

LEOPOLD BLAUSTEIN VS. EDMUND HUSSERL

ACTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE SEARCH FOR ESSENCE

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Abstract

The article presents Husserl's conception of imaginative variation and intentional consciousness while considering the philosophy of Leopold Blaustein. The Polish philosopher's critical analyses regarding the validity and feasibility of the operation of variation as well as Husserl's account of consciousness, on the one hand, reveal shortcomings in Blaustein's philosophical reflections, and, on the other hand, nonetheless lead us to points of convergence between their concepts. What emerges in

Blaustein's thought is, alongside his philosophical maturity and independent scholarly approach, an interesting application of Husserlian categories.

Keywords: consciousness, imaginative variation, intentionality, constitution, perception.

Leopold Blaustein vs. Edmund Husserl. Aktivna zavest in iskanje bistva

Povzetek

Članek predstavi Husserlovo pojmovanje imaginativne variacije in intencionalne zavesti, pri čemer se osredotoči na filozofijo Leopolda Blausteina. Tako kritične analize poljskega filozofa glede veljavnosti in izvedljivosti operacije variacije kot tudi Husserlovo dojetje zavesti, na eni strani, razkrivajo pomanjkljivosti Blausteinovih filozofskih refleksij in, na drugi strani, kljub vsemu nakazujejo točke konvergence med njunimi pojmovanji. Tako se v okviru Blausteinove misli, ob njegovi lastni filozofski zrelosti in samostojnem znanstvenem pristopu, razgrne zanimiva aplikacija husserlovskih kategorij.

Ključne besede: zavest, imaginativna variacija, intencionalnost, konstitucija, zaznavanje.

When I began my university studies in philosophy, Professor Twardowski spoke to us about the priesthood of the philosopher, about how only people of the highest ethical standards ought to become philosophers. To me, Edmund Husserl seems to be just such a dignified priest of philosophy, worthy of the deepest reverence.

Leopold Blaustein, “Edmund Husserl i jego fenomenologia”

1. Introduction: Mutual motivations

The article is based on the philosophical premises of the thoughts of Bergson (1859–1941) and Ingarden (a supporting, secondary thread; 1893–1970), Husserl (1859–1938), Twardowski (1866–1938), and Blaustein (1905–1942 [?]). Such a compilation of ideas should not come as a surprise to readers with a preliminary familiarity with early 20th-century philosophical thought, for these thinkers shared a certain intellectual kinship marked by mutual respect.

Edmund Husserl and Kazimierz Twardowski, both of whom “grew” from the philosophical soil cultivated by Franz Brentano, are brought together, as it were, in the thought of Leopold Blaustein—not in the sense of attempting to reconcile their views, but rather in the way his work reflects both lineages. At this stage, it is premature to assess, which of these thinkers exerted a greater influence on the philosopher, for a greater degree of critique directed at a particular thinker does not necessarily imply distance from his ideas.¹

The inspiration for the thematic focus of the present paper arises from Husserl’s concept of intentional/transcendental consciousness, though considered within a specific contextual framework; namely, the interest here lies in the perpetual activity of consciousness, which in the case of Husserl’s eidetic phenomenology, through a series of eidetic transformations, enables the grasping and apprehension of pure possibilities. The eidetic context has

¹ Marek Pokropski, in his article titled “Leopold Blaustein’s Critique of Husserl’s Early Theory of Intentional Act, Object and Content,” emphasizes that the uniqueness of Blaustein’s thought lies in the synthesis of Twardowski’s and Husserl’s thought (Pokropski 2015, 94).

been deliberately chosen here, in order to expose a certain “liberality” within the rigor of the phenomenological method; the context of examining a range of pure possibilities, which Husserl refers to as intentional eidetic horizons, nonetheless sets for itself the lofty task of uncovering a universal *a priori* (Husserl 1960, 70–71).

The eidetic phenomenological framework shall hence serve as the point of reference for reflections on the aforementioned philosophers. However, the ultimate “outcome” of the inquiry is to be the notion of active consciousness, understood as the ceaseless work of the knowing subject who does not settle for a naïve attitude or for a habitual and superficial apprehension of what is epistemically presented. As will become evident, similar general methodological assumptions led the thinkers considered here to entirely different conclusions—although without any diminishment of the significance of any of them.

190 I also intend to demonstrate that each of the said thinkers presupposed the essentially constitutive role of active consciousness, and this was never understood as a “petrified” or constrained consciousness. The process of constituting the object or of arriving at pure essences was, in Husserl’s case, a kind of “juggling” of various forms of experiences grounded in originary presentational intuition. One must bear in mind, however, that each of the thinkers developed their own perspective on the very concept of consciousness. The verb “presupposed” in the opening sentence of this paragraph is employed here in a specific sense—it should be taken the least literally, and indeed functions more as a working hypothesis of this article. My intention is to show that these thinkers were searching for some kind of permanence within change, certain universal strata of consciousness that would “constitute” constancy amid the variability and instability of perceptual apprehensions.

In the first part of this study, I shall turn to the concept of Henri Bergson and his notion of the “average form,” while also presenting Roman Ingarden’s perspective on the issue. In the next section, I shall outline the principal tenets of Husserl’s eidetic method with particular attention given to phenomenological tools, such as eidetic reduction and its constituent operation, imaginative variation (the operation of varying). I shall then present the arguments of Kazimierz Twardowski, which offer an interesting perspective on the epistemic

order between purely conceptual and object-directed thinking, particularly from the viewpoint of perception and imagination. In the final and most crucial part of the study, I shall focus on the philosophy of Leopold Blaustein whose thought I shall attempt to synthesize with the analyses of the thinkers discussed earlier in the paper.

2. Bergson: The germination of “essential” thought

Roman Ingarden, a student of Husserl, must necessarily be mentioned here: firstly, as a proponent of the impracticability of Husserl’s imaginative variation (whether it is justifiably so, cannot to be judged here);² and secondly, for his ontological analysis of the content of ideas presented in his magnum opus, the three-volume *Controversy over the Existence of the World* (*Spór o istnienie świata*), a work that critically analyses Henri Bergson’s denial of the real existence of essence, which Bergson himself terms the “average form.”

Ingarden interprets the French intuitionist’s understanding of essence as follows: “[...] it [essence; M. G.] is merely the product of the cinematographic mechanism of the intellect, relative to the functioning of the schema, to which, in reality, nothing corresponds. According to Bergson, in reality there exists [...] a continuous stream of becoming [...]” (Ingarden 1963, 139; my translation.) How are we to understand these cinematographic intellectual operations? To phrase it by using Husserlian terminology, in the course of temporal perception of a given object, we apprehend it from various sides, frame by frame, forming a sequence of views, or, to revert to Bergson’s own language, we fix them in the form of “snapshots” attributed to specific temporal moments of the thing (it is important here to distinguish the persistence of the object itself from the temporality of its perception or imagination).

This intellectual stance, in Bergson’s view, possesses a certain power of “integration” of the mental photographs thus created. It is unsurprising that these images, as mental fixations, need not exhibit common elements in comparison. Ingarden, interpreting Bergson, writes: “These momentary snapshots show great differences among themselves. Therefore, we select

2 See Gilicka 2023, 7–30.

only those properties that occur in the majority of them and are similar to one another [...]" (Ingarden 1963, 140; my translation.) It is precisely this similarity that Bergson terms the "average form," which he considers to be wrongly equated with essence. The latter, in his view, constitutes no real entity. This is not to say, of course, that Bergson deemed all epistemological reflections on essential knowledge of beings to be absurd. Quite the contrary, his epistemological aspirations are remarkably close to those of Husserl. As John-Francis Phipps writes in his article "Henri Bergson and the Perception of Time": "The true purpose of knowledge is to know things deeply, to touch the inner essence of things via a form of empathy." (Phipps 2004.) The objects of our cognition are endowed with a kind of immanent essence. But what, then, is this "empathy"? It is the fundamental operation of the seasoned metaphysician. One might liken it to a doctor who, when examining a patient, uses available medical tools, such as a stethoscope, to auscultate the object and delve into its innermost depths. In both cases, there is a striving toward a goal that is difficult to reach via surface-level inspection. In the case of the metaphysician, that goal is to "grasp the inner essence of the thing" (Phipps 2004). As Bergson himself wrote, again cited by Phipps: "A true empiricism is that which proposes to get as near to the original itself as possible, to search deeply into its life [...]" (Phipps 2004.)

For Bergson, the life drive, which is irrational, constitutes the essence of the world. Reason is too "ossified" to be able to know reality. In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson writes: "Life, we have said, transcends finality as it transcends the other categories. It is essentially a current sent through matter, drawing from it what it can. There has not, therefore, properly speaking, been any project or plan." (Bergson 1922, 279–280.)

Yet, does this not raise a fundamental difficulty regarding the very selection of the "average form": how are we to know that this, rather than some other set of elements, is precisely the one that determines the essence of a specific object? Where lies the margin of error in determining the "average form"? I also wonder how, on the grounds of Husserlian philosophy, we might justify that, faced with various transcendent beings, some changing in time, others atemporal, some appearing in variable profiles due to their three-dimensionality and always accessible only in two-dimensionality, we are capable of condensing them in

such a way as to grasp them as manifestations, in which something objective, namely essence, is presented? How does constituting consciousness manage such difficulties? In this regard, Bergson's reflections prove illuminating and instructive.

The Polish phenomenologist, addressing these concerns, writes:

To regard some "average form" of various changes of an object as its individual essence is, naturally, an error. But to seek in it an essence is not so much an intellectual illusion relative to the operation, as a mistake of the philosopher. That average form must, of course, in some indeterminate approximation, be embodied in each phase of transformation, or in each object, of which it is the "average form." Yet, it need not be identified with the essence. [...] As such, it is necessarily entirely relative in its content [...]. It may therefore possess ever-different content depending on which specimens are considered from the viewpoint of "averageness." (Ingarden 1963, 144; my translation.)

Ingarden further underscores Bergson's error in unconditionally and consistently equating the average form with essence. This form, he claims, would belong to every object of cognition at any moment of its change, even if it is apprehended with insufficient clarity. Determining such a form does not, in this sense, provide grounds for recognizing it as a reliable and indubitable source of knowledge. The fact that certain features recur during the object's manifestation from various angles does not necessarily mean that they constitute its essence.

The founder of phenomenology in *Experience and Judgment*, which encompasses Husserl's late work and was published posthumously, also emphasizes the crucial role of repetition in essential access to objects—an aspect that constitutes the genetic dimension of transcendental phenomenology. In §5 of this work entitled "The retrogression from the self-evidence of judgment to objective self-evidence," we read that the genetic approach to knowledge involves "[...] production through which judgment and also knowledge in their original form, that of self-givenness, arise—a mode of production which, no matter how often it is repeated, always yields the same result, the same cognition" (Husserl 1973, 23). Of course, merely stating repetition is insufficient. "The Same" is not some kind of proposition that accompanies

specific, individual cognitive acts. As Husserl explains, the element of repetition of what is “the Same” has nothing to do with the real components of acts. As the philosopher writes, “the Same” is “[...] an ‘immanent’ moment of such nature that in repetition it is self-given as the identical moment of the repetitions” (Husserl 1973, 23–24). What is repeated lies beyond time and reality. It is something *irreal*. It belongs to the sphere of immanence, and at the same time cannot be treated as anything concrete. “The Same” is a repetition grounded in identity—a kind of internal *irrealism* of that, which is repeated.

In conclusion of these preliminary reflections, which serve as a prelude to what follows: a given object of perception may represent various content configurations and, accordingly, different average forms. Moreover, objects belonging to the same kind often differ significantly in their specific properties. How, then, can we grasp the average form as essence? The objects of the world would, under such a conception, be characterized by an unstable essential constitution. Ingarden rightly labels this view “nonsense,” for it would contradict the very notion of essence (Ingarden 1994, 147).

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3. Husserl’s eidetic method

At this point, we encounter a moment of conceptual collision between the thought of Bergson and that of Husserl, particularly in relation to the technique of imaginative variation, the mechanism of which appears perhaps to be lacking in the French philosopher’s deliberations. What imaginative variation in Husserl’s phenomenology is can be explained by the words of Władysław Stróżewski (1933), a student of Roman Ingarden. In his book *Logos, wartość, miłość* (*Logos, Value, Love*) he writes:

On the [...] final level we attempt to determine whether the property *p* is necessary for the identity (essence) of the object under examination. In order to do so, we leave behind the domain of empirical generalizations and essential universals, and pass over into the realm of imagination. Here, we carry out what is known as imaginative variation. This consists in imagining all possible alterations of the object in question and examining at which point it ceases to be itself, “explodes,” and loses its identity. (Stróżewski 2013, 210–211; my translation.)

The Husserlian imaginative variation allows us to uncover a highly significant impossibility. If we return to our initial, rather serious doubts, namely, how it is possible to determine the essence of an object that presents itself from various perspectives and is always given to us in a two-dimensional context, then, in a certain sense, imaginative variation both confirms the legitimacy of our concerns and simultaneously transforms them into a positive argument. We must accustom ourselves to the fact that the worlds opened up by Husserl's perspective pertain to forms of imagination that are distinct from those encountered in the "everyday" perception of reality (Essom-Stenz and Roald 2025, 41). Through the process of imaginative variation, we are led to conclusions that reveal both the vast potential of constituting consciousness as well as its limitations and constraints. It also demonstrates something of paramount importance: the laws of logical thinking cannot be broken, and Husserl had no intention of doing so. The results of imaginative variation ought to include such insights as those explicitly mentioned by Stróżewski, which fit rightly into the thematic framework of the present inquiry: "[...] it is impossible to imagine an object in space that does not diminish in size as it moves further away from us; [...] it is impossible to view a three-dimensional object from all sides at once" (Stróżewski 2013, 211; my translation). The same applies to the intuition of temporal transcendence: we are unable to present to ourselves the temporal course of its duration, unless we grasp this course as a succession of overlapping segments (Stróżewski 2013, 211).

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The procedure of imaginative variation grants us a particular form of certainty: the object of presentation, in its specificity, possesses a set of properties that are strictly its own; these particular properties, and no others, can be ascribed to it. It is through this means that the *eidos* is revealed. The entire "mechanism" of variation (*variieren*), as an analytical procedure aimed at attaining "pure thought-objects," is also conducted by the phenomenologist in *Cartesian Meditations*. As Husserl explains, in perceiving a given object and undertaking the operation of variation, one may be guided by a certain cognitive liberty; colloquially speaking, one may let the imagination roam freely. Given the rigor of phenomenological cognition and its associated rules, this is a rather surprising approach to the matter. What must remain evident,

however, so that imagination does not alter the very nature of the perception, is the context of perceiving precisely this and not another object. One might say that Husserl permits, in a particularly intriguing respect, a manipulation of transcendence—understood immanently.

Thus, a transcendent object, subjected to the free play of creative imagination and presenting itself, for instance, in various shapes or color variants, will allow constituting consciousness to isolate what was previously referred to as “the Same”; it will reveal that which remains unchanged amidst change, that which guarantees the object’s identity.³ In the introduction to this study, I spoke of a certain “liberality” of the eidetic method, which here finds its clarification: this “freedom” of permissible fantasy ultimately leads to something that is to be certain and indubitable.⁴

In *Cartesian Meditations*, the German phenomenologist writes:

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In other words: abstaining from acceptance of its being, we turn the factual perception into a pure possibility, one among others that are quite “optional” as pure possibilities but are possible perceptions. We might say that we move the actual perception into the sphere of the nonactual, of “as if,” which provides us with “pure” possibilities free from everything that would restrict them to this or that fact. In the second case we keep these possibilities, not as restricted to co-given factual states of the ego, but solely as completely free “imaginable possibilities” of phantasy. (Husserl 1960, 70.)

All such acts of fantasy must be completely detached from any reference to the *ego*. Here, Husserl grants total, yet simultaneously limited, freedom and stipulates that these “acts of imaginative immersion (*hineinphantasieren*)” must bear no connection to any factual aspects of our existence. The perception, being an integral part of these acts of fantasy, rests solely on pure possibilities, untainted by facticity. “Perception, the universal type thus acquired, floats in the air, so to

3 See Husserl 1968, 73.

4 Manusz Moryń writes: “The founder of phenomenology was not so much interested in the very structure of *eidos* [i.e., its formal ontology] as in the benefits arising from eidetic appearances [...] from eidetic apprehension, negation can never follow.” (Moryń 1998, 17; my translation.)

peak—in the atmosphere of pure phantasiableness” (Husserl 1960, 70), Husserl continues. This kind of operation allows us to arrive at the general essence of perception, cleansed of all empirical, psychophysical references. The *eidos* of perception constitutes a specific set composed of its unique components: these are the ideal perceptions as the ultimate outcomes (to use colloquial language) of those free acts of fantasy, acts, which must still be bound to the original perceptual content.⁵ Such essential analyses have a universal dimension and can be applied to every kind of cognition and perceptual experience.

This brings us, in turn, directly back to the issues of intuition. As in Bergson, so too in Husserl, there is no path other than that of intuition (albeit differently explicated),⁶ in order—that is, through a direct immersion in the object—to reach the essence of the object subjected to eidetic analysis (regardless of how that essence is ultimately conceived). The pure thought-objects repeatedly mentioned above, as the result of freely conducted acts of fantasy, appear by way of intuitive givenness. The essence of imaginative variation therefore lies in epistemic indubitability, in the self-givenness of the object of apperception.

Husserl states:

The variation being meant as an evident one, accordingly as presenting in pure intuition the possibilities themselves as possibilities, its correlate is *an intuitive and apodictic consciousness of something universal*. The *eidos* itself is a beheld or beholdable universal, one that is pure, “unconditioned”—that is to say: according to its own intuitional sense, a universal not conditioned by any fact. It is *prior to all “concepts”*, in the sense of verbal significations; indeed, as pure concepts, these must be made to fit the *eidos*. (Husserl 1960, 71.)

⁵ See Husserl 2012, 245.

⁶ Apart from the above, we can also provide another example of understanding the notion of “intuition” as conceived by Bergson. The term was also used by J. W. Dawid in a lecture on Bergson’s philosophy, delivered in Lwów in 1913: “1-0. Intuition is to be a direct cognition through the senses or introspection, in contrast to definition or description. No description, no drawing can provide an adequate image of Paris—one must see it; one must experience the corresponding feeling. [...] 2-0. Intuition is the grasping of particular features, the discovery of meaning in a multitude of dispersed facts, their synthesis, their proper configuration.” (Dawid 1914, 5; my translation.)

An intriguing perspective on the epistemic order between merely conceptual and objectual thinking, within the framework of perceptual and imaginative experience, is presented by Kazimierz Twardowski, the founder of the Lvov–Warsaw School. Worth emphasizing as a significant point of the present deliberations is the fact that Twardowski did not employ Husserl’s method of eidetic reduction. Naturally, there was a certain shared analytical concern (especially in relation to topics from the period of the *Logical Investigations*), yet Twardowski’s approach was more centered on the logical analysis of the structure of acts.

4. Blaustein: Legacy and the synthetic richness of thought

198 Blaustein, albeit a philosopher who openly engages with the thought of scholars from his immediate intellectual milieu, nonetheless demonstrates philosophical independence. As a continuator of their thought, he develops their concepts further on his own terms. Let us now examine the fruits of these implications in his philosophy, bearing in mind the chosen epistemological context: reflections on the active conception of consciousness, the possibility of eidetic intuition, and the essential laws correlated therewith. In this section, I undertake a comparative analysis, establishing an internal polemic between the thought of Husserl and that of Blaustein.

Let us turn to Blaustein’s perspective regarding Husserl’s eidetic method. Before doing so, however, we shall consider his reading of the Husserlian conceptualization of consciousness. In his work “Husserlowska nauka o akcie, treści i przedmiocie przedstawienia” (“The Husserlian Doctrine of Act, Content, and Object of Presentation”), the philosopher offers a thorough critique of Husserl’s definitional understanding of consciousness, as formulated in *Logical Investigations* and, to a degree, in *Ideas I*. Blaustein disagrees with the German philosopher on several points, including, notably, that he considers it mistaken to classify sensory impressions as psychic experiences—the latter, in Blaustein’s view, belong to the phenomenal world and are extra-conscious; only intentional acts qualify as psychic experiences. It is thus erroneous, Blaustein argues, to define consciousness as a “weave of psychic experiences,” since sensory contents, not being psychic experiences, are not components of consciousness

(instead, they are objects of transcendent and adequate perceptions). From the outset, Blaustein's conception of consciousness becomes apparent; it is simply a stream of psychic experiences, understood as intentional acts (with impressions excluded). As he writes in the doctoral work:

For if experiences are exclusively intentional acts, then consciousness, being their stream, comprises them as its real constituents, psychic and intentional acts, and remains in that specific relation to the "I," which Husserl names *Ichlichkeit*. This does not exclude the possibility that certain psychic processes, states, and the like may also be included within consciousness. (Blaustein 2013b, 193; my translation.)

As Witold Płotka observes in his monograph on Blaustein's philosophy, *Leopold Blaustein i jego fenomenologia. Źródła i konteksty* (*Leopold Blaustein and His Phenomenology: Sources and Contexts*), the philosopher conceives phenomenology as a "descriptive psychology that employs the method of phenomenological reduction, which amounts to conceiving it as a descriptive eidetics of pure experiences of consciousness, grounded in eidetic intuition (*Wesensschau*)" (Płotka 2021a, 55–56; my translation).⁷ Following Płotka's interpretation, and in the spirit of critical analysis, I shall present two stages in Blaustein's approach to the eidetic method.⁸ I will not analyze Blaustein's stance on the *eidōs* or the essences of general objects themselves. It is worth

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⁷ See also Płotka 2024.

⁸ Blaustein described Husserl's eidetic analysis in the following manner: "According to empiricism, he recognizes as the ultimate principle that every primordial intuition (*originär gebende Anschauung*) is the legitimate source of knowledge, and that everything, above all empirical data, should be accepted as given to us and within the limits in which it is 'given' [...]. In opposition to the empiricists, Husserl maintains that, alongside individual empirical objects given in empirical intuition, there are also individual data given in eidetic intuition—essences of those individual objects. According to Husserl, each individual object is assigned, in his view, a certain *eidōs*. He emphasizes that everything that belongs to the essence of a given individual may also belong to another individual. Any statements made about an individual object are, in a sense, accidental, whereas statements made about it, insofar as it possesses a particular essence, and not another, are necessarily a priori. As a consequence, Husserl postulates, alongside empirical sciences concerned with facts, a priori eidetic sciences." (2013a, 226; my translation.)

noting, however, that Blaustein, in his radical repudiation of Husserl's general essences, fails to maintain full scholarly integrity, accusing Husserl of precisely that which the founder of phenomenology explicitly warns against in the *Logical Investigations*—namely, the hypostatization of ideas (see §7, *Logical Investigations*, Volume II, Part I). As Płotka rightly points out, Blaustein rejects Husserl's method of phenomenological reduction and moves toward conceiving phenomenology as descriptive psychology based on inductive generalization.

In his self-review entitled “Próba krytycznej oceny fenomenologii” (“An Attempt at a Critical Assessment of Phenomenology”; 28 April 1928), Blaustein articulates a position that echoes Roman Ingarden's doubts regarding the selection of features in the process of *Wesensschau* (eidetic intuition): why should certain features, rather than others, constitute the epistemic apprehension of general objects? Blaustein argues:

200 If this psychological interpretation is correct, then *Wesensschau* is something every person can and does experience. Yet, simultaneously, it becomes doubtful whether it can truly bear evidential value. Undoubtedly, intuition may successfully select certain features as essential from among those fulfilled by the presenting content, and its heuristic value must not be underestimated; however, one can never be certain of the correctness of this selection, nor can one strictly differentiate correct from incorrect choices. (Blaustein 1928, 164b–165a; my translation.)

This schematicity, as Blaustein argues elsewhere, hinges upon the problem of inadequacy in presentations, which he elaborates more fully in *Przedstawienia imaginatywne. Studium z pogranicza psychologii i estetyki* (*Imaginative Presentations. A Study on the Border of Psychology and Aesthetics*). An inadequate presentation arises, when certain elements of the presenting content correspond to only some aspects of the intended object (Blaustein 1930, 57).⁹ We are thereby confronted with what may be called a simplified

9 At this point, it is worth mentioning Blaustein's concept of the dual-layered “world surrounding us,” which possesses spatio-temporal qualities (e.g., distance relations, shapes, etc.). It consists of complexes of non-spatial impressions that are the objects of

problem of the “partiality” of the object. A question immediately emerges: is the eidetic method truly concerned with apprehending the general through such means?

These doubts, however justified, must be confronted with a response grounded in the phenomenological method as devised by its founder. First and foremost, the Husserlian conception of consciousness must be revisited—the conception, which Blaustein critically engages with in his “Husserlowska nauka o akcie [...],” a work based on his doctoral dissertation supervised by Kazimierz Twardowski. This Husserlian exposition of consciousness, particularly as presented in *Ideas I*, offers a counterpoint to Blaustein’s reservations. By assigning ontological primacy to consciousness performing the *epoché*, Husserl relativizes being to consciousness, which, after transcendental reduction, becomes so-called pure consciousness, a domain of individual being devoid of ontically (and ultimately epistemologically) transcendent content. In §49 of *Ideas I*, Husserl writes:

[...] consciousness considered in its “purity” must be held to be a *self-contained complex of being*, a complex of *absolute being* into which nothing can penetrate and out of which nothing can slip, to which nothing is spatiotemporally external and which cannot be within any spatiotemporally complex, which cannot be affected by any physical thing and cannot exercise causation upon any physical thing—it being presupposed that causality has the normal sense of causality pertaining to Nature as a relationship of dependence between realities. (Husserl 1983, 112.)

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immanent perceptions. The phenomenal world, given to us in adequate perceptions, consists of sensory contents of three-dimensional space—for example, sound or smell impressions—, which Blaustein refers to as presenting contents. As the philosopher writes, we never experience the entirety of this world, which appears to us fragmentarily and manifests itself in objects of presenting acts. The second layer of the surrounding world consists of material objects, which are spatial and, crucially, cannot be reduced to impressions. (2013b, 196). For Blaustein, presenting contents constitute the effective part of the act; while adopting Husserl’s notion of the intentional, transcendent object, he also emphasizes the turning of the act toward that object. A problematic and pressing issue, which Blaustein never fully resolved, is the category of spatiality—how that which is spatial is composed of non-spatial impressions (Płotka 2021a, 124–125).

The entire surrounding world, situated in time and space, the knowing subject and its “human I,” all constitute merely “intentional” beings—entities dependent entirely on the constitutive accomplishments of pure consciousness. As Husserl further notes, this world is given in intuition “only as something identical belonging to motivated multiplicities of appearances: *beyond that it is nothing*” (Husserl 1983, 112). Witold Płotka, in his book *Fenomenologia jako filozofia mniejsza. Rozważania wokół sporów o metodę Husserla* (*Phenomenology as the Lesser Philosophy. Reflections on Husserlian Methodological Debates*), draws attention in the chapter entitled “The Transcendental Turn and the Absolute of Consciousness” to an aspect crucial for our discussion: the constitutive activity of pure, absolute consciousness. The problem Blaustein identifies—namely, the proper selection of features constituting the general object—must, considering the phenomenological conception, shift its weight from the ontological-objective domain to the subjective domain. The mutual correlation of consciousness (its object-directedness aimed at the constitution of meaning) and being cannot lead to their reduction to one another, as they differ fundamentally in their modes of givenness. Płotka’s words aptly capture our reflections:

While the object itself can never be given in its entirety *hic et nunc*, the modes of its givenness—cogitationes—are presented absolutely. Here, absoluteness equates to certainty, and thus to the indubitable status of the apprehended object—or, more precisely, the subject. (Płotka 2019, 111; my translation.)

On the one hand, we face the imperfect objective world and, on the other hand, the absolute consciousness, whose processes are indubitable, and which constitutes “the condition of all reality” (Płotka 2019, 111; Husserl 2003, 20).

The aforementioned constitutes one argument concerning the selection of features forming the *eidos*, not as an empirical being of the material world (from which we must, according to Husserl, withdraw our naïve gaze), but rather, through aiming at Husserlian transcendentalism, as something given in intuitive, intentional insight into essence. A further argument moderating the issue lies in Husserl’s assertion that this source-giving consciousness, enabling the apprehension of essence, does not act spontaneously, but as a

“contemplating” consciousness that develops this capacity through a form of training. As he writes in §69 of *Ideas I*, “The Method of Perfectly Clear Seizing Upon Essences,” the apprehension of the essence is gradual and procedural. He states:

The intuitions of single particulars serving the seizing upon essences may be already clear to an extent which allows for acquiring an essentially universal moment which, however, does not extend as far as the guiding intention; clarity is lacking on the side pertaining to more detailed determinations of the essences combined with (what had been attained), consequently there is a need to bring the exemplificatory single particulars nearer or to provide anew more suitable ones in which the confusedly and obscurely single traits intended to stand out and, consequently, can become given with maximum clarity. (Husserl 1983, 156–157.)

Thus, a methodological aspect arises here—we can use previously established results of conducted eidetic intuitions (*Wesensschau*) for the purposes of current clarifications. Husserl is aware, therefore, that the tools he proposes for grasping the *eidōs* require a particular kind of skill.

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Let us now turn to another claim by Blaustein, which he made in his self-review. The philosopher believes that the outcomes of *Wesensschau* are a kind of schematic representations (Blaustein 1928, 164b). This raises the question of how one should understand this schematicity. Of course, the creator of phenomenology himself provides a certain “recipe” for arriving at the *eidōs*, but have Blaustein’s assumptions about the schematic nature of the eidetic method not been undermined by the foregoing argument? Acts that originally present essences, which are not real objects, but rather a kind of synthesis of apprehensions given in the process of variation, are not acts of sensory perception (although Husserl, in his 1925 summer semester lectures titled *Einleitung in die phänomenologische Psychologie*, emphasized that the process of operative variation is rooted in the experience of the surrounding world). As Witold Plotka writes about imaginative variation in his already cited work, “‘seeing’ is a mental operation that consists in forming an open multiplicity of variants, which take a given experience as a model and free themselves from

empirical determinations in pure fantasy” (Płotka 2021a, 70; my translation). Therefore, “seeing” does not mean optical seeing, but rather aims at immediacy (Płotka 2021b, 262), aprioricity, and the self-presence of that which appears “before our eyes” as a “synthetic unity” devoid of metaphysical interpretation—the process of variation indicates that the *eidōs* is not an immutable being existing in a transcendent world of ideas, as Plato thought (Płotka 2021a, 69). In any case, Blaustein’s statements about the procedural nature of *Wesensschau* simplify the interpretation Husserl gives in his explanations of the method, if not outright transform it.

In the next step, let us briefly refer to Kazimierz Twardowski, a scholar who had a tremendous impact on Blaustein’s philosophical path. Twardowski did not use the eidetic method, but instead worked within the tradition of analytical philosophy. What connects our topic in this study is the approach to the constitution of concepts and the founder of the Lvov–Warsaw School’s stance on the constitution of objects in consciousness, which Twardowski understood as a set of acts (not contents), as has already been explicated earlier (Woleński 1986, 35).

Husserl, as a proponent of the presuppositionless method, believed that concepts (descriptive method) are the result and aim of the researcher, and therefore do not precede the phenomenological insight into essences (see the earlier citation from *Cartesian Meditations*). In contrast, both Twardowski and Blaustein disagreed with Husserl’s notion that philosophical reading is unnecessary. In “O naoczności jako właściwości niektórych przedstawień” (“On Directness as a Property of Certain Representations”), Blaustein explains:

Someone might object that we commit a *circulus vitiosus* by presupposing a priori that certain types of representations are direct [...]. This objection, however, is not valid. For we are not examining which types of representations are direct, but rather, assuming that at least some of them are definitely direct, we attempt to determine what this directness consists in. (Rosińska 2005, 24; my translation.)

Later in the text, Blaustein—as a supporter of descriptive psychology (who treats phenomenology in the same way, eliminating essential investigations from it)—explains that accepting some representations as direct is based

on trusting the scientific achievements of psychologists, not on an arbitrary judgment of the knowing subject. Our knowledge, based on aesthetic experience (based on representation or being a representation itself), also refers to this conviction (Rosińska 2005, 25). It is difficult to place such a view within Husserl's phenomenological thought, although Blaustein, in a spirit more closely aligned with it, argues that it is through intuition that we can grasp the essence of a given object. Such knowledge, once established, is expressed conceptually. As Zofia Rosińska writes, Blaustein "attaches great importance to the analysis of concepts and then to their consistent use in the meanings assigned to them" (Rosińska 2005, XVIII).

Let us note, however, a certain polemic with Husserl's reflections as presented in *Ideas I*: "Prejudices make people remarkably easy to satisfy with respect to theories. [...] psychology, so proud of being empirical, is enriched here, as in *all intentional spheres* [...] with *invented phenomena, with psychological analyses which are no analyses at all*" (Husserl 1983, 41–42). Husserl's arguments in the further part of this passage are based on the conviction that the error of "psychological" thinking is the identification of pure essences with concepts, which are "creations of thought." Thus, Husserl asks, in the context of numbers: "But are not cardinal numbers [...] what they are regardless of whether we 'form' them or not form them?" (Husserl 1983, 42). If we return to Blaustein's ideas, it can be said that his focus on Twardowski and Brentano, according to Plotka centered on the method of analysis and description of psychic phenomena, blocked him from the method of variation leading to the "irreal" grasping of *eidos*—he was unable to recognize that irreality described by Husserl,¹⁰ which may also be a result of failing to recognize the difference between the phenomenological (essential) content of an act and its lived (effective) side. Plotka writes: "[...] when he follows Twardowski and combats Brentano's psychologism, pointing to the radical transcendence of the intentional object over the act, he does not

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10 Edmund Husserl writes: "We call real in a specific sense *all that which*, in real things in the broader sense, is, *according to its sense, essentially individualized by its spatiotemporal position; but we call irreal every determination which, indeed, is founded with regard to its spatiotemporal appearance in a specifically real thing but which can appear in different realities as identical* [...]" (Husserl 1973, 265–266.)

identify this thesis as an eidetic law, but rather as a descriptive one” (Płotka 2021a, 128; my translation).

This again outlines a key aspect of “seeing”; this work has already discussed the phenomenological intuition of essence at length. With regard to Kazimierz Twardowski and his concept of consciousness, it is worth emphasizing that he, while criticizing ontological psychologism for conflating mental products and acts, nevertheless sided with methodological psychologism as an important attempt to overcome Brentano’s psychologism and its mental in-existence of the object in consciousness, including the reduction of objects of consciousness to mental entities and the identification of concepts with their designata. Thus, Blaustein’s mentor carried out an analysis of acts of consciousness in terms of acts, products, concepts, and objects: “[...] psychic products can have properties whose relations can be determined a priori, that is, independently of the results of psychology [...]. [...] in general, we learn about the existence of psychic products through internal experience and inferences drawn from it.” (Woleński 1985, 40; Woleński 1986, 6.) It is worth noting that Twardowski’s reflections were closer to Husserl’s static phenomenology. He did not use eidetic analysis, but he sought a reliable description of the structures of consciousness, which can be seen as an attempt to describe its “pure” forms; he also conducted semantic analyses in this respect (Woleński 1986, 7; Husserl 1983, 41–42). Blaustein, on the other hand, more inclined toward the genetic variant of phenomenology, combined Twardowski’s search for “pure” structures of consciousness during the analysis of the constitution and perception/mode of appearance of the aesthetic object with the aspect of active, temporal consciousness. And it is this latter aspect that we shall turn to in the following reflections.¹¹ In his lecture delivered at the Third Polish Philosophical Congress in Krakow in 1936 and entitled “Rola percepcji w doznaniu estetycznym” (“The Role of Perception in Aesthetic Experience”),¹² Blaustein writes:

11 In this work, we will not discuss in further detail Blaustein’s criticism of Twardowski’s concept in terms of his division of representations into images and concepts. It is worth mentioning that Blaustein followed his teacher’s distinction between the act, content, and object of presentation. However, he considered his theory of the division of presentations to be underdeveloped in terms of the clarity of the chosen division criterion (Płotka 2021a, 138–139).

12 An interesting perspective on the genesis of Blaustein’s philosophical reflections in the context of aesthetic considerations can be found in Płotka’s article entitled “On

Perception and the emotions associated with it are essential components of aesthetic experience [...]. The main types of perception result from differences in their course and the differences in their experiential structure [...]. The perception that forms part of the aesthetic experience may be—regarding its course—a momentary experience or a prolonged process. (Rosińska 2005, 136; my translation.)

What particularly interests us here is the aspect of the active subject of perception. This initially sounds somewhat paradoxical, since perception is, for the philosopher, an act grasping wholly adequate representations and a form of intuitive presentations. Thus, insofar as it refers to currently experienced objects of presentation, it would have a passive character. However, Blaustein does not deny the aesthetic experience an active character on the part of the perceptual-subjective domain. The philosopher points to the temporal aspect of the intentional aesthetic experience. One must also consider the nature of the work, with which we are dealing—whether we are experiencing so-called dynamic works of art (e.g., film) or their static variants (e.g., painting). This subjective activity is based on the possible multiaspectuality of attitudes during the process of constituting the aesthetic object. On the other hand, the temporal span of the experience reveals its passive character (Płotka 2021a, 155–156). At this point, a comparison with Husserl’s concept of passive genesis of activity, described in the *Cartesian Meditations*, is unavoidable. Here too, this passivity should not be taken as a kind of constitution in its merely passive form. It is rather an expression of activity, in the sense of conscious givenness. A given object, despite its initial givenness a priori—within the synthesis of passivity—presents itself in the various modes of consciousness each time as a case of active grasping. Its particular properties, components, etc., may be subject to change—through explicative acts. “While these [active syntheses; M. G.] are making their synthetic products, the passive synthesis that supplies all their ‘material’ still goes on,” writes Husserl in the *Meditations*, thus emphasizing the fundamentally active nature of both syntheses (Husserl

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Two Themes in Leopold Blaustein’s Aesthetics” (2022). The author advances the thesis that the sources of Blaustein’s phenomenological thought are to be found not so much in Husserl himself as in Twardowski and Brentano.

1960, 78). In this sense, what is passive is not inert, but rather foundational. After all, Husserl wrote that the ego is not determined by itself, but only within the limits of its own potentiality: “I can always do so again” (Husserl 1960, 60–61), and thus it defines itself only in an evident relation to what it knows or can know, and also, thanks to habituality related to intentional acts, to what it already knows and retains as its “permanent possession.” In paragraph 33 of the *Cartesian Meditations*, where the concrete I as monad and the problem of its self-constitution are expounded, Husserl defines the concreteness of the ego through its assimilation of objects as existing via acts of positing or taking a stance, where this existence is correlated with the enduring possession of the ego. This enduring possession of the I—the I as “the pole of its permanent determinations”—is precisely that habituality, by virtue of which what is presumed attains, for the ego, the status of something that endures (Husserl 1960, 67–68, 72–73; Gilicka 2020, 440).

208 If we again return to Blaustein, the presenting content given in aesthetic experience may be grasped differently depending on the subject’s attitude, which also determines the existential status of the aesthetic object. The latter may consist of several of its “correlated” variations (e.g., the events of a film’s plot may be perceived as *quasi-real* or as genuinely real *hic et nunc*). Thus, it must be noted that the passive and active spheres, as in Husserl, interpenetrate, with aesthetic experience beginning from passive perception, which serves as a basis for further acts of constitution. This aspect is also emphasized by Aleksander Serafin in his work “Fenomen w architekturze: wobec dykusji na temat architektury fenomenologicznej” (“Phenomenon in Architecture: On the Debate about Phenomenological Architecture”), when, referring to Blaustein’s concept, he draws attention to the active role of the experiencing subject during the constitution of the aesthetic object and the crucial character of the perceptual process in this context (Płotka 2014, 523).

A dependency of this kind is also found in Husserl’s thought, particularly in his concept of passive genesis, which provides the objectual repeatability, by virtue of which we may delve even deeper into explicative understanding of the “phenomena” accessible to us in intentional, spontaneous acts (Husserl 1960, 79–80). A similar issue regarding active and passive synthesis was also discussed by Thomas M. Seebohm (1934–2014). He wrote:

The question now is how intentionality, which presupposes active synthesis, relates to intentionality that is passive synthesis. First and foremost, it should be emphasized that all acts of imagination, in which experiences are presented, refer to something that is not originally given in the phase of the present. Thus, they transcend this field and its “immanent” spatiality. (Seebohm 1994, 81; my translation.)

However, the question of how the subject in aesthetic consciousness grasps Gestalt qualities, in order to constitute the aesthetic object, cannot be fully explicated in this paper. In any case, the conceptualization of perception and of the modes of givenness of artworks developed by Blaustein demonstrates phenomenological tendencies, although it is difficult to classify it as strictly phenomenological.

5. Recapitulation

Let us commence our conclusion with an attempt to situate Blaustein's concept within the framework of research characteristic of Husserl's eidetic method and, more broadly, phenomenology. Asking what may have motivated Blaustein to raise certain objections to Husserl (without focusing on personal issues), or thereby suggesting that Husserl's thought was distorted, we should pay attention to the autonomy of Blaustein's philosophical reflection and his selective appropriation of terms and themes from “the phenomenological bag” that aligned with his own perspective on the analysis of the modes of givenness or appearance of objects in intentional consciousness. Indeed, a difficulty arises from a certain rigidity in the thought of the phenomenologist, who seemed to overlook Husserl's evolving conception of consciousness, intentionality, and even the category of transcendence, which, starting from the *Logical Investigations* (where the intentional object is understood as transcendent) and continuing through Husserl's later works, reveals a changing context that explains the notion of constitutive intentional consciousness.

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Had Blaustein moved away from interpreting the key categories central to this article strictly within the framework of the *Logical Investigations*, focusing not merely on terminological changes (Płotka 2021a, 122), he might have recognized an essential shift in Husserl's understanding of intentionality

(including the theory of intentional content). This might have led him to attempt to situate the noema within the structure of the intentional relation, since he clearly acknowledged this issue in “Husserlowska nauka o akcie, treści i przedmiocie przedstawienia,” where he wrote:

Above all, the relation of the noema to the intentional object as such is unclear. Although everything suggests they are identical, doubts arise from the fact that, according to the *Logical Investigations*, the intentional object as such is identical with the real object, whereas the noema, as something ideal, is distinct from the real object. (2013b, 211; my translation.)

We now turn to the next thread of this paper where, for Husserl, concepts, taken as pure ideas, as meanings, are secondary expressions of the constitutive acts of consciousness. Their emergence must always be grounded in an *eidos*—something that undoubtedly appears in intuition, something necessarily characterized by a certain kind of givenness in the strictest sense of the word. Husserl’s view requires that concepts be just as ideal and pure as the general entities, which serve as their eidetic archetypes. In Blaustein, we observed the opposite relation—he calls for a trust in the concepts themselves. The Polish philosopher consistently distances himself from essential and eidetic analyses, offering a critique of the categories of intentional essence and meaning essence. Yet, at the same time he is clearly aware of the necessity of phenomenological inquiry into how intentional objects appear in consciousness and the search for a foundation for the legitimacy of knowledge.

The objections presented in this paper from Blaustein, as well as the attempt to counter them, particularly regarding the feasibility and validity of conducting imaginative variation, using Husserl’s own arguments, further emphasize the need to complement Blaustein’s thought with essential analyses of consciousness. It is also important to note also that the texts used to rebut Blaustein’s criticisms are from beyond the period of the *Logical Investigations*. Nevertheless, this does not contradict the assumption made at the outset: that both the founder of phenomenology and Blaustein developed their own conceptions of active consciousness, each attempting to draw from givenness that which is pre-given in variability and the multiplicity of modes

of appearance, while simultaneously drawing upon its own intentional resources.

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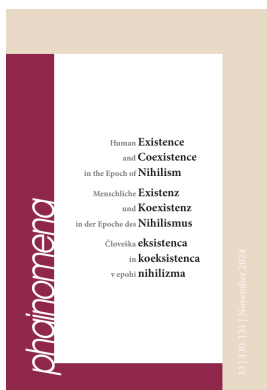
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Transitions | Prehajanja

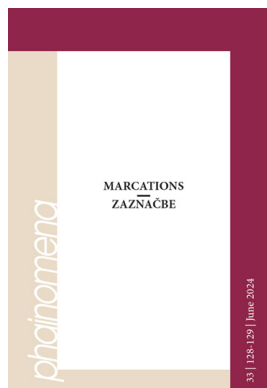
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Human Existence and Coexistence in the Epoch of Nihilism

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



Phainomena 33 | 128-129 | June 2024

Marcations | Zaznačbe

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