

BETWEEN CRITIQUE AND AFFIRMATION

BLAUSTEIN'S FUNCTIONAL METAPHYSICS OF CULTURE

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Abstract

The article reconsiders Leopold Blaustein's philosophy by focusing on his critical stance toward metaphysics. While Witold Płotka interprets Blaustein as a philosopher of metaphysical neutrality, I argue that Blaustein should rather be seen as a critic of metaphysical idealism who nonetheless develops a minimal and functional form of metaphysical reflection. This reflection is grounded not in ontological assumptions, but in the implicit meaningfulness of anthropological experience. The article examines

four domains—intentionality, humanistic psychology, aesthetics, and education—and includes a final boundary-case analysis of religious spirituality, in order to clarify the scope and limits of Blaustein's functional metaphysics. Drawing on his critique of Ingarden and his own educational writings, I argue that Blaustein's philosophy ultimately points toward a non-speculative, yet normatively rich conception of culture and value. His project, although critical of traditional metaphysics, remains open to a constructive transformation of metaphysical thinking rooted in human experience and practical reason.

Keywords: Blaustein, metaphysics, intentionality, phenomenology, culture.

Med kritiko in afirmacijo. Blausteinova funkcionalna metafizika kulture

Povzetek

102 Članek filozofijo Leopolda Blausteina pretresa tako, da se osredotoča na njegovo kritično držo glede metafizike. Medtem ko Witold Płotka Blausteina interpretira kot filozofa metafizične nevtralnosti, jaz zagovarjam mnenje, da moramo Blausteina videti kot kritika metafizičnega idealizma, ki obenem vendar razvije minimalno in funkcionalno obliko metafizične refleksije. Tovrstna refleksija ne temelji na ontoloških predpostavkah, temveč na implicitni pomenljivosti antropološkega izkustva. Članek obravnava štiri področja – intencionalnost, humanistično psihologijo, estetiko in izobraževanje – in nazadnje obsega analizo mejnega primera religiozne spiritualnosti, da bi tako razjasnil domet in meje Blausteinove funkcionalne metafizike. Sklicujoč se na njegovo kritiko Ingardna in na njegove pedagoške spise, trdim, da Blausteinova filozofija navsezadnje izpričuje nespekulativno, a normativno bogato pojmovanje kulture in vrednote. Četudi kritičen glede tradicionalne metafizike, Blausteinov projekt ostaja odprt za konstruktivno transformacijo metafizičnega mišljenja, kakršno je zakoreninjeno v človeškem izkustvu in praktičnem umu.

Ključne besede: Blaustein, metafizika, intencionalnost, fenomenologija, kultura.

Introduction: Between critique of metaphysics and reconstruction of the philosophy of experience

The purpose of the present article is to analyze Leopold Blaustein's philosophical position through the lens of his stance on metaphysics. At first glance, Blaustein appears as a consistent critic of all forms of metaphysical thinking—a stance articulated most clearly in his reviews of Roman Ingarden's *The Literary Work of Art*, where he questions not only the notion of metaphysical qualities, but also the ontological and eidetic foundations of phenomenological methodology. However, a close reading of his texts does not support the straightforward conclusion that his philosophy is purely anti-metaphysical.

The article begins by examining the three versions of Blaustein's review of Ingarden's *The Literary Work of Art*, showing that they contain not only a critique of what he regards as metaphysical assumptions, but also key elements of Blaustein's own philosophical position. These texts ultimately reveal a systematic attempt to reconstruct the foundations of the philosophy of culture, grounded in his consistent appeal to Kazimierz Twardowski's thesis about the tripartite structure of intentionality. This thesis becomes the basis for Blaustein's redefinition of the relationship between object, intentional content, and the individual's cognitive or affective stance.

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The subsequent sections of the article show how Blaustein develops this foundation in four directions: (a) the modernization of the theory of intentionality in a functional spirit; (b) the elaboration of humanistic psychology as an auxiliary science for the philosophy of culture; (c) the application of these developments to aesthetics and education as distinct domains of value formation; and (d) the reinterpretation of phenomenology's foundations—not as a philosophy of ideal entities, but as a philosophy of types of lived experience. Section V provides a boundary-case analysis (religious spirituality) designed to expose the limits and operational criteria of the proposed minimal metaphysics.

These strands of thought converge in the central question: is it possible to reconstruct, within Blaustein's work, a form of metaphysics that does not take the shape of a doctrine of substances or ideal entities, but rather of a reflection

on the structures of experience, culture, and value? Throughout this article, I will use the term “metaphysics” in this deliberately modest and functional sense.

In recent literature, this problem has been addressed most comprehensively by Witold Płotka who interprets Blaustein’s position as a consistent attempt to maintain metaphysical neutrality—a stance that, in Blaustein’s own view, allows him to avoid the metaphysical consequences of the Husserlian idealism, while preserving key methodological insights of phenomenology. In this respect, I agree with Płotka’s criticism of the readings proposed by Marek Pokropski and Krzysztof Wieczorek, which treat Blaustein’s notion of the “phenomenal world” as implying a two-world metaphysics (see: Płotka 2024, 169–171, 185–189; Pokropski 2015, 97; Wieczorek 2006, 161). In my view as well, the idea of a phenomenal world can be understood in a strictly phenomenological and methodologically motivated way, without committing Blaustein to any ontological doctrine about levels of being.

104 At the same time, however, I consider the general label of “metaphysical neutrality” to be only partially adequate. Firstly, it risks suggesting that Blaustein merely suspends metaphysical questions, whereas I argue that he transforms them into a minimal and functional reflection on the structure of experience, culture, and value. Secondly, in the Polish debate, the influential label of “analytic phenomenology” has been applied to Blaustein himself. As Płotka shows, this term is understood by Marek Pokropski as designating a combination of Twardowski’s logical analysis with Husserlian phenomenological description, whereas Wioletta Miśkiewicz uses it to characterize a type of analysis typical of early phenomenology in the period of the *Logical Investigations*. Yet, precisely because the label “analytic phenomenology” is employed in such a loose and heterogeneous way by Pokropski, Miśkiewicz, Woleński, and Rosińska, it tends to obscure the specific profile of Blaustein’s work, and Płotka—in my view, convincingly—points out its shortcomings (see: Płotka 2024, 7–10, 295–296; Pokropski 2015, 94; Wieczorek 2006, 161; Woleński 2011, 77; Miśkiewicz 2009, 181; Rosińska 2005, XVII). I agree with this criticism. Symptomatically, it is Płotka who then introduces the notion of Blaustein’s “metaphysical neutrality” as his own interpretative proposal. Although this proposal is not intended to align Blaustein with logical empiricism, the very phrase “metaphysical

neutrality” can, especially against the background of the Lvov–Warsaw tradition, suggest a strong anti-metaphysical stance. In my view, it therefore risks obscuring, rather than illuminating the minimal and functional kind of metaphysical reflection that is at work in Blaustein’s account of experience, value, and culture. For reasons of convenience, I will still occasionally speak of the “Lvov–Warsaw school” when referring to this broader tradition. Yet, in reconstructing Blaustein’s position I follow Ingarden’s own suggestion that one should distinguish between a Lvov descriptive-phenomenological current and a separate Warsaw logical-analytic current, and I take Blaustein to belong primarily to the former rather than to the latter.¹

Rather than reading Blaustein simply as a philosopher of metaphysical neutrality or as an “analytic phenomenologist,” I therefore propose to interpret his position as that of a critic of metaphysical idealism who nonetheless elaborates a minimal and functional form of metaphysical reflection. This reflection is grounded not in ontological assumptions, but in the implicit meaningfulness of anthropological experience, and it finds its clearest expression in Blaustein’s theories of aesthetic experience, humanistic psychology, and pedagogy.

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By focusing on these domains—especially the educational writings, which have been largely overlooked in prior literature—, I aim to reconstruct Blaustein’s philosophy as a functional metaphysics of culture, in which the very process of experiencing, valuing, and forming the self assumes a structural role

¹ Like most authors, Płotka follows the now standard historiographical label of the “Lvov–Warsaw school.” Ingarden, by contrast, explicitly resisted this unified designation. In his 1936 survey of contemporary Polish philosophy, he distinguishes between a Lvov current, rooted in Twardowski’s descriptive psychology and phenomenology, and a Warsaw logical-analytic current closer to logical positivism. Within the former, he lists, among others, a “young generation of pupils devoted to him (T. Witwicki, M. Lutman-Kokoszyńska, I. Dąmbaska, L. Blaustein, Mehlberg, Auerbach)” who continue to work “for the most part in the domain of descriptive and experimental psychology” (Ingarden 1974, 102). In a later letter to Henryk Skolimowski (1967), Ingarden returns to this opposition in even sharper terms, stating that he does not count Twardowski and those of his pupils who remained “descriptive psychologists to the end” among representatives of Polish analytical philosophy (see Ingarden 2023, 277). On the reading adopted here, this two-fold map of Polish philosophy supports placing Blaustein on the Lvov side of the tradition and cautions against interpreting him as an early representative of an “analytic phenomenology” modelled on the procedures of the Warsaw logicians.

once occupied by metaphysical doctrines of substance or essence. This reading aims to complement and also critically extend the perspective articulated by Plotka, offering an alternative conceptualization of Blaustein's relation to metaphysics in light of his broader cultural and psychological project.

I. Blaustein's critique of Ingarden and the problem of metaphysical qualities from a perspective of minimalist functional realism

The point of departure for reconstructing Leopold Blaustein's philosophical stance is his critical reading of Roman Ingarden's *Das literarische Kunstwerk*, carried out over the course of the 1930s. His three successive reviews (Blaustein 1930a, 1932, 1937) can be regarded not merely as assessments of a close colleague from the Lvov circle, but as components of an autonomous philosophical project shaped under conditions of polemical engagement. These texts reveal both the contours of Blaustein's opposition to metaphysics and the outlines of a positive alternative theory of aesthetic experience, grounded in a modernized theory of intentionality.²

Already in his 1930 review, Blaustein notes that Ingarden develops his project within the framework of phenomenology and its central discovery of intentionality, building on Twardowski's tripartite model of mental acts. As Blaustein writes:

2 See Plotka 2024, section 8.4.2, 228–234. Plotka focuses primarily on Blaustein's reviews of *Das literarische Kunstwerk*, analyzing them in relation to Ingarden's theory of the purely intentional object. His reading emphasizes Blaustein's distance from Ingarden's ontological framework and frames Blaustein as an advocate of metaphysical neutrality. In this article, however, I pursue a different aim: rather than reinterpreting Blaustein through the lens of his proximity to, or divergence from, Ingarden, I focus on reconstructing Blaustein's own critical stance toward certain forms of metaphysics and ontology, as a starting point for what I interpret as a positive, albeit minimal, metaphysical commitment in his writings. This perspective allows for an alternative account of Blaustein's philosophical project—one that highlights his attempt to articulate the structural conditions of cultural and value experience without fully abandoning metaphysical reflection.

The distinction between act, content, and object of representation and judgment, developed and elaborated by Twardowski, Husserl, and Meinong, provided the basis for recognizing the multilayered nature of the literary work. It made it possible, first and foremost, to distinguish the layer of linguistic symbols, that is, the so-called text, from the layer of meanings, [...] and both of these layers from the layer of intentional objects of these experiences—that is, from the fictional world of persons and events that is “spoken of” in the literary work.³

Nevertheless, Blaustein disagrees with the metaphysical development of these assumptions as he understands them. In the same review, he writes polemically: “The fact that the author assumes the existence of ideal concepts will make his theory unacceptable to all those who are inclined—like the Reists, for example—to apply Ockham’s razor.”⁴ By detaching the literary work

3 “Dokonane i opracowane przez Twardowskiego, Husserla i Meinonga rozróżnienie aktu, treści i przedmiotu przedstawienia i sądu dostarczyły podstawy do zauważenia wielowarstwowości dzieła literackiego. Pozwoliły one odróżnić mianowicie przede wszystkim warstwę symbolów językowych, czyli tzw. tekst, od warstwy znaczeń, [...] a obydwie te warstwy od warstwy przedmiotów intencjonalnych tych przeżyć, tj. od świata fiktywnego ludzi i zdarzeń, o którym ‘mowa’ w dziele literackiem.” (Blaustein 1930a, 453.) All translations are by the author of the article.

4 “Fakt, iż autor zakłada istnienie idealnych pojęć, uczyni jego teorię niemożliwą do przyjęcia wszystkim tym, którzy skłonni są jak np. reiści—posługiwać się brzytwą Ockhama.” (Blaustein 1930, 454.) As Płotka notes: “Blaustein did not accept this response and later spoke against Ingarden’s concept of essence on several occasions, postulating the application of Ockham’s razor to essences treated metaphysically as existing general objects.” (Płotka 2024, 117–118.) In the context of the debate with Husserl, Płotka responds to Blaustein’s doubts by insisting on the non-metaphysical status of essences in phenomenology. In his view, once essences are understood as the invariant structures of experience, rather than as independently existing general objects, both the ontological and methodological worries raised by Blaustein lose their force. “In phenomenology,” he writes, “essences simply do not have a metaphysical nature. This allows us to reject both the ontological and methodological doubts raised by Blaustein.” (Płotka 2024, 122; see also 177 for a similar formulation.) I agree that, from a Husserlian point of view, phenomenological essences need not be construed as metaphysical entities. Yet, Blaustein’s persistent reservations show that such a programmatic clarification does not, for him, settle the issue. His demand is not merely for a different “label” for essences, but for a different way of investigating them. Rather than accepting the Husserlian assurance that essences are non-metaphysical,

from its concretization and from the psychological experiences of author and reader, Ingarden, in Blaustein's view, adopts ontological commitments that culminate in the positing of metaphysical qualities—a move Blaustein finds unconvincing:

A literary work is by its very nature a multilayered creation; its four layers—namely, phonetic formations, meanings, the objects represented in the literary work, and schematized appearances—form an organic whole and serve as the foundation for the “polyphonic harmony” of aesthetic values, to which are added what the author refers to as “metaphysical qualities,” such as tragedy, sublimity, and the like. (The concept of metaphysical qualities is, to me, one of the most obscure ones in this work.)⁵

In the 1932 review, Blaustein further refines his position. While acknowledging the centrality of the layer of intentional objects—a point on which he partly concurs—he gives greater emphasis to the layer of meaning, corresponding to the content within the intentional structure:

The author of this review has sought, in several readings, to render plausible from the reader's perspective the thesis that among the three layers of the literary work, the most important is the layer of intentional objects—delineated and defined only fragmentarily and schematically by the psychologically understood layer of meanings, which itself is also incompletely and ambiguously determined by the layer of signs.⁶

Blaustein calls for a more functional approach: one that treats essences as structures emerging within concrete acts of experiencing, valuing, and cultural formation, and that tests their validity by reference to the dynamics of anthropological reality. In this sense, his critique of Husserl and Ingarden is inseparable from his attempt to develop a minimal and functional metaphysics of culture.

5 “Dzieło literackie jest z istoty swej wielowarstwowym tworem, cztery jego warstwy (mianowicie tworów fonetycznych, znaczeń, przedstawionych w dziele literackim przedmiotów i schematyzowanych wyglądów) tworzą organiczną całość i służą jako podstawa ‘polyfonicznej harmonii’ wartości estetycznych, do których dołączają się tzw. przez autora ‘jakości metafizyczne’ jak np. tragizm, wzniosłość itp. (Pojęcie jakości metafizycznych należy do najbardziej niejasnych dla mnie w tern dziele.)” (Blaustein 1930a, 453.)

6 “Autor niniejszej recenzji starał się w kilku odczytach uprawdopodobnić z punktu widzenia czytelnika tezę, iż z pośród trzech warstw dzieła literackiego najważniejsza

Once again, Blaustein reiterates his reservations about the vagueness of the concept of metaphysical qualities, which Ingarden situates as a higher-order moment in the constitution of the work:

Each of the layers contributes to the work its own distinctive material and its own aesthetic values, while all of them together—especially the layer of objects—contribute to the emergence of what the author calls, though not entirely clearly for the reader, “metaphysical qualities,” such as sublimity, tragedy, comedy, and so on.⁷

The most complete articulation of Blaustein’s critique appears in his 1937 review, where—remaining consistent with his anti-metaphysical stance—he systematically expands his objections. Having initially questioned the unclear notion of the so-called “metaphysical qualities” (as defined by Ingarden) in each of his reviews, he now shifts his focus and explicitly characterizes several foundational elements of Ingarden’s theory as metaphysical in nature. In particular, he reconstructs what he sees as Ingarden’s underlying metaphysical and epistemological presuppositions in relation to the problem of the intersubjectivity of the literary work:

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In order to preserve the intersubjective identity of the meaning layer, the Author adopts a series of metaphysical and epistemological assumptions, in particular: (a) the existence of ideal concepts; (b) the non-self-sufficient existence of meanings as creations of subjective operations (these creations—as we already know—come into being through such operations, but once constituted, they continue to exist even if not conceived by any subject); (c) the capacity to cognize ideal concepts, for only by apprehending the content of such ideal concepts can the reader re-actualize the meaning of a sentence in the same way

jest warstwa przedmiotów intencjonalnych, wyznaczona i określona w sposób fragmentaryczny i schematyczny przez psychologicznie zrozumianą warstwę znaczeń, również niezupełnie i niejednoznacznie wyznaczoną przez warstwę znaków.” (Blaustein 1932, 347.)

7 “Każda zaś z warstw wnosi do dzieła swój swoisty materiał i własne wartości estetyczne, wszystkie zaś razem, a szczególnie warstwa przedmiotów, przyczyniają się do powstania tzw. przez autora, a niezupełnie jasnych dla czytelnika ‘jakości metafizycznych,’ jak wzniosłość, tragizm, komizm, itp.” (Blaustein 1932, 348.)

as the Author intended—this meaning being itself an actualization of given ideal concepts; (d) the possibility of knowing the identical literary work despite the fact that the reader—just like the Author—can grasp the work only in one of its concretizations, and these concretizations—as the Author himself admits—differ from one another and generally realize the work inadequately, constantly adding elements which the creator did not assign to the work.⁸

Rather than limiting himself to formulating his primary objection to Ingarden's theory and while deploying an anti-metaphysical version of *Ockham's razor*, Blaustein outlines an alternative solution grounded in intentional psychology and in the privileging of the layer of meanings that constitute the "fictitious world." This proposal dispenses with the metaphysical and epistemological assumptions he attributes to Ingarden and instead affirms the possibility of intersubjective identity on the basis of linguistic and psychological regularities:

110 An alternative way of preserving the intersubjective identity of the literary work—one that does not require these metaphysical and epistemological assumptions—may be to assume that a literary work is a system of sentences in a given language, created through the subjective operations of the author and fixed in writing or by other means. When the reader is oriented toward that language, and understands the sentences of that language, they intentionally grasp the fictitious world determined by those sentences. The identity of this world, as grasped

8 "Chcąc uratować tę intersubiektywną identyczność warstwy znaczeniowej, Autor przyjmuje szereg metafizycznych i epistemologicznych założeń, w szczególności a) istnienie pojęć idealnych, b) niesamoistne istnienie znaczeń jako tworców subiektywnych operacji. (Twory te—jak już wiemy powstają dzięki tym operacyom, lecz po utworzeniu istnieją nadal, chociażby nie były pomyślane przez żaden podmiot), c) zdolność poznawania pojęć idealnych, gdyż tylko dzięki ujęciu zawartości idealnych pojęć może czytelnik dzieła literackiego w identyczny sposób reaktualizować sens zdania, który mu nadał Autor, a który jest aktualizacją danych idealnych pojęć, d) możność poznawania identycznego dzieła literackiego mimo, iż czytelnik—podobnie zresztą jak twórca dzieła ująć może dzieło tylko w jakiejś z jego konkretyzacji, a konkretyzacje te—jak Autor przyznaje różnią się między różnią się między sobą i przeważnie nieadekwatnie realizują dzieło, dodając nadto stale do niego szereg rzeczy, których twórca dzieła nie nadał." (Blaustein 1937, 100b.)

by various readers, is guaranteed by the uniformity of the sentences made available to them, and by the fact that, when oriented toward the given language, they understand the sentences according to the same directives. Where these directives fail, various interpretations of particular sentences or sentence complexes may arise; nonetheless, in the overall experience, all readers grasp the same fictitious world, since such failures occur only in rare cases of ambiguity or the like.⁹

The dispute thus outlined does not revolve around the recognition of the intentional and stratified nature of the literary work—Blaustein fully endorses this—, but rather around its ontological and epistemological grounding. In response to the acceptance of ideal concepts, the non-self-sufficient existence of meanings, and the possibility of knowing an identical literary work independently of its concretizations, Blaustein proposes an approach more closely aligned with functional psychology and the phenomenology of lived experience. This, in turn, becomes the starting point for the development of his own theory, which he elaborates within the framework of his aesthetic investigations.

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II. Aesthetics as an analysis of dynamic structures of meaning and the problem of ontology

Already in his reviews of Ingarden's work, Blaustein signals the need to shift from an ontologically grounded conception of aesthetic values and the literary work to a functional analysis rooted in the structure of experiential

9 "Taką drogą do uratowania intersubiektywnej identyczności dzieła literackiego, nie wymagającą tych metafizycznych i epistemologicznych założeń, jest może przyjęcie, iż dzieło literackie jest utworzonym dzięki subiektywnym operacjom twórcy i utrwalonym na piśmie lub w inny sposób systemem zdań pewnego języka, oraz iż przy nastawieniu czytelnika na ten język, gdy rozumie zdania danego języka, ujmuje on intencjonalnie wyznaczony przez te zdania świat fiktywny. Identyczność tego świata, ujętego przez rozmaitych czytelników, gwarantuje równokształtność zdań, które są im dane, oraz fakt, iż przy nastawieniu na dany język rozumieją te zdania w myśl tych samych dyrektyw. Gdzie te dyrektywy zawiodą, powstają rozmaite interpretacje danych zdań lub związków zdań, w całokształcie jednak ujmują wszyscy czytelnicy ten sam świat fiktywny, gdyż dyrektywy zawieść mogą tylko w rzadkich wypadkach wieloznaczności." (Blaustein 1937, 101a.)

acts. This orientation finds a fuller development in his original aesthetic writings, particularly in *Imaginative Representations* (*Przedstawienia imaginatywne*), where we find a clear attempt to “purify” the descriptive language of any ontological assumptions. This move, however, does not signal a retreat of systematic ambition; on the contrary, Blaustein proposes a nuanced methodology for the study of aesthetic phenomena, grounded in a phenomenologically oriented psychology.

In the aforementioned work, when Blaustein distinguishes between the material and formal object, he is quick to clarify that “this distinction has nothing to do with the difference between an object existing independently of an act and one existing dependently upon the act; it is purely methodological and carries no ontological weight.”¹⁰ This interpretative gesture clearly demonstrates that Blaustein forgoes assigning any ontological status to works of art, and instead grounds the entire analysis in the constitutive functions of mental acts.

Moreover, Blaustein offers a detailed discussion of the quasi-causality and quasi-reality of the represented world in art, emphasizing that causal relations
112 within the represented world—such as walls being torn down by battering rams on screen (cf. Blaustein 1930b, 23)—are only possible within dynamic appearances and do not possess ontological status. Anything that appears spatial, temporal or causal in the represented world must be qualified as “quasi-”: “Worlds of imaginary objects may be deceptively similar to our own. Yet, all of their properties—except those belonging to them as imaginative objects—are held under the proviso of quasi-.”¹¹

This anti-ontological shift, carried out in the spirit of applying Ockham’s razor, finds its justification in the intentional analysis of acts. At the same time, Blaustein defends himself against the charge that his descriptions carry ontological implications. He writes: “We have only seemingly been dealing

10 “Odróżnienie przedmiotu materalnego i formalnego nie ma nic wspólnego z odróżnieniem przedmiotu istniejącego niezależnie od aktu i przedmiotu istniejącego zależnie od aktu, to też posiada wyłącznie znaczenie metodyczne, nie ma zaś żadnego waloru ontologicznego.” (Blaustein 1930b, 11.)

11 “Światy przedmiotów imaginatywnych mogą być do naszego świata łudzaco podobne. Wszelkie jednak własności prócz własności przysługujących im jako przedmiotom imaginatywnym—posiadają one z zastrzeżeniem quasi.” (Blaustein 1930b, 24.) See Płotka 2024, 226–232.

with imaginative objects; for imaginative objects do not exist either realistically or in any other way, and they have not been the actual topic of discussion.”¹²

The description of the “object” thus functions merely as an instrument for analyzing the act itself:

In describing them, I was describing—by way of a detour through the description of intentional objects—the matter of imaginative acts [...]. Therefore, the explanation of the meaning and source of the quasi-qualification [...] is to be sought exclusively on the side of the acts, not within the ontological sphere.¹³

In this way, Blaustein consequently dispenses with the need for an ontology of the aesthetic object, and instead proposes a psychological phenomenology of experience, in which the artwork is understood as a function of the dynamic organization of imaginative acts.

The question of intersubjectivity—so central to Ingarden—is also reconfigured by Blaustein. He acknowledges that intersubjective imaginative objects can be ascribed identity (for example, the “same” *Venus de Milo*), although this identity does not stem from their being grounded in idealities or metaphysical qualities. Rather, it seems to derive from a function of communicative agreement—although Blaustein remains cautious here: “The meaning of this ‘identity’ is difficult to explain. [...] In any case, the explanation of the problem must be sought on the side of the acts, and not in any ontological sphere.”¹⁴

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As a result, we may say that Blaustein proposes a form of *minimalist metaphysics*—or rather, a phenomenological-psychological methodology—,

12 “Albowiem tylko pozornie zajmowaliśmy się przedmiotami imaginatywnymi; przedmioty bowiem imaginatywne nie istnieją ani realnie ani w żaden inny sposób i nie o nich była dotychczas mowa.” (Blaustein 1930b, 24.)

13 “Opisując je, opisywałem na drodze okrężnej poprzez opis przedmiotów intencjonalnych materię aktów imaginatywnych [...]. To też wyjaśnienia sensu i źródła owego zastrzeżenia quasi [...] szukać należy wyłącznie po stronie aktów, a nie w sferze ontologicznej.” (Blaustein 1930b, 25.)

14 “Jaki jest sens tej ‘tożsamości,’ trudno wyjaśnić. Ponieważ chodzi tu o przedmiot imaginatywny, a więc nieistniejący—wyjaśnienia zagadnienia szukać należy w każdym razie po stronie aktów, a nie w jakiegokolwiek sferze ontologicznej.” (Blaustein 1930b, 48.)

in which notions, such as “identity,” “causality,” “spatiality,” and “value,” are conceived as functions of the structure of lived experience, rather than as properties of autonomous entities.

All this leads to a general conclusion: Blaustein’s aesthetics dispenses with the notion of ideal being as the foundation of the artwork, rejects aesthetic value as an object, and abandons ontological analysis altogether, treating it as a form of speculation. In its place, he offers a refined analysis of acts and their organization—one that proves sufficient to account for both the aesthetic experience and the intersubjective recognition of the artwork’s identity.

In his other aesthetic writings, Blaustein continues the anti-metaphysical orientation already present in his reviews of Ingarden. For Blaustein, the forms of an artwork are not ontological structures, but functional arrangements that organize experiential acts. He states explicitly:

114 The aesthetic experience, although we perceive it as a rest, as a relaxation after hardship, requires considerable activity from us, sometimes even extraordinary spiritual dynamism. It is by no means enough to look at a beautiful landscape, to listen to good music, to watch a beautiful film, for an aesthetic experience to arise.¹⁵

This activity concerns both the reactive and perceptual dimensions of the experience:

 Yet, not only in these reactive components of aesthetic experience, but already in the perceptual ones—in those in which the seemingly passive reception of the aesthetic object takes place—does the activity of the aesthetically experiencing subject manifest itself.¹⁶

15 “[D]oznanie estetyczne, mimo, iż odczuwamy je jako odpoczynek, odprężenie po trudach, wymaga od nas znacznej aktywności, niekiedy nawet niezwyklej dynamiki duchowej. Nie jest bynajmniej tak, iż wystarczy patrzeć na piękny krajobraz, słuchać dobrej muzyki, widzieć piękny film, by powstało przeżycie estetyczne.” (Blaustein 1938, 4.)

16 “Ale nie tylko w tych reaktywnych składnikach doznania estetycznego, lecz już w perceptywnych, w tych, w których dokonuje się na pozór wyłącznie bierny

Recalling Ingarden, Blaustein emphasizes the significance of the literary work's status within the aesthetics:

It is well known that literary works of art are the source of many aesthetic experiences. Until recently, little attention had been paid to what a literary work actually is. [...] This difficult problem was brought to the attention of aestheticians and literary theorists by the Polish scholar Roman Ingarden.¹⁷

However, Blaustein offers a different solution from Ingarden's. For him, the concrete perception and its quality condition the emergence of aesthetic values:

In the works of Roman Ingarden cited above, the reader will find numerous further confirmations of the claim that the same literary work may be apprehended in different ways depending on the course of the reader's experience, which obviously affects the richer or poorer grasp of its aesthetic values. A full apprehension of the work and its aesthetic merits thus requires great activity and skill on the part of the reader.¹⁸

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Blaustein's aesthetics, thus, turns out to be a theory of the dynamic organization of experience, in which the work of art possesses no independent being, but functions as a point of reference within an intentional, perceptual-affective framework. Aesthetic values are not ideal entities, but "occur" within a well-formed structure of acts, expressing his commitment to a functional metaphysical minimalism. This is particularly evident in *On the Apprehension*

odbiór przedmiotu estetycznego, objawia się aktywność człowieka przeżywającego estetycznie." (Blaustein 1938, 4.)

17 "Wiadomo, iż literackim dziełom sztuki zawdzięczamy wiele doznań estetycznych. Do niedawna mało zastanawiano się nad tym, czym jest właściwie dzieło literackie. [...] Ten trudny problem uświadomił estetykom i teoretykom literatury polski uczony Roman Ingarden." (Blaustein 1938, 18.)

18 "W cytowanych dziełach Romana Ingardena znajdzie czytelnik liczne dalsze dowody twierdzenia, że to samo dzieło literackie może być zależnie od przebiegu przeżyć czytelnika rozmaicie ujęte, co oczywiście wpływa na bogatsze lub uboższe uchwycenie jego estetycznych wartości. Pełne ujęcie dzieła i jego walorów estetycznych wymaga więc dużej aktywności i umiejętności czytelnika." (Blaustein 1938, 24.)

of *Aesthetic Objects* (*O ujmowaniu przedmiotów estetycznych*), where a positive project of aesthetic phenomenology emerges—one that, though still cautious toward classical metaphysical questions, is no longer merely descriptive. Here, we find a mode of valuation and normative reflection on culture, its function, and the conditions of its reception, which may be interpreted as a proposal for a minimalist metaphysics of culture.

Blaustein writes:

Since in aesthetic experience the object appears as endowed with certain aesthetic qualities, and the quantity and kind of these qualities that reach the consciousness of the experiencer depend not only on the objective properties of the object, but also on the course and type of perception—it is up to us, and not only to the creator of beauty, how much of the beauty of nature and art we absorb into ourselves, how much we notice, how much we feel.¹⁹

116 This aspect of aesthetic activism introduces an axiological and quasi-ethical dimension to the description of aesthetic experience. With reference to Ossowski, Blaustein speaks of “aesthetic color-blindness” as a kind of civilizational illness that deprives life of depth and the possibility of escape into a world of higher experiences:

Beauty, due to such a mode of consumption, loses nothing; rather, it is the life of the aesthetically color-blind person that is impoverished—one who often seeks joy where only the illusion of it beckons, and passes by those sources, which could bestow lasting emotion upon him.²⁰

19 “Skoro w doznaniu estetycznym przedmiot występuje jako wyposażony w pewne walory estetyczne, a ilość i rodzaj tych walorów, które dochodzą do świadomości doznającego zależą nie tylko od obiektywnych właściwości przedmiotu, ale również od przebiegu i rodzaju percepcji to od nas, a nie tylko od twórcy piękna zależy, ile piękna przyrody i sztuki w siebie wchłonimy, ile go zauważymy, ile odczuwamy.” (Blaustein 1938, 28.)

20 “Piękno z powodu takiej jego konsumpcji nie traci niczego, ubożeje natomiast życie daltonisty estetycznego, który szuka radości często tam, gdzie tylko złudny jej pozór

Equally significant is the intensity and spiritual engagement that Blaustein attributes to the aesthetic experience. This experience is both active and transgressive, allowing one to distance oneself from the concerns of everyday life and transition to another dimension of experience. This may be interpreted as a functional equivalent of an “escape” into the ideal realm—a minimal form of metaphysical elevation: “Indeed, during an aesthetic experience we forget our worries and life pursuits; we ‘live in the moment,’ as the Polish aesthete Stanisław Ossowski writes—rather than in the past or the future.”²¹

It is also worth noting that, for Blaustein, the apprehension of a work—especially, a literary one—depends on the spiritual competence of the recipient. This renders the act of reception not merely a psychological fact, but also an axiologically relevant activity:

A full grasp of a work and its aesthetic qualities therefore requires a great deal of activity and skill on the part of the reader. The lack of such capacities means, for instance, that some readers of masterpieces fail entirely to apprehend them as masterpieces.²²

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By way of conclusion, it can be said that in his independent aesthetic writings—unlike his earlier polemic with Ingarden’s ontological position—Blaustein develops his own conception of aesthetics as an active, evaluative, and culture-generating experience. And although he consistently denies the aesthetic object an ontological status, his affirmation of aesthetic experience, cultural competence, and valuation amounts to a subtle, reduced, but nonetheless genuine *metaphysics of culture*.

kusi, a przechodzi obok takich jej źródeł, które trwałym wzruszeniem hojnie obdarzyć go mogą.” (Blaustein 1938, 29.)

21 “Wszak w czasie doznania estetycznego zapominamy o naszych troskach i dążeniach życiowych, ‘żyjemy chwilą,’ jak pisze polski estetyk Stanisław Ossowski—a nie przeszłością lub przyszłością.” (Blaustein 1938, 3.) See Płotka 2024, 197, note 795.

22 “Pełne ujęcie dzieła i jego walorów estetycznych wymaga więc dużej aktywności i umiejętności czytelnika. Ich brak sprawia np., że niektórzy czytelnicy arcydzieł nie ujmują ich zupełnie jako arcydzieł.” (Blaustein 1938, 24.)

III. Humanistic psychology as the core of a functional project and a metaphysics of culture

The programmatic article “On the Tasks of Humanistic Psychology” (“O zadaniach psychologii humanistycznej”) is one of the most compelling synthetic expressions of Blaustein’s philosophy. Despite his explicit distance from classical metaphysics, Blaustein does not reject the question of the structure and meaning of culture; rather, he reframes it as a functional and differentiated analysis of the experiencing person within symbolic forms and collective cultural structures.

Blaustein begins by distancing himself from metaphysical formulations of humanistic psychology:

The above formulation of the tasks of humanistic psychology rests in many respects on its classical representatives, Dilthey and Spranger, while diverging from them in others—specifically, in its tendency to avoid certain concepts burdened with metaphysical assumptions or semantic ambiguity.²³

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This polemical stance has naturally suggested to later commentators that Blaustein, like Twardowski, should be regarded as being straightforwardly “anti-metaphysical.”²⁴ In my view, however, this picture needs to be nuanced.

23 “Powyższe ujęcie zadań psychologii humanistycznej opiera się w licznych punktach na klasycznych jej przedstawicielach, Dilthey’u i Sprangerze, odbiegając w wielu innych, a to w tendencji unikania pewnych pojęć, obarczonych założeniami metafizycznymi lub wieloznacznością.” (Blaustein 1935a, 57.)

24 For the historical context of this project, see Płotka 2024, 72–77. Płotka reconstructs Blaustein’s lecture on Spranger and Dilthey, delivered on October 6, 1934, at the 335th plenary meeting of the Polish Philosophical Society, and reports Twardowski’s reaction: the paper was “well prepared,” but “misleading in regard to its content” (Twardowski 1997, 365). He interprets this remark as indicating that Blaustein’s project of humanistic psychology could in principle be reduced to Twardowski’s descriptive psychology, rooted in the distinction between actions and products, and that Blaustein’s anti-metaphysical attitude is directly grounded in his teacher’s philosophy. At the same time, Płotka emphasizes that the published version of the lecture offers an original synthesis of Twardowski’s approach with that of Spranger and Dilthey, and can be regarded as the beginning of the Polish tradition of humanistic

Twardowski's stance was closer to Brentano's critical attitude toward speculative metaphysics than to the radical anti-metaphysical program later associated with the Warsaw logicians. He remains open to the possibility of a positive, carefully circumscribed metaphysics, and it is in this more nuanced sense that Blaustein's own project of humanistic psychology and cultural analysis can be understood, not as a rejection of metaphysics, but as a search for a minimal and functional metaphysical framework adequate to anthropological and cultural reality.²⁵

psychology, anticipating later developments in Maslow and Rogers (see also Nawrocki 1996, 139–142).

25 On this point, I follow a line of interpretation that treats both Brentano and Twardowski not as straightforward enemies of metaphysics, but as proponents of a positive and methodologically constrained metaphysics. In Brentano's case, his lifelong "moral and metaphysical teachings" (Jacquette 2004, 17) are explicitly retained within an empiricist framework: descriptive psychology functions as an entry point to a unified philosophical science, and his later reistic ontology, with its parsimonious categories of concrete substances and accidents, together with his value theory and natural theology, amounts to a substantive metaphysical position, rather than a dissolution of metaphysical questions (see: Albertazzi 1996, 47–60; Kriegel 2017; Sauer 2017; Chrudzimski and Smith 2004). For Twardowski, the 1895 inaugural lecture ("Wykład wstępny w Uniwersytecie Lwowskim") is decisive. There, he first characterizes philosophy as a science of mental (spiritual) phenomena—a definition that applies to psychology, logic, ethics, and aesthetics—, but immediately adds that it does not apply to metaphysics, which investigates neither sensory phenomena as such nor mental phenomena. Metaphysics, he argues, concerns a different kind of object, above all relations (causal, spatial, temporal, logical, etc.), which cannot be reduced to either physical or mental phenomena, and are nonetheless intimately connected with both; questions about the origin and structure of the world, the connection of soul and body, the dependence or independence of mind on matter, or the teleological ordering of reality all properly belong here. Against positivist attempts to deny metaphysics any significance, Twardowski insists that these problems can and should be treated scientifically—by means of careful analysis and the same inductive and deductive procedures that guide the natural sciences—and that metaphysics thus conceived forms a necessary complement to the philosophical disciplines grounded in inner experience (see Twardowski 2013b, 457–467; Brożek and Jadacki 2014, 27–28). A concrete illustration of what he takes to be a properly metaphysical problem is his essay "Metaphysics of the soul," where the dispute over the subject of mental life is framed in terms of whether—beyond successive experiences—there exists a substance, of which mental phenomena would be accidents (against the Humean or Fechnerian asubstantialism and against materialism) (see Twardowski 2013a, 119–125). As Dariusz Łukasiewicz has shown, this conception can be read within a broader Brentanian context:

Blaustein's rejection of metaphysically burdened terminology, however, does not imply epistemological skepticism or the abandonment of ordered accounts of human reality. On the contrary, he builds the structure of humanistic psychology as a form of knowledge about the cultural human being—one who is not reducible to a reactive organism, but manifests as a dynamic center of acts, values, and experiences. Within this framework, he introduces the concept of the person:

When I introduce the concept of “person” in defining the tasks of humanistic psychology, I am not referring to a metaphysical self; rather, I understand it [...] as a psycho-physical individual, endowed with numerous structurally interconnected dispositions and tendencies toward experiencing and behaving.²⁶

It is precisely this structurality and differentiation of experiential dispositions that forms the foundation of a functional anthropology of culture—an anthropology open both to the investigation of individual psychological differences as well as to the shared conditions that constitute the human world as a cultural world.

Polish metaphysics in the Twardowskian tradition inherits Brentano's commitments to intentionality, a pre-Kantian conception of truth, and ontological realism, while seeking to develop a scientifically disciplined, non-speculative metaphysics, rather than to abandon metaphysical reflection altogether (Łukasiewicz 2009, 26–28). A related tension is diagnosed by Roman Ingarden who argues that the Warsaw logistic movement, despite its “basic hostility toward metaphysics,” in fact advances robust metaphysical theses about reality—for example, in Kotarbiński's reism—, which Ingarden explicitly qualifies as a form of “dogmatic metaphysics,” even if Kotarbiński himself would probably refuse to recognize them as such (Ingarden 1974, 101–102). From this angle, the rhetorical call to “avoid metaphysics” is best understood as a rejection of speculative *Metaphysizismus*, not of any scientifically disciplined metaphysics (see: Woleński 2017, 53; Płotka 2024, 16). It is against this background that Blaustein's project may be read not as an anti-metaphysical liquidation of traditional problems, but as an attempt to articulate a minimal, functionally oriented metaphysical framework adequate to humanistic and cultural reality.

26 “Gdy wprowadzam przy określeniu zadań psychologii humanistycznej pojęcie ‘osoby,’ nie chodzi mi o metafizyczną jaźń; pojmuję ją [...] jako psychofizyczne indywiduum, wyposażone w liczne strukturalnie powiązane dyspozycje i skłonności do przeżyć i zachowań się.” (Blaustein 1935a, 44.)

In Blaustein's account, culture is not a set of objects, but a network of collective products, each with its own enduring structure: "Civilization, science, law, language, art (not only folk art), etiquette, religious ritual—all of these are likewise collective creations."²⁷

This distinction between individual (e.g., Shakespeare's drama) and collective (e.g., a democratic system of government) cultural products enables Blaustein to grasp the objective dimension of culture without invoking metaphysical entities. Cultural structures are the product of human activity, yet they extend beyond the individual—they constitute a domain, in which the individual may define oneself, transcend oneself, and participate.

In this sense, humanistic psychology not only studies the person, but also presents the person as a point of intersection between the orders of experience, value, and collective form. Blaustein does not construct a metaphysics in the classical sense; rather, he develops a metaphysics of culture as a functional account of transcendence through participation—through acts of experiencing, creation, and identification with values.

Grounded in the reconstruction of the "essence of psychic phenomena" and in the reading of the human being as a cultural individual, this project reveals a distinct normative dimension: it speaks not only to what the human being is, but to what constitutes the human being within a world of meanings, structures, and values. In this sense—despite his declared distance from ontology—, Blaustein constructs a positive, functional metaphysics of the person and of culture, which proves relevant both to the analysis of aesthetic experience and to the understanding of the individual's relationship with the collective.

Against this background, functional humanistic psychology transforms metaphysics into a reflection on the structure of higher-order experiences, their role in the constitution of personhood, and their relation to values:

In concluding this descriptive characterization of higher-order experiential wholes, it is worth recalling the point emphasized by Dilthey—namely, that these wholes, or their phases, are most often accompanied by a sense of their value or significance for the whole of psychic life. Experiences

²⁷ "Cywilizacja, nauka, prawo, język, sztuka (i to nie tylko ludowa), etykieta, rytuał religijny są więc również wytworami zbiorowymi." (Blaustein 1935a, 46.)

associated with friendship bear the mark of greater importance than, for instance, those connected with listening to radio broadcasts.²⁸

Here, value and meaning emerge as central categories—though Blaustein initially approaches them with caution:

[...] the reason for avoiding such fundamental concepts for German humanistic psychology as “meaning” or “value” was rather their ambiguity. I do not exclude the possibility that, after numerous and difficult semantic analyses, it might become feasible to render, for instance, the term “meaning” suitable for scientific use.²⁹

122 Despite this initial reserve, in his analysis of higher-order experiences Blaustein not only acknowledges that such experiences are subject to valuation, but also maintains that their value is constituted in relation to the person and to their life as a whole. This relational dimension forms a kind of rooted metaphysics—a metaphysics of subjective embeddedness: “From the standpoint of the various higher-order experiential wholes, individual experiences acquire differing values and differing vital significance.”³⁰

In this context, Blaustein explicitly invokes the thesis of Ingarden who emphasized the necessity of linking experience to the person:

28 “Na zakończenie tej deskryptywnej charakterystyki całości przeżyciowych wyższego rzędu godzi się zwrócić jeszcze uwagę na podkreślaną przez Diltheya okoliczność, że całościom tym resp. ich fazom towarzyszy najczęściej poczucie ich wartości, ważności dla całokształtu życia psychicznego. Przeżycia związane z przyjaźnią noszą na sobie piętno większej doniosłości, niż np. przeżycia, związane z słuchaniem audycji radiowych.” (Blaustein 1935a, 42–43.)

29 “[P]rzyczyną unikania tak podstawowych dla niemieckiej psychologii humanistycznej pojęć, jak pojęcie sensu lub wartości, była raczej ich niejasność. Nie wykluczam możliwości, że po licznych i trudnych analizach znaczeniowych, udałoby się przygotować np. termin ‘sens’ do naukowego użytku i że należy to uczynić, sądzę jednak, że zadania psychologii humanistycznej określić można bez odwoływania się do tego terminu.” (Blaustein 1935a, 55.)

30 “[...] z punktu widzenia rozmaitych całości przeżyciowych wyższego rzędu poszczególne przeżycia przybierają różną wartość, różną ważność życiową.” (Blaustein 1935a, 43.)

One of these points was rightly raised by Prof. Roman Ingarden, according to whom their essential feature is their connection to the person, with the task of humanistic psychology being to grasp experiences as expressions or discharges of that person.³¹

Blaustein not only endorses this view, but extends it into a relational theory of psychic wholeness: “I regard higher-order experiential wholes as artificially isolated from the originally natural psychological whole—that is, from the psychic life of a concrete human being, most intimately tied to the behavior of that human being.”³²

In this way, Blaustein proposes a model grounded in psychic phenomenology—one that goes beyond purely descriptive analysis. It does not merely reconstruct the structure of experience, but imbues it with meaning in biographical, cultural, and functional contexts. This approach articulates a positive, reduced metaphysics of culture and personhood—one not based on hypostases, but on the functionally structured psychic life, its internal configurations, and its axiological orientations.

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IV. Education as a functional metaphysics of culture: The pedagogical complement of Blaustein’s project

One can venture to say that in Blaustein’s philosophy, education constitutes a kind of functional metaphysics of culture, where pedagogy complements in a unique way his minimalist philosophical project based on humanistic psychology, act-based phenomenology, and the tripartite structure of intentionality. It appears that Blaustein’s theoretical concept finds its full expression in his pedagogical texts, such as those concerning out-of-school education, discipline, and laziness.

31 “Na jedną z nich zwrócił słusznie mą uwagę Prof. Roman Ingarden, według którego istotną ich właściwością jest ich związek z osobą, przyczem zadaniem psychologii humanistycznej ma być ujęcie przeżyć jako ‘wyładowań’ tej osoby.” (Blaustein 1935a, 43.)

32 “[U]ważam całości przeżyciowe wyższego rzędu za coś sztucznie izolowanego z pierwotnie naturalnej całości psychologicznej, jaką jest życie psychiczne konkretnego człowieka, związane najściślej z zachowaniem się tego człowieka.” (Blaustein 1935a, 43.)

In his reflections on out-of-school education, Blaustein emphasizes the importance of the intellectual and spiritual activity of the adult, which is the basis for maintaining vital energy, developing personality, and integrating with society. Referring to the concept of Charlotte Bühler, he writes: “The efficiency and productivity of a person’s work depend on their vital energy and on their experience and intellectual development. Intellectual and spiritual needs and functions sustain a person’s vitality longer than would correspond to a purely biological course.”³³

Blaustein adds: “By maintaining the intellectual activity of the adult learner, one can also sustain their vital energy, [...] give meaning to their life, and increase their satisfaction with life.”³⁴ Education, according to Blaustein, does not change the adult’s character, but, by instilling a worldview tied to their emotional life, it redirects the objects of their commitment and volition.

124 Blaustein’s concept of discipline is based on the understanding of obedience as a dynamic relationship of the individual toward society and the educator who must reconcile the necessity of educational compulsion with the student’s freedom and spontaneity. He writes: “We say that person A is disciplined with respect to person B, if they carry out their orders, whereby this discipline can be blind, voluntary, or forced.”³⁵ This formulation grounds the concept of discipline, not in the mere fact of submission, but in the modality of the relational stance—its voluntariness, compulsion, or mechanical conformity—, thus enabling a psychological and ethical evaluation of educational authority.

In line with humanistic psychology, he also considers the broader social context of this phenomenon in terms of dynamic exchange of life power and

33 “[...] wydajność i sprawność pracy człowieka zależy od jego energii życiowej (witalności) oraz od jego doświadczenia i rozwoju intelektu. Potrzeby oraz funkcje intelektualne i duchowe utrzymują aktywność życiową człowieka dłużej, niż by to odpowiadało przebiegowi czysto biologicznemu.” (Blaustein 1935b, 27.)

34 “Przez podtrzymanie aktywności myśli dorosłego ‘wychowanka’ podtrzymać też można jego energię życiową, [...] nada się jego życiu sens, zwiększy jego zadowolenie z życia.” (Blaustein 1935b, 27.)

35 “Powieśmy, iż osoba A jest karna względem osoby B, jeśli wykonuje jej zlecenia, przyczem karność ta może być ślepa, dobrowolna lub przymusowa.” (Blaustein 1936a, 5.)

affect: "One can be disciplined not only toward a person, but also toward a group of people, a society of which one is a member."³⁶ He explains: "The increase in the power of an organization intensifies the discipline of its members [...]. The fact that membership in a given organization is voluntary or compulsory does not yet determine the type of discipline toward that organization."³⁷

In his reflections on laziness, Blaustein emphasizes that the acquisition of knowledge or physical skills requires systematic effort on the part of the pupil and that this effort serves not only cognitive aims, but also character formation: "The acquisition of knowledge or certain physical skills requires systematic work from the pupil, and this work is at the same time one of the most excellent means of character formation."³⁸ He warns that this work is often hindered by laziness, which he defines, not merely as a psychological state, but as a trait opposed to the ideal of the active and creative person: "Laziness is a feature of passive people."³⁹ The task of combating it falls especially to the modern educator, whose ideal is the formation of an active and creative citizen.

Blaustein's pedagogical approach leads him to a detailed, phenomenologically grounded analysis of the psychological causes and effects of laziness. He enumerates its main causes as follows:

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[...] a) emotional indifference toward the goal of the activity, b) impossibility of achieving the goal at a later time, c) difficulty of the tasks to be performed, d) unpleasant associations connected with the tasks, e) fatigue, etc., f) experiencing pleasant or unpleasant affects, g) coercion exerted to compel the execution of certain activities.⁴⁰

36 "[...] karnym można być nie tylko wobec jakiejś osoby, lecz również względem pewnej grupy ludzi, społeczeństwa, którego jest się członkiem." (Blaustein 1936a, 10.)

37 "Zwiększenie mocy organizacji potęguje karność członków [...]. Okoliczność, czy przynależność do pewnej organizacji jest dobrowolna czy przymusowa, nie decyduje jeszcze o rodzaju karności wobec tej organizacji." (Blaustein 1936a, 10.)

38 "Uzyskanie zaś wiadomości lub pewnych sprawności fizycznych wymaga od wychowanka systematycznej pracy, przyczem praca ta jest zarazem jednym z najznakomitszych środków kształcenia charakterów." (Blaustein, 1936b, 5.)

39 "Lenistwo jest cechą ludzi biernych." (Blaustein 1936b, 5.)

40 "[...] a) obojętność uczuciowa względem celu czynności, b) niemożność zrealizowania celu w późniejszym terminie, c) trudność czynności, które należy

In the spirit of humanistic psychology, Blaustein treats each of these causes, not as fixed traits of the child, but as dynamic and modifiable aspects of their lived experience. In cases of emotional indifference toward the goal of a task, the educator should awaken the pupil's engagement by suggesting or demonstrating the meaningfulness and value of the work. Where the goal appears unattainable in the future, Blaustein recommends changing or adjusting the task to suit the child's abilities—an approach that presupposes individual attention to their capacities and developmental stage. When tasks are experienced as difficult, he advises dividing them into smaller, more manageable steps that lead progressively toward the intended result. For unpleasant associations linked to a task, Blaustein proposes creating a more positive and secure atmosphere of learning, avoiding punishment and excessive pressure. In cases of fatigue or affective overload, he suggests alternating the activity with one that is more stimulating or suited to the child's interests, thereby reawakening motivation. Finally, in situations involving coercion, the educator should rationalize the demand, explain its purpose, and provide room for choice and autonomy in execution, helping to foster a sense of internal motivation and responsibility.

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The pedagogical complement to Blaustein's theory thus lies in his proposal for an educational methodology grounded in a phenomenological understanding of the pupil's psychological life. He emphasizes the need to reconcile the necessity of educational discipline with the promotion of autonomy, freedom, and meaningful engagement. In this light, education becomes a key vector of his functional metaphysics of culture—aiming at the integral development of the human person through the cultivation of both reason and character.

V. Boundary case: Religious spirituality as a structure of experience

In his analysis of Hebbel's dramas presented in *Das Gotteserlebnis in Hebbels Dramen*, Blaustein develops the tenets of his humanistic psychology *avant la*

wykonać, d) przykre kojarzenia, łączące się z wykonywanymi czynnościami, e) zmęczenie itp., f) przeżywanie przyjemnych lub przykrych afektów, g) przymus, wywarty celem skłonienia do wykonania danych czynności.” (Blaustein 1936b, 13.)

lettre, extending them to encompass the specificity of boundary experiences—namely, religious experiences. In line with his methodological commitments, Blaustein refrains from adopting ontological-metaphysical assumptions about the “spirit,” and confines himself to a descriptive and functional account of experiential structures. Nevertheless, his interpretation of Hebbel’s dramas goes beyond mere psychological reconstruction, incorporating elements of valuation and even a model of authentic religiosity.

Blaustein maintains the tripartite structure of intentional experience (act—object—content) also in relation to religious experience. He introduces a distinction between religious experiences in the strict and the broad sense, emphasizing both their subjective and objectifiable aspects. As he writes: “Religious experiences in the strict sense of the word are all psychic experiences whose intention is directed toward God as their intentional object.”⁴¹ At the same time, he also acknowledges a broader category: “Religious experiences in the broader sense of the word are also those whose intentional object is different from God, but which stand in some other relation to God.”⁴²

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Blaustein underscores the importance of analyzing not only the act of experiencing, but also its content and intentional correlate. This leads to a noematic investigation aimed, as he puts it, at “the cognition of God as he is grasped and understood in individual religious experiences, the knowledge of the attributes and functions ascribed to God (or to the gods) in particular religious experiences.”⁴³

Through this descriptive framework, Blaustein continues the phenomenological project in the field of religious experience, focusing on how the divine is constituted in consciousness and what structural features define

41 “Gotteserlebnisse im engeren Sinne des Wortes sind also alle psychischen Erlebnisse, deren Intention sich auf Gott als ihren intentionalen Gegenstand richtet.” (Blaustein 1929, 2.)

42 “Gotteserlebnisse im weiteren Sinne des Wortes sind aber auch alle diejenigen, deren intentionaler Gegenstand zwar von Gott verschieden ist, die aber in irgendwelcher anderen Beziehung zu Gott stehen.” (Blaustein 1929, 2.)

43 “[...] die Erkenntnis Gottes, wie er in den einzelnen Gotteserlebnissen erfaßt und begriffen wird, die Kenntnis der Attribute und der Funktionen, die Gott (resp. den Göttern) in einzelnen religiösen Erlebnissen zugeschrieben werden.” (Blaustein 1929, 2.)

such constitution. His approach remains rigorously intentional, yet open to the rich variability of the noematic contents and affective dimensions involved in religious life.

Blaustein pays special attention to the drama *Maria Magdalena*, analyzing the character of Klara as an example of childlike and feminine religiosity. Klara prays:

But you are gracious. You are merciful! I wish I had a faith like the Catholics, so I could give you a gift! I would empty my whole piggy bank and buy you a beautiful gilded heart and decorate it with roses.⁴⁴

Blaustein comments: “Here we see a pure, deep feeling of gratitude toward God that seeks a symbol, striving for expression.”⁴⁵ For Blaustein, Klara’s religiosity exemplifies an authentic mode of religious experience—one that does not stem from theological instruction or mystical contemplation, but from a natural, childlike emotional relation to the world. As he observes:

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A large part of humanity—the children and those who are like children—believe in God as a family father. That is why they address Him so personally, as if speaking informally, believing Him to be always present, concerned with their little worries.⁴⁶

Blaustein emphasizes that such individuals are not mystics, but rather express a pure sense of childlike feeling: “And yet they are not mystics; they simply surrender to their pure childlike feeling. [...] And without being

44 “Aber du bist gnädig. Du bist barmherzig! Ich wollt, ich hätt einen Glauben wie die Katholischen, daß ich dir etwas schenken dürfte! Meine ganze Sparbüchse wollt’ ich leeren und dir ein schönes, vergoldetes Herz kaufen und es mit Rosen umwinden.” (Blaustein 1929, 46.)

45 “Wir sehen hier ein reines, tiefes Gefühl der Dankbarkeit Gott gegenüber, das ein Symbol sucht, nach Ausdruck ringt.” (Blaustein 1929, 46.)

46 “Ein großer Teil der Menschheit – die Kinder und solche, die den Kindern gleichen – glaubt an Gott, als einen Familienvater. Darum sprechen sie ihn so persönlich an, duzen ihn gewissermaßen, glauben ihn immer gegenwärtig, sich mit ihren kleinen Sorgen beschäftigend.” (Blaustein 1929, 46.)

Christs, they feel themselves to be sons and daughters of the Father in heaven.”⁴⁷ Crucially, he notes that this kind of faith lacks cosmological abstraction: “They have no notion of the immense vastness of the world, of the universe. That is why they do not tremble before God, even when they fear Him.”⁴⁸ Through this analysis, Blaustein suggests that genuine religiosity may arise from emotional immediacy and existential trust, rather than from doctrinal knowledge or metaphysical speculation.

In *Genoveva*, Blaustein notes that the religious experiences of the title character and of Golo bear a metaphysical dimension, although not in a doctrinal form. He writes: “The plot of the tragedy is thus metaphysically anchored and at the same time presents a depiction of the era that reveals to us the innermost essence of the spiritual life of a great epoch.”⁴⁹ *Genoveva*, though passive, becomes a figure of spiritual purification, suffering, and forgiveness: “Like the Savior, she too will suffer, and, like him, will neither moan nor complain. And in doing so, the burden of humanity’s sins will once again be erased for a thousand years.”⁵⁰ Golo, by contrast, is “only an instrument of the world’s will,”⁵¹ and his tragedy lies in the fact that, though unconsciously, he enacts a historical plan without understanding its metaphysical significance. 129

In *Herodes und Mariamne*, Blaustein identifies not only psychological depth, but also a profound religious and cultural anchoring. As he writes: “The tragedy is metaphysically anchored, its problem elevated to a cultural problem; it takes place at a turning point in the world process.”⁵² This

47 “Und dabei sind sie keine Mystiker, sie geben sich nur ihrem reinen Kindesgefühl hin. [...] Und ohne Christusse zu sein, fühlen sie sich als Söhne und Töchter des Vaters im Himmel.” (Blaustein 1929, 46–47.)

48 “Von der ungeheuren Größe der Welt, des Universums haben sie keinen Begriff. Darum schauern sie nicht vor Gott, auch dann nicht, wenn sie ihn fürchten.” (Blaustein 1929, 47.)

49 “Die Handlung der Tragödie ist also metaphysisch verankert und entwirft zugleich ein Zeitbild, das uns das innerste Wesen des geistigen Lebens einer großen Periode enthüllt.” (Blaustein 1929, 30.)

50 “Wie der Heiland, so wird auch sie selbst leiden und, wie er, weder jammern noch klagen. Und dadurch wird wieder einmal die Sündenlast der Menschheit auf ein Jahrtausend getilgt werden.” (Blaustein 1929, 31.)

51 “[...] nur ein Werkzeug des Weltwillens [...]” (Blaustein 1929, 30.)

52 “Die Tragödie ist metaphysisch verankert, ihr Problem ist zum Kulturproblem

anchoring is further developed through the temporal and symbolic setting of the drama: “It is the time around the birth of Christ, a transitional period just before the sunrise of a new idea that will come to rule the world.”⁵³ The conflict between Herod and Mariamne unfolds within a symbolic circle encompassing “the entire world of that time and everything that moved it.”⁵⁴ At the center of this tragic conflict stands the figure of the woman treated as property—a recurring motif in Hebbel’s plays, as Blaustein notes (Blaustein 1929, 16). Through this interpretation, Blaustein demonstrates that religiosity in literature can function as an expression of deep metaphysical tensions and cultural transformations, elevating individual psychological conflict to the level of epochal significance.

This represents a specific instance of a functional metaphysics of culture, in which religious experience appears as one of the most complex forms of psychological life, shaping both morality and existential meaning. In this sense, Blaustein does not construct an ontological metaphysics of the spirit, but, rather, within the framework of humanistic psychology, enables a descriptive
130 account of religious experiences as meaning- and value-generating structures embedded in the life of the individual and cultural community.

VI. Conclusion: Phenomenology, Husserl, and the positive metaphysics of culture

From the perspective of a holistic reading of Blaustein’s thought, his attitude toward phenomenology appears to be critically loyal as well as functionally transformative. Blaustein did not reject Husserl’s phenomenology, but subjected it to a rigorous methodological and epistemological scrutiny. In a 1928 paper, he explicitly stated that phenomenology could make sense as an empirical, descriptive science of types of experience, rather than as an *a priori* ontology of ideal beings. Addressing the concept of *Wesensschau*, Blaustein

emporgehoben, sie spielt sich in einem Wendepunkt des Weltprozesses ab.” (Blaustein 1929, 16.)

53 “Es ist die Zeit um Christi Geburt, eine Übergangsperiode unmittelbar vor dem Sonnenaufgang einer neuen Idee, die die Weltherrschaft erringen wird.” (Blaustein 1929, 16.)

54 “[...] die ganze damalige Welt und alles, was sie bewegte [...]” (Blaustein 1929, 16.)

offers a psychological interpretation that challenges its foundational role in phenomenological method.⁵⁵

In other words, Blaustein does not deny the heuristic significance of intuition in highlighting essential features of a presented content. However, he questions the claim that such intuitive acts provide apodictic insight or proof. For Blaustein, *Wesensschau* should be understood as a form of schematic representation whose value lies in its suggestive and exploratory capacity, not in its epistemological certainty. This reorientation is emblematic of his broader project of reworking phenomenology within a framework of descriptive psychology and empirical grounding.

Thus, Blaustein proposes a reinterpretation of the foundations of phenomenology toward a descriptive psychology that does not rely on controversial eidetic intuitions, but on a systematic description of intentional acts in their full functionality. This does not mean, however, that Husserl as a philosopher was not an important figure for Blaustein. On the contrary, he regarded Husserl as one of those thinkers who, despite all theoretical problems, initiated a new form of reflection upon consciousness and its structures. It can be said that Blaustein remains in a relation of creative transformation toward Husserl, moving from an idealizing ontology or transcendental phenomenology to, in his view, a much more constructive and concrete epistemology of acts and their cultural products. What is worth quoting, however, in the context of the metaphysical dimension of Blaustein's thought, is that in his very personal recollection of a conversation with Husserl, he evokes an extremely powerful and dramatic vision of philosophy as an ethical human mission, with which, in a way, he seems to identify:

“Philosophy is heroism,” Husserl said. Only from ethical or religious motives can one arrive at philosophy. Philosophy is the moral

55 See Blaustein 1928, 164–165: “Tzw. ‘Wesensschau’ zaś wydaje się być pewnym rodzajem przedstawień schematycznych. [...] Różni się tem, iż doboru cech, spełnionych w treści prezentującej, dokonuje na zasadzie ich istotności resp. nieistotności, przyczem dobór ten dokonuje się intuicyjnie. [...] Niewątpliwie intuicya może dokonać trafnie doboru pewnych cech jako istotnych [...], ale nigdy nie ma pewności, że dobór jest trafny, ani też nie ma możliwości ścisłego odróżnienia trafnych wyborów od innych.”

task of mankind. God is waiting for it. [...] He who has understood his mission and task does not remember himself, he is not concerned with the fact that he was the discoverer, he does not argue, he is silent when it comes to the question of authorship. Someone like this works in the consciousness, unshaken by anything, that God is waiting for his work.⁵⁶

This poignant testimony—of both Husserl and Blaustein—points to the existence of a deeply ethical and spiritual motivation for philosophizing, which Blaustein also links to the tradition of Twardowski's Lvov school:

When I began my university studies in philosophy, Professor Twardowski told us about the priesthood of the philosopher, about the fact that philosophers should only be people who stand very high in ethical terms. Edmund Husserl seems to me to be such a dignified priest of philosophy, worthy of deep reverence.⁵⁷

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We can, therefore, conclude that Blaustein's reflection does not simply reject metaphysics, but points toward its profound transformation. What emerges is not a metaphysics of substance, essence, or transcendence, but a positive metaphysics of culture: one that operates through the structural description of human experience, the normative functions of values, and the spiritual products of intentional life. In this sense, Blaustein's metaphysics is not imposed from above, but arises "from below"—from within the forms of lived, affective, and cognitive activity, as they are manifested in domains, such as art, education, interpersonal understanding, religion, and ethical self-realization. Metaphysics, thus reconfigured, ceases to be a speculative discourse about

56 "Filozofja jest bohaterstwem", powiedział Husserl. Tylko z pobudek etycznych lub religijnych można dojść do filozofji. Filozofja jest zadaniem moralnym ludzkości. Bóg na nią czeka. [...] o tem, że kto zrozumiał misję swoją i zadanie, ten nie pamięta o sobie, temu nie chodzi o to, iż on był odkrywcą, ten nie polemizuje, ten milczy, gdy chodzi o kwestję autorstwa. Ten pracuje w świadomości niezachwianej niczem, że Bóg czeka na jego dzieło." (Blaustein 1930c, 241–242.)

57 "Gdym rozpoczął studjum uniwersyteckie filozofji, prof. Twardowski mówił nam o kapłaństwie filozofa, o tem, że filozofami być winni wyłącznie ludzie, bardzo wysoko pod względem etycznym stojący. Takim dostojnym kapłanem filozofji, godnym czci głębokiej, wydaje mi się Edmund Husserl." (Blaustein 1930c, 242.)

absolute being, and becomes an analytic of meaning and value, a grammar of spiritual formation. It no longer answers the question of what there is, but instead addresses how things become meaningful, how values are experienced, and how these can be shaped, preserved, or transformed within the cultural processes.

In this light, Blaustein's position aligns closely with phenomenology at its best: not as a transcendental philosophy of ideal entities, but as a rigorous and life-oriented description of experience. Yet, it is also distinct in its pedagogical and normative orientation, and in its cultural grounding. It is a phenomenology that does not transcend the world, but commits to it —through a disciplined attention to forms of meaning, to affective and cognitive regularities, and to the moral vocation of philosophy as a work of clarity, responsibility, and human dignity. Such a vision places Blaustein not only as a critic of metaphysics in its traditional guise, but also—perhaps unexpectedly—as a metaphysician of the human condition, one who sought not to escape the world, but to understand and uplift it.

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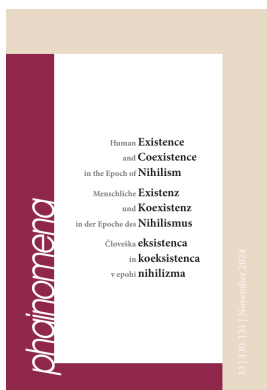
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Transitions | Prehajanja

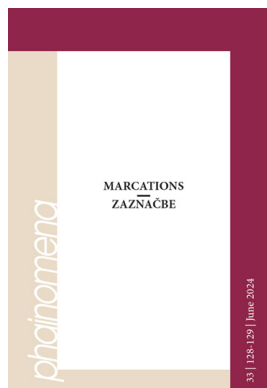
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Human Existence and Coexistence in the Epoch of Nihilism

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



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Marcations | Zaznačbe

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