

Andrea Staiti, ed. *Commentary on Husserl's Ideas I*. De Gruyter 2015. 344 pp. \$126.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 978-3-11-042628-1); \$35.00 USD (Paperback ISBN 978-3-11-043842-0).

Edmund Husserl wrote *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, 'freely and uninterruptedly, in a sort of trance' in just six weeks (4), as the editor of this remarkable introductory volume recalls. Considering the strenuous conditions of its composition, it is no wonder that this work presents its readers with a few pitfalls. False modesty aside, one can legitimately declare that *Ideas* is a difficult book—'everything is difficult' eloquently reads the Husserlian quote at the beginning of De Warren's contribution to this volume. Therefore, the community of Husserl scholars can do nothing other than gratefully welcome the publication of this *Commentary on Husserl's Ideas I* equipped with instructive articles put together by internationally renowned experts on the doctrine of the founder of the phenomenological movement.

The contributions of the volume encompass all four sections of *Ideas I*, providing valuable insights into important concepts and issues the non-specialist reader may encounter. A screening through all fourteen contributions would go beyond the limited scope of this review. In the following, I shall exclusively focus on a topic that the authors of this book quite unanimously consider 'the unique contribution of *Ideas I*' (29): namely, Husserl's brand-new concept of reason.

Staiti's introduction points out what distinguishes Husserl's idea of reason from the one handed down in the philosophical tradition. With Husserl, he acknowledges, reason is no longer conceived of as exclusive property of a mental substance; rather, it 'names a relation holding between certain acts of consciousness and their intuitive fulfillment' (5). Rationality thus becomes tied to the general structure of consciousness, i.e., intentionality.

Arguing for the viability of phenomenological insights in current debates in analytic philosophy of mind, Drummond's essay underlines the teleological conception of reason characterizing *Ideas I*. Husserl's notion of intentionality is itself teleological in the sense that empty intentions are ordered toward fulfillment. This, in turn, determines the life of a rational agent as ordered toward 'a self-responsibility in which the agent accepts responsibility for her beliefs, her attitudes, and her actions' (29). This self-responsibility ought to be realized in all the spheres of reason, namely the theoretical, the axiological, and the practical.

In his assessment of Husserl's eidetics, Majolino expounds further on the most specific object of theoretical reason, *namely* formal ontology. The three regional ontologies delineated by Husserl—natural being, psychophysical being, and culture or *Geist*—do not enjoy an ontological unity but a transcendental unity represented by the *Ur-region* called 'world.' The latter is rendered possible by another *Ur-region*, namely pure consciousness. By letting the unity of the world appear in the first place, consciousness realizes one of the main tasks of the rationalization of the real, namely the constitution of unity. Thus, from Majolino's paper, one might conclude that, in so far as phenomenology inquires into the conditions of possibility for the being of worldly unity, it is itself committed to this rationalization.

Hanna's chapter spells out Husserl's rationalism by clearing the way from naturalistic misconceptions of 'transcendental-phenomenological normativity:' the threefold thesis according to which categorial normativity exists, requires human minds, and is knowable a priori by means of rational intuition (53). In examining the notion of the general thesis operative in the natural attitude, Staiti broaches the phenomenological significance of the expression 'positing of being' (*Seinsetzung*) in his essay. The positing is a component feature that cuts across all genera of intentional acts. Corresponding to them are different modes of beliefs or doxic modalities that

differ in virtue of the varying possibilities of fulfillment. Fulfillment as the proper *telos* of any empty intention represents the actualization of a rational drive, which pervades all of consciousness. Rationality, in this sense, amounts to the capacity of identifying the motives that justify the existential positing of individual objects and the world as such. Thus, by putting the general thesis on the existence of the world into brackets, the phenomenological epoché seeks to unveil the experiential motives that rationally justify that general positing.

Jacobs recognizes the import of the implicit notion of psychology operative in *Ideas I*. As she notes, if the transcendental phenomena are ‘obtained by purifying the real phenomena that are the object of psychology, then it is as important to correctly understand the domain of psychology as it is to understand how we purify this domain in and through the method of bracketing’ (98). The epoché demands that we bracket not just the existence of the material world, but also our consciousness of the world ‘insofar as it is taken as a real event or psychological state of a real subject or soul’ (109). Phenomenology differs from both empirical psychology and rational, eidetic psychology as it remains an eidetic science whereby its object is neither the soul nor experiences taken as states or manifestations of the soul. The bracketing results in the gaining of a brand-new region of being, the realm of transcendently purified phenomena.

Hopkins dwells on Husserl’s demonstration of the absolute being of pure consciousness in the central section of *Ideas I*. While the possibility of non-being inheres to the essence of every transcendent thing and to the world in general—thus determining the contingency of the natural thesis—the same does not hold true for the being of consciousness. The phenomenologist spots a lack of rational motivations for the absolute positing of the existence of the world. Again, the notion of rationality as justifying grounding is at stake in this important passage of *Ideas I*.

Luft hints at the question of reason by referring to Husserl’s exclusion of pure logic as a methodological device. Insofar as the main phenomenological task is ‘to formulate laws of givenness’ (150), logical laws and axioms such as the principle of non-contradiction must be brought back to the experiential apodictic evidences which legitimate their validity.

Dodd explains the phenomenological reflection on consciousness as a method of clarification. The latter distinguishes itself into two fundamental processes: one is ‘the process of bringing something to intuitivity, thus extending the domain of what has been clarified; the second is the enhancement of a clarity already gained’ (169). Accordingly, Dodd can interpret the principle of all principles stated in § 24 of *Ideas I* as a principle that grants an expansion of objectivity from a quantitative as well as a qualitative point of view. What is originally given in intuition must be further investigated, thus enabling the expansion of clarity within the given horizon of originary presence.

Zahavi expounds further on the function of reflection for phenomenology. Phenomenological reflection allows one to overcome the naïveté of taking ‘the world [and its existence] for granted, thereby ignoring the contribution of consciousness’ (188). Reflection unveils the horizon of consciousness’ transcendental accomplishments, thereby enabling the understanding of the world qua intentional correlate.

Moran spells out the multiple strata of Husserl’s notion of noema. The noema, that is the object as intended, does not equal the sense. The former is directly affected by the manner of the act (the noetic components), whereby the latter refers to ‘an ideal mind-independent abstract object in the manner of a Fregean sense’ (222). Thus, the noema explicates a kind of meaning, which includes reference to the subjective point of view and is as such a fundamental component of the givenness of the world.

De Warren identifies the basic problem for which the analysis of intentionality is fashioned in ‘the unity of objective experience as a manifold of modifications’ (233). The problem of unity,

which is one of the problems which Husserl's concept of reason is called upon to solve, is a complex one. Unity is demanded not only within the hyletic, noetic, and noematic sides of experience, but also *between* these totally different dimensions.

In his second contribution, Drummond follows up on the discussion of noema by pinning down the so-called 'determinable X.' The latter corresponds to the object 'considered formally, apart from its determinations' (265) and equals a teleological notion or 'idea in the Kantian sense,' as the complete presentation of objects hinges on the essentially infinite manifold of their appearances. For Drummond, teleology manifests 'the fundamental sense of reason. Reason in this sense is evidence, the having of the object in an experience which directly and intuitively presents the object as it is' (269).

Dahlstrom fleshes out Husserl's phenomenology of reason in the last chapters of *Ideas I*. Its proper task is to determine the essential possibilities of the evidence of coherence, confirmation, and corroboration.

In the final chapter, Rinofner-Kreidl directly addresses the problem of reason with reference to Husserl's general project in *Ideas*. She sees a fundamental connection between the notions of foundation, stratification analysis, analogy of reason, and teleology of reason. She also characterizes reason as a unifying structure pervading the totality of consciousness' activity, which crosses the borders 'of the widely acknowledged distinction between theoretical, axiological, and practical reason' (297). Therefore, the primary task of phenomenology is to explain and describe 'how different types of unity can be effective at different levels of constitution by synthetizing different types of manifolds' (322).

To conclude, thanks to its clarifying and outstanding essays, this new *Commentary on Husserl's Ideas I* can be said to provide a 'royal entrance' not only into Husserl's chef-d'oeuvre, but also into the so-called 'new science' dubbed phenomenology.

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