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Angaben zur Veröffentlichung / Publication details:

Meixner, Uwe. 2025. "Phenomenological Platonism." *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie: Louvain Journal of Philosophy* 87(3): 399–423. <https://doi.org/10.2143/TVF.87.3.3295570>.

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PHENOMENOLOGICAL PLATONISM

By Uwe MEIXNER (Augsburg)

1. THE EVERYDAY PERCEPTION OF UNIVERSALS, AND PLATO, HUSSERL, AND DAVID LEWIS

Consider this:

A A A A
A B C D,

and three questions: How many letters are in the first row? How many letters are in the second row? How many letters are in both rows together? One true answer to these questions is this: (1) There are four letters in the first row, and four letters in the second row, and therefore eight letters in both rows together. Another true answer is this: (2) There is one letter in the first row, four letters in the second row, and there are four letters altogether in both rows. But how can this be? How can both answers be true?

Obviously, what the word “letter” means in the second answer must be different from what the word “letter” means in the first answer; otherwise, the two answers would contradict each other and, therefore, could not both be true. In the second answer, the word “letter” stands

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for certain *type-objects* (hence for *universals*); in the first answer, the word “letter” stands for the *tokens*, or *occurrences*, of those type-objects (hence for *individuals*, or: *particulars*). Which of the two meanings one employs depends on how one is inclined to describe the situation that is presented at the beginning of this section. There are two descriptions of that situation, both equally true — and every grown-up fully capable English-speaking person is able to recognize *both* as true.

The description that fits answer (2) is this: “In the first row the letter A occurs four times, in the second row the letter A, the letter B, the letter C, and the letter D each occur one time; thus, in the first row we have one letter, in the second row we have four letters, in both rows together we have four letters.”

The description that fits answer (1) is this: “In the first row we have four A-letters, in the second row we have one more A-letter, and then one B-letter, one C-letter, and one D-letter; thus, in the first row we have four letters, in the second row we have four letters, hence eight letters in both rows together.”

Strikingly, the description that fits answer (2) is more natural than the description that fits answer (1); this becomes patent as soon as further elucidation of what is meant by the terms “A-letter,” “B-letter,” “C-letter,” and “D-letter” is requested. In fulfilling that request while staying within the conceptual bounds of answer (1), one has to come up with something conceptually complex, like this: An A-letter is a perfect copy of the following paradigmatic particular: A; a B-letter is a perfect copy of the following paradigmatic particular: B; etc. Now, there can be no doubt that we judge and describe the situation that is presented at the beginning of this section on the basis of *visual perception*. In consideration of the greater naturalness, just noted, of the description that fits answer (2), could it be that we perceive — indeed, *visually* perceive — certain universals, or certain type-objects, and not just the occurrences of them? Could it be that we perceive *the letter A*, for example, and not just tokens of it?

In the history of philosophy, *perceivability* has in general been denied to universals (which have in general been viewed as *abstract* entities), and that denial has frequently been followed by the denial of their

very existence (by so-called “nominalism”). Two notable exceptions to this historical pattern (continued even today) are Plato and Husserl. But whereas Plato’s ideas on the perceivability of certain universals — he called them *eide* (singular: *eidos*): *forms* — are fraught with myth and mysticism,¹ Husserl’s ideas on the same topic are not. Within his Phenomenology, Husserl offered an entirely rational theory of the visual — better: *quasi*-visual, or visual-*form* — perception of universals, which Husserl called *essences* and, in deference to Plato, also *eide*.

If one offers even part of an epistemology for some universals, then an ontology of those universals ought to be provided along with it. Husserl did not really do this. However, with the help of one of the great figures of 20th-century Analytic Philosophy, David Lewis, the ontology of the relevant universals that Husserl left incomplete can be completed — and, as it turns out, from the purely epistemological point of view, Husserl’s, the Phenomenologist’s, characteristic diffidence in ontological matters (which are, after all, *metaphysical* matters) does certainly have its advantages.

2. AN ONTOLOGICAL AND TERMINOLOGICAL BRIEFING

Every property, relation, or type-object is a universal, and every universal is either a property, a relation, or a type-object. Properties and relations are unsaturated, or predicative, universals, i.e., their *adicity* (that is, the number of their slots for saturation, according to which they are called “monadic,” “dyadic,” “triadic,” ...) is greater than zero (as is the case with all *functions* — the unsaturated entities — in the completely general Fregean sense). Type-objects, on the other hand, are saturated, or nonpredicative, universals, in other words, their adicity is zero (as is the case with all *objects* — the saturated entities — in the completely general Fregean sense). The adicity of properties is 1, that is, they have one slot for saturation; the adicity of relations is greater than 1, that is, they have more than one slot for saturation; the adicity of type-objects

¹ See Plato’s dialogues, in particular: *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Phaedo*.

is 0, that is, they have no slot for saturation. In order to avoid complexities which are not immediately pertinent to the subject matter of this essay, after this section, the article will focus on properties and type-objects.

If a property (a *monadic* universal) is filled by an entity which it can be saturated by, then the result is a state of affairs; if that state of affairs *obtains*, i.e., is a *fact*, then the entity in question exemplifies the property in question; if not, then the entity in question does not exemplify the property in question. If a property is filled by an entity which it *cannot* be saturated by, then the result is *Nothing* and, *a fortiori*, the entity in question does not exemplify the property in question. In order to avoid complexities which are not immediately pertinent to the subject matter of this essay, after this section, this article will focus on *exemplified* properties which can *only* be saturated by *concrete non-dependent individuals* that are *not* per se, *not* due to their very nature, located at some possible world within a space of possible worlds. The just-mentioned individuals are paradigmatic Fregean objects; in traditional terminology, they can be called “substances” (a nomenclature that is not without historical justification, but details would lead us too far astray), and I will avail myself of this terminology. Thus, to put the matter more briefly, this essay, to the extent that it deals with properties, will focus on *exemplified* properties *that are fit for substances only*. Note that every such property is a paradigmatic property.

What it means for a property to be exemplified and, respectively, not exemplified by an object *x* has been made clear (at least clear enough for the purposes of this essay). It is less clear what it means for a type-object to be exemplified and, respectively, not exemplified by an object *x*. Nevertheless, type-objects are quite commonly said to be exemplified by some object or other, and also said to be not exemplified by some object or other. Thus, not only the property *being red* is exemplified by every red object but also the type-object (*the color*) *red*. Similarly, not only the property *being a lion* is exemplified by every lion but also the type-object *the lion* (*per se*). And just as the properties *being red* and *being a lion* are not exemplified by, for example, this yellow tulip, so also the type-object *red* and *the lion* are not exemplified by this yellow tulip.

Once again in order to avoid complexities which are not immediately pertinent to the subject matter of this essay, this essay will focus on type-objects and properties that *naturally and essentially* match each other one-to-one, which, as part and parcel of their *naturally and essentially* matching each other, are exemplified by the very same entities. In this way, the exemplification of the type-objects considered in this essay is clear enough, since it can be taken to be *reducible* to the exemplification of the properties considered in this essay *via* natural and essential one-to-one correspondence.

Now, if — with all restrictions of focus in force — one listed, *per impossibile*, all the universals that this essay will be centrally concerned with (it is really impossible to list them all because they are infinitely many), then the list might start out in the following way:

(exemplified) **properties**

(fit for substances only):

being a lion

being a tiger

being a cat

being a soldier

being a thumb

being a head

being a brain

being a beautiful woman

being a left hand

being a motor car

etc.

(essentially corresponding)

type-objects:

the lion (per se)

the tiger (per se)

the cat (per se)

the (universal) soldier

the thumb

the head

the brain

the beautiful woman (per se)

the left hand

the motor car (per se)

etc.

Thus, as illustrated, some properties and type-objects naturally and essentially match each other one-to-one in such a manner as to be exemplified by the very same entities. But certainly not all properties and type-objects match each other in this manner. For some exemplified properties that are fit for substances only, there simply are no type-objects which are exemplified by the very same entities that the properties are exemplified by, for example, the property *being a thumb or a head* and the property *being a nonhuman substance*. However, as a rule, if a property

is associable with a *robust mental picture* (not just an abstract symbol), then it is naturally and essentially matched by an *equi-exemplified* type-object. For highly general properties, even if generality is confined to substances, associable mental pictures may become tenuous, or simply lack. Such properties may be naturally and essentially matched by equi-exemplified type-objects nonetheless; this is the case for the property *being an animal* (matching type-object: *the animal*) and the property *being human* (matching type-object: *the human being*).

If one looks at type-objects that are exemplified and *exclusively* exemplified by substances, then, indeed, every one of them seems to be naturally and essentially matched one-to-one by some equi-exemplified property fit for substances only. But in some cases the match is awkward to describe, and as a consequence of this, one is prone to describe it in a trivial way. Consider the following type-object (already encountered in section 1): *the letter A*. In a way, the matching property is easily named: *being a token of the letter A*. However, this way of naming the matching property is trivial, because it is being named *via* referring to the type-object it matches. The matching property is not so easily named if, in the naming, one forbears to refer to the matched type-object.

3. A BASICALLY LEWISIAN ONTOLOGICAL REPRESENTATION OF (CERTAIN) PROPERTIES AND OF THE TYPE-OBJECTS THAT NATURALLY AND ESSENTIALLY MATCH THEM

According to Lewis,² (exemplified) properties (fit for individuals only) are *non-empty sets* (in the familiar set-theoretic sense) of *possible* (that is, actual or merely possible) *individuals*.³ I disregard some *specifically* Lewisian (and highly controversial) ontological lore (see the first sentence

² See David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 50-51.

³ Note that according to Lewis no individual is a substance (for explanation: see the main text). Note also that Lewis *can* be said to accept non-exemplified properties, or rather, to accept *exactly one* non-exemplified property. It would be the empty set. Exemplification, in turn, is a simple matter for Lewis: an individual exemplifies a property if, and only if, it is an element of the property, i.e., of the set of possible individuals that is identical with the property. Note, finally, that Lewis does not accept *impossible* individuals (he was not a Meinongian); thus *the possible individuals* are *the individuals* for him.

of footnote 3). Each Lewisian possible individual is (and can only be) a physical individual which is, due to its very nature, a spatiotemporal part of exactly one possible world, each Lewisian possible world being, in turn, due to its very nature, a possible physical individual and a spatiotemporal part only of itself. Thus, in Lewisian ontology, transworld-identity of individuals (i.e., of the possible individuals) is excluded by the very nature of these individuals and must be replaced by the (or *a*) counterpart-relation.⁴

In contrast, the possible individuals considered in this essay are all, on the basis of what was determined in section 2, possible *substances*, in other words, possible *concrete non-dependent individuals* that are *not* per se, *not* due to their very nature, located at some possible world within a space of possible worlds.⁵ Therefore, no possible individual considered in this essay is a Lewisian possible individual; for no possible substance is a spatiotemporal part (in the proper, full sense) of a possible world. Otherwise, a possible substance would be *per se* located at some possible world within a space of possible worlds, which contradicts the definition of *substance*.

Substances (in the sense here employed) have no place in Lewis's ontology; he is even unable to grasp what their ontological nature consists in — as is apparent from *Plurality*, on pages 198-202. However, these negative facts do not preclude that, in an ontology that is not Lewis's, the basic Lewisian idea of *representing* properties by sets of possible individuals can be fruitfully employed. Let (exemplified) properties (fit for substances only) be *represented* by non-empty sets

⁴ See Lewis, *Plurality*, 69-71, 81. According to Lewis, in addition to identity, neither physical relations nor the relation of causation can obtain between possible individuals in different possible worlds. Concerning *counterparts*, see David Lewis, "Counterpart Theory and Quantified Modal Logic," in *Philosophical Papers*, vol. I (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 26-46.

⁵ The "*not per se*," "*not due to their very nature*," is important; for if a substance exists in a possible world, usually in the time of the possible world, it is *via* that existence certainly located, in a sense, at that possible world, and usually located also in the time of that possible world. I, for example, being a substance, am not per se located at the actual world, nor in the time of the actual world (briefly: "in time"); but since I exist in that world and in the time of that world, I am located, in a sense, at the actual world and in the time of the actual world; and since that possible world is quite unique, being the only one that is *actual*, I am located, in a quite excellent sense, at *exactly one* possible world within a space of possible worlds — *via* my *actual* existence. However, my being thus located is certainly not due to my very nature.

of possible substances. To speak here of *being represented by* certain sets is more appropriate than to talk straightforwardly of *being (identical with)* certain sets — and Lewis, too, would have done well (for general reasons of philosophical appropriateness, not only for the reason pointed out at the end of section 4) if he had not held that properties *are* sets of possible individuals, but had only held that they *are represented by* such sets; but in some — not in all — areas of ontology Lewis was a ruthless reductionist,⁶ unscrupulously employing set-theory as an effective instrument for achieving reductive purposes.⁷

Now, what is the rationale for *representing* properties by non-empty sets of possible substances (though not quite for *identifying* them with such sets)?⁸ That rationale is not difficult to find. Let P be a non-empty set of possible substances. If P is not a singleton set, the elements of P vary, and may vary very much, but they all have something in common too: let $\text{maxcom}(P)$ be *the maximum* of what all the elements of P have in common. Evidently, each non-empty set of possible substances determines exactly one maximum (*the maximum*) of what all its elements have in common, and different sets of possible substances determine different such maxima.⁹ Thus, there is a one-to-one correspondence between the non-empty sets of possible substances and *the maxima of commonality* for those sets: each non-empty set P of possible substances has its maximum of commonality, namely, $\text{maxcom}(P)$: different non-empty sets P and P' of possible substances have different maxima of commonality, i.e., $\text{maxcom}(P) \neq \text{maxcom}(P')$. And of course, trivially, there is no maximum of commonality for a non-empty set of possible substances which is not the maximum of commonality of some non-empty set of possible substances.

⁶ He was not a reductionist — quite the contrary — in the ontology of modality.

⁷ Ontological reductionism via set-theory, or something much like set-theory, has a long tradition. Here are three milestones: Frege's *Grundgesetze der Arithmetik*, Russell & Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica*, Carnap's *Der logische Aufbau der Welt*.

⁸ Note that identification can be considered *the extreme* of (one-to-one) representation.

⁹ Why is that so? — Let P and P' be different non-empty sets of possible substances; hence there is an element x of P which is not an element of P' , or there is an element x' of P' which is not an element of P ; hence either *being different from x* is part of $\text{maxcom}(P')$ but not of $\text{maxcom}(P)$, or *being different from x'* is part of $\text{maxcom}(P)$ but not of $\text{maxcom}(P')$. In either case, $\text{maxcom}(P)$ is different from $\text{maxcom}(P')$.

What ontological category does $\text{maxcom}(P)$ belong to for a given non-empty set P of possible substances? There is no absolute need to assume that it is always a property, let alone in the *focal* sense of “property” specified in section 2, according to which properties are not only required to be fit for substances only, but also required to be exemplified and naturally and essentially matched one-to-one by type-objects. Nevertheless, it seems just right to take $\text{maxcom}(P)$ to be a property in the *focal* sense — *unless* one takes it to be a type-object, namely, a type-object that naturally and essentially matches the aforesaid property (one-to-one). In line with this, we can set up the following two-columned list, which incorporates in its righthand column the already two-columned list in section 2:

non-empty set P of possible substances:	$\text{maxcom}(P)$
<i>the set of all possible lions</i> ¹⁰	<i>being a lion and the lion (per se)</i>
... 	
<i>the set of all possible motor cars</i> ¹¹	<i>being a motor car and the motor car (per se)</i>
etc.	etc.

This parallel listing continues no matter which (exemplified) property (fit for substances only) matched by the relevant type-object is being put into the list under the heading **$\text{maxcom}(P)$** . This means: the rationale for *representing properties* (and matching type-objects) by non-empty sets of possible substances (though *not identifying* them with such sets) has been made clear.

4. THREE QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE FOREGOING EXPOSITIONS

Question 1: The representation of properties and matching type-objects in the previous section refers to *possible substances*. This may mean *entities of which it is (alethically) possible that they be substances*, or it may mean *substances of which it is (alethically) possible that they exist*. The latter

¹⁰ That is: the set of all possible substances which are lions.

¹¹ That is: the set of all possible substances which are motor cars.

meaning is intended. Now, substances of which it is possible that they exist, either exist or do not exist. But are there non-existing substances of which it is possible that they exist? Are there *merely possible* substances?

Answer to question 1: Unfortunately (speaking *ad personam*), the representation of properties (and matching type-objects) by non-empty sets of possible substances works only if one accepts merely possible substances. If one does not accept merely possible substances, that is, if one holds that every possible substance is an existing substance (the converse is trivially true), then one is forced to admit that different properties are not (one-to-one) matched by different non-empty sets of possible substances, which is contrary to what is required if we are to have (*one-to-one*) representation here. *Being an animal with a heart* and *being an animal with kidneys* certainly are two different properties; but if there are no merely possible substances, then *the set of all possible substances which are each an animal with a heart* (in short: *the set of all possible animals with a heart*) is not different from *the set of all possible substances which are each an animal with kidneys* (in short: *the set of all possible animals with kidneys*): this follows from the well-known fact that the set of all *existing* substances which are each an animal with a heart (in short: the set of all *existing* animals with a heart) is *identical* with the set of all *existing* substances which are each an animal with kidneys (in short: the set of all *existing* animals with kidneys). For if there are no merely possible substances, then the set of all possible animals with a heart *just is* the set of all existing animals with a heart, and the set of all possible animals with kidneys *just is* the set of all existing animals with kidneys.

Question 2: In what sense can a merely possible substance be F (e.g., red) or an F (e.g., a lion)?

Answer to question 2: What is meant by “possible substance *x* is F/an F” is that “possible substance *x* is F/an F *relative to the actual world*.” Thus the representation of properties (and matching type-objects) by non-empty sets of possible substances requires not only that there be merely possible substances, i.e., substances that are possible but non-existent *relative to the actual world*, but also that *F* or *an F* can be predicated of these objects *relative to the actual world*, and *veridically* so, yielding merely possible

substances that are *F*, e.g., *red*, and merely possible substances that are *an F*, e.g., *a lion*. Now, readers may well feel that the ontological price for representing properties by non-empty sets of possible substances — *even if*, as in this essay, one is not upholding any Lewisian extremes of modal realism (cf. section 3) — is a bit high. As will be seen, the Husserlian perspective on that same representation has something to offer that improves the situation — at least somewhat.

Question 3: It seems that even properties that come most easily to mind will be represented by infinitely large sets of possible substances; for example, the set of all possible lions is presumably infinitely large. Doesn't this have unacceptable consequences? Is not the property of being a lion fairly easy to grasp, whereas the set of all possible lions, being infinitely large, is impossible to grasp?

Answer to question 3: This question addresses a serious epistemological problem. Indeed, for Lewis's view of properties, which assumes the *identity* of the property with the appropriate set, and not just the *representation* of the property by the appropriate set, the problem is fatal — though, of course, it is fatal *only if* one allows epistemological problems to be fatal for ontological views, which outlook I suspect, Lewis would not have allowed. But even if merely representation, and not identification, is intended, the problem is serious. It is not without irony that a move which — considering Husserl — one may view as bringing certain properties and type-objects within the purview of intuitional knowledge, namely, the move of *representing* them as sets of possible substances, has side-effects that contravene that very purpose.

5. HUSSERL'S ANTICIPATION OF (SOME OF) LEWIS'S VIEWS

It is time to turn to Husserl. Husserl speaks a rather different philosophical language than Lewis. It is not really important that Husserl's language is German and Lewis's English, nor are personal differences of literary style important. What is truly important is that Husserl's philosophical language is a version of (what one might call) *epistemologese*,

whereas Lewis's is a version of (what one might call) *ontologese*. Speaking *epistemologese*, Husserl is very positive — and positive, to boot, with a historical perspective (Plato!) — concerning the *perceivability of universals*, and he is very clear on the question of what *perception* (in a *general* sense, which is not perception as *sensory perception*!) must consist in, so that universals turn out to be *perceivable* — topics which Lewis was not at all interested in (just as he was not at all interested in the history of philosophy).¹² Here are a few revealing quotations from Husserl's *Phenomenological Psychology* (all quotations in this essay are translated from the original German by the present author):

[1] In the last lecture, we have sought to describe the specifically shaped complex mental activities as the final result of which the *eidos*, the Platonic idea, the general essence [das Wesensallgemeine] enters our vision: so that we have it quite directly and henceforth keep it as an abiding mental acquisition, just as we keep any other objectivity that comes to our knowledge. This multi-form mental activity we call vision of ideas or, also, ideation.¹³

[2] This general essence is the *eidos*, the “*idea*” in the Platonic sense, but taken in its purity and free of all metaphysical interpretations; hence taken precisely as it comes directly intuitively to givenness for us in the vision of ideas that originates in such [namely, the described] way.¹⁴

[3] The vision of ideas is itself an analog of simple experience, insofar as it is a consciousness, albeit a higher and actively generating consciousness, in which an objectivity of a new kind, the general, comes to self-givenness.¹⁵

[4] [B]ringing a kind of objectivity in original selfhood to consciousness. This is done by every ideation itself, the envisaged idea is here called envisaged

¹² Cf. Lewis, *Plurality*, viii.

¹³ Edmund Husserl, *Phänomenologische Psychologie. Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1925*, Husserliana IX [HU IX], ed. Walter Biemel (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), 76: “Wir haben in der letzten Vorlesung die bestimmt gearteten komplexen Geistestätigkeiten zu beschreiben gesucht, als deren Endergebnis uns das Eidos, die platonische Idee, das Wesensallgemeine in die Schau tritt: so daß wir sie ganz unmittelbar haben und sie hinfort als bleibenden geistigen Erwerb behalten, so gut als irgend sonstige Gegenständlichkeit, die uns zur Kenntnis gekommen ist. Wir nennen diese vieltgestaltige Geistestätigkeit Ideenschau oder auch Ideation.”

¹⁴ HU IX, 73: “Dieses allgemeine Wesen ist das Eidos, die *idea* im platonischen Sinn, aber rein gefaßt und frei von allen metaphysischen Interpretationen; also genau so genommen, wie es in der auf solchem [dem beschriebenen] Wege entspringenden Ideenschau uns unmittelbar intuitiv zur Gegebenheit kommt.”

¹⁵ HU IX, 83: “Ideenschau ist selbst ein Analogon der schlichten Erfahrung, insofern sie ein freilich höheres und aktiv erzeugendes Bewußtsein ist, in dem eine neuartige Gegenständlichkeit, das Allgemeine, zur Selbstgegebenheit kommt.”

because it is not intended or talked about vaguely, indirectly, via empty symbols or words, but is taken directly and as itself.¹⁶

Thus, according to Husserl, *without* Husserl actually using the words “perceive” and “perception” in this context (or rather their German equivalents: *wahrnehmen*, *Wahrnehmung*), we do *perceive* universals — generalities, general essences, *eide* in the Platonic sense, *ideai* in the Platonic sense. We do so in virtue of *perception (of something)* being taken to be the direct — non-mediated, non-symbolic — self-giveness (*Selbstgegebenheit*) of something in the mind, in consciousness, without anything interposing between the cognizing subject and the object which is being cognized. Husserl is convinced that universals are presentable to the human mind in this manner, and he has a method for inducing the *self-giveness* of universals. Before we turn to this method, note that the universals Husserl has in mind when speaking of the *eidos* and the *idea* in the Platonic sense are bound to be type-objects, not properties; for Plato’s *eide* are type-objects. But Husserl’s concentration on type-objects is, after all, not important, because the very elementary type-object that Husserl uses as an example in the quotations that follow is not only rather un-Platonic — considering that it is *a color* —, it is also matched naturally and by its own nature — i.e., essentially — by a property (one exemplified and fit for substances only). It can safely be assumed that this would have been the case also with other *eide* that Husserl might have adduced. Thus, the focus on properties (exemplified and fit for substances only) that are naturally and essentially matched (one-to-one) by type-objects — the focus I started out with in section 2 (in order to avoid unnecessary complexities) — is adequate for interpreting Husserl. Husserl writes:

[5] An *eidos*, a generality-essence [*eine Wesensallgemeinheit*] is, for example, the species *red* or the genus *color*, but as a pure generality.¹⁷

¹⁶ HU IX, 83: “[E]ine Art <von> Gegenständlichkeiten in ursprünglicher Selbstheit zum Bewußtsein zu bringen. Das tut jede Ideation selbst, die geschaute Idee heißt hier geschaut, weil sie nicht vage, indirekt, mittels leerer Symbole oder Worte gemeint oder beredet ist, sondern eben direkt und selbst erfaßt.”

¹⁷ HU IX, 85: “Ein Eidos, eine Wesensallgemeinheit ist z. B. die Artung Rot oder die Gattung Farbe, aber als reine Allgemeinheit.”

Note that Husserl (like so many others) is actually committing an ontological error here: *color* is not the genus of *red* or the genus of anything that is red. *Color* is the *higher-order* type-object that naturally and essentially matches (and is equi-exemplified with) the *higher-order* property *being a color*. *Red* exemplifies this property (but nothing red does), and therefore *red* (but nothing red) can be said to also exemplify the matching type-object: *color*. Instead of “*color* [*Farbe*]” in the above quotation, Husserl should have said “*colored* [*Farbig*]”; for *colored* is indeed a type-object *qua genus* that fits *red* as a type-object *qua species* (of a genus, e.g., the genus *colored*).

Note moreover that Husserl treats both *red* (“red” used as a noun, designating a certain color) and *being red* (“being red” used as a singular term, designating a certain property)¹⁸ as *primarily* exemplified by individual aspects (individuals that are dependent aspects) of certain substances, which (dependent) aspects he called “*Momente* [moments]” and the medieval Aristotelians called *accidentia*, and as only *secondarily* exemplified by the substances themselves. I will disregard this complication, since nothing important for the subject matter of this essay hinges on it, and will treat *being red* simply as an *exemplified* property *fit for substances only*; and I will *correspondingly* treat the naturally and essentially matching type-object *red* as exemplified by the same substances as the property *being red*.

Though *intuitional*, the *quasi-visual* perception of universals — their *quasi-visual* self-givenness — that Husserl believes to be possible requires a theoretical guideline. The following quotation from *Phenomenological Psychology* suggests that the guideline followed by Husserl I is the basically Lewisian conception of the ontological representation of properties by the sets of their respective instances (which conception is described in section 3), though there was, of course, no influence of Lewis on Husserl and, to the best of my knowledge, also no influence of Husserl on Lewis. And quotation [7] leaves no doubt that such a kinship of thought between the two (very different) philosophers exists *indeed*:

¹⁸ Note that “*red*” in the singular term “*being red*” is, in this essay, used as an *adjective* throughout, *not* as a noun; for it is not the higher-order property *being [the color] red* (i.e., *being identical with red*) that is intended to be designated by “*being red*.”

[6] The general red cannot be seen [...]; but unavoidable is the extension of speech with regard to seeing which is not for no reason common in general language. This extension of speech is the expression of the following fact: Quite analogously to the way in which an individual singularity in sensory perception is appropriated by us directly and as itself, so also is a commonality and generality of arbitrarily many individually seen instances, but, certainly, in that more complicated vision achieved by way of actively comparing overlap-making [Überschiebung] and congruence.¹⁹

[7] [But as we say] the *eidos* red is one vis-à-vis the infinity of possible singularities, [...] we have an infinite variation in our mind as underlying basis. It [the variation] gives us what belongs to the *eidos* as inseparable correlate, the so-called circumference of the *eidos*, of the “purely notional essence,” the infinity of possible singularities that fall under it, being its “singularizations” which, Platonically speaking, stand to it in the relationship of participation, [each] as singular in relation to the *eidos* as its [general] essence [...]. In correlation can here be seen, on the one hand, the general itself [the *eidos*], on the other hand, the [i.e., its] circumference as the [i.e., its] allness, but also the singular [i.e., its singularization] in any way at all.²⁰

Clearly, the two-columned list in section 3 can, in harmony with Husserlian and not only in harmony with Lewisian ideas, be continued as follows:

**non-empty set P of
possible substances:**

maxcom(P)

...
the set of all possible red substances

...
*being red and red (per se).*²¹

¹⁹ HU IX, 85: “Das allgemeine Rot kann man nicht sehen [...]; aber unvermeidlich ist die Erweiterung der Rede vom Sehen, die nicht umsonst in der allgemeinen Sprache üblich ist. Damit kommt zum Ausdruck, daß ganz analog, wie ein individuell Einzelnes uns im sinnlichen Wahrnehmen direkt und als es selbst zu eigen wird, so auch ein Gemeinsames und Allgemeines beliebig vieler einzeln gesehener Exemplare, aber in jenem freilich komplizierteren Erschauen der aktiven vergleichenden Überschiebung und Kongruenz.”

²⁰ HU IX, 79: “[Aber wie wir sagen] das Eidos Rot ist eins gegenüber der Unendlichkeit möglicher Einzelheiten, [...] haben wir eben eine unendliche Variation in unserem Sinn als Untergrund. Sie liefert uns das, was zum Eidos als untrennbares Korrelat gehört, den sogenannten Umfang des Eidos, des rein begrifflichen Wesens, die Unendlichkeit von möglichen Einzelheiten, die unter es fallen, die seine Vereinzelungen sind, die zu ihm, platonisch gesprochen, im Verhältnis der Teilhabe stehen, als Einzelnes bezogen auf das Eidos als sein Wesen [...]. In Korrelation ist hier zu erschauen einerseits das Allgemeine selbst, andererseits der Umfang als die Allheit, aber auch das irgend Einzelne überhaupt.”

²¹ In full: the property *being red* and the type-object *red*.

6. THE PROBLEM WITH HUSSERLIAN IDEATION

The subsequent two quotations show that Husserl is only to some extent aware of the epistemological problem that is connected with the one-to-one correspondence depicted by the two-columned list, i.e., with the one-to-one matching of certain sets *and* certain properties/type-objects, a matching epitomized also by *the set of all possible red substances* placed on the one side and the property *being red* and the type-object *red* placed on the other. That epistemological problem — already thematized in the answer to question 3 in section 4 — does not go away even if one avoids the Lewisian, *not* Husserlian, move of *identifying* the (exemplified) property (fit for substances only) or matching type-object with the non-empty – and, normally, infinite — set of possible substances that represents it. The problem persists if, like Husserl, one does not make the identification in question but still, like Husserl, seeks *to know* the universal, even to know it intuitionally, quasi-visually, through knowing a *finite* part of its so-called “circumference” (by which set, *the whole* of the set, it is *represented*), and seeks to know it in this manner *even if its “circumference” is infinite*, as it normally is.

[8] Namely, doing variation, free and arbitrary variation, we produce variants, each of which occurs in the subjective experiential mode of the “ad libitum” — just as occurs, on the other hand, the process of variation itself. But now, we can here at any time direct our regard also at the fact that through it [the variation], respectively through all variants, necessarily an invariant persists which — as we can envisage, can, envisaging, comprehend — is itself absolutely invariable. Described more precisely: we can see, and with absolute certainty, that in doing arbitrary variation — while we are indifferent regarding what differs in the variation — so to speak a constant congruence of variants is maintained, and [we can see] a general essence as the *what* or content which in the congruence necessarily remains invariable. At this, therefore, we can direct our regard, as upon the necessarily invariable in a variation done in the mode of the “ad libitum,” and howsoever it is to be continued.²²

²² HU IX, 72-73: “Nämlich Variation ühend, freie, willkürliche, erzeugen wir Varianten, deren jede im subjektiven Erlebnismodus des beliebig auftritt, wie andererseits auch der Prozeß der Variation selbst. Nun aber können wir hier jederzeit auch den Blick darauf richten, daß durch sie bzw. durch alle Varianten in Notwendigkeit eine Invariante hindurchgeht, die, wie wir schauen, einsehen

[9] The basic work on which everything further depends is the shaping of some experienced or imagined objectivity into a variant: the shaping of it into the form of the arbitrary example and, at the same time, of the guiding “paradigm”: the first member of an openly endless manifold of variants, in short: of a variation. This open endlessness does of course not imply an actual progress in infinity, does not imply the nonsensical demand *actually* to generate all possible variants — as if only then we could be certain that the *eidos* coming to be grasped later on is really in accordance with all the possibilities. What is meant, rather, is that the variation as process of the formation of variants is to have itself an arbitrary shape; that the process is to be carried out in the consciousness of the arbitrary formation of variants. [...] Thus, to every manifold of variation there essentially belongs the curious and exceedingly important consciousness of “and so on ad libitum.” It is only in this way that what we call an “openly infinite” manifold is given, and it is evident that it is the same manifold whether we proceed by generating [variants] for a longer time, or proceed by adducing arbitrarily what fits, hence whether we extend the series of actual envisagements [Anschauungen] or break off earlier.²³

In fulfilment of the announcement made in the answer to question 2 in section 4, the following can be said: It must please every opponent to mind-independent *mere possibilia* (mind-independent nonexistent possibles, as are postulated by any version of modal realism) that Husserl speaks of *generating* possible variants — in one’s mind, in one’s consciousness,

können, selbst absolut invariabel ist. Genauer beschrieben: wir können sehen und in absoluter Gewißheit, daß in Übung willkürlicher Variation und während uns das Differierende der Variation gleichgültig ist, sozusagen eine beständige Deckung der Varianten erhalten bleibt, und als Was oder Gehalt, der in der Deckung notwendig invariabel bleibt, ein allgemeines Wesen. Darauf können wir also den Blick richten als auf das notwendig Invariable in solcher im Modus des ‘beliebig’ geübten und wie immer fortzuführenden Variation.”

²³ HU IX, 76-77: “Die Grundleistung, von der alles weitere abhängt, ist die Gestaltung irgend-einer erfahrenen oder phantasierten Gegenständlichkeit zu einer Variante; ihre Gestaltung in die Form des beliebigen Exempels und zugleich des leitenden ‘Vorbildes’: eben des Ausgangsgliedes für eine offen endlose Mannigfaltigkeit von Varianten, kurzweg eine Variation. Diese offene Endlosigkeit besagt natürlich nicht ein wirkliches Fortgehen in die Unendlichkeit, nicht die unsinnige Forderung, alle möglichen Varianten *wirklich* zu erzeugen – als ob wir nur dann gewiß sein könnten, daß das nachher zur Erfassung kommende Eidos wirklich allen Möglichkeiten gemäß sei. Was vielmehr gemeint ist, ist, daß die Variation als Prozeß der Variantenbildung selbst eine Beliebigkeitsgestalt habe, daß er im Bewußtsein beliebiger Fortbildung von Varianten vollzogen sei. [...] Also zu jeder Variationsmannigfaltigkeit gehört wesentlich das merkwürdige und so überaus wichtige Bewußtsein des ‘und so weiter nach Belieben’. Dadurch allein ist das, was wir eine ‘offen unendliche’ Mannigfaltigkeit nennen, gegeben, und evidenterweise ist dies dieselbe, ob wir längerhin erzeugend oder beliebig Passendes heranziehend fortschreiten, also die Reihe wirklicher Anschauungen erweitern oder schon früher abbrechen.”

of course, and only finitely many, of course. If mere *possibilia* are to be mind-dependent constructs, fictions of the imagination (by fantasy-variation), as Husserl proposes, then this makes them rather more acceptable to thinkers who have set their minds against modal realism (as, no doubt, Husserl himself would have). No phenomenologist, Husserlian or otherwise, can deny that fantasy-variation takes place in the mind and that *something objectual* is produced in the course of it, as a rule, *mere possibilia*, though mere *possibilia* which are, ontologically, quite inseparable from an actual experiential setting of intentionality;²⁴ it is this experiential setting which is primarily produced, its intentional object only secondarily.

Moreover, and once again it must be pleasing to the ontologically frugal, no *actual* infinity of anything is produced in the course of fantasy-variation. All we can have by fantasy-variation is a *potential* infinity of variants: “an openly endless manifold of variants,” an “open endlessness [of variants],” “an ‘openly infinite’ manifold [of variants],” as Husserl calls it. Husserl is very clear in quotation [9]: “This open endlessness does of course not imply an actual progress in infinity, does not imply the nonsensical demand *actually* to generate all possible variants — as if only then we could be certain that the *eidos* coming to be grasped later on is really in accordance with all the possibilities.”

Now, a *potential* infinity is never anything else but a *finitude* that can be *ad libitum* enlarged, and this constitutes a difficulty for the project at hands, which Husserl, however, believes he can overcome — *without* fully recognizing the force of the difficulty (as is evident from quotation [9]). The difficulty is this: The given set of variants — say, *a set of possible red substances* — produced by fantasy-variation is finite, and we can grasp it, that is, we can grasp all of its elements (one after the other, or, if the set is not too large, even all together *at once*). But by grasping it, grasping them, do we thereby — within “a constant congruence of variants” — already grasp, for example, the type-object *red*? This seems

²⁴ Fantasy-experiences of the nonexistent are *qua experiences* just as real as other experiences, for example, sensory experiences. However, it is common, though somewhat misleading, to call fantasy-experiences “unreal” because their intentional objects are experienced as (and normally are) nonexistent, i.e., unreal.

questionable, in view of the fact that the given finite set of variants can be enlarged in infinitely many ways in infinitely many directions of similitude. How can we be sure that the finite set of possible red substances we produced by fantasy-variation points *unequivocally* to the type-object *red*? — as would indeed *the set of all possible red substances* if only we could produce and/or grasp it, which, however, we cannot, because it is infinite.

What Husserl offers, implicitly, for overcoming this difficulty is not convincing. It seems he believes in the — philosophically unconscionable — magic of the expression “and so on,” or in the magic of the peculiar kind of consciousness which is, undeniably, evoked by that expression. (The “ad libitum” added to “and so on” can, in reason, only denote an *ad libitum within strict bounds* — whether Husserl was aware of this or not.)

However, the intriguing thing is that the — philosophically unconscionable — *magic* seems to work on most occasions where it is invoked, and, come to think of it, what would we do if it didn’t work on most occasions where it is, explicitly or implicitly, invoked? How often have we been presented with a finite subset taken from an infinite set and have known instantly, intuitionally, and precisely which infinite set it was taken from, through the mere further information (or true assumption) that the infinite set was not a “lawless” set, that the infinite sequence, for example, was not without a governing rule! And therefore, might we not very well proceed from knowing an infinite set in this finitely grounded manner to knowing intuitionally, quasi-visually, the universal which the infinite set represents, given that it is a set that represents a universal in the manner described previously in this essay?

Let’s make a phenomenological experiment: Blindfold a person and put ten (wholly) red but otherwise arbitrarily chosen substances — “things” — on a table in front of her, and nothing else. Remove the blindfold and ask the person which “quality” — property/type-object — is being exemplified — “presented” — by these “things” in front of her. The answer is very likely: *red*. And if it isn’t, simply increase the number of red substances on the table while, at the same time, allowing them to be as miscellaneous as possible. Sooner or later (rather sooner than later) the answer to your question will, after all, be: *red*.

Johannes Kepler was able to extract the laws of planetary motion from the (exact but finitely many) data provided by Tycho Brahe. On a much humbler scale, human beings are perfectly able to pick up a tune from a few notes — and they are perfectly able to discern the intended universal when given a few samples, “specimens,” of it. This strongly suggests that we are indeed able to *quasi-visually perceive* universals subsequent to envisaging a finite number of samples of them, as Husserl asserts. Yet, it seems we can do so in a much more direct manner than Husserl thought and expounded, namely, in a rather classic, straightforwardly *Platonic* manner.

According to Husserl, “seeing” a universal is perceptually secondary to envisaging samples of the universal in fantasy-variation. According to him, envisaging the samples comes first, and only then — *perceptually supervenient* on this act (that is, *determined* by it) — the vision of the universal is brought about. Husserl speaks of

[10] performing that mental overlap-making in which the commonality, the red, the shape “itself” emerges and itself comes to perception, to vision.²⁵

However, is there really such an “actively comparing overlap-making” of “arbitrarily many individually seen instances” (cf. quotation [6] from *Phenomenological Psychology*)? I, for one, cannot discern any such procedure in my experience; perhaps it is unconsciously performed. What if in fact there is no perceptual supervenience of the universal, as *quasi-visually known*, upon its envisaged (as such finitely many) possible samples, and the envisaged initial samples merely serve to stimulate the mind and to guide it to the direct vision of the universal — just as classic Platonists have always said that the imperfectly straight lines seen in the sand or on a wax tablet or on a piece of paper merely serve to stimulate the mind and to guide it to the (for Plato himself, merely *remembered*) vision of geometrically perfect straight lines?

Clearly, Husserl, in his phenomenological Platonism, does not go that far, but insists on *perceptual supervenience*, that is, on a secondary perception (the quasi-visual perception of the universal) *being determined*

²⁵ HU IX, 85: “jene geistige Überschiebung vollziehen, in der das Gemeinsame, das Rot, die Figur ‘selbst’ hervortritt, selbst zur Erfassung, zur Erschauung kommt.”

by a primary perception (the envisagement of individual instances of the universal).²⁶ But then the epistemological problem remains: It is *not understood* how the perception — quasi-visual “vision” — of a normal universal, represented (as described) by an *infinite* set of possible substances — for example, the type-object *red* (or the matching property *being red*) — could *supervene* on (be *determined* by) the perception — the literal vision (in the imagination or indeed in actuality) — of only *finitely* many of its instances. And only finitely many instances they *must* be.

7. ESSENCE-TRUTHS

Husserl considered the realm of the *eide* — of the “generality-essences,” “general essences,” here focally taken to be (exemplified) properties (fit for substances only) and the matching type-objects — to be also a realm of *a-priori*-truths:

[11] The general truths in which we merely explicate what belongs to pure generality-essences [*Wesensallgemeinheiten*] precede, in their validity, all questions regarding the facts and their factual truths. For this reason, the essence-truths [*Wesenswahrheiten*] are called *a priori*, preceding in their validity all factuality, all determinations on the basis of experience.²⁷

²⁶ Earlier, Husserl had a different approach, one much closer to classic Platonism (identified with its rational core, without the mysticism). In the Second Logical Investigation (in: *Logische Untersuchungen. Zweiter Band. Erster Teil*, Husserliana XIX/1 [HU XIX/1], ed. Ursula Panzer (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984)), he speaks of a “specializing intending [*spezialisierendes Meinen*]” of general objects, species, ideas *alongside* the “individual intending [*individuelles Meinen*]” of individuals, instances: one can switch from one intending to the other, and back, with respect to the same appearance (HU XIX/1, 114-115; for a striking illustration, consider again the phenomenon whose description is at the very beginning of this essay; Husserl’s own example is on p. 115 of HU XIX/1). For Husserl, the specializing intending is irreducible to the individual intending: we intend “the one identical red [*das eine identische Rot*]” “in a new manner of consciousness whereby the species, instead of the individual, becomes an object for us [*in einer neuartigen Bewußtseinsweise, durch die uns eben die Spezies statt des Individuellen gegenständlich wird*]” (HU XIX/1, 111-112). Why did Husserl abandon this simple view? Perhaps because it tasted to him more of *postulation* than of phenomenological description? Is what he replaced it by — the view that has been examined in this essay — more in line with phenomenological description? It does not seem so. From the point of Phenomenology as a purely descriptive discipline, Husserl might have done well if he had stuck to the *simple view*.

²⁷ HU IX, 86: “Die allgemeinen Wahrheiten, in denen wir bloß auseinanderlegen, was zu reinen Wesensallgemeinheiten gehört, gehen in ihrer Gültigkeit allen Fragen nach den Tatsachen und ihren tatsächlichen Wahrheiten vorher. Daher heißen die Wesenswahrheiten *a priori*, aller Tatsächlichkeit, allen Feststellungen aus Erfahrung vorangehend in ihrer Gültigkeit [*sic*].”

This quotation also reveals that Husserl — a speaker of *epistemologese* even to the point of being an ontological idealist²⁸ — does not distinguish between the epistemological concept of *sensory experience* and the ontological concept of *factuality*, with the consequence that he does not distinguish between the concept *valid independent of sensory experience* and the concept *valid independent of factuality*. In other words, Husserl does not distinguish between *a priori* and *necessary*. To him, they are one and the same concept.

In line with this Husserlian non-distinction, there are indeed many truths which are both *a priori* and *necessary*. Which *a priori* and necessary truths is Husserl thinking of under the designation “essence-truths”? Most certainly, he has in mind truths that involve, beside the purely logico-ontological functors, only essences: truths that concern important logico-ontological relationships between properties, respectively: between the matching type-objects. Such relationships are, above all, *inclusion*, *exclusion*, and *identity*. For example, it is *a priori* and *necessarily* true that *lion* excludes *tiger* (and vice versa) and that both *lion* and *tiger* include *cat*, and it is *a priori* and *necessarily* true that *red* excludes *blue* (and vice versa) and that both *red* and *blue* include *colored*.²⁹ It is important to note here that the essences in these examples are all *instigated by experience*, and are in this sense *empirical*, *a posteriori*, while the truths about them, the essence-truths, are nevertheless *a priori* and *necessary*. The original context of quotation [11] makes it clear that under the “generality-essences” [Wesensallgemeinheiten] Husserl also includes empirical essences, for example, the color *red*.

Is it another Husserlian essence-truth that *water* is (identical with) H_2O ? Is it *a priori* and *necessarily* true that *water* is identical with H_2O ?

²⁸ Regarding Husserl’s idealism, see, for example, Uwe Meixner, “Husserls transzendentaler Idealismus als Supervenienzthese — ein interner Realismus,” in *Husserl und die Philosophie des Geistes*, eds. Manfred Frank and Niels Weidtmann (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), 178-208, and “Idealism, Husserl, and Monotheism,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Idealism and Immaterialism*, ed. Joshua Farris and Benedikt Paul Göcke (London/New York: Routledge, 2022), 300-317.

²⁹ Husserl would have held (it is safe to assume that he would have made this mistake) that it is *a priori* and *necessarily* true that both *red* and *blue* include *color*; but, on the contrary, it is *a priori* and *necessarily* true that neither *red* nor *blue* includes *color*. However, what is indeed *a priori* and *necessarily* true is that both these colors *exemplify color*.

If one follows Saul Kripke, then this has to be denied. Kripke has, on the one hand argued that it is a scientific, hence empirical truth not *a priori* true that *water* is H_2O and, on the other hand, he has argued that it is, nevertheless, *necessarily* true that *water* is H_2O .³⁰ Of course, the mere fact of having been discovered by empirical means does not by itself make a truth empirical, yet in the case of *water* being H_2O , it is utterly plausible that this truth (if it is a truth) could not have been discovered by any non-empirical means (by human beings): it could not have been discovered by means that do not involve *sensory* experience. Thus, it is indeed not *a priori* true that *water* is H_2O — though it is true (or so it seems). But is it, nevertheless, *necessarily* true? For Kripke, his affirmative answer to this question is a consequence of his rather unexamined belief in the ability of science — *natural* science — to justify, as true, identity-statements *with rigid designators*.³¹ The identity-statement “*water* is H_2O ” is a typical “scientific” example of such a statement. For “*water*” and “ H_2O ” are *rigid* designators: the first singular term refers *in every possible world* invariably to X (we know what it is), and the latter singular term refers *in every possible world* invariably to Y (we know what it is). Thus, if *water* is H_2O , it must be *necessarily* so (i.e., in every possible world).

On the other hand, in view of the positions of this article, what is the *Husserlian* perspective on “*water* is H_2O ”? *First of all*, *water* is taken to be a type-object matching the property *being a quantity of water*, and H_2O is taken to be a type-object matching the property *being a quantity of H_2O* . *Second*, the “is” between “*water*” and “ H_2O ” is taken to be the “is” of (numerical) identity (and “*water*” and “ H_2O ” must therefore be taken to be *singular*, not general, *terms*). Thus, “*water* is H_2O ” is taken to be saying that *water* and H_2O are one and the same type-object. *Third*, *water* is one-to-one represented by the set of all possible substances which each are a quantity of water, in short: by *the set of all possible quantities of water*; and H_2O is one-to-one represented by the set of all possible

³⁰ See Saul Aaron Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 128 (on the one hand), and 99 and 116 (on the other hand).

³¹ For the first introduction of the famous distinction between *rigid* and *nonrigid* designators, see *Naming and Necessity* (which was first published in 1972), 48.

substances which each are a quantity of H_2O , in short: by *the set of all possible quantities of H_2O* . Thus, the question whether the statement “*water is H_2O* ” — taken to be an identity-statement about type-objects — is true amounts to the question whether *the set of all possible quantities of water* is the very same set as *the set of all possible quantities of H_2O* .

And what is the answer to this latter question? What cannot well be doubted is that the set of all *existing* quantities of water is the very same set as the set of all *existing* quantities of H_2O . *This* identity is the set-identity that science — quite undaunted by the so-called *problem of induction* — teaches on the basis that every *so far molecularly examined* existing quantity of water turned out to be a quantity of H_2O , and every *so far examined* existing quantity of H_2O ³² turned out to be a quantity of water. But the set-identity which — with a lot of anti-skeptical goodwill(-to-believe) — is inductively established by science is obviously not the set-identity that is needed for establishing that *water is H_2O* . For *this*, one needs the identity of the set of all *possible* quantities of water with the set of all *possible* quantities of H_2O , and this latter set-identity seems not to obtain. For is it not rather easy to generate by fantasy-variation a fantasy-experience which has, as intentional object, a possible (but nonexistent) quantity of water which is *not* a quantity of H_2O ?

Considered thus, “*water is H_2O* ” is so far from being necessarily true that it is not even true. Considered thus, “*water is H_2O* ” is, therefore, *not* another Husserlian essence-truth. Considered thus, “*water is H_2O* ” is, moreover, not a counterexample to Husserl’s or anybody else’s identification of *a priori* and *necessary*: because “*water is H_2O* ” is, according to this vein of thought, *not* true, it is *neither* necessarily *nor* *a priori* true (whereas its negation is both *a priori* and *necessarily* true and is, no doubt, a Husserlian essence-truth). But doesn’t such a view contradict science? No, says the Husserlian (or would have said Husserl), for science has not established the identity of *water* and H_2O , all it may be taken to have established is the equi-exemplification (or co-extensionality) of these two

³² Certainly not many such quantities have been examined without assuming from the start that they are quantities of water.

type-objects (and of the matching two properties) within the *existent* substances, relative to the *existent* substances. Thus, for the Husserlian, the relationship between *water* and H_2O is precisely the same as the relationship between *animal with a heart* and *animal with kidneys*, and the identity of *water* with H_2O is just as far away from being legitimately assumable as is the identity of *animal with a heart* with *animal with kidneys*.³³

KEYWORDS: Platonic forms, type-objects, intuitability, self-givenness, perceptual supervenience, sets of possibilia, David Lewis, essence-truths, Saul Kripke

SUMMARY

The word “essence” is used in a relational sense when speaking of *the essence of something*, and it is used in a non-relational sense when speaking simply of *essences*. The two uses are not unrelated: It seems obvious that every essence of something is an essence. But whether, conversely, every essence is an essence of something is already a matter for philosophical discussion. The present essay focuses on the ontology and epistemology of essences *simpliciter*, taking them as the entities that Husserl — deliberately employing Platonic terminology — called *eide*. It turns out that *eide* are closer to our everyday experience than is commonly thought, and that Husserl’s insistence on the intuitability of *eide* is far from being unfounded. For grasping Husserl’s rationale for this, it is helpful to consider a piece of recent formal ontology within Analytic Philosophy, namely, the ontology of properties — and, by implication, of type-objects — proposed by the American philosopher David Lewis. In most respects, Husserl and Lewis are very different philosophers, but the basic plan for representing *eide*, alias type-objects, in human cognition can be discerned in the philosophies of both. In the end, however, the historically well-known, straight Platonic grasp of *eide* — if they can be grasped at all in human cognition — is seen to prevail against that plan. The essay closes with observations on Husserl’s views on *essence-truths* (truths involving, beside the purely logico-ontological functors, only *essences*), in contrast to Kripke’s views, which observations serve to illustrate and highlight Husserlian ideas.

³³ And note, while taking this stance, the Husserlian would happily agree with Kripke that “water” and “ H_2O ” are rigid designators.