Among all the methodological tools introduced by Husserl to establish phenomenology as an eidetic science of transcendentally reduced phenomena belonging to the region of pure consciousness, the method of *eidetic variation*—also said method of “free” or “phantasy” variation—has been for years the subject matter of divergent interpretations. Scholars seem to be far from reaching an agreement on both the method’s purpose and its operating principles.¹

Before we embark on our analysis of this method, it is important to acknowledge the distinction between two different senses that characterize the general methodological notion of variation in the writings of Husserl. On the one hand, there is what can be called the *functional notion of variation*: for example the “double variation” of §20 of the *Fifth Investigation*, employed in order to bring to the fore the functional dependence between the two moments that make up any intentional act (i.e., “quality” and “matter” (Hua XIX/1, 428)). On the other hand, there is what we would label the *systematic notion of variation*: the one having a structural position and role within the framework of Husserl’s eidetic investigation. In what follows, we will focus our attention on the systematic notion of variation, i.e., the so-called *eidetic variation*. Nevertheless, even within this latter concept one should not overlook the distinction between three different sub-notions that derive, so to say, from the three different “objects” (loosely construed) to which the method itself applies:

- **(α)** The method of eidetic variation (*sic et simpliciter*);
- **(β)** What we might characterize as the method of “co-variation”;
- **(γ)** What Husserl himself refers to as “self-variation”.

Let us immediately warn the reader against taking (β) and (γ) as two specific differences of a more general one, and thereby encompassing the method of variation (which would be represented by (α)). Even if they all aim at the same “goal”—which for the sake of brevity could be described as an intuitive bringing to the fore of the *eidos*²—and (α) contributes to lay out the general coordinates of the method, two differences must be recognized: (i) the *eidos* that is to be grasped is a different one, depending upon what the method is applied to; (ii) such a diversity basically follows from the relation in which both the method and the *eidos* stand to the “transcendental” domain. Preliminarily stated: (γ) brings to the fore the *eidos* of the transcendental ego as a “concrete” one, i.e., the “monad”; (β) brings to intuition the *eidos* of such and such a specific “co-relation” within the transcendental sphere; (α), on the contrary, provides the eidetic scientist...
with *eide* endowed with no transcendental bearing. While (β) and (γ) exclusively belong to the methodological “equipment” of a very unique eidetic scientist, i.e., the transcendental philosopher (= the “phenomenologist”), for (α) this is not at all the case.

In order to do justice to such differences, and to all the nuances of the method itself, our analysis will be divided into three parts, which will correspond to the three different “varieties” at stake. In section 37.1 there will be not only a general description of the method, but also of some “formal-ontological” concepts, which will turn out to be decisive to understand the difference between (α), (β) and (γ); section 37.2 will be on what in Formal and Transcendental Logic Husserl calls *mit-varieren* (a methodological notion usually overlooked by scholars); finally, in section 37.3 we will describe the method of self-variation, and then elaborate on the “methodological” implications of the eidetic variation (α) being applied to what the Cartesian Meditations call “concrete ego” or “monad”.

### 37.1. Eidetic variation and τόδε τι

Let us start by assessing (α). Husserl presents and divides the performance of the general method of variation into four steps that lead the eidetic scientist to intuitively grasp the universal as an *eidos*. For the sake of our analyses, the following distinctions will suffice.

(a) The starting-point is the consciousness of a given “individual” (perception) or quasi-individual (phantasy). As Husserl immediately writes, “the universal which first comes to prominence in the empirical given must from the outset be freed of its character of contingency.” Accordingly,

(b) The “individuality” is no longer regarded as *this individuality*, but as entailing an “exemplary” value whose consciousness is a “consciousness of exemplarity” (*Exempel*).

(c) The *Exempel* is hence a *Vorbild*, “the starting point for the production of an open and endless multiplicity of variants.” In Husserl’s words, the passage from (b) to (c) can be so described: “every color occurring in actuality is certainly, at the same time, a possible color in the pure sense: each can be considered as an exemplar and can be changed into a variant.” To put it in a nutshell: an initial *quicumque* individual this (a), regarded as an *Exempel* (b), is then turned into a “variant” of a multiplicity of variations (c). In the methodologically strict sense of the term, only (c) represents the actual process of variation.

(d) Eventually, the relevant *eidos* comes to the fore as the underlying “unity” of the manifold of variations: “it is the *eidos*, the *ἰδέα* in Platonic sense.”

The sequence can be easily represented as follows:

\[ \Delta \]

(a) This individual → (b) This as an Exempel and Vorbild

→ (c) Variations → (d) Eidos

Now, in order to fully appreciate the difference between (α) and (γ), a series of remarks bearing on both *this individual* and what Husserl refers to as *Stufen der Allgemeinheit* is necessary. As Husserl explains in §84 of *Erfahrung und Urteil*,

If we start from the experience of individual objects, then the lowest universal (…) is that which arises from the mere “repetition” of individuals capable of being expe-
Variation

rienced as independent and completely alike. We designate it a concretum. (...) Every individual is an individual particular of its concretum. 6

What Husserl has in mind is what Ideas I (to which this very same text refers) calls—with an Aristotelian sounding term—a τόδε τι: “A this-here, whose material essence is a concretum, is called individuum” (Hua III/1, 36). If this is the case, then this individual7—providing the starting-point for the method of variation (a)—can be understood in relation to the notion of τόδε τι (and of “essence”). What, then, is a τόδε τι?

As has been pointed out,8 Husserl distinguishes what could be called a narrow concept of essence (henceforth: NC)—which refers to the lowest species itself (die niederste Spezies) as something that an individual object has in common with any other individual object of the same “kind” (Husserl also calls it: ein Wiederholbares)—and a broad concept of essence (henceforth: BC), including the “bearer” as what “individualizes” the lowest species itself. Ontologically, this individual (a) is an essence in the narrow sense of the term (τι) individualized hic et nunc (τόδε).

To put it as a formula:

Individual = NC + Individualization

Methodologically speaking, this individual can be turned into an Exempel (b) by disregarding its “individualization.” The Exempel or Vorbild—which leads the process of variation—is obtained by disentangling NC from the τόδε: it is the lowest species or lowest universal (τι), that is to say, what Ideas I calls “eidetic singularities,” species that cannot be further specified but only individualized, or exemplified in such and such an individual (Hua III/1, 36).

As Husserl goes on to explain in §15 of Ideas I, every eidetic singularity present in an individuum leads to a specific tree-like system of species and genera, thus also to a relevant highest genus (Hua III/1, 36). If we take, for instance, the eidetic singularity “perception of physical things” (Hua III/1, 172), then the relevant “tree-like” system of species and genera can be represented in his way (the reader should keep in mind that the following diagrams are supposed to display the structure of the “Porphyrian tree,” so to say, with each level including specific “downward” bifurcations):

\[(\Delta')\]

Highest Genus: Erlebnis in general

↓

Genus: Intuition

↓

Species: Perception

↓

Eidetic Singularity: Perception of Physical Things

-------------

Τόδε Τι: This Perception of a Physical Thing

Here the eidetic singularity is NC, the τι that can be repeated and, thus, individualized hic et nunc (τόδε). Given this individual perception (a), we can turn it into an Exempel (b) by disentangling the τι from the τόδε: the eidetic singularity, now regarded as repeatable, can function as a Vorbild and thereby guide the variation (c). The process can be further carried on and, depending on
the system of species and genera, one can rise from lower generalities (e.g., “perception”) to the higher genera (e.g., “intuition”) up to the highest one (e.g., “Erlebnis in general”).

Husserl does not fail to recognize that the one and the same individual can also include different “eidetic singularities,” each of which leads to a separate Stufenbau of “genera” and “species.” Here is how Husserl’s example of a “phenomenal thing” (Hua III/1, 36–37) could be represented:

\[ \Delta \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Genus: Geometrical Form in General</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highest Genus: Quality in General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genus: Polygon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genus: Visual Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Species: Triangle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Species: Color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eidetic Singularity: Equilateral Triangle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eidetic Singularity: Ruby Red</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\[ \text{Töde Tī: This Phenomenal Thing…} \]

Presented in this way, i.e., with the help of the notion of \( \text{Töde Tī} \), the method of eidetic variation obtains a rigorous ontological foundation.

Yet, before we move on to investigating the method of co-variation, a question arises and needs to be taken into consideration: what did we mean by the claim that the method presented here (i.e., the general method of eidetic variation) does not exclusively belong to the “phenomenologist”? In what sense do the eide so obtained have no transcendental bearing? To put it better: in what sense do the phenomena, whose eidetic structure we are investigating based on the method of eidetic variation, display no “transcendental” value? If Husserl can switch from examples such as color and sound to Erlebnisse because the field of “application” of the method is not limited to the “transcendental” domain of “pure consciousness,” the method of eidetic variation, whose goal is to bring to the fore the eidos of a relevant set of phenomena, can be used—and is de facto used—by a different array of “eidetic scientists,” such as pure chromatologists (as we may call those who investigate the eidetic structures of the chromatic field), pure phonologists (those who investigate the eidetic structures of the auditory field), or pure psychologists (‘pure psychology’ being for Husserl the eidetic science of the psyche). The latter case is the most interesting one: for, the subject matter of pure or eidetic psychology is a domain (“pure psyche”) “parallel” to that of transcendental phenomenology (“pure consciousness”); the difference being that pure psychology investigates the same phenomena (e.g., Erlebnisse and their immanent structure), but exclusively to the extent that they belong to the “real” domain of the psyche, namely, prior to the opening up of the region “pure consciousness” by means of the method of transcendental reduction.

The investigation of the transcendental value of the “co-relation”—which Husserl himself presents as a relation between subjective (or constitutive) a priori and ontic a priori—is the subject matter of phenomenology, and the relevant method of variation meant to bring to “intuition” its eidos is what we may properly designate as “co-variation”.

### 37.2. Co-variation and transcendental co-relation(s)

Bluntly stated: by \text{mit-varieren}, or “co-variation”, Husserl means the method of eidetic variation as applied to such and such an intentional and transcendental experience; accordingly, what the
“co-variation” brings to the fore is neither the *eidos* of a specific ontic domain (be it that of “colors” or “sounds”), nor that of the pure psyche, but *such and such a specific transcendental co-relation*. The text to be considered is §98 of *Formale und transzendente Logik*, dedicated to explaining in what sense the phenomenological “constitutive” investigations are “a priori”.

As Husserl contends, any “constituted objectivity” (for example: a “natural object” (*Naturobjekt*)) points back, according to its “peculiar essence” (*Wesensart*), to a “correlative essential form (*eine korrelative Wesensform*)” of what he calls a multiplicity of actual and possible intentionality, which is “constitutive for that objectivity” (Hua XVII, 253). As is immediately evident, here the method of variation hinges upon—and directly exploits—the “transcendental” (i.e., “constitutive”) co-relation between (objective) *Wesens-Art* and (subjective) *Wesens-Form*, which applies to all kinds of objects and corresponding modes of consciousness: “the modes of consciousness that can make one aware of some ideal objectivity or other (…) have a definite style, essential to *this* sort of objectivity.” By writing “*this* sort of objectivity”, *diese Art Gegenständlichkeit*, Husserl proves to be following (*Δ*): as is the case with (*α*), here, too, the starting-point is represented by a τóδε τί; nevertheless, unlike in the case of (*α*), the singling out of the τί does not directly convey the *Exempel* to be varied (*b*), but first points back to a corresponding system of intentionality (i.e., a subjective “essential form”).

With respect to (*Δ*), what is then required is an additional intermediate methodological step: (*Δ1*)

(a) This individual → (b) NC

→ (c) Co-Relation between Wesens-Art and Wesens-Form as an Exempel and Vorbild

→ (d) Variations → (e) Eidos

Given *this individual object* (*a*), the phenomenologist disentangles the τί from the τóδε (*b*): the eidetic singularity—regarded as a repeatable—is assumed as the correlate of a peculiar *Wesensform*, and hence points back to a corresponding mode of consciousness: it is such a “co-relation” that now stands out as the *Exempel* (*c*) to which the operation itself of variation properly applies (*d*).

As Husserl puts it,

Everything that we have stated in our observations concerning constitution can, in the first place, be made a matter of insight on the basis of no matter what *exemplars* (*Exempeln*) of no matter what sorts of already-given objects—that is: in a reflective explication of the intentionality in which we simply and straightforwardly “have” a real or an ideal objectivity. We have made a significant advance when we recognize that what obviously holds good for the *factual* single cases of actuality or possibility still holds good necessarily when we vary (*variieren*) our exemplars *quite arbitrarily*, and then inquire retrospectively for the correlative co-varying (*korrelativ mitvariierenden*) “representations.”

(*Hua XVII, 254*)

To each “ontic essential form” (*ontische Wesenform*), with its own a priori, corresponds a system of actual and possible intentionality with its own “constitutive” a priori:

when one turns one’s regard reflectively from the ontic essential form (…*) to the possible constitutive experiences, the possible manners of appearance, one sees that
these necessarily co-vary \((sich\ mitvariieren)\) with it, in such a way that now a two-sided essential form \((\text{zweiseitige Wesensform})\) shows itself as invariant.

\((\text{Hua XVII, 255})\)

As Husserl concludes, it becomes apparent that an ontic a priori is possible only as the “correlate” of a subjective a priori, and such is then the transcendental “co-relation” whose \(\text{eidos}\) the “co-variation” is meant to bring to direct intuition:

It is very necessary to lay hold of this genuine sense, of this universality of the a priori and, in so doing, to grasp in particular the just described retro-relatedness of every straightforwardly derived a priori to that of its constitution, as well as that of the a priori apprehensibility of the co-relation between object and constituting consciousness.

\((\text{Hua XVII, 255}).\)

Here, again, a problem arises and has to be immediately faced. Does Husserl himself not maintain that phenomenology, as an eidetic science, is nothing else but the “uncovering of the all-embracing \(\text{eidos transcendental ego as such}\)” \((\text{Hua I, 105})\)? If this is the case, and the so-called “co-variation” applies only to such and such a specific transcendental “co-relation”, how are we to “uncover” what Husserl presents as the \(\text{eidos}\) of the transcendental ego as such? What is such an ego? And how do we obtain it? Only by moving on to the next paragraph can we provide the answer to this question.

37.3. Self-variation and the monad

As Husserl maintains in the \textit{Cartesian Meditations}, the problem of explicating the monadic ego—i.e., the transcendental ego as a concrete one—phenomenologically “coincides with phenomenology as a whole” \((\text{Hua I, 103})\). If phenomenology is to be possible as an eidetic science, then there must be a method able to bring its subject matter to the fore: such being the goal of what Husserl labels \textit{Selbst-Variation}. The method of self-variation is then fundamental in that it makes phenomenology \textit{scientifically} possible by conveying what the latter, as a science, is about: the \(\text{eidos}\) transcendental ego. As Husserl puts it:

After transcendental reduction, my true interest is directed to my pure ego, to the uncovering of this factual ego. But the uncovering can become genuinely scientific, only if I come back to the apodictic principles that pertain to this ego as exemplifying the \(\text{eidos}\) ego.

\((\text{Hua I, 106})\)

Since the method of self-variation does not simply bear on specific transcendental \textit{Erlebnisse}, but on the concrete ego as such, then the question turns out to be: what is a “concrete ego”? And how does the method of self-variation operate with respect to both \((\alpha)\) and \((\beta)\)?

In the \textit{Cartesian Meditations}, Husserl describes the concrete ego in opposition to both the ego as an identical pole and as a person. As he presents it: “From the ego as identical pole and a substrate of habitualities, we distinguish \textit{the ego taken in full concreteness}.” What Husserl calls concrete ego is obtained by including all objects as correlates of actual and potential forms of consciousness: it is not simply the ego as a pole, nor just as a \textit{person} with abiding \textit{bleibenden Erwerbe} gained from and built upon previous experience, but also as embracing \textit{die Umwelt mit ihrem Horizont} of already known and still unknown “objects” \((\text{Hua I, 102})\). Now, since the
concrete ego includes “all objects as correlates of actual and potential forms of consciousness,” the method of self-variation does not apply to just such and such “a” correlation, or mode of consciousness as “a” correlate of a specific “ontic a priori” (as in the case of co-variation), but to the totality of them.

This leads us to the most important feature of the monad as a concrete ego: what might be called its “intrinsic individualization” or also “self-individualization.”12 As Husserl bluntly puts it, when it comes to the monad, “the lowest concrete universality”—i.e., the eidetic singularity concrete ego—“individualizes itself.” Or, as a late manuscript points out: “dieses Eidos [the concrete ego] hat das Merkwürdige, dass jeder seiner eidetischen Singularitäten ein einzelnes transzendentales ich (als Möglichkeit) ergibt” (Hua XIII, 383).

It is important to remark that Husserl is not at all maintaining that the concrete ego has no “eidetic singularity” (or, better, that there is no such a thing as the eidetic singularity “concrete ego”), or that there is no distinction between the latter and its “individualization”: rather, Husserl is claiming that the eidetic singularity “concrete ego” is its own individualization (as he writes, they zusammenfallen or “coincide”13). Accordingly, also BC and NC zusammenfallen, and this means that the eidetic singularity “concrete ego” cannot be considered merely as a Wiederholbares (“Das Ego kann nicht wiederholbar werden”) that would be “individualized”—as an “identical” essence (τι)—hic et nunc (tōde). Rather than representing the situation by distinguishing the eidetic singularity concrete ego as something that would stand “over and above” its many individualizations (or “exemplifications” in such and such a plurality of individual and concrete egos):

Eidetic Singularity: Concrete Ego

we could simply confine ourselves to what follows (with each individual and concrete ego being the Zusammenfallen of “eidetic singularity” and “individualization”):

Tōde Ti: This Individual Concrete Ego… This Individual Concrete Ego…

Now, if eidetic singularity and individualization “coincide”, then the phenomenologist cannot take an individual concrete ego and turn it into an Exempel by disentangling the τι from the tōde; but if NC cannot play the role of Vorbild guiding the variation, how is then the process to be carried out?

As Husserl points out, the “beginning phenomenologist” is bound by the circumstance that he/she takes himself/herself as an “initial exemplar” (Hua I, 110). Hence, we can think our factual ego “to be freely varied” (frei variiert) and set “the problem of exploring eidetically the explicit constitution of any transcendental ego in general.” As he remarks:

It should be noted that, in the transition from my ego to the ego in general, neither the actuality nor the possibility of other egos is presupposed. The scope of the eidos ego is here determined by self-variation of my ego. I feign only myself as if I were different; I do not feign others.

(Hua I, 106)

My own factual ego is not simply a factually existing tōde τι whose “individuality” can be disregarded in order for the eidetic singularity to stand out as an Exempel, and thereby play the role...
of Vorbild in the process of variation. In a nutshell: *my own factual concrete ego is itself the Exempel* to be varied.

Methodologically speaking, the situation can be presented as follows:

\[(\Delta 2)\]

\[(a + b)\] My concrete ego assumed as the Exempel and Vorbild

\[\rightarrow (c)\] Variations \[\rightarrow (d)\] Eidos

Since my own concrete ego is the *Zusammenfallen* of eidetic singularity and individualization, the variations so produced cannot be taken as different individualizations (τόδε), or exemplifications in such and such a plurality of individuals, of one and the “same” lowest concrete universality (τι) that has been previously singled out or disentangled: this being the deep, and highly problematic sense of Husserl urging that “The scope of the eidos ego is here determined by self-variation of my ego.”

If this is the case, can phenomenology still claim—as Husserl says—to become a science, namely, the universal science of the concrete ego as such? Let us try to make ourselves clear. If the problem of explicating the monadic ego “coincides with phenomenology as a whole,” and yet the “scope” of the eidos “ego,” Husserl urges, is “here determined by self-variation of my ego,” does not this end up affecting, and hence limiting, the universality of the eidos itself “ego überhaupt”?

As we know, if self-variation is to be held as an essential tool of phenomenology, it is precisely because of its ability to convey what the latter, as an eidetic and intuitive science, is about: not the eidos of just such and such an ontological objectality, nor simply of such and such a “co-relation,” but the eidos monadic ego in general. And yet, we have to ask: can phenomenology really aspire—as a science—to “universality”? Would not such universality, and the method that should lead to it, embrace the self-constitution of my concrete ego, yet not that of the concrete ego as such (being the “scope” of the eidos in question determined by self-variation of my own concrete ego with its own habitualities and sedimentations)? These are the issues that any future investigation of the relation between *variation* (as co-variation and self-variation) and *monad*, phenomenology as a *monadology* and its aspiration to being a *universal* and *eidetic science*, will have to explore and clear up.

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Notes

1 For an overall discussion of the method, as well as of the relevant problems concerning its mode of working and goals, see De Santis 2011.

2 It is important to understand that, as a part of what Husserl himself calls “spiritual method of ideation” (*die geistige Methode der Ideation*), the purpose, or the goal of the method of eidetic variation is not to “achieve knowledge of eide.” Indeed, in Husserl’s understanding, “knowledge” requires propositions and their fulfillment by a “categorially shaped” objectuality (what is usually called “state of affairs”); in other words, it involves a discursive as well as an intuitive side, namely, the so-called “categorial intuition.”

3 Husserl 1972, 410.


5 *Ibid.*, 411. The question naturally arises as to what Husserl himself means by *eidos*, or by “universal” as an *eidos* in opposition to “empirical universalities.” Without getting into a detailed discussion of a problem
Variation

that goes far beyond the objectives of this text, let us simply point out that the two kinds of universal differ with respect to (i) “extension” (Umfang); (ii) mode of “exemplification”; and (iii) the “modal” character they exhibit, “contingent” or “open” necessity (what Husserl calls Zufälligkeit) in one case, eidetic or strict necessity in the other. That empirical universals present an “extension” of real or really possible individuals means their being necessarily acquired on the basis of actual experience, therefore their referring to a “limited and, so to speak, denumerable extension of actual particulars” experienced up to now (Husserl urges that they involve the “co-positing of an empirical sphere in which they have the place of their possible realization in particulars”). The horizon of their validity is to be said “presumptive” because it is open to further confirmation as well as to possible “cancellations.” By contrast, in the case of eide, we confront an a priori necessity that prescribes “rules” for the later course of our experience and that “[rules] out a sudden change, a cancellation.” That their extension embraces “purely possible individuals” means their not being acquired on the basis of actual experience (they are not “dependent generalities”) and the possibility to contrive possible exemplifications in the realm of pure or free phantasy. See Husserl 1972, 409–410.

Ibid., 403.

We should always keep in mind that “individual” is a concept broader than individuum (understood as a “this-there, whose material essence is a concretum”). Indeed, if every individuum is a τοῦ δὲ τί, not every τοῦ δὲ τί is an individuum: for example, an individual color is a τόδε τί whose essence is nevertheless an abstractum. In what follows, we will mainly employ the term individual, in order to cover both abstracta and concreta (thus, without the necessity of explicitly distinguishing between them in the course of our analyses).


“Die Essenz, das Was des Substrats, ist einerseits konkretes spezifisches Wesen, das ein ‘Wiederholbares’ ist und wiederholbar an verschiedenen Individuen mit verschiedenen Substraten und möglichen Vereinzelungen dieses spezifischen Wesens, und andererseits das τοῦ δὲ τί. Das τοῦ δὲ τί ist das, was das Spezifische, und zwar die niederste, nicht mehr spezifisch differenzierbare Spezies, individuell vereinzelte” (Hua XXXIII, 299–300).

The reader should regard this only as meant to shed light on the mode of working of eidetic variation and of its relation to the ontological Stufenbau of “genera” and “species.” As we will see in the next section, the application of the method of variation to the “transcendental” domain of pure consciousness is what Husserl labels “co-variation,” and its methodological structure and procedure are more complex than the one discussed here.

Accordingly, since the difference between (α) and (β) is that between an ontological and a transcendental domain of application of the method of variation, also the corresponding “eidetic” laws are different. Without getting into a nitty-gritty analysis, let us simply remark the following: while the eidetic laws brought to the light with the help of the method of variation discussed above should be better described as ontological (i.e., ontological laws), those obtained by means of application of (β) might be easily labeled transcendental (i.e., transcendental laws). In addition to this, it is important to notice that whereas (α) bears on the Was of such and such a type of objectuality, (β) on the contrary—by focusing on the co-relation, thus on the mode of appearance of such and such a type of objectuality—primarily bears on the Wie.

“Allgemeinbegriff der Art, wie wir ihn als absolutes Konkretum früher definiert haben, nicht hat. Das Ego kann nicht wiederholbar werden als eine Kette von rein möglichen koexistenten und absolut gleichen Egos (...). Darin liegt: das Ego hat die merkwürdige Eigenheit, dass für es absolutes Konkretum und Individuum zusammenfallen, dass die niederste konkrete Allgemeinheit sich selbst individuiert” (Hua XXXV, 62). For a more detailed discussion of the relation between concrete ego and variation, see De Santis 2020.

How are we to understand such an “intrinsic individualization” of the monad if it is not to be taken as though there were no distinction between the eidetic singularity and its being exemplified in an individual monad or “concrete ego”? Now, in order to provide a satisfactory answer, what should be taken into account is the problem of individualization (as Husserl assesses it in the “Bernau manuscripts”), which is a “transcendental” question, and includes the constitution of both space and time. Since the topic would take us far beyond the scope of this entry, let us confine our observations to the following.

In Ideen… II Husserl makes a clear distinction between Individualität von Dinge (“Kein Ding hat in sich selbst seine Individualität”) and the one proper to die geistige Welt (“Die absolute Individuation geht in das personale Ich ein”) (Hua IV, 297–302). If this is the case, then the distinction between the two forms of individualization (“extrinsic” and “intrinsic”) is to be traced back to the transcendental-constitutive

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process itself. In other words: while “things” receive, so to speak, their “individualization” from without and as a result of the constitutive operation on the part of the transcendental subject, being the “monad,” the transcendental source itself of the process, it does not receive its individualization from without but “from within” (si parva licet!). As is often the case with Husserl, an “ontological” distinction (in this case, between “intrinsic” and “extrinsic” individualization) can be properly understood exclusively if looked at from a transcendental perspective, i.e., as a problem of constitution.

References


