

The Faces of Contemporary Phenomenology: the Quest for Relevance

Edited by Piotr Janik, Magdalena Kozak,
Robert Grzywacz, and Szczepan Urbaniak

Harrassowitz Verlag



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Dedicated to the memory of Jan Patočka and Roman Ingarden

2021

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

Cover: Infinite spiral stairs, Stockholm. Photo by Ludde Lorentz, Creative Commons

Publication co-financed from the funds granted by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2021 for the enhancement of research potential at the Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <https://dnb.dnb.de> abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the internet at <https://dnb.dnb.de>.

For further information about our publishing program consult our website <https://www.harrassowitz-verlag.de>

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Printed on permanent/durable paper.
Printing and binding: Hubert & Co., Göttingen
Printed in Germany

ISSN 2749-7879
eISSN 2749-7887

ISBN 978-3-447-11741-8
eISBN 978-3-447-39216-7

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Introduction

Piotr Janik, Magdalena Kozak, Robert Grzywacz, Szczepan Urbaniak

In memory of Jan Patočka and Roman Ingarden

It is not even possible to trace a field of scientific research where phenomenological investigations would be absent, and the same is true of the outcomes of analysis and of different philosophical approaches. Nowadays, phenomenological investigations have acquired a recognition that goes beyond European borders, even surpassing the scope of continental philosophy. “The Faces of Contemporary Phenomenology” is seen as giving voice to this plurality, albeit in the form of a brief overview which focuses on the most current issues.

These rigorous beginnings have not only captivated a large body of followers but also paved the way towards “sense experience” from the scientific world becoming reconciled with the humanities. After a century, the principles remain still valid. In this regard, the agenda that Husserl outlined in his lectures entitled *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (1910–1911), probably the one Husserl referred to so often as to no other, marks the milestone in the development of this method. In the introduction, Husserl underlines the indispensable requirement of “a completely different attitude than the natural one within which natural-scientific and psychological knowledge is attained” (Husserl, 2006, 1). The scope of the indispensable change is to make possible a description of “what this attitude finds before itself” (*Vorfindlichkeiten*). However, as Husserl promptly adds: “It is as such that he [each of us] finds himself, and he finds himself at all times as a center of a surrounding (*Umgebung*).” (Husserl, 2006, 2). On the one hand, Husserl’s systematic approach of the sensate goes toward the *Crisis of European sciences*, even if it is not the last word of the founder on the genesis of a sense. On the other hand, this provokes an alternative start point, namely the Heideggerian, which consists in the unity of sense or the interest provided by caring. Nevertheless, it is not the case that it overcomes or makes redundant the earlier position, because both agree in claiming the nomen-omen “findings” of an *index*, i. e. in Husserl “*Vorfindlichkeiten*” and in Heidegger “*Befindlichkeit*”, respectively. The “findings” of contemporary phenomenological analysis which are rooted in these attempts are opened up for dialogue beyond the realm of the school. In other words, grounded in the respectful way of facing phenomena, the “findings” become reality to be argued for and outcomes to be shared within the scientific world. Beyond that, these may express the lived experience of humans, i. e. the personal.

Certainly, Husserl’s approach differs from that of Heidegger. However, what makes it different is not the matter of the “personal”, contrary to Heidegger’s own opinion in *Sein und Zeit*. In fact, Husserl analyses pre-technical rationality, for which the presentation as a correlate is the opposite, i. e. an object. Yet Heidegger’s investigation concerns the tech-

nological mentality, namely rationality as a device and thus Heidegger intends the factuality of *Dasein* to serve as an objective. And what is left out is actually the sense of the lived experience. Therefore, without any ado the Heideggerian approach is a mechanical-like interpretation, i.e. locked in the Cartesian framework, in the contemporary meaning of “mechanical” as it is applied to any algorithmic, artificial doing. It is not by chance that Patočka (1996, 1998) corrects both positions, arriving at so-called “a-subjective” intentionality, in the first case leaving idealism aside, in the second making “feeling” free from insight, i.e. from the linguistic meaning. In Patočka’s view, the Cartesian dilemma, known as the “body-mind” problem, is apparently overcome. Unfortunately, these terms “body” and “mind” seem to refer to the same thing, disregarding the specificity attributed to both entities, *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, respectively. Nevertheless, may the term “a-subjective intentionality” mean “res” or not? In other words, may it not represent the “tissue” of the personal in a scientific fashion? This appears to be the background of the current quest and in any way an open question.

Technology has set new borders with artificial intelligence, eventually replacing the living world (*Lebenswelt*) and the “animal rationale” with that of the “avatar” and virtual or augmented reality. It seems to be no more the case to raise an issue of the personal versus the subjective, but rather to disclose the personal due to the “a-subjective”. Paradoxically, our feeling of the “natural”, as Patočka (2016) claims, is mistaken for an aspiration of technology itself. We are living in an “inauthentic way” due to our abandonment in an “inauthentic world” (Merleau-Ponty, 2005). In this case, analysis and dialogue are perhaps still indispensable.

What kind of contribution to dialogue can phenomenology offer? Undoubtedly, putting forward a theory is a foreign affair which it is not up to. It is not even the case that it makes other people’s intentions *explicite*. In some ways, it seems to give reason to common sense, also claiming perhaps a different approach, catching nuances, the relevance of something unnoticed and left aside and so on. Perhaps, however, this is not even the case. As Merleau-Ponty (2005) notes, any description requires a screen and the body functions as the “tissue” of it. Similarly, Patočka (1996) discloses the appearance of phenomena as always being packed with co-phenomena as a background. If something is unveiled according to interest, something else is lost in the confusion, because of disinterest. The “insight” is just about giving voice to one against the whole. Certainly, the reaching of “ideas clear and distinct” works like a torch in the darkness. If it penetrates the depths of this darkness, it produces a fragmentary, shadowy picture. If by chance the light is strong, it involves the whole of the surrounding area, with the beam dependent on it.

The term “reason” encompasses at least three meanings, known as the Cartesian ideas (Brentano, 2009), identified by Twardowski (1977) as content, act, and object. However, according to Descartes (2012) an idea, strictly speaking, is only presentation, i.e. object. It does not seem possible to think by leaving the idea aside, as was already obvious to Descartes. Moreover, perhaps no one nowadays supports a mirror-like conception of presentation, neither as a mirror of nature, nor of language. The “conceptual idea” – to say – is a complex vision of reality, one that is no longer an image. As one notices, when

one hears some noise, one immediately addresses the source of the sound, following our understanding of a state at play.

Consequently, the “conceptual idea” cannot be valued or judged. In fact, it is distinguished from both act and content. The “conceptual idea” refers to what is “objective”. Yet the valuation gives rise to an objection (bias) and judgement requires an object.

Perhaps, however, as Brentano (1975) claims, a “sense of being” – if not even of “res” – applies well to Aristotle’s ten categories which he in turn derived from Plato, namely: oneness (substance), quality, quantity, action, affection, habitus, position (situs), space, time and relation. If this is the case then the “tissue”, reductively considered a structure, can be articulated through them and due to them. The phenomenological analysis aims toward making sense of the “findings”, to bring out the reasonableness in them, and this makes phenomenology a partner for dialogue.

The approaches of Husserl and Heidegger coincide in the point that “findings” are not “given at hand”. What counts are: 1) the appropriate objective (intentional) attitude and a shared communal (intersubjective) attitude, 2) committed research that achieves “insight”, 3) resolution that marks a transition – as Patočka (1996) underlines – from problem to required differentiation, i. e. “problematism”. The goal of the authors brought together in this volume is to follow this path.

The opening chapter by Jérôme de Gramont, “Retour aux sources de la phénoménologie – la nouvelle controverse du réalisme” revisits the old controversy concentrated on realism as a source of problems for phenomenology. The author displays his brief account of the history of phenomenology as a matter of lost equilibrium and an endless effort of balancing two poles of the essential correlation between what is given, on the one hand, and subjective receptivity on the other. The study argues in favour of an inescapable irreducibility of both sources, constitutive of the principal correlation characterising phenomenology, namely between its worldly pole and the subjective one. Moreover, this correlation implies the primacy of world with respect to subject, primacy called realism. It is the point that requires a particular understanding and is testified to in various ways by a few followers of the so-called “new French phenomenology”. Four of them are examined more closely in the text: Henri Maldiney, Jean-Louis Chrétien, Jean-Luc Marion and Jean-Yves Lacoste. Everyone unfolds a singular view regarding the following three marking points: 1) redefinition of the concept of realism, 2) detection of the aspects in Husserl’s thought which resist the idealistic interpretation, 3) reading in terms of a kind of presence of both sides of phenomenality. Each one of the commented positions investigates the difficult equilibrium between subjectivity and the world, particularly when an excess of givenness or a deficiency on the part of subjective response, brief a sort of dissymmetry comes into play.

In chapter Two, entitled “A Pendulum of Phenomenology: On Two Ways of Understanding the Phenomenon”, Daniel R. Sobota addresses a central theme of phenomenology, namely the question of the phenomenon *qua* phenomenon. For in the very concept of phenomenon and in its etymology lies a certain ambiguity – that of the act of “ap-

pearing itself” and of a thing “showing itself”, i.e. the phenomenon as the appearance of things and the phenomenon as things’ showing themselves. Sobota shows that the history of phenomenology proceeds in a rhythm of oscillations between these two *modes* of becoming manifest. The author shows that, starting from Husserl, we have a phenomenology of the object appearing in presence, apprehended in an apophantic form, while, on the other hand, starting from Heidegger, the thing that shows itself remains inapparent, while phenomenology uses rather “indication” and takes an eroteric form. The question that Sobota poses is whether it is possible to highlight some third way of conceiving of the phenomenon and phenomenality – to relate appearing to showing, while maintaining the way of phenomenization characteristic of each of the two and avoiding the radicalization characteristic of the phenomenology of immanence and that of transcendence. Sobota argues that a privileged phenomenon in which appearing is made manifest through showing itself and showing itself through appearing is a situation of an artistic performance. Moreover, the author introduces the idea of the phenomenology of performance, hopefully a step towards a new performative phenomenology.

Chapter Three deals with “Jean-Luc Marion’s phenomenology of givenness and the problem of the limits of rationality”. In his study, Szczepan Urbaniak analyzes how Jean-Luc Marion, starting from the principle of reduction to givenness, radically expands the boundaries of rationality to the saturated phenomena (paradoxes), the phenomenon of love and the phenomenon of revelation. This broadening of rationality poses a challenge to Marion’s phenomenology, for if the limits of rationality are to be set by the very thing given according to the givenness, the method, in pursuit of it, must make a turn, disappearing in favour of the given. Urbaniak argues, that this “turn” of reduction, supposed as fulfilment of Marion’s phenomenology, is never accomplished. He then shows how this aporia of method is changing the very phenomenology of donation in its movement of testing the limits of rationality. Using the example of the phenomenology of donation together with its aporia, the author shows how the movement of broadening the boundaries of rationality is part of a wider contemporary discourse on phenomenology itself, its method and limits. Urbaniak asks how the tension in the phenomenology of donation – its source and the attempt of its solution in later Marion’s work – might be informative for the question of phenomenology itself.

Chapter Four, by Wojciech Starzyński, opens a new section of the monograph, namely one devoted to explorations of what it is like to be human. This first contribution deals with the subject of surprise as a phenomenological principle of subjectivity. In his analysis he refers to the later philosophy of Descartes, reading his *The Passions of the Soul* in a phenomenological spirit. In his interpretation, Descartes perceived the phenomenon of wonder as giving the subject primary access to the world and to itself. Following Ricœur’s analysis, Starzyński shows that the passion of surprise is a privileged phenomenon of the unity of body and soul in Descartes philosophy. Accessed in the passion of wonder, this original subjectivity also unfolds in its temporality and is fulfilled in the world as good will, i.e. in the phenomenon of generosity – esteem for oneself and esteem for others. Thus Descartes in the interpretation of the author would open up the possibility of going beyond understanding the world according to the objective method

which characterized his early work and was made homogeneous by its chief attribute of extension. In this approach, the world is no longer described in the language of the emerging discipline of physics, but in a way that could be called phenomenological.

Chapter Five, i.e. “Disponibilité habituelle et disponibilité attentionnelle – penser phénoménologiquement la distinction mêmeté-ipséité”, by Robert Grzywacz, starts from the famous distinction introduced by Paul Ricœur between idem-identity and ipse-identity, and represents an attempt to deepen it by means of a phenomenological approach. The author claims that the idem-ipse distinction, inasmuch as referring to two different ideal types of qualifiers ordinarily combined within human identity, remains in a sort of correlation which may be determined in detail with two foundational experiences. These are respectively the habitual and the attentional mode of being. Such an endeavour entails a reading of the late legacy of Ricœur with the help of his early work, something which requires a justification. The task is easier to realise in the case of idem-identity in which the model of character comes into play but it is less evident when one takes into consideration the phenomenon of attention as corresponding to ipse-identity. Finally, even the former case turns out to be complicated along with separating habits as routines from habits as abilities (Romano). The phenomenological elaborations attained in the research ultimately focus on different ways of experiencing emotions and time in an existential perspective, depending on whether the inert and reifying aspect of identity (idem) or the spontaneous and self-determining one (ipse) prevails.

In Chapter Six “Radical Phenomenology versus Dynamic Phenomenology: Michel Henry and Renaud Barbaras, Two Philosophers of Life”, Marek Drwiega compares and confronts the phenomenological approaches to life in the title with a view to establishing the resemblances and divergences between them. The author especially focuses on the understanding of two operations fundamental for the phenomenology of both thinkers, namely *epoché* and reduction, as well as on the repercussions of its different understanding for the scope of the field grasped by phenomenological method and for the objects accessible through it in each analysed case. Even if life seems to constitute a key concept in both, a closer examination of its respective meaning (absolute auto-affection vs source unity of being alive and experiencing something) makes it evident that one is dealing with viewpoints that by no means manifest an essential similarity to one another. Their specificity above all comes to light as concerns two poles of the basic correlation that condition all phenomenality: Henry’s emphasis on immanence and subjectivity contrasts with Barbaras’ stress on the worldly pole as the ground to which subjectivity belongs. These shifts in emphasis result in two original versions of the metaphysics of life.

The title of Piotr Janik’s chapter is “The Reason for an Utterance: Towards Human Conversation”. In this text, the author addresses the issue of language, and specifically asks about the significance of an utterance in the horizon of human conversation. In asking about the origin of authentic speech which would go beyond what Merleau-Ponty terms the world of second-hand thoughts, he argues that one must go beyond the Cartesian approach to sensations. By means of the Cartesian separation of motion from the sensations, affectivity is no longer linked to spontaneous movement as such, and thus to the vital relation to the environment. Janik introduces the concept of the medium as the

transition stage, and instead of “sensory perception” the term “sensing” serves in his text as a synonym for the openness of a living being which cancels the subjective-objective relationship. Openness, as it is argued in his text, means overcoming prejudice, striving for consensus or reaching a balanced and nuanced position “in-between.” By analyzing Heidegger and Patočka, the author shows that this “in-between” is no longer neutral and indifferent toward the situation of the subject, but rather a part of becoming and being within a temporal frame, whereas the utterance refers to the situation that is being lived through and living in common (*Mit-Sein*). Openness in human life is therefore argued to be a kind of dialogue, because it is a kind of negotiation of meanings through sympathy (*Mit-Gefuehl*), in the wider context of being affected or “touched” by the situation.

Chapter Eight starts a new section that groups contributions investigating the issues of social engagement and care treatment. The first study is devoted to a particular illustration of these questions, namely to “Critical Phenomenology and Social Engagement: The Case of Achille Mbembe’s Criticism of Race”. Alice Pugliese analyses the contemporary version of such a phenomenology on the example mentioned in the title. The reader is confronted with the following problem: how can a set of phenomenological tools (such as intentional and motivational analysis or the politics of evidence) provide a meaningful basis for social and political research? Referring to the Cameroonian philosopher’s analyses, Pugliese shows that motivation need not be a weak alternative to causality, but a new kind of efficiency. Evidence should not be treated as the final seal of certainty, but as a starting point in the pursuit of truth. Inspired by Mbembe’s research, the author postulates a need to abandon the contemplative attitude of phenomenology and to involve it in the analysis of concrete social transformations. She sees the need for phenomenology to deal with concrete factuality, with concrete experience and to recognise the current and pressing questions arising from the life of people and societies. Here she recalls Mbembe’s analyses of the concept of race in the field of dialogue between Husserl’s classical phenomenology and contemporary hermeneutic criticism. His interpretations of the notions of race, postcolony, racism, and modernity establish experiential paradigms that must be examined not only on the basis of empirical reconstruction, but in relation to their meaning. Reaching for motivational analysis, Pugliese follows Mbembe’s genealogical/genetic phenomenology by focusing on the problem of identity, the relationship of modernity to violence and domination, the separation of the subject, and the alienation of modern societies.

In the next chapter “The lost space of ‘Secular Age’: Re-thinking Immanence and Transcendence with Phenomenology”, Carla Canullo addresses the question of rethinking space in light of the concepts of immanence and transcendence. She relates this issue to the reflection on secularisation. If one of the characteristics of the “secular age” is tension between immanence and transcendence, i. e. the immanence of history and the transcendence of what is religious, the immanence of the world and the transcendence of what is divine, then the author asks whether the locative pair inside/outside is the only locative pair we have in the “secular age”? By referring to the phenomenology of Husserl, she shows that the concept of “immanent transcendence” is to be analysed in this context. Also in Heidegger’s philosophy, with his *In-der-Welt-Sein* of *Dasein*, the situation

of “space” is more nuanced. The author argues that phenomenology should enable us to recompose what has been decomposed in the “secular age” – namely immanence/transcendence. As a way of overcoming the dichotomy of the pair inside/outside, the concept of the phenomenon of the “out of place” of the interiority is introduced. Canullo refers here to Jean-Louis Chrétien in his analysis of the phenomenon of joy, described in special terms as the intensive broadening of the space of interiority. Furthermore Canullo, introduces the figure of a spiral, as it manifests itself as a way of outlining space, not according to an inside/outside topic, but according to the development that manifests itself while happening in nature. Thus, the inner space is grasped more originally and not as counter-posed to exteriority. This inner space provide a common ground in a secular age, where the choices of both believers and non-believers are made.

Chapter Ten unfolds the potential of “Phénoménologie de l’attestation chez M. Heidegger et E. Lévinas”. In her commentary Magdalena Kozak presents the category of testimony as essential to understanding the constitution of the subject for both Heidegger and Lévinas. By juxtaposing the positions of both philosophers, she shows the central place of testimony in their thinking, indicating, however, their different understanding of this category. Heidegger perceives the original state of Dasein as an entanglement between the Self and the “they,” and the key task that Dasein has to fulfil is to bring out the Self and to establish itself in the field of authenticity. The author points to conscience as a necessary condition for the attestation of one’s existence, which takes on the character of a call (to Being-one’s-Self). This attitude implies a choice of one’s own existence and a determination to respond to the voice of concern. As later with Lévinas, and also with Heidegger, the subject remains in a state of being guilty until it sides with authentic existence and defends the Self against the “they.” Bearing witness to the Self and its authenticity is a continuous process that takes place through choices in taking responsibility for oneself – and only oneself. Kozak then describes Lévinas’s subjectivity, where the category of testimony is transferred from the level of ontology to that of metaphysics (and thus also ethics). In contrast to Heidegger, the category of witness emerges in Lévinas at the moment of establishing a relationship with the Other, with one who calls me to witness the Good through his appealing face. Kozak describes the genesis of such a testimony going back to the an-archic time, to the category of being guilty and late. Witnessing in Lévinas’s work takes place as a breaking down of the self, as resignation of the self, as giving oneself completely to the other and offering one for the other.

Chapter Eleven opens the final section of the book dedicated to the issues that have to do with limit questions. In her contribution “<<L’imaginaire du semblable>> face à celui qui n’a plus figure humaine. Les variations imaginatives en situations extremes”, Agata Zielinski examines the problem of “imaginative variations” and the role that imagination itself plays in the encounter with people in a coma, in a vegetative state or those with profound disabilities. Starting with Husserl, who described “imaginative variations” as “abnormal” appearances that are a modification of the normal person, the author leads us to Ricœur, who shows that “abnormality” – from a phenomenological point of view – is not clear and distinct. “Anomaly” is purely descriptive and aims to account for diverse modes of human existence. The other, the “abnormal” is another *I*, appearing as a

variation of the original *I*. The author reflects on the role that the imagination plays in encounters with people in extreme health situations. Referring to Husserl's principle of analogy, she shows that, although the imagination is not infinite because it comes from already acquired experience, it always allows for a change of point of view and a reopening to what is different, new. It is imaginative variations that enable me to experience the anticipated possibilities, that make me feel that what happens to another in an extreme situation can also happen to me. The author refers to the corporeal roots of imagination, which is not a purely mental creation but is imbued with the experience of the body, it is "in the body," which makes us reflect on the possibilities of the body itself. In contact with a concrete human being in a vegetative state, imagination not only appears as a creative force, but above all as a force that drives us to action and forces us to choose the right attitude. The author cites, after Ricœur, the practical power of imagination understood as "social imagination," which is a development of the theory of intersubjectivity after Husserl from the Fifth Cartesian Meditation, pointing to the participation of the imagination in creating and sustaining the social world. Writing about the socialising and humanising character of imagination, we also encounter a reflection in the text on the dangers that imagination has to face. If imagination generates connections between the perception of oneself and the perception of others, and that enables the transition from *I* to you, us, then in contact with the you that is in a vegetative state, a fear (of oneself) may arise that distorts the role of imagination. Then, instead of uniting me with my neighbour, imagination can divide us and push us away from each other.

In Chapter Twelve, entitled "Transformative experience and psychopathology", Andrzej Kapusta presents mental disorders as a sort of transformation of human experience and attempts to find an answer to the question of the extent to which psychopathology can be described in the categories of change in life experiences, which have their own dynamic and structure and which reveal significant dimensions of human existence. A change in life experience is described here from the perspective of phenomenological psychopathology and hermeneutical interpretation, while taking into account the anthropological complexity of the antinomy of human experience. In this anthropology, a mental disorder appears as human fragility and vulnerability. A mental disorder appears not just as a deficit of significant functions and the lack of ability to adapt, but also as a source change in the structure of experience, which on the one hand has its own dynamic but on the other hand reveals the complexity and finiteness of human existence. The disorder experience is examined in the context of several concepts: Plessner's eccentric positionality, the boundary/limit situation of Jaspers, Ricœur's concept of subjectivity, and as part of classic opposition: health/illness, authentic/inauthentic, familiar/unfamiliar. The consequences of a change in the structure of a disorder experience are described as transformative experience using selected forms from psychopathology (depression, schizophrenia, personality disorder) as examples.

The concluding chapter deals with "La phénoménologie et les pratiques ostéopatiques: Brève note programmatique". Its author, Michel Dupuis, reflects on the possibilities of applying the phenomenological method to the analysis of the practices in the title. Referring to phenomenological anthropology opens – in the author's opinion – new

perspectives to perceive and understand the human body, which becomes, in the perspective of phenomenology, a phenomenon to be read and deciphered. Osteopathic practices are realized through touch and they focus on the bodily accessibility of the patient. How then are the bodily reactions which are detected by touch experienced and felt? Significant in this context seems to be the “ethics of tact,” which concerns the quality of the proximity and distance between people and their bodies. The author advocates the need for a personalistic attitude, because it determines interpersonal relations, the ability to communicate and cooperate, and pays special attention to the postulate of respecting boundaries: individual and collective ones. They are what make an authentic encounter in a position of balance possible. At the same time, Dupuis devotes considerable attention to the question of vulnerability, understood as the capacity to be hurt, but also as the capacity to “understand” oneself and others. It is the basic human sensitivity that manifests itself as fragility, as uncertainty, as care in a variety of situations: health, social, economic, political, cultural. The caring response is described as the ability to receive and recognise other people who need help and care. Dupuis writes about the problem of embodied human subjectivity, which on the one hand cannot be reduced only to the body and, on the other hand, cannot be separated from this body either. The challenge, therefore, is to describe human subjectivity as a biological body with psychic abilities, without falling into extremes: materialism on the one hand and spiritualism on the other. Therefore, the phenomenology of lived experience must point to a new ontology and metaphysics, one in which the body acts as both the place and the centre of that experience. The use of phenomenology in osteopathy establishes a new form of transcendental anthropological empiricism and a metaphysical horizon that goes beyond the biomechanical monopoly.

On behalf of all the contributors, it is the editors' pleasure to offer this monograph to the reader in the hope that it will help them engage with a genuine phenomenological path.

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Engagement in a controversy

Retour aux sources de la phénoménologie – la nouvelle controverse du réalisme

Jérôme de Gramont

“Ne quittant la lecture de Stuart Mill que pour celle de Lachelier, au fur et à mesure que [Mme de Cambremer] croyait moins à la réalité du monde extérieur, elle mettait plus d’acharnement à chercher à s’y faire, avant de mourir, une bonne position.” (Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, Paris, Gallimard, Pléiade, 1954, t. II, p. 924).

Au commencement sont nos premiers mots, ou les premiers regards qui se lèvent, les premiers affects qui mettent en mouvement notre vie de sujet, tout cela qui appartient au matin de notre expérience et s’origine dans la libre montée des phénomènes. Ou bien: au commencement est l’apparaître qui se destine à nous, appelant la réponse d’une parole, soulevant le regard, se donnant parce que nous affectant. La phénoménologie se meut dans un cercle, celui de la philosophie première, où, pour reprendre les mots du fragment V de Parménide, il importe peu de savoir par où nous commençons parce que nécessairement nous repasserons par ce point et celui qui lui fait face¹: primauté du phénomène mais entendu en un sens retravaillé, ou primauté du logos mais compris comme logos du monde esthétique au bord du langage. Partons de deux formules qui servent de principe à la phénoménologie husserlienne: le célèbre “principe des principes” du § 24 des *Ideen I*, et ce que le § 48 de la *Krisis* présente comme étant historiquement son coup d’envoi (l’a priori universel de corrélation).

1 Le projet phénoménologique

Repartons du “principe des principes” et de ses deux pôles, l’intuition et la donation, chacun qualifié d’originaire: “toute intuition donatrice originaire est une source de droit pour la connaissance, tout ce qui s’offre à nous dans “l’intuition” de façon originaire (dans sa réalité corporelle pour ainsi dire [en chair et en os]) doit être simplement reçu pour ce qu’il se donne, mais sans non plus outrepasser les limites dans lesquelles il se donne alors²”. A la phénoménologie comme science rigoureuse Husserl assigne donc l’équivalence de deux sources, comme présence de l’intuition aux choses mêmes en tant

1 “Ce m’est tout un par où je commence, car là même à nouveau je viendrai en retour” (Parménide, *Le Poème*, fragment V, trad. Jean Beaufret, Paris, PUF, 1984, p. 81).

2 Edmund Husserl, *Idées directrices pour une phénoménologie*, § 24, trad. Paul Ricœur, Paris, Gallimard, 1950, p. 78.

qu'intuition donatrice originaire, et présence des choses mêmes à l'intuition en tant qu'elles se donnent en chair et en os. Non pas un côté *ou* l'autre de l'origine, mais intuition *et* donation, donnant et se donnant ensemble, chacune adossée à l'autre, chacune à son sommet de présence grâce à l'autre. Une intuition sans donation porterait à vide, une donation sans intuition ne pourrait que se perdre. Au seuil pratiquement de son grand livre de 1913, Husserl décrit un difficile équilibre en quoi consiste littéralement le projet phénoméno-logique. En 1950 Ricœur assortit sa traduction de quelques notes importantes tant pour la compréhension de Husserl que pour sa propre interprétation de la phénoménologie. "Le rapprochement des deux expressions: l'intuition *donatrice*, et: ce qui *se* donne, – est frappante. Il tient en raccourci toutes les difficultés d'une philosophie de la constitution qui doit rester en même temps à un autre point de vue un intuitionisme³." Il y va d'un difficile équilibre, annoncé très tôt dans les *Ideen I* et dont on voit bien qu'il touche aux sources mêmes de la phénoménologie. Comme on devine aussi combien il sera difficile de le tenir, et que Husserl lui-même pourrait bien dans le cours du même ouvrage s'en écarter, appuyant sur un côté plutôt que l'autre.

Avant même la note du § 24 que nous venons de citer, et la définition du point d'équilibre du projet phénoménologique, dès son annotation des toutes premières pages de l'ouvrage, Ricœur fait part d'un déséquilibre qui s'expliquera plus tard en terme d'idéalisme: "*L'intuition donatrice*: ce sens actif du verbe donner appliqué à l'intuition sera confirmé par le passage à la constitution transcendantale qui est une "donation de sens": § 55. On reviendra sur l'accent idéaliste de cette expression qui ne supprime pourtant pas le caractère intuitif de la perception et en général de l'évidence⁴". On le voit, l'interprétation de la phénoménologie historique repose sur un accent privilégiant l'activité de la subjectivité constituante et sa donation de sens par rapport à l'autre pôle, celui de l'intuition comme évidence reposant avant tout sur ce qui se donne à voir⁵, mais interprétation qui ne va pas sans une réserve. Ce que confirme une troisième note, accompagnant le § 55, paragraphe qui "met l'accent sur le côté positif de l'attitude transcendantale" (donation de sens et constitution, motifs rigoureusement synonymes), mais où Ricœur maintient pourtant l'idéal d'équilibre affiché par le principe des principes: "Le verbe *geben* souligne l'activité de la conscience absolue dans l'intuition même, qui reste intuition (cf. l'expression *gebende Anschauung*): toute l'originalité de la phénoménologie de Husserl est cette identité du "voir" et du "donner"⁶."

Venons-en au second passage, tiré du livre testamentaire de Husserl et faisant retour sur les origines du projet phénoménologique: "La première percée de cet *a priori* corrélationnel universel de l'objet d'expérience et de ses modes de donnée (tandis que je travaillais à mes *Recherches logiques*, environ l'année 1898) me frappa si profondément

3 Ibid., note de Ricœur.

4 Ibid. § 1, p. 14 sq, note de Ricœur.

5 Selon deux acceptions possibles de l'intuition donc: en tant qu'originellement donnante ou qu'elle se laisse donner ce qui apparaît (acception proprement kantienne cette fois). Sur cette différence, voir Jean Beaufret, *Dialogue avec Heidegger*, t. II *Philosophie moderne*, Paris, Minuit, 1973, p. 105 note.

6 Husserl, *Ideen I* § 55, p. 183, note de Ricœur.

que depuis le travail de toute ma vie a été dominé par sa tâche d'élaboration de l'*a priori* corrélationnel⁷. A bien des reprises, Renaud Barbaras est revenu sur ce passage, chez Husserl une simple note – mais combien de fois un auteur rejette-t-il l'essentiel dans une note de bas de page? Dans ce concept d'*a priori* corrélationnel, il ne faut pas voir seulement le point de départ de la phénoménologie husserlienne, mais ce que Renaud Barbaras présente bel et bien comme “le cadre nécessaire au sein duquel ou à partir duquel la phénoménologie se développe après Husserl⁸”, de quelque manière qu'il puisse être ensuite interprété, c'est-à-dire élaboré, infléchi ou critiqué. Aussi n'y a-t-il rien d'étonnant à ce que ses propres travaux trouvent là une impulsion décisive. Retenons seulement pour notre propos que cette corrélation n'accorde aucun privilège à un pôle sur l'autre, dans la mesure où ni l'étant transcendant (ou le monde) ne se laisse penser comme reposant en lui-même et par là coupé de toute apparition, ni le sujet ne pourrait se refermer sur lui-même, cessant par là de se rapporter à un étant transcendant, ce qui revient à interdire au moins à son départ toute interprétation de la phénoménologie dans un sens réaliste (privilège du monde) ou idéaliste (privilège du sujet)⁹. Avant même d'explicitier le sens de ces deux mots en -isme, chargés de tant d'équivoques dans l'histoire de la métaphysique, le principe de l'*a priori* universel de corrélation aura dénié toute pertinence à leur alternative, au moins au moment où s'invente le projet phénoménologique dans son équilibre difficile à tenir¹⁰.

Car l'histoire de la phénoménologie est bien celle d'un équilibre perdu dès son commencement, même si nous savons aussi, à lire davantage Husserl, à nous être aventurés quelque peu dans le maquis des textes, à tirer quelques fils ou vu comment les successeurs ont pu tirer quelques fils, que cette œuvre n'est pas d'une pièce mais traversée de tensions. Comme toujours l'interprétation est affaire d'accent – comme pour le *Don Giovanni*, drame joyeux, mais où l'accent doit porter plutôt sur le drame ou plutôt sur la joie. En tant qu'il est son premier interprète, Husserl a clairement porté l'accent sur l'idéalisme. Sans doute convient-il en la matière de séparer la question *quid facti?* (et se rendre à l'évidence que Husserl a bien pris parti pour une interprétation “idéaliste” du

7 Edmund Husserl, *La crise des sciences européennes et la phénoménologie transcendantale*, § 48, trad. Gérard Granel, Paris, Gallimard, 1976, p. 189 note).

8 Renaud Barbaras, *Recherches phénoménologiques*, Paris Beauchesne, 2019, p. 244.

9 “En d'autres termes, cet *a priori* signifie que chacun des termes en présence, l'étant transcendant et le sujet (qui est la condition, sinon le lieu des apparitions) enveloppe sa relation à l'autre terme, qu'aucun des deux pôles ne peut être posé hors de cette corrélation. (...) Ici, on le voit, c'est l'alternative entre un certain réalisme et un certain idéalisme qui se trouve dépassée” (ibid., p. 245 sq).

10 Équilibre dont peut se réclamer Renaud Barbaras dans un Entretien de 2006: “Pour ma part, je dirai que, dans une ligne qui me paraît être celle de la phénoménologie historique, la difficulté est d'éviter toute forme de réalisme naïf, conformément à l'inspiration fondamentale de la phénoménologie selon laquelle le sens d'être de l'être est son apparaître, sans pour autant tomber dans un subjectivisme, qui persiste encore y compris là où il est expressément dénoncé, comme c'est le cas chez Heidegger par exemple” (ibid., p. 283 sq).

projet phénoménologique) et la question *quid juris?* (Ingarden et les phénoménologues du cercle de Göttingen ayant ouvert une première controverse)¹¹.

Revenons auprès du fameux § 24 des *Ideen I* et prêtons attention à la lecture qui fait pencher le principe des principes du côté de l'intuition comme activité du sujet au détriment de la donation des choses elles-mêmes – lecture qui peut s'autoriser de la phénoménologie de la donation de Jean-Luc Marion, dans la mesure où celle-ci entend prendre ses distances avec une phénoménologie proprement husserlienne qui ferait la part trop belle à l'intuition en tant qu'originellement elle donne. La lecture et critique est menée dans les premières pages d'*Etant donné*, et cette fois encore il vaut la peine de regarder une note. Après avoir rappelé celle de Paul Ricœur sur le difficile équilibre entre "l'intuition donatrice" et "ce qui se donne", Jean-Luc Marion poursuit: "En fait, les deux formules convergent assez aisément dans l'unique donation. Mais c'est alors que surgit une autre difficulté: la donation se mesure-t-elle uniquement à l'intuition (et à la constitution)?¹²" Il s'agit donc bien de savoir si les deux sources de la phénoménalité se ramènent à une, et si oui laquelle? Dire que l'intuition chez Husserl est mesure de toute donation revient à dire que la subjectivité est mesure de toute phénoménalité, ce à quoi l'invention marionnienne du phénomène saturé apporte un démenti sans concession.

2 Le tournant réaliste

Où il y a interprétation, il y a conflit d'interprétations, et les critiques n'ont pas manqué de ce qui est apparue comme un tournant en-deçà duquel il était possible de remonter. L'indéniable fécondité sur plusieurs générations de la phénoménologie française est liée à une constante explication avec Husserl et Heidegger qui est souvent passée par une critique de la subjectivité constituante. Sans forcément se réclamer du réalisme, des œuvres originales se sont construites en s'écartant du programme ouvertement idéaliste de Husserl. Le montrer en détail demanderait plus qu'un chapitre de livre¹³. Arrêtons-nous à titre d'exemple sur deux ouvrages récents, le premier parce qu'il *interprète* les travaux

11 Pour une première esquisse, voir notre court article "Le legs d'une question, de Husserl à Patočka", dans *Philosophie* n°118, été 2013. Pour un jugement plus critique envers la controverse elle-même et l'idée d'un tournant husserlien du réalisme des *Recherches logiques* vers l'idéalisme des *Ideen I*, voir en revanche Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Etre en danger*, Paris, Cerf, 2011, p. 232: "Le lexique de Husserl est parfois mal choisi, et le concept d'"idéalisme transcendantal" fut plus mal choisi encore que d'autres. (...) Ce que la phénoménologie ne se préoccupe plus [dans la réduction] d'affirmer comme existant hors de la conscience la peuple en fait plus encore qu'il ne la peuple dans l'attitude naturelle". Le moi dit transcendantal n'est pas un moi replié sur soi et sur des "représentations", mais un moi capable d'offrir l'hospitalité, en lui, à tout ce qui lui apparaît en provenance du monde".

12 Jean-Luc Marion, *Etant donné. Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation*, Paris, PUF, 1997, p. 21 note.

13 Signalons pourtant quelques travaux qui en peu de pages ont su présenter ces critiques: Dominique Pradelle, "Ricœur lecteur de la phénoménologie transcendantale: entre idéalisme et engagement ontologique", *Philosophie* n°112, janvier 2017 (sur Ingarden, Tràn-Duc-Thào, Levinas et Ricœur); Jean-François Lavigne, *Husserl et la naissance de la phénoménologie (1900–1913)*, § 6, p. 53–70 (sur la génération de Levinas, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty et Ricœur, puis celle de Michel Henry, Jacques Derrida et Jean-Luc Marion); Alexander Schnell, *La déhiscence du sens*, Paris, Hermann, 2015, p. 29–41 (sur le réalisme revendiqué cette fois par Claude Romano et Jocelyn Benoist).

les plus contemporains de la “nouvelle phénoménologie française” en terme de réalisme (*Le lieu de l'universel*, d'Isabelle Thomas-Fogiel), le second parce qu'il se présente ouvertement comme un programme de phénoménologie réaliste (*Les repères éblouissants*, de Claude Romano).

L'originalité du livre d'Isabelle Thomas-Fogiel est de présenter un panorama de la philosophie française contemporaine en traversant la frontière qui sépare phénoménologie et courant analytique pour mettre en évidence une commune orientation en faveur du réalisme. Seul nous retiendra ici l'état des lieux du côté de la phénoménologie¹⁴, et non la convergence avec la philosophie analytique ou les remarques critiques formulées dans la dernière partie de l'ouvrage (et qui justifient son sous-titre: *Impasses du réalisme dans la philosophie contemporaine*). Pour rassembler sous un même titre des travaux divers il convenait de donner à ce titre une définition minimale, et pour simplement les rassembler de partir d'un exemple, en supposant, par un jeu de proximité et d'analogie, que les analyses peuvent s'étendre à d'autres œuvres. Pour parler de réalisme (ou d'idéalisme), nous nous sommes contentés de partir de la dualité sujet-monde et de parler d'accent. Cette définition suffit à notre auteur: dans ce couple sujet-monde (avec toutes les variations lexicales possibles ensuite) la primauté revient alors au monde. Ou pour le dire autrement: premier est le phénomène, et non pas le sujet. Il y a bien *une* source de la phénoménalité¹⁵, et celle-ci n'est plus attribuée au sujet dans son acticité de constitution et de donation de sens. “Il y a bien dans la phénoménologie de ces dernières années un réalisme radical, dans lequel le donné, posé comme autre du sujet (ce qui lui advient pour Romano, ce qui surgit pour Richir, ce qui l'appelle pour Marion ou Chrétien), est source, critère et principe premier, en une inversion parfaite et délibérée de la révolution copernicienne¹⁶”. Ce qu'il fallait ensuite décrire plus précisément sur un exemple, et ce sera la phénoménologie de la donation de Jean-Luc Marion.

Pourquoi ce choix? Parce que si au commencement est l'autre pôle que le sujet, à savoir ce qui se donne plutôt que la conscience, il faut soit donner son nom propre à ce qui se donne en premier lieu et commande l'espace entier de la phénoménalité, autrement dit donner un nom propre à ce qui a pour prénom “archi-phénomène” ou “phénomène de la phénoménologie”, et souscrire ainsi à une certaine “course à l'originnaire ou à l'archi-originnaire” assez caractéristique de la phénoménologie française¹⁷, soit retenir la phénoménalité dans un certain anonymat (ou, parce qu'il faut bien lui donner un nom,

14 Qui vient plus de vingt ans après celui de Dominique Janicaud unifiant le paysage phénoménologique français autour d'un tournant théologique (*Le tournant théologique de la phénoménologie française*, Combas, Ed. de l'éclat, 1991) et peu de temps après l'ouvrage de Tengelyi et Gondek construit autour du concept central d'événement (*Neue Phänomenologie in Frankreich*, Berlin, Suhrkamp, 2011).

15 Ou ce que notre auteur peut appeler une source du sens: “Le phénomène est premier et source de sens; le phénoménologue reçoit ce sens; il ne le constitue pas plus qu'il ne le donne, ne l'anticipe ou ne le modifie” (Isabelle Thomas-Fogiel, *Le lieu de l'universel*, Paris, Seuil, 2015, p. 49).

16 Ibid., p. 46. Pour une autre tentative de définition, voir la page 277 qui avance deux critères: (1) tout repose sur la chose, (2) cette chose se donne et fait preuve en elle-même.

17 Selon une formule de François-David Sebbah développée dans *L'épreuve de la limite*. Derrida, Henry, Levinas et la phénoménologie, Paris, PUF, 2001, et reprise par Isabelle Thomas-Fogiel, *op. cit.*, p. 37.