

1.4 PHENOMENOLOGY AND AESTHETICS

1.4 ФЕНОМЕНОЛОГИЯ И ЭСТЕТИКА

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THE INTERTWINING OF PHENOMENOLOGY AND CUBISM — IN THE ANALYSES AND WORKS OF ART OF CZECH ARTISTS AND THEORETICIANS

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This study derives from the genealogy of phenomenological and cubistic aims and their thematic interests at the beginning of the 20th century in the Central-European milieu. In the first part, we observe common and close questions of Husserl's philosophy on the one side and the new artistic initiative of cubists on the other. This level of observation and comparison is in the second part recognized and deepened thanks to the analyses of Czech philosophers (Bayerová, Patočka, Mathauser), theoreticians (Vlček, Kramář, Lamač and others) and works of cubists themselves (Kubišta, Filla, Hofman and others). The philosophical scope of the consideration also opens the principal question — which is the topic of the third part of the study — of the intertwining of phenomenological and cubistic methods (epoché, reduction and pictorial elaboration). Because it is not one unitary style, Cubism brings with it a complicated interpretative task: in relation to this, we present the polemic concerning the use of polyperspectivity and geometrisation; thanks to phenomenology, their deeper meaning can be revealed. We identify as phenomenological tendencies in cubistic works of art, their claim to liberate perception, to create pure forms and to refuse the symbolic, representative and imitative function of art. We analyse these questions with respect to the creative possibilities of the subject/artist as well as the pictorial/perceptive character of the world.

Key words: Husserl, Czech cubism, Central-European philosophy, phenomenological method, perception, object, work of art.

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ПЕРЕПЛЕТЕНИЕ ФЕНОМЕНОЛОГИИ И КУБИЗМА В АНАЛИЗЕ И ТРУДАХ ЧЕШСКИХ ХУДОЖНИКОВ И ТЕОРЕТИКОВ

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Данное исследование основывается на генеалогии феноменологической философии и кубизма, а также их тематических интересов в начале XX века в Центральной Европе. В первой части статьи рассматриваются вопросы, общие и близкие как философии Гуссерля, так и художественным интуициям кубистов. Этот уровень рассмотрения и сравнения углубляется во второй части на основе работ чешских философов (Байерова, Паточка, Матхаузер), теоретиков (Влчек, Крамар, Ломач) и работ самих кубистов (Кубишта Филла, Хофман и др.). Философская цель этого рассмотрения состоит и в том, чтобы открыть принципиальный вопрос, который выступает темой третьей части исследования, а именно вопрос пересечения феноменологического метода и метода кубизма (эпохе, редукция и разработка изображения). Поскольку кубизм не является каким-либо единым стилем, он сопоставляется с завершенной интерпретативной задачей: в связи с ним автор статьи представляет полемику относительно использования полиперспективности и геометризации. Их более глубокое значение может быть обнаружено благодаря феноменологии. Автор статьи опознает те тенденции в произведениях искусства кубизма, которые претендуют на высвобождение восприятия, создание чистых форм, отбрасывание символических, репрезентативных и подражательных функций искусства, феноменологические тенденции. В статье эти вопросы анализируются в виду креативных возможностей субъекта/художника, а также изобразительного/перцептивного характера мира.

Ключевые слова: Гуссерль, чешский кубизм, философия Центральной Европы, феноменологический метод, восприятие, объект, произведение искусства.

The effort to make phenomenology a scientific discipline and the effort to create a new language in art were analogous processes in Central Europe during which common problems and inspirations appeared.

(Bayerová, Vlček, 1991, 47)

Husserl's statement in *Ideas I* that fantasy is an element of phenomenology can lead us to develop various analyses dealing with forms of givenness and appearance of objects, as well as image consciousness and aesthetic experience. In the creative development of these themes, many mutually inspiring points of contact between phenomenology and

art emerge; fruitful and «suggestive»¹ meetings occur between certain phenomenological texts and specific artistic works. In Central European thinking at the start of the 20th century there is an interesting — at first sight unexpected yet internally justifiable — overlapping of phenomenology and Cubism. Both movements are in a way radical, each producing a revolution in both philosophical thinking and new artistic possibilities. Despite — and thanks to — their specificity, we come across «parallels, affinities and interconnections» (Bayerová, & Vlček, 1991), even their «rapprochement» (Pinnotti, 2010), all of which acquire a philosophically relevant form in the Czech context.

In the following analysis, we will look at the work of the Czech phenomenologist Maria Bayerová and the art theorist Tomáš Vlček, both of whom addressed this question. By taking a detailed look at Czech phenomenology and art — in the texts of Jan Patočka and Zdeněk Mathauser — we will also consider other impulses in the development of this unusual theme which has a wider philosophical import. We focus on development in concrete phenomenological analysis (perception, thing and space) and in the next part, move on from the common thematic and programmatic elements of the two initiatives to analysis of the overlap of the phenomenological method with Cubist means of depiction.

THE EXPONENTS OF THE AGE

Mapping the historical and cultural points of overlap between the phenomenological movement and Cubism springs not so much from their explicit and deliberate mutual influence as from their identical temporal and spatial location as well as their similar programmatic orientation. «It is one of the paradoxes in the history of ideas that Cubism, which so greatly inspired philosophical approaches among the twentieth century avant-garde, was characterized by its representatives as an atheoretical or even antitheoretical movement.» (Pinotti, 2010, 63) In a similar way to Andrea Pinotti, we will try to resolve this paradox not in accordance with Picasso, Braque or Gris' rejection of theoretical and philosophical approaches but by considering common features shared by this new artistic direction and by the philosophical discourse of the period. It is easier to resolve this paradox within the Czech context than that of French Cubism; though a solution emerges partly

¹ As Mathauser (Mathauser, 2006, 134) succinctly describes it.

through the influence of French artists, it is more manifest within the atmosphere of Austrian and Czech philosophy in the Central European cultural context. Czech artists did not reject theoretical approaches and in their own texts we can find theoretical and philosophical analyses.² In the background to these intellectual and artistic movements, there is a creative dynamism linking the axis of the centre to its radials (i.e. French Cubism and its regional developments) which not only inspires but also creates a certain autonomy.³

Jan Patočka and Bohumil Kubišta, representatives of each of these movements, propose that we always see an artist as being an «exponent of their age», hence the necessity to look at the historical existence of artists who initiated this new artistic direction and at the same time were anchored in the same geographical and cultural space. Representatives of both phenomenology and Cubism perceived the critical and creative atmosphere at the start of the 20th century in much the same way. Modern art moved away from existing creation of forms, from reproduction, imitation and representation, from the poetic and decorative towards prosaic expression — its effect is more «non-literary and unpoetic, the distorting efforts of earlier periods» (Hofman, 2005, 70). Phenomenology also reacts to the prejudices and consequences of empiricism, positivism, psychologism and historicism, all of which led Husserl to call for a rigorous scientific approach. This ties in with his long-standing efforts at founding a new science as well as approach which would address both the subjective process of knowing and its objective and intersubjective conclusions. If we consider these two movements, artistic and philosophical, in a thematic context, we can see that they both want to understand the processes of perception and the appearance of objects in a new way, at the same time making the question of subjectivity and psychological processes a central theme. We can also observe this tendency in the context of that period which was related to discussions between psychology of associationism, Gestalt and phenomenological psychology.

Although there probably do not exist many explicit statements from that period

² This opinion is expressed by Lamač in his analysis «Czech Cubism and the World» (Švestka, & Vlček, 1991, 58). See the texts by Kubišta, Čapek, Hofman, Filla, Gutfreund, Beneš and Kramář collected in *Frühling in Prag oder Wege des Kubismus* (Fabritius, & Hagedorn, 2005; Lamač, 1968).

³ This is developed in *Ars* magazine dedicated to the relationship between the centre, which presents the dominant elements of Cubism, and the «artistic creativity of the periphery» (Lahoda, 2014, 112). In his study «Czech Cubism in the European Context» E. F. Frey refers to the efforts to achieve «the modernness of Western Europe» at the same time as «the gravitational strength of Czech and Central European traditions» (Švestka, & Vlček, 1991, 14).

about the similarity between phenomenology and Cubism, their interrelationship was referred to in 1936 by Emil Utitz in his introduction to the German edition of the works of Emil Filla. He wrote that Filla «does not subscribe to the naturalistic positivism which was cultivated in the 19th century but instead to phenomenology, which focuses on the inalienable essence of the whole givenness, on legitimacy in its deepest form.» (Utitz, 2005, 111)

Addressing the mutual relationship of the two movements, Tomáš Vlček writes: «Thus both phenomenology and Cubism tried to unify the culture of senses with that of reason, to uncover the value and meaning of the natural world and find a relationship to everyday events and objects.» (Švestka, & Vlček, 1991, 24) Many different themes and levels of understanding can be found in relation to this; for now we can state a *dual* purpose which has been noticed by Czech authors. On the one hand, phenomenology and Cubism rehabilitate perception and the perceptive world, capture the manifoldness of things and give free rein to experience. On the other hand, they require not an arbitrary but an observant spectator and viewer⁴ who is attentive to reality and able to be guided and stimulated by it. Two effects play a role: «satisfaction and requirement» (Mathauser, 1995, 6).⁵

*THEMES: THE MANIFOLDNESS OF THINGS AND ART,
WHICH DOES NOT IMITATE*

Together with new cultural, social and historical conditions, new programmatic intentions emerge revealing more concrete content. Themes that are key both for the

⁴ «Allusion and implication, which stimulate and cultivate our intelligence in fine art, presuppose that the observer is strongly familiar with the material world»; «confining oneself to certain features of things and then emphasizing them has contributed to a deeper knowledge of the world, especially the most banal and ordinary things [...] which we so often overlook» — as Kramář (1958, 30) puts it. We should recall that Kramář (1877–1960) was a promoter and collector of Cubists and in 1921 wrote an important analysis of Cubism. His collection is exhibited at the National Gallery in Prague.

⁵ We can continue to the wider relationship between phenomenology and the avant-garde. Phenomenology need not confine itself to figurative, narrative or traditional art but can also be applied to abstraction, experiments and questioning modernism — and not only in relation to hermeneutics but also to structuralism and semiotics. This theme again emerges in the Czech milieu with Mathauser. «J. Patočka's texts are especially important in considering the relationship between phenomenology and structuralism. Elsewhere K. Chvatík writes about the link between the structuralistic Prague linguistic circle and phenomenology while Husserl's phenomenological and Mukařovský's structuralistic understanding of time are discussed by P. and W. Steiner and M. Červenka...» (Mathauser, 2006, 85) Mathauser also refers to Sepp's, Trinks's and G. Shpet's texts.

artistic and philosophical approach such as senses, body and space move into the foreground. The basic problem is perception: how we perceive, see and how objects appear to us. Both the above approaches want to capture the object in the origin of its appearance. Generally speaking, Husserl's analysis of perception questions the mirror-reflective ability of external impulses in consciousness and at the same time rejects the symbolic and representative function of consciousness. He liberates perception from the layers of theoretical construction; perception is not a projection of ideas or notions. In freeing itself from this kind of interpretation of reality that would interfere with and influence an act of perception, phenomenology creates space for perception itself. As Cubism attacks impressionism,⁶ phenomenology «delimits itself» against psychologistic and empirical interpretations of perception.

Cubism is not an imitative art, is neither naively photographic nor a mirror of reality, but instead depicts deformations, deflections, hyperbolae, curvatures, disorders and de-colorations — if the «rhythm of the picture» requires it, if subtler and more differentiated aspects of reality or if the object itself requires it. Phenomenological analysis shows that in perception, the dynamic of two complementary principles: pretension (*Prätention*) and deficit (*Manko*) applies. Perception requires us to apprehend more than we can actually see because an object presents itself to us only in its adumbrations and not from all sides at once. Thus, we anticipate and rely on the fact that the perception of thing will progress in such and such a way, which inevitably leads at times to disappointment and our expectations not being fulfilled. It is a field of «open possibilities *a parte ante* which *a parte post* can always more closely determine, limit and enrich although they still always face infinity.» (Husserl, 1973, 137) In the same spirit Vincenc Kramář (2005, 219) interprets Picasso's endeavours when he points out that Picasso no longer wants to depict the object seen from one angle in space — as artists did from an earlier era, thanks to a play of colours, light and perspective etc., arousing in the viewer the desired impression and using illusion. In so doing they relied on considerably *more* than can be seen in reality, arousing the desired effect through the *playing of forms*. At the same time, these earlier artists actually express *less*, because in an apparent imitation

⁶ «The system of colour depiction of the universe plays the role of another layer in the scheme of linear elements arising from the renaissance way of displaying space.» (Francastel, 2003, 86; Francastel, 1977, 159)

of reality, they reduce an object to just one perspective, one that is clearly not exhaustive and is always arbitrary in its own way. Cubism thoroughly examines an object and in depicting it, wants to capture it in its naked reality. The cube, as often used by Husserl (e.g. Husserl, 1973, 91, 252), is in its symmetry an example of something which reveals its rear face to us by rotating, its rear face becoming its front face as it turns. Cubism leads to realizing and developing the relationship between the reality of object and the ideality of form, which then leads to the quest for new artistic expression or to the freeing of the *pure form* (Hofman, 2005, 202; Kramář, 2005, 214).

In the following polemic which arose about Cubism, we can observe two sides to the creative process — *the creative possibilities of the subject* and *the artistic facet of the world*⁷ — together with their philosophical reflection. The radical new approach of Cubism can arouse the very opposite reaction to its intended points of departure. The main charge is one of formalism, deformation of reality by using geometrization and polyperspectivity. Deliberate intervention in the presentation of the observed object through its simplification, schematization and reduction to a geometric form (often the impression of the observer of Cubist work) negate an approach that wants to leave us to see things as they present themselves. Superficiality, transparency, utility and a simplified offering of the object run counter to the opacity of reality, which always leaves us missing certain aspects. According to this approach, geometrization would be in conflict with phenomenology. At the same time, we can ask if Cubism's «violence» against the object does not lead to dehumanization of an art that wants to possess and manipulate («will to objectification»). Ortega y Gasset and Walter Biemel both tend to this opinion; Jan Patočka, however, disagrees and sees it as being an oversimplification. We can find his analysis in the relatively little known but interesting text «*Notes on Picasso's polyperspectivity by W. Biemel*» (Patočka, 2004) in which he reacts critically to analyses of Cubism which accuse it of object manipulation. Patočka wants to draw attention to a deeper tendency, which he finds in cubist works: «polyperspectivity is a term from experimental semantics [...] an attempt to get to the bottom of the painter's efforts, to understand his capabilities, if possible, in a spontaneity which *rejects preconceived*

⁷ In choosing this framework, we were inspired by Kramář and by Sepp's analyses of the exhibition of three artists (Kimura, Matoušková, and Van Look) in Prague.

schemes of *thoughts*. It is not that he has mastered seeing but that by moving towards the absolutely elementary and original, *the nature and being of things* becomes manifest to him in another, more original and fuller way.» (Patočka, 2004, 33) The geometrical approach that Cubism works with is thus not the *founding* of schematization — it is not formalism but a type of realism –, it is more a *quest* for such an approach to the possibilities of depicting things that represent their «basic grammar». (Through the contrast of founding and quest, we want to express dynamism of creativity that does not offer stable solutions but can always run the risk of not fulfilling its intention.) In other words, polyperspectivity is not just a composite of perspectives, an aleatory adumbration of object or a working with the object for the needs of its neutral, total or technical operation. Geometrization is «the eliciting of *privileged forms* in the Husserlian sense. Privileged forms are those which contain the greatest potential of sense.» (Patočka, 2004, 412) Rejecting mere playing with forms and instead searching for pure forms or those which reactivate sense, goes deeper into the structure of perception and the phenomenal side of reality and enables us to follow further common coordinates of both, artistic and philosophical initiatives.

If we remain with two facets that we have chosen as frameworks for analysis — the possibilities of artist/subjectivity and artistic/perceptual aspect of the world — we can observe deeper layers of this so-called «autogony» and «cosmogony» in one, as H. R. Sepp expresses it. Because «the world provides space for the movement of subjectivity» and «subjectivity in constant movement gives the constitution of the world ever new forms of sense» (Sepp, 2004, 68). Perception of things and their capturing on canvases, emphasising their figural aspects and shape connects with intentionality and arises from categories of relationship, part and whole. Intentionality — following laws of perception and the ways of givenness of the perceived thing — is at the same time anchored in passivity, where background and co-givenness dominate.⁸ This situatedness of subject and object of perception produces «subject-object dialogue, this drawing together, by the subject, of the meaning diffused through the object, and, by the object, of the subject's intentions — a process which is physiognomic perception.» (Merleau-Ponty, 2005, 152-153) In other words, there emerges an overlap of «spontaneity and

⁸ Cf. Bayerová (1995, 90-94).

receptivity» (Sepp, 2004, 18). Thanks to this, phenomenology and Cubism have at the same time discovered for us a whole new range of objects: from the significant, non-trivial discovery of everyday things through meetings with otherness, other worlds, periods and cultures to the search for symmetrical geometrical shapes. And so in the paintings, we meet with a bottle, a musical instrument, a skull or buildings; Filla's works such as «Salome» and «Paraclete» or Kubišta's «Harlequin» are very distinctive in this respect.⁹ This non-triviality is also connected with the fact that the functions of the senses are revealed in a new way, their connection (especially sight and touch) does not appear synthetic, eludes simple fusion or joining together. One sense does not succeed from another but instead they together create new synaesthetic units. Here too we find an interesting parallel between phenomenology and Cubism in terms of how tactile experience interests them. Husserl draws his lectures about object and space from analysis of moving and optical phenomena (in the oculomotor field); in later texts, however, this approach seems inadequate to him and he prefers to consider the issue from a haptic point of view. For the Cubist artist, body, tactile experience with the object in space is also important and forms part of the constitution of space.¹⁰ Kramář states in relation to this that «the touch and the muscular sense more objectively reflect sensory reality than visual perceptions» (Kramář, 1958, 48).

The concept of perception and intentionality (an intentional arc, as described by Merleau-Ponty) is closely tied up with body that is no longer considered to be an object amongst objects but is characterized by its indeterminacy and situatedness. It is not a blind recipient of external impulses, but a field of localisation, an organ of movement and orientation. The body is an analogue to artistic work because «it is a nexus of living meanings, not the law», calculable in advanced or determined from the outside — in this sense «the body is to be compared, not to a physical object, but rather to a work of art» (Merleau-Ponty, 2005, 175, 174). Its significance is gained through experience and achievement of perception.

This Merleau-Ponty's analysis leads us on to addressing the relationships between subjectivity and space as well as between space and a work of art. In the case of Cubism,

⁹ Mathauser (Mathauser, 2006, 141) draws attention to the significance of dreams, jokes, mythology etc.

¹⁰ See Breuer's analysis (2015) of the haptic genesis; cf. Kramář (2005, 220-221).

it seems that Husserlian texts about the constitution of space and geometry may serve us better than texts about image consciousness. Space ceases to be an objective or causal configuration but becomes a place we inhabit that acquires meaning through experience, in its living presence (*lebendige Gegenwart*). Similarly, the Cubist artist moves around observing the proportions and intersections of space and shape.¹¹ In his essay «The Prosaic Beauty of Modern Art» (Hofman, 2005, 69) Hofman writes that we have grown used to expecting certain optical conclusions and that this art really does come from empirical content; at the same time, empirical reality can reactivate its potentiality, which «penetrates (also) through to what is unusual».¹² Further: «instead of Cubist painting uniting everything into one impression, it offers a system of spatial shortcuts» (Hofman, 2005, 69); the focus of depiction changes and uses «the rhythmic synthesis of real spatial marking and shortening, which are elements of space and our knowledge of it (J. Junoy speaks about “orientation”)» (Hofman, 2005, 69). This, according to Hofman, is what is prosaic, simple but also revolutionary about Cubism. In Czech Cubism, with its distinctive architectural, painting and applied-arts elements, we can meet with the combination of space and movement together with the use of rhythm.¹³ In practical life, we also use tendencies, emphases and improvements of figural and shape qualities reflecting our preference for certain forms when moving and orientating ourselves within the natural world and when working with objects. We can find ourselves again in a similar polemic to the one about polyperspectivity. Does this lead to simplification? Where does the connection lie between choosing certain shapes and surfaces and the deeper meaning of this pictorial technique that does not aim to be arbitrarily deformative but instead realistic and observant?

That we prefer flat surfaces, straight lines and plasticity¹⁴ comes from the practical pre-scientific world of commonly lived experience from which further processes, both theoretical and artistic, then follow. As Patočka states: «the straight line is a privileged

¹¹ Cf. Lamač (1988, 171).

¹² Let us add descriptions of A. Dufourcq: «the Mont Sainte-Victoire” is an oscillating topic of open plurality of accidental variations, a topic placed between these variations. That is why it is a topic with a rich future, one always on its way»; «we can add to variation the most unexpected and original elements; there is nothing which a priori forbids them to bear a topic (on condition that they can integrate harmoniously [...]: just as some metaphors are able to revive meaning whereas others are not).» (Dufourcq, 2015, 753, 754)

¹³ Francastel (Francastel, 2003, 117; Francastel, 1977, 229-230) recalls one interpretation of Cubism which found «rhythm in the moment it left the geometrical spirit of the Renaissance and thus founded a new realism».

¹⁴ Cf. Husserl's *Crisis*, appendix 3, which Bayerová and Vlček work with.

shape not only perceptually but also actively: in it we have a structural element with which we can work, construct and experiment with some complexity.» (Patočka, 2004, 33) Bayerová and Vlček interpret this connection in the same way when they draw from those texts of Husserl in which he reveals the primary creative activities from which geometry originated, the relation to what is indubitable, to what «was available in the pre-scientific world and served as a material of idealization». And it is here that they find the connection with Cubism in which geometry «has become a means of reevaluating pictorial forms, though not from the object and sensory perception towards abstraction, but rather by giving sensoriness and objectivity new ways of functioning in an artistic work on the basis of geometry.» (Bayerová, & Vlček, 1991, 49)

Rather than the reductiveness and superficiality which polyperspectivity and geometrization can lead to when used in a certain way, Czech theoreticians carry out a (*phenomenological*) analysis which respects laws of perception, polysensoriness and the situatedness of the observer, as well as the genuine¹⁵ effort of the (*Cubist*) artist in combining creative possibilities with shapes filled with sense (Patočka, 2004, 33). This leads to an important overlap in central questions about both approaches. We have therefore found a number of common thematic features which phenomenology and Cubism share. But can we go further?

METHODS: EPOCHÉ AND REDUCTION IN PHENOMENOLOGY AND CUBISM¹⁶

When we seek to identify common characteristics of phenomenology and Cubism, the question of methods is implicitly present from the beginning and relates to phenomenological epoché and reduction and the artistic method of depiction. This area is addressed by the key interpretative approach developed by C. Einstein, G. Habasque, K. Piwocki, E. Escoubas, H. R. Sepp, and Z. Mathauser within the Czech milieu. This

¹⁵ Cf. Karul's analysis of paradigms of modern art coexisting in contemporary art, of authenticity and inauthenticity in the approach of the artist, according to which we move within that modern art paradigm which preserves «the personal and subjective character of seeing [...]. Expressing interiority or subjectivity refers almost tautologically to the demand for authenticity.» (Karul, 2015, 737)

¹⁶ I have presented arguments for the comparison of methods also in this article: (Vydrová, 2015, 837-839).

does not so much involve looking at the thematic convergences that occurred at around the beginning of the century when formulating the same questions nor the emergence of theoretical approaches but instead at the stronger «hypothesis that Cubism does *the same* as phenomenology, that it performs *a parte imaginis* the same operation that phenomenology *performs a parte philosophiae* [...] Cubist painting is thus [...] in itself phenomenological.» (Pinotti, 2010, 64)¹⁷

This connection of methods comes not merely from an effort which wants to approach reality without presuppositions (*epoché*) and dismantle theoretical schemes of interpretation, but also from an effort which crosses through the fleeting and accidental to that which is indubitable — in other words from the factual to the eidetic (*eidetic reduction*). We can observe use of this method in the synthetic phase, in what is called eidetic Cubism. «Experiencing, or *intuition of something individual* can become transmuted into *eidetic sensing (ideation)* — a possibility which is itself to be understood not as empirical, but as eidetic.» (Husserl, 1983, 8) According to Habasque, this enables independence and *a priori* knowledge, though not only for the needs of the scientific approach but also for «the inexact essences typical of the world of our concrete bodily experience, the same ones that *Ideas I* (§§71–75) had explicitly vindicated» (Pinotti, 2010, 64). We can add that this development is already present in the opening paragraphs in which Husserl determines the connection between (accidental) facts and (inevitable) essences,¹⁸ as well as where he hints at development of categories, regions and regional ontologies.

This point of comparison can be developed further, as Sepp shows. According to him, phenomenology with its method functions like a *caesura*; its method is manifest in Cubism in a similar manner. Carl Einstein speaks in the same way about a Cubism which has again discovered experience and about an image as an *interruption*,¹⁹ dissociation,

¹⁷ Another line of argumentation present Kahnweiler and Gehlen, who point to the closeness to Kant and neo-Kantianism. This position has been challenged, however (by Gadamer and Sepp).

¹⁸ «When we said that any matter of fact, “in respect of its essence”, could be otherwise, we were already saying that *it belongs to the sense of anything contingent to have an essence and therefore an Eidos which can be apprehended purely*; and this Eidos comes under *eidetic truths belonging to different levels of universality* [...] any material thing has its own essential species and, highest of all, the universal species “any material thing whatever”, with any temporal determinations whatever, any duration, figure, materiality whatever.» (Husserl, 1983, 7, 8) Habasque is criticized by Lamač, who in the case of phenomenology and Cubism sees only salient points not parallels (Lamač, 1988, 334-335; Blecha, 2007, 171).

¹⁹ Didi-Huberman quotes Einstein: «in his book about Braque, he offers this strange equation: “*Image = interruption*”.

disintegration of a view (Didi-Huberman, 2006, 225-226; Didi-Huberman, 2010, 206), Mathauser uses the term «derailing» or observes the dynamic of putting a theme in a work of art and then cancelling it. This concerns epoché and reduction, which operate on the level of perception; subsequently, however, it also concerns the difference between various types and states of objects — the thing and the image (artefact) — which the special act of *neutralization*, the so-called *modification of neutrality* focuses on. Before reduction, «*reelle Bestand* of consciousness does not give of itself but of something else; it *presents* what is transcendent and what functions on a symbolic level. Epoché and reduction are attempts at invalidating this symbolization and at reductive uncovering *reelle Bestand* and its intentional referencing (*Verweisungscharaktere*) through original de-symbolization.» (Sepp, 1995, 299; cf. Sepp, 1988, 80) This means that the change of viewpoint is such, it enables understanding of the real «mechanism of the image», freeing of the «image order» and grasping of its autonomy.²⁰ Thus for Husserl, the realms of fantasy, variation of imagination and quasi-reality are a fertile ground for phenomenology which is sufficiently free from transcendent obscurities and layers of meaning dealing with various states of reality and referring. Sepp thus reformulates the intention of Cubism with the phenomenological question: «Wie erscheinen Dinge-im-Wie-ihres-Wahrgenommenseins im Medium des Bildes?» (Sepp, 1995, 303)²¹

If phenomenology is a caesura which ultimately points to intentional achievements and a noetic-noematic correlation between perception and the perceived, imagination and the imagined, the caesura of Cubism focuses on appearance in the area of depiction, image. Phenomenological reflection exploring the conditions for intuition and meaning has its analogue in the Cubistic observance of the «syntax and semantics of pure depiction» (Sepp, 1995, 309), one which does not allude to other layers of transcendence, does not represent nor code. In other words, through reduction to pure forms, Cubism showed where the problem of depiction, imitation and duplication of reality in image really lies: it beguiles us because it does not leave things to merely appear but instead presents to us different realities. According to Sepp, pure experiences in phenomenology overlap with the pure,

How should we interpret this? Primarily as a reference to the phenomenological analysis of *distance...*» (Didi-Huberman, 2006, 225).

²⁰ Cf. Mathauser (2006, 139), (Lamač, 1988, 175).

²¹ How do things (in their being-perceived) appear in the medium of image?

autonomous image of Cubism and thus the realism of Cubism comes close to what *reele Bestand* means to Husserl, to real existence and the actual content of consciousness.

Didi-Huberman (Didi-Huberman, 2006, 227; Didi-Huberman, 2010, 208) and Einstein also see Cubism in its epistemological context and attribute to it the function of «modifying» how we think about objects and appearances, modification of experience. The first-person approach, specific to phenomenology, disrupts the structure of causality and suspends those links between the subject and the world which are inserted from outside or which presuppose further types of reality (whether in the form of impressions, theoretical assumptions, causality or representation). In his text «Work of the Eye», Emil Filla draws attention to the important influence these tendencies have on art; with various forms of depiction our eye is literally forced to change: «Our eye has been spoiled. Because of its exposure to impressionistic works, it has learnt to only look for the surface impression, it has learnt to look strangely in the distance with narrowed eyes [...] from the distracting surface of the image, it wants to grasp the whole.» (Filla, 1968, 341) In other words, we can say that Cubism functions via two perspectives: on the one hand, it refuses an inner relationship between the image and observer, which should communicate some constructed psychological meaning — the modification of the position of viewer described by Einstein recalls the uninterested observer in Husserl. The observer in phenomenology and the viewer and artist in Cubism all have to undergo a change of viewpoint so that they can free up their perception and attention for the objects. This ties in with a second perspective in which Cubism questions and suspends objective and causal settings of space and time. Creation of new forms of depiction is then open to the dynamism which follows the qualitative aspects — of subject-object relation, as well as relation between the subject and the work of art — which is not the culmination of the artist's endeavours but a continuation of the creative process (Didi-Huberman, 2006, 223; Didi-Huberman, 2010, 203-204).

CONCLUSION: INTERTWINING OF ENDEAVOURS

Cubist work places great demands on its audience, requiring them to free themselves from expectations, which are, however, often burdened by received but untested assumptions. It also places great demands on the artist; s/he may be able to create works of the highest order but may also be an artist of thwarted attempts and

unfulfilled intentions (that Cubism may exhaust itself is confirmation of the dynamism of creativity and a rebuttal of accusations of schematism and manipulation of object and image). It is intended to be an active return to original perception, a sharpening of view that can sometimes be induced by just one raised line on a canvas, and by deepening knowledge of the world and things. It is in this that Cubism is phenomenological — with its demand for us to approach experience anew, it is both radical in its rejection of previous forms of depiction and also minimalist in its attempt to continuously purify, de-symbolize, dissolve the sense to its purest form.

Interpreting Cubism is problematic and its theoretical analyses are varied. According to Francastel, we may study Cubism but should not look for its definition. In this respect our point of departure was the genealogy of phenomenological and cubistic aims at the beginning of the 20th century and their common practical endeavours and we found out, that the input of Czech specialists — on the one hand, in the work of Marie Bayerová and Tomáš Vlček, in the discussion of Jan Patočka with Walter Biemel and the mapping of points of overlap between phenomenology and the avant-garde done by Zdeněk Mathauser; on the other hand, in the artistic and theoretical texts of Czech Cubists — can be considered invaluable.

Although points of overlap between phenomenology and Cubism may at first sight seem surprising, as we have tried to demonstrate, they exist both in thematic and programmatic areas as well as in methodological ones. In the wider sense, this overlap could also apply to their ambitions: if an image is «not meant to depict but to be, *to work*», as Didi-Huberman puts it (Didi-Huberman, 2006, 220; Didi-Huberman, 2010, 201), so phenomenology should not only create theory and syntheses but also look for a variety of themes, liberate seeing and capture the manifoldness of things themselves.²²

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²² My thanks to Dr. J. Gresty for the English translation and Dr. R. Karul for help with the French texts. The text was written at the Institute of Philosophy SAS as part of the VEGA project 2/0050/14.

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