

SSPPP 2018

Ca' Foscari University Venice

ABSTRACTS OF THE SEMINARS

Pedro Alves (University of Lisbon)

***Modalities of access to fictional worlds
A phenomenological approach***

I intend to explore from a phenomenological point of view the fictional consciousness as such, and particularly the intentions and forms of reference that constitute fictional objects within a fictional “world”. In this regard, I will discuss Marbach’s thesis about the identity but not individuality of fictional objects (see E. Marbach, “Towards a Phenomenological Analysis of Fictional Intentionality and Reference” *Internataional Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 428–447).

I will examine the basic modification of belief-consciousness that posits a fictional world (which I will not call a “quasi-world”, but rather a “para-world”). The doxastic modification will not be construed neither as a consciousness of free *possibilia*, nor as a neutralized consciousness. The theory of assumptions will be expanded in order to understand the peculiar kind of positings that constitute a fictional world. However, there are several kinds of *ficta*. The leading distinction I propose revolves around the difference between *ficta* that are there for simple observation (in a broad sense), as in fantasy stories like *Alice’s Adventures in the Wonderland*, and *ficta* where the I intervenes as the very center of the phantasized world, as in daydream consciousness.

My analyses will be, thus, focused on the difference between observational *ficta*, on the one hand, and a modality of fantasy that I call “reverie” (or daydream consciousness), on the other hand. I will stress that observational *ficta* entail a contemplative *ego* that develops itself in the form of an anonymous life, which is the consciousness of the fictional world as such, whereas reverie entails a free construction of the ego’s own personal story beyond the partition between what is truth and feigned about himself. Both modalities are interpreted as an enlargement of the ego’s self-experience. Namely, I emphasize the connection between fictional consciousness and affective life, stressing that there is an actual affective and emotional commitment of the ego, either as anonymous life or phantasized self, in the experience of a fictional world.

I will end with a proposal for a more fine-grained classification of fictional objects and modalities of phantasy consciousness.

Reading list

Alves, Pedro - "Image-Consciousness and Phantasy". *Phenomenology 2010*. *Selected Essays from the Euro-Mediterranean Area*. Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2011, pp. 37-64.

Alves, Pedro - "Observing: A Phenomenological Approach". *Phainomenon*, n. 25 (2015), pp. 175-184.

Alweiss, Lilian - "Beyond Existence and Non-Existence". *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 21 3 (2013), pp. 448-469.

Marbach, Eduard - "Towards a Phenomenological Analysis of Fictional Intentionality and Reference" *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 428–447

Voltolini, Alberto - *How Ficta Follow Fiction*. Dordrecht: Springer, 2006.

Lilian Alweiss (Trinity College Dublin)

The Limits of Imagination

This lecture will be exploring the relation between fiction and reality by focusing on the role of the imagination (phantasy). Clearly we all have the capacity to imagine things. Indeed, life without imagination would be dull, if not unliveable. The imagination allows us to distance ourselves from our socio-historical situatedness and view ourselves and the world from a distance. Imagination is crucial for our understanding of others (the ability of seeing the world from another person's perspective) and for thinking (being critical – distancing ourselves from views handed down by others) and our sense of freedom (not being limited to the situation we find ourselves in). At the same time the imagination should never be free floating; it should be rooted in reality. Too much imagination can lead to madness, too little to thoughtlessness. This lecture will attempt to tease out how to understand the relation between the imagination and our sense of reality.

To do this we shall focus on three interrelated questions:

- 1) How to differentiate between fiction and reality
- 2) Why the imagination is central to understanding who we are
- 3) Is there a limit to the imagination?

We shall explore these questions by focusing on the writings of Husserl (*Phantasy, Image Consciousness and Memory* (1898-1925). Dordrecht: Springer 2005) and Jean-Paul Sartre (*The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*; Routledge) and we shall draw on Hannah Arendt 'Eichmann in Jerusalem; A report on the Banality of Evil. Penguin Books and E T A Hoffmann's short story: *The Sandman* Alma Classics.

Daniele De Santis (University of Roma II)

As if there were a truth

Fictions and Transcendental Philosophy according to Hans Vaihinger

The seminar will discuss *Die Philosophie des Als Ob* by Hans Vaihinger and will try to present his notion of “truth” understood as a system of (theoretical, practical as well as religious) generalized “fictions” (*Fiktionen*). Originally a Kant scholar (he is indeed mostly known for his monumental *Kommentar zu Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft* and the so-called “*Blattversetzung in Kants Prolegomena* case”), Vaihinger was also a refined (and quite interesting) thinker, who in fact tries to combine Kant’s very idea of “transcendental” philosophy (i.e., transcendental critique of reason) with some crucial Nietzschean motives. It is such “combination”, so to say, that the seminar wants to bring to light and thus strives to explore.

Reading list

- H. Vaihinger, *Die Philosophie des Als Ob. System der theoretischen, praktischen und religiösen Fiktionen der Menschheit auf Grund eines idealistischen Positivismus. Mit einem Anhang über Kant und Nietzsche*; English trans: *The Philosophy of “As If”. A System of Theoretical, Practical and Religious Fictions of Mankind*;
- H. Vaihinger, *Kommentar zu Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft*; English trans: *Commentary on Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*;
- I. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*;
- I. Kant, *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können*

Nicolas de Warren (Pennsylvania State University)

Husserl and Hofmannsthal

During a speaking tour of Germany in 1907, the Viennese poet, playwright, and writer Hugo von Hofmannsthal gave a lecture in Göttingen “The Poet and Our Time” and took this occasion to visit Husserl (Hofmannsthal was related to Husserl’s wife, Malvine). Although the details of their conversations are not known, the impact on Husserl was immediately registered in the form of a letter which Husserl shortly thereafter penned to Hofmannsthal. In this letter, Husserl proposes that there exists a substantial connection between his own nascent method of phenomenological inquiry and the aesthetic craft of the poet. Husserl is in particular attracted to what he perceives as an affinity between the aesthetic attitude towards the world and the phenomenological attitude; both attitudes, as he writes, require a position that excludes any “position taking.” Both attitudes adopt a stance of indifference towards the world in terms of which the world can be discovered anew in its truthful constitution. It is through this indifference that fiction comes to fruition for the discovery of the world.

This letter offers a tantalizing opening for an exploration of the relationship between fiction and truth, phenomenology and literature. In this session, we will focus on trying to understand Husserl's perceived affinity between his own method of phenomenology and Hofmannsthal's poetics. Hofmannsthal's poetics was committed to an *Erkenntnis-Lyrik* in search of a poetical knowledge of the world that abandoned an overly subjectivist form of *Bekanntnis-Lyrik*. Rather than focus on the self, poetry here searches for a discovery of the object through a cultivated form of aesthetic intuition in which the element of plasticity is paramount. As Hofmannsthal remarks: "Plasticity develops not through observation, but through identification." The artist must strive to develop an aesthetic attitude and type of intuition, or insight, in which the language of things becomes heard and rendered visible. Yet, it is precisely this notion of aesthetic knowledge that Hofmannsthal will himself come to question profoundly in this own thinking, in his celebrated *Lord Chandos Letter*, thus raising the fundamental question of whether the search for truth requires or is inhibited by the productions of fiction, be it phenomenology or literature.

Reading list

Hofmannsthal "The Poet and Our Time," *The Letter of Lord Chandos*

Burt Hopkins (University of Lille | UMR-CNRS 8163 STL)

The Paradox of the Problem of Truth and Fiction in Husserl's Phenomenology

"But how is evidence related to truth? Actually the relation is not so simple . . ." (Husserl, *FTL*, § 91)

"Determining the essence of phantasy is a great problem." (Husserl, Text No. 19 [1922-1923], 558)

The problem of truth and fiction in Husserl's phenomenology is twofold. On the one hand, it is the pivot upon which its eidetic method turns. On the other hand, its opposition is the quarry that that method promises to deliver, and to do so in the guise of philosophy as rigorous science capable of distinguishing between the being and non-being of the respective objects that belong to each region of reality. The paradox of the problem of truth and fiction in Husserl's phenomenology emerges with the identification of fiction as a mode of non-being, which gives rise to the question of how a philosophical method that traffics in fiction can possibly be productive of not simply truth, but of the intersubjectively accessible set of criteria capable of determining the truth of the being and non-being of anything with a claim to existence.

Husserl's answer to this question, like the question itself, is twofold. One, the fictional basis of the phenomenological method is rooted in the capacity of phantasy to unfetter the empirical limits of cognition, such that units of evidence, composed of infinitudes, generate absolute evidence. Two, the units of phenomenologically uncovered absolute evidence provide the foundation for the truth claims of the exact sciences, the natural sciences, the formal sciences, the human (social) sciences, as well as for all the branches of philosophy, including metaphysics.

The seminar will explore Husserl's phenomenology's seminal accounts of phantasy and truth, with a focus on their contribution to the traditional problem of image and original, as a propaedeutic to a critique of the ontology behind the digitalization of reality and the reality of digitalization. Digitalization may be characterized as the process of electromagnetically storing information that

“represents” any domain of reality. It does so by approximating the perceptual being of reality, using mathematical algorithms based on sequences of 0s and 1s to measure it. The appeal to representation to characterize the status of the digitalized data invites the traditional philosophical distinction between image and original in order to render it intelligible. The guiding question of this exploration will be whether the classical distinction between image and original not only can still be, but more important, should still be maintained in our contemporary, digitalized, world.

Reading list

Edmund Husserl, “Pure Possibility and Phantasy” <texts probably from 1922/23> (548-564, pages in German, reproduced in English translation.), in *Phantasy, Image, Consciousness, and Memory* (1898-1925), trans. John Brough.

Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, §64 a-d.

Edmund Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, §§59-62.

Jacob Klein, *A Commentary on Plato’s Meno*, Ch. 2, “The meaning of εἰκασία” and Ch. 3, “The dianoetic extension of εἰκασία,” “Ἀνάμνησις, εἰκασία, and δίανοια in the *Phaedo*” (pp. 112-150).

Claudio Majolino (University of Lille)

Phenomenology and the “fictional” vicissitudes of truth qua ἀλήθεια

In his essay Plato’s doctrine of Truth, Heidegger provides an extremely fascinating interpretation of the allegory of the cave in the Republic (514a–520a). According to this reading, Plato’s allegory appears as the turning point from the original understanding of truth as ἀλήθεια to a novel understanding of truth intended as ὀρθότης—an account of truth as “correctness” that will eventually shape the innermost core of the Western philosophical tradition.

Now, despite its great appeal, Heidegger’s interpretation will be heavily challenged by German philologist Paul Friedlander. In his extensive study on Plato, Friedlander both rejects Heidegger’s claim that the original meaning of ἀλήθεια is unconcealment, and suggests an entirely different reading of Plato’s allegory and its underlying account of truth. Not unsurprisingly, the cogency of Friedlander’s critique will be later acknowledged by Heidegger himself, whose late texts provide a deeply modified narrative about the Greek concept of truth.

In this lecture I will try to reconstruct the whole discussion between Heidegger and Friedlander. More precisely I will try to show to what extent the “fiction” of the cave is supposed to host a concept of truth whose nature might turn out to be “fictional”. I will then conclude by showing that, quite unexpectedly, Husserl’s understanding of Plato in his 1916-19 lectures Introduction to Philosophy—although from an extremely different angle—appears to be more compatible with Friedlander’s reading than with Heidegger’s. It will be my contention that such an agreement is not unrelated with Husserl’s account of the relationship between fictions and truth in his lectures on phantasy consciousness.

Reading list

Paul Friedlander, “Aletheia. A Discussion with Martin Heidegger”, in *Plato. An Introduction*, tr. by Hans Meyerhoff, Princeton University Press: 1970, p. 221-229.

Martin Heidegger, “Plato’s doctrine of truth” in, *Pathmarks*, tr. by Thomas Sheenan, Cambridge University Press: 1993, p. 155-182.

Martin Heidegger, “The End of Philosophy”, in *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*, tr. by Joan Stambaugh, Chicago University Press: 1973, p. 55-73.

Edmund Husserl, Texts n° 19 (“Pure possibility and phantasy”) and 20 (“Phantasy-Neutrality”) with their respective Appendixes (LXI-LXV), in *Phantasy, Image Consciousness, and Memory (1898-1925)*, tr. by John Brough, Dordrecht: Springer 2005, p. 659-714.

Edmund Husserl, *Einleitung in die Philosophie. Vorlesungen 1916-1919. Husserliana Materialien IX*, ed. by Hanne Jacobs. Dordrecht: Springer, 2012, p. 1-287.

Gian Luigi Paltrinieri (Ca’ Foscari University Venice)

If «the ‘True World’ Finally Became a Fable» (Twilight of the Idols, IV), how could Nietzsche still call himself «the lover of knowledge»?

Human, All too Human I, § 30: «Bad habits in drawing conclusions. [...] an opinion makes happy, therefore it is a true opinion; [...] an opinion causes pain and agitation, therefore it is false». The world is a fiction, a construct, a narrative artifact created by the clever human beast, who calls truth what is simply useful to his/her life, that is what gives him/her both epistemic support and moral comfort. This is what is usually ascribed to Friedrich Nietzsche as the alleged father of the Postmodern destruction of truth. Yet, if there is no truth, how can Nietzsche know that traditional sentences are false or mere fictions? Moreover, when he says that «facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations» (*The Will to Power* § 481), he always adds that our interpretations of the world are signs or symptoms of what we are. In other words, interpretation reveals «the nature of the knower» (*The Gay Science* § 110) and so interpretation could be experienced as a kind of Phenomenon. Is there a Nietzschean Phenomenology?

Reading list

The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche;

Jessica N. Berry, *Nietzsche and the Ancient Skeptical Tradition*, Oxford UP 2011;

Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, Cambridge UP 1990;

Daniel Conway, *Beyond Truth and Appearance: Nietzsche’s Emergent Realism*, in in B. Babich (ed.), *Nietzsche, Epistemology, and Philosophy of Science*, II, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999, pp. 109-122;

Carlo Gentili, *Kant, Nietzsche und die Philosophie Als-Ob*, Nietzsche-Studien, 20, 2013, pp. 103-116;
Volker Gerhardt, *Die Perspektive des Perspektivismus*, Nietzsche-Studien, 18, 1989, pp. 260-281;
Claudia Ibbeken, *Konkurrenzkampf der Perspektiven*, Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg 2008;
Andrea Rehberg (ed.), *Nietzsche and Phenomenology*, Cambridge Scholars 2011;
Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche*, Routledge, London 1983;
Paul J.M. Van Tongeren, *Nietzsche's Symptomatology of Skepticism*, in B. Babich (ed.), *Nietzsche, Epistemology, and Philosophy of Science*, II, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999, pp. 61-71.

Emiliano Trizio (University of the West of England, Bristol)

Understanding transcendental idealism through fictions

“We are a common type, the grass of the universe!”

Stanisław Lem, *Solaris*

Transcendental idealism, i.e., the thesis that the world is a unit of sense constituted in transcendental consciousness, has been a source of puzzlement for many of Husserl's readers. In particular, the claim that the being of the world is relative to the being of consciousness appears to run against our most common intuitions about reality. It is not by chance, that so many interpreters have adopted various strategies to underplay the metaphysical significance of transcendental phenomenology and reduce it to a mere generalized approach to the notion of sense. In this lecture, I will follow the opposite direction and stress the metaphysical implications of transcendental idealism. Unsurprisingly, given the nature of phenomenology, my conclusions will rest on the analysis of a number of fictions. The starting point consists in recognizing that the realistic-naturalistic worldview underlying the scientific conception of reality and of the place of humankind in it rests not only on factual claims, such as that the universe existed long before the appearance of humans and of any other living being, not only on conditional claims, such as that the universe would continue to exist even if any human and animals disappeared, but also on a specific type of fictions, namely *counterfactual scenarios*. Indeed, all scientifically educated people would take it as an obvious consequence of the scientific worldview (or *world-narrative*) that *had* the physical conditions of the universe been different, life would have never appeared, that, further, *had* the physical and biological conditions of the Earth been different, no intelligent life would have developed, and that, finally, *had* the physical, biological and historical conditions been different, no scientific and philosophical civilization would have ever seen the light of the day. These counterfactual statements are woven into the naturalistic worldview precisely because they are taken to prove that consciousness in general and human consciousness in particular is not only a limited phenomenon within the world, but also a wholly accidental one. In order to understand how Husserl's transcendental idealism overcomes the naturalistic worldview, it will thus be necessary to show how it is able to dismiss such fictional scenarios and reasserts the view that humanity is, as Schopenhauer said (and *contra* Stanisław Lem), “the bearer of the world”, rather than a limited and contingent fact within it. This analysis will require a brief introduction of concepts such as embodiment, intersubjectivity, normality and animality. A final corollary of this analysis will be that transcendental phenomenology has the resources not only to meet the so-called “challenge of

ancestrality” raised by Quentin Meillassoux and convincingly countered by Dan Zahavi, but also the much more radical realist challenges stemming from the aforementioned fictional scenarios.

Reading list

Hua XIII. *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass. Erster Teil. 1905-1920*, ed. I. Kern, Nijhoff, Den Haag 1973.

Hua XIV. *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass. Zweiter Teil. 1921-1928*, ed. I. Kern, Nijhoff, Den Haag 1973.

Hua XV. *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass. Dritter Teil. 1929-1935*, ed. I. Kern, Nijhoff, Den Haag 1973.

Hua XXXVI. *Transzendentaler Idealismus. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1908-1921)*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003.

Meillassoux, Q., 2008, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, Continuum: London.

Zahavi, D. 2017, *Husserl's Legacy: Phenomenology, Metaphysics, and Transcendental Philosophy*, Oxford University Press: Oxford.