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PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO
INTERSUBJECTIVITY AND VALUES

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The review is devoted to a joint monograph of *Phenomenological Approaches to Intersubjectivity and Values* published in 2019. The peculiarity and novelty of this monograph is that it is devoted not so much to the cognitive and epistemological aspects of phenomenology of intersubjectivity as to ethical, existential and value problems of relations with the Others, presented in various phenomenological concepts. One of the advantages of the work is the pluralistic approach, which allows the reader to get acquainted with the solutions to the problem of intersubjectivity posed by a number of the most prominent phenomenologists, i. e. Husserl, Scheler, Heidegger, Sartre, Marcel, Levinas and others. The book traces the idea that emerging of the topic of intersubjectivity in phenomenology caused a socio-ethical and axiological shift in the phenomenological movement. Considering moving of modern philosophy towards “the intersubjective paradigm” (W. Höhle), the aim of the authors of the monograph to show the relevance and innovation of phenomenology in discussing the problems of the Other, communication and ethics can be assessed as a promising theoretical project. Whereas critics of the phenomenological movement reproached “methodological solipsism” of phenomenology, which develops Cartesian-Kantian subjectivism, a serious analysis of the works of the most prominent representatives of the phenomenological tradition leads the authors of the monograph to the conclusion that a phenomenological subject is social in its essence. The review draws a conclusion that the joint monograph

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brings into sharp focus that phenomenology is in possession of deep and diverse ways of studying the common being of people and collectively shared values.

Keywords: intersubjectivity, phenomenology, value, ethics, Husserl, Scheler, Heidegger, Sartre, Levinas.

РЕЦЕНЗИЯ НА КНИГУ Л. А. ДЕ СУСА, А. ФАЛЬКАТО (РЕД.)

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Рецензия посвящена коллективной монографии “Phenomenological approaches to Intersubjectivity and Values”, опубликованной в 2019 г. Особенность и новизна данной монографии в том, что она посвящена не столько когнитивным и гносеологическим аспектам феноменологии intersубъективности, сколько этическим, экзистенциальным и ценностным проблемам отношений с другими, решавшимися в различных феноменологических концепциях. Одним из достоинств работы является плюралистический подход, дающий возможность читателю познакомиться с анализом проблемы intersубъективности целого ряда наиболее значительных феноменологов — Гуссерля, Шелера, Хайдеггера, Сартра, Марселя, Левинаса и др. В книге прослеживается идея о том, что появление в феноменологии темы intersубъективности привело к социально-этическому и аксиологическому повороту в феноменологическом движении. Учитывая движение современной философии к «intersубъективной парадигме» (В. Хёсле), стремление авторов монографии показать актуальность и новаторство феноменологии при обсуждении проблем Другого, коммуникации и этики можно оценить как многообещающий теоретический проект. Если критики феноменологического движения выдвигали упреки в «методическом солипсизме» феноменологии, развивающей картезианско-кантовский субъективизм, то серьезный анализ произведений важнейших представителей феноменологической традиции приводит авторов монографии к выводу, что феноменологический субъект социален по своей сути. В рецензии делается вывод о том, что в коллективной монографии убедительно показано наличие в феноменологии глубоких и разнообразных способов исследования совместного бытия людей и коллективно разделяемых ценностей.

Ключевые слова: intersубъективность, феноменология, ценность, этика, Гуссерль, Шелер, Хайдеггер, Сартр, Левинас.

The problem of intersubjectivity in phenomenology is among most discussed both by phenomenologists and by their critics. Indeed, it is evident that topicality of ideas related to the problems of intersubjectivity, language and communication in the

history of modern / postmodern thought has been consistently increasing. Thus, as it was noted by V. Hösle, a prominent German philosopher,

the philosophy of the modern age [...] is characterized by the fact that subjectivity is removed in intersubjectivity. The discovery of an infinite number of phenomena and problems related to the field of intersubjectivity constitutes an enduring achievement of the modern age (*Der Moderne*), in relation to which there is no backward movement. (as cited in Motroshilova, 1992, 198)

Summing up the results of philosophical discussions about the problems of pragmatics and communication in German philosophy, primarily initiated by K.-O. Apel and J. Habermas, he also spoke about shift in paradigms occurring in history of Western philosophy, going from the objective one (antiquity), through the subjective one (Descartes-Kant) to the intersubjective one (in nineteenth and twentieth centuries)¹. G. Vattimo, one of the main theorists of postmodernism, a representative of neohermeneutics, entitles postmodern reality “a society of communication,” also emphasizing the central nature of the problems of intersubjectivity, interpretation and values in modern thinking (Vattimo, 2002). In this context, phenomenology, which inherits the very traditions of the Cartesian-Kantian philosophy of a subject, may arouse suspicion of “methodical solipsism” as of an innate “disease” of transcendentalism. We can recall the definition given by K.-O. Apel to new European “philosophy of consciousness,” i. e. “the methodical solipsism of the philosophy of the modern age—starting from Cartesian Reflections to Husserl’s *Cartesian Reflections*, which does not reflect the “intersubjective and socially linguistic foundations of thinking” (Apel, 2001, 97). In the other context, Apel briefly defines such solipsism, which, in his opinion, Kant and Husserl share with neopositivism, as the premise that “one is the only who can cognize” (Apel, 2001, 206). Though recognizing the significance of the late Husserlian concept of lifeworld, J. Habermas, nevertheless, believed that only the different direction of analysis, i. e. the one which goes from the structure of intentional consciousness to the pragmatics of the use of language, could make it truly productive. According to Habermas, even “intersubjective shift” in Husserl’s late works leaves the transcendental ego in a privileged and, therefore, asymmetric relation to the Other. Thus, Habermas has concluded that Husserl’s model is incapable of putting forward a method adequate for considering “intersubjectively communalized experience” (Habermas, 2001, 42). Along the same lines, other critics sometimes insist that, due to being focused on subjectivity, phenomenology has failed to grasp the meaning of the intersubjectivity problem or to find a satisfactory solution to it within its own

¹ See (Hösle, 1990, 107–113).

attitudes. On the other hand, an appeal to the works of prominent philosophers of phenomenological tradition, i. e. Husserl, Scheler, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, etc. leaves no doubt that the topic of intersubjectivity in the form of a concrete face-to-face interaction or a shared lifeworld or a transcendental principle is assigned a central role in phenomenological constructions. Moreover, the first philosopher to give the detailed philosophical analysis of intersubjectivity was the very founder of the phenomenological movement. It is crucially important for proponents of phenomenology to show that the phenomenological analysis of intersubjectivity is relevant in the current philosophical situation. This theoretical tension between the subjective aspect of phenomenology and a clear awareness of the role of relationships between subjects in constructing of our world has led to the fact that it is phenomenology which belongs to philosophical traditions richest in concepts of intersubjectivity.

In 2019, a joint monograph of *Phenomenological Approaches to Intersubjectivity and Values* comprising articles which 14 modern phenomenologists devoted to different aspects of a various phenomenological approaches to a problem of intersubjectivity was published. What was the contribution made by this collection of studies to the abovementioned discussion? As it was noted by the authors of the introduction, L. A. De Sousa and A. Falcato, currently we have been witnessing a revival of interest in phenomenology, specifically in English-language philosophy. However, they also note that this interest is almost exclusively focused on epistemological problems, on the contribution made by phenomenology to cognitive sciences and to philosophy of mind. Yet, when it comes to discussing questions of ethics, aesthetics and other existential and value issues, the deep and versatile developments posed by phenomenologists are often not taken into consideration. The main objective set by the authors of the monograph is to fill this gap at least in some measure. The monograph is formally devoted to the problem of intersubjectivity in phenomenology, but the intention of its authors is broader and it concerns the sphere of axiology taken as a whole. The idea behind these collected works is that “intersubjectivity is the key to what phenomenology has to say about values” (De Sousa & Falcato, 2019, 1) The book presents the concepts of intersubjectivity of almost every most prominent phenomenologist, i. e. Husserl, Scheler, Sartre, Marcel, Merleau-Ponty and Levinas. At the same time, the obvious advantage of the monograph is that its authors discuss an extremely wide range of phenomenological concepts and topics, without limitation to any single direction or narrowly defined problems.

As it was mentioned above, a special aspect of these collected works on intersubjectivity lies in the emphasis on the axiological i. e. primarily ethical and existential dimension of the phenomenological approach to intersubjectivity. Moreover, the conceptual idea of the group of authors lies in the fact that the topic of intersubjectivity is

that very bridge which phenomenology crosses moving from the theory of knowledge the phenomenological project began with, to the axiological sphere, which currently acquired paramount importance both in philosophy and in the public sphere in general.

Regarding the wealth of concepts presented in the book (the authors of the introduction briefly divide them into those giving more priority to the cognitive attitude towards the Others (it primarily refers to E. Husserl) and those emphasizing the existential and ethical foundations of intersubjective relations), we can refer to more detailed classification posed by D. Zahavi, distinguishing four different phenomenological approaches to the phenomenon of intersubjectivity (Zahavi, 2001, 151–167). One of the alternatives is to focus on a face-to-face encounter and try to explain it in terms of a special mode of consciousness called empathy, analyzing its structure and determining its difference from other forms of intentionality (according to the idea posed by M. Scheler). Another approach (as, for example, posed by M. Merleau-Ponty) is based on the idea that our capability of encounter with the Others is determined by a form of discrimination that is internal to the embodied Self. In such case, it is necessary to investigate the correlation between the selfhood and the otherness. The third alternative denies that intersubjectivity can be reduced to an actual encounter between two people. Such concrete encounter, on the contrary, presupposes the existence of another, more fundamental form of intersubjectivity, that is a priori rooted in the very relation between subjectivity and the world (as, for example, it is suggested by M. Heidegger). Finally, the fourth approach emphasizes that the encounter with radical otherness is a decisive and inalienable aspect of intersubjectivity (shared by J.-P. Sartre or E. Levinas despite all the dissimilarities of their concepts).

The value of this monograph lies in the fact that the articles it comprises completely and utterly reveal this variety of phenomenological concepts of intersubjectivity missing none of the named alternatives and allowing a reader to join the world of rich, diverse and sometimes competing ideas about one of the most important topics in the contemporary philosophy. The book consists of three parts. The first part actually has the major emphasis placed on the epistemological and cognitive dimension of intersubjectivity in phenomenology, since it was epistemology that originally became the core of the phenomenological project. Naturally, this part opens with an appeal to Husserl's phenomenology. Indeed, in the 1920's Husserl recognized the necessity for elaborating a concept of intersubjectivity that goes far beyond the image of transcendental philosophy, defined by K.-O. Apel in the above-given quote as the one which emanates from the isolated ego. In 1922 Husserl wrote that elaboration of phenomenology should be aimed at shifting from "egological" (referred to the ego of a philosophizing subject for the time being) phenomenology to a transcendental sociologi-

cal phenomenology having reference to a manifest multiplicity of conscious subjects communicating with one another” (Husserl, 1981, 68). Or, as he later put it even more definitely, “subjectivity is what it is — the Self performing a constitutive function — only in intersubjectivity” (Husserl, 2004, 231). The statement that the Self becomes completely constitutive and, therefore, transcendental, only through his relationship with the Other, suggests that Husserl’s late phenomenology can be viewed from the standpoint of the intersubjective transformation of transcendental philosophy, leading it away from the traditional Kantian understanding of transcendental subjectivity. An article by P. Zipfel devoted to one of the topics crucial for problematics of intersubjectivity in Husserl works, i.e. the issue of the (in) accessibility of the other Self, is based on an in-depth analysis of Husserl’s concepts of “immediate” and “original,” that is, the self-giveness of an object and its belonging to the stream of consciousness.

In the following articles of the first chapter L. A. Umbelino and L. A. De Sousa resort to a phenomenological approach to intersubjectivity in Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception*. The authors substantiate the intersubjective and embodied nature of experience we go through in Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty believed that self-cognizing of subjectivity must contain a dimension of otherness and embodiment, which intersubjectivity would be impossible without. It means that the Self is consistently other for himself, he is a not pure self-identical interiority, and that is exactly why the Self is open to the Others. That is to say, the Self is not a pure incorporeal interiority, but an embodied being that lives outside of himself and goes beyond himself. According to such approach, otherness in relation to oneself is a condition for understanding the Other, and the difference between the Self and the Other is derived from the original intersubjective or intercorporeal relationships. A clear analysis of Merleau-Ponty’s reflections on the impossibility of moving from purely private experience to the idea of the Other and on the prior and holistic nature of relationships with the Other leads to the topic of the second chapter of the book, linked to the idea that addressing the topic of the Other imparts an irreducible ethical and existential dimension to phenomenology.

As it was believed by the authors of the monograph, the hope of finding the foundations of ethics within phenomenology can be associated only with an adequate phenomenological analysis of the way, which the Other is given to the Self in. We might recall the valuable classification of three different ethical approaches in phenomenology, made by S. Loidolt with respect to different concepts of a subject, intentionality and ethical experience, i. e. ethics of values (it primarily refers to Scheler), existentialist ethics (Heidegger, Sartre, Marcel) and ethics of otherness (Levinas)². As

² See (Loidolt, 2017).

we have seen from the previously noted pluralistic idea of phenomenology, characteristic of the joint work of the authors under discussion, almost all of these approaches are considered in the monograph, and this consideration is valuable precisely by the expanded explication of their correlation with any particular solution to the problem of intersubjectivity.

Thus, Scheler's ethical views are analyzed in H. Telo's article dedicated to the priority of the integrity of our relationships with the Other (as it was noted above) and, which is most worthy of note, to Scheler's concept of love qua experience of openness. Telo also analyzes critique given by Scheler to our understanding of the Others being widely interpreted as analogical reasoning. Scheler is known to reject two main premises of the argument coming from analogy, namely, the assumption that the starting point for the Self is his own consciousness, given to the Self in a direct and immediate way, so that the Self projects his mental experience onto the Other, and the assumption that the Self is deprived of the direct access to the consciousness of the Other. H. Telo gives an original interpretation of the concept of the Other treating him as a prerequisite in relation to both self-consciousness and experience of an encounter with the specific Other.

Existentialist phenomenological ethics is represented by the works devoted to Heidegger, Sartre and Marcel. Thus, P. A. Lima devoted an extremely in-depth article to a category of *Mitsein* given by Heidegger in his *Being and Time*. At the same time, the author separates Heidegger's "existential" approach to the problem of the Other from the "cognitive" one, primarily represented by the theory of empathy as an attempt to explain an encounter of two isolated subjects. Yet, for Heidegger, *Dasien* neither initially exists alone nor does it acquire being-with-the-others only after these Others appear. On the contrary, *Dasien* is social from the very beginning as the involved being-in-the-world. According to interpretation given by Lima, the fundamental social nature of *Dasien* is a formal condition for the possibility of any particular experience and encounter with the Others, therefore, *Dasien* cannot be understood otherwise than as being in the world shared with the Others.

Sartre's concept of intersubjectivity is original and substantially differs from those given both by Husserl and Heidegger. Whereas Heidegger describes the apriority of joint being, in relation to which a concrete face-to-face encounter is secondary and derivative, Sartre, on the contrary, proceeds not from the initial intersubjective correlation, but from a conflict and a confrontation. A concept of intersubjectivity posed by Sartre, being compared to the one given by Heidegger, emphasizes the transcendent and elusive nature of the Other. However, A. Barata's article is focused on the difference existing between the existential Sartrean phenomenology of intersubjectivity and the cognitive

and epistemic approach inherent to Husserl. According to Barata, in a relationship with the Other, “question is not so much of knowledge or ignorance, but of relationship or absence thereof” (De Sousa & Falcató, 2019, 165). The author is talking about the transition from a purely cognitive to a practical approach in the study of intersubjectivity, referring to well-known Sartrean analyzes of shame, love, masochism and language. Sartre argues that the ontological constitution of human reality is marked by deep existential nihilism, since it is a “vain project,” an unrealizable desire for holism, and nihilism, as it was noted by F. Jacobi, who was the one to introduce this term into philosophy, means a shift from a purely theoretical position to a practical problem of a meaningful life. Therefore, in the interpretation given by Barata, the relationships with the Other must be also subjected to such practical revision.

Apparently, the culmination of the phenomenological search for a solution to the problem of the Other, or at least to its ethical dimension, lies in the philosophy of E. Levinas, which ethics acquires the status of the “first philosophy” in. The novelty of Levinas’s ethics lies in the fact that ethical experience, which begins with an encounter with the “face of the Other,” is not based on the idea of subject’s autonomy. On the contrary, ethical experience brings the Self’s autonomy into question, since the demanding call coming from the Other vests the Self with the obligations which the Self does not choose. The approach of Levinas lies in analyzing of ethical experience within the paradigm of otherness, which entails the ethical inversion of intentionality of consciousness. Intentionality is a process of objectification which we reduce the Other to an object in. On the contrary, Levinas’s project was aimed at avoiding objectification of strange subjectivity, an encounter with which, therefore, must be understood as an encounter with an inexpressible and radical externality. According to Levinas, there were two main tendencies in Western philosophy, i. e. autonomy and heteronomy. And the first one, by all means, has always been dominating, especially in the modern age with its subjectivism. For philosophy, which unfolds the project of autonomy, the freedom of a subject represented the core value, and everything that stood in its way had to be eliminated, both in thought and in society. Levinas, on the other hand, argues that responsibility precedes freedom, and experience of a heteronomous demand, that holds the Self to account, pre-exists free activity of a subject, embracing all that exists with his cognitive effort. A subject of cognition assimilates and absorbs that, what is other and strange, turning it into familiar and same. According to Levinas, the Other cannot be adequately cognized. “By being present, a face refuses to be the content. In this sense, he cannot be understood, that is, he cannot be embraced” (Levinas, 2000, 199). Encounter with the Other is not of cognitive, but of ethical nature, and it is exactly the ethical situation, that demands from the Self to take

responsibility, which the Other appears in his radical otherness in. Levinas speaks of “the Other, who in his transcendence, has ascendancy over me” (Levinas, 2000, 218). There is no room for rules of reciprocity in ethical relations. All this means that Levinas subjects phenomenological thinking to a powerful transformation, forcing it to undergo a test of encounter with the Other.

V. Niculescu, the author of an article devoted to Levinas, elaborates the ethical problematics of Levinas’s phenomenology, related to the Other’s asymmetry, proceeding from critique of Heidegger’s immanentist existential analytics, following Levinas, in particular, questioning about Being, which is subordinated to questioning about the meaning of *Dasein*. It results in an impressive description of a new concept of a subject, radically different from the previous ones, i. e. a subject is not being-for-himself, the one concerned about of himself, but being originally intended for the Other, so that becoming oneself always occurs in the context of responding to the Other, forcibly open to ethical transcendence. For phenomenology, the problem lies in a fact that such experience of externality must discord phenomenal experience and lead out of it. It is hardly surprising that Levinas creates in his later works a strange, disturbing ethical language of words such as prosecution, obsession, hostage, trauma. It turns out that the Self’s attitude towards the Other is expressed not in “positive” feelings of benevolence, generosity or respect, but in the obsessive, obsessive experience of responsibility that haunts the Self and does not let go. He describes the attitude towards the Other as traumatic in many of his texts written in the 60s and 70s. “This trauma, unbearable, caused by the Infinite to the presence, or the impact on the presence of the Infinite [...] act as submission to the fellow-being ...” (Levinas, 2006, 222). According to Levinas, the ethical demand is traumatic because it comes from the outside, not at the discretion of a subject, and leaves its indelible mark. In other words, there is something external “inside” the Self, the core of subjectivity is touched by otherness. Although V. Niculescu does not speak about trauma — his task is to demonstrate that, “existential world-concern (*Besorgen*) and existential self-care (*Selbstsorge*) have been subordinated to a trans-existential sociality of solicitude-by-summons...” (De Sousa & Falcato, 2019, 230) — but the very description of the transcendence of existential self-care by a call coming from the Other certainly follows revolution in phenomenology made by Levinas.

As it was noted by the authors of the introduction, phenomenology can be understood not only in terms of affiliation with a particular school or a fixed set of doctrines, but also in a broader sense as a line of thought, and it is also possible and necessary to expand the field of phenomenological studies far beyond the traditionally formed boundaries. Therefore, the third part of the book is devoted both to philosophers who usually fall outside the scope of the phenomenology of intersubjectivity,

for instance, to Foucault and Deleuze, and to topics which rarely become a subject of phenomenological research. The authors, in particular, have resorted to artistic experience inherent in the works by J.M. Coetzee and A. Camus. (Here we should also mention the articles from the first two chapters devoted to M. Scheler's "ecological self," intersubjective relations in psychiatry and philosophy of G. Marcel, which is rarely associated with the issue of intersubjectivity). The latest article by Nicolas De Warren, written in the form of a philosophical and artistic essay and devoted to comprehending traumatic experience of the First World War, is of special interest. The author touches upon a topic which brings phenomenology closer to trauma studies, i. e. the topic of the special temporality of traumatic experience. "Every trauma [...] has two times, that separate and complicate relations between an original shock, or catastrophe, and its enduring affect [...] The traumatic is the disjointed time" (De Sousa & Falcato, 2019, 316). Indeed, there is always a temporal gap between an event and experience of trauma, and the connection between experience and meaning in a world of a subject also disintegrates along with temporality. These observations bring us back to the talk about trauma that already came into view in the case of Levinas. Presently, trauma study is an aria extremely relevant for comprehending both catastrophic events, the history of modernity is comprised of, and also modernity as such, as well as a modern subject as marked by traumatic experience (we can recall that W. Benjamin, following Baudelaire, connected modernity with experience of "shock"). When it comes to talking about trauma, it is psychoanalytic or sociological methods which are most commonly used, but not so long ago phenomenologists began to resort to collective traumatic experience³. With respect to the fact that the authors of the book intended to show the relevance of phenomenology precisely in value, ethical, existential and social contexts of thought, I would like to give a favorable praise of this involvement with the rapidly developing interdisciplinary area of trauma studies.

Thus, the articles presented in the monograph give an idea that the axiological and socio-ethical shift in phenomenology was inevitable, starting from the moment when Husserl epitomize the experience of the Other as a necessary aspect of the phenomenological world. It appears that the main conclusion that can be drawn after reading the articles comprised in this volume is that all prominent phenomenologists, regardless all the crucial differences of their philosophical standpoints, shared the idea that nature of the Other's manifesting is original and not derivative, not constructed by thought. This means that a phenomenological subject at its core is a social subject, since

³ See (Welz, 2016). This article, based on 4 lectures delivered at different universities, represents the attempt of the author to approach the evidence of the Holocaust from a phenomenological perspective.

the Other differs from the rest of objects constituted by the Self. The other subjectivity is a condition for possibility not only of constituting the objectivity, taken as a whole, but also of the value sphere shared by us in social and cultural life, so that “the Self,” “the Others” and “the (objective and value) World” can be viewed from a phenomenological standpoint as inextricably interconnected and mutually clarifying perspectives. Coming back to the doubts about the ability of phenomenology to adequately comprehend the problem of intersubjectivity, which we mentioned at the very beginning, we can draw the following conclusion: the authors of the monograph have clearly demonstrated that in the modern “intersubjective paradigm,” in the conditions of explosion of concern about the problems of communication, communities and collectively shared values, the phenomenological tradition can offer perhaps the most impressive selection of versatile and profound methods of comprehending human coexistence.

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