

## BETWEEN PHENOMENOLOGY AND VIOLENCE

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### ABSTRACT

*We are surrounded by mean people, mean life-styles and mean concepts. Everything that we know might be just a fact, might not have anything to sustain it or might be just a temporarily faze that the world is going through. But two things have been present, since maybe the very beginning of this world: phenomenology and violence. And although phenomenology might be something quite hard to understand, and this is why I tried to focus more on this subject, it still exists, it is still present in our day to day life even if we do not notice it and it will always be a huge part of our lives. Standing between phenomenology and violence and trying to decide which one is more present in our lives is quite the difficult task to ask of someone. This is why I tried to make this article as comprehensive as I could and also the reason why I tried to put things into a more positive light. It is quite a difficult job to make a living in today's world. But even though this is the harsh reality that we are living in I will always stand by phenomenology and the fact that violence can be defeated through it.*

**Keywords:** *phenomenology; violence; human; understanding; perspective;*

### 1. THE IMPORTANCE OF PHENOMENOLOGY

Phenomenology studies the conscious experience of how it is felt, lived and expressed by each individual person, in his own way and through the rhythm of his own perceptions. It is a pure subject that goes hand in hand with the human being and with its own level of knowledge and self-knowledge. This field of philosophy must then be distinguished from other important fields of philosophy, such as ontology, epistemology, logic, ethics, and many others. In the recent philosophy of the mind, the term phenomenology is often, in a limited way, designated to characterize the different abilities and sensory characteristics associated with a person. This happens, however, in the context in which everything that we experience offers a much more wider palette of content than a simple sensation. “*For Ricoeur, action denotes the basic manner in which persons exist and inhabit the world. Action involves not only doing but undergoing. Actions comprise our capabilities, including our limitations. Through our actions we constitute our identity*” (Gadamer and Ricoeur 2011:7).

Consequently, in the phenomenological tradition, phenomenology is associated with a much larger ensemble, which allows it to address the significance that things have in our experience, in particular the meaning of objects, events, instruments, time flow, self and others, as they appear and are lived, felt, processed and sometimes even over-processed in our daily lives. Thus, it addresses the phenomena experienced and the dimensions they offer, different and inexhaustible, full of significance and ambiguities in perspective. So, phenomenology can be seen as a real attempt to understand what really means the experience and the means that it uses to allow us access to new dimensions, or in other words it gives us

a formal account of the conscious experience and its implications. However, what is called phenomenology is not a rigid school or a uniform philosophical discipline with a set of incontestable dogmas. Rather, there is a great diversity and almost unlimited number of views of thinkers and so many approaches that could ultimately constitute a true collection of phenomenological knowledge. Consequently, as a philosophical movement, phenomenology is marked by a variety of forms, ideas, thoughts, moments, evolutions and subsequent variations. And just like Hans-Georg Gadamer said:

I think it necessary at this point to adhere precisely to the fact that something is only ever a beginning in relation to an end or a goal. Between these two, beginning and end, stands an indissoluble connection. The beginning always implies the end. Whenever we fail to mention what the beginning in question refers to, we say something meaningless. The end determines the beginning, and this is why we get into a long series of difficulties. The anticipation of the end is a prerequisite for the concrete meaning of beginning (Gadamer and Ricoeur 2011:15).

What happens to phenomenology when it is completely free from the task of following the origin of meaning back to the work of the transcendental self? Does it somehow lose its critical potential? Does it lose its autonomy in relation to opinions, beliefs and perspectives of knowledge that ultimately constitute natural attitudes? Is it enough to obey and be led by the forces of irrationality? Or, ultimately, it gains something that is in favor of subjectivity, for the experience we actually live-and that also means for the phenomenon itself and, as such, the recognition, the rights, and the truth that is due or what is ours due? Maybe it sounds improper, but somehow, I think that phenomenology owes us something special, something that cannot be transposed accurately into words, but it can certainly be felt. And we support this because in one form or another, as human beings, we are in a relationship of symbiosis with phenomenology, which naturally leads to self-fulfillment and self-completion.

The unconditionality of a moral imperative certainly does not mean that the moral consciousness must remain rigid in judging others. Rather, it is morally imperative to detach oneself from the subjective, private conditions of one's own judgment and to assume the standpoint of the other person. But this unconditionality also means that the moral consciousness cannot avoid appealing to the judgment of others. The obligatoriness of the imperative is universal in a stricter sense than the universality of sensibility can ever attain. Applying the moral law to the will is a matter for judgment (Gadamer and Ricoeur 2004:29).

The fundamental structure of consciousness, found in reflection or analysis, involves other forms of experience. Thus, phenomenology offers a complex account of temporal awareness in the flow of consciousness, spatial awareness, especially encountered in perception, of course, making a complex distinction between focal and marginal consciousness, awareness of own experience through ego, alter ego and supra-ego, in a sense, self-awareness, by itself and in itself, in different roles, at different times and of course in different ways, such as thinking, acting, embodied action, including the theoretical awareness of the practical movement, awareness of others in empathy, intersubjectivity, collectivity, even to the everyday activity characterized by a certain culture or even by the way we as subjective beings perceive that culture.

Our task, it seems to me, is to transcend the prejudices that underlie the aesthetic consciousness, the historical consciousness, and the hermeneutical consciousness that has been restricted to a technique for avoiding misunderstandings and to overcome the

alienations present in them all. What is it, then, in these three experiences that seemed to us to have been left out, and what makes us so sensitive to the distinctiveness of these experiences? (Hans-Georg Gadamer 1977:8).

For a very long time, people have been constantly told who they are, who they must be, what they should do or experience. The liberation from this socio-cultural implication of meaning implies a subject, whether individually or collectively, in a phenomenological gesture whereby experience, in addition to being actually lived, is ultimately recognized, and existential significance is respected as such. The supremacy of phenomenology is that it insists on recognizing and observing the reality of our experience as it was lived, intercepted and felt. In fact, she legitimizes and empowers the reflexive, critical capacity of subjectivity in her struggle to break away from the oppressive cultural interpretations imposed upon him. In this sense, phenomenology is already an ethics, already a politics, let's say a common one. In this context, the significance of phenomenology is that it provides a disciplined method of working hermeneutically and critically with the experience experienced to reveal the implicit or latent potential of the light, and to carry this critical potential further, to translate it into this environment and in many others in ways that are considered to be life-giving, because it offers one of the fundamental things that allows us to live at the absolute maximum intensity: freedom. This concept of objective spirit, the roots of which reach far back into antiquity, finds its real philosophical justification in Hegel through the fact that it is itself transcended by what Hegel calls absolute spirit. By absolute spirit, Hegel means a form of spirit that contains nothing more in itself that is alien, other, or in opposition, such as customs, which can stand over against us as something limiting us, or the laws of a state, which restrict our will by expressing prohibitions (Hans-Georg Gadamer 1977:114).

Therefore, phenomenology opens up a completely new field of investigation that has not been properly explored previously. Rather than supposing or trying to discern what exists outside the mental domain and what causal relationships belong to these entities, we can study the objects strictly as they are given, that is, as it appears to us and as we perceive in the experience. Phenomenology is the study of all things related to modernity, and scientific certainty becomes something to be understood. It is the destruction of the idea that we can know everything absolutely, everything is, or is logical. Phenomenology refers to perception, although perhaps for many this is still something difficult to observe. So, there is a question: if there is a world in which I live and inspire, which has an irreducible quality as it seems to me to feel, why will I pretend that it is only in my mind and that I am not connected in any way, in a real way with myself?

As soon as history is in play, what matters is not what is merely given, but, decisively, what is new. Insofar as nothing new, no innovation, and nothing unforeseen is present, there is also no history to relate. Destiny also means constant unpredictability. The concept of development, therefore, brings to expression the fundamental difference that exists between the process-quality of nature and the fluctuating accidents and incidents of human life. What comes to expression here is a primordial opposition between nature and spirit ( Hans-Georg Gadamer 1977: 16).

The ultimate goal of phenomenology is to address our experience in such a way that it is no longer mediated by concepts or representations offered by our subjective consciousness but rather to provide a clearer representation of the life that is offered to us to enjoy it fully and make the most out of it. It allows phenomena to give us by our own and personal means and as they will give themselves, thus noticing how we live and, moreover, how the truth

gives us, and how it really puts us in front of our reflection to really offer a true representation of who we are. Phenomenology, far from being an outdated and irrelevant methodology, holds a privileged position today. It is found in vast and varied fields, including journalism, where it helps to portray reality in a clear, shadowless and maskless light. It is a truly poetic and appropriate approach to understanding the different living conditions and having higher judgments. It is also almost incredible that these conditions and experiences are constantly changing and unfolding in such unpredictable ways that perhaps few people would have expected phenomenology to become the pillar linking all these areas and all these feelings.

In contrast to the mere givenness of the phenomena of objective consciousness, a givenness in intentional experiences, this reflection constitutes a new dimension of research. For there is such a thing as givenness that is not itself the object of intentional acts. Every experience has implicit horizons of before and after, and finally fuses with the continuum of the experiences present in the before and after to form a unified flow of experience (Hans-Georg Gadamer 2004:237).

### 1.1. Phenomenology's aspect in a world of violence

To reveal the relational character, I will try to substantially extend the phenomenological concept of meaning. Meaning is a very complete concept although apparently does not give that impression. The meaning may be the predefined one, it may be something completely objective or on the contrary, it may be probably one of the most subjective concepts, experiences and perceptions, in the context in which this meaning is associated with an intimate thing: sense. Sense, in other words, occurs in the relationship between the subject and those with whom it interacts in this world, which can make this world seem something unreal or something incredible, or eventually it can make it disappear, and consequently, the subject becomes conditioned to shape self-understanding, self-contemplation and self-reflection.

The mediation of finite and infinite that is appropriate to us as finite being lies in language - in the linguistic character of our experience of the world. It exhibits an experience that is always finite but that nowhere encounters a barrier at which something infinite is intended that can barely be surmised and no longer spoken. Its own operation is never limited, and yet is not a progressive approximation of an intended meaning. There is rather a constant representation of this meaning in every one of its steps. The success of the work constitutes its meaning, not what is only meant by it (Hans-Georg Gadamer 1977: 80).

The discussion of violence in relation to a relational phenomenon or inter-phenomenon requires an emphasis on two aspects: first, the fact that the feeling of violence, once lived, cannot be extracted from a single perspective or viewed in the context of a crowd of prospects, a fundamental order, a teleological order, or even a procedural order. This understanding rather gives us the opportunity to consider those dimensions of our inter-corporal existence in which the feeling of lived violence develops in multiple ways without our active or even conscious participation. Secondly, the discussion of violence as a relational phenomenon is evidence that we have become accustomed to understanding violence as an exception to our intrinsic sociality, or as a way to avoid any form of externalizing us because of fear of an improper future, overshadowed by a possible act of violence. The main purpose of phenomenology is to raise the intentional horizons of a life

full of experiences, in which we move, think and act by following a kind of daily pattern, without these actions being mainly and, most of all, thematic.

Correspondingly, the culture of inwardness, the intensification of personal conflicts in human life, and the pent-up expressive power of its artistic representation is gradually becoming alien to us. The social order develops forms of such power that the individual is hardly conscious at all any longer of living out of his own decisions, even in the intimate sphere of his own personal existence. Thus we must sharpen the question in our own time as to how man can understand himself within the totality of a social reality dominated by science (Hans-Georg Gadamer 1977: 111).

Some might wonder because one of the starting points in terms of the philosophical and phenomenological approach to violence could be the very philosophical character of the person involved in the act of violence or more, even the philosophical character of the act itself. And these things are more than a mere advent to reality about this ensemble of violence and philosophical character. Because eventually everything has to start somewhere and I think that all of us are often in the same place, maybe even at the same time, but what distinguishes us from those who choose violence is our philosophical character, a positive one otherwise, and also how we can use it. Perhaps, on the other hand, the problems of violence are not, in the end, all that obscure, even if they may be difficult to understand. In fact, there are a number of approaches to violence that provide very convincing explanations for this phenomenon. The problem of war, an ongoing one, for example, can be formulated as a limited issue, a problem in the military science technique where the specialist investigates how to fight more effectively by mobilizing and concentrating forces. Such approaches provide a thematic basis on which to construct a true worthy example, just like real solutions have to be found and perhaps more often, these solutions could find themselves in phenomenology, but they are hidden under other aspects of this field. And what matters even more is that they are not limited to the actual warfare; for example, the familiar question about what legal or social institutions would be needed to shape human affairs in such a way that even if it does not rule out completely the existence of war at least it reduces its appeal to other people.

The real power of hermeneutical consciousness is our ability to see what is questionable. Now if what we have before our eyes is not only the artistic tradition of a people, or historical tradition, or the principle of modern science in its hermeneutical preconditions but rather the whole of our experience, then we have succeeded, I think, in joining the experience of science to our own universal and human experience of life (Hans-Georg Gadamer 1977: 13).

From the perspective of technical approaches, violence issues do not disappear as a mere consequence, but they do not seem to be usually obscure. They should not attract the concept of philosophy, at least if it is accepted that violence has been effectively understood through a variety of conceptual frameworks that such approaches offer. But if we find ourselves caught in the notion that there are no real problems of war or real problems of conflict at this intensity and that everything is limited to a problem of approach and technique, whether military, legal or social, then it means we limit ourselves alone in the solutions that we know. And on top of that, we also shut down any way of accessing others or a phenomenology of truth, or any philosophical leverage that could help us deeply investigate the war or any act of violence. There are precedents for such a commitment to the philosophy that remains strictly in these horizons; they are based on the idea that philosophy,

together with human sciences, such as history and sociology, can be an important resource for the development and study of the basic categories used by military science, international politics or law (which is also found in the weather of the ancient and preserved to this day through the customs).

Anytime we attempt to reach a shared understanding, there is not only the danger of one voice silencing the others or out-shouting them so that they cannot be heard. There is also the danger of one voice actually putting words in the other's mouth, and thereby doing a kind of violence to the individuality of the Other and his own thought. This is a way of misrepresenting what the Other says, and doing him an injustice in the process (Hans-Georg Gadamer 1977: 61).

The very idea of violence as a pure means of rationalization rejects any argument that could support the meaning or meanings known to man. It's like denying it almost directly. Because the rationalization in question does not claim to have brought into question what is essential for those lives that are affected by war and violence in particular. It is not claimed to be the rationalization of war as a total human event, but only of war in its limited, reductive representation, such as the use of means or material potential for the practices of violence. All questions arising from different acts of violence and likely to find a rather well-defined answer in the phenomenology remain unresolved when we restrict any philosophical sense or any kind of rationalization that would allow access to and other directions than violence. Phenomenology is practically connected to the hands and feet, it is unable to do any kind of movement, to connect with the self, with the self or with the consciousness of the person. Violence often wins, but because we need to see the good in any situation, we can still say that what gives us hope and in these situations is the foundation of phenomenology and philosophy, a foundation that has resisted some very little known times to people. Also, the morality of the war does not find, according to this principle, a chance to be expressed as long as we only pursue the passage of this phenomenon of violence and do not try to hang on to it. It is both necessary and sufficient for a moral reflection to start with the damage or to understand the results of a cause and from there to ask for reason and justification; to be concerned about violence as such, a possible origin of any significant meaning that would contribute to defining the parameters of moral reflection, and would not simply block any reflection of an act that contradicts the spiritual nature of the human being.

What can be called an experience constitutes itself in memory. By calling it such, we are referring to the lasting meaning that an experience has for the This is the reason for talking about an intentional experience and the ideological structure of consciousness. On the other hand, however, the notion of experience also implies a contrast between life and mere concept. Experience has a definite immediacy which eludes every opinion about its meaning. Everything that is experienced is experienced by oneself, and part of its meaning is that it belongs to the unity of this self and thus contains an unmistakable and irreplaceable relation to the whole of this one life (Hans-Georg Gadamer 2004:58).

## 2. COMING TOGETHER

The working hypothesis regarding the case study is that according to the subject "S. J." has a Violence comes in so many different shapes and sizes, that there is absolutely no way in completely preventing it, but definitely, there will also be solutions to defeating it. Through philosophy and phenomenology in particular we can reach new levels of understanding one another, of understanding where we stand in this world, how we perceive

things and we can use our surroundings to our advantage. It is not an easy thing to do. And of course, the human nature works its ways into everything, it will also be quite difficult to overcome our inner fears, inner judgements and inner limits in order for us to fully accept phenomenology as a real life style. Although I believe that a little bit of this philosophy field can be found in each and everyone of us, the difficult part might be actually acknowledging it and understanding how to use it in our own advantage. And I do say advantage because in today's life and today's world we really need to learn how to use things in our advantage.

Being vulnerable in the face of violence is one of the most courageous acts a person can put out there. It is not something that comes easy. But just like being stubborn is part of the human nature, so is being there for one another, and this is the key for us to be able to get past the huge level of violence that we encounter each and every single day. Because violence, like phenomenology, comes in different shapes and sizes. And even though the concept is the same, the way it affects us and the way we perceive it will always be different from one person to another, from one culture to the next one, from one part of the world to the opposite one.

But being able to identify with our inner selves, with what we describe as being our conscience and how it affects us can really make the difference. The moment we can fully comprehend who we truly are and we can acknowledge this because we understand the concept of phenomenology will mark a turning point in our lives. It is not hard for us to be kind to one another. What is hard is the fact that we care too much about how others see us, about how their violence could affect us and even change us into something that we would never be if it wasn't for their violence. Coming together really means being able to be kind, to be humane, to be human beings and to really just put our hearts on a plate and fight against any form of violence because deep down we all know that this is what can change the world. We just need to find a way and use phenomenology to get people to admit who they truly are and let them know that they matter and that violence is not the answer.

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