

Introduction

Phenomenology, Practice, and Action: Perspectives on Central and Eastern Europe

Phenomenology, one of the leading trends in contemporary philosophy, consists first and foremost in a systematic analysis of what is given in experience. Due to its methodological background, phenomenology enables one to investigate such diverse topics as, e.g., the world, culture, social reality, embodiment, etc. (e.g., Zahavi 2012), and because of this methodological potential it is used also in, e.g., psychology, psychiatry, sociology, and in the cognitive sciences. In this context phenomenologists ask about such phenomena as, e.g., joint actions, or about constitution of meanings in practice. In a word, phenomenology today is strictly connected with the question of practice and action. Considering its history, however, phenomenology was developed at the very beginning mainly as a theoretical project which struggled with psychologism in logic, descriptive psychology, and the question of ultimately justified theory of knowledge.¹ So, it is not surprising that if one reads classical books in phenomenology, say, Husserl's *Logical Investigations* or *Ideas I*, they seem to lack any clear reference to practice or action. Consequently, phenomenology was traditionally regarded as interested exclusively in theoretical topics, whereas the questions of practice and action seemed to be completely absent. Indeed, if one limits phenomenology to consciousness and to the question of intentionality, Husserl's project can be regarded as a theoretical philosophy. After all, practice and action, though somehow connected to consciousness, are not specific conscious phenomena as, e.g., the act of perception, temporal experience of what is happening *etc.* Nonetheless, more recent readings in Husserl has show that both topics: practice and action, were important, or even crucial themes for him (e.g., Spahn 1996; Sepp 1997; Melle 2007; Heffernan 2017). How, then, phenomenology of practice can be developed?

Given that practice and action are topics for a phenomenological inquiry, one seems to stand in the face of two basic options: either one investigates *essences*

¹ On the history of the phenomenological movement, see Spiegelberg 1994.

of these phenomena, or one attempts to explore *normative* questions. Let me look closer at both directions. The first option, rather uncontroversial, consists in asking the question of *what* is practice or action? A phenomenologist understands this question as the question concerning the essence of practice what means that the question requires descriptive-eidetic analysis of action. Thus this way of analysis explores – to use technical terms – noetic-noematic structure of action as instantiated by or grounded on some sort of acts of consciousness. This approach comprehends practice as a phenomenon, i.e., as an entity grasped in its constituted meaning in a correlation with consciousness. Here practice can be understood – from a noetical point of view – as a consequence of rational activity of consciousness. In turn – from a noematic point of view – practice can be regarded as instantiated by different forms of actions which are present in the so-called life-world (*Lebenswelt*) (e.g., Gmainer-Pranzl 2007). So, the first approach can be developed as a systematic analysis of different types of practice and, even more importantly, general structures of actions. In a word, it is developed as *phenomenology of practice or action*. Regardless of the question of “what,” one can developed also the question of *how* to act in given practical situation. The latter question of “how” concerns what I called *normative* dimension of philosophy. The ultimate aim of this normative approach is to define general rules or norms of (moral) actions. Strictly speaking, this approach can be developed as ethics (e.g., Melle 2007).

Both sketched possible directions for developing phenomenology of practice and action were, of course, present in the history of the phenomenological movement. Even regardless of Husserl’s (1988) clear interests in ethics, one can indicate in this context, for instance, Scheler’s (1973) project of material ethics, Heidegger’s (1962) detailed analyses of everyday activities, Merleau-Ponty’s (2012) examination of practical context of perception, or Wojtyła’s (1979) investigations into the acting person. Moreover, one can also ask about practical, e.g., political involvement of a philosopher. After all, besides investigating practice as a phenomenon, one can examine the problem of how philosopher’s theory, say an ethical theory, was implemented by him or her in practical life or with regard to concrete practical problem. This plurality of perspectives, of course, requires a systematization. The contributions to this thematic issue of “Miscellanea Anthropologica et Sociologica” set out to elaborate on these potentials of phenomenology of practice and action. The collected papers took up the task to describe the conceptual and methodological resources and horizons of phenomenology of practice and action. What makes this collection of papers unique is its thematic emphasis put on the tradition of the phenomenological movement in Central and Eastern Europe. This theoretical perspective stems from a recognition that historical and political circumstances in Central and Eastern Europe have led to a significant reformulation

of the ways of how to do phenomenology. It is well known that in the Communist period phenomenology was regarded as an idealistic, and bourgeois philosophy. Although some phenomenologists wanted to abandon any political commitment, many of them used phenomenology as a background of their political-practical reformulation of philosophy. Well known examples are Patočka, or Wojtyła. However, this aspect of a heritage of the phenomenological movement in Central and Eastern Europe is still not widely known. Therefore, a further aim of the special issue is to raise also historical questions: Who could be regarded as key figures of the “practical turn” in phenomenology in Central and Eastern Europe? How was phenomenology redefined as a practical philosophy within the phenomenological movement in Central and Eastern Europe? How can we understand political and social roles of phenomenology and phenomenologists as a part of the opposition movements before 1989? What role did the exile play in supporting, and preserving the phenomenological movement beyond the Iron Curtain? Can we say that phenomenology grounds a specific form of ethics? If yes, what are the specific problems of this form of ethical phenomenology? What is the thematic scope of phenomenology of *praxis*? What are the main phenomena connected with practice? How, if at all, phenomenology can be practically implemented?

Regarded in detail, then, the presented collection of papers concerns both traditional, i.e., Husserlian tradition of phenomenology, and its developments in the history of the phenomenological movement in Central and Eastern Europe. In her paper “The Ego as Moral Person. Husserl’s Concept of Personhood in the Context of his Later Ethics,” Irene Breuer (Bergische Universität Wuppertal) presents Husserl’s philosophical project in the context of its practical implications. The author focuses on the concept of a person and shows that it is a cornerstone of Husserl’s later idea of the ethics of love. Breuer argues that the basis for this concept Husserl presented in his *Ideas II* where he conceives a person as a concrete subject – as opposed to a transcendental subject – which is individualised by its actions and passions. Moreover, a person, according to Breuer, is a being which undergoes a changing life-history. Next, the author tracks implications of this concept in Husserl’s later ethical project, also in the context of his idea of “renewal,” as well as his analysis of Fichte’s practical philosophy. It is argued, following Husserl, that a person as moral person realises its ethical existence under the guidance of practical reason.

In his study, Tomasz Kąkol (University of Gdańsk) compares phenomenological theories of empathy which is to be understood in the text as “mind-reading” with contemporary cognitivists’ approach to this problem. In this regard, the author focuses on Stein and Ingarden who both present different theories of empathy. Kąkol attempts to show that although both theories seem to be incompatible at first glance, after a thorough analysis they can be understood as complementary.

It is argued also that empathy is indispensable in practice, though this topic has to be carefully examined. Also Carlos Lobo (Collège international de philosophie) contextualizes Ingarden's philosophy. In his paper on "Relativity of Taste without Relativism. An Introduction to Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience," Lobo reads Ingarden's critique of relativism in the context of the phenomenology of aesthetic experience formulated by Geiger, as well as in relation to Husserl's refutation of relativism. Ingarden's position is summarized in four ontological-aesthetical theses: (1) values do exist as the proper correlates of aesthetic experience, (2) aesthetic values must be distinguished from artistic values, (3) artistic and aesthetic values are founded in other ontic strata, and finally (4) the act of valuation in aesthetic experience does not presuppose any value judgement. The author situates his discussion of Ingarden's position in the context of modern physics, also interpreted from a philosophical point of view (Weyl, Bachelard, Geiger). The ultimate thesis presented by Lobo is that the relativism, which states or presupposes that any feeling is right, is wrong.

In the paper on "Roman Ingarden: Phenomenology, Responsibility and the Ontological Foundations of Morality," Simona Bertolini (University of Parma) explores practical implications of Ingarden's ontology. The author is aware that Ingarden does not present any ethics as such, and moreover that his philosophy cannot be associated directly with a "practical turn" in phenomenology, but – as she argues – in his investigations into the nature of a human being, Ingarden considers ontological foundations of moral actions. Ingarden's philosophy of a human being is summarized in three theses: (1) man's life goes between two different spheres of reality: nature and spirit, (2) by explaining the relation of dependence which connects the natural and spiritual realms, Ingarden notices a conflict between them, (3) a human being overcomes the conflict by realizing values. Therefore, following Bertolini, moral responsibility emerges as an essential moment in the constitution of humanity. The author presents also implications of Ingarden's ontology of freedom.

Wojciech Starzyński (Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences) in his paper on "Irena Krońska: A Student and a Critic of Roman Ingarden's Philosophy" presents three stages in Krońska's approach towards Ingarden's philosophy. Krońska was studied under Ingarden in Lvov in the 1930's. The author reconstructs main line of arguments formulated by Krońska in her review of Ingarden's *Controversy over the Existence of the World* published in 1949 in the *Revue philosophique de France et de l'étranger*. As Starzyński argues, this review is unique in the context of the reception of Ingarden's philosophy since it contextualizes Ingarden's ontological project, especially in the context of the development of phenomenology in France and Germany. Moreover, the author presents Krońska's cooperation with Ingarden in the 1960's, especially in the context of the

March 1968 events in Poland. Finally, Starzyński introduces Krońska's approach to Ingarden's philosophy as presented in her epistolary exchange with Patočka.

Michael Gubser's (James Madison University) paper on "Phenomenology contra Nazism: Dietrich von Hildebrand and Aurel Kolnai" asks about the relationship between phenomenology and political activity with regard to Hildebrand and Kolani. As Gubser shows, they both were influenced by Scheler and Reinach for whom philosophy is strictly connected with practice. The author reconstructs Hildebrand's theory of ethical acts. The act arises, namely, as a conscious engagement with a particular object or state of affairs. Here a value has its own proper emotional response. At this basis Gubser presents Hildebrand's personalism and his conviction that a corporate state organized around Christian communities is a compelling alternative to totalitarian absolutism and to the individualism of liberalism. Also for Kolani, values stand in the center of philosophical inquiries. According to Gubser, Kolani specifies four types of value experience.

Natalia Artemenko (St. Petersburg State University) in her paper explores the relationship between phenomenology and psychiatry and psychoanalysis in regard to Heidegger's philosophy. The author presents a detailed and critical analysis of "Zollikon Seminars." Artemenko reconstructs Heidegger's view of a human being as connected with other subjects, i.e., as an intersubjective being. In the article, Heidegger's critique of Freud is presented. In this context, the author examines Heidegger's approach to the existence of the human being as understood in the light of a conceptual duality of causality and motivation. According to Artemenko, however, Heidegger does not consider crucial problems formulated within psychoanalysis. Despite these lacks, following the author, Heidegger's central contribution here seems to be an attempt to understand the practice of psychiatry.

In the essay "The Rupture and The Rapture: Eternity in Jan Patočka and Krzysztof Michalski," Nicolas de Warren (Pennsylvania State University) interprets Michalski's philosophical account of eternity presented in his last book on Nietzsche – *The Flame of Eternity. An Interpretation of Nietzsche's Thought*. It is argued in the essay that in order to understand Michalski's position one has to contextualize his philosophy, and refer to Heidegger's and Patočka's thought. The author tracks the way of how to understand the problem of eternity by reference to Ancient Greek philosophy, e.g., Anaximander. The ultimate aim of the essay is to describe main differences of Patočka's and Michalski's approaches to eternity. In this regard, the thesis presented in the essay is that whereas for Patočka human temporality attains meaning through a movement of freedom in the rupture of eternity, for Michalski human temporality attains meaning through a movement of desire in the rapture of eternity.

In the paper "Praxis, the Body, and Solidarity: Some Reflections on the Marxist Readings of Phenomenology in Poland (1945–1989)," Witold Płotka (Cardinal

Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw) explores main tendencies in the post-war reception of phenomenology in the light of Marxism. It is argued that although phenomenology was marginalized and even refused from the Marxist position, a dialogue between both traditions established interesting developments. The author claims that the confrontation with Marxism enabled phenomenologists a problematization of the phenomenon of work as a specific way of being. Płotka defines main ideological points of the Marxist critique of phenomenology, i.e., a critique of phenomenology as a bourgeois philosophy that cannot offer anything to the communist society since it abandons the sphere of praxis. Next, positive developments of the phenomenological method are reconstructed, including Szewczyk's original reading of Husserl. The article points out also a Marxist background of some thoughts of Wojtyła and Tischner.

In her paper "On the Absence of Eco-phenomenology in Poland," Magdalena Hoły-Łuczaj (University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszów) formulates an interesting problem of why eco-phenomenology is less popular in Poland than in the West. Hoły-Łuczaj's thesis in this regard is that Tischner's philosophy of drama, which is an anthropocentric theory, influenced philosophy in Poland to marginalize eco-phenomenology. To show this, the author reconstructs main points of eco-phenomenology, next she asks about environmental philosophy in Poland and presents main elements of Tischner's philosophy of drama. As Hoły-Łuczaj argues Tischner looked at reality mainly from the perspective of human beings' affairs; at the same time, Tischner is not interested in nonhuman beings at all.

Witold Płotka

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