

Received | Makale Geliş: 08.05.2017

Accepted | Makale Kabul: 18.09.2017

DOI: 10.20981/kaygi.342182

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Intentionality and Givenness in French Phenomenology: M. Henry and M. Merleau Ponty

Abstract

My guiding research hypothesis is as follows: the significant progress made by the phenomenology of immanence (according to which no worldly hetero-givenness would be possible without subjectif self-givenness) and by the phenomenology of transcendence (which states that no subjectif self-givenness would be possible without worldly hetero-givenness) are not distinguished so much by the posing of new problems as by the reformulation of “the question of the ground of intentionality” that fueled the entire phenomenological tradition. It is striking that despite the different solutions they offer, these two approaches have the same critical orientation regarding phenomenology (they characterize intentionality by its failure to ensure its own foundation), and they have the task of testing phenomenology in a confrontation with its various outsides such as “Invisible”, “Totality”, “Affectivity” or “Le visage” which escape the Husserlian concept of experience determined by the consciousness and its correlative noetic-noematic structure. This pathos of thought which is proper to the French phenomenology wants to go further than what remains unquestioned in Husserl (presence determined in the solid figures of intuition and objectness), and in Heidegger (presence determined as phenomenon of being). This new phenomenological movement reorganize and revise the method of classic phenomenology and deal with a certain experience of “hyper-phenomenon” or “counter-phenomenon” which is an event of appearing that establishes itself by itself.

Keywords

Intentionality, Givenness, Phenomenon, Michel Henry, Merleau-Ponty.

Husserl's conception of intentionality plays an immensely significant role both in his elaboration on the concept of experience and on the development of the thought system of an entire phenomenologists that followed. However, as I will attempt to formulate, in order to understand and conceptualize experience, the noetic orientation of intentionality which elaborates a theory of intentionality on the basis of the concept of lived experience is an indication of a problem rather than its solution. In the theme of intentionality, as it is thematized by Husserl, there is an unresolved tension between Cartesianism and anti-Cartesinaism, between a theory of representation and its negation, between an idealist and a realist tendency. Thereby, some of post-Husserlian French phenomenologists examine the limits of noetic intentionality (i.e., of givenness) and search for a dimension more original and more profound for founding ground of experience as a "mode of givenness of things."

My guiding research hypothesis is as follows: the significant progress made by the phenomenology of immanence (according to which *no worldly hetero-givenness would be possible without subjective self-givenness*) and by the phenomenology of transcendence (which states that *no subjective self-givenness would be possible without worldly hetero-givenness*) are not distinguished so much by the positing of new problems; as it is by the reformulation of "the question of the ground of intentionality" that fueled the entire phenomenological tradition. It is striking that despite the different solutions they offer, these two approaches have the same critical orientation regarding phenomenology (they characterize intentionality by its failure to ensure its own foundation), and they have the common task of testing phenomenology in confrontation with its various "outsides" by granting a central place to the "non-intentional." For it is only through starting from such an enterprise of showing the limits of intentionality that the possibility to truly overcome the Husserlian perspective, according to which the given is the measure of all things that can be opened.

The phenomenology of transcendence and phenomenology of immanence seem to be in controversy as the radical need for transcendence and for immanence, leading to the destruction of the Husserlian matrix of "transcendence within immanence." Nonetheless, they share the intimate proximity of the obverse and reverse. If this can indeed be shown, we will ask, what does this unexpected and ambiguous relationship teach us about the question "what is phenomenology?" The French phenomenology intends to explore the territories perhaps indicated but abandoned and ignored by Husserl and Heidegger. However it can be considered an heir to historical phenomenology when regarded as a general path of inquiry into phenomenality. The common goal is to study the phenomena such as "Invisible", "Totality", "Affectivity", or "Le visage" which escape the donation of meaning determined by the consciousness and its correlative noetico-noematic structure. This pathos of thought which is proper to the French phenomenology wants to go further than what remains unquestioned in Husserl (presence determined in the solid figures of intuition and objectivity), and in Heidegger (presence determined as phenomenon of being). This post-Husserlian and post-Heideggerian phenomenological movement reorganize and revise the method of classic phenomenology and deal with a certain *experience* of "hyper-phenomenon" or "counter-phenomenon" which is an event of appearing that establishes itself by itself. It is a particular and particularly evident phenomenon which facilitates our access to the

less directly evident phenomena. Phenomenology is cross-germinated with diverse “outsides”—and diverse types—that constitute at once poles of resistance and of fecundity. In this regard, I will stress the structural opposition between the excess of plenitude in givenness (Henry) and the symmetrical excess constituted through the decrease of presence in non-givenness (Merleau-Ponty). The comparison can be valuable only if it is connected to the underlying structural hypothesis stated here: the discriminating factor lies in the various manners of managing the limits of intentionality (i.e., of givenness).

1) Relationship Between Intentionality and Experience

It is striking to observe that many philosophical currents that prescribe a method of access to experience do not succeed in accounting for experience as an access, an opening to something because experience is subjected to categories that do not derive from it. The empiricist perspective, for example, begins with the precise decision to adhere to experience, to what is given as given. However, the determination of this *given* in terms of sensations or impressions faces insurmountable difficulties. The concept of sensation is in fact characterized by the confusion between the subjective state and what is experienced in it, between experiencing and that of which there is an impression. From this point of view, the sensation remains an atomic datum which is incapable of representing or presenting something. This problem draws a field which constituted the conditions for the possible emergence of a phenomenological concept of experience. In Husserl’s words, “it is the experience [...] still mute which we are concerned with leading to the pure expression of its own meaning” (1970a: 38-39). In his view, experience possesses an immanent *logos*, and it is this *logos* that phenomenology intends to bring to light.

Husserl interprets experience in §55 of *Ideas I* as a relationship between the human being and the world, and in this conception, the human being is regarded primarily as an experiencing and meaning-constructing consciousness while the world is regarded as a set of units of sense conceived as sense thanks to consciousness itself (1962: 128). Husserl calls these units of sense, phenomena. Thus, the experience Husserl talks about here is an experience in the sense of lived experience (*Erlebnis*), i.e. delimiting of the sense of a phenomenon in consciousness, while consciousness has the structure of universal subjectivity which represents the condition of possibility of appearing as such. On that basis, experience can be characterized in the very way in which we are conscious of things, events, processes, and so on; which correlatively appear to us “in” and “through” this experience - it has a phenomenal content. Experience is always experience *of this and that*; it is oriented toward things and the world; it is a mode of givenness of something. As Romano writes: “[I]n order for there to be experience in general, something has to be given to be experienced: experience is something we do, rather than something we have (*Erlebnisse*, lived experiences); but what is experienced in an experience is something that is given, i.e., that is present for us through that experience” (2015: 260). What is given to us in experience and what is *experienced* in it, is also, by this very fact, something appearing: a *phenomenon*, namely the “self-showing” of something. It is this concept of phenomenon that furnishes the

leading clue to the phenomenological inquiry, and according to which the latter can present itself as a description of the things themselves in their phenomenality. In order to be noticed or to appear as such, ways of appearing are in need of what Husserl calls a phenomenological *epoche*—that is, a suspension of the normal course of perceptual life and the given presence of things in order to reach to their phenomenality itself. On that basis *epoche* is essentially an act of conversion by which we turn our gaze to the world of lived experience. Thus, the “things themselves” attended to by phenomenology are not ordinary things, but things in their mode of givenness, as the “pure phenomena” disclosed by the phenomenological *epoche*. The suspension of natural life allows to explore the intentional correlation between the experienced object and its subjective modes of givenness; in other words, between the world and consciousness. In Husserl’s view, the *universal a priori correlation* unquestionably imposes itself on anyone who manages to neutralize the natural attitude and its host of presuppositions: “no conceivable human being, no matter how different we imagine him to be, could ever experience a world in manners of givenness which differ from the incessantly mobile relativity we have delineated in general terms: that is, as a world pre-given to him in his conscious life and in community with fellow human beings” (1970b: 165). In fact, the relation of appearance is irreducible to an external relation and the intentional discourse is irreducible to causal discourse. This is the prototype of a lawfulness and it is phenomenology’s task to uncover. It signifies that the essence of consciousness implies its relation to a transcendent, to the extent that a consciousness which is not in relation to an other, is not a consciousness: consciousness is as relative to the world as the world is relative to it. It is clearly this property, summarized by the concept of intentionality that characterizes the essence of consciousness. As Husserl writes, “the word intentionality signifies nothing less than this general and functional particularity of the consciousness of being conscious of something, carrying within itself, in its quality of *cogito*, its *cogitatum*” (1970a: 14).

Intentionality is not only an intrinsic characteristic of lived experiences but it is also on the basis of all perceptual experience in relation to the thing. In §41 of *Ideas I*, Husserl points out that all spatial things can only be seen through changing adumbrations (*Abschattungen*): “[O]f essential necessity there belongs to any ‘all-sided’, continuously, unitarily, and self-confirming experiential consciousness [*Erfahrungsbewußtsein*] of the same physical thing a multifarious system of continuous multiplicities of appearances and adumbrations in which all objective moments falling within perception with the characteristic of being themselves given ‘in person’ are adumbrated by determined continuities” (1962: 87). This is the fundamental situation that is captured in the doctrine of givenness by adumbration: the adumbration already gives what it outlines; it presents it, but insofar as it is only an adumbration it sidesteps what is outlined and postpones the full manifestation of it; in the adumbration, the object is presented rigorously as the formulation requires, and it has no other tenor beyond the adumbration than this requirement itself. There is no such thing as an adequate perception of a thing because all things appear through partial “adumbrations” and within a “horizon” that extends far beyond what is actually perceived. “Necessarily there always remains a horizon of determinable indeterminateness, no matter how far we go in experience, no matter how extensive the continua of actual perceptions of

the same thing may be through which we have passed. No god can alter that, no more than the circumstance that $1 + 2 = 3$, or that any other eidetic truth obtains" (1962: 95). Due to the discovery of givenness by adumbrations Husserl succeeds to clarify his phenomenological concept of perceptual experience. In short, according to this theory, perceptual experience is not structured only by contingent synthetic links; it possesses necessary characteristics. These necessary characteristics are not subjective but objective. They depend on the very nature of the phenomena that possess them and they apply to all possible experiences.

However, Husserl does not pursue this fundamental intuition once he conceives of what is adumbrated as a pure object that is in itself determinable, and thereby he shifts the adumbration to the subjective point of view, turning it into a punctual lived experience. The thing as such is really absent from its adumbration, but it is intentionally present as noema, insofar as an act apprehends it within the adumbration, thus conferring on the latter the function of appearance; the absence of the thing in the adumbration represents its presence in consciousness. Thus the excess of the thing vis-a-vis the adumbration that characterizes perception is at the same time (intentional) belonging of the thing to consciousness. As Barbaras writes: "[T]he appearance of the worldly appearing necessarily refers to a more originary sense of phenomenality, namely the manifestation of the lived experience to itself; to appear is either to be lived or to be constituted by means of lived experiences" (2006: 23). In contradiction to the transcendent thing, the characteristic of lived experience is that it is not given by adumbrations. Nothing in it exceeds its manifestation; it is nothing more than it appears, an absolute identity between the appearance and manifestation. The lived experience conceals neither any distance nor any emptiness; it fills perfectly the reflection that focuses upon it or, in other words, fullness itself as a mode of existing. As Husserl writes: "every perception of something immanent necessarily guarantees the existence of its object" (1962: 100). Transformation of the question of givenness to the question of self-givenness of lived experiences is based on a profound solidarity between the intuitionist determination of fulfillment and the radical adequation of consciousness with itself. According to the intuitionist determination of fulfillment, the satisfaction that responds to the need for fullness is the presence of the object and it excludes any form of deficiency or distance. In other words, the structural relation of emptiness and fulfillment is interpreted as the opposition between deficient givenness and intuition. Thus there is evidence (satisfaction) and presence only as givenness of the thing as it is in itself, as originary self-givenness. Consequently, "phenomenon" in the classic phenomenological sense applies to the lived experiences immanent to consciousness.

Husserl does not raise the question regarding the phenomenological meaning of self-givenness of lived experiences. In his work, self-givenness is given more as a solution than as the index of a problem. On the basis of this opposition between the absolute being of consciousness and the contingent being of the transcendent, Husserl gives, in his phenomenology, a kind of total positivity to the self-givenness of lived experiences. He reduces phenomenality to this positivity of the lived experiences. The appearance of the thing necessarily refers to a more originary sense of phenomenality, namely the manifestation of the lived experience to itself; to appear is either to be lived or to be constituted by means of lived experiences. The problem consists in situating the

analysis on the basis of lived experiences, conceived of as “contents” accessible in an adequate intuition, in being given a sense of being of the subjectivity that not only prevents accounting for phenomenality but also reactualizes presuppositions that all phenomenological analysis aims to uproot. How can a lived experience transcend the sphere of immanence to which it belongs by its essence so as to confer on sensible matter a figurative function? The difficulty stems from the fact that the lived experience is defined as what can legitimately be expressed in reflection; what can become the object of an internal perception. As Patočka points out, “the givenness of the objective moment by the noesis is incomprehensible because the opening upon a transcendence by a lived experience is inconceivable. Such is undoubtedly the reason, that Husserl never inquires into how the noetic lived experience is given to itself” (1988: 208). If the transcendence of the correlate of lived experience must be a “transcendence within immanence” which should precisely belong to “intentional immanence,” is it not connected, despite Husserl’s efforts, despite the very dynamism of lived experience, to a risk of enclosure within consciousness? The only response to this question Husserl can provide comes in a revamping of the traditional idea of the combination of immanence and transcendence, transposed into a new philosophical setting. However, the new concept of intentional immanence does not cancel the old notion of psychologizing real immanence. These two concepts coexist in transcendental phenomenology of Husserl. Even though Husserl brings out immanence in the intentional sense, he maintains the distinction between the really immanent contents (intentional acts and hyletic givens) and the really transcendent intentional objects which has different modalities of evidence. As Rudolf Boehm writes: “[O]n the one hand, phenomenology attributes a new meaning to these two terms; on the other hand, a parallel use of these same terms in the traditional sense (or ‘real’ immanence and transcendence) will prove indispensable and will be retained” (1959: 486). This Cartesian difference consists in separation a domain of absolute certainty (real immanence) from a domain subject to universal doubt (real transcendence). On that basis, the givenness is subject to an epistemological prejudice: the certainty only lies in the givenness of being as presence, that is to say, the apodicticity is to be found merely as adequacy and conformity of knowledge to its object.

2) Michel Henry and Merleau-Ponty

For anyone wishing to map out the field of the first phase of French phenomenology, intentionality –the central theme of phenomenology in general– constitute a privileged or strategic “point of departure.” If we look at this closely, we see that the target of the inheritors of Husserlian phenomenology, in their critique of intentionality, is what still attaches it to the modern space opened out, at least “symbolically,” by Descartes: egological subjectivity and representation. In all of them, and in absolutely different ways, a will is displayed to portray an originary as more originary than the ego in which the ego would be rooted: that it would be necessary to designate an absolute presence, or even a space of “Urpresence” or “over-presence” (Henry), or on the contrary, to state that at the origin, there was no origin but rather an irreducible absence (Merleau-Ponty). This means that the limit, far from indicating the

prevention or imperfection of a philosophy, is, on the contrary, its own possibility, since its possibility is its unthought.

According to Henry, the problem of givenness or the problem of the phenomenality of the phenomena is the ultimate problem of phenomenology. In Henry's eyes, no worldly hetero-givenness would be possible without subjective self-givenness. Nevertheless, this subjectivity no longer contains anything of the conscious Urregions absoluteness, nor of the constitutive powers of the transcendental Ego. Henry shows us a subjectivity that is not a constitutive power, an originary that is no longer supported by a base. In his view, immanence has two fundamentally connected characteristics: its absence of distance from self and, thus, its impossibility to show itself in any outside. He noticed that: "life is not affected first by something else, by objects or by the horizon of a world. It is affected by oneself. The content of its affection is itself, and it is only in this way that it can be 'living'. To live is to experience oneself and nothing else. The phenomenality of this pure experience of oneself is an original affectivity, a pure 'pathos' that no distance separates from oneself" (Henry 2015: 120). However, the phenomena seeming to contain the stuff of the exterior world in their entirety –or even those which make exteriority—are not purely excluded by Henrian phenomenology as we might have expected: essentially, language (which makes the absent thing visible, and which even, so to speak, "absentizes" it, unrealizes it), time and the alterity of the other. The phenomenology of pure immanence is not without time, language or others. On the contrary, it is in immanence that we discover "true" time, "true" language, and "authentic" alterity. These "phenomena" are thus like the results of a positive coefficient that will reverse nature and its powers: they can then be addressed as "living beings," or as "transcendental". The challenge is to allocate a coefficient to language, time, and the alterity of the other, which would be powerful enough to save them from transcendence and to inscribe them at the heart of immanence. Henry's reduction, in contrast to Merleau-Ponty's unachievable reduction, arises from an all-or-nothing logic: it is radical and has no residue. This is why, if one "resists" the intuition of Henry's philosophy, it will seem to be a phenomenology "without phenomena" since it has no "outside." On the contrary, if one looks through Henry's eyes, then everything reappears in its authenticity, in the obscure clarity of immanence. Henry does not place himself beyond intentionality but arrives at its limits in and through phenomenology. He displays the limits of Husserlian intentionality, incapable of revealing Immanence, Life, Matter, *Urimpression* (in the Husserlian lexicon), that are just so many "names" for pure presence. From this viewpoint Henry clearly directs phenomenology and his central theme, intentionality, toward their limits. He have exceeded intentionality in the direction of a Self older than the knowledge of intentionality.

In parallel, the Husserlian idea of intentionality is devoid of Merleau-Ponty's vocabulary, and within his frame of thought, intentionality can no longer be described only as a derivative phenomenon. In other words, intentionality is revealed to itself in the dissolution of what it thought it was. The aim of this a-subjective phenomenology is to obtain the autonomy of the phenomenal field by freeing the transcendence of the world from every form of objectivity and freeing the existence of the subject from every form of immanence. It is on this sole condition that the autonomy of the phenomenal field can be guaranteed. If the Husserlian language of transcendence is retranslated into

ontological level, it would be possible to speak, with Merleau-Ponty, of an *intentionality within being* which is the ante-predicative relation between the World and our life. Thus the incarnation of sense in the sensible supposes the incarnation of the subject who apprehends this sense. The dimension of the subject's belonging to the world is directly considered in terms of corporeality. In this regard, the Merleau-Pontian self can be dissolved in(to) the World in order to reemerge from it. As he writes: "the flesh of the world is of the Being-seen, i.e. is a Being that is eminently *percipi*, and it is by it that we can understand the *percipere*" (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 250). The phenomenon—that is, the flesh—is pregnant with all possible perceptions, hence, the being-seen makes it possible to understand the perceiving, the *percipere*. We can no longer refer the meaning of being back to a consciousness, on the contrary, the meaning of the being of consciousness depends on the meaning of being of phenomenality. Transcendence is not anymore a transcendence of a transcendent *de jure* accessible to knowledge. Transcendence is assumed as such; "absolute invisibility" a "pure transcendence without an ontic face": that is, as nothing of the present (and consequently as no part of a presence to self, of consciousness). From now on it is the irreducible excess of the world over the moments which composes it. It is clear that, qua phenomenal being, the world cannot exist like a thing, fully positive, self-identical. More precisely, if it is true that the whole is nothing more than its parts without being the sum of them, we must acknowledge that nothingness has a certain reality. If that which is nothing more than its parts has an efficacy, we can no longer contrast nothingness to being, and we must admit that the phenomenal totality is a singular form of nothingness, a negativity that is not absolutely opposed to positivity. For if the world is nothing more than the parts, that is to say, a totality immanent in the parts, it follows that it is not different from things, because it is not another thing. The World is this difference without distance or duality, transcendence in words of Merleau-Ponty. The totality reveals a transcendence that is not the transcendence of a transcendent, or a reducible distance, and conversely the transcendence of the world is understood as an inexhaustible whole.

Despite their differences, Michel Henry (phenomenology of radicalized subjectivity) and Merleau-Ponty (a-subjective phenomenology), install themselves in precisely the same "places" within the Husserlian problematic of time; it is as if they take the same route but in opposite directions. The reflection about time shows us the analyses of the given in which Husserl's philosophical description simultaneously fulfills its program and goes beyond itself.

What gives the Husserlian problematic of time its originality is that Husserlian time is a "strange" object for consciousness since it is revealed as the originary being of consciousness itself—an originary describable neither as "beginning" nor as "foundation" in the logical sense of these terms. The problem is that if consciousness is the most *a priori* region of time, then how is consciousness itself constituted? (Husserl 1964: 93) The idea of an "inner" consciousness of time is based on the primacy of the transcendental subject. Time is basically the "place" in which intentionality, as the power of producing all things, as the pure act of being thrown into the world while remaining itself, seeks to be given to itself. Time came to appear to Husserl not only as an entity, not only as a special kind of objectivity but as something which makes it possible to transcend the limits of immediate contact with individual beings and

establish contact with entire universal spheres and ultimately with the whole. In this regard, time became for him the *world horizon* itself. Even if Husserl does not say so explicitly, the original concept of the world is hereby transcended and rendered problematic by the concept of horizon and of a horizontal intentionality. Husserl gives to horizon the status of a potential of consciousness and characterized it, from the time, as being ultimate consciousness.

In searching for its origin, the Husserlian intentional glance sees itself as an “object” in the form of a more originary intentionality. Faced with this task, Husserlian phenomenological method must create the ideas of passive synthesis, double intentionality “ratified” in longitudinal intentionality, transversal intentionality, and operant intentionality; these are all ideas about which we might wonder what would happen if they do not remain “haunted” and thus made opaque by the very aporia they seek to absorb. Clearly, Urregion consciousness for Husserl oscillates between the status of phenomenon par excellence and non-phenomenon. Thus the way that Husserl carries out these ideas in his systematics leads to an immanentization, that is, a subjectivization of being. As Patočka already saw, Husserl’s strife for such an immanentization of being seems to culminate precisely in the reduction of all objective being to a constitutive stream of transcendental subjectivity and also of this flowing transcendental life to the “absolute” *nunc stans* (Patočka 1992: 169). But, in the case of the *nunc stans* as the ultimate core of the subjectivity of the subject, a positive and direct self-givenness is not possible because the *ego* is a process and also because *auto-apprehension* is always a reification of something transposed from a live process into a product: from creator to created, from subjectival to objectival. From this point of view, the idea of the *nunc stans* is as paradoxical as the self-givenness of the lived experience (Şan 2012: 180).

Henry reproach Husserl for domesticating *Urimpression* with intentionality. Impression does not give itself to itself but is given “as being there now” by an intentionality. As François-David Sebbah noticed, “intentionality triumphs over impression—in a Pyrrhic victory since it loses what it seeks at the very moment in which it pretends to give it, and thus loses itself since the quest was entirely one for its origin” (2012: 79). *Urimpression* is non-realized, condemned to time. For Henry, time is merely the non-reality of the “not yet” (of protentional intentionality) and it is the “already more” of retention. Operative intentionality is the culmination of the non-reality of intentionality in time. If there is time, it is the fault of intentionality that “kills” what it holds in view, emptying it of all matter, of all the hyletic flesh: the non-reality of transcendence is the non-reality of form, formal transcendence is time. Not only is impression distorted in being so constituted, but the structure of ecstatic temporality is injected into it in such a way that it ends by defining the essence: impression will then be thought as perception turned toward spatiality: a “now” is nothing other than a glance toward a new now. For Michel Henry, the “murder” of impression in and by time is completed.

But, how to think a temporality in and of immanence, if all temporality seems to implicate an Ek-stasis, a temporal gap? While Henry denounces an Ek-static temporalization of the immanence of affectivity, Merleau-Ponty regrets, on the contrary, an incapacity to think time radically as horizon of indeterminacy, absence. This

Urimpression, pure immanence for Henry, is transcendence for Merleau-Ponty; since he thinks it as what un-makes, alters, and opens intentionality. In examining the concept of temporality, Merleau-Ponty assimilates the Husserlian notion of operative intentionality to the Heideggerian notion of transcendence, putting it at the base of his own analysis of temporality. In short, by means of this transcendence, the present could surpass itself toward the past and toward the future. As he says in *The Visible and invisible*: “to be sure there is the present, but the transcendence of the present makes it precisely able to connect up with a past and a future, which conversely are not a nihilation” (1968: 196). This description of the implication of the past and the future in the present also shows us, in addition to the character of transcendence, the character of continuity in which time is wrapped in our originary experience. Critical of Bergson’s thesis on this point, Merleau-Ponty nevertheless affirms that continuity, though it is an essential phenomenon, does not however suffice to explain time, but calls for clarification in its turn: this continuity must be brought back precisely to the transcendence that pushes the present to surpass itself toward the past and toward the future. In Merleau-Ponty’s conception, time thus unfolds itself as a single movement, the different moments of which flow into each other. From this fact, rather than erasing each other, the different moments mutually recall and reaffirm each other, starting from the privileged field of presence, in a sort of coexistence that is habitually hidden by the idea of time as “a succession of instances of now”. It is in fact against continuity and sequentiality that Merleau-Ponty thinks through time. Thus Merleau-Ponty demonstrates the simultaneity in which the temporal dimensions sketch themselves within the field of presence. According to him, we do not constitute time and our retentions themselves do not refer back to an intentional act of consciousness. Rather, they refer precisely to the operative intentionality internal to being. Merleau-Ponty critiques Husserl for having conceived of the field of presence “as without thickness, as immanent consciousness” while, from his perspective, he unceasingly emphasizes that “it is transcendent consciousness, it is being at a distance” (1968: 173) precisely by virtue of its Gestaltic form. It is indeed by virtue of this form that, in our field of presence, the present sketches itself simultaneously with the past to which it obliquely refers, and that, consequently, the reminiscence of this past does not presuppose the intervention of an intentional act. For Merleau-Ponty, Husserl’s conception, on the contrary, cannot account for this simultaneity of past and present, because the intentional analytic, on which this conception rests, “tacitly assumes a place of absolute contemplation from which the intentional explication is made, and which could embrace present, past, and even openness toward the future” (1968: 243). Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, emphasizes that “it is necessary to take as primary, not the consciousness and its *Ablaufspanomen* with its distinct intentional threads, but, the spatializing temporalizing vortex (which is flesh and not consciousness facing a noema)” (1968: 244). Consciousness is an effect of time and not the place where time is constituted. Thus the question of presence is not a question of intuition. In other words, this vortex refers not to the intentional activity of consciousness, but to “the fungierende or latent intentionality which is the intentionality within being” (1968: 244). The sense that precedes the face-to-face of consciousness and the object, the distinction between activity and passivity, is auto-constituted precisely by virtue of the operative intentionality internal to Being itself. This discontinuous temporality is existential eternity beyond sequentiality. As another

working note from *The Visible and Invisible* affirms, “the sensible, Nature, transcends the past present distinction, realizes from within a passage from one into the other Existential eternity” (1968: 267). A time that is not “the serial time, that of acts and decisions” (1968: 168), but rather a time characterized by the enjambment of simultaneity.

3) The Transformation of Idea of Phenomenon

In working through the question of time, Henry and Merleau-Ponty agree about nothing other than what the new resources of the phenomenological method offer them. It is precisely the reflection on the nature of internal time consciousness which has shown that in the ultimate foundation itself we are not moving towards an ever greater and more evident clarity, but that our greatest insight is at the same time an *intuition of what is escaping us*. Because this clarity of a thing itself -in fact, a clarity alone- depends on presentation and specifically on the presentation of a temporal being (which, as temporal, is in turn and in principle possible only as finite). It is clear that, the *Urimpression* is not constituted and the question of presence is not a question of intuition. The question of time is not a question of consciousness but a question of givenness because the time first happens as an unconscious, preconscious event and the event is precisely what in time cannot be reconducted to consciousness. The issue they were interested in about this problem of time, among other things, is precisely to check the limits and possibility of phenomenology. Apparently, phenomenology can no more be transformed into a theory of pure intuition. The phenomena can not be brought without remnant into the light of intuitive clarity.

In this case one should interrogate the phenomenological reason (defined by an ideal of adequation and a transparency of the real to knowledge) which thematizes the experience in terms of “lack” or “excess” of appearance. This is to say, on the one hand, the subject always intends more than what he/she really sees. Subject intends the entire thing, not just fleeting or partial adumbrations of it. According to this first scenario, the lack is entirely on the side of the appearing phenomena and the excess is on the side of the intentions of the subject. From this point of view, Husserl understands intuition as the presence of the thing in itself, as proof of an adequacy; it is a grasping of the thing according to the plenitude of its determinations, in contrast with empty intentionality, and it therefore excludes any lacuna, any indeterminacy. Fulfillment in this context is filling up an emptiness. This relation of emptiness and fulfillment possesses a dynamic importance that corresponds to the fundamental orientation of intentionality toward knowledge. On that basis, the nonintuitive is pure and-simple absence, that emptiness is nongivenness rather than a specific mode of givenness. The nonintuitive moments (strictly speaking, non-sensed) implied in perception—everything that regarding the thing which is not given—could have only a subjective existence, as if the subjective were the index of the nonintuitive. Such is without question the deepest root of the subjectivation of appearance in Husserl’s world: the inability of conceiving of the absence or the deficiency as a constitutive moment of phenomenality as an “objective” moment. Husserl spontaneously understands absence as the inverse of a presence rather than as constitutive of presence; put in another way, “emptiness” is what

cannot be, what does not have a reality, which is why an absence from the objective point of view can only refer to a subjective reality. In effect, to deprive emptiness of the status of a mode of given is to postulate that a thing is not present if it does not present itself (so to speak, exhaustively) in its manifestations; it is to posit that there is fulfillment only as adequate possession of the object. Thus the denial of the phenomenological positivity of “emptiness” is merely an expression of the assimilation carried out by Husserl between the structural relation of empty intentionality and fulfillment on the one hand, and the contrast between the deficient mode of givenness and the presence of the object on the other. To conceive of fulfillment as the presence of the thing itself is *ipso facto* to interpret all partiality or indetermination as a deficient mode of givenness. It is to understand the focus upon emptiness as a lacking; it is to deny any positivity to absence.

It is clear that the perception is submitted to the horizon of a givenness “in flesh” and “adequate” of the thing which maintains the privacy of form over matter and the meaning over sensation. Thus according to Husserl, the givenness is limited to the determination of presence in the interdependent figures of intuition and objectivity. He supposes a reciprocity between the existence and adequate donation, and between intuitiveness and originarity. It is vital to emphasize that Husserl would not know how to juxtapose non-givenness with phenomenology, perceptive inadequation being for him is always caught within the horizon of a full adequation functioning as a regulatory idea for perception. This ideal pole requires a *telos* of a process which, in principle, is endless. By doing so, intentionality has been conceived from the outset as intending an ideal object. In other words, localizing the lack on the side of givenness of the thing, Husserl requires further givenness of the experienced object to describe the structure of our experience by a theoretical relation to the world allegedly established through intuition.

But there is also another way. What shows itself to the subject is always more than what he/she can grasp. The thing shows qualities and meanings the subject did not expect and its shining appearance carries other possible appearances and other things possibly appearing. In this second scenario, the lack is thus on the side of the subject and the excessive richness on the side of the appearing phenomena. This second scenario calls for a critical deconstruction of the Husserlian concept of experience and sees the phenomenology as a means to open a possibility, to let the phenomenon go by itself, to free the phenomenon. The specificity of this phenomenological approach resides in that it definitively gives up the certainty of progress, a certainty that for Husserl was nourished by the hope that, even if it is in the name of the ideal regulator, the plenitude of givenness is accessible. This new phenomenological movement moves toward a description of “hyper-phenomenon” or “counter-phenomenon” which exceeds the field of appearance. As Merleau-Ponty writes, “that to see is always to see more than one sees” (1968: 247). Merleau-Ponty characterizes the visible through its intrinsic invisibility, an invisibility which is not a negation but a synonym of visibility. Thus the seen always remains withdrawn from its manifestation and therefore that its transcendence is constitutive of its phenomenality.

The task of this post-Husserlian phenomenology consists in qualification and conception of the structure of phenomenality with respect to its originality. It imposes a

disjunction between originarity and the horizon of adequation and deals with all phenomena whose originarity excludes fulfillment and implies a constitutive dimension of non-presence. Being interested in this constitutive dimension of non-presence, is thus, precisely, being concentrated on what exceeds and what is prior to intentionality (an originary subjectivity for Henry and an originary anonymity for Merleau-Ponty). However, this is not only an attitude of rejection of intentionality but a rupture in phenomenological *practice* and also a radical change in its concept of experience and phenomenon in terms of self-givenness. It is thus a question of getting back to a pre-originary stage of experience, paralyzed by intuition and objectivity. According to Michel Henry and Merleau-Ponty, experience does not refer primarily to itself, it does not heal or affirm itself as a self-identical beginning of thinking. These thinkers find a moment in experience when experience refers to something which it is not. It is related to an experience of an essential non-actuality or invisibility (The revelation of life or Flesh of the world) in which an object cannot be experienced in a direct intentional relationship. In the following considerations, I will limit myself to some remarks on Merleau-Ponty's transformation of idea of phenomenon.

The givenness is not limited to the determination of presence in the interdependent figures of intuition and objectivity and the phenomenon never offers itself plainly and integrally. In fact, if intention is not promised to intuition, and despite it signifies nothing, intention cannot give something (by way of presence), then there is a mode of presence that is not reduced to intuition, and thus intuition is a mode of givenness. In other words, a deficiency in givenness is not a deficiency of givenness but it is the condition of the givenness as givenness of an originary existence. This claim is as simple in its formulation as it is complex and rich in its consequences. As Patočka writes: "we can ask ourselves if emptiness is a 'simple intention' that fulfillment converts into the fulfilled in person, so that it disappears itself: or indeed if it also conceals something positive, a given" (1995: 178). Of course, the answer is contained in the question because "if we examine in depth the theory of modes of givenness, it will certainly become evident that the 'non-intuitive' that appears in a deficient mode of givenness is also a being, a being that is not of a subjective-egological nature" (Patočka 1988: 203). Thus in the final analysis, the subjectivation of appearance refers to the purely negative determination of emptiness as non-givenness, in other words, to the refusal to recognize emptiness as phenomenological given the dimension of absence that is constitutive of perception. Inversely, a critique of subjectivism and of the composition of perception on the basis of lived experiences involves recognition of the positivity of absence as a specific mode of the given and therefore contains a reevaluation of the status of the structure emptiness-fulfillment.

As Merleau-Ponty writes in an important note, "the sensible is precisely that medium in which there can be being without it having to be posited; the sensible appearance of the sensible, the silent persuasion of the sensible is Being's unique way of manifesting itself without becoming positivity, without ceasing to be ambiguous and transcendent (1968: 214). To say that everything manifests the presence of a whole as absent amounts to that everything is more than itself and, in this sense, includes a dimension of possibility and so transcends its own position as to encroach on other events. The invisible, which is synonymous with meaning, or condition of possibility, is

in principle not something that could become visible (it is not something at all). It lies in a dimension of invisibility constitutive of visibility: it is as visible as the visible is invisible. In other words, vision of something in the world requires a relation with the world as inexhaustible depth.

This horizontal givenness is something original and irreducible to the progression from an unfulfilled intention to a fulfillment of intention. Horizon is neither a particular perspective nor an anticipation but perspectives and anticipations are possible only on the basis of it. In this regard, a thing can only be seen if it is seen as something that exists, which is to say something belonging to the world and standing out against the world. A relation to this whole is thus involved in every perception, and in this sense the whole is present. Moreover, to understand that any manifestation is originally a manifestation of the world is to realize that the absence of the object is irreducible, because it is none other than the untotalizable infinity of its adumbrations. But it is also to understand that from this infinity and ultimately from this absence, there is a specific givenness in the form of horizon. Horizon can only be understood as a boundary phenomenon, the unobjectifiable remainder of all objectification, the unconstitutable residue of all constitution. Merleau-Ponty is therefore correct when he writes, “[N]o more than are the sky or the earth is the horizon a collection of things held, or a class name, or a logical possibility of conception, or a system of ‘potentiality of conscious’; it is a new type of being.” (1968: 148). We cannot reach the horizon moving from one lived experience to another because it precedes, as a structural globality, all the appearances of the object that stand out against it, because it is a structural totality in which the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Horizon designates this rooting of the manifestation in something invisible. As Barbaras writes: “[T]he structure of the horizon reveals a mode of being that defies the principle of identity. As reference to an untotalizable totality, it is greater than itself; it opens onto an alterity that, insofar as it becomes invisible in it, it is not distinct from identity. It is given as the identity of itself and its other” (2006: 79).

Moreover, as an inexhaustible totality, however, the world cannot be present in itself (otherwise, it would no longer be a totality, but a thing in the world): it is, to be precise, present as absent. That which manifests itself, that which comes to light in every concrete perception, at the same time withdraws from his presence: it presents itself by remaining absent. The givenness of the world as a whole is as ultimate and unshakable as the givenness of lived experience. Here I must add one comment: one can only speak of a true phenomenon when something shows itself as what it is and how it is according to its own way of being. The world is a phenomenon in which something shows itself by means of something else. The ultimate determination of the phenomenon of world implies not to be, but to appear as counter-phenomenon or dephenomenalisation instead of an over-phenomenon.

This fact is described by Merleau-Ponty as specifically ontological: “[T]he transcendence of the thing compels us to say that it is plenitude only by being inexhaustible, that is, by not being all actual under the look—but it promises this total actuality since it is there...” (1968: 191). Even if the relation is intentional, it signifies that the total actuality exists only as a promise, the zero degree of visibility, opening of a dimension of visible. It is therefore a promise without a promiser, a totality in a *non-*

positive sense or invisible for Merleau-Ponty. The total actuality as promise escapes the distinction between presence and absence: it is present—that is, real and efficient—as absent: it is, to be precise, the presence of a certain absence. Promise is not a statement of intention because it is not ordered by the *telos* of adequation or fulfillment. Instead of presupposing a possible fulfillment like Husserl, Merleau-Ponty integrates a dimension of absence in givenness. This is not a promise made with an intention on the promiser's part to convince a hearer, or to give up going back to the things themselves. On the contrary, this is a call to give to the things what essentially belongs to them. Givenness as promise is not limited to the determination of presence in the interdependent figures of intuition and objectivity. Promise is given as not yet given, infinitely remote, and so on. The invisible is not beyond the visible, not other than the visible.

If objectivity and intuition are not the standard definitions of the phenomenon, and if the phenomenon, according to Heidegger, is “that which gives itself from itself,” in that case, we are led to the possibility of the phenomenon as an unfulfilled promise. The experience of the unfulfilled promise highlights the disjunction between givenness in person and the possibility of fulfillment. Unfulfilled promise does not imply necessarily the presence of a giver or of a given thing. The leading idea of this phenomenology is that we cannot determine phenomena according to prior conditions but rather we can determine conditions according to phenomena. Thus we should give up the economic horizon of exchange in order to interpret the zero degree of visibility, starting from the horizon of givenness itself. The interest of such a description lies in our getting something which can still be described although it does not amount to an object and not a being either. It makes clear that phenomenology is governed by rules that are completely different from those that are applied to the object or to the being because the world of phenomena, the world of phenomenal lawful order, is independent of the world of realities, of the world of actuality. It is never possible to deduce manifesting as such, either from objective or actual structures. We cannot explain, and we have no access to a totality in a *non-positive sense*, so long as we keep it within the horizon of fulfillment. In this experience of promise, something is given and appears as given without referring it to another thing or being or object that would be the cause of its givenness. A promise is not an engagement and an unfulfilled promise is still a promise. So the call of the totality cannot be reduced to an exchange between subject and the world because it is an open promise.

Fransız Fenomenolojisinde Yönelimsellik ve Verilmişlik: M. Henry ve M. Merleau-Ponty

Özet

Fransız fenomenolojisinin temel figürleri Husserl'in eserinin şu iki merkezi fikrini başlangıç noktası olarak alırlar: Transandantal bilincin içkinliği fikri ve aşkınlık ve açıklık olarak yönelimsellik fikri. Husserl bütün yaşamı boyunca bu iki yaklaşımı birbirlerinden ayırmayarak onları kırılğan bir dengede tutmaya çalıştı. Fakat, kendisinden sonra gelen düşünürler bu dengeyi bir kenara bırakıp söz konusu iki yaklaşım arasındaki karşıtıktan beslenip kendi fenomenolojik yorumlarını ortaya koydular. Böylece içkinlik fenomenolojileri ve aşkınlık fenomenolojileri, her biri kendi tarzında olmak üzere, kartezyen biçimde işlenmiş ve içkinliğin aşkınlığa önceliğini esas alan "aşkınlıktaki içkinlik" görüşüne alternatif çözümler önermişlerdir. Aşkınlıktaki içkinlik görüşü bir yandan aşkınlık ve nesnellik arasındaki çakışmaya diğer yandan da varoluş ve (yaşantıların) içkinliği arasındaki çakışmaya dayanır ve bu iki çakışma da bizi beliren ile belirmenin kendisi yani tezahür arasındaki çakışmaya gönderir. Husserl'in ardından gelen Fransız fenomenologlar -her biri kendi özel tarzında- "yönelimselliğin kökeni sorusu" ile ilgilenir. Önerdikleri farklı çözümlere rağmen hemen hemen hepsi fenomenolojiye karşı aynı eleştirel yaklaşımla (yönelimselliğin kendi öz temelini oluşturmaktan yoksun olmasıyla) hareket ederler ve yönelimsel olmayana (bir anlamda ontolojik, etik ve metafizik olana) merkezi bir konum atfederek fenomenolojiyi kendisinin dışıyla ilişkiye sokmaya çalışırlar. Hemen hemen hepsinin ortak eğilimi, yönelimsel bilinç ve onun noetik-noematik yapısı tarafından belirlenen anlam verilmişlerine indirgenemeyecek istisnâi fenomenleri, ("görünmez", "ten", "vahşi veya spontane anlam", "sembol", "duygulanım", "yüz") merceğe altına almaktır. Sınırdaki fenomenlere yönelik, fenomenolojinin Alman kurucularıyla yeni bir tartışmanın fitilini ateşler. Fransız fenomenologlar Husserl ve Heidegger'in eserlerine eleştirel bir mesafe alıp hem *onlarla birlikte* hem de onların eserlerindeki *düşünülmemiş boyutlar içinden* düşünerek fenomenolojiye yeni bir kimlik kazandırır. Bu yeni fenomenoloji hareketi klasik fenomenolojinin yöntemini yeniden düzenleyerek belli bir "aşırı-fenomen" ya da "karşı-fenomen" deneyimiyle ilgilenir.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Yönelimsellik, verilmişlik, fenomen, Michel Henry, Merleau-Ponty.

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