

PHENOMENOLOGY FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE LVOV–WARSAW SCHOOL

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to examine the views on phenomenology developed by representatives of the Lvov–Warsaw School (henceforth: LWS). The paper shows that, firstly, there is a significant genetic connection between the LWS and Husserl's phenomenological movement. Secondly, members of the LWS have developed a coherent understanding of phenomenology, which they regard as an autonomous philosophical science of essence. They particularly appreciate the

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fact that phenomenologists are committed to making clear distinctions. However, they are skeptical about the reliability of *Wesensschau*, as it is based on immediate insight rather than deduction or induction. Furthermore, they consider the works of phenomenologists to be obscure. Thirdly, their criticism of phenomenology is similar, though less radical, to that offered by analytic philosophers, such as Moritz Schlick, Gilbert Ryle, and Rudolf Carnap.

Keywords: Lvov–Warsaw School, *Wesensschau*, criticism of phenomenology, philosophical styles, analytic–continental divide.

Fenomenologija s stališča lvovsko-varšavske šole

Povzetek

Namen prispevka je raziskati poglede na fenomenologije, kakršne so razvili predstavniki lvovsko-varšavske šole (v nadaljevanju: LVŠ). Članek pokaže, da, prvič, obstaja pomembna genetska povezava med LVŠ in Husserlovim fenomenološkim gibanjem. Drugič, člani LVŠ so razvili koherentno razumevanje fenomenologije, ki jo dojemajo kot avtonomno filozofsko znanost bistev. Posebej cenijo dejstvo, da se fenomenologi zavzemajo za jasna razlikovanja. Vendar so skeptični glede zanesljivosti *Wesensschau* (zrenja bistev), saj temelji na neposrednem uvidu in ne na dedukciji ali indukciji. Dela fenomenologov se jim, nadalje, zdijo zamegljena. Tretjič, njihova kritika fenomenologije je podobna, četudi manj radikalna, kot tista, ki so jo vanjo uperili analitični filozofi, kakršni so Moritz Schlick, Gilbert Ryle, and Rudolf Carnap.

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Ključne besede: lvovsko-varšavska šola, *Wesensschau*, kritika fenomenologije, filozofski stili, razcep analitično–kontinentalno.

Introduction

The Lvov–Warsaw School (henceforth: LWS), established by Kazimierz Twardowski, and the phenomenological movement initiated by Edmund Husserl are both rooted in the philosophy of Franz Brentano (Kriegel 2017, 9–11). Phenomenology has been associated with the so-called continental tradition of 20th-century philosophy (see Rosen and Leiter 2007; McCumber 2011), whereas the LWS has long been classified as representative of the analytic tradition (see Skolimowski 2024; Woleński 1989). Nonetheless, Twardowski's students exhibited a variety of diverse philosophical interests, including descriptive psychology and phenomenology. Overviews of the reception of phenomenology in the LWS can be found in Küng (1993), Woleński (1997), Głombik (2011), Płotka (2017), and Łukasiewicz (2020). There are studies that trace the influence of Husserl on various LWS members, for example, Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz (Olech 1995), Stanisław Leśniewski (Smith and Mulligan 1982), and Leopold Blaustein (Miśkiewicz 2009; Płotka 2024). One can also observe a growing interest in the relationship between the LWS and Roman Ingarden (Richard 2020; Brożek and Jadacki 2022). However, there is another significant aspect related to phenomenology and the LWS that has not received sufficient attention. Namely, the members of the LWS produced several works that introduce, discuss, and criticize phenomenology as a distinct philosophical movement and school.

This paper aims to answer the following questions. How do the LWS members view phenomenology? Do their analyses allow for the reconstruction of a relatively coherent view of what phenomenology is from the LWS's standpoint? If so, is this view comparable to that of other analytic thinkers, such as Moritz Schlick (1979), Rudolf Carnap (1959), and Gilbert Ryle (2009a; 2009b)?

The paper is divided into four parts. In the first part, I outline the legacy of Brentano reflected in the schools of Husserl and Twardowski as discussed

This paper is part of the research project no. 2020/37/N/HS1/02292 funded by the National Science Center, Poland. The author would like to thank Prof. Anna Brożek and the anonymous reviewer for their comments, which helped improve the initial version of the paper.

by members of the LWS. In the second part, I present the interpretations of phenomenology offered by the LWS members. The third part examines the LWS's criticism of phenomenology. Finally, the fourth part compares their criticism with that of Schlick, Ryle, and Carnap.

1. The legacy of Brentano: Husserl's and Twardowski's philosophical “schools”

Husserl and Twardowski were both students of Franz Brentano. They commenced their philosophical inquiries within the field of descriptive psychology and expressed interest in each other's work (see Cavallin 1997). Most notably, they both exerted significant influence, which contributed to the development of philosophical schools or movements. Although the philosophies arising from Twardowski's and Husserl's teachings differ considerably, the LWS members highlighted their common origins and drew parallels between the environments fostered by these two philosophers. The first comparison was made by Władysław Tatarkiewicz (1913) who concluded his paper on the phenomenological school with the following remark:

Meinong, Twardowski, Stumpf, and Husserl originated from the school of Franz Brentano. Due to this shared point of departure, they and their students, despite contemporary differences, constitute one large philosophical group. If the phenomenological school were to be classified under any contemporary philosophical group, it should undoubtedly be associated with this one rather than any other. (Tatarkiewicz 1913, 262.)¹

Tatarkiewicz wrote his paper in 1913, before the development of the “Warsaw,” i.e. the logical-mathematical branch of the LWS.² Therefore, he was discussing the “Lvov School,” which has made significant contributions to descriptive psychology (see Citlak 2022). Descriptive psychology is indeed

¹ All translations from Polish come from the author of the paper, unless stated otherwise.

² On the so-called “logical-mathematical” and “psychological-semiotic” branches of the LWS, see Brożek *et al.* 2021, 25–26.

associated with phenomenology in the “widest sense” (see Spiegelberg 1994, 6). However, the Warsaw branch of the LWS, which included figures, such as Jan Łukasiewicz, Stanisław Leśniewski, Tadeusz Kotarbiński, and Alfred Tarski, diverged from its origins and pursued its own path, in which mathematical logic played a fundamental role (Kotarbiński 1958, 737). In this context, the Warsaw branch would hardly be considered part of the same “philosophical group” as phenomenology. The internal development of both the LWS as well as phenomenology should be considered, when drawing such general comparisons.

Nevertheless, the “genetic” link between the LWS and the phenomenological “school” was also acknowledged by Kotarbiński (1958, 741), Ajdukiewicz (2006, 252–253), and Józef M. Bocheński (1994, 11). The existence of such a connection explains why some members of the LWS became interested in Husserl. Twardowski frequently encouraged students to complete internships abroad. Some of them attended lectures and seminars by Husserl in Göttingen and Freiburg im Breisgau: Stefan Błachowski, Bronisław Bandrowski, Ajdukiewicz, Blaustein, Henryk Mehlberg, and Roman Ingarden,³ although not all of them were equally interested in phenomenology (Płotka 2017, 82). Kotarbiński regarded Blaustein as a philosopher who “combines native tradition with phenomenology” and as the “leader” of the group of Twardowski’s students influenced by Husserl and Ingarden (Kotarbiński 1958, 741).⁴

Blaustein compared Twardowski’s and Husserl’s schools, focusing on their respective approaches to teaching philosophy. In 1925, he spent a few weeks in Freiburg im Breisgau, where he attended Husserl’s seminars and lectures on phenomenological psychology (Płotka 2024, 22). In one of his papers, Blaustein described Husserl’s approach to philosophical education. First, philosophy students should acquire a broad knowledge base across the natural sciences, mathematics, and history (Blaustein 1930, 240). Second, Husserl was opposed to being overly familiar with philosophical literature, as it hinders creativity. He

3 Ingarden began his philosophical studies under Twardowski, but he decided, after becoming familiar with phenomenology, to write his doctoral thesis under Husserl’s supervision (Ingarden 1968, 114–115).

4 Among the members of this group, Kotarbiński (1958, 741) mentioned Salomon Igel, Walter Auerbach, Eugenia Ginsberg-Blaustein, Izydora Dąmska, Henryk Mehlberg, and Tadeusz Witwicki.

advised limiting reading to only classical and prominent works. The primary goal of philosophical studies is to gain an understanding of philosophical problems, rather than the history of philosophy. Third, students should focus on independent work, which consists of observing and describing phenomena “in the way, in which they impose themselves on us” (Blaustein 1930, 240). According to Blaustein, these rules resembled those of Twardowski.⁵

However, there are also several significant differences, some of which influenced the reception of phenomenology in the LWS. Blaustein stressed that Husserl’s seminar was not organized or systematic, and it lacked discussions, compulsory dissertations, and colloquia. Finally, and most notably, Husserl had a “tendency to train students to become his co-workers in phenomenology, and only those who follow this path, according to Husserl’s admission, gain his genuine attention” (Blaustein 1930, 240).

The final aspect highlights the crucial difference between Husserl’s and Twardowski’s teaching. Firstly, Twardowski did not impose any philosophical doctrine on his students, nor did he expect them to use any specific philosophical method (Twardowski 1999b, 27). However, he expected them to follow methods that he considered scientific; for example, following Brentano, he rejected the metaphysical speculation characteristic of post-Kantian German idealism (Twardowski 2015c, 40). Secondly, he stated that his primary aim was of a “methodical” nature, namely, to teach his students to articulate themselves clearly, to properly justify their statements, work rigorously, and think independently (Twardowski 1999b, 27). Consequently, his students applied and developed a variety of methods across all philosophical disciplines, from descriptive psychology to mathematical logic (see Brożek *et al.* 2021). Dąmbska argued that what sets the LWS apart from other philosophical “schools,” including phenomenology, is that Twardowski’s students did not share any philosophical doctrine or worldview, but rather a way of philosophizing and a common scientific language (Dąmbska 1948, 17).

In contrast, the phenomenological movement, at least in its early stages, appears to be more unified in its approach to philosophical issues and,

⁵ On the main elements of Twardowski’s philosophical program, see: Twardowski 2015a; 2015b. See also: Woleński 1989, 24–26, and Brożek, Grądzka, and Nowicki 2024.

crucially, in the specific philosophical method that is the core of Husserl's project (Husserl 1983, XIX–XX; Reinach 2012, 143). Nevertheless, differences emerged within Husserl's philosophy and between him and his students, especially with Husserl's turn toward transcendental idealism in the first volume of *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie* (henceforth: *Ideen I*). Over time, phenomenology also became a highly diverse movement, which Paul Ricoeur described as a history marked by "Husserlian heresies," since Husserl's works did not establish any orthodoxy (Ricoeur 2004, 182). Still, despite the development of various "phenomenologies" by Husserl's students, the phenomenological method remained at the heart of the movement (Spiegelberg 1994, 677–679).

2. The idea of phenomenology

Herbert Spiegelberg distinguished two "methodic principles" essential to phenomenology: (1) direct intuition as the source and final test of all knowledge, and (2) insight into essential structures as a genuine possibility and a need of philosophical knowledge (Spiegelberg 1994, 5–6). I will show that the LWS members also identified those principles as the core of phenomenology. The most significant remarks regarding this topic were made by Tatarkiewicz (1913), Blaustein (1928; 1928–1929; 1930), Ajdukiewicz (1973; 2006), Czeżowski (1969; 2004), and Bocheński (1956; 1965). Their works enable us to draw a relatively coherent picture of what phenomenology is from the perspective of the LWS. Of course, there are differences regarding certain details, which I point out when necessary. I must also emphasize that their works on phenomenology, apart from those of Blaustein, are mainly introductory in nature. LWS members discussed phenomenology in textbooks and papers with the aim of placing it within the context of other philosophical movements.

Overall, they considered phenomenology an autonomous philosophical discipline that has its own specific object of study and methods. Specifically, it is a purely theoretical and descriptive "science of essence" that relies on intuitive a priori cognition. The primary method of phenomenology is the intuition of essence (*Wesensschau*), which involves performing the so-called

reduction (suspension of the “general thesis of natural attitude”). The first aim of phenomenology is to describe and differentiate between the essences and to uncover a priori laws that govern them. The second aim is to establish the fundamental basis for all science.

2.1. Philosophical science of essence

According to the LWS members, Husserl accepted the principle of empiricism that experience is the ultimate source of knowledge, but he rejected the view that there is only one type of experience, namely empirical perception (Ajdukiewicz 1973, 42–43; Blaustein 1930, 236; Bocheński 1956, 130). Besides individual objects given in empirical perception, there are also essences (*Wesen*) of those objects, which are given directly in intuition. The proper task of phenomenology is to distinguish between and describe those essences (Tatarkiewicz 1913, 260; Blaustein 1930, 236; Ajdukiewicz 1973, 46–48; Bocheński 1956, 137). Thus, the LWS members defined phenomenology as a “philosophical science of essence,” which aligns with Husserl’s approach from 1913 (see Husserl 1983, XX).

But what are those essences, which can only be apprehended directly in intuition? The prevailing view among the LWS members is that essences are some kind of ideal entities like Plato’s forms (Ajdukiewicz 1973, 43; Czeżowski 2004, 65; Bocheński 1965, 130). A more detailed explanation of the essence as an object of phenomenological inquiry was provided by Tatarkiewicz (1913, 257–260) and Bocheński (1965, 25–26). First, the essence relates only to certain aspects or elements of a particular object, which are revealed in intuition when the object is stripped of all contingent aspects. Second, the essence is indifferent to whether the object exists; it concerns the “what” of the object (Bocheński 1965, 17, 24–25; Tatarkiewicz 1913, 260). This explains why, according to Bocheński, “one might call this essence the fundamental structure of the object in the sense of the whole underlying content” (Bocheński 1965, 26). Third, the fact that the essence is directly given in intuition underpins the fundamental principle of phenomenology: “go back to the things themselves” (Bocheński 1956, 135). These “things” are whatever appears to our consciousness as immediately given, what we “see” in consciousness, and those are the “phenomena,” the essence

of which a phenomenologist seeks to apprehend (Bocheński 1956, 135–136). Furthermore, Tatarkiewicz described the essence as something that precedes the distinction between logical and psychological, general and individual, real and ideal (Tatarkiewicz 1913, 260). By considering essences as the focus of phenomenological inquiry, Husserl outlined an entirely new “neutral” domain of research, which is non-constructive, unlike other sciences (Tatarkiewicz 1913, 257–258), meaning that essences are given directly and are not derived from experiential data. What is particularly noteworthy about Tatarkiewicz’s interpretation is that he did not understand essences merely as ideal entities (in contrast to real entities), as Ajdukiewicz, Bocheński, and Czeżowski did. Unlike Blaustein, Tatarkiewicz emphasized that the essence should not be confused with a general object, as essences precede the distinction between general and individual (Tatarkiewicz 1913, 260). Instead, Tatarkiewicz sought to grasp what lies behind Husserl’s conception of the essence as “irreal” (see Husserl 1983, XX), which is substantial to the idea that phenomenology is presuppositionless. The essence cannot be characterized by qualifications, such as real–ideal, individual–general, or anything similar, as all these are contingent. This is why phenomenology requires a special procedure, namely, reduction. In order to “see” the essence, a phenomenologist must suspend all that is contingent, all that is given in the so-called natural attitude.

As an eidetic science, phenomenology differs from the factual sciences, which are based on sensible experience. However, there are also other eidetic sciences besides phenomenology, which may be formal or material. Formal eidetic sciences include logic and mathematics, whereas material eidetic sciences comprise geometry and phenomenology (Blaustein 1930, 236; Bocheński 1956, 137). The eidetic sciences constitute the foundation for all factual sciences, since all the latter make use of logic and mathematics (Bocheński 1956, 137). Phenomenology, as the science of essence, is considered the foundation for all science, including other eidetic sciences, since all of them incorporate essence as a component (Tatarkiewicz 1913, 258–262; Blaustein 1928–1929, 166a; Ajdukiewicz 2006, 254; Bocheński 1956, 135).

2.2. *The phenomenological method: Intuition of essence, reductions, distinctions*

The exposition of the phenomenological method was challenging for the LWS members. Tatarkiewicz argued that Husserl's works are not sufficiently clear, and thus it might be better to reconstruct the method from the works of his students (Tatarkiewicz 1913, 258–259). Blaustein stated that, in order to understand phenomenology, one must first grasp what phenomenological reductions are, which is not an easy task given the complexity of the conceptual framework surrounding them (Blaustein 1930, 235). Finally, Bocheński emphasized that Husserl did not provide a concise account of his method, and the “occasional methodological observations in his writings are not always easy to understand” (Bocheński 1965, 16). Furthermore, Husserl described phenomenology as both a doctrine and a method, and it is doubtful whether “a purely methodological idea can be distinguished at all” (Bocheński 1965, 16). Nonetheless, they managed to identify and describe the basic features of the phenomenological method.

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The principal goal of phenomenology is to describe and distinguish between essences. However, to “see” the essence, one must employ and practice the specific procedure called *Wesensschau*—the intuition of essence (Blaustein 1930, 236; Ajdukiewicz 1973, 43; Bocheński 1956, 130).⁶ Since the intuition of essence is direct, it does not rely on either deduction or induction (Tatarkiewicz 1913, 259; Ajdukiewicz 1973, 43). According to Bocheński, the phenomenological method “neither explains by means of laws nor deduces from any principles, instead it fixes its gaze directly upon whatever is presented to consciousness, that is, its object” (Bocheński 1956, 136). The fact that intuition is a direct source of knowledge of the essence leads phenomenologists to assume that this method arrives at theses, which are undoubtedly certain (Ajdukiewicz 1973, 43).

⁶ Ajdukiewicz, Blaustein, and Bocheński employed the term *Wesensschau* to signify the intuition of essence. This is noteworthy, because, according to Płotka (2021, 258), the term does not appear in Husserl's works until his lectures on phenomenological psychology from 1925. Blaustein attended those lectures, and it is possible that at least Ajdukiewicz adopted the term from his writings. However, he does not cite his works.

However, in order to gain such an insight into the essence, one must suspend the so-called “general thesis of natural attitude” (Blaustein 1930, 236). In a natural attitude, one experiences both the empirical world and the world of values. Humans are part of this world and assume its existence. A phenomenologist suspends or “brackets” all propositions derived from this thesis, including the assumption of the existence of the world. This is what phenomenologists call “reduction” or *έποχή*. Ultimately, everything transcendent in relation to “pure consciousness” is subjected to reduction. The intuition of essence becomes the intuition of phenomena of pure consciousness, which is a “residue of the phenomenological *έποχή*” (Blaustein 1930, 237). However, suspending the thesis of natural attitude does not mean rejecting the propositions that follow from it. Phenomenologists simply do not make use of them. According to Blaustein, phenomenology in the Husserlian sense is a “descriptive science of ideal essences of pure consciousness” (Blaustein 1930, 237). A similar description of the intuition of essence and the reduction was given by Tatarkiewicz who clearly distinguished between phenomenology and descriptive psychology, since the latter is a science of real, mental facts, the science of reality, whereas the former is an “eidetic” science (Tatarkiewicz 1913, 261–262).

It appears that the LWS members did not clearly differentiate between eidetic and transcendental reduction. The exception was Bocheński (1956, 136–138) who actually distinguished three stages of reduction: historical, eidetic, and transcendental (Bocheński 1956, 137). First, one sets aside philosophical tradition, for phenomenologists are not interested in other people’s thoughts. Second, one carries out the eidetic reduction, the “bracketing” of existence. Everything contingent, inessential to the “whatness” of the object is being suspended (Bocheński 1965, 16–17). This includes the results of all scientific knowledge, since it assumes the existence of the object (Bocheński 1956, 137–138). The last step is the transcendental reduction, which means that one brackets not only existence, but everything that is not a correlate of the subject’s pure consciousness. All that remains of the object is what is given to the subject’s consciousness. The concept of transcendental reduction is not easily understood, as it is rooted in Husserl’s doctrine of intentionality and cannot be explained apart from it (Bocheński 1956, 138). That is why Bocheński later

claimed that transcendental reduction “can hardly be considered a method of any general significance” (Bocheński 1965, 16). Ultimately, the LWS members contended that the employment of reduction led Husserl to transcendental idealism (Blaustein 1928, 82; Ajdukiewicz 2006, 254; Bocheński 1956, 151).⁷

In the context of *Wesensschau*, the LWS members emphasized the significance of the distinctions involved in this process. According to Tatarkiewicz (1913, 260), distinctions are essential for differentiating between various essences and for developing the typology of “essences, meanings, contents, objects, acts, and entities.” He described what he called „the method of distinctions” as an analysis that identifies the features of each type of object and the relationships between them (Tatarkiewicz 1913, 258). In this sense, phenomenological investigations may amend the statements of various sciences, which often assume as directly given what is not (Tatarkiewicz 1913, 259).

The LWS members observed the similarity between the phenomenological method of distinctions and analyzing away the ambiguity of expressions. They also noted that this practice is not new and is fundamental to philosophy in general. Nevertheless, phenomenologists have given it primary importance (Tatarkiewicz 1913, 260–261; Ajdukiewicz 2006, 253–254). Moreover, Bocheński stated that they “endowed it with remarkable refinement and purity, and have quite consciously employed it as the essential procedure” (Bocheński 1956, 153). It appears that the systematic use of the method of distinctions is the most valued aspect of phenomenology for the LWS. For example, Ajdukiewicz (2006, 254) emphasized that phenomenologists contributed to clarifying significant concepts in the special sciences by removing ambiguities and introducing subtle distinctions that were “desperately needed,” especially in the humanities.

7 In his criticism of Husserl’s theory of presentations, Blaustein sketched an argument against transcendental idealism, which he based on the analysis of sensations. Blaustein argued, against Husserl, that sensations are not part of the intentional act, but are part of what he called “the phenomenal world.” It is given through transcendent perception, although directly, immediately, and adequately. If sensations are not part of the act of consciousness, but may be accessed directly and adequately, it becomes harder to justify the standpoint of transcendental idealism (see Blaustein 1928, 71–78). The limits of the paper do not allow me to go into detail about Blaustein’s arguments. The topic of Blaustein’s criticism of Husserl was recently thoroughly elaborated by Płotka (2024).

As an example, he refers to Ingarden's analyses in *The Literary Work of Art* (see Ingarden 1979), which exerted a substantial influence on literary theory (Ajdukiewicz 2006, 254).⁸ It is in this context that one should read a somewhat intriguing remark: that "what phenomenologists call the intuition of essence, one may also call a careful scrutiny into the meanings of words" (Ajdukiewicz 1973, 44–45). Tatarkiewicz also noted that the method of distinctions involves demonstrating the ambiguity of expressions. He argued that the consequences of making distinctions are crucial, as only such a method results in theories free from equivocations and confusions (Tatarkiewicz 1913, 260–261). Bocheński stressed that this procedure is purely descriptive and involves point-by-point elucidation: "although it is not easy to practise, the use of the phenomenological method by Husserl and his pupils has shown that it provides a wide scope for extraordinarily fruitful research" (Bocheński 1965, 137).

The appreciation of the method of distinctions is not surprising given the importance that the LWS members attached to the clarity of speech (see Twardowski 1999a) and, consequently, to the analysis of concepts, which became one of the main philosophical methods used by Twardowski's students (Ajdukiewicz 2006, 252).⁹ Furthermore, the description of this method, presented, for example, by Łukasiewicz (2022), bears similarities to the phenomenological method as described above:

To give a logical analysis of some concept, that is, of some abstract object, means finding all its features and examining the relations among them, with a particular attention to the necessary relations, that is, singling out the constitutive and consecutive features. (Łukasiewicz 2022, 7.)

8 A similar appreciation of this work was expressed by Blaustein. Although he did not accept Ingarden's ontological assumptions, he argued that the book is filled with valuable observations, inquiries into semantics, and the theory of presentations, and in its entirety, it is a work of fundamental importance (Blaustein 1937, 101b).

9 Moreover, the most significant of Twardowski's results are described in terms of distinctions; for example, the distinction between object and content of presentation, and the distinction between action and product (see Woleński 1989, 35).

Thus, the analysis of a concept involves: (1) identification of all its features; (2) differentiation between constitutive (essential) and consecutive (contingent) features; and (3) examination of the necessary relations among those features. According to Łukasiewicz, the “only correct” view regarding the nature of concepts is that they are ideal entities in Plato’s sense (Łukasiewicz 2022, 4). The similarity between conceptual analyses performed by Twardowski’s students and phenomenological distinctions was observed by Ingarden (1973, 7). One must, however, remember that the analysis of concepts does not involve reduction, although it may involve abstraction from contingent features of the object. Recently, Jadacki and Brożek (2022, 55–64) delivered a thorough comparison between the phenomenological method (in Ingarden’s version) and the conceptual analysis developed by the LWS.

3. Criticism of phenomenology

Most of the works, in which the LWS members discussed phenomenology, except for Blaustein, were introductory. They generally did not provide in-depth analyses of the phenomenological method or its application in actual philosophical works. Nevertheless, the LWS members made remarks that allow us to identify two main targets of their criticism of phenomenology (and phenomenologists): the idea that intuition is a reliable source of cognition, and the manner, in which phenomenologists express their views and justify their claims.

3.1. *Against the intuition of essence as a legitimate philosophical method*

Criticisms of the intuition of essence were delivered by Blaustein (1928–1929), Ajdukiewicz (1936; 1973), and Bocheński (1993). Blaustein rejected the essence as a legitimate object of phenomenological inquiry and, thus, the method of *Wesensschau*. He assumed that the validity of the phenomenological method depends on whether one can demonstrate the existence of essences, which he identified with general objects (Blaustein 1928–1929, 164b).

Firstly, it is an empirical fact that an intentional act may be directed toward a general object, which can even be described as “an intentional object of some

mental act.” However, this is actually a description of this very act, not of some kind of transcendent object that exists independently (Blaustein 1928–1929, 165a). Secondly, *Wesensschau* is said to be the method that allows one to “see” the essences and is the only way to determine whether they exist (Blaustein 1928–1929, 164b). However, the intuition of essence is not perception; rather, it is a so-called “schematic presentation” (Blaustein 1928–1929, 164b). In order to illustrate this point, let us suppose one perceives an empirical object, such as a picture of a square: because of this observation, the idea of a “square in general” appears in one’s mind. Such an idea, based on this perception, is a schematic presentation (Blaustein 1931, 74).¹⁰ Through *Wesensschau*, the supposedly essential features that are fulfilled in the presenting content of the intentional act are chosen intuitively. Blaustein argues, however, that although intuition may be adequate, it does not provide the criterion that would allow one to differentiate between essential and inessential features. Therefore, it lacks demonstrative value and cannot justify any statement about the existence of essences (Blaustein 1928–1929, 165a). As a result of these considerations, Blaustein concluded that essences cannot be legitimate objects of phenomenological enquiry. He asserted that what is directly given in perception are “lower species,” in other words, types of objects. These types are given in perceptions through abstraction from certain contingent features of individual objects (Blaustein 1928–1929, 165a). That is why he argued that “phenomenology is possible only as an empirical, descriptive science of types (lower species) of experiences of pure consciousness, and not as an a priori, descriptive science of higher species as ideal objects” (Blaustein 1928–1929, 165b).¹¹

Another critic of eidetic intuition was Ajdukiewicz who argued that *Wesensschau* does not meet the criteria of the scientific method, which requires scientific results to be intersubjectively communicable and verifiable

10 For a precise description of the concept of schematic presentation and its role in Blaustein’s philosophy, see Plotka 2024, 209–211.

11 Plotka (2021, 255–258) argues that Blaustein’s criticism does not so much concern Husserl as Ingarden. Husserl ultimately understands the essence as irreal rather than ideal. This is why he introduced the reduction, which suspends the question of existence.

(Ajdukiewicz 1936, 19). These principles state that anyone with the necessary competence should be able to, first, understand the statements produced by any science and, second, reproduce scientific procedures and their results (Ajdukiewicz 1936, 19). He admitted that applying these principles limits the scope of philosophical enquiry to the extent that methods, such as *Wesensschau* or the Bergsonian intuition—although they hold value in their own domain—, are not acceptable within these limits. Ajdukiewicz's criticism can be contrasted with Czeżowski's view, which regarded methods relying on intuition and employing an extended notion of empirical experience as scientifically valid. Such methods are simply not yet as developed as those of the natural sciences (Czeżowski 1969, 27). Czeżowski and other LWS members did, in fact, allow reliance on intuition, at least in the field of values, in their analyses of certain axiological facts (see Brożek 2015).

Finally, Bocheński offered a generally positive evaluation of phenomenology, suggesting that there are notable similarities between phenomenology and analytic philosophy. For instance, both movements emphasize the necessity of analysis and strive for objectivity. Phenomenologists, like analytic philosophers, are also interested in the analysis of language. Nonetheless, he criticized the fact that phenomenology relies on direct intuitive insight rather than logical reasoning, which is unacceptable to analytic philosophers (Bocheński 1993, 40–41).¹²

3.2. *Against obscure philosophical style*

The postulates of the clarity of speech and justification of statements are essential elements of Twardowski's philosophical program (Woleński 1989, 36–41; Brożek *et al.* 2021, 194, 237). Twardowski was convinced that even the most complex philosophical problems can be expressed clearly, if a philosopher has the ability to think clearly himself (Twardowski 1999a, 257). Hence, it is not surprising that the LWS members used the principle of clarity to assess philosophical works and movements, and phenomenology was no exception.

Tatarkiewicz raised this objection against *Ideen I*, arguing that Husserl's “arrangement of issues, expression, and terminology makes the introduction

12 Bocheński (1985) also criticized continental philosophers for not learning and applying mathematical logic in their philosophical analyses.

to phenomenology difficult" (Tatarkiewicz 1913, 258). Blaustein also observed that Polish philosophers oppose the form, in which Husserl's views are presented, since it lacks "sufficient clarity and scientifically satisfying exactness" (Blaustein 1930, 233). What additionally contributed to the problems of understanding phenomenology is that Husserl did not publish much, and his students applied the enormous methodical and conceptual apparatus that is only available in Husserl's manuscripts (Blaustein 1930, 235).¹³ The obscurity of Husserl's writing was also observed by Kotarbiński who juxtaposed it with Twardowski's style of philosophizing. He stated that Husserl's analyses of intentional objects are "deeper" than Twardowski's; however, this depth lacks clarity, whereas Twardowski, in the case of conflict between depth and clarity, always chose the latter (Kotarbiński 1958, 741). Finally, Łukasiewicz wrote rather maliciously that, while he was impressed by Husserl's antipsychological project outlined in the first volume of *Logische Untersuchungen*,¹⁴ he was disappointed with the second volume, for it contained "an obscure philosophical chatter, which repelled [him] from all German philosophers." He added: "I was surprised that such a big difference may occur between two volumes of the same work." (Łukasiewicz 2013, 65–66.)

The accusation of obscurity was also raised by Ajdukiewicz who contended that the arguments produced by authors, such as Husserl and Bergson, were expressed in inexact, evocative language, full of metaphors. The proper language for philosophy should be structured upon modern logic; it should contain strictly defined rules and meanings (Ajdukiewicz 1936, 19–20). He also went up against Husserl's student, Martin Heidegger, by accusing him of having

[...] a caricatural tendency toward verbal hypostases and the creation of neologisms, which replace the lack of clear meaning with suggestive expressions. In effect, we are left with a largely incomprehensible whole,

13 Blaustein regularly raised the issue of the ambiguity and the obscurity of Husserl's concepts. He argued that Husserl unjustifiably extends the meanings of the concepts of intentionality, consciousness, and sensation, which leads to the emergence of contradiction in his theory (Blaustein 1928, 84–88).

14 Husserl's arguments against psychologism exerted an enormous influence on the LWS (see Woleński 1997, 155–156).

which, however, can evoke a certain mood and has a semblance of depth. (Ajdukiewicz 2006, 254.)

42

Ajdukiewicz remarked that Heidegger's thought reflects a shift in German philosophy of the time. Namely, German philosophers abandoned purely theoretical issues related to ontology and epistemology in favor of "life philosophy" which aims to understand the meaning of human life (Ajdukiewicz 2006, 255–256). However, because this philosophy relies on an "obscure and irresponsible metaphysics," it tends to cause disapproval among scholars trained in precise and responsible scientific work (Ajdukiewicz 2006, 256). He also noted a simultaneous emergence of the opposition to life philosophy, a philosophical movement that may be called "scientific philosophy." It seeks to incorporate the principles of the strict scientific method into philosophical work. Its proponents include the members of the Vienna Circle in Austria, Bertrand Russell, and Alfred N. Whitehead in the UK, as well as the LWS members in Poland (Ajdukiewicz 2006, 256). Even in the 1937 paper by Ajdukiewicz, we therefore find quite an early expression of the chasm that emerged in 20th-century philosophy, which we now know under the name of the analytic–continental divide.¹⁵

A positive view of Husserl's philosophical style was expressed by Bocheński. He agreed that Husserl is "not always easy to understand" (Bocheński 1965, 16), but believed that Husserl's works are difficult to read "not so much because of inadequacy of expression as from their theme," and that Husserl "is a model of precision as a philosophical writer and reminds one of Aristotle in this respect" (Bocheński 1956, 131). Bocheński's overall assessment of Husserl's writings remains positive, since they

[...] contain such a host of penetrating and subtle analyses that it seems doubtful whether this wealth of knowledge has yet been completely utilized or even put into circulation. His works may come to rank as a classical source for future philosophy. (Bocheński 1956, 132.)

15 The history and the significance of the analytic–continental divide have recently become a growing field of study. See, for example: Chase and Reynolds 2011; Vrahimis 2013.

He especially valued Husserl's early work presented in *Logische Untersuchungen*, for it contains the theory of meaning, the theory of pure grammar, the concept of the category of meaning, and the part–whole theory, which he considered “one of the most valuable achievements of contemporary philosophy” (Bocheński 1956, 135). Unlike Ajdukiewicz, Bocheński appreciated Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, especially the analyses of the concept of time. However, he asserted that Heidegger failed to achieve his own goals, since he wanted to derive general ontology from the subject, which is unattainable (Bocheński 1994, 26–27).

4. Analytic philosophers on phenomenology

Like the LWS members, other thinkers, representing the early analytic tradition, offered criticisms of phenomenology. The detailed elaboration of their arguments exceeds the scope of this paper, so I will limit myself to presenting only the main points.¹⁶

One of Husserl's fiercest opponents was Moritz Schlick who argued against what he called an “idealistic” turn in philosophy, which abandons the concept of knowledge developed by empirical science. Representatives of this turn, William James, Henri Bergson, and most notably Husserl, seek to establish intuition as the ultimate source of philosophical knowledge. Being immediate and direct, intuition does not rely on quantitative symbolic–mathematical methods (Schlick 1979, 144). Schlick argued, however, that knowing comes about by comparison of the new object with the object that is already known, by a reduction of the former to the latter, a rediscovery of the one in the other. An object is apprehended when it is assigned a correct place in one's knowledge pattern, and this is done through concepts and symbols. According to Schlick, the essence of knowledge is conceptual and quantitative. By contrast, in intuition, one is confronted with a single object, without relating it to anything else. This process has no resemblance to knowledge at all (Schlick 1979, 144–146). Finally, about Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen*, he wrote that “it is not through intuition that the truths contained in the book

16 The criticism of phenomenology by analytic philosophers is discussed in: Marion 2003; Chase and Reynolds 2011, 2017; Vrahimis 2013.

are elicited, but rather precisely through a skilled process of coordination, classification and description; not through ‘contemplation of essences’ but by methods of comparison and symbolization” (Schlick 1979, 150–151).

In the cradle of analytic philosophy, Gilbert Ryle rejected the core elements of Husserl’s project: the intuition of essence, transcendental reduction, the notion of intentionality, the idea that immanent perception is a source of immediate and evident cognition, and the assumption that phenomenology is a foundation of all science (Ryle 2009a, 179–181). He argued that phenomenology can and should be reduced to the “philosophy of psychology,” which is to analyze propositions that contain concepts of psychic functions, such as “Jones knows or believes such and such” (Ryle 2009a, 185). Moreover, he rather maliciously stated:

The proprietary method claimed for Phenomenology is a sham, and Phenomenology, if it moves at all, moves only by the procedures by which all good philosophers have always advanced, the elucidation of concepts, including consciousness-concepts. (Ryle 2009b, 229.)

44

Finally, one must mention the notorious “elimination of metaphysics” presented by Carnap who conducted what he called a logical analysis of Heidegger’s statement: “Nothing itself nothings,” and concluded that it is, in fact, a meaningless pseudo-statement (Carnap 1959, 69–70). Essentially, his argument relied on the assumption that only statements that are empirically verifiable and whose method of verification is known have meaning. Such statements must either consist of words referring to objects accessible empirically or be deduced from the so-called protocol (or observation) statements that have already been accepted (Carnap 1959, 62–65). Although Carnap’s criticism did not directly address phenomenology, he contended that

[...] logical analysis [...] pronounces the verdict of meaninglessness of any alleged knowledge that pretends to reach above and behind [empirical] experience. This verdict hits, in the first place, any speculative metaphysics, any alleged knowledge by pure thinking or by pure intuition that pretends to be able to do without experience. (Carnap 1959, 76.)

He concluded by noting that what remains of philosophy is the method of logical analysis, limited to either eliminating meaningless words and pseudo-statements or to clarifying meaningful concepts and propositions, in order to establish logical foundations for factual science and mathematics (Carnap 1959, 77).

From this brief overview, it can be argued that the main targets of analytic philosophers' criticism align with those of the LWS. However, it is important to emphasize that the members of the LWS developed their arguments and ideas independently of their Western counterparts (see Woleński 1989, 295–302). Furthermore, Austrian and British philosophers appear to be more radical in their judgments than Polish philosophers. Carnap, Ryle, and Schlick rejected the idea that intuition could be a source of knowledge in any sense. Ryle and Schlick downgraded valuable elements of Husserl's phenomenology to the analysis of concepts and regarded it as no novelty. Ultimately, Ryle reduced phenomenology (and descriptive psychology) to the analysis of statements about psychological facts. Carnap deemed the statements that are not empirically verifiable to be meaningless, thereby, in a sense, radicalizing the accusation of obscurity. Additionally, he reduced all philosophy to the analysis of those concepts that may prove useful to science.

45

Conclusion

The LWS members represent a relatively coherent standpoint with regard to phenomenology. First, due to shared origins in the Brentano school, they provided comparisons between Husserl's and Twardowski's approaches to teaching philosophy, showing significant similarities and differences. This genetic connection contributed to the interest in phenomenology among the LWS members. Second, they regarded the method of eidetic intuition as the core of phenomenology, valuing the distinctions involved in the process of identifying and describing essences. This is probably because it resembles the analysis of concepts, a method fundamental to Twardowski and his students. Thus, their interpretation of phenomenology aligns with Spiegelberg's (1994). However, they criticized the very idea of the intuition of essence (*Wesensschau*) as a reliable method of philosophical inquiry. The exception was Czeżowski

who allowed certain intuitive insights as a legitimate method of philosophizing. They also condemned the “philosophical style” of phenomenologists’ work, which they found to be obscure.

Despite criticism, the LWS members regarded phenomenology as an important philosophical movement with notable contributions, particularly Husserl’s arguments against psychologism and the use of distinctions. The most favorable views on phenomenology were expressed by Tatarkiewicz and Bocheński. The latter appreciated not only Husserl, but also Heidegger, which is uncommon in the analytic tradition. Finally, the LWS members’ view of phenomenology overlaps significantly with that of other analytic philosophers. The similarity concerns both the criticism as well as the valuable aspects of phenomenology. In this way, their work may serve as a certain confirmation of the chasm that emerged in 20th-century European thought between analytic and continental philosophy. The chasm had, in a sense, already been observed by Ajdukiewicz in 1937.

46 Taking the adduced into consideration, what is exceptional about the LWS compared to other analytic groups¹⁷ is that their criticism, which addresses the core features of the Husserlian phenomenology, did not prevent them from discussing and adopting various ideas promulgated by Husserl. In this sense, the reception of phenomenology in the LWS is quite rich, as was noted by Blaustein (1930, 233). The topic and the scope of this paper do not allow for a further elaboration on this issue. The literature provides an account of various traces of Husserlian inspirations in the LWS (see: Küng 1993; Woleński 1997; Olech 1995; Miśkiewicz 2009; Głombik 2011; Łuksiewicz 2020; Płotka 2024). However, this area still requires systematic research. In particular, the so-called “Lvov phenomenological circle,” a group of Twardowski’s students gathered around Ingarden, which included Blaustein, Ginsberg-Blaustein, Igel, Auerbach, and Tadeusz Witwicki (Płotka 2017, 87), requires further investigation. In their works, one finds significant references not only to Husserl and Ingarden, but also to other prominent phenomenologists, such as Adolf Reinach, Alexander Pfänder, and Moritz Geiger.

17 On the “modest” reception of phenomenology in British analytic philosophy and in the Vienna Circle, see: Marion 2003; Vrahimis 2013; Chase and Reynolds 2017.

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