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Essay 21

Homogenization without Violence? A Phenomenology of Interculturality Following Husserl



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Abstract

For a long time experts have been discussing whether Husserl's idea of philosophy as an all-embracing science can be applied to other cultures. The critical question is: Does phenomenology, with the European spirit with which it is supposed to be employed, violate non-European worldviews? Although it thoroughly criticizes the homogenization that results from positive science, does Husserl's phenomenology not itself employ homogenization, on the one hand, by broadening the conception of European science and yet, on the other hand, nevertheless considering it to be a final and binding universal standard? Does this very homogenization of phenomenology, whereby phenomenology claims that the principles inferred for legitimate theory and practice are valid for all homeworlds, not intrude on other cultures? In connection with Husserl's fundamental definitions, I would like to sketch a way in which phenomenology can avoid being accused of illegitimate homogenization. I will proceed in four steps: First, I will clarify the problems; second, I will seek to demonstrate how the structural moment of care (“Sorge”) is the decisive point in the development of the homogenization achievement; third, I will go on from there to discuss the relationship between phenomenology and homogenization; and finally I will characterize the methodological approach which develops from a phenomenology of interculturality.

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I. The Problems

The Japanese phenomenologist TANI, Toru has replied to the objection that phenomenology is intrusive with a remarkable argument.¹ He refers to a difference that plays a merely marginal role in Husserl's work: the difference between primal home (Urheimat) and homeworld. "Primal home" designates the transcendental depth as well as the genetic earliness of the homeworld. In contrast to the primal home, the homeworld represents a further developed constitution. It describes the way a primal homeworld relationship is transformed in homeworldness after being confronted with foreign worlds: When experiencing the foreign world the homeworld is first conceived as such, i.e., a relatively closed unit the exclusiveness of which is characterized by a specific "normality" that is valid for this world. Thus a home-world relationship first arises when a sense of unity constitutes one's world sphere, of which one has implicit knowledge. Every individual world constituted as an individual world may already imply such knowledge about the relationship of one's own homeworld to foreign homeworlds (such as is the case between Greeks and non-Greeks).

However, a further constitutive step is to encompass the homeworlds in a homogenization relationship, which first legitimates the concept of a plurality of worlds: When confronted with foreign homeworlds, one can develop the insight that there are a number of possible homeworlds, and—especially in the case of "Europe"—motivates one to encompass one's own and the foreign in a general interpretation of the world. In correlation, one may constitute an overdimensional (übergross) space, the "universe," which homogenizes home and foreign worlds. Homogenization intrudes in that it implicitly adapts the foreign to the own. Thus, homogenization has two characteristics: on the one hand, the pluralization of worlds into the home- and the foreign worlds within a unified space and, on the other hand, the homeworld-centered constitution of this unified space, its constitution according to sense-formations of the own homeworld.

Following TANI's line of reasoning, one might add that the primal homeness should not be seen as referring to a transfigured mythical condition, which actually existed at a given time, but rather it should be seen as referring to the transcendental depth of homeworld life, a depth, which has always been covered constitutively by this life. It refers to the depth of the world sense developed in a manner unique to the individual or the group, the transcendental origin of the distinctive and indispensable nuclear contents of the corresponding manners of looking at the world. In this sense, "primal home" designates a primal singularity. However, this transcendental sense of primal home must correspond to a mundanized correlate that is valid before the apperception of the own world as a homeworld: namely, at the point where humanity has not yet met an unknown humanity and thus not yet defined it as such. This kind of

¹ T. TANI, "Heimat und das Fremde," *Husserl Studies*, 9, 1992, pp. 199-216.

mundane primal home relationship certainly is acquainted with preliminary forms of the experience of foreignness, which expresses itself, for example, in the knowledge that there are other people out there whose living conditions and opinions are unknown or unfamiliar or is manifested in the fear of demonic powers. At this point, it would be worthwhile to examine to what extent these preliminary forms of foreign experience lead to the transformation of primal home connectedness into a home-world relationship.

According to TANI's thesis, Husserl's concept of "Europe" is a transcendental-mundane double-concept² that Husserl himself did not completely analyze and to whose clarification can be significantly contributed to by the distinction between primal world and homeworld. By essentially connecting the concept of transcendental phenomenology to the cultural form "Europe," he identified the transcendental primal home "Europe" with its worldly form as the homeworld. This identification, however, is not based on phenomenological thinking. The homogenization of Husserl's philosophy thus rightfully lends itself to criticism when it equates its transcendental origin with its mundane worldly appearance. According to TANI, this criticism of the illegitimate homogenization achievement of phenomenology must be advanced by phenomenology itself. It must serve as a measure of phenomenology's suitability for an intercultural dialog.

II. Homogenization and Care

The question emerging from the experience of a number of homeworlds as to whether such plurality has something universal, i.e., the question about one and the same world, leads the origin of European philosophy as a universal science: in its primal institution, philosophy wants to answer this question transcending all home-worldly particularity, from a position which it itself attempts to transcend all biasness and partiality of practical life.³ Ancient philosophers laid the groundwork for the construction of a homogenous world as a constituent of an exclusively ideal and, compared to the solely situation-relative homeworldly truths, irrelative contents. This construction was radicalized in the modern age by the mathematization of the ideal, the limitation of the ideal to mathematical infinity poles and their application to real occurrences. In the course of this process, ancient views in accordance with the mathematical-ideal were recognized as the actual true being and serving as the basis of the merely subjective-relativities of the homeworlds, showing that they are mere modes of appearance of the nonrelative mathematic-ideals, and thus allow for the

² TANI, *ibid.*, p. 203.

³ Cf. Hua VI, pp. 328 sq.; Hua XXVII, pp. 187 sq, Hua XXIX, pp. 386 sq.

subjugation of everything subject-relative in its real concrete-factual context to mathematical ideas, allowing for its computation and processing as well.⁴

Husserl demonstrated that this “cloak of ideas,”⁵ which spreads the mathematization of nature over the homeworlds not only originates from European philosophy but also from certain prescientific lifeworldly achievements. Thus the relatedness to ideal poles, limes formations, is based on a certain style of worldly living that Husserl designates as “inductive”:⁶ All worldly experience merely presents a nucleus of giving of something itself embedded in horizons that predelineate potential experience and into which further experience can enter. All horizontal delineation ultimately refers to the “totality horizon” of the world, which is the absolute empty horizon which always precedes all experience. This referential system is idealized in the process of mathematization, i.e., subjugated to mathematical ideas. These ideas serve as unfulfillable limes-ideas and regulate all world experience as a correlate to experienced being.

The fact that worldly life only includes a certain nucleus of giving of something itself, of evidence, and is delegated to an incomplete iterative process of verification is central to the concept of the sense of finiteness of mundane life. It is not self-evident that a personal subject bound in time and space is subjugated to such a structure, for this does not hold for every subjective being: For God there would be no difference between intention and fulfillment.⁷ Worldly life, however, is in the middle of this difference and must carry it out and is therefore in a certain manner self-referential in the sense of an all-round caring,⁸ which intends to secure and maximalize the fulfilled. Mathematization also falls under this lifeworldly Sorge-structure by growing away and striving directly for its maximization. This Sorge-structure has certain general characteristics. For example, it implies that (1.) the occupation of a “space” that is opened from the difference set up by the intention-fulfillment system; this occupation results in the development of an inductivity of worldly experience, which is as such incomplete and whose “limit” is only in the totality horizon itself, which it will never reach. Because of this incompleteness, (2.) mundane intentionality on the horizon of the world ultimately remains unfulfilled. Finally, (3.) the directional sense of mundane inductivity correlates with a certain directed act-center, namely with a surrounding-world subject-centeredness that is based on body consciousness.

The Sorge-structure, wherever it concretely exists, is always characterized by a homeworldly set of types that originates in primal-home structures of meaning. Even their general characteristics of filling space, of incomplete inductivity, and

⁴ Cf. Hua VI, § 9.

⁵ “Ideenkleid” (Hua VI, p. 51).

⁶ Cf. Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil*, Hamburg 1976, p. 28.

⁷ Cf. Hua XIX/1, § 14 and VI. “Logical Investigation,” sections 1 and 3; Hua III/1, § 136; Hua XI, § 2 and sections 1 and 2.

⁸ “Die Person ist nur Person als vorsorgende.” (Hua XV, p. 599). Cf. N.-I. Lee, *Edmund Husserls Phänomenologie der Instinkte*, *Phaenomenologica*, vol. 128, Dordrecht/Boston/London 1993, p. 148.

unsatisfiable intentionality as well as subject-centeredness appears on the world horizon in an individual stage of development with the corresponding interpretive contents. If the homogenization that is motivated by the confrontation with foreign worlds is restricted to this *Sorge*-structure, is based and operates on it, then it has the continual tendency while constructing its universe to make the *Sorge*-structure of the own world absolute. There is certainly no lack of attempts to dispel the influence of the own homeworld in the process of homogenization. The mathematization of nature itself can be considered a more radical and, in part, a successful attempt. The dispelling of the homeworld influence tries to empty the homeworldliness of its contents as much as possible in the process, i.e., it tries to formalize it. This attempt succeeded only partially, while the *Sorge*-structure remained unchanged and still valid, which can be seen for example in the way mathematization uses nature for the purpose of its domination. Thus every homogenization that does not modify the *Sorge*-structure responsible for the homeworldly restriction implies imperialistic violence. However, if the structure of the *Sorge* pervades world-experienced life so originally and essentially, is there any chance at all that there could be homogenization without violence?

III. Homogenization and Phenomenology

An attempt will be made now to confirm the thesis that transcendental phenomenology contains aspects that allow it to avoid the criticism that homogenization “Europeanizes” foreign cultural traits. Of course, the question will arise as to whether this procedure can still be considered homogenization. A demonstration for the thesis put forth will be presented in two ways: (1.) Transcendental phenomenology establishes a different kind of self-relationship, one that is able to transcend a world-experienced life. (2.) It provides tools which can elucidate the corresponding culturally-bound material configuration of the space opened by the difference of the intention-fulfillment-system.

Ad 1. World-experiencing life is in a circle, in as much as all intentional striving only leads it to the point where it has its own roots: at the prior givenness of the world. This circle is also hermeneutic inasmuch as world life perpetually understands itself from the world, i.e., in the world as the totality horizon in which everything that is past-settled, progressing and future-mapped out in its meaning is ultimately referred to. Transcendental phenomenology tries to break through this circle by bracketing the givenness of the world; it no longer lends acceptance to lives on the universal horizon, but leaves this tendency “beneath” it.⁹ It brings with it the iterative process of becoming truth, the progression of intentional anticipations and their partial fulfillments and new anticipations, i.e., at the same time, it brings caring life in its

⁹ Cf. Hua VI, p. 153.

intention-fulfilling system with its basic tendency to a standstill. This universal cessation reflects the basic tendency of life, its termination in the world horizon, and as a correlate the structure of the world as totality horizon itself and as such. What it shows is the theme of phenomenology. As far as this theme is concerned, its liberation from the Sorge-structure succeeded. If transcendental phenomenology would identify this possibility with the homeworld “Europe,” that is, equate its transcendental primal home with Europe, then it would pull the carpet out from under its own feet: It could not spot the Sorge-structure of any regional life and would make itself superfluous. The possibility of phenomenology arising in the transcendental primal home ‘Europe’ nonetheless intends getting beyond the homeworld “Europe” because this intention formulates the climbing out of all home-worldliness. Its intention is, in fact, to transcend the intention-fulfilling-system as such by having it become thematic.

How can phenomenology make plausible the fact that it has actually transcended this system, stepped out of the circle in which world-experiencing life is confined? This question can only be answered meaningfully from within the circle, since it casts doubt on stepping outside of it. Since there is no taking a “superior” vantage point in order to answer this question, an answer can only be given in a certain negative sense: in exhibiting a withdrawal process which can no longer be understood by the circle structure, but which is manifest in this structure and for this structure. Such a withdrawal process does in fact present the procedure of phenomenology. Phenomenology does not just withdraw from world-experiencing life by trying to bring it to a standstill. Rather, in the more radical sense, it makes the standstill possible by the very fact that it withdraws itself from the structure of tendency, i.e., it no longer acts in the manner in which all world-experiencing life is executed: in the style of motivation.¹⁰ Whereas all practical and theoretical actions on the world horizon manifest their individual motivation, phenomenology has no motive,¹¹ especially not in its starting point of epochē and reduction, as Husserl repeatedly stressed: For the very reason that phenomenology has no motive in the horizon of the world, it has the opportunity to acquire this horizon as a phenomenon.

But how can it begin without a motive? Obviously, the answer has to be that it can begin because the motive reference of world-experiencing life motives itself—however covertly and in a completely different sense. Every motive reference is as a fundamental intentional structure only possible in a space that is opened by the difference between intention and fulfillment, so that it itself refers to the impossibility of its fulfillment, which is given by this space: the incompleteability of all the intentionality directed toward the world horizon. In other words, the motive reference has a motivating effect to the extent that, seemingly paradoxically, it implicitly maps

¹⁰ Cf. Hua IV, § 56.

¹¹ Cf. E. Fink, VI. Cartesianische Meditation. Die Idee einer transzendentalen Methodenlehre, *Husserliana Dokumente*, vol. II/1, ed. by H. Ebeling, J. Holl and G. van Kerckhoven, Dordrecht/Boston/London 1988, pp. 33 sq.

out a certain possibility of fulfillment in the face of this impossible fulfillment, a possibility which exists in the consciousness of the impossibility of its fulfillment. This “motive” is covert in world life, because it is this itself and refers to this as such. It is a motive in a sense different from all other motives of world life, because it refers to world life in its motivatedness itself. Since it refers to such a kind of world life, it is only capable of establishing a radicalized relationship to it. The possibility of the reference of life to itself is not set in the horizon of the world. Only by discursively jumping out of the circle of world-experiencing life, directly motivated by existential border experiences¹² can world life acquire itself in its transcendental structure. The act of the phenomenological epochē is the direct-indirect leap onto a possibility horizon, which does not open until it is leapt into.

Ad 2. By liberating itself from the Sorge-structure of world life in the characteristic sense, phenomenology is able to analyze this structure in its phenomenal organization. In this process, it cannot only show, as Husserl already had, the transcendental genesis of the intention-fulfillment system at each constitutive step back to its constitutive origins in pre-egological, pre-predicative achievements. The aim of a phenomenological analysis dedicated to interculturality should be to carry out this demonstration in a manner in which the different cultural variants of the intention-fulfillment-system in their individual transcendental history are questioned and, beyond that, the transcendental structure of the corresponding primal homeness in its individual determined variant, in its “relation” in its determinate materialness, should become apparent.

The vantage point of phenomenology itself is a determined viewpoint, but nevertheless it is not connected to a homeworld. It is located in its factual disclosure in a transcendental but not at all mundane sense relative to a transcendental primal home (“Europe”). At the same time it is unlocated, since it is not at all relative to a homeworld or to a complex of homeworlds named “Europe,” and thus avoids the danger of a violating homogenization, since it also does not operate in the realm of the experienced homeworlds, but transcends them in its mundaneness by using the tendency of the Sorge-structure to repel all world-experiencing life. Thus phenomenology is located both “beneath” and “above” the differentiation of home and foreign world—beneath the locality of its transcendental origin and above the un-locality of its transcendental stride.

IV. Attempt at a Phenomenology of Interculturality

The place of the phenomena of phenomenology in this sense may now be free of the critique of violating homogenization, but it has not yet been exhibited to what

¹² Cf. Fink, *ibid.*, p. 38.

extent transcendental phenomenological analysis itself can be applied in general. That is to say, it has not yet been established whether or to what extent the pre-worldly arising of phenomenology itself implies a cultural bond that might stand in the way of making its statements universally valid and how, in that case, such a bond could be overcome. Such a bond exists in the sense that the transcendental components are presented in a form of language that is always merely a mundane form of language, the language of this or that homeworld. As little as phenomenological analysis can be disconnected from determinate language forms, as little as it should be identified with them. Thus the task of a stable deconstruction of the language covering over the phenomenological evidence as well as the task of intercultural cooperation that carries out this deconstruction from the ground of different primal worldly roots and the difference of phenomenological sense-formation and conceals by homeworldly language positions first has to verify.

This kind of intercultural phenomenological research would be characterized mainly by three aspects:

1. Disconnecting transcendental phenomenology from the *Sorge*-structure results only in the corresponding thematic. It leaves world-terminating life incomplete, which then, in its correlativity of subjectivity and world, becomes the theme of phenomenology, which shows this by withdrawing its bond in the *Sorge*-structure and requires renewed thematic attention.

2. Phenomenological analysis is capable of demonstrating the theme of primal homeness in its specific relation. It shows the corresponding own in the genesis of its ownness in an accessibility that does not originate from this ownness. But through the impartiality that it grants the ownness, it does not intrude. In this sense, phenomenology performs a homogenization, which in its first development, at the point where the individual relations in their individuality come forth, they themselves at the same time break down. Inversely, the relations can in this way manage a "homogenization" in a positive sense, a homogenization that is no longer determined by a homeworld, but grows out of the interaction of the phenomenologically ascertainable relations.

3. This movement of growth of a "homogenization" unique to phenomenology corresponds to the procedure of phenomenology that is, in this respect, discontinual. This discontinuity describes the step-by-step advancement of the phenomenological analysis, which must not only face but get accustomed to the surprises that the illustrated relations hold in store for them and are continually at risk, those which through phenomenological analysis, which is carried out on the basis of language positions and comprehension horizons of other homeworlds, able not only to be enriched but also newly defined, but where there is no guarantee that an actual cognition will take place. Phenomenology does not only fulfill itself in a heretic form of existence, which constantly seeks the other in the supposed self, but at the same time, especially as an intercultural theory, also takes a risk.