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On a phaneroscopy beyond human consciousness: Building a phenomenology of multiple realities

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Abstract: This essay wants to rescue the concept of phaneroscopy, created by Charles Sanders Peirce, to adapt it in a phenomenological condition of multiple realities. Therefore, in addition to review the reflection of Peirce, we visited the approach of phenomenology of multiple realities proposed by Alfred Schutz in his reading of William James. The idea is to seek a phenomenology that goes beyond the human consciousness to other research subjects.

Keywords: Alfred Schutz, Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, Philosophy of Mind, Multiple Realities, Phenomenology

INTRODUCTION

It is clear that, for phenomenology, the important thing is not the world that exists but the way the knowledge of the world is given to each. However, does this phenomenological subject needs to be the human conscience? Can we not extend this philosophical reflection field?

This essay wants to rescue the concept of phaneroscopy, created by Charles Sanders Peirce, to adapt it in a phenomenological condition of multiple realities. Therefore, in addition to review the reflection of Peirce, we visited the approach of phenomenology of multiple realities proposed by Alfred Schutz in his reading of William James. The idea is to seek a phenomenology that goes beyond the human consciousness to other research subjects.

Through the condition of multiple realities, the phaneroscopy can address the experienced multiplicities of subjects that have similarities to the human consciousness, such as animals (which have the ability to represent as humans do) and objects of culture (which can build own realities around them, a fact exemplified by the representative action of fictions).

C. S. Peirce's phaneron and phaneroscopy

In Peirce's "Adirondack Lectures", we can found that "phaneroscopy is the description of the *phaneron*; and by the *phaneron* I mean the collective total of all that is in any way or in any sense present to the mind, quite regardless of whether it corresponds to any real thing or not" (CP 1.284) [1].

Therefore, as De Tienne points out, "The phaneron is a continuum permeated with generality, and

its individuality stems only from its being the conflation of a particular mind with the objective world. Each individual mind lives one phaneron, and there are as many phanera as there are individual minds (be they human or otherwise: animals, for instance, are also "phaneral beings," even though their capacity to pass from self-presentation to other-representation appears more limited than ours)". [2]

Taking a 180° turn in Husserl's thought, Peirce showed, by phaneroscopy, a negative type of phenomenology. If in Husserl, we found a Descartes-like concern with rational universality, in Peirce, we can follow an empirical individualism. This kind of phenomenology opens itself to criticism of many orders like the one made by Hookway: "There is a difficulty about coming to grips with Peirce's phenomenological writings which reflects a fundamental feature of the discipline itself. He stresses that phenomenology does not issue in a body of accepted propositions; there is not a community of phenomenologists adding to the stock of shared knowledge, publishing reasoned conclusions, and so on. Each individual must be his own phenomenologist (...). In line with this, Peirce's own discussions are extremely allusive (...). In the end, the reader must decide for himself whether these hints enable him successfully to carry out a phenomenological inquiry and agree with Peirce's categorial doctrine" [3].

But De Tienne, among others, counter-arguments that criticism with arguments which show that Peirce describes a different kind of science: "To begin with, the fact Peirce did not call the science of the phaneron by the name of "phanero-logy" (except in one fleeting instance), but by that of "phanero-scopy," is

certainly significant. The suffix -scopy introduces the idea of observation, while the suffix -logy introduces the idea of discourse, a corpus of systematized arguments. This distinction is crucial to understand the rôle of phaneroscopy, and is found in many different guises throughout the writings. For instance, Peirce says that “in Phenomenology there is no assertion except that there are certain seemings; . . . Phenomenology can only tell the reader which way to look and to see what he shall see” (CP 2.197, 1902). Elsewhere he writes that phaneroscopy “does not undertake, but sedulously avoids, hypothetical explanations of any sort. It simply scrutinizes the direct appearances. . . . The student’s great effort is . . . to confine himself to honest, single-minded observation of the appearances” (CP 1.287, 1905). Phaneroscopy is a work of observation: it “studies” what seems but does not “state” what appears, does not make assertions. Assertions are judgments “about” something, and they usually attribute to those something different qualities, such as reality or unreality, and truth or falsity. The phaneroscopist refrains from making such judgments. He only acknowledges the manifest qua manifest. The auxiliary verb of his assertions is not to be but to seem. There is “little reasoning,” for reasoning is a matter of reaching conclusions from premisses, and observation of the phaneron does not start from premisses. Peirce insists on the purity of that observation, which stems from the fact that phaneroscopists must make sure not to incorporate in their observation anything foreign to it, such as preconceived interpretations. Phanero-“scopy” must be “honest” and “single-minded,” as well as direct and keen. This might sound pretty much Husserlian if it was not for the important difference that phaneroscopy has no interest in defining the intentional characteristics of different modes of consciousness, since for the phaneroscopist “there is no difference in the presentations themselves” (CP 7.644, 1903). Anything can be part of the phaneron, “in any sense or in any way,” because whatever the sense or the way, they are not the phaneroscopists’ business. They do not speculate about what self-presents: they merely observe it” [2].

And phaneroscopy must have a method which is totally different of the one put forward by Husserl and other phenomenologists. After all, as Peirce noted, the very nature of phaneron as a phenomenon is different from the Husserlian one: “What phenomenology does is to distinguish certain very general elements of phenomena, render them distinct, and study their possible modes.... The work of discovery . . . consists in disentangling, or drawing out, from human thought, certain threads that run through it, and in showing what marks each has that distinguishes it from every other. (R 693: 62–64, 1904; also in NEM IV: 196) [T]he results of phaneroscopy are obtained by the mere observation, generalization, and analyses, of matters of common experience, always present to us.

These are as capable of repetition, comparison, etc. as are the operations of mathematics. (RL 427: 10, CSP–C. A. Strong, 25 July 1904)” [2].

So, phaneroscopy become a possibility of an Analytic counterpart of phenomenology with a method which dialogs with the philosophy of its time like Logical Atomism or even the mathematical tradition in philosophy within the Vienna Circle. “These operations can only be conducted through the medium of a diagram. This is exceedingly important, as far as phaneroscopy is concerned. Observing a phaneron is not a matter of introspection. It needs to be projected, as it were, in a form that is least likely to disrupt or betray it. Such a form can only be iconic, but iconic in a sophisticated fashion. Peirce’s work on existential graphs convinced him that these graphs furnished the best conceivable model of diagrammatization. He was so convinced of this that at times he spoke as though existential graphs as he defined them were the very diagrams needed to analyze and describe the constituents of the phaneron. It appears to me; however, that what Peirce really meant was that phaneroscopy had to come up with diagrams that mimicked the existential graphs while remaining distinct from them. His argument to that effect was by analogy. Just as the Sheet of Assertion can be used by the logician to diagram the contents of the logical Quasi-Mind, in the same way a Sheet of Description can be used to diagram the contents of the Phaneron, the Phaneron being defined as the “collective whole of all that could ever be present to the mind in any way or in any sense” [2].

William James and Alfred Schutz: Phenomenology of multiple realities

If phaneroscopy is the possibility of a counterpart of the Phenomenology from the Analytic Philosophy, we need to update the concept analytically. Thus, the notion of multiple realities needs to come from the analytical field. We chose here reading by Alfred Schutz, famous Epistemologist of the Phenomenology, the best known book by William James. “In a famous chapter of his Principles of Psychology William James analyzes our sense of reality.’ Reality, so he states, means simply relation to our emotional and active life. The origin of all reality is subjective, whatever excites and stimulates our interest is real. To call a thing real means that this thing stands in a certain relation to ourselves” [4].

To William James, “there are several, probably an infinite number of various orders of realities, each with its own special and separate style of existence. James calls them “sub-universes” and mentions as examples the world of sense or physical things (as the paramount reality); the world of science; the world of ideal relations; the world of “idols of the tribe”; the various supernatural worlds of mythology and religion;

the various worlds of individual opinion; the worlds of sheer madness and vagary” [4].

However, the main feature that allows us to call this condition as “multiple realities” is that “the popular mind conceives of all these sub-worlds more or less disconnectedly; and when dealing with one of them forgets for the time being its relations to the rest. But every object we think of is at last referred to one of these sub- worlds. "Each world whilst it is attended to is real after its own fashion; only the reality lapses with the attention” [4].

For Alfred Schütz, “all these worlds—the world of dreams, of imageries and phantasms, especially the world of art, the world of religious experience, the world of scientific contemplation, the play world of the child, and the world of the insane—are finite provinces of meaning. This means that (a) all of them have a peculiar cognitive style (although not that of the world of working with the natural attitude); (b) all experiences within each of these worlds are, with respect to this cognitive style, consistent in themselves and compatible with one another (although not compatible with the meaning of everyday life); (c) each of these finite provinces of meaning may receive a specific accent of reality (although not the reality accent of the world of working)” [4].

Therefore, “the world of working in daily life is the archetype of our experience of reality. All the other provinces of meaning may be considered as its modification” [4]. All realities are analogous to it. So, ““World of daily life” shall mean the intersubjective world which existed long before our birth, experienced and interpreted by others, our predecessors, as an organized world. Now it is given to our experience and interpretation. All interpretation of this world is based upon a stock of previous experiences of it, our own experiences and those handed down to us by our parents and teachers, which in the form of “knowledge at hand” function as a scheme of reference” [4].

This puts the phenomenology of multiple realities as a thorough analysis of the experiences of lived life. “To this stock of experiences at hand belongs our knowledge that the world we live in is a world of well circumscribed objects with definite qualities, objects among which we move, which resist us and upon which we may act. To the natural attitude the world is not and never has been a mere aggregate of colored spots, incoherent noises, centers of warmth and cold” [4].

Therefore, “philosophical or psychological analysis of the constitution of our experiences may afterwards, retrospectively, describe how elements of this world affect our senses, how we passively perceive them in an indistinct and confused way, how by active

apperception our mind singles out certain features from the perceptual field, conceiving them as well delineated things which stand out over against a more or less inarticulated background or horizon” [4].

So our aim of an updated phaneroscopy needs to take into account not only the description-like philosophical method, as Peirce said, but also the bulk of lived experiences. After all, “the world of everyday life is the scene and also the object of our actions and interactions” [4].

Phaneroscopy of multiple realities

As Peirce states, [t]he results of phaneroscopy are obtained by the mere observation, generalization, and analyses, of matters of common experience, always present to us. These are as capable of repetition, comparison, etc. as are the operations of mathematics. (RL 427: 10, CSP—C. A. Strong, 25 July 1904)” [2].

This mathematical precision mentioned by Peirce leads us to consider the role of phaneroscopy to take the place of phenomenology in what Husserl calls “geometry of the vivid” [5]. Thus, phaneroscopy can take the place of phenomenological analysis of everything that lives or is the result of any living thing.

It is still necessary to build a method for phaneroscopy and we believe that the phenomenology of multiple realities is the main way for this. After all, what lives builds these multiplicities, a real world of experiences around it.

At first, we can think of two alternatives. As said before in this essay, one is inspired by the reflections of our own Charles Sanders Peirce: existential graphs [1]. The other found reflection posed by Ludwig Wittgenstein: language games [6].

In a previous work, we showed that there are possible links between Peirce and Wittgenstein through the concept that inspires the language game idea: the *satzsystem* [7]. *Satzsystem*, in Middle Wittgenstein ideas, “indicates the logical space of the definition of something. That is made through the operations made by the truth functions and their own logical necessity. That is the moment when we see this essay’s point: that *Tractatus*’ Wittgenstein is not totally different from *Investigations*’ Wittgenstein. And, the curious thing is that what separates the two Wittgenstein—that is, the medium phase with the lectures and conversations with the Vienna Circle—is what binds them together in a single way of thinking” [7].

In this reasoning, the construction of the minds of phenomenological study elements beyond human consciousness also involves the study of language. Language that we understand as the true builder of realities and the only way to reflect vivid experiences.

With the point of view of language games, phenomenological interpretations put by Heidegger [8] and Sartre [9], for example, describe the language game set in motion by the ontological being. It must now perform the philosophical endeavor posed by phanerology to seek phenomenology of other consciousnesses beyond human.

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