

LECTURE NOTES on WEEK 3

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ON PHENOMENOLOGY

• first introduced by HUSSERL in his LOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS (1900-1)
he himself saw this as a NEW RADICAL EXPLORATION of a DOMAIN of CONSCIOUSNESS which investigates the "quality FOR WHAT IT IS, IN THE MANNER IN WHICH IT APPEARS"

↓
this meant rejecting the UNQUESTIONED ASSUMPTION that things exist outside the subject and relying only on EXPERIENCE

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in this sense it associated with WILLIAM JAMES' radical empiricism and KANT distinction between NOUMENA (things as they are in themselves) and PHENOMENA (things as they appear) by rejecting NOUMENA and focusing only on the latter.

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- this position which HUSSERL called PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTIONISM was refuted by many other PHENOMENOLOGISTS - most prominently HEIDEGGER. (for CARTESIAN CONNECTION SUSPENSION of JUDGEMENT)

NONETHELESS Husserl created the outline of a METHOD which connects a variety of thinkers under this umbrella

all of them infect saw PHENOMENOLOGY as a PRACTICE (2)
more than a SYSTEM, a PRACTICE which attempt at
exploring and describing PHENOMENA outside PRE-IMPOSITIONS
placed on EXPERIENCE (religious and actual traditions,
common sense, ...)

↳ this sense it was an attempt to REINVENTING PHILOSOPHY
by confronting it with LIFE and using SUBJECTS outside
metaphysics or contextual methodology

↳ rather focus on GIVENNESS and abandoning SCIENTIFIC, PHILOSOPHICAL,
CULTURAL & EVERYDAY ASSUMPTION (HUSSERL)

↳ ⇒ this method HUSSERL argued we could
explore LIFE-WORLD - "the world in which we are always
already living and which furnishes the ground for all
cognitive performances and all scientific determinations"

↳ do ~~PHENOMENOLOGY~~ PHENOMENOLOGY proper to go beyond the distinction
between RATIONALISM & EMPIRICISM by rejecting the distinction
between OBJECT & SUBJECT (as we saw in HEIDEGGER)

↳ HEIDEGGER pushed this even further and argued that
humans always find themselves thrown in a world

or in other words, beings are always living
 "BEING-IN-THE-WORLD". Heidegger critiqued
 HUSSERL focus on CONSCIOUSNESS and INTUITION as a CARTESIAN
 overton and focus on how BEING appears to BEINGS
 as. (think about the article we read) the way in which

THE WORLD COMES INTO APPEARANCE IN and THROUGH HUMAN
 (from CONSCIOUSNESS to EXISTENCE)

↓
 OBJECTIVITY-FOR-SUBJECTIVITY - main contribution of
 phenomenology to
 CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY
 "world is not made by people &
 people are not made by the world but
 they exist in unity" (HEIDEGGER)

→ IT WAS AT THIS POINT THAT phenomenology, which
 rejected history, was hit and crushed by HISTORY - was
 ported by the SECOND WAR WORLD. Some of its
 more prominent men thinkers, students of HUSSERL,
 died in concentration camps, many others such as ANNA
 ARENDT & GADAMER fled to the united states and took
 other philosophical directions of ~~but~~ PHENOMENOLOGY
 mostly migrated to France for its german origin;
 mostly under the impulse of two thinkers:

LEVINAS & MERLEAU-PONTY.

Both LEVINAS and MERLEAU-PONTY departed from HUSSERL'S (4)
transcendental phenomenology and its idea of a transparent
CONSCIOUSNESS able to "see" the world. In this sense
they expanded on HEIDEGGER by, in the case of LEVINAS,
exploring inter-subjects relations and in the case of
MERLEAU-PONTY focusing on the BODY and not CONSCIOUSNESS
as the PRIMARY SITE of KNOWING the world.

Let me start from LEVINAS. Levinas was a student of HUSSERL and
the first translator of his work in French. His main contribution
to phenomenology was in expanding the method to the
study of the APPEARANCE OF THE OTHER IN AN SUBJECTIVE
SPHERE and its relations to ETHICS or "RESPONSIBILITY TO

THE OTHER"; Levinas was interested in the way in which
meaning, signification, and experience emerged from our
"facing" the other. Another subject which presents him as
himself as a radical alterity, one that elicits both a
RESPONSE and a RESPONSIBILITY in us.

In this sense, Levinas criticized classical philosophy, (5) including phenomenology's SUBJECTIVISM and EGOCENTRISM.

Completely different was the road taken by MERLEAU-PONTY who more than the others focused his attention to PERCEPTION, the role of the BODY in it, as well as on SPACE and PLACE.

Merleau-Ponty saw phenomenology as a way to "RE-LEARNING HOW TO LOOK AT THE WORLD". This answer to this call was done by focusing on the BODY or better the BODY-SUBJECT and its ^{INSEPARABLE} relation to the world. "Our own body is in the world as the heart is in the organism; it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system."

Starting from this body he moves out to investigate the way in which motor and vision structure PERCEPTION and therefore as PERCEPTION - of something. In so doing he also analyses SPACE as a word in which the body moves, once again going beyond the

traditional distinction between ABSOLUTE & RELATIVE (6)

ideas of space by refuting the separation between body & world. As he would say "we don't take up space, we ~~HABIT~~ inhabit it, "like a hand to an instrument."

SO TO CONCLUDE

phenomenology can hardly be seen as a unified tradition but as a variety of approaches with significant disagreements. MOST PROMINENTLY OVER

- 1) SUBJECTIVISM - centrality of perceiving eye / role of the other
HUSSEIN, HEIDEGGER, MERLEAU-PONTY / LEVINAS
- 2) UNIVERSALISM - human phenomenology / contextual in history
HUSSEIN - intuition / MERLEAU-PONTY - HEIDEGGER
- 3) CENTRALITY of CONSCIOUSNESS / importance of the BODY / centrality of BEING
HUSSEIN / MERLEAU-PONTY / HEIDEGGER
centrality of encounter with the OTHER / LEVINAS

BUT ALSO DIFFERENCES

- METHOD - "attention to world as it presents to us."
- SURPASSING of SUBJECT / OBJECT DISTINCTION