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Redefining Community in Intercultural Context



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Redefining Community in Intercultural Context

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First cover: The Map of Albania from 1445 (author: Bartolomeo Pareto, dedicated to Pope Nicholas V), recently discovered by Artan Shkeli, where the Balkan territory was named Scandirbeco (Skanderbeg). This map suggests the role of Albania in Balkans and in Europe. It also represents a metaphor for the Balkan routes of the waves of history.

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Mígration &
Intercultural
Díalogue

THE COMMUNICATIVE RELATIONSHIP AS A CONSTITUTIVE DIMENSION OF THE “IDEA OF COMMUNITY”. THE RELEVANCE OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION OF EDMUND HUSSERL

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Abstract: *Is it possible to identify in the communicative relationship the constitutive condition of a renewed “Idea of Community”, aimed at averting the ever more evident risk of conflict between exaggerated ideologies of “belong-to”? In this question can be found both the nucleus of my personal theoretical contribution and the perspectives of deepening that philosophical thinking can offer to the work of the International Conference. In this brief intervention, I propose the phenomenological perspective that Edmund Husserl develops as a method of investigation and reflective attitude able to restore renewed dignity to the communicative-relational phenomenon and to the resulting the “Idea of Community”. The phenomenological approach, in fact, makes it possible to make a theoretical gap with respect to the diffused acritical forms of adjectivity through which the current scientific research landscape reduces the communicative relationship to a simple problem of communication. To confuse the communicative relationship with the consolidated forms of externalized representation of communication and with the innumerable modalities of its symbolization entails the risk of not grasping its original and constitutive essence: the “Relation-With”.*

Keywords: *idea of community; communicative relationship; relation-with; phenomenological contribution; intercultural philosophy*

1. INTRODUCTION

The perspective of dialogic interculturalism is today considered inevitable and unavoidable, both as a response to today’s challenge of cultural diversity, and as a dimension closely connected to the anthropological vision that defines the human as relationship, dialogue, sociality available to the contamination of diversity.

The awareness that cultural diversification puts to the test and can lead to inadequate reactions must not make us forget that it is a huge resource, which must be recognized and valued.

Specifically, philosophical research has long felt challenged to offer its critical and constructive contribution to the realization of forms of communication between world cultures. Above all it is a critical contribution, as an investigation into the genesis, methods, ends and limits of intercultural discourse; but also of a constructive contribution, which leads to signal new research horizons. Of course this does not mean that the philosophical approach is exclusive, but only that a critical reflection on intercultural dialogue can validly contribute to better highlight the

complexity, urgency and fruitfulness of an intercultural discourse that at the same time knows how to recognize the own limits.

As stated by Raúl Fonet-Betancourt, Cuban philosopher who is the initiator and supporter of the new paradigm of intercultural philosophy,

interculturality makes of personal biography a constitutive, central point of identity stability. Unlike multiculturalism, interculturality privileges dialogue and goes beyond tolerance. For interculturality tolerance is important but reductive. In fact, we must go beyond tolerance, we must learn to truly share with love and learn to live-with. Tolerance is respect, while interculturality is a quality of human relations, a mutual inter-relationship between cultures and not a cold ‘bearing’ the other (Fonet-Betancourt, 2009:18).

Between multiculturalism and interculturality, the substantial difference lies in the fact that the latter promotes the quality of a dialogical relationship with the other, in which a common transformation takes place without, however, the differences disappearing. The challenge of interculturality lies precisely in the possibility of

not canceling the differences. For example, we continue to be Milanese or Roman, French or German or Albanian, but in the encounter with the other we get rich; we get closer to each other, but at the same time we don't lose our identity point. We can see that we are dealing with a dialectical interaction of approach and departure, for which we are in the presence of a historical process open to intercultural relations. If multiculturalism creates "ghettos" (Italians, Indians, North Africans, Moroccans), interculturality is a participatory dialogue that aims at the common construction of identity. Thinking critically about the common construction of identity inevitably leads to a question of meaning. It leads directly to the constitutive idea of Community.

Then, what contribution Philosophy and in particular the phenomenological attitude, has to offer today to the theoretical investigation and to the possibility of identifying in the communicative relational dimension (interpersonal and intersubjective) the original meaning of a renewed Idea of Community?

I try to move my research into the theoretical reflections that Husserl develops in a series of shorthand notes in a specific historical period that goes from 1922 to 1935. Some notes are still unpublished in Italian language and others are present in works published and become fundamental in the field of philosophical research.

In particular, I refer to the five essays published between 1922 and 1924 in the Japanese Magazine *Kaizo* (Renewal) and published in Italian language in the volume *L'Idea d'Europa*. I also recover the fertility of thought of the 1935 *Dissertations* collected in the book *Crisis of the European sciences and the transcendental phenomenology* and I try to make them dialogue with the meditating thought of a series of notes written in 1924, collected in the second volume entitled *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität* and by myself translated and published in the volume entitled *Fenomenologia della relazione comunicativa*.

2. RENEWED IDEA OF COMMUNITY

2.1 Transformation and renewal of Humanity. In August 1922, Chugi Tadayoschi Akita - agent of the Japanese general culture magazine *Kaizo* - living in Berlin at that time, asked Professor Edmund Husserl to write and send him an article of no more than 3,000 words to be published in the same magazine. Husserl willingly accepts above all because the Phenomenology, the

philosophical current of which he was the initiator, was spreading in Japan in that period and was getting a brilliant response. Inspired by the profound meaning of the magazine's name (*Kaizo* is a Japanese term that translates to the word Renewal), Husserl goes far beyond writing 3,000 words as commissioned. In the winter of 1922-23, he produced five essays. Only the first three will be published in the magazine due to some misunderstandings with the publishers. The last two essays will remain unpublished until their publication in volume XXVII of the *Husserliana* series entitled *Aufsätze und Vorträge (1922-1937)*.

The general theme that Husserl addresses within the five essays is "The Renewal of Man and Culture". The choice is not accidental. The meaning of the name of the magazine: "Renewal" certainly inspires Husserl not to miss the opportunity to point out that "Philosophy of the Crisis" that was maturing in Europe immediately after the end of the First World War, particularly in Germany. It is no coincidence that, at the end of the First World War, writers, thinkers and illustrious philosophers dedicated entire pages to the problem of the cultural and existential crisis that was raging in the West. I mention only a few: the philosopher Ernst Bloch who in 1918 wrote the essay *Geist der Utopie* and in the same year the writer Thomas Mann who published *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*. In 1919, the French writer, poet and philosopher Paul Valéry wrote his work with the emblematic title: *La crise de l'esprit*. In all the intellectual circles of the period, the urgency of a "transformation of humanity" is evident because through war it was able to show its moral, religious and ☐ Husserl will say ☐ philosophical misery.

In 1920, in a letter addressed to his student and friend William Hocking, the philosopher denounces how the Great War "became a war between peoples in the most terrible and literal sense of the term, has lost its ethical meaning" so that, for the "renewal ethical-political of humanity", it would require "an art, supported by supreme and clearly established ethical ideals", capable of "a universal education of humanity" (Husserl, 1924).

Husserl's message is surprisingly current.

2.2 Universal education of humanity. It is also necessary to start today from a universal education of humanity. It is necessary to re-signify the cultural boundaries that differentiate and define a people with respect to another people in order to promote an intellectual and dialogical attitude capable of looking at the difference of language,

religion, tradition, *forma mentis* as a possibility of wealth and of continuous redefinition of an authentic and universal sense of Humanity.

The reflection that Edmund Husserl starts at that particular historical moment is dictated by the personal need to clarify the theoretical assumptions underlying the constitutive problem of the identity of the self. This identity was overshadowed by an unbridled technicality and a weariness of science that made us lose sight of the spiritual sense of man and of his being an active part of a broader social identity as Europe was expected to be at that time.

He himself does not hesitate to reiterate that to characterize the “spiritual form of Europe” can not and must not be a geographical map capable of circumscribing within the borders of nations “men who live in European territory and consider them European humanity” (Husserl, 1923-24/1999: 85).

The “renewed” Idea of Community contains in itself and alludes to the unity of a life, an action, a spiritual work, with all the aims, interests, concerns, efforts, and the organizations that follow it. This unity includes the men who act within multi-faceted societies of different degrees such as the family, the cities, the nations, in an “interior and spiritual communion” of which it is important to recognize its “binding character” (Husserl, 1923-24/1999: 97).

The binding character to which Husserl speaks is that relational condition that allows cultures to enter into dialogue, avoiding the transfer of conflicts not only from a geographical area at war to a safe area but also and above all between different languages, traditions and habits.

What does Husserl mean when he speaks of “inner and spiritual communion”? He refers to a change of essential perspective. The central core of this change of perspective is in the complexity of the perceptual act. He takes up this problem in a more intense way, in 1930 □ a few years after the publication of the essays in the Japanese magazine □ in the Second Volume of his work *Ideas for a pure phenomenology and a phenomenological philosophy (Idee per una fenomenologia pura e per una filosofia fenomenologica)*.

In the moment that one discovers as a subject that performs actions, “subject of a voluntary or involuntary I do” (Husserl, 1930/1965: 705) and as a subject that undergoes them (*Ego patior*), the individual Ego □ according to the phenomenological analysis that Husserl develops in an extremely original and pertinent way □ it is perceived in a dual position and with a double identity:

a) as what is “outside” and “against”, as opposed to the individual Ego, as non-I, as alien to the Ego;

b) as what is “in-front”.

In front of me, opposed to the individual, foreign to the Ego.

2.3 The perception of the “in front of me” as “opposite” and as a “stranger to the Ego”. From what conditions does the differentiated perception of the “in front of me” be generated as “opposed to the Ego” and “extraneous to the Ego”? And again, what do I perceive as “in front of me” and what as “opposite” and “foreign to me”? In Appendix VI to the Third Section of Book II of *Ideas*, Husserl asks: “What do I find in front of me under the title of Ego, and what do I find as opposed to the Ego, as not-I, as a stranger to me?” (Husserl, 1930/1965:704).

The level and type of possible answers are closely linked to the attitude that is taken respect to the question: they reflect the perspective, the point of view, the stance. The difference and the difference between what is “in front” and what is “opposite” is first of all influenced by the distance that separates the naturalistic attitude and the personalistic attitude. The difference between what belongs to subjectivity and what belongs to nature is also played in the gap between “in front” and “opposite”. According to the naturalistic perspective it would seem that the individual Ego first comes across, and almost obviously, in the physicality of its own corporeity. He finds himself as part of natural reality, as a thing between things.

The physical body (*Körper*) is the limit of the possibilities of life-giving movement, of kinesthetic perceptual Intentionality. The naturalistic perspective makes us blind and prevents the individual from perceiving himself as living, intentional in a network of interpersonal and worldly relationships.

In § 49 of Chapter I, Section III, of *Ideas II* we read: “(...) man knows about himself, about other men and about a world around them all common” (Husserl, 1930/1965:578). It is a knowledge that precedes any information of a cognitive nature. The limit configured by what in nature is “against” is the boundary of individual egological perception: the boundary established by the interpersonal relationships and the relationship with the “common surrounding world” (*Umwelt*). It is a mobile boundary linked to symbolic and cultural productions within the group to which they belong.

This surrounding world does not contain mere things, but also objects of use (clothes, domestic

utensils, weapons, instruments), works of art, literary products, means of religious action, legal (seals, official badges, gifts, symbols ecclesiastics, etc.) and does not contain only single persons: people are, rather, members of communities, of personal units of a higher order, who live as totality, who maintain themselves and go forward in time regardless of the appearance and disappearance of the individual. They have their own conformation as a community, their ethical and juridical order, their ways of working together with other communities and individuals, their dependence on circumstances, their regulated mutability, their way of developing or to remain temporarily constant in according to the particular circumstances. The members of the community, of marriage and of the family, of the class, of the association, of the municipality, of the state, of the church, etc. they "know" their members, are consciously dependent on them and know, eventually, to act consciously about them (Husserl, 1930/1965: 578-579).

2.4 Awareness of belonging-to. The boundary of subjective individuality, established by the natural 'in front', determines, therefore, in the individual Ego, different levels of awareness:

a) the personal awareness of being always in situation and that this situation is at the same time spatio-temporal and symbolic, is connotable in terms of naturalness and is full of culture, is worldly as well as interpersonal;

b) the shared awareness on the experiential level of finding oneself in a situation which, precisely because it is relational and interpersonal, manifests the sense of belonging to a more or less cohesive group of other individual Ego: a group as a community of people and also of values, of meanings that link tradition to the possible production of new values and meanings.

Certainly, even my individual Ego can in front of me as a material thing can be: as a non-I and as a foreign given to the Ego. It happens when my own body "is taken as this somatic body, like this thing here, something that in fact is something like another thing" (Husserl, 1930/1965:705). In this case the individual Ego belongs to the sphere of the non-I, the somatic body, it is a thing among things. And yet, this individual Ego is other than the thing: it is something else at various levels. The first person I of the verb and the somatic body non-I are in a constitutive relationship that makes the body/soma (*Körper*) a living body (*Leib*).

What does Husserl want to introduce when he investigates the traits that separate the Ego from the not-I? What differentiates this individual Ego that belongs to me but which can be 'in front of me' and which is offered to me as a substratum of

theoretical, affective, psychic, etc., acts, from the self that I find 'against' me as a thing and not-thing, like me and not-me, as a stranger to self? On which of these elements does Husserl actually focus attention?

A first hypothesis of response to these questions can be advanced by observing how, through these analyzes, the phenomenological methodology accentuates the relevance that attaches to the situation in which the interpersonal and intersubjective relationship is established: that relationship which, on the border, is configured in the terms of being 'against', opposed-to, extraneous-to.

By shifting attention to the concrete situation in which the interpersonal relationship is constituted, Husserl points out that it is possible to perceive the "in front" of an individual ego only by referring to another individual ego. In the "front" specific intentional acts are manifested which are proper to the individual ego compared to another ego. These acts are based on self-awareness that persists even when there is no reflection and without which it would not be possible "even to reflect" (Husserl, 1930/1965: 706).

3. COMMUNICATIVE RELATIONSHIP AND INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

3.1 From the individual I to the I-You and I-We relationship. The itinerary that leads to the recognition and realization of the individuality of the self is therefore a long and complex process. The characteristics of individuality are always to be conquered, always to be renegotiated not only with each other but above all with one's own individual ideal self.

The personal need to recognize oneself in one's individuality through a continuous process of differentiation (to look for the individualizing elements that separate the self from the other) is accompanied, and is in a constitutive relation, to the need to identify the other, to grasp the elements that differentiate me. So it is no longer a question, for the theorists, of searching in the place of scientific knowledge, if there is a concept that defines the individual Ego. Rather, it is a matter of grasping the specific relational through which the I expresses itself and in which we recognize the others who pronounce "I".

It is not a question of creating a concept that expresses, in terms of theory or categories, the Ego that acts and works in the relationship: at least it is not a question of doing so with the risk, already denounced by Ortega y Gasset, of leaving behind it

the dynamism of the phenomena involved in relationality.

The condition of being “in front” is the exclusive belonging of the individual Ego, man and person. It is a condition in which the individual Ego places itself when it requires or welcomes that in front there is “an I in the form of the you, that is, a front which in turn is another individual Ego” (Husserl, 1930/1965: 707). I as an individual and you as an individual: it concerns the initial differentiation between I and non-I, between subject, object complement and I naturalized in the somatic body.

We move from a level full of instances of objective constitution to a strongly and deeply dialogical level. We move from a plan characterized by individualistic cognitive expectations to an essentially relational and interpersonal level.

The person □ writes Husserl in Appendix VII of the *Ideas II* □ its essence (*Wesen*: to be) “can be constituted only in a personal association of bonds” (*Verband*: link), it designates a sort of “kind of being relative” (Ibidem).

3.2 Context phenomenology. What does Husserl mean when it recalls the centrality of the function that “a possible context” performs both with respect to the definition of the individual ego and of the person and with respect to the definition of the material thing?

The reference to the context indicates the possibility of looking at phenomena from another point of view: no longer or not only from the perspective of the abstract Ego, it is artificially dissolved from the links with the world and with the others with whom it lives daily, but from the perspective of relationships and bonds in which the individual Ego, actor of the overall and variegated ‘I do’, acts in the network of possibilities and limits marked by being in an ‘association of people’. The passage is from the abstract vertex of the individual ego to the plane of situations in which the bonds are welded together, make it possible and at the same time delimit the action of the same Ego: observing each other in relation, the I do is perceived as a nucleus of possibilities (I can) and of impossibility (I *patior*).

The context, the connection, the relationship, can be examined in the interpersonal and relational connotation of ‘context of people’ or in the naturalistic connotation of ‘context of material things’. In the first case, the network is given by the ties that are established between the individual ego and those who put themselves ‘in front’.

“In front” there are and can be found only “the other men, not as objects of nature, but as persons, in front of us, as egological subjects and *as companions* (Ibidem. The italics is ours). In the second case the investigation can continue to focus only on the experience of the Ego, on its way of relating to nature and to its own self that is naturalized or included in the objectified and objectifying dimension of the other, deprived of the possibility of saying ‘I’.

In the network of relationships with the “in front”, the individual Ego grasps and develops its own personal dimension. His individuality is constituted through the experiences that relate him as well as to the natural and cultural world to others in ‘flesh and blood’ towards which he feels emotions.

Only “by way of abstraction” □ observes Husserl □ the person can be thought of in

his singularity, (...) in such a way that it no longer involves a relationship with other people (no relationship that falls within the association of people). In ideal terms, each person has within the surrounding communicative world (...) in which extra-communicative persons can be involved, that is to say, (...) people who are outside the social association of people. The people who are part of the social association are given to each other as ‘companions’, not as objects but as counter-subjects who live together, who are in a mutual trade, who are in a mutual reference, currently or potentially, in the acts of love and reciprocated love, hatred and reciprocal hatred, trust and reciprocated trust, etc. (Husserl, 1930/1965: 589-590).

3.3 To be in a communicative and interpersonal relational situation. In the interpersonal relational situation the ego becomes I-person as I-subject:

a) who speaks: subject who asks questions. Person is who expresses himself using the first person of the personal pronoun I;

b) that is in front of another Ego-subject to whom it is addressed and towards which it is intentionally directed;

e) that, with the other, it carries out a symbolic exchange, a personal trade: to be in a mutual relationship. The symbolic exchange therefore presupposes the question and the answer and takes into account that the answer can be negative and therefore negotiated in the *cum mercis* exchange. “People are the men themselves who are with us in a *personal business* (Husserl, 1930/1965:708. Italics are ours);

d) that, with the other, shares a common experience. The etymological root of companion

recalls the experience of *cum-panis*, that is, of consuming together.

Husserl, therefore, investigates the structure of the “possible context” through the precise analysis of the ways in which the interpersonal communicative relationship unfolds.

It is the language of the other that allows the individual ego to speak in first person, to recognize the symbolic boundaries of its existential perceptive space-time, to take on the possibility of giving rules to oneself and to others, to respect the rules of others, renegotiate them continuously by re-inventing them. It is also in the word that the self discovers its own status as a “subject” which is revealed to an “other subject”, not an “object”.

The word requires two interlocutors: one who names the thing and the other who evokes it by hearing the name. The word refers to the centrality of the function of dialogue (*dia-légo*) and, consequently, of relational understanding (*cum = prehendere*). In dialogue, in fact, there is no error but only “truth”. The error is always related to the object. In the dialogue there is only the truth of the subject which, in comparison with the other, emerges from the solipsism of its eventual delirium (Lèvy-Valensi Amado, 1956).

3.4 Intended and intentional word. What kind of word does it refer to? To the intentional and intentional word. For Husserl, intentionality is the first access to the recognition of the presence of the other. To be intentionally-addressed constitutes the horizon of meaning in which the other is no longer something between things, but he too is a core of meaning. The same intentional movement constitutes its own identity, that of the other and that of the external world as a horizon of intersubjective meaning. And open to the communicative relationship. The communication (*Mitteilung*) is con-division.

Through the phenomenological analysis of communication, the specific of the human relationship is configured mainly in two ways:

- a. in participation and belonging-to;
- b. in understanding how to take the other with you, take it on.

Understanding communication as the possibility of the subject communicating “to be-part-of” allows Husserl to not homogenize it to the externalizing forms in which it manifests itself in human groups or associations. It refers, rather and very explicitly, to its intentionally to be part of a culture, of a mentality, of an attitude that finds its rooting in to be-with-the-other and is fulfilled in the form of understanding.

The communication thus understood realizes the participation in the common life and the understanding of the other subject in the constitutive modality of to be-with (*Mit-Sein*).

The problem of communication becomes for Husserl all one with that of the constitution as well as a privileged form of intersubjective and interpersonal knowledge of the ego and the Ego-other-me.

Communication, unlike what may appear to the modern consumer of information, is not a problem that is added to interpersonal relationships, but is itself rooted in the Ego that is always and constitutively an I-in-relationship.

Intentionality, as it gives meaning to being, is the constitutive link of all modes of being. The sense of being is in turn rooted in consciousness. Which means that the constitution theory is not reducible to a mere gnoseological problem.

The relationship is not the consequence of the simple act of connecting, as if at first there were real things and then these were related to each other. Instead, it is what Husserl entrusts to the words of the manuscript “I am in relation to an environment” (Husserl, 1924/1973:331-332).

To be in a relationship-with has in itself the implicit recognition, in the sphere of the Ego, of the constitutive link with the ‘you’ and of the apperceptive movement in which the constitutive act of the Ego as self and the other-self becomes possible. In this way the ‘me-us’ emerges on the level of representative possibility. And it is this ‘me-us’ that leads again to a reflection on the ego.

It is a question of a continuous renewal of the theoretical categories with respect to the consolidated pre-judgments that too often pre-judge the possibility of recognizing and recognizing the relationship-with as a communicative relationship.

This is a relationship understood as a fundamental transition from a solipsistic but necessary vision of the world to a recognition as part of a humanity as a unity of sociality.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The formative plan of the phenomenological reflection and perspective.

At the conclusion of the theoretical reflection that I proposed with respect to the theme of the Conference: *Redefining community in Intercultural Context. Migration and Intercultural dialogue*, I would like to underline the importance of the phenomenological perspective as an attitude of search for meaning about the requests that must be at the basis of the authentic dialogue between

different cultures to which the migration phenomenon, today, takes on.

The phenomenological methodology has the implicative value able to involve not only the activities of rational and symbolic thought but to activate and strengthen the critical and epistemological request as well as the corresponding personal, emotional and affective intention. The phenomenological methodology contributes to launching that “intentional modification” that transforms the modalities of relating-to and interacting-with in the operative framework that Husserl calls phenomenological attitude.

The perspectives □ notes Husserl in the *Crisis of the European Sciences* □ are “infinite” but above all they suggest “guidelines of orientation” that translate into a “*Neuartige Einstellung* (new attitude)” (Husserl, 1935/1961: 334). If we report this Husserlian annotation to the here and now (but also to the *hic et nunc* of each relational situation), we immediately realize that Husserl's phrase reveals at least two key information regarding the operational modalities in which everyone can choose to place himself in the context to which it refers. The perspective not only delimits and circumscribes a “context” as a “field” of observation and action but also indicates the role of a hypothetical external observer. It follows that, from a topological point of view, the perspective has two main poles:

a) the position (to be inside) that the intentional individual occupies or is about to occupy in the relational space of the situation (plane of the emotional-affective implication of knowledge);

b) the point of view (to be outside) that the intentional individual occupies or is about to occupy as an observer (logical-formal and epistemological level of knowledge).

Of a situation or ‘relational space’ it is possible (and no less appropriate) to grasp (to know) both its to be in a network of relationships, meanings and motivations (internal configuration), and the natural structure (external configuration), what it possesses at a given moment and that can be assimilated to the perception of an external hypothetical observer.

4.2 From the individual to the group; from the position of the self to the relational situation.

Specifying one's own perspective therefore requires a fluctuating and intensely mobile attention: it urges us to pass continuously from the observer to the context, from the individual to the group, from the position of the self or of the other

to the network that keeps them united in the relational situation, from the strictly intellectual level to the symbolic, emotional and cultural one.

Etymologically the term ‘perspective’ derives from the Latin *pro-spicere*: *pro-* ‘forward’, *specere* ‘to look’. The action of the *pro-spicere* establishes a connection between two elements: there is a “subject” that performs the action of looking and a *quid*, placed before it, which is “object” of to be looked at. The presence of the subject who performs the action of looking is *conditio sine qua non* of the *pro-spicere* no less than the object (real or imaginary).

Now, to be able to look, the subject must:

1. has performed a preventive distancing action between himself and the object to be looked at (whoever looks [*spicere*], looks “from a distance” and, with respect to the relationship, places himself “outside”);

2. that he looks “before” to himself. (You can only look at what is before us: “against” and / or “in front” and, consequently, only if you are “in” the relationship).

The distancing refers to the set of conceptual and theoretical tools (knowledge) available to the subject. They mediate and maintain the necessary distance for knowledge and observation. How these tools affect the cognitive process and how they condition it is the object of study of epistemology.

What interests us here is that the relationship between the subject and the object, to which the cognitive distancing refers, is not the only one possible. The ‘pro’ evokes a whole range of potential relationships that bind both the subject to the object (being against and being ‘opposed to the self’) and two or more subjects between them: to be in front (Husserl, 1935/1961).

The choice of perspective therefore suggests “guidelines”. It directs our attention, among other things, and implies our to be in relationship. In the specific case, when I claim to be in a phenomenological perspective, I invite you to shift our attention:

a) on the actors and on the role of those who act in a relational space;

b) on the relational space in which these “actors” operate and have their own “role”.

Opposite - observes Husserl - one can only have another person, not the natural objects or the naturalized body of the other. Opposite is the condition of the *vis à vis*, of the gaze that recognizes the other as analogon and at the same time other than itself; on the other hand, it expresses the opposition between objects or

between an individual who makes an “object” or naturalizes the other, making it a thing among things. The others of the frontal position are placed in an interpersonal relationship; they are in relationship with the role of co-actors, with dignity of person and with a common “sense of belonging” which cannot be ignored.

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