schemas, ideas, as (durable/non-durable and mental/non-mental) products. From this point of view, a radio (a durable product) is correlated with a certain broadcast (a non-durable product) that is comprehended by relevant actions (ways of understanding radio). Here, technology forms a web of artefacts (durable products), mental, as well as psychophysiological products, not to

⁷ Following Nawrocki's (1996, 140) summary, this account enables one to ask about (1) psychic acts understood as mental actions, (2) psychophysiological products (correlated with relevant mental actions), (3) an individual's attitude toward a certain product, and (4) a social relation, which determines someone's experience.

mention relevant actions. Finally, Blaustein (1935, 34) classifies this approach as holistic.

86 The *phenomenological* account, in turn, is focused first and foremost on lived experiences or phenomena. This method is *descriptive, analytical, intuitive*, and it adopts *inductive-deductive procedures*, which aim at formulating *laws* governing different *types* of lived experience. It is descriptive, as it serves to identify and name basic elements of lived experiences. As such, it is analytical, as it enables one to break up lived experience taken as a whole composed of parts. This is possible by limiting perception to intuition and due to one's focus on what is intuitively given. On the basis of drawn differences, one inductively connects observations and formulates a hypothesis that is confirmed or verified by other experiences. Ultimately, one aims to formulate general laws, which explain relevant phenomena. To be clear, Blaustein's account of phenomenology is closer to Brentano's descriptive psychology, and it marks a clear break with Husserl's eidetic approach. In this vein, Blaustein is clear that, thus conceived, the procedure concerns types, i.e., generalized species, and not (as for, e.g., Husserl or Ingarden) essences (Płotka 2020a, 157–161).⁸ Blaustein uses this strategy, for instance, in his 1930 book, *Imaginative Presentations*,⁹ and in other texts on aesthetics (see Blaustein 2005). Its ultimate task is to examine, as Blaustein (1937, 245–249) puts it, the *ways of manifestations* (*Gegebenheitsweise*) of the objects given in lived experiences. With this phrase, he holds that the experienced object given in relevant lived experience has specific ways of manifesting; it appears in a certain way, and in order to study lived experiences adequately, one has to describe the presented object *as it is* presented.

As suggested, Blaustein uses this methodological procedure to analyze technology. After all, the phenomenon of technology is manifested in different

8 Blaustein accounted for Husserl's essences as hypotheses, which is problematic. Elsewhere, I have shown that Husserl's eidetics can be formulated in the key of metaphysical neutrality; however, a closer examination has shown that Blaustein's criticism was directed (most plausibly) toward Ingarden who in his early papers adopted a metaphysical account of essences as timeless entities. See Płotka 2021, 255–258.

9 See Blaustein 1930. A summary of Blaustein's method can be found in Płotka 2024, 39–40.

lived experiences, which are given while using technological devices, and while being in a technologically determined environment. In this regard, Blaustein's point is to show *how* technology is experienced by describing and analyzing the very experiences themselves. After all, any technological artefact is *somehow* experienced, and one's aim here is to break up this very experience as a composition of basic parts, and to formulate—first in the form of hypotheses, and later as rigid theses—laws that explain to us the phenomenon of technology. From his earliest text, including his doctoral dissertation on Husserl's theory of intentionality, Blaustein (1928) operates with a tripartite structure of the mind, i.e., (1) act, (2) content, and (3) object. The fact that technological devices are objects of one's experiences results in different modes of how content is constituted and apprehended by the act. To phrase it differently, technology shapes our experience by constituting different contents that are apprehended by one's act. For instance, while listening (act) to the radio (object), one experiences impressions of sounds (content) that are apprehended by the very act of listening. With this in mind, it is clear that Blaustein's central idea in the context of technology lies in understanding this very phenomenon as a mediatory factor of our experiences. Before I turn toward this point, however, an important question has to be addressed: are the two approaches complementary or rather in competition?

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As already mentioned, Blaustein does not use the humanistic approach in regard to the phenomenon of technology, although he suggests a promising conceptual framework to understand it. At the same time, he extensively uses the phenomenological method (as defined above). Does this mean that for him both approaches cannot be combined? Although he does not answer this question directly, he refers to the metaphilosophical rule that one ought to use different methods as and when needed to allow for the efficient study of relevant subject matters (Blaustein 1935, 52–53). Given this, one can argue that the approaches are complementary in regard to technology: whereas the *humanistic* approach offers a rich ontology that enables one to understand technology as complex sets of objects (products) correlated with relevant actions, the *phenomenological* approach enables one to study experiences and the “how” of technological artefacts. Arguably, this combination mirrors Ihde's (1990, 21) idea to combine phenomenology (the study of experiences)

with hermeneutics (understanding as a basic phenomenon) in studies on technology. If one were to set Blaustein in Ihde's strategy, the two research methods described by him—the humanistic and the phenomenological one—would suit the dual approach in studies on technology: one treats technology as somehow understood, since it is situated in an anthropocentric perspective (taken as a product of human actions), yet without excluding that technological artefacts or products shape our experience. All things considered, Blaustein's dual perspective seems to be an adequate and efficient tool for describing the phenomenon of technology.

3. Technology as a mediatory factor: The “how” of technology

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Ihde (2009, 23) argues that, in order to understand what technology is, and how it shapes us and our worlds, one has to operate, as he puts it, with “interrelational ontology,” i.e., the view “that the human experiencer is to be found ontologically related to an environment or a world, but the interrelation is such that both are transformed within this relationality.” In this context, he also refers to Husserl's theory of intentionality that, put simply, consciousness is consciousness of “something,” but technologies nuance this understanding as “[t]echnologies can be the means by which ‘consciousness itself’ is *mediated*. Technologies may occupy the ‘of’ and not just be some object domain.” (Ihde 2009, 23.)

In this section, I argue that Blaustein's phenomenology of technological consciousness can be understood from Ihde's point of view. As we will see in the following, Blaustein examined different aesthetic phenomena that manifest themselves as technologically mediated, yet shaping consciousness itself, e.g., the phenomena of watching a movie in the cinema or listening to the radio: how do technologies shape these phenomena?¹⁰ Thus, for him, the central factor that has to be investigated here is the “how” (or Ihde's “of”), i.e., the ways, in which technologies shape one's experience. Importantly, what I do *not* account for here is the question of Blaustein's descriptive analysis of mediated experiences in comparison to other scholars of his times, e.g.,

10 For a summary of Blaustein's aesthetics, see: Rosińska 2011, 199–208; 2013, 74–94.

Heider's account of perceptions as mediated experiences. This topic requires a separate study.¹¹

Let me start with a few examples. In his studies on the phenomenon of cinema, Blaustein (2005, 121–122) holds that one's experience is determined by the *ways* of composing single images and their compositions (e.g., a set of scenes) in movies; this, however, is strictly connected to the ways of using a camera, i.e., a technological tool that captures or records images.¹² If the image captured or recorded by a camera can be classified as beautiful, one experiences aesthetically valuable appearances of captured or recorded objects. Additionally, if a certain sequence of images is well, i.e., smoothly, composed (the “how”), the movie merges all the scenes and adds further aesthetic factors and values to one's experience. The point here lies in the unitary character of this very experience: technology (e.g., the way the camera films objects and actors) determines the “how” of one's experience (e.g., well-composed, smoothly connected images experienced *as* aesthetically valuable). To reiterate, the experience is constituted by the mediatory technology: camera and film (tape). Another clear example of the technologically mediated phenomenon concerns music and its use in movies. If the images projected at the cinema screen are well (the “how”) coordinated with the music, one can experience pleasure in observing these fragments. Blaustein (2005, 111) holds that music brings about in cinemagoers certain emotional states, which he describes as *moods*. Of course, the melodies may be cheerful, sad, lively, or solemn, however, generally, music helps one in experiencing cheerful moods, if music is composed in a major key, while sad moods are brought about with a minor

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11 In 1926, Heider published a paper on “Thing and Medium,” which explored a psychological relation of sensations and images in perception. See Heider 1959, 1–34. Heider, in parallel to Blaustein, considered technological devices (Heider [1959, 20] writes, e.g., about thermometers, barometers, electrical measuring instruments) as mediator-like elements; however, contrary to Blaustein, Heider adopts a genetic approach that consists in reconstruing the chain of conditions that result in the relevant experience. There is no evidence that Blaustein was familiar with Heider's studies; however, a further study could result in identifying parallels and differences between their accounts. For the sake of brevity, I omit this topic. I am thankful to the anonymous reviewer of the journal for bringing my attention to this author.

12 For more on Blaustein's account of media, see: Płotka 2024, 259–290; 2025, 556–579.

key. This phenomenon is evident, if one first watches a movie with music and then without it: the transition from the former state to the latter is described by Blaustein as “enormous,” and he holds that one feels “a strange alienness,” if the music is absent.¹³ Once again, music and the way it is used in the movie (the “how”) is technologically founded, but experiences of music are already mediated, although one may not notice that fact.

90 Blaustein describes comparable phenomena in regard to listening to the radio. His key insight in this regard is to examine “how” sounds in a radio broadcast determine one’s experience of listening to the radio (Blaustein 2005, 146). Technology here clearly determines one’s experience, as a broadcast is formed as a sequence of sound phases that are perceived by the listener in a certain composition, and thus in an already defined order. Two sounds recorded at the same time could be difficult to hear *as* two sounds; for this reason, sounds have to be planned as a sequence, and the how of their composition plays a crucial role. As a result, one experiences sounds and apprehends them as, e.g., sounds *of* something. To put this phenomenon in more technical words, one
hears (or apprehends) sounds *as* acoustic or auditory content, and these very sounds are what one “truly” hears; as such, experienced sounds function as representing factors in one’s experience. But one does not hear sounds *per se*, but *as* sounds *of* something, e.g., the sound *of* a ringing phone or the rumbling *of* a departing train. In this regard, Blaustein notices a shift in focus: one does not hear “mere” sounds, but rather, e.g., a phone ringing or a train departing, and all these things are heard “directly.” He describes this shift as “objectifying” heard sounds (Blaustein 2005, 150).¹⁴ Stated differently, the listener changes

13 “The enormous significance of the influence of music in the whole experience of the cinemagoer will be appreciated only by someone who has had the opportunity to watch a silent film without the company of music. A goer accustomed to musical illustration then feels a strange alienness to what is happening on the screen, it seems to the goer that some shadows appear and disappear there, not living people, the facial expressions are rather comical.” (Blaustein 2005, 113.) Blaustein (2005, 108) also notices that actors use different mimics in silent and sound movies; this change is, of course, technologically mediated.

14 A parallel phenomenon was noticed by, among others, Messer (see 1908, 40–41). For him, one’s sensations refer to the object, if they are “interpreted objectively” (*die objektive Deutung der Empfindung*). Messer described a phenomenon of remembering sounds that are interpreted and, thanks to this, are sounds *of* something. He writes

her *attitude* toward what is experienced. Precisely for this reason, the “how” of sounds, i.e., the way, in which they are composed in a radio broadcast, shapes one’s experience.

In his studies on listening to the radio, Blaustein describes an interesting phenomenon that illustrates the above-described dependence. To begin with, he asks about the relation between where the microphone is placed during recording and one’s experienced appearance of sound spaces (Blaustein 2005, 150). He holds that the way the sound director manipulates the microphone determines the listener’s experience of something apprehended *as* close or distant from “here” (i.e., from the place where the action of the radiobroadcast takes place) or *as* moving toward or away from “here.” Another example is the phenomenon of hearing a gong that suggests time passing within the represented action of the broadcast (Blaustein 2005, 151). According to Blaustein, while hearing the gong one *immediately* perceives this sound as time passing. Voice actors can also manipulate the way how they are speaking or using non-verbal sounds (e.g., a sigh of relief, speaking very fast to emphasize one’s irritation), in order to present relevant mental states; of course, the point here is *how* the voices are recorded.¹⁵ Finally, the broadcast can use the radio announcer’s commentary to determine one’s experience; this technological factor is mediated directly in one’s experience (Blaustein 2005, 155). By and large, the examples just listed show that one’s experience is embedded in technological factors that shape this very experience directly: recording technology produces a new, mediated form of human hearing.

Thus far, Blaustein’s exemplary descriptions reveal the embeddedness of human experience in technologically mediated factors. These factors, as shown

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of remembering the train’s sound. I am thankful to the anonymous reviewer of the journal for bringing my attention to this study.

15 “A voice may sound as if it is ‘tired,’ ‘apathetic,’ ‘intense,’ ‘energetic,’ ‘gentle,’ ‘firm,’ it may reveal—regardless of the meaning of what is said, but in connection with the situation—anxiety, depression, excitement, agitation, anger, concern, despair, love, amazement, delight, humility, embarrassment, joy, compassion, contempt, etc. [...] A voice also reveals the age, gender, and temperament of the speaker, the way in which they express themselves—their ‘personal culture.’ A voice, which might be ‘soft’ or ‘hard,’ resonant or hoarse, etc., can also cause the listener to like or dislike the speaker.” (Blaustein 2005, 167.)

above, include first and foremost technological devices, e.g., camera, cinema, radio. With these examples in mind, one may ask a more general question: *how* does technology shape one's experience? What "way" is technology experienced? In order to address these questions, one must turn toward the phenomenon of *attitude* described above in regard to objectifying sounds. For Blaustein, in general, any object of aesthetic experience is accessible due to a specific attitude. It is true, as Miskiewicz (2009, 186) noticed, that "[f]or Blaustein, perceiving an object is always *observing an object with a certain attitude*." In the case of technologically mediated experiences, one is determined to comprehend certain contents *as* related to relevant objects. For instance, while listening to a radio drama, one has to apprehend sounds *as* sounds of relevant objects that are parts of the represented action. This attitude allows one to be immersed in technologically mediated experience, be it watching a movie or listening to the radio. If this way of perceiving is somehow broken or interrupted, one experiences technology, as Blaustein shows, in the modus of "alienness." An example of this interruption is the earlier example of one watching a movie without music and experiencing this absence as "alien" (Blaustein 2005, 113). Additionally, the darkness of a cinema hall during the screening of a movie puts one in a specific attitude with respect to it.¹⁶ An analogous phenomenon is manifested while listening to the radio: while apprehending sounds as sounds of something, one changes one's attitude toward them and is ultimately focused on the represented world of the broadcast, which, however, is not present in the same place where one is listening to the radio; instead, this world inherent to the radio broadcast is "alien" to our surrounding world. In sum, one's immersed experience of mediated objects manifests itself in the *modus* of alienness, if this very experience is interrupted.¹⁷

16 "The darkness of the cinema hall, which is indispensable for technical reasons, has effects that are more than technical. It makes it easier for the goer, or even forces her, to concentrate on the screen, it performs the indicated isolation, and prevents the artificial intrusion of the imaginary world into ours, which is what some strive for in the theater, painting, or sculpture. The significance of this isolation is significant." (Blaustein 2005, 101.)

17 The idea that disrupted technology-mediated experiences can be described as "alien" can be read in parallel to Heidegger's philosophy of technology; for Heidegger,

4. Technology as embodied and embedded phenomenon

The conclusion of remarks on how, according to Blaustein, technology is experienced leads to two important topics in the field of philosophy of technology, i.e., the issues of embodiment and environment. After all, as shown above, the experience of “alienness” refers to one’s embodied experiences and to the world (environment). Today’s scholars, including Ihde (1990, 44–58; 2002; 2009, 23), Grau (2002, 151–173), or Lettow (2011, 110–117), convincingly argue in favor of comprehending technologies as embodied and embedded in certain environments. Of course, the central idea here is not a trivial observation that technology affects our bodies or environments, but that the intentional relation between the experiencing subject and an object is *already* mediated as the body and the life world are correlated by the *means* of technology. This relation is often characterized as transparent, and one is immersed in this lived experience. A typical example of this relation, discussed by Ihde (1990, 47–48), is looking through a window; this mediated phenomenon remains unnoticed, until it becomes opaque. Nevertheless, these shaping factors can be identified and analyzed in careful descriptive analysis of relevant experiences. This is precisely how Blaustein approaches these topics.

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In order to show that technology reshapes one’s experience of the body, Blaustein describes different aesthetic phenomena. To begin with, a plain example is contemplating a painting (a technological artefact) that affects me to occupy a suitable position, in order to observe the painting as a whole; here, one’s body becomes a zero-point of the perceived orientations of spatial objects.¹⁸ While contemplating a painting, one attempts to take the same bodily

technological tools appear to the agent as absent, if they are broken. Heidegger analyzes this phenomenon in regard to the topic of “readiness-to-hand” (*Zuhandenheit*). See Heidegger 1962, 98–102. For more on this issue, see, e.g., Ihde 1990, 31–32.

18 “Whenever I perceive the world around me, I only perceive one part of it. There are other imperceptible parts of this world beyond what I can perceive. The part I am able to perceive, in which I exist at the moment, is filled with a larger or smaller number of spatial objects. My body is, of course, one of these objects. I get bored with the world around me, so I escape from it. After a while, I am in a totally different part of it, which is filled with totally different spatial objects. One object in particular was

position as the artist had while working on the work art. Blaustein (2005, 98) holds that “[a] painter must take a position sufficiently distant from the painted object or objects, to be able to encompass their entirety at one glance, otherwise the painting will be unclear in terms of spatiality.” This remark concerns the artist’s body; however, it also shows that one who contemplates the painting should find an optimal position while contemplating the artwork. Next, if we notice that the painting functions here as a technologically determined object, we can see that it functions as the means, through which one acts in the world as an embodied subject. A comparable phenomenon was analyzed by Blaustein in regard to cinemagoers. One is more immersed in the showing (i.e., one focuses one’s attention more easily on the screen), if one’s body is well situated in relation to the cinema screen. In the *Contributions to the Psychology of the Cinemagoer*, one reads as follows:

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Even when the film is not very interesting, thanks to the darkness in the cinema hall, involuntary attention is focused on the film, as long as the goer is perceiving the screen at all. If the film is interesting, the focus of attention is exceptionally strong and long-lasting; the world around one disappears for the goer as rarely happens otherwise. This also depends partly on the place in the audience that the goer occupies. For instance, the visual field of a goer sitting on the balcony is usually not as completely limited to the screen as that of a goer sitting on the ground floor. (Blaustein 2005, 102.)

To reiterate, technologies (how a movie is projected onto the cinema screen or how the cinema hall is constructed) are here the means, by which the cinemagoer experiences movies. This holds also for the phenomenon of listening to the radio. While listening to a radio broadcast one may want to be alone, in order to focus one’s attention; to be immersed in the broadcast, one may close one’s eyes, and this, as Blaustein (2005, 175) puts it, “desire for

there, however, and must be here too. And that object is my body, which I could not escape from even if I tried. Consequently, my body occupies the central position in the apprehension of any of my spatial relations. Something is behind something else and something is in front of it, something is to the left and something is to the right, depending on the position my body occupies.” (Blaustein 2011, 217.)

darkness” intensifies one’s experience of radio. Again, this is necessary, because of the technological mediation.

For Blaustein, technology also reshapes one’s sense of space. This phenomenon is clear in how the body may be projected into the imaginative world of art. A basic level of this experience is evident in contemplating a painting. Blaustein discusses a painting by Jacob van Ruisdael, in which one sees a windmill by a river, and he notices that the landscape represented by the painting contains a series of spatial characteristics. As he puts it, “[a]fter all in Ruisdael’s painting some objects are higher, others lower, one behind the windmill, the other in the front of the windmill, one closer, the other far away, one to the right, the other to the left” (Blaustein 2005, 128–129). Thus, the objects represented by the painting are oriented, *as if* they were in the world that surrounds us. Of course, the system of orientation has its center, i.e., a zero-point, just like the embodied experience described above. However, in the painting there is no body; it is rather invisible or, more precisely, transparent. The body is in fact the zero-point of orientation in the imaginative world, i.e., the world imaginatively presented while contemplating Ruisdael’s painting. And thus, objects seem to be placed closer or farther from “me,” meaning “my (projected) body.” The same holds for the experience of watching movies. The camera occupies a certain point in space, which *seems to be* the zero-point of orientation, i.e., the body of the perceiver: some objects move closer to “me” or “my body,” whereas other objects are farther from “me” or “my body” (Blaustein 2005, 98). For Blaustein, the space constituted in these phenomena has a property of *quasi-spatiality*, i.e., it is composed of objects interrelated, *as if* they were real objects in the surrounding and spatial world. All in all, the objects of the world are organized *as if* oriented in relation to the projected body. Yet, the body is “invisible” or “transparent,” since it is the zero-point of all orientations; as such, it is not given, but enables or gives other objects.

Blaustein is clear that this “alienness” of mediated experiences is determined by the technologically reshaped environment: (1) a *painting* shapes the experience of *quasi-spatiality* with a frame that suggests the system of spatial orientations; (2) a *sculpture* introduces this “alienness” with the plinth that serves to emphasize that even if, say, the marble is part of the same surrounding world as the world of the viewer, the figure represented in the

marble is not part of the same world (Blaustein 2011, 218); (3) in the *theater*, this *quasi*-spatiality is possible due to the scene and the curtain that marks the border between “my” world and the imaginative world of art; finally, (4) in the *cinema*, this is possible due to the darkness of the cinema hall and the black spaces around the screen (Blaustein 2005, 130). In all these and similar cases, technological artefacts or manipulations of the environment (a frame, a plinth, a curtain, switching off the light, etc.) are the means that are interrelated with, and connected to, the body within one’s intentional directedness toward an object.

5. Conclusion

96 The present study was an attempt to look at Blaustein’s phenomenology of media, understood as a part of his aesthetics, as a variety of philosophy of technology. This task originated with the prevailing opinion in the scholarly literature about the pioneering character of his achievements in the field of media studies (e.g.: Rosińska 1999, 207–218; 2001, 22–23; Miskiewicz 2009, 182, 187; Ciccotti 2014, 147–161); however, media, including cinema and radio, have to be considered technologically constituted phenomena. Thus, given the growing interest of phenomenologists in the issue of technology (e.g.: Ihde 1990; 2004; Verbeek 2005), it is not only compelling, but important to consider the juxtaposition of Blaustein’s work with selected ideas from the field of philosophy of technology. Of course, in order to accomplish this task, one must draw parallels and analogies between today’s readings regarding technology and Blaustein’s descriptions that were formulated almost a century ago. Although some topics had to be put aside, including the question of Blaustein’s use of experiments in his descriptive psychology or the topic of the technique of methodological procedures, I examined selected issues that enabled us to look at Blaustein as a philosopher who explored technological devices that shape our experiences or phenomena. How, then, can his account be summarized?

First of all, given the output of section 2, (1) Blaustein offered two research strategies to explore technology: (a) *humanistic* and (b) *phenomenological*. (2) The former comprehends technologies very broadly as *products* of

relevant *actions*, including (a) mental, (b) psychophysiological, and (c) physical products, whereas (3) the latter addresses the *ways of manifestation* of technologies in one's lived experiences or, to phrase it differently, what it is like to experience technologically mediated phenomena. As shown, (4) both methods can be understood as compatible, since the humanistic approach enables one to formulate a rich *ontology* of technologies, whereas the phenomenological method allows for detailed descriptions of relevant *experiences*. In fact, (5) Blaustein widely examined the “*how*” of the “*ways*,” in which technology mediates one's experiences, including—as shown in section 3—(a) cinemagoers' experiences and (b) the phenomenon of listening to the radio. Next, (6) he described the “*how*” of phenomenology with a specific *attitude* that one adopts, though as a fully transparent attitude, while being immersed in technologically mediated experience; however, (7) if this experience is interrupted, one experiences technology in the *modus* of “*alienness*.” Finally, following section 4, (8) we have seen that for Blaustein technology is both (a) *embodied* and (b) *embedded*. Of course, the presented description is a sketch, and would, as such, require further detailed analyses; nonetheless, this reading of Blaustein's phenomenology of media shows how, from his point of view, technology shapes our experiences. In the end, such a reading reintroduces Blaustein into the theoretical landscape of today's debates and proves the originality of his interesting, albeit neglected ideas.

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Transitions | Prehajanja

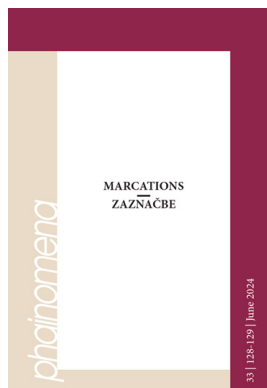
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Human Existence and Coexistence in the Epoch of Nihilism

Damir Barbarić | Jon Stewart | Cathrin Nielsen | Ilia Inishev | Petar Bojanić | Holger Zaborowski | Dragan D. Prole | Susanna Lindberg | Jeff Malpas | Azelarabe Lahkim Bennani | Josef Estermann | Chung-Chi Yu | Alfredo Rocha de la Torre | Jesús Adrián Escudero | Veronica Neri | Žarko Paić | Werner Stegmaier | Adriano Fabris | Dean Komel



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Marcations | Zaznačbe

Mindaugas Briedis | Irfan Muhammad | Bence Peter Marosan | Sazan Kryeziu | Petar Šegedin | Johannes Vorlauffer | Manca Erzetič | David-Augustin Mândruț | René Dentz | Olena Budnyk | Maxim D. Miroshnichenko | Luka Hrovat | Tonči Valentić | Dean Komel | Bernhard Waldenfels | Damir Barbarić

