

On Possibility of Dis/Ability in Husserl's Phenomenology

Shinji HAMAUZU
(Osaka University)

Abstract

Instead of “I think (ego cogito, Ich denke), Husserl often used “I can (Ich kann)” as an expression for intentionality. It means on the one hand that he tried to understand intentionality as including “my living body (mein Leib)” with a “sense of moving (Kinästhesie)”. On the other hand it means that intentionality has to be understood not only in “actuality”, but also in “potentiality”, in other words not only with “objects”, but also with “horizon” or “background”. To take an instance of perceiving a box by going around, I'm now looking at one side of the box, while I've just looked at the other side and I'm going to look at the other side again a little later. The actuality of my perception is surrounded by the possibility or potentiality of my perceiving it in the stream of time. Husserl called it “horizon-intentionality (Horizontintentionalität). The horizon of my perception is opened by “I can go”, i.e. my ability of moving. Husserl called this possibility-based-on-ability “Vermöglichkeit“, a compound word composed of “be able to (vermögen)” and “possibility (Möglichkeit), which we could maybe translate as “capability”. It means, however at the same time, that the horizon is limited by my ability or depends on my ability to go. Each of us human beings has a different ability or disability, a different way of going, seeing, hearing and smelling. We all have different horizons, and how they differ depends on our own dis/ability. Although Husserl sometimes mentions a dichotomy of “normality and abnormality”, we should talk about the variety or diversity of horizons and our “life-world” according to our ability and disability. Husserl was amongst the first philosophers to draw attention to the developmental process a human being undergoes to get from childhood to maturity, from birth to death, and he understood that we cannot simply demarcate the “normal” from the “abnormal”. In my presentation I would like to discuss the possibility of dis/ability in Husserl's phenomenology.

Affectivity and Power of Acting

HUANG Kuan-Min
(Academia Sinica / NCCU)

Abstract

In the core of phenomenology of action, the “I can” occupies a primordial place for Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. The formulation of “I can”, originated from the idea of Maine de Biran, designates a corporal correlation of action, quite different from the idealistic determination through the will, such as Fichte would argue. The problematic is traced back to the mind-body relation, by modeling the dualistic Cartesian view. Asserting the presence of affection of the body in the self-knowledge of the mind, Spinoza evokes another way of approaching this problematic. The body, serving as an ontological layer rooted in nature, is embedded with a potential for the constitution of meaning in the form of intercorporeality. Whenever an action is expressed as meaningful, it is corporeally related and deeply inscribed in the process of nature. Without taking the Spinozist position of substantialism, I would like to propose a phenomenological perspective of action inspired by Spinoza’s statement of affects. An action is understood from the connection between the affectivity and the power of acting. It is itself in the process of differentiation, of becoming. By adjusting the body-place relationship in contrast to the time-space framework, I would consider the human action as an expression of worldly event, as an incarnation of the natural process in which differences and multiplicities can not be ignored.

What is it like to be an amnesic patient?

Man-to TANG
(The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

Abstract

This paper does not aim to be a contribution to the clinical investigations of the amnesias, but rather an inquiry into the subjectivity in neurosciences and phenomenology. Neurosciences can localize some types of amnesia which involve structural brain damages or brain lesions. However, there is an ontological reductionist tendency among neuroscientists. In neurosciences, the basic reference is “our” brain. However, the meaning of “our” brain is not based upon our bodily experience, but rather the interpretation of scientists under observational experimentation like Brain imaging. Accordingly, we are merely objects of science, and the subjectivity in neurosciences is undermined. Ricoeur’s phenomenology does not only pinpoint the ontological reductionist tendency in neurosciences, but also argue against Patricia and Paul Churchland’s eliminativism. The relationship between this kind of neurosciences and phenomenology will thus be antithetical. More importantly a naturalistic approach in neurosciences restricts itself in the field of the observable and the material. It remains silent in the unobservable and the immaterial. It does not express what makes us remember, namely, the dialectic of presence and absence.

Through the phenomenological guidance, Ricoeur uncovers that the trace must be conceived as a present effect and as the sign of its absent cause. Since neurophysiology remains silent toward psychical traces, it is insufficient to explain the discrepancy. Psychical traces signify the reality of the past, on the one hand; they refer to the ontology of being-the-world, on the other hand. In this regard, Ricoeur’s trajectory not only refutes neuroscientific reductionism, but also appropriates to how an amnesic patient lives.

A Husserlian Account of the Intentionality of Bodily Sensation

Ka-wing Leung
(Tongji University)

Abstract

The intentionality of consciousness is a doctrine central to phenomenology. There is much debate in contemporary philosophy of mind as to whether all conscious states are intentional. Feeling is a main battlefield in this debate. It is denied by the majority of scholars that all varieties of feeling are intentional. Surprisingly, Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, also seems to have agreed that feeling, in one sense of term, is not an intentional state. This paper begins with a clarification of Husserl's position and then proceeds to discuss the merit or demerit of his theory in special regard to bodily feeling.

Between silence and violence

Reappraisal of Arendtian concept of world

Jacky, Yuen-Hung TAI
(Doctoral student, KU Leuven, Belgium)

Abstract

My paper aims at shedding a new light on Arendt's concept of « world of appearance » by characterizing it as a world of speech, action, memory and dis-identification. With these human activities, I argue that the « world of appearance » in the Arendtian sense is thus sharply distinguished from the concept of world in her predecessors, namely Husserl and Heidegger. The world of appearance almost synonymous with her key term « plurality » becomes the key to thinking about the political. I further advance the claim that the « world of appearance » composed of speakers, actors, narrators of the past and builders of new communities surpass the dichotomy of consensus and dissensus in contemporary debates in political philosophy. As a result, I suggest understanding the « world of appearance » as a world always torn between its extreme tendencies namely, silence and violence, such that any attempt to reduce the world into consensus of citizens or mere conflict of forces contributes to disempowerment of human beings and eventually brings about deterioration of the political world.

Toward A Phenomenology of Disability

Kohji Ishihara
(The University of Tokyo)

Abstract

The aim of this presentation is to investigate the possibility of developing a phenomenological approach to disability. The significance of the phenomenology of disability is evident in the study of disability and in the phenomenological investigation. Since the relation between disability and impairment is the key issue in disability studies, the importance of the phenomenology of disability is intrinsic. The phenomenology of disability and impairment could contribute to discussions concerning the distinction between disability and impairment. From the perspective of phenomenological investigation, the phenomenology of disability helps to elucidate how individuals with diverse percepts constitute a common, intersubjective world. While every person perceives the world uniquely, though “normal” persons are scarcely aware of it, “disabled” persons are likely to be highly aware of the diversity of percepts.

As the phenomenology of disability grapples with the essential structure of the experience of disability, it needs access to the experience of disability. This should be available not only for disabled persons themselves but also for the non-disabled. Some indirect methods can be used to comprehend the experience of disability, such as observing behaviors, neuroimaging, self-reporting, etc. This presentation will suggest an alternative approach to the phenomenology of disability based on the phenomenological community, which is made up of those who co-constitute the common world, while considering heterogeneous experiences of its members (Ishihara 2013). This idea comes from a reflection on “Tojisha-kenkyu” (first person study of experience of disability) which developed in Japan mainly among individual with mental and developmental disorders since 2001. The interpretation of Tojisha-kenkyu as a phenomenological practice will permit the renewal of phenomenology as a method to approach the experiences of disabled persons. (ibid.)

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Husserl on Moral Motivation in Later Texts at the Limits of Phenomenology

Thomas Nenon
(University of Memphis)

Abstract

This paper will report on and analyze some of Husserl's reflections on the underpinnings of action in general and on motivations for moral action with a special view towards his claim that an important postulate underlying moral action on behalf of humanity as a whole is the belief in some kind of divine providence. Husserl describes how difficult it can be in the face of adversity when doubts about the very sense of rational strivings can overwhelm our commitment to the ideals of progress and the betterment of humanity. We will also ask to what extent these reflections, as genuinely felt and compelling as they may have been for Husserl, can or cannot be considered phenomenological.

Emotion and Interculturality

A Phenomenological Study of Burke's Theory of Emotion

In-Cheol Park
(Kyung Hee University)

Abstract

“Interculturality” that is currently becoming one of the hottest topics in philosophy presupposes the following three conditions: first, the recognition of cultural diversity and difference; second, the acknowledgement of equal values for each culture without assuming any hierarchy of cultures; and last, the pursuit of mutual consensus and convergence between cultures creating a new cultural form to be shared. The point is that human attitudes towards other cultures play a crucial role in all of the above conditions. We express an emotional attitude toward different cultures, especially in the first confrontation. In this context, the objective of my paper is to explain the relationship between emotion and interculturality. Here, I would like to limit my consideration to the emotions that arise from encounters with alien cultures. Edmund Burke, a British politician and thinker of the 18th century, deserves our attention, as he has philosophically analyzed comprehensive emotions that are triggered by the encounter with others. Thus, I will use Burke’s theory of emotion as a methodological guiding thread for my discussion. However, his argument has some limitations as it relies on the strict dichotomy between two groups of emotions, so I must reconstruct his theory in a critical way. The phenomenological perspective, from which emotion is deeply studied in accord with the subject-object correlation, will play a decisive role in this reinterpretation of his theory.

A Feminist Phenomenological Investigation of the Lived World of Mothers

Who Have Raised Children with Disabilities:

From Dialogues in Philosophy Café Sessions

Minae Inahara

(Kobe University)

minaeinahara@gmail.com

minaeinahara@penguin.kobe-u.ac.jp

Abstract

Based on a qualitative study of mothers who have raised children with disabilities, this paper examines their lived worlds and experiences through dialogues with each other in 18 philosophy café sessions that were held at Osaka University Dental Hospital from January, 2015 to September, 2016. Findings reveal a complex phenomenon that has at least three meanings: (a) a self, which refers to the mother, (b) a self, referring to the Other, and (c) the extended self, when mothers of children with disabilities extend their selves to a broader societal concern. The findings, which suggest that the lived world of mothers are still ascribed on the basis of gender, are discussed in relation to the social norms of human ability and development and the situations of families with disabled children in today's Japanese society.

Game Objects as Intentional Objects

Chung-Chi YU
(National Sun Yat-sen University)

Abstract

What is the game object in the digital game world? How is the game object to be determined phenomenologically? A game object is complex, it is far beyond Husserl's framework, yet I hold that, no matter how complex it may be, it is intentional, it fits the framework of intentional analysis. As long as intentional analysis has priority to physical analysis, it does not focus on how the game is based on physical or digital requirement. It focuses on the interactive sphere between subject and object, on the in-between of player and game object, on how the player experiences the game world. There is original experience of game playing, and it constitutes the essential part of computer game. I tend to hold that the intentional analysis helps revealing what is essential to computer game. Though the computer game might constitute a challenge to Husserl's phenomenology, it might broaden phenomenology's scope as well.

Between being able and being powerless

A phenomenology of ability

Takashi Ikeda
(Meiji University)

Abstract

While questions concerning the meaning and value of life have always been one of the central topics in practical philosophy, the simplest behaviors, such as physically moving one's arms and legs, are often simply presupposed as a trivial fact. In my view, such a philosophical habit does not sufficiently reflect our everyday experience of being-in-the-world. When we find ourselves being unable to move or accomplish simple bodily movements due to, for example, illness or aging, we will experience intensive emotions such as disappointment and despair that occasionally lead to skepticism about the meaning of life. In my talk, I will explore the question how we understand our own ability, by using methods and concepts developed in the phenomenological tradition. The first section proposes a phenomenological analysis of bodily abilities by citing Merleau-Ponty's ideas on the embodied subjectivity as well as Ratcliffe's concept of "existential feeling," which traces back to Heidegger's *Befindlichkeit*. The second section points out the social dimensions of our understanding of abilities, which tend to be ignored, especially when the analysis is based on traditional phenomenological concepts. By referring to Iris Marion Young's critical interpretation of Merleau-Ponty, this paper clarifies that, in certain social settings, one's understanding of ability is often ambiguous and occasionally distorted, rather than self-evident. As a result, one may believe that he/she is unable to do what he/she is actually able to do, which constitutes the oppressed feeling of being powerless.

The space of possibilities and its normative reconfiguration

Chon Ip Ng
(Associate Professor,
Interdisciplinary Program of Humanities and Social Sciences,
National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan (R.O.C.))

Abstract

Retrospectively it is clear that the revelation and the mapping of the phenomenal space of possibilities is one of the major legacy of the classical phenomenology. Nothing can show itself where Being is populated solely with positive presence; and Phenomenon takes place only in a field of possible appearances, already opened and structured as horizon, clearing or milieu. Expressed in natural and simplified terms, there is experience, knowledge and action only when there is some sort of elementary freedom.

Normativity is a reconfiguration of this space of possibilities; it is not simply a force exerted by a special kind of object named “value”, but a second delineation of our field of action, so that what appears to be possible and at our free disposal becomes modified as being necessary, permissible or forbidden. Yet the reconfiguration will not be completed without at least a partial reference to the rationality for the reconfiguration. Only thus is the normativity different from the sanction of brutal violence or even blind dictatorship of mores and tradition. Out of certain reasons we limit our field of action, and reshape the structure of its possibility and impossibility, regarding some actions as obligated and avoiding the others as prohibited.

In this paper, I have a double objective: Firstly, I will try to retrace the legacy of classical phenomenology concerning the conception of the phenomenal space of possibilities. The basic positions of Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty will be compared and their phenomenological contributions will be evaluated. Secondly, I attempt to outline the normative reconfiguration of this elementary phenomenal field. By drawing on the hermeneutic dimension of action, I strives to develop the insights of the classical phenomenologists and to give an account of the original constitution of normativity.

Instinct and Value

Nam-In Lee
(Seoul National University)

Abstract

In this paper, I will try to develop a genetic phenomenology of valuing as a kind of axiological conativism that I call genetic-phenomenological conativism.. In section 1, I will clarify what the axiological conativism means. In section 2, I will show the necessity of paying attention to the various kinds of instinct in order to clarify the nature of valuing, and I will also attempt to clarify the concept of instinct itself. Thereafter in sections 3?4, I will analyze the role of instinct in the genesis of the manifold forms of valuing. In section 5, I will deal with the issue of the axiological realism and the axiological idealism. Finally, in section 6, I will highlight the merits of genetic-phenomenological conativism and briefly mention its future tasks.

The Phenomenology of the Person

Dermot Moran
(University College Dublin)

Abstract

The concept of the person is one of the few concepts that was not developed by classical Greek philosophy. It has its origins in Alexandrine grammar, Roman Law and in the theological discussions concerning the three persons in one God (Trinity) in the fourth century CE. In this context, the classical definition of Boethius – a person is an ‘individual substance of a rational nature’—defined medieval discussions in St. Thomas and others. Locke and Kant further developed the concept of the person as a free agent of intrinsic infinite worth, who recognizes and applies the law to himself or herself. The phenomenological tradition (especially Husserl, Scheler and Edith Stein) has further developed the understanding of the person with specific attention to embodiment, historicity, and sociality. In this paper I will outline the central features of the phenomenological contribution to the understanding of the person.

Animal as Person

An Interpretation of Husserlian Ontology of Animal based on Temporality

Kim Tae-Hee
(Kunkook University)

Abstract

Advocating moral treatment of animals, Singer and Regan regard (some) animals as persons or subjects of a life in possession of certain consciousness of objective time. In this paper, I attempt to reconstruct and interpretate Husserlian phenomenological analyses on animals especially with respect to their temporality in order to examine whether and in which sense animals can count as persons. Based on these interpretations, I suggest that animals can not count as beings with such an objective time-consciousness as Singer and Regan assumed, but with a low-order habituality from passive primal instituting that can entitle animals to be persons in a broader sense. By these phenomenological analyses on relation between temporality and personhood, I examine how phenomenology can contribute to one of the central problems of contemporary practical ethics, i.e. to the problem of moral status of animals.

The Place of Thinking

Tetsuya KONO
(Rikkyo University)

Abstract

Thinking has been considered as an abstract logical procedure as if it were a software in a computer. Thinking has been seen as being detached from corporeal conditions, influences from the environment, and human relationships. Moreover, thinking has been regarded as an active process which we can start and take control of as we like while emotions are passive processes. But as I organize philosophy café and philosophy with/for children and become a facilitator for a dialogue, I came to realize that thinking is rather a passive process than an active one; it comes down to us by itself during a dialogue. Why does a dialogue invite us to think? What makes us think of what? And finally what is thinking?

In referring to the theories about thinking by Vygotsky, Dewey, Heidegger, Bakhtin, and Lipman, I will analyze the experience of thinking in a dialogue and argue what calls and facilitates thinking.

What is it like to be motivated?

An answer from Alexander Pfänder

Genki Uemura
(Okayama University)

Abstract

The aim of the present talk is to examine the phenomenological analysis of motivation proposed by the Munich phenomenologist Alexander Pfänder. I will interpret his 1911 paper “Motive und Motivation” as an attempt to respond to the question: *What is it like to be motivated?* His answer to this question, to anticipate it, could be formulated as follows:

(PM) Phenomenologically, to be motivated for S is to decide to φ while relying on an object of S's experience that demands S to φ .

For Pfänder, doing phenomenology of motivation is a mean to an end. In presenting (PM) in “Motive und Motivation”, he draws two claims (among others) concerning the nature of motivation. We could call them Non-Causality and Anti-Internalism respectively with the following reformulations.

(NC) Motivation is not causation.

(AP) Motives are not a mental item.

Focusing on those question, answer, and two claims, the present paper deals with Pfänder's discussion of motivation in 1911. In what follows, I will reconstruct how Pfänder shows (NC), (PM) and (AP) respectively. As for the last point, I will also give a short critical remark to it.

Merleau-Ponty's Hermeneutics of the Normal and the Pathological

Kwok-ying LAU 劉國英

(The Chinese University of Hong Kong 香港中文大學)

Abstract

This paper has a fourfold aim.

1. To show that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body-subject undertaken in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, by way of establishing that the body-subject is a center of corporeal intentionality enacted through the corporeal schema, provides *ipso facto* some basic elements for a phenomenology of human capacity. What is of particular interest in this Merleau-Pontian enterprise is his use of the clinical studies of psychiatry and psychopathology of his time to demonstrate concretely what a normal person can do in terms of basic bodily movement by the contrast with what patients suffering from cortical brain injuries can do and can't do. These studies show that the so-called pathological human subject is still a subject capable of executing vital actions in view of accomplishing tasks related to life interests. But Merleau-Ponty's demonstration is of more profound theoretical importance: a phenomenological theory of human capacity has to be conducted via the studies of pathological phenomena of the human subject. Yet this state of affairs cannot be understood by a positivistic theory of human behavior in terms of the commonly admitted theory of conditioned reflex action of external stimuli and response. For the latter theory approaches pathological phenomena in human behavior with physiological explanation considered from a purely quantitative and mechanistic perspective. Face to pathological behaviors of patients, Merleau-Ponty adopts the approach of existential analysis to show that pathological phenomena are still phenomena of the human order which exhibit meanings. Thus Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological endeavor to make sense of behaviors of patients suffering from brain injuries is a hermeneutics of the pathological. But this seems entirely paradoxical to a scientific ear: if pathological means deficiency in capacity, how is it possible to establish a phenomenological theory of human capacity on the basis of a hermeneutics of the pathological?

2. To enhance our understanding of the above state of affairs, we will make use of the philosophical elucidation of the concept of the normal and the pathological proposed by the French philosopher of medicine and life-science, Georges Canguilhem (1904-1995), a contemporary of Merleau-Ponty, in his land-marking work *The Normal and the Pathological* (French original 1943, English Translation 1978). Canguilhem succeeds in showing in what way a positivistic natural scientific approach fails to understand the complicated and paradoxical relation between the normal and the pathological and norms and normativity on the one hand, and between the diseased and the healthy on the other. That means there is a convergence in the understanding of the phenomena of the normal and the pathological in Merleau-Ponty and Canguilhem. Is this a pure coincidence?

3. We will show that the convergence between Merleau-Ponty and Canguilhem in the understanding of the phenomena of the normal and the pathological is not a pure coincidence. In

fact they share a common source of inspiration, namely that of the clinical studies and theoretical explanations of the originally German non-positivistic neurologist and psychiatrist Kurt Goldstein (1878-1965), especially those collected in his 1934 ground-breaking work *Der Aufbau des Organismus* (English Translation *The Organism*, 1939). We will show, through Goldstein's own explanation of his holistic method in opposition to the analytic or dissecting method used by positivistic neurologists, that there is a close proximity between Goldstein's approach and the phenomenological approach.

4. If time allows, we will go on to critically discuss, with the results obtained above, Foucault's famous distinction between the two separate lines of development in the first half of Twentieth French philosophy, a distinction proposed in his "Preface" to the French Translation of Canguilhem's *The Normal and the Pathological*: on the one side a philosophy of experience, of sense and of subject represented by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty; on the other side a philosophy of knowledge, of rationality and of concept represented by Cavailles, Bachelard and Canguilhem. To Foucault these two lines represent two completely different and separated modalities of philosophical thought. We will try to show that this line of demarcation may not be valid for Merleau-Ponty and Canguilhem. In the case of Merleau-Ponty, his philosophy of experience is mediated by a philosophy of concept, namely the concepts of the pre-reflective experience and of corporeal schema. In the case of Canguilhem, his concept of life is precisely life as experience. Because Canguilhem's epistemology of the science of life is not that of a purely formal science; rather, the formation of concepts pertaining to the disciplines of life science must pass by the experience of life.

It is well-known that in his *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty has proposed the concept of body-schema to underlie his conception of a body-subject, namely the human body is a center of intentional relations. Merleau-Ponty used pathological cases studies of human behaviors to demonstrate that a normal human subject is capable of both abstract and concrete bodily movements, while a patient suffering from cerebral injuries is capable of concrete movements only. Upon this demonstration, Merleau-Ponty is able to refute both the empiricist and the intellectualist theses. The empiricist thesis relies on the behaviorist theory of conditioned-reflexes to understand bodily actions, a theory which cannot explain why a patient with serious cerebral injuries can still exercise vital actions. The intellectualist thesis, while attributing the capacities of the human person to some intellectual functions of the human mind, is simply unable to explain the difference in normal and pathological human behaviors.