

## Phenomenology and the Social World

### Presentation

It doesn't seem very promising to understand the social world through phenomenology if we consider one of the initial gestures of *Logical Investigations*, namely, to set aside the communicative aspect of language to isolate the ideal character of meaning. Following this initial gesture, Husserl devotes much of his analysis to examining the intentional operativity of the isolated subject, which, once the transcendental project of the constitution of the meaning of the world was developed, leads to the extreme risk of solipsism, which the author himself admits, particularly in his *Cartesian Meditations*.

However, it is also known that Husserl sought to qualify the meaning of this methodological precedence of the isolated subject in specific phenomenological descriptions, making it clear that the constitution of meaning can never be completed without the participation of other subjects, whose intentional performances are intertwined in complex acts, irreducible to the powers of an isolated subject. It is not only a matter of recognizing that, in the social acts, the subjects must also establish a global meaning from partial intentions that complement each other, a thesis that already reveals how much Husserl dedicated himself to the social problem, namely in many manuscripts collected in three volumes of *Phenomenology of Intersubjectivity*. Indeed, the author goes even a step further, recognizing that subjectivity itself, as a personal monadological unit, only gains its contours based on relations with other individuals by stating that “[...] the origin of personhood lies in empathy and the social acts that arise then, [to the extent] that the subject becoming aware of himself as the pole of his acts is not enough for personality [since] he is constituted only by entering into social relations with other subjects, through which he becomes objective on the practical realm” (Hua XV: 175).

Indeed, when investigated from the point of view of its formation process, subjectivity can never be taken as an autonomous whole but rather as taking part in an intersubjective, social, communitarian, and historical nexus that always puts the net of relationships to others as an insuppressible moment of its very self-constitution. By the same token, the objects of the social world, from utensils of whatever kind to ideal formations like law or rights and symbolic entities like religious icons, for instance, are not only intersubjectively shared but, above all, intersubjectively constituted by practices and collective beliefs which are, by essence, meta- and trans-individual.

Accordingly, the papers in this issue investigate the theoretical legacy of phenomenology in various ways, both in Husserl's work and in authors whose work was influenced by his phenomenology.

In the first article, "Intersubjectivity and the Project of a Phenomenology of the Social World," Carlos Morujão questions whether phenomenology can offer a theory of the social world. His strategy is to show how two heirs (and at the same time critics) of the Husserlian project, Alfred Schutz and José Ortega y Gasset, maintain essential aspects of the phenomenological approach (in particular, the "egological" starting point, in a sense that will be clarified for each author) and from there develop quite complex approaches to social relations.

In the second article, "Community and the Absence of Hostility: Interpretation and Defense of Gerda Walther's Account," Genki Uemura takes up one of Walther's central theses about community life, namely that the affective unification of members makes up the ontological basis of it. The author defends this thesis against A. Gurwitsch's criticism and shows how Walther presents a very relevant position for understanding social relations.

In the third article, "Phenomenology and Human Rights," Nathalie Barbosa de la Cadena proposes to unify notions from Husserl and Reinach in order to build a new approach to human rights. The general idea is to take human rights as *a priori* material laws, which can serve as a basis to evaluate the content of legal enactments and their consequences in individual and social life. In this framework, she defends the relevance and priority of human rights for the enactment of positive legislation.

In the fourth article, "Temporality of Totemic Presentifications: In the Wake of Positions and Repercussions of Husserl's Letter to Lévy-Bruhl," Alice Mara Serra starts with the famous letter sent in 1935 by Husserl to Lévy-Bruhl to analyze the relations between historical and ahistorical societies contained therein and to follow its unfolding

in texts by Merleau-Ponty and Derrida, as well as to explore the fecundity of the phenomenological approach when facing anthropological topics.

Finally, in the article "Capitalism and the Crisis of Rationality: Phenomenological Reflections on Mercantilization, the Mathematization of Value and Disinterest for the Lifeworld," Esteban Marin Ávila explores a practical facet of the theoretical mathematization of the world of life, namely, the mercantilization and ascension of exchange value as prominent in social relations under the capitalist economic regime.

As editors, we think that these contributions are valuable elements for a much-desired phenomenology of the social world.

*The Editors*

Marcus Sacrini

Pedro M. S. Alves