

<https://doi.org/10.21638/2226-5260-2022-11-114-140>

ARGUING FOR THE “DESTRUCTION” OF THE *A PRIORI*. THE PROMPTS FROM HUSSERLIAN PHENOMENOLOGY

STATHIS LIVADAS

PhD in the Philosophy of Mathematics. Independent Scholar.

University of Patras, Department of Mathematics.

26504 Rion Patras, Greece.

E-mail: livadasstathis@gmail.com

This article argues against the concept of a priori and essence as they have been traditionally thematized in the course of the old metaphysical-idealist tradition. Specifically, I argue against the existence of an ontological a priori, often endowed with metaphysical-platonic connotations, by attempting to “relocate” it in the subjective sphere and thus reduce it to the being and modes of being of a transcendental subjectivity. To do so, I will be appealing to a phenomenological, Husserlian approach, while pointing to a possible connection with the Kantian views on the matter and also taking into account certain views in the secondary literature. Since a substantial part of my position is associated with the notion of a constituting, transcendental subjectivity further reducible to the origin of inner temporality, I intend to show that the objectivity constraints put in this way on the conception of the transcendental a priori may ultimately lead to a “destruction” of its traditional ontological sense. Given that in transcendental phenomenology the concept of a priori “appears” both in the constituting and the constituted level, I aim to show that it is precisely in this context that the a priori cannot rid itself of the vestiges of factuality brought in by means of the very constitutive, subjective processes implying ipso facto the question of the role of the constituting origin of temporality.

Keywords: constitutive a priori; constituting subjectivity; endless regression; inner temporality; reflective ego; transcendental a priori; transcendental subjectivity.

© STATHIS LIVADAS, 2022

АРГУМЕНТЫ В ПОЛЬЗУ «ДЕСТРУКЦИИ» АПРИОРНОГО. ПОТЕНЦИАЛ ГУССЕРЛЕВСКОЙ ФЕНОМЕНОЛОГИИ

СТАТИС ЛИВАДАС

PhD по философии математики, независимый исследователь.

Университет Патраса, факультет математики.

26504 Рион Патрас, Греция.

E-mail: livadasstathis@gmail.com

Как заявлено в названии, в этой статье приводятся аргументы против понятия априорного, а также параллельно этому против понятия сущности, против того содержания, которые они приобрели за века метафизико-идеалистической традиции. Более конкретно, я аргументирую против существования онтологического априори, которое часто наделяют метфизико-платонистскими коннотациями, «перемещая» его в субъективную сферу и тем самым редуцируя его к бытию и способам бытия трансцендентальной субъективности. Таким образом, я большей частью апеллирую к феноменологическому гуссерлианскому подходу, указывая на возможную связь с кантианскими взглядами в отношении этой проблематики, а также учитывая её интерпретацию во вторичных источниках. Поскольку, в существенной мере, я в своей позиции опираюсь на понятие конституирования, а трансцендентальная субъективность редуцируема к внутренней временности, я стремлюсь показать, что объективные препятствия, возникающие на этом пути для понятия трансцендентального априори, могут, в конечном счёте, привести к «деструкции» его традиционного онтологического смысла. Более конкретно, учитывая, что в трансцендентальной феноменологии понятие априори «проявляется» как на уровне конституирующего, так и на уровне конституируемого, я как раз планирую показать в этом контексте, что априори не способно избавиться от следов фактичности, которые привнесены самими конститутивными, субъективными процессами, что фактически подразумевает вопрос о роли конститутивных истоков временности.

Ключевые слова: конститутивное априори, конституирующая субъективность, бесконечный регресс, внутренняя временность, рефлексивное эго, трансцендентальное априори, трансцендентальная субъективность.

1. INTRODUCTION

From the idealist platonic tradition and the Aristotelian logicist approach toward essences and a priori categories to the early 19th Western philosophy, the historically established notion of the a priori was left virtually unchallenged. More specifically, philosophers from Plato to logical empiricists had never disputed the view that all empirical knowledge must rely on a priori semantic foundations something that essentially means that a priori essences are to be considered as conditions of the possibility of empirical structures. It should be noted that in recent or relatively recent literature there have been those arguing against the a priori character of semantic foundations or against the general a priori on naturalistic grounds, yet in my view,

they do not avoid the pitfalls that may come along in talking about the a priori in an empirically founded context. I refer, for instance, to Antony's views in (Antony, 2004) giving a "positive" account of the a priori from a naturalistic viewpoint as well as to those of Schroeter's in (Schroeter, 2006), arguing against a priori reductions of conditional claims based on psychologicist or empiricist concerns.

My own intention as stated in the title of this article is to argue for the possibility of a "destruction" of the philosophical a priori in the sense it has historically acquired, namely as associated with the essences in an absolute sense by taking recourse to phenomenological analysis, primarily to Husserlian writings on the matter. In this regard I will try to elucidate the character of the transcendental a priori by being oriented, among others, to its essential relation with the eidetic intuition and the meaning-giving within-the-world which presupposes, in turn, an origin founded in transcendental subjectivity. In such terms, even though Husserl was critical of Kant's lack of a systematic theory based on a pure transcendental subjectivity¹, Kant's theory of a priori can be a point of departure for an assessment of Husserl's expanded theory and further of the phenomenological reduction to the transcendental subjectivity, in other words to the subjective origin of pure consciousness which may be made the key to inquire into the transcendental a priori and its inalienable co-positing with the pre-reflective and the constitutive (personal) ego.

Kant had stated that the a priori unity required for the concept of an object has its ground in that pure, original, unchangeable consciousness named transcendental apperception which makes that transcendental apperception is the fundamental ground of experience in a twofold way:

On the one hand, the transcendental unity of apperception is the formal principle a priori of that necessary synthetic unity of the intuited manifold [of re-presentations. — S. L.] on which the possibility of experience depends. On the other, transcendental apperception is the constitutive principle a priori whose absolutely essential function is exercised through the pure understanding in an a priori act of synthesis. (Murphy, 1974, 67)

However given Kant's difficulties in the conception of the synthetic unity of consciousness by the subsumption of a manifold of intuitions under the a priori concepts of pure understanding which would make the determination of sensibility problematic², Husserl's prowess was to describe this kind of synthesis in terms of the constitution of a manifold of intuitions by the transcendental subjectivity of ego according

¹ See e.g., (Husserl, 1956, 199, 227, 237).

² For Kant "the transcendental unity of apperception is related to the pure synthesis of the imagination, as an a priori condition of the possibility of all composition of the manifold in a cognition.

to a priori laws. Yet the latter constitutive scheme cannot be taken as a self-standing foundation of the synthetic unity (of apperception) subsuming the pure concepts of understanding or properly said in Husserlian terms those of concept formation and meaning-giving, without taking account of the most fundamental a priori intuition. The intuition associated with inner temporality. However temporal constitution and the subjectivity factor involved as a time-constituting one will prove to be the kind of murky ground upon which the notion of synthetic unity out of a manifold of intuitions may be ultimately reduced. This will be a matter of further discussion in section 5.

I point out that for Husserl the a priori of essences over facts described in *Ideas I* was subsequently “transposed” to the a priori forms of constitutive consciousness according to universal eidetic laws. This meant that the realm of essences serving as the presuppositionless layer upon which empirical facts and beings were made intelligible was also proved susceptible to the exercise of *Epoché* as belonging to the constituted world and therefore in need of a constitutive analysis. Consequently with the a priori objective essences displaced from their self-evident and presupposition-free status, the a priori structures of transcendental subjectivity are accorded a prevalence status in constitutive terms. In transcendental phenomenology the concept of the a priori has been rendered suspect of duplication: it “appears” both in the constituting and the constituted level, and my intention in this paper is to show that precisely in this context the a priori cannot rid itself of the vestiges of factuality brought in by means of the very constitutive, subjective processes. A kind of duplication, even though in a somehow different sense, is found in Majolino’s assertion that “an a priori necessarily unempirical world would not count as a world. Not even within quotation marks” and further that “A world whose lack of factual laws, physical or spiritual, would prevent a priori any conceivable form of experience, any perception or assessment [...], is plainly and simply not a world” (Majolino, 2016, 179)³. In other words, the talk here is about a world in which the a priori is put *a tergo* as a follow-up of the factuality of the world.

But only the productive synthesis of the imagination can take place a priori; for the reproductive synthesis rests on conditions of experience” (Kant, 1998, 238).

³ Majolino argues, in (Majolino, 2016) that whatever intuition we may have of the world it has to provide at least some minimal unity so that we can have an intuition of enduring, well-meant objects in it. On this assumption he is led to the ambivalent position that “the a priori of a world, namely its empirical (more or less rational) style, is tantamount to the a priori of a world that can be possibly experienced by some conceivable form of consciousness” (Majolino, 2016, 179–180). Consequently one may be inevitably led to a total constraining of the a priori and of eidetic laws to empirical concerns about the world.

It is noteworthy that Husserl extended the field of Kant's analytic a priori to include formal mathematical science as *mathesis universalis* referring to general "objects-anyhow" conceived as purely intentional, content-free objects. Moreover in *Ideas I* he broadened and transformed the Kantian field of synthetic or material a priori⁴, now meant as an a priori pre-delineating the essential characteristics of an object of possible experience in an endless horizon of possibilities, to establish the idea of eidetic universality bestowed upon all objects of possible experience. To be sure, for all their divergences in the meaning of the formal or analytic a priori and the synthetic or material one and, of course, Husserl's introduction of the idea of intentional constitution, a proper reading of both philosophers' can be conducive to the "realization that the a priori is rooted in the 'constitutive' function of the transcendental ego and owes to transcendental subjectivity its transcendental significance" (Murphy, 1974, 72).

Of course Kant's and Husserl's views on the a priori have been a source of philosophical discussion over the years and from various angles. In the present paper I adopt an argumentation basically drawn from the Husserlian writings and it is an argumentation on the possibility of "deconstructing" the a priori in purely constitutive terms on the assumption that constitution is performed by a transcendental subjectivity in virtue of "being" a constitutive one. In this sense it is fundamentally different from approaches bordering on dualism or even anthropologism as it is, for instance, M. Dufrenne's approach in *The Notion of the A Priori*. This latter borders on anthropologism insofar as "just as the objective a priori had to be wrested from its Platonic or Kantian cloud and thrust into the paste of the perceived, so the subjective a priori must also descend into the flesh of the perceiver" (Dufrenne, 2009, xii) and it is dualistic to the extent that "By defining separately the world's appearances and our pre-comprehension of them, Dufrenne has perhaps created an insoluble problem and made the 'in-itself' [*en-soi*] of the objective a priori incommunicable with the 'for-itself' [*pour-soi*] of the subjective a priori" (Dufrenne, 2009, xvii). Naturally this can be deduced by taking the objective a priori not as a condition of objectivity proceeding from a constituting subjectivity but as an objectivity in itself, in contradistinction with the subjective a priori meant as the pre-given comprehension of a given entity or state-of-affairs in the absence of which the meaning of the given entity would be drawn, in the sense of a posteriori, only at the end of a more or less minute, inquisitive elaboration. I note here Dufrenne's statement that the anteriority of the subjective (hence virtual) a priori except for its logical character has yet to be translated in the language of temporality by virtue of the expression "always already there," possible

⁴ See, e.g., (Kant, 1998, 282–283).

to be clarified only by means of a genetic theory. On this account one may soon find himself, as will be further made clear, slipping into the unconvenability of admitting to something nontemporal in the subject “as is attested by the unspecifiable anteriority of the virtual” (Dufrenne, 2009, 125, 128).

There are of course a host of articles in the contemporary secondary literature dealing with the question of the a priori, most of them motivated by naturalistic, epistemic or logicist concerns⁵, that stand in contrast with my own phenomenological-constitutive approach. A notable phenomenological approach to the concept of a priori is R. Sowa's, *Eidos und A Priori: Husserls ontologische Konzeption des Apriori*, in which the emphasis is put on Husserl's conception of the a priori as the prime category of eidetic states-of-affairs, in the sense that these latter in virtue of a priori states-of-affairs are “syntactical objectivities” set up as pure objectivity postulations (*Gegenstandsbestimmungen*) or “functions” of states-of-affairs related with the meaning of eidos and the a priori (Sowa, 2016, 38). Let it be noted that even though Sowa refers only marginally to the role of the transcendental ego in the foundation of the a priori, he has aptly pointed to the eidetic transcendental phenomenology as the universal science of essential laws for which the universal a priori without the transcendental ego would be unthinkable (Sowa, 2016, 40).

Summing up, the phenomenological aspects of my position are primarily founded on transcendental phenomenology and are to a considerable extent influenced by the role of the constituting, subjective origin of inner temporality.

2. A RELOCATION OF THE ESSENCE AND THE A PRIORI IN THE SUBJECTIVE SPHERE

Husserl regularly made use of the expression “*was es seinem Wesen nach ist*” both in relation to phenomena as constituted and to the subjective factor as constituting. This happens for instance, in the *First Philosophy (Erste Philosophie)* in which he refers to the consciousness of self-evidence in relation to the self-giving or self-grasping of the objectivities that we become conscious of in the flesh, so to say, in the process of originally genuine thinking (Husserl, 1956, 134). What is indisputable, in the final count, is Husserl's persisting concern with the concept of a priori throughout his philosophical work. In fact there is no stage in his thinking, except for the initial psychologistic preoccupations around the time of the *Philosophy of Arithmetic*, in which he did not set out to fulfill the task of laying bare the a priori structure of some

⁵ I refer, for instance, to the works of G. Bealer, P. Tidman, and J. Turri respectively in (Bealer, 1999), (Tidman, 1996), (Turri, 2011).

domain of knowledge or other. The phenomenological a priori would then go beyond the bounds of factual nature and factual consciousness (the latter not to be confused with empirical consciousness) and ground itself in the essences of the sorts (modes) of consciousness and the possibilities and necessities associated with these essences (Husserl, 1956, 393). It is noteworthy that Husserl talking in *First Philosophy* and elsewhere about transcendental philosophy as an a priori philosophy of the realm of ideal possibilities, he essentially identified the a priori characteristics of a universal science of essences with the eidetic attributes exhibited by pure subjectivity and its pure “life” of consciousness, in the constitution of objects according to ideal possibility; in other words with the eidetic science of the ego cogito. In such view to all a priori insights corresponds a normativity belonging to the pure essence of subjectivity which as essential normativity is common to all subjects (Husserl, 1956, 143–144, 201).

As already evident from the time of *the Prolegomena to Pure Logic (Logical Investigations, First Book)*, Husserl effected a gradual re-positioning of the whole universe of logical objectivities and the associated notions of truth to the source of subjective activity, noting later that what is ideal appears as located in the subjective sphere and comes out of it.

In fact the quest to establish a firmly founded connection between the universe of experience and the universe of essences runs through the whole undertaking of Husserlian phenomenology in virtue of the turn toward “things themselves” and proves to be what fundamentally justifies Ortiz-Hill’s comment that “The underlying paradox is that Husserl’s science of subjectivity was his science of objectivity” (Ortiz Hill, 2009, 9). Indicative in this respect is that even though Ortiz Hill, referring to Husserl’s *Introduction to Logic and Theory of Knowledge*, talks about pure logic as an a priori discipline entirely grounded in conceptual essentialities in which all truth is nothing other than the analysis of essences or concepts, she has yet to refer to Husserl’s later view in the *Formal and Transcendental Logic* that

Even the ideal Objectivity of logical formations and the apriori character of the logical doctrines relating to them specifically, and then again the sense of this Apriori, are stricken with this same obscurity: since the ideal does indeed appear as located within the subjective sphere; it does indeed arise from this sphere as a produced formation. (Husserl, 1969, 35)

In Husserl’s *Zur Lehre vom Wesen und zur Methode der eidetischen Variation* the relocation of the sphere of ideation to the subjective sphere appears even more explicitly, implying as a matter of fact the temporal modes of the constituting flux of consciousness:

Wahrnehmung gibt unmittelbares Gegenwärtig-Dasein, Retention gibt unmittelbares Soeben- Gewesensein, Wiedererinnerung gibt wieder in anderer Weise Gewesensein: Da haben wir keine „blosse Phantasie“. Überall, ob wahrgenommen ist oder frisch erinnert oder wiedererinnert, das Wesen, das darin „gegeben“ ist, kann dasselbe sein, und ich kann darauf hinsehen. Der gegenwärtige, der noch erinnerte, der wiedererinnerte Ton ist vom selben Inhalt, vom selben Wesen; aber auch in den parallelen Phantasiemodifikationen: in der Quasi-Erinnerung u.dgl. (Husserl, 2012, 31)⁶

Husserl's views which were supposed to establish a compatibility between the ideality of the objects of pure logic, for which truth must be an analysis of essences or concepts, and the underlying subjective forms through which the knowing consciousness implements its constituting activity led in fact to the attestation of a lack of clarity concerning the a priori nature of logical theories and the ideal objectivity of pure logic since "what is ideal appears as located in the subjective sphere and arises from it." This implied, in terms of a Cartesian-kind turn of philosophy in the deepest sense, the necessity of an absolute self-contained eidetic science of pure consciousness relating in turn to all correlations founded in the essence of consciousness, its potential objective-real (*reell*) immanent moments,⁷ and the determined within consciousness ideal noemata and objectivities (Husserl, 1956, 234).

For Husserl all scientific thinking in terms of a systematic formal theory is conditioned on purely logical laws without which all the concepts and propositions articulating a scientific discipline in a systematic, consistent form would be left without sense or validity. This stands in contrast with natural science as an a posteriori discipline grounded in real-world experience which is, as such, simply a science of matters of fact. It follows that pure logic permeating the body of natural science in the form of a systematic

⁶ "Phenomenological perception (*Wahrnehmung*) provides direct presentational being-there (*Das-ein*), retention provides direct just-passed-by having been, remembrance provides again in another mode the having been: We have there no 'sheer imagination.' Anyway, essence which is 'given' there, whether phenomenologically perceived or newly called to memory or recalled, can be the same, and I can 'see' to it. The present, the just called and recalled to memory sound is of the same content, of the same essence; the same also in parallel phantasy modifications: in the quasi-memory and the like" (my transl. — S. L.).

In (Husserl, 2012), Husserl further pursued the inquiry into the temporal foundation of essences ultimately facing the intractable difficulties associated with the form of time, the individuality of a temporal point and the question of whether a temporal point is an essence, etc. See (Husserl, 2012, 199–200).

⁷ The term immanent, widely used in phenomenological texts, can be roughly explained as referring to what is or has become correlative (or 'co-substantial') to the being of the flux of one's consciousness in contrast with what is "external" to it. For more on this and other "esoteric" phenomenological terms, primarily the notions of noetic-noematic, the non-familiar reader may consult Husserlian or secondary literature texts; for example, Husserl's *Ideas I*: (Husserl, 1983, Part III, Ch. IV).

corpus of knowledge, is the a priori discipline whose truth is reducible to the analysis of essences or essential concepts, in which case the factual-causal character of natural (or generally empirical) sciences is mediated by the essential, apodictic, ideal character of logical laws free of any factual supposition. The a priori methods of systematic scientific thinking are accessed by logic precisely in this sense. On the other hand, the norms for the truth of the world themselves are established on the basis of pure subjectivity and the real and potential experience of the world (Husserl, 1956, 245).

As a matter of fact Husserl had tried, from the years he abandoned naïve psychologism, to reconcile the worlds of the actual consciousness and the “purely” logical, the latter as a “situation in itself” in the sense of an ideality whose proper essential content (*Wesengehalt*) has nothing to do with mental acts, with subjects or with factual persons of objective reality. Even as he seemed, earlier in his texts on logic and the theory of knowledge, to delineate what properly belongs to transcendental phenomenology and what does not, meaning that a priori real ontology of any kind, formal logic and formal mathematical geometry as an a priori theory of space are incompatible with genuine transcendental phenomenology, he came to concede in the 1913 draft of a preface to the *Logical Investigations* that “what he had proposed as analyses of immanent consciousness had to be considered as pure a priori analyses of essence” (Ortiz Hill, 2013, 68). This claim was in agreement with his extended view of pure logic as the field of *mathesis universalis* that comprised also such analytical doctrines of mathematics as number theory, arithmetic, algebra and such formal theories as pure analysis, theory of Euclidean and non-Euclidean spaces, etc. At the time of publication of the *Formal and Transcendental Logic* (1929) the field of *mathesis universalis*, representing the entirety of the formal a priori and dealing with all categories of meaning and the formal categories of objects correlated to them, was freed from any relation to particular facts about objects and actual matters of fact, being directed instead to the vacuous idea of “something-in-general” or “object-in-general” with the whole range of its modifications. Purely logical concepts and axioms serving as underpinnings of mathematical disciplines are essentially grounded on purely logical categories, that is, categories devoid of any cognitive content except for the expression of the a priori modes of being of an “object-in-general” as pure form. And yet those “objects-in-general” being syntactical individuals in a “lowest-level” apprehension, without any analytically describable or even spatiotemporal content, are inaccessible without a corresponding lowest-level intentionality meant as a priori directedness to a “this-there,” this latter analogous to the *τόδε τι* of the aristotelian categories. This triggers a next question, one of the trickiest in phenomenology, namely, the question of the “ontological” status of intentional directedness, more concretely the question of whether this is a pre-objective a priori directedness independent of the real

existence of the intended object or whether it is an “act” meant only as being-in-objectification whose ultimate non-objective origin must be founded in the transcendence of the pure ego⁸. Both options reproduce a kind of ontological deficiency between the essential a priori and its being-in-reflection, the source of an endless regression reflecting-reflected that can only be fulfilled by the ad hoc invocation of another kind of a priori, the one called by Patočka the retention of the non-reflective ego acting in the actual present (Patočka, 1992, 166). I will further discuss this matter in the last section.

The reduction of the a priori analyses of essences to analyses of immanent consciousness was gradually brought to the forefront of Husserl’s properly meant phenomenological research, in the time of and after *Logical Investigations*, in a way that the field of the immanent givennesses of consciousness was to be valued as appropriate to ontological investigations well apart from any pretention to psychologism. It is quite characteristic that Husserl criticizing Lotze insisted that

What he did not see was that consciousness itself, the immense wealth of intentional experiences and noematic correlates in experience, was an infinitely richer field of a priori knowledge and something that is fully accessible to systematic research, that its systematically coherent, pure exploration is precisely the vital question for an “exact” psychology and a serious epistemology. (Husserl, 1975, 43)

Furthermore he admitted that the interpretation of the “insight” in which relations among ideas are given to us as a “seeing,” in terms of an originally presenting consciousness, necessitated the need to ascribe an essence to all objectivities as presentations in pure consciousness and thus associate with a theory of object-like cognitions a field of essence-cognitions (Husserl, 1975, 43).

It is true that initially, for instance, in his 1906/1907 lectures on logic and epistemology, Husserl had tried to interpret the transcendental problematic in terms of epistemology. However he was avowedly perplexed by the transcendence of knowledge, namely the “knowledge of the natural sciences, then psychological knowledge as well, finally mathematics as tool, logic as judge” (Husserl, 2008, 398). The question was after all for one to see how can knowledge, a particular act or series of acts “reach

⁸ In the *Late Texts on Time-Constitution* (*Späte Texte über Zeitkonstitution*) Husserl explicitly wondered if intentionality can be founded on real analysis: „Schon das eizelne Erlebnis, sofern es z. B. Wahrnehmung von diesem Tisch ist mit den und den, [...], gibt mir das Problem: Kann solch ein intentionaler Bestand durch reelle Analyse gefunden werden, bzw. wie weit kann man das gelten lassen?“. (“Already the particular experience, insofar as it is, for instance, phenomenological perception of this table with that and that, [...], presents me with the problem: can such an intentional occurrence be found by means of a real analysis and, further, how far can one let it hold?” (Husserl, 2006, 248) (my transl. — S. L.)).

beyond” and grasp, posit, know something that is valid independently of the individual act, and eventually how the meaning of this validity is to be securely founded.

For Husserl empirical sciences

are subject to principles that govern thinking and research in the natural sciences, that make natural science in general possible and that, therefore, cannot for their part be investigated again by thinking and research in the natural sciences. All these principles are unclear and debatable the moment one gives them thought. They are clear in praxis, in application. All natural scientists, for example, speak of cause and effect, allow themselves to be guided everywhere by the principle of causality. That is part of that “basic model.” Only, one may not ask them about the ultimate meaning and the source of this principle. (Husserl, 1984, 96)

In this sense pure logic, in virtue of *mathesis universalis*, is a case of “metatheory” to empirical sciences in which the notion of formal a priori is incorporated in its full scope. In fact in what concerns the whole field of the categories of meaning and the categories of objects correlated to meanings in the sense of “objects-whatsoever” (*Etwas-überhaupt*), pure logic includes the entirety of the a priori associated with the ‘analytic’ or ‘formal’ sphere.

Husserl claimed in effect that beyond the merely relative sciences of being, there should be a definitive science of being that alone has to satisfy our highest concept of being, one that has to investigate what must be considered as real in an ultimate, definitive sense. This radical science of being, the science of being in the absolute sense, was to be characterized as metaphysics, as a metaphysical a priori ontology through which one may simply reflect on everything without which reality in general cannot be conceived, more specifically on concepts like individual real thing, thing in general, real property and relation in the broadest sense, state, process, coming into being and passing away, cause and effect, space and time, all these in the sense of basic categories in which what is real as such is to be understood in terms of its essence. It turned out that what was to be studied by metaphysical a priori ontology in terms of an analysis of essence and essential laws was to be reduced to subjectively directed investigations in which for the first time *the cogitata qua cogitata*, as essential moments of each conscious experience, come into their own and immediately come to dominate the whole method of intentional analysis (Husserl, 1970, 234). Further as an allusion to what would be a prime preoccupation in the years to come, namely the place of inner temporality in shaping logical essential forms and generally logical meaningful discourse, Husserl referred to genuine intentional synthesis as a synthesis of several acts into one in a way that by a “unique manner of binding one meaning to another, there emerges not merely a whole, an amalgam whose parts are meanings,

but rather a single meaning in which these meanings themselves are contained, but in a meaningful way” (Husserl, 1976b, 234). For Husserl the question of inner temporality ultimately underlies the entire pure experience of the world as such and its truthfulness through subjective givennesses and syntheses that lead to each one’s subjective temporality as form of his occurring phenomena (Husserl, 1973, 65).

It is to be noted that in *Ideas I*, in spite of the privileged place attributed to the transcendental source of subjectivity by radical phenomenological reduction, various forms of transcendence or transcendent entities, like the absoluteness of God, would have to be excluded from reduction concerns insofar as they cannot by any means be made a real part of living experience, i.e., a part of the stream of mental processes of pure consciousness. In this sense the absolute ego found out as identically the same by essential necessity throughout any mental process “cannot in any sense be a really inherent part or moment of the mental processes themselves” (Husserl, 1983, 132–134). Husserl went on to exclude other sorts of transcendencies as well, i.e., the set of all essences or of all “universal” objects as being in a certain sense transcendent to pure consciousness, that is, as not really belonging to its immanence. However he was caring to the fact that these exclusions could not mean an exclusion of transcendencies altogether since in such case “even though a pure consciousness would indeed remain, there would not remain, however any possibility of a science of pure consciousness” (Husserl, 1976a, 135).

At the bottom line the ultimate substratum of all real-world and immanent processes as well as of all essential universalities within-the-world would remain absolute consciousness as the residue left over from a presumable “annihilation” of the world in the broadest sense of a grounding soil (Husserl, 1976a, 103).

3. THE INEVITABLE CIRCULARITIES OF TALKING IN TERMS OF A PRIORI

Given that Husserl had excluded as transcendent to the living experience, in other words transcendent to the immanence of pure consciousness, the set of all essences or the set of all “universal” objects independent of any spatio-temporal constraints, one may pose the following question. If essences are to be excluded from the being of the immanence of pure consciousness how then we could possibly reach out to them? If they are to be taken as transcendent to the consciousness in the sense of universal objects-species within-the-world then they should be subjected to “adumbration” by an “adumbrating” origin analogous to the way physical things are, in an interminable completion which would entail that they eventually lose their essential character. And yet if they were to be taken as transcendent within immanence then their eidetic uni-

versality, in virtue of being-in-reflection, would be necessarily subjected to the norms of a self-constituting subjectivity, the pure ego, thereby relativizing any assumption of transcendence within immanence.

The difficulties encountered on the matter are evident in the persisting ambivalence of the terms employed by Husserl when trying to talk about transcendences within immanence. For instance in the addition in copy D of *Ideas I* (under K. Schumann's editorship), he referred to the pains one must take to fully apprehend the diversity between consciousness and reality in its purity: "On the natural basis upon which we are operating, my consciousness, my stream of consciousness even when taken as purely immanent, and my pure Ego as pertaining to my consciousness, are still worldly determinations of the real human being" (Husserl, 1983, 90).

Another point of concern seems to be the content Husserl gave to the meaning of the a priori principle of intentionality and its relation to transcendence. Given that the conception of an "object-in-general" devoid of any "inner" content presupposes an intentional act on the part of a subject in whose awareness such "objects-in-general" appear "in person," then one should inquire into the meaning and "ontology" of intentionality as a kind of a priori awareness. All the more so since:

The nature and form of the intentionality of thinking is reflected in the nature and form of logical meaning, so that understanding the basic composition of logical meaning affords insight into the a priori essence of thinking and vice versa. The theory of forms of meanings thereby gives a theory of forms of thinking as that of logical meaning. So the theory of forms of logical meanings would also correlatively be a theory of forms of thinking with respect to its meaning-like essence, with respect to the possible forms of its intentionality. (Husserl, 2019a, Introd., xxx)

In fact a deficiency of meaning, running through traditional scholastic logic and also the theory of the logical laws revamped by mathematics in the form of mathematical logic, was to be found in the lack of elucidation of the intentional characteristics of affirmative judgements and consequently of thought-acts in general as well as in the confusion resulting from the mixing of the empirically psychological and eidetic judgements. The same deficiency seems to concern the whole of formal mathematics insofar as this is considered a purely deductive theory requiring the application of the same method as in the fields of formal and mathematical logic, namely what Husserl singled out as the algebraic method. In short it was claimed that

What apart from that [i.e., technical perfection. — S.L.] is lacking in both the old mathematics and in formal logic is a scientific understanding of thinking in terms of its intentional constitution and in terms of the possibility of its cognitive attainments upon which an intrinsic understanding of the meaning of the laws that make valid intentionality possible then further depends. (Husserl, 1996, 93–94)

I note that for both Husserl and Heidegger, even though in a distinct narrative, intentionality is associated with “ontological” transcendence, presumably a token of the ambivalence concerning the irreducible “vacuum” between “toward being-in-the world” and “being-in-the world” in objective terms. For Husserl in the *First Philosophy* all reflections ultimately presuppose an underlying ‘substrate’ of intentionality whereupon a “reflectionless” consciousness is somehow obscurely described as the realm of alienated to the ego objectivities, these latter being according to their sense free of anything subjective, inasmuch as a subject to the extent that it does not exercise an act of reflection is not knowable of its proper subjectivity (Husserl, 1956, 266). In *Formal and Transcendental Logic* he clearly associated intentionality with transcendence insofar as transcendence “belonging to all species of objectivities over against the consciousness of them (and, in an appropriately altered but corresponding manner), the transcendence belonging to this or that Ego of a consciousness, understood as the subject-pole of the consciousness” underlies “the universal ideality of all intentional unities over against the multiplicities constituting them” (Husserl, 1969, 165–166).

Heidegger, on the other hand, connected transcendence with intentionality in these terms: “If one characterizes all comportment towards beings as intentional, then intentionality is possible only on the grounds of transcendence. Intentionality, however, is neither identical with transcendence nor, conversely, does it itself make transcendence possible” (Heidegger, 1976, 135; as cited in Moran 2014, 508).

Conditioned or linked to some kind of transcendence as these concepts of intentionality might be, they are nonetheless clearly divergent on account of the distinct content Husserl and Heidegger gave to the idea of transcendence itself, insofar as for Heidegger transcendence essentially characterizes *Dasein* as being-in-the-world, whereas for Husserl transcendence within immanence is generally thought of as an “out of this world” pure subjectivity. In fact these ambivalences, e.g., the unlikely possibility of an ontological determination of intentionality in reducing the ontology of being to a constituting subjectivity, runs through the whole fabric of phenomenological analysis as it happens also with other notions, for instance, the notion of ideality in a purely logical context reducible to the being-in-itself of the ideal sphere in relation to consciousness. It was indeed the puzzling question of coming to terms with the ideal objectivity of purely logical notions versus a subjective constituting activity, that Husserl persistently sought to resolve throughout his maturity years, which brought to the fore the need to rethink the place of essences and of all a priori notions in terms of the world as a phenomenon reducible in the most radical fashion to a non-eliminable absolute subjectivity. In the *General Theory of Knowledge, Lectures 1902/1903*, the ultimate meaning and source of all objectivity, making possible to reach beyond con-

tingent human acts and lay hold of objective being in itself, was to be found in ideality and the ideal laws defining it. Yet Husserl already admitted to the fact that “it was his psychological analyses that had compelled him to recognize the ideal as something given prior to all theorizing and impressed upon him the essential interrelationship of the worlds of pure logic and actual consciousness” (Ortiz Hill, 2013, 75).

On his gradual transcendental evolution and specifically at the time of *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, objective, formal logic was to be complemented by subjective transcendental logic in which logical forms are the by-product of the underlying activity of the subjective factor, a fact implying that even the ideal objectivity of logic, the a priori nature of logical structures and the meaning pertaining to this a priori are prone to a lack of clarity. As pointed out in the previous section this lack of clarity was considered as due to the fact that what is ideal appears to be reducible to a categorial activity within the subjective field and arising out of it.

In fact the content Husserl gave to the concept of ideal or ideality definitely began to take shape in his purely phenomenological analyses following the first edition of *Logical Investigations* and was motivated by his research on the foundations of pure logic. Over the course toward transcendental phenomenology the concepts of ideas, ideality, etc, along with the concepts of eidetic intuition and eidos became organic parts of the larger picture of the phenomenology of constitution including, in a quite perplexing way, the riddle of inner temporality.

In the *First Philosophy*, for instance, each pure idea pertaining to a genus or a mathematical form referring to objectivities draws back to a kind of eidetic problematic toward so and so articulated objectivities of related modes of consciousness in a way that these modes are thought in eidetic generality and, in the actual investigation, ought to be exhibited in the eidetic method as ideas (Husserl, 2019b, 143).

Yet on a closer look one may find out that while eidetic intuition and all that comes with it is reducible to an ideating subjective activity within the world, all that refers to ideality in general is either enmeshed in a circularity of corresponding terms or simply serves as an *ad hoc* concept to cover up the deficiency between the constitution of objectivities as consummate entities in presentification and the “adumbrating” process meant as a subjective act with an endless (though eidetically predetermined) horizon. In this sense ideal essences are considered as ideal “limits” in a process of ideation out of descriptive concepts which are “essentially impossible to find in any sensuous intuition but which morphological essences [as correlates of descriptive concepts. — S. L.] ‘approach’ more or less closely without ever reaching them” in contrast with ideas as extensions of exact ideal concepts and genera, e.g., those of exact logical sciences (Husserl, 1983, 167). However one may reasonably argue that the reference

to the term extension (*Umfang*) already presupposes an eidetically founded and yet indefinite horizon of transcendental experience in a way that parallels Husserl's reference to geometry as an exact eidetic science in which based on a finite number of axioms, that is, on primitive eidetic laws, it is possible to

derive purely deductively all the spatial shapes "existing," that is ideally possible shapes, in space and all the eidetic relationships pertaining to those shapes in the form of exactly determining concepts which take the place of the essences which, as a rule, remain foreign to our intuition. (Husserl, 1976a, 163)

In view of the difficulties in the description of essential or ideal structures without the "backdoor" constraint imposed by the inconvenience of an endless regression objectivating-objectivated, Husserl offered a kind of metaphorical explication to account for the apparent contradiction between the all-sided infinity of continuum meant, e.g., in the sense of an ideal infinity of multiplicities of appearances of one and the same thing and the "closed" unity of the completion of the "running through" of appearances. Thus the idea of continuum as such and the idea of the perfect givenness prefigured by the idea of continuum are presented in an intellectual "seeing" (*Einsicht*) in the way an "idea" can be intellectually seen by designating by virtue of its essence the peculiar type of intellectual seeing. In these terms the idea of an infinity motivated according to its essence is not itself an infinity. The fact that this infinity cannot be given in principle and *in rem*, does not preclude but rather requires the intellectually seen givenness of the idea of this infinity (Husserl, 1976a, 342–343). This seems to be a way out of the apparent contradiction of an immanent "finite infinity" even though, as with Husserl's obsessive search for a foundation of the immanent unity of consciousness in temporal terms, one can again raise the issue of an endless regression of reflecting egos insofar as, notwithstanding the content one might give to this kind of intellectual seeing, it is still a subjectively founded act.

4. THE IMPACT OF THE SUBJECTIVE FACTOR ON THE CONCEPT OF INDIVIDUAL ESSENCE

One of the most subtle questions of phenomenology, essentially from the time of *Ideas I*, is the conception of individuals as corresponding to appropriate essences on the assumption that to every individual corresponds an essential hypostasis which is its essence and reversely to every essence corresponds a range of possible individuals. In this respect one may distinguish between an individual as representative of its essence and an individual thematically posited in the sense of a "this-there," namely as an individual effectively posited by a thematic "glance" (*Blickwendung*) of consciousness.

Husserl talked further about the possibility of distinct judgments referring to distinct essences, yet also of judgments which in an indefinite universality and independently of a thematic positing of individuals would refer to individuals purely as an individuation of their essences in the mode of “whatsoever.” In this view one might think of individuals—“whatsoever” independently both from a specification of essence and also from a “this”-thematic positing having, for instance, in mind judgments of pure geometry referring to a straight line, an angle, a conical section, etc., not in the sense of the *eidē* straight line, angle, conical section, etc., but in the sense of a straight line, angle, conical section, etc., as objects—“whatsoever.” This makes that the corresponding judgments have the character of pure and unconditioned universality (Husserl, 1983, 12–13).

Consequently in view of Husserl’s reference to an intuitive consciousness of essences in which essences can be seized upon in a certain way without becoming “objects about which,” one is about to be faced with the subtleties of a presumably ontological a priori of essences in contrast to the non-eliminable “ontology,” in fact the ever “in act” character of the constituting ego.

Therefore I draw attention to the following arguments:

If an essential state-of-affairs is considered as a pure potentiality it cannot be turned into an actuality even in passively reflecting on it without bringing it into factual existence and second, one may rightfully doubt about the possibility of existence of an intuition of essences in which an essence might be intuited without making it an “object about which.” The latter is true to the extent that we cannot conceive of a constitutive consciousness other than each time as thematically positing “something,” even in deceptively thinking that it is not objectivity constituting. In case Husserl’s assertion here is to be taken at face value there seem to be two possibilities:

Either one reproduces an infinite sequence of states of consciousness in the sense of reflecting-reflected or in breaking this (ideally) infinitely proceeding sequence he negates a fundamental phenomenological tenet, namely that no consciousness is conceivable but as a consciousness-of. In the final count one cannot perceive of an individual “whatsoever” but as the “this-there” of an act intentionally oriented and effectuated in objective real world terms. Any other possibility of intuiting an individual as eidetically representing a proper essence without a thematic positing in terms of its effectuation in the present now is necessarily bound to entail circularities in description or arbitrary ideations. Consequently the capital issue of inquiring, from a phenomenological standpoint, into the very concept of a priori with regard to essences, individuals, intentional forms, etc., is to be treated under entirely different terms. Of course one should bear in mind that although a priori and essence are “parallel” concepts they are not identical, e.g., the meaning of essence in terms of eidetic intuition which is a way of arriving at an

intuition in its purity is in no way the same as the traditional meaning of essence taken as the a posteriori result of a process of abstraction.

An interesting insight to the relation of the concept of individuals with the corresponding essences in terms of prior-posterior can be found in L. Eley's *The Crisis of a Apriori* (Eley, 1962). The whole approach in terms of prior-posterior draws on the assumption that the relation between an object-individual as a "this-there" and its essence is of an essential and therefore not of a factual character. However if the relation prior-posterior is of a constitutional character then it must necessarily be a factual connection (under eidetic "laws") between the individual as a "this-there" and its essence. Indeed one cannot think of a way a relation of prior-posterior could be possibly conceived as an essential state-of-affairs without the acting of a subject, that is, without the enactment of an intentional "glance." In Eley's view, reality and essence become distinct concepts/states-of-affairs in the sense that an individual whose thingness substance is a *Konkretum*⁹ "precedes" in the act of (intentional) experiencing as a concrete "this-there" its postulation as the last outcome in a concatenation of essences by virtue of being a de facto posterior of its prior-posterior.

To the extent that in Husserlian phenomenology the fundamental ways of knowledge of essences is except for variation and free (rationally grounded) imagination also eidetic intuition, these are inconceivable but only as being acts carried out within objective spatio-temporality. In consequence, according to Eley, this may result in the "destruction" of the essential character of the relation of an individual to its essence having as a further effect the reduction of essences to pure possibilities hovering in "the air" of absolutely pure conceivability (Eley, 1962, 37–38).

In this sense Husserl's conception of essences may be characterized as the outcome of its contradicting moments. In Eley's succinct expression "Husserl conceives of the universal insofar as he negates it: The essence in Husserl's sense consolidates this negation; put it otherwise: Essence in the process of its reflection becomes deprived of itself" (Eley, 1962, 65). Obviously this claim contradicts the position that the "this-there" (as a thematic positing in real terms) presupposes

the corresponding essence in the understanding that only then it becomes meaningful to ask about the "what" of the "this-there." Furthermore it implies that the character of the "precedence" of essence should be one of necessity just like the eidetic specificity of a universal eidetic state-of-affairs is one of essential necessity. (Husserl, 1983, 14)

⁹ A *Konkretum* is termed by Husserl an absolutely self-standing essence, in contrast to a not self-standing one called an *Abstraktum*. For instance, to the latter class belongs the formal categorial form object in general in contrast with the categorial form object with a concrete thingness substance, i.e., a *Konkretum*. A "this-there" whose thingness substance is a *Konkretum* is called an *Individuum* (Husserl, 1983, 29).

To address these subtleties and resolve the presumed contradictions in a phenomenological approach to the concepts of essence and a priori, Eley proposed, based on Husserl's views in *Ideas III* (Husserl, 1971), the concept of a difference-unity (*Differenz-Einheit*) which must be presupposed so that essences are the conditions of the experienced objects they "precede," in the sense of a prior condition that makes possible any thematization in the act of experience without being itself object of an essential intuition. But this would entail transcendencies associated with absolute subjectivity, a clue to Husserl's constant preoccupation with a radical reduction toward the subjective origin of the absolute flux of consciousness¹⁰.

5. TALKING OF THE A PRIORI IN TERMS OF CONSTITUTION AND TEMPORALITY

If a description of phenomenology can be summed up as the universal eidetic science of pure consciousness then one may reasonably argue that its ultimate foundation may be found in the subjective origin of inner temporality, in other words in the pure ego in virtue of a temporal-in-constituting ego.

Yet the fact that the double intentionality of consciousness, as an intentional form making possible the unity of the absolute consciousness as inexhaustibly fulfilled by new objects, may ground immanent unity independently of any spatio-temporal constraints can raise in turn the question of its own objectivity in real world terms.

Husserl referred in the *Phenomenology of Inner time Consciousness* to the double intentionality of temporal consciousness in these terms: It is thanks to the fact that retention is characterized by a double non-objective intentionality that the consciousness of temporal succession is at all possible as also the unity of temporal consciousness as such (Husserl, 1991, 84–88). This means that retentive consciousness as a phenomenon of the unfolding of inner time is manifest as a continuity or, to put it in metaphorical terms, a "fluidity" of the passing from a specious present, in virtue of original impression, to the immediate consciousness of the past and its continuously descending tail of retentions. In these terms absolute consciousness, displays a double non-objective intentionality so that it constitutes objective time as a continuous stream in actuality (through longitudinal and transversal intentionality) by constituting itself, in a way that itself may not be made objective for otherwise it would require a new consciousness-of so that again one would relapse into a kind of circularity *in infinitum*. Let it be noted that Husserl's reference to the continuity (*Stetigkeit*) of temporal consciousness due to

¹⁰ See (Eley, 1962, 20–21) and (Livadas, 2020).

the double intentionality form proves in fact to be by itself circular insofar as continuity cannot be taken account of as pertaining to the sphere of constituting (i.e., the phenomenological ego) by appealing to what is constituted (i.e., the objective flux).

Therefore as intentionality cannot be thought of independently of what is intended, and this latter even if it is simply an object of imagination cannot but be a being-in-objectivity, it is really an issue whether intentionality in general and *a fortiori* the double intentionality of consciousness can be regarded as a priori acts themselves or just clues in the level of constituted of a transcendental subjectivity, origin of inner temporality. In the latter case one is left, as stated in earlier sections, in the limbo of admitting to a transcendence within immanence, the pure ego, whose “being” is rather deducible by logical deduction as an absolute origin of constitution-within-the-world, yet one not being derivable in terms of being-in-the-world¹¹.

Independently of these concerns it is true that intentional constitution, as a means to overcome Kant’s dichotomy between understanding (spontaneity) and sensibility (passivity), may apply to both the reflective level of science and the pre-reflective level of the life-world so that it guarantees by the identity of the corresponding “laws” the validity of the laws of science. More than that it is the noetic aspect of intentional constitution, which eluded Kant’s conception of formal and material a priori by means of the understanding proper (i.e., by transcendental apperception), that constitutes through the act of synthesis the structural unity of phenomena and points to the transition from static to genetic phenomenology with the latter dealing at the deepest level with the constituting function of absolute subjectivity. This is in fact, in view of Kant’s and Husserl’s convergent approaches in the reduction of the ontological a priori to the a priori of subjectivity itself, what substantiates to a large extent Husserl’s contribution to the pure logic, that is, “the turn to the transcendental dimension of the a priori forms of cognizing subjectivity itself” (Murphy, 1974, 73). In fact by genetic phenomenology one may view the a priori of all subjective structures as pertaining to their functions as constitutive, both on the predicative, reflective level and the pre-reflective, pre-predicative one, something that makes the grounded on transcendental subjectivity *a priori* to be essentially associated with actual presence-in-constituting within the world.¹² The founding of the material a

¹¹ I take note that D. Zahavi argues in (Zahavi, 2022), based on Husserl’s writings, that the pure ego is not presupposed by a conceptual and metaphysical necessity, rather it seems to be “something” that is directly exhibitable, (Zahavi, 2022, 271). Yet his arguments in no way weaken the present article’s global position.

¹² J. N. Mohanty has talked, referring to Husserl’s *Crisis*, about a novel distinction between the objective-logical a priori and the a priori of the life-world. The *a priori* of the life-world is said to be “subjective-relative” (Husserl, 1970, 140), “pre-logical” (Husserl, 1976b, 141), and presupposed by the objective sciences (Husserl, 1976b, 139; Mohanty, 1974, 51). As a matter of fact Mohanty’s argu-

priori¹³ on the essential peculiarity of each sensuous content so that the corresponding material essence “appears” factually through its particularizations in experience makes the case about the transcendental subjectivity associated a priori even stronger. However one may enter a slippery ground here if the “predominance” of the material *a priori* leads to a deflation of the transcendental a priori as being conditioned on the constraints of factual experience. De Palma’s views are indicative of the risk to run into an “osmotic” relation of the purely eidetic with facticity on the grounds that: „Die Fakta leiten alle Eidetik. Was ich exemplarisch nicht unterscheiden kann, davon kann ich auch keine eidetische Unterscheidung und Wesensbildung gewinnen“ (De Palma, 2014, 198–199)¹⁴.

De Palma has further asserted that even though the validity of the formal a priori is independent of the “thingness” a priori, its applicability on the experience is tied to the existence of the latter whose a priori structure depends on the things/contents factually given (De Palma, 2014, 198–199)¹⁵.

It is telling, though, that for Husserl the life-world has, conceived as prior to science, the structure that the objective sciences would presuppose as a priori in their substruction of a world which exists “in itself” (Husserl, 1970, 139). Even more important, the validity of the life-world is the outcome of the a priori “constituting” intentionality of transcendental subjectivity, and accordingly life-world as ultimate ontic meaning is immanently constituted according to the universal eidetic categories of thematic consciousness and the a priori norms of subjective (temporal) unity (Husserl, 1976b, 69). This, of course, weakens the view of those who claim that it is the objective a priori (material ontologies and the a priori of the life-world) that may serve in an essential sense as a clue for the investigation of the subjective a priori and not the other way around. The question that naturally follows is how one can bring

mentation about the life-world *a priori* by no means alters my own general argumentation in this article. All the more so since the life-world *a priori*, after the *Epoché*, manifests itself as a “stratum” within the universal a priori of transcendental subjectivity insofar as *LW2*, meant as the universal pre-given horizon within which any world experience is to be possible, under the *Epoché* is precisely the transcendental subjectivity (Husserl, 1976b, 63).

¹³ The level associated with the material *a priori* relates to those essences pertinent to material objects in their eidetic singularity.

¹⁴ “Facts guide all eideticity. What I cannot distinguish by virtue of example, I cannot gain its eidetic distinction or essential formation thereof” (my transl. — S.L.).

¹⁵ The nature of the perplexing relation of the formal and further of the transcendental *a priori* with the material *a priori* is not sufficiently clarified in the literature and could possibly be the subject matter of a new article. *A propos* I have in mind, Woodruff Smith’s view that “ontology is to one extent a priori and to another extent a posteriori” and his reference to Quine in that “categorical ontology [concerning logical-mathematical claims. — S.L.] lies at the center of our web of beliefs, yet is responsible to the periphery of perceptual observation” (Woodruff Smith, 2004, 246, 279–280).

into intuitive clarity the a priori modes of subjective constitution both on the level of spontaneity and that of passivity without, on the one hand, falling prey to the reductionistic lure of naturalism and, on the other, without generating circularities in talking about the a priori in terms of being-in-the-world.

For the moment I note that for Husserl the transcendental *a priori*, as operative both on the reflective level of predicative spontaneity and the pre-reflective level of passivity (where the life-world is intentionally “constituted” *a priori*) ends up in an eidetic reflection on the experiencing subject itself so that the transcendental philosophy of the a priori becomes an “egology,” a transcendental philosophy of the pure ego in view of the latter’s essential being as being-in-constituting and in the concrete modes of being thus and so. Consequently the reflective experience of the transcendental *a priori* is reduced to an intuition of the ego in its essential, constitutive role. But then again one might pose the question: if the transcendental a priori is grounded in the intentional (noetic) structure of the transcendental ego, thought of in purely constitutive terms, then the transcendental ego must be itself a factual ego if it is to be a constituting one in concrete terms, something that entails the risks of a transcendental solipsism and empiricism in terms of factuality (Murphy, 1974, 76). The inevitable consequence is that one gets drawn into the muddle in which Husserl got enmeshed from the time he set out to describe the nature of the absolute ego on the operative level, in other words in factual terms, even as factuality was attributed properly to the factual ego in the sense of the latter as a ‘mirror’ reflexion of its atemporal, pure self.

Husserl’s attempt to determine the transcendental ego *a tergo* in terms of the factual ego, this latter conceived as the identical substrate of ego properties by which it constitutes itself as a “fixed” and “abiding” personal ego, points to a circularity in the reducibility of the transcendental a priori to the constituting (noetic) forms of the transcendental subject. This may be implied to the extent that the identical ego in virtue of active and affected subject of consciousness “lives in all processes of consciousness and is related, through them, to all object-poles” by means of a temporal constitution (Husserl, 1982, 66). Further, to dissipate any lingering doubts on the essentiality of the mutual relation between pure and factual ego, Husserl stated that:

I exist for myself and am continually given to myself, by experiential evidence, as “I myself.” This is true of the transcendental ego and, correspondingly, of the psychologically pure ego; it is true, moreover, with respect to any sense of the word ego. (Husserl, 1991, 68)

On the other hand the self-constitution of the factual ego according to the universal essential “laws” of temporal egological coexistence and succession, in more

general terms those of temporal co-possibility, points to its conditioning on a foundation of inner temporality as a constituted state-of-affairs presupposing a constituting absolute, subjective origin. For Husserl what occurs in my own ego and eidetically in any other ego as such, with respect to transcendental processes, i.e., with respect to intentional processes, constituted unities, and habitualities of the ego, has its temporality and in this regard takes part in the system of forms that belongs to the universal temporality with which every imaginable ego, every possible variant of my ego is constituted for itself (Husserl, 1991, 74–75).

Even in sidestepping the question of temporality, insofar as we might accept the aphorism “the a priori is transcendental since ‘constitutive’; the ‘constitutive’ is transcendental since a priori,” we not only rule out a transcendental a priori on a solipsistic foundation but due to the prevalence of transcendental constitution over vacuous ontological concerns we may extend the field of transcendental subjectivity (and thus of the associated transcendental a priori) to that of transcendental intersubjectivity within the life-world (Murphy, 1974, 77–78). Keep in mind that the transcendental constitution of the world is effected by eidetic laws proper to the factual or concrete ego that is meant in a more schematic or at least logically deductive description as the concretized eidos of the transcendental ego, the latter devoid of any *in rem* intuitive or constitutive underpinning.

6. CONCLUSION

As the general concept of the a priori has acquired, even within phenomenology, some varying connotations according to the particular context of discourse, I have tried to bring out, especially regarding the transcendental a priori, the ways by which it ultimately implies a kind of subjective constitution, either in objective (i.e., in a free variation activity) or in purely transcendental terms. Consequently one may proceed in an apodictic fashion and not merely by logical implication to the “destruction” of the concept of *a priori* by undermining the *a priori*, transcendental character of its originating source. Of course as it is common in philosophical debates this is not a position left unchallenged.

C. Romano, for instance, based on Husserl’s views in the *Introduction to Logic and Theory of Knowledge* insists that

The material a priori is grounded in the very nature of the contents of experience. It is independent of the subject—objective—to the precise extent that it depends on these contents. The a priori laws that are true of colors define what color is for any consciousness capable of experiencing it. (Romano, 2015, 21)

However, without entering into further details, Husserl's views on the matter and in the particular reference may be judged as belonging to a phase of elaboration of his ideas prior to his evolution toward transcendental phenomenology proper¹⁶. Moreover and most importantly my attempt at “deconstructing” the *a priori* in the particular sense is inseparable from a conception of transcendental subjectivity as temporally constituting (and not constituted).

Turning back to the question of the temporal foundation of a radical egological analysis and the reductive argumentation by which the transcendental *a priori* comes to be accounted for in terms of the being and the modes of being of transcendental subjectivity, I have offered some clues to the circularities and the virtual impasse reached by putting the question along these tracks. It is true that the question of the origin of inner temporality was for Husserl a continuing challenge for which he dedicated much of his philosophical toils to come to terms with, especially in his transcendental phenomenology years, but for all his efforts it was virtually left unanswered to the end of his life. And to the extent that the concrete, genuine being of immanent *onta* has to be accounted for in terms of the primordial temporality of the living streaming present (*lebendig strömende Gegenwart*) (Husserl, 2006, 297), the question of the temporal foundation of the ego bears inevitably its mark on the foundation of the *a priori* and its presumed “destruction” for that matter¹⁷. As already noted in earlier sections a thorny persisting issue is the infinite regression reflecting-reflected generated by the distinction between the pure, non-reflective ego and the constitutive, reflective one, mirrored in the distinction between the ontic (in the sense of *eidos*) and the constitutive *a priori* (the one of possible experiences or of possible modes of appearing) of which only the latter is by definition able of self-foundation, even though both are thought inseparable from each other (Mohanty, 1974, 50).

In the search for a clarification of the idea of a non-reflective ego, as anonymous “*Ich*,” which would cut off the endless chain of reflecting-reflected by exclud-

¹⁶ It is quite suggestive to compare, e.g., Husserl's corresponding views in (Husserl, 1973, 376). I point out that Romano himself claims in another place that “Only that necessary structure of our consciousness [i.e., intentionality. — S. L.] allows us to see how the *a priori*, while being a determination of our experience of objects, is also—and by this very fact—a determination of the objects of our experience” (Romano, 2015, 32).

¹⁷ As it may have been already made clear the term “destruction” in this paper is meant in the sense of a conceptual “dismantling” of essences and bears a strong connection with Eley's use of the term as pointing to a “destruction” of essences to invariants, in reference to Husserl's essential deprivation of the *a priori* nature of essences in *Ideas I*, and *III* and their reduction to a system of endless processes of continuous appearances.

ing the possibility of “being” a consciousness-of, Husserl entered helplessly into the mire of overlapping or simply circular notions in the following sense. In the *Bernau Manuscripts* as well as in the *Late Texts on Time Constitution*¹⁸ he tried to establish a “lowest-level” subfield of consciousness as a field of a non-reflecting “possession” of consciousness (*Bewußtseinshaben*) thought also as a “lowest-level” of living experience which should be a prerequisite for all reflecting activity. This would come, however, at the expense of bracketing the reflective ego which would entail in turn the lack of any foundation, by virtue of evidence-in-reflection, for any non-reflective origin of temporal consciousness. On this account Husserl sought in the *Bernau Manuscripts* a clarification of the essence of “being” of a primordial process (*Urprozess*) as preceding reflection by asking how in such a case one could think of a primary flux, perceived as a temporal one, yet one which would nonetheless not be made consciousness of a temporal flux nor of a phenomenological perception. The impossibility, by all means, to answer this question should be put next to the one of whether the pure ego, insofar as it is considered a presupposition of an ego-in-act for its own *a tergo* ontification, would be the same ego-pole in being thematized and so on in infinitum (Husserl, 2006, 187, 189). In the final count the question is reducible to whether and in what sense a pure, transcendental ego may not have the character of a consciousness-of and therefore be necessarily objectivity-constituting. And of course another challenge left unanswered is whether this may be conceived of in non-constitutive terms without the *ad hoc* call of a *deus ex machina*.

Consequently it seems that if the transcendence of the *a priori* can be reducible in constitutive terms to the temporal being of a transcendental subjectivity, we may indeed get rid of the platonic-metaphysical burden that run through centuries of rational thought until Kant’s re-positioning of the concept of *a priori* in subjective terms. Yet one may run the risk of getting ensnared in the circular maze of introducing a non-reflective absolute subjectivity in constitutive-objective terms. In this eventuality one may be led, on the grounds of my argumentation, to an undermining of the concept of transcendental subjectivity and consequently of the transcendental *a priori* or perhaps even more properly said to their complete and outright “destruction.”

Acknowledgements: The author wishes to thank the two anonymous referees for their constructive and insightful comments.

¹⁸ See, e.g. (Husserl, 2001, 198–199) and (Husserl, 2006, 36, 189).

REFERENCES

- Anthony, L. (2004). A Naturalized Approach to the A Priori. *Philosophical Issues*, 14, 1–17.
- Bealer, G. (1999). A Theory of the A Priori. *Philosophical Perspectives*, 1, 29–55.
- De Palma, V. (2014). Die Fakta leiten alle Eidetik. Zu Husserls Begriff des materialen Apriori. *Husserl Studies*, 30, 195–223.
- Dufrenne, M. (2009). *The Notion of the A Priori*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Eley, L. (1962). *Die Krise des Apriori in der Transzendentalen Phänomenologie Edmund Husserls*. Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Heidegger, M. (1976). Von Wesen des Grundes. In F.-W. von Herrmann (Ed.), *Wegmarken* (123–175). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- Husserl, E. (1956). *Erste Philosophie, Erster Teil* (Hua VII). Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Husserl, E. (1969). *Formal und Transcendental Logic* (D. Cairns, Trans.). The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Husserl, E. (1970). *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (D. Carr, Trans.). Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Husserl, E. (1971). *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie* (Hua V). Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Husserl, E. (1973). *Experience and Judgment* (J. S. Churchill & K. Americs, Trans.). London: Routledge & Kegan P.
- Husserl, E. (1975). *Introduction to the Logical Investigations*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Husserl, E. (1976a). *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie* (Hua III/I). Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Husserl, E. (1976b). *Die Krisis der Europäischen Wissenschaften und die Transzendente Phänomenologie* (Hua VI). Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Husserl, E. (1982). *Cartesian Meditations* (D. Cairns, Trans.). The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Husserl, E. (1983). *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy: First Book* (F. Kersten, Trans.). The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Husserl, E. (1984). *Einleitung in die Logik und Erkenntnistheorie* (Hua XXIV). Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Husserl, E. (1991). *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* (J. B. Brough, Trans.). Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Husserl, E. (1996). *Logik und Allgemeine Wissenschaftstheorie* (Hua XXX). Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Husserl, E. (2001). *Die Bernauer Manuskripte über das Zeitbewußtsein (1917/18)* (Hua XXXIII). Dordrecht: Kluwer Acad. Pub.
- Husserl, E. (2006). *Späte Texte über Zeitkonstitution, Die C-Manuskripte* (Hua VIII). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Husserl, E. (2008). *Introduction to Logic and Theory of Knowledge, Lectures 1906/07* (C. Ortiz Hill, Trans.). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Husserl, E. (2012). *Zur Lehre vom Wesen und zur Methode der eidetischen Variation* (Hua XLI). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Husserl, E. (2019a). *First Philosophy — Lectures 1923/24 and Related Texts from the Manuscripts (1920–1925)* (S. Luft & T. M. Naberhaus, Trans.). Dordrecht: Springer Nature B. V.
- Husserl, E. (2019b). *Logic and General Theory of Science* (C. Ortiz Hill, Trans.). Cham: Springer Nature.
- Hill Ortiz, C. (2009). Husserl and Phenomenology, Experience and Essence. In A.-T. Tymieniecka (Ed.), *Analecta Husserliana, vol. 103* (9–22). Berlin: Springer Science+Business Media B. V.
- Hill Ortiz, C. (2013). The Strange Worlds of Actual Consciousness and the Purely Logical. *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, XIII, 62–83.

- Kant, I. (1998). *Critique of Pure Reason* (P. Guyer & A. Wood, Eds., Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Livadas, S. (2020). Husserl's Sachhaltigkeit and the Question of the Essence of Individuals. *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 60, 4 (240), 449–471.
- Majolino, C. (2016). “Until the End of the World”: Eidetic Variation and Absolute Being of Consciousness — A Reconsideration. *Research in Phenomenology*, 46 (2), 157–183.
- Mohanty, N. J. (1974). ‘Life World’ and ‘A priori’ in Husserl’s Later Thought. In A-T. Tymieniecka (Ed.), *The Phenomenological Realism of the Possible Worlds, Analecta Husserliana, vol. 3* (46–65). Dordrecht: Springer Science + Business Media.
- Moran, D. (2014). What Does Heidegger Mean by the Transcendence of Dasein? *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 22 (4), 491–514.
- Murphy, T. R. (1974). The Transcendental A Priori in Husserl and Kant. In A-T. Tymieniecka (Ed.), *The Phenomenological Realism of the Possible Worlds, Analecta Husserliana, vol. 3* (66–79). Dordrecht: Springer Science + Business Media.
- Patočka, J. (1992). *Introduction à la phénoménologie de Husserl*. Grenoble: Ed. Millon.
- Romano, C. (2015). *At the Heart of Reason* (M. B. Smith & C. Romano, Trans.). Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press.
- Schroeter, L. (2006). Against A Priori Reductions. *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 56 (225), 562–586.
- Smith Woodruff, D. (2004). *Mind World. Essays in Phenomenology and Ontology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sowa, R. (2016). Eidos und A Priori: Husserls ontologische Konzeption des Apriori. *Discipline Philosophique*, A. XXVI (1), 9–45.
- Tidman, P. (1996). The Justifications of A Priori Intuitions. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, LVI (1), 161–171.
- Turri, J. (2011). Contingent A Priori Knowledge, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, LXXXIII (2), 327–344.
- Zahavi, D. (2022). From No Ego to Pure Ego to Personal Ego. In H. Jacobs (Ed.), *The Husserlian Mind*. (269–279). Oxon: Routledge.