When the first book of the *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologische Philosophie* was released in 1913, the main goal that Husserl aimed at achieving was to lay the foundations of what he labeled “an essentially new science” (Hua III/1, 3), a “new eidos” (Hua III/1, 164), phenomenology as a “science of Ideas” (Hua III/1, 4–5) or, in a more emphatic way, as an eidosic science of transcendent phenomena belonging to the region of pure consciousness (Hua III/1, 6–7). Husserl’s chief burden was not only to ensure the possibility of such a new science by disclosing a new field of investigation (“pure consciousness”), but first and foremost to legitimize its methodology in opposition, on the one hand, to science of facts (e.g., empirical psychology) and, on the other hand, to already established eidosic sciences (e.g., geometry and mathematics).

Since, as Husserl explains, there is an “object-province that corresponds to each science as the domain of its research and since for all correct statements there is a corresponding primal source of the grounding which alone can validate their legitimacy” (Hua III/1, 10–11), we will, first, have to bring to the foreground what kind of (eidosic) knowledge this new science is expected to convey and then, secondarily, what its methodology and validating procedure properly amount to.

A remark is however needed: for in what follows we will be discussing what is usually called the method of eidosic or phantasy variation. As, indeed, the recently published Husserliana XLI (text 4, *Der Wesensunterschied in den Wesensbegriffen und ihrer Bildung. Anschauungsbegriffe als Typenbegriffe gegenüber exakten Begriffen als Ideen*) shows, Husserl used the technical phrase *eidetische Variation* for the first time in a 1912 manuscript to indicate a method employed to attain (vordringen) “knowledge” of essential laws and their mutual connections. In this early context—rather than meaning an exclusively intuitive procedure to bring universals to the fore as *eide* accomplished in the realm of pure phantasy—the eidosic variation works to determine and spell out in statements the *Wesengesetze* that rule over the elements of “consciousness” and their relations. Rather than relying exclusively on a purely intuitive operation, here the phenomenologist has to consider both an *intuitive* and a *propositional* component: the former confirming and giving validity to the states of affairs and laws articulated and expressed by the latter.

In the following presentation, we will focus our attention on the method of variation and strive to clarify its meaning and role within the more general problem of eidosic knowledge and method. In order to do so, we will have to explain what such “knowledge” and “method” are (Sections 14.1, 14.2) and then discuss the methodological significance of eidosic variation (Section 14.3).
14.1. The structure of eidetic knowledge: some basic notions

As Husserl succinctly puts it, the phenomenologist’s goal is to achieve “scientific cognition”, i.e., to work out “a system of concepts and statements of laws that have their source in the pure intuition of essences” (Hua III/1, 331). The quote perfectly expresses the three notions at stake in any eidetic knowledge: (i) there must obtain an articulation of concepts into a statement (ii) spelling out a law (iii) validated by the so-called intuition of essence.

The clarification of the three elements just mentioned will provide us with all the basic notions we need to understand once and for all both the possibility and sense of eidetic knowledge and method.

(i) In terms of propositions, there is a difference between so-called “judgments about essences” and “judgments having eidetic universal validity”. Whereas the former directly bear upon essences, e.g., “the essence ‘color’ is different from the essence ‘sound’”, the latter—even without “positing” any individual—judge in the mode “in general” (im Modus des Überhaupt) “about the individual, even though purely as a single particular case of the essence (Einzelheit des Wesens)” (Hua III/1, 18): “A color ‘in general’ is different from a sound ‘in general’”. This difference being recognized, Husserl immediately states what we might indicate as a sort of translatability between them: “any judgment about essence can be converted into an equivalent unconditionally universal judgment about single particular cases of such an essence” (Hua III/1, 19).

The translatability might then be represented as follows (with J meaning judgment, ε standing for essence and c referring to the particular case of ε):

![Translatability Diagram](image)

The translatability relation

Yet, as Husserl goes on to say, the mere direct relationship between J and ε, or the indirect one via c, does not complete the survey of our eidetic activity. In order to provide a more satisfactory account, we need to consider the objectual (i.e., ontological) correlate of the proposition as a result of our propositional activity: “It is now apparent that the following ideas belong together: eidetic judging, eidetic judgment or asserted eidetic proposition, eidetic truth (or true proposition)”. The correlate of the latter notion is the eidetic state of affairs (as obtaining in the eidetic truth), whereas the correlate of the proposition is the state of affairs as meant (Vermeintheit), in the sense of what is judged in the judgment and that can either obtain (true judgments) or not obtain (in the case of false judgments) (Hua III/1, 19). Let us make all of this clear by drawing a further diagram:

(a) Eidetic Judging → (b) Eidetic Proposition → (c') Eidetic Truth

(b') State of Affairs as Meant → (c) Obtaining State of Affairs in the Proposition

Eidetic knowledge
The purpose of any eidetic inquiry, i.e., the pursuing and establishing of eidetic truths, consists of two steps: there is first a signitive, or mere judgmental activity, delineating a possible state of affairs as intended and still in need of eventual confirmation (transition from a via b to b’); there is then, in the case of true propositions, a given state of affairs confirming the corresponding state of affairs and validating (by fulfillment) the relevant proposition, which now turns out to be establishing what we have been after, notably a so-called eidetic truth (from b’ via c to c’).

Yet, if in the light of that diagram we know what a truth properly is, i.e., a proposition’s intended state of affairs being confirmed and validated by a given state of affairs, we do not at all know what would make such a truth precisely an eidetic one, a truth belonging to the field of eidetic science.

In other words: what does eidetic mean in the phrase eidetic truth or eidetic law?

(ii) In a nutshell, Husserl describes “eidetic truths” as those truths “valid in an unconditional universality and necessity for everything possible as well as for everything authenticating itself as actual in actually occurring experience” (Hua V, 42). “Unconditional” universality and necessity seem to be the two primary features of any eidetic truth. Yet, as Husserl hastens to remark, even if the notions of “universality” and “necessity” are correlates, they are not to be confused: “An eidetic particularization (Besonderung) and singularization (Vereinzelung) of an eidetically universal state of affairs, in so far as it is that, is called an eidetic necessity” (Hua III/1, 19). If, then, the aspect of universality primarily applies to universal states of affairs, necessity pertains to the “propositional” consciousness to which a “state of affairs” is given precisely as a particularization of the universal one: “The consciousness of a necessity, more particularly a judging consciousness in which there is consciousness of a state of affairs as a particularization of an eidetic universality, is called an apodictic consciousness”. The situation might be illustrated as follows:

![Diagram of Apodictic Consciousness](image)

Our propositional consciousness (A) is aware—through the relation to a particular state of affairs (B)—of the universal one (C) of which B itself is only a particularization. In turn (by following the dotted line), the universality of C, being singularized in a particular—and thereby necessary—state of affairs (B), makes our propositional consciousness apodictic (A). It is worth pointing out that if, on the one hand, our judging consciousness is in a direct relationship only to (B), the particular and necessary state of affairs, it is, on the other hand, universality (C) that has priority over necessity: indeed, it is only by particularizing a universal state of affairs that B can be described as necessary and, therefore, our consciousness of it as apodictic. It is necessity to be primarily experienced by our propositional consciousness and the feature of universality is only indirectly given via necessity.

The argument above allows us to take a further step in order to better understand the relation between “eidetic judging about individuals” and “the factual positing of something individual”. The eidetic universality can be applied, say, or transferred to something individual posited as “existing”. In so doing, “The state of affairs posited as actual is then a matter of fact insofar as it is an individual and actual state of affairs (individueller Wirklichkeitsverhalt); it is, however, an eidetic necessity insofar as it is a singularization of an essential universality” (Hua III/1, 20).
(iii) Since, as has already been mentioned, universality seems to have priority, if we inquire into what is meant by Wesensallgemeinheit and how it is possible, the answer will be, to quote from the German text, that es sagt aus, was rein im Wesen gründet: “it expresses what is purely grounded on the essence” (Hua III/1, 20). Husserl speaks then of Wesenswahrheit and Wesensnotwendigkeit, Wesensallgemeinheit, Wesensmöglichkeit, and Wesensgesetz. Not only the two “modal” notions of necessity and possibility, but also universality, truth and law are determined in the light of the key concept of “essence”.

Essences or eide,2 as Husserl urges over and over again, are new sorts of objects (Gegenstände), by “object” meaning—“in the necessarily broadened sense proper to formal logic”—any subject of possible true predications (jedes Subjekt möglicher wahrer Prädikationen) (Hua III/1, 15). This is why—being “states of affairs” (Sach-Verhalte), the objectual correlates of predications3—Husserl tends to speak, more and more frequently, not just of essence (Wesen), but of Wesen-Verhalte, that is, of “essential states of affairs” (he refers indeed to die originäre Gegebenheit des Wesenverhalte, (...) den jener Satz ausdrücklich hinstellte, “the originary givenness of the essential state of affairs explicitly set down by that proposition”) (Hua III/1, 20–21).

Contrary to what a certain tradition has always—and misleadingly—taken Husserlian essences and eidetic intuition to be, notably, the intuition of concepts thought of as “crystallized in a splendid isolation”, for Husserl the highly dreaded notion of intuition of essence does refer to the intuition of (eidetic) states of affairs. Now, to expand upon the response to the question “what does eidetic mean in the phrase eidetic truth?”, one might uphold that if these truths are “valid in an unconditional universality and necessity for everything possible”, it is because they express states of affairs rooted in a relevant essence. Or, to put it better, because of the essence being “explicable” in propositions shaping Sachverhalte, which hence are essential states of affairs (Husserl speaks of the states of affairs “included” (beschlossen) in the essence (Hua III/1, 24)).

Husserl hastens to point out that “no intuition of essence is possible without the free possibility of turning’s one regard to a corresponding ‘individual’ and forming an exemplary consciousness—just as, conversely, no intuition of something individual is possible without the free possibility of bringing about an ideation and, in it, directing one’s regard to the essence exemplified in what is individually sighted” (Hua III/1, 15–16).

Let us propose a fourth diagram to illustrate the argument.

```
\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\node (int) at (0,0) {Intuition of Essence};
\node (ess) at (2,0) {Essence};
\node (exemplary) at (0,-1) {Exemplary Consciousness};
\node (individual) at (2,-1) {Individual as Exemplifying an Essence};
\node (consciousness) at (0,-2) {Consciousness of Something Individual};
\node (individual2) at (2,-2) {Individual};
\draw [->] (int) -- (ess);
\draw [->] (exemplary) -- (individual);
\draw [->] (individual) -- (individual2);
\draw [->] (consciousness) -- (exemplary);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}
```

Exemplary consciousness

The methodologically key moment is represented by the exemplary consciousness (following the upward movement) by which we regard an individual as exemplifying an essence. In this respect, the very same individual can be taken as exemplifying, alternatively, different essences and hence giving rise to different intuitions of essence and eidetic analyses: the “book” on my table might...
be regarded as an example of the essence “spiritual formation” (geistiges Gebilde) or of the essence “material object”, in so doing opening up the possibility of different lines of inquiry (and indeed, to put it as a slogan, die Differenzen zu sehen ist die Leidenschaft der Phänomenologie).

Yet, Husserl speaks of “a system of concepts and statements of laws that have their source in the pure intuition of essences”. That is, the intuition of essence, by offering different (essential) states of affairs to our “gaze”, can either confirm and validate the states of affairs meant in and shaped by our judgmental activity or contradict and prove them wrong.

14.2. A Socratic procedure

14.2.1. The purpose of the method

Let us start by providing an overview of the different levels, and corresponding goals, that we can aim at fulfilling with the eidetic method. They can be grouped and listed as follows.

(I) The first level concerns what Husserl calls relation between “particular” and “universal” (Hua XXXI, 80–81) or, better, between a τόδε τι and a relevant essence. This can be done

(I') Either by subsuming an individual under an essence (Hua III/1, 33); or

(I'') By applying, so to say, the essence to the individual (Hua XXXV , 210).

In so doing (see previous Figure) we move from our consciousness of something individual to the exemplary consciousness in which the individual is regarded as exemplifying an essence. In judgmental terms, the basic form is “This is … an α”. Such a relationship in which, as Husserl points out, “A is grasped through α” (A ist begriffen durch α) can be either framed as “A is an individual of the universal α” (emphasis on exemplification) or “α belongs to A” (emphasis on application) (Hua XXXV, 210).

At this point it might be interesting to briefly discuss what a former Göttingen student of Husserl, Roman Ingarden, maintains in his essay Essentiale Fragen. In his view, the starting point of any eidetic investigation is what he calls the “first essential question”, the one asking “What is this?”. To this question there corresponds, as an answer, a judgment that he refers to as an “identification judgment” (Bestimmungs-Urteil). If then the question reads “What is this?”, the answer will have the form “That is … an α”. For example: “that is a triangle”, “that is a rose”, “that is an intentional experience”. What is such an identification judgment about?

In order to answer the question Ingarden refers to the Munich phenomenologist Alexander Pfänder, who, in his Logic, describes identification judgments as those judgments that “determine the subject by stating its ‘what’ (Was)”: “In identification judgments, therefore, the copula not only carries out the general function of relating the predicate-determination to the subject […] but posits, at the same time, that material unity (sachhaltige Einheit) which exists between the object and its ‘what’. Identification judgments are thus understood correctly only when this unique, material unity is co-posited along with them”.

By following Pfänder’s analysis and Ingarden’s one might then urge that (I) consists precisely in the possibility of forming “identification judgments”.

(II) On a second level we meet with the explication of what Husserl refers to as “the relationship of an eidetic genus or species to its eidetic particularization among the relationships of ‘part’ and ‘whole’” (Hua III/1, 31–32). This can be seen as a further development of (I) in which we regard an individual in the light of the higher species and genus which are—according to the mereological terminology employed here—“directly” or “indirectly” “included” in the individual in question as exemplifying such or such a higher essence:
“The eidetic singular essence thus implies collectively the universals lying above it and which, for their part, level by level, ‘lie one inside another’, the higher always lying inside the lower” (Hua III/1, 31).

(III) By leaving off the realm of individuals, we face the problem to which Husserl refers in terms of “subordination of an essence to its higher species or to a genus” (Hua III/1, 33). In opposition to (II), where we focus the attention on the relationships species–genus only as they are exemplified in a relevant individual, here we consider those relationships per se.

Here too, Ingarden’s analysis might turn out to be helpful. Once we answer the first question and get to know what this, as a τόδε τι, really is—for instance: “this is an hawk”, “this is an intentional experience” or, to quote his favorite example, “this is a square”, we could further investigate and ask “what is the hawk?”, “what is the intentional experience?”, “what is the square?”. The answer, in this case, cannot be another “identification judgment”; rather, it is what Ingarden refers to as a judgment of essence (Wesensurteil), whose general form is:

“α is β with the properties a, b, c…”

and spells out the relationship-articulation between the “genus” and one of its “species” regardless of them being exemplified in a corresponding individual.7 Considering Ingarden’s example, if the question is “what is then the square?”, the response will sound like this:

“The square (α) is the parallelogram (β) with four equal sides and four right angles (a, b, c…”.

Unlike “identification judgments”, where an individual is grasped and seen as exemplifying a lower species or a higher genus, in the case of “judgments of essence” we exclusively deal with essences and their relationships, as Husserl would say, of “including” and “being included”.

(IV) At this point we reach the final level where, upon the basis of the more pregnant concepts of non-independence and independence, we work out all the “connections” of contained-ness, unity, and synthesis (Verknüpfung) “in a more proper sense” (Hua III/1, 35; likewise Hua XXXV, 83). This is the very moment, explains Husserl, in which we need to Sehen, Erfasen, Analysieren, to see, to grasp, to analyze in a very strict and rigorous sense (Hua III/1, 153). In other words, we need to see the essences (or Wesensverhalte), grasp the mutual essential relations (Wesenszusammenhänge) and analyze them by eventually giving them “conceptual expressions” (begriffliche Ausdrücke). In this sense, as Moritz Geiger once put it, phenomenology is the attempt “to let the givennesses speak freely, in the whole fullness of their being” (die Gegebenheiten rein als solche sprechen zu lassen, in der ganzen Fülle ihres Seins).

It is here that we can describe our “judgmental activity” as Gesetzes-Urteilen and the judgments themselves as establishing a Gesetz-Gebung. As Husserl emphatically points out, “the realm of universal judging” (das Reich des allgemeinen Urteilens) is “the realm of legislation” (das Reich der Gesetzgebung) (Hua XXXI, 83). The essential possibilities turn out, then, to be truly “necessary possibilities” (notwendige Möglichkeiten), i.e., “forms of union of compatibility that are prescribed in the essences and delimitated by laws of essence” (Hua III/1, 556; likewise Hua XXXI, 83).

Such forms of union and compatibility, as determined and delimitated by laws of essence, might be formulated in two different ways. We can either focus on the general law and say, for instance, that:
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- “A is in general given along with B; in general then, if any A whatsoever is, so is B” (überhaupt ist mit A B gegeben; überhaupt ist, wenn etwas A ist, es auch B) (Hua XXXV, 227). In so doing, we frame “general laws” expressing “necessary” connections and syntheses in the form of hypothetical judgments bearing exclusively upon essences, that is to say, upon their “essential connections” and mutual implications (Hua XXXV, 233); yet, one might also say:
- “If any X is A, it is necessarily also B” or, even better, “if any X falls under A, it necessarily falls under B”. In this new case, “single particulars falling under one essence cannot exist without being determined by essences which at least share a generic community with other essences” (Hua III/1, 35). Hypothetical judgments assume now the possibility of something individual exemplifying the essence, or essences in question, hence their mutual connections.9

If identification judgments are πρότερον πρός ἡμᾶς, namely “first for us” because they determine the individual as “exemplifying” such or such an essence, only judgments of essence are πρότερον φύσει—being judgments that express the essential connections and syntheses that can be rephrased in the form of hypothetical judgments (giving a definite form to the above laws).

14.2.2. The method of the method

Husserl himself speaks of a “Socratic procedure” (Hua V, 100); of course, it is not just a matter of “fixing linguistic usage, but rather, in such coinciding, it is one of making an […] essence stand out in what is intuitively given, and of fixing it as that which is meant by mere word-meaning”. Am Leitfaden der Wortbedeutungen, namely “following the guiding thread of word-meanings”—this is how the method might be properly presented. Yet, as Husserl himself hastens to explain: “Only in a clarifying intuition can it become apparent to us, through a purely expressive fitting of the word-meaning, the logical one, to the essence given in the intuition, whether the expression with its sense actually fits onto that which is unclearly meant” (Hua V, 87; likewise Hua-Mat IX, 27, where this procedure is explicitly compared to Socrates’ mode of inquiring).10

Before we embark upon a discussion of the method, it is necessary not to overlook the distinction between the following two notions and procedures:

- **Making Distinct** (Verdeutlichung): “Making a concept, what is meant by a word as such, distinct, is a procedure that occurs within the mere sphere of thought (Denksphäre). Before the least step toward clarification is taken […], what lies in the meaning can be considered: for example, in the ‘decahedron’, a body, a regular polyhedron with ten congruent lateral surfaces”.

- **Clarifying** (Klärung): “With clarification, we go beyond the sphere of mere word-meanings and signifying thinking; we bring the significations into congruity with the […] intuition, the […] object of the former with that of the latter” (Hua V, 101).

Once we go beyond the sphere of mere thought or meaning and look for a fulfilling intuition, three possibilities can occur: the given state of affairs can (i) either confirm in toto the state of affairs as it was originally intended in the judgment; (ii) or disprove it in toto or, (iii) finally, confirm some of the elements of the intended state of affairs while contradicting the remaining ones. While then (ii) will simply force us give up on the concept as it was semantically expli-
cated in the intended state of affairs, (iii) calls for a re-elaboration (Husserl speaks of “producing anew” (Hua V, 102)) of the concept originally explicated and meant in the state of affairs. Of course, and Husserl could not be clearer on this point, (iv) one cannot rule out the possibility of different intended states of affairs that nevertheless find their confirmation in the same intuitively given state of affairs.

Now, the application of the method follows three distinct steps, by Husserl sharply distinguished.

(a) Let us say that we want to make clear the concept “material thing” and what it really “means”.
   To this end, we start making the concept distinct by defining it and formulating a state of affairs, spelling out, in a purely signitive manner, what a material thing is supposed to be;

(b) At this point, given the state of affairs as it is meant in a judgment, we proceed from examples that “represent unquestionable applications of the word ‘thing’, e.g., stones, houses and the like, but are not content with merely snatching these up, so to speak, through the name, i.e., with ‘thinking’ by mere word-meanings. Rather, we proceed to intuition” (Hua V, 100);

γ In so doing, we can make comparisons between the various given objects so as to bring to the fore “differences” and “commonalities”: “We look rather to that which in the intuitively given is, so to speak, brought out, covered, conceptually meant by the word-concept [and] which essential moments there are of the intuitively given, for whose sake the fact is precisely so ‘called’”.

Now, if (a) corresponds to the operation of making a concept distinct (in this case by defining what a material thing is supposed to be), (β) includes what we have previously called “identification judgments” (“this is an (unquestionable) example of material thing”) on the basis of the definition of the concept previously provided; after we compare all the examples at our disposal, (γ) will end up formulating judgments of essence, i.e., judgments stating not simply what “material things” are supposed to be, but what they actually and essentially are (“X is Y with the properties a, b, c…”), and see whether the judgment of essence confirms the definition provided in (a).

We can now further develop one of our previous Figures and propose the following schematization:

The full structure of eidetic knowledge

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14.3. Hic sunt phantasmata: phantasy (variation) 
and the method of eidetic knowledge

In order to appreciate the role assigned to phantasy and phantasy “variation” within the framework of eidetic knowledge, thereby its methodological place in our last Figure), we will distinguish three arguments concerning their relation:

(A) **Indifference Argument.** Since the “eidetic” or “essential truths” state pure possibilities and not solely factual or mere contingent connections, “they can be exemplified for intuition in experiential givens—in data of perception, memory and so forth”; but they can be “equally exemplified in data of mere phantasy” (Hua III/1, 16). The argument does not yet entail any gnoseological relevance, nor does it consider phantasy as playing any methodologically key role. It is based on the “ideal linkage between perception and phantasy” (Hua XIX/2, 645), according to which to each perception corresponds a conversion into a possible phantasy. This leads us to:

(B) The so-called **truth-conditions argument.** If we take into account the difference between the “truth-conditions” of Daseins-Urteile, judgments as to matters of fact, and Wesens-Urteile, essential judgments or judgments bearing upon essences, it is apparent that in the former case the position of actual realities is included in their own propositional sense. Hence the definition: a “judgment” is a “judgment as to matters of fact” iff its validity can be exemplified and exhibited (ausweisen) only in data of perception and experience (Wahrnehmung und Erfahrung) (Hua XXVI, 121–122).

An hic sunt phantasmata blocks the way to the “possibility” of exemplifying in phantasy the truth of judgments supposed to bear exclusively upon actual realities—in so doing giving us a negative criterion so as to discriminate judgments on matters of fact from essential judgments. In this sense, a judgment is not a judgment as to matters of fact if its validity can be exemplified also in data of phantasy (likewise Hua V, 26–27).

(C) **Variation Argument.** Upon the basis of (B), the hic sunt phantasmata represents a “necessary” yet not “sufficient” condition for the eidetic method to exclusively work with data of phantasy. In this respect, Husserl underlines both vantages and disadvantages of the act of phantasy:

- The “well-known” disadvantage of phantasy is that “it does not stand firm, even if it is clear; it quickly loses its fullness; it sinks into the semi-clear and the dark” (Hua V, 54)—in so doing making it very hard for the “scientific investigator” to fix and describe what is intuitively given. In this sense, perception, not phantasy, owns methodological priority (Ideas I, §70);
- Yet, there are several reasons by virtue of which in phenomenology, as an eidetic science, “free phantasies acquire a position of primacy over perceptions” (Hua III/1, 161–162); the main being that the phenomenological Wesensgestaltungen or “formations” to be investigated, described, and then eidetically fixed, are infinite: to our end, namely in order to investigate as many formations as possible, we “can use the resource of original givenness only to a limited extent”.

From both (B) and (C) it follows that the key and “unavoidable” role assigned to phantasy in the course of our eidetic investigations and clarifications is due not only to its ability to “negatively” discriminate between Daseinsurteile and non-Daseinsurteile, but also to its contriving a potentially infinite amount of data (larger than that provided by perception) to either confirm or disprove the states of affairs as they are intended at the outset in our judgments.
Now, if we want to locate the process of variation in our last Figure, it would appear between (b’−c) and (c’), between the identification judgments, which yield us an unquestionable application of the starting states of affairs, and the establishing of judgments of essence.

Let us try to explain it better. In order to make a concept distinct, we define it by formulating a state of affairs (b’), which is merely meant in a judgment. Then we point to an individual that can assume the role of unquestionable application of the state of affairs; on the basis of this individual we formulate an identification (b’’) judgment, which hence takes it as exemplifying the essence and confirming the initial state of affairs (c). Here phantasy comes into play with its ability to contrive, by varying on the given exemplifying state of affairs, potentially infinite new ones.

It is worth emphasizing the twofold task that the variation can be called for to accomplish:

- As suggested by (γ) we need to look to a multiplicity of exemplars in order to compare and bring to the fore commonalities as well as differences. In this sense, the variation is simply asked to yield a multiplicity of variants of the starting example as confirming the original state of affairs as it was meant in the judgment. The phenomenologist employs here the variation, as already said, in her way to bring about judgments of essence;
- Nevertheless, the variation can be also appealed to in order to determine the limits of application and the conceptual boundaries of a judgment of essence already formulated. To this end, we operate in the opposite way: we make that judgment of essence (“X is Y with the properties a, b, c…”) our new starting point and frame alternative states of affairs (“X is Y with the properties a, b, d…” and “X is Y with the properties a, b, e…”). Now, by going back to (b’’), we make use of phantasy (variation) to come up with a case that can be held as an example of the new state of affairs. If this is not the case, namely, if the variation turns out to be unable to yield the example, it means that the property was essential to the state of affairs and limits its application. If, by contrast, the variation yields such a case exemplifying the new state of affairs, the latter obtains validity and the original concept has been modified according to one (or more) of its properties.11

* * *

Unlike Husserl’s later development of the method of variation as a purely intuitive procedure, here the eidetic or phantasy variation is construed as a part of the method of eidetic knowledge characterizing phenomenology as an eidetic science. Rather than being used in order to bring about the intuitive “apprehension” of universals as eide, here the eidetic variation operates, say, in collaboration with different judgmental forms (identification judgments, judgments of essence) to either provide the basis for the establishing of eidetic truths, or validate (by fixing its boundaries) an already established one.12

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Notes

1 For a general and overall work on phantasy, see Volonté 1997.
2 For the sake of clarity we are not making any distinction between the notions of essence as Wesen and pure essence as eidos in this context. In Ideas I Husserl takes the notion of “pure essence”, not just essence, to mean the same as eidos. On the difference between essence and eidos, Sowa 2007, 88:
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“Essences in the pregnant sense demanded by Husserlian descriptive eidetics are pure essences, which Husserl also refers to as eide. Eide or pure essences, however, are not correlates of any general concepts; rather, they are exclusively correlates or pure general concepts. These pure concepts especially occur in pure material laws or material eidetic laws, and are presupposed by these laws”; and Majolino 2010, 595: “‘Eidos’ n’est donc pas un autre nom pour ‘essence’, une essence étant, en un sens très général, tout ce dont un individu donné (un tode ti, concret ou abstrait) peut être l’exemple. L’eidos husserlien est en revanche une ‘essence pure’, c’est-à-dire une essence dont l’intuition […] se fonde sur l’apparaître d’un individu qui peut être autant le corollat d’un acte positionnel (perception, mémoire, attente, etc.) que d’un acte positionnellement neutre”.

3 “In the judgment a state of affairs ‘appears’ before us, or, put more plainly, becomes intentionally objective to us” (Hua XIX/1, 461).

4 Geiger 1933, 5.

5 Ingarden 1925, 148 (§6).


7 Ingarden 1925, 220–263. For a detailed analysis, De Santis 2014.

8 Geiger 1933, 4.

9 For a phenomenological analysis of the different meanings of the hypothetical proposition in relation to ontological problems and eidetic analysis, see Ingarden 1958, 443–446.

10 This aspect was already emphasized by Wilhelm Pöll (1936, 112–114), a former student of Pfänder. We agree with Sowa 2010, 548, when he claims: “along with Austin, we give the ‘initial word’ to everyday language and its often already very subtle conceptual articulations of certain domain of phenomena, although we already know at the outset that it will not be the ‘final word’. The (provisional) ‘final’ word will be the result of descriptive analyses provided in the form of an ensemble of eidetic laws through which the everyday concepts that we began the analysis with gain new, intuitively deepened, and intuitively calibrated significations”. See also Mohanty 1991, 267–268, on the necessity of a preliminary acquaintance with the meaning of the concept at stake.

11 Sowa 2010, 547–548, describes the process as an attempt to “proceed from firm exemplars to firm counterexamples of the thematic universal and from there to limit-cases in which the application of the concept becomes dubitable”.

12 Lohmar 2005, 71, correctly speaks of “justification” of our concepts “on the basis of a fulfilling intuition” (die Berechtigung von Begriffen auf dem Grunde der erfüllenden Anschauung) (see also what he says on pages 83 and 86 on the Grenze unserer Begriffe). Only in this sense one can also speak of a method employed to “clarify” “vague concepts” (see page 78), according to the distinction between Verdeutlichung and Klärung.

References


