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Phenomenological Community and Integrative Social Agency. Critique of a Phenomenological Concept of Inter-subjectivity

Abstract   *The term „phenomenological community" is not among the most well-known concepts of phenomenology. It was used by Marc Richir referring to Merleau-Ponty's concept of „natural" community. The paper examines this concept from the point of view of social philosophy. It analyses its relevance in the context of a post-Hegelian philosophy of inter-subjectivity. The community conceived this way is origin and result at the same time, giving rise to a theory of a historically grounded formation of a previously not given and heterogeneous communicative integration; moreover, social mediation defining the subject of action is an open, non-totalizing process, which makes it possible to conceptualize an integrative action that does not neutralize the heterogeneity of the contemporary society. The theory of the phenomenological community is the ontology of a disintegrated but common world. Social action never happens on the basis of chaos but of the inter-subjective world, thus it can provide a new basis for such an action. On the other hand the „phenomenological community" is essentially a form of the „passive synthesis" thus it is unable to provide foundation for a unifying action, the only possibility for an authentic integration (a non-representative form of social integration). Thus it necessitates a critique.*

Keywords: *Inter-subjectivity, Marc Richir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, nature, infinity, phenomenology, social philosophy, integration*

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Recent social movements pose previously rarely emphasized questions in the field of social philosophy. Mass movements in various counties in the last few years proved to be unclassifiable with the inherited concepts. One of the recognizable common characteristic of these movements is the lack of stable ideological backgrounds. While mass movements of the 20th century tended to have ideas or ideals shared by the individuals or at least ideals that were readily acceptable by most of them, there is no sign of such commitment nowadays. In case of Turkish anti-government mass demonstrations, or London youth demonstrating on the streets, or say Hungarian student protest movements, unifying ideology is non--existent. A social philosophy with an emancipatory allegiance has to deal with the question of the possibility of action of *a radically heterogeneous* mass, one that has no common ground not only in ideals but in most cases not even in interests. Although far from being an entirely new phenomenon, the decline of 20th century mass societies rendered this the rule instead of the exception. A situation which necessitates a model

of interaction between heterogeneous agents, individuals or groups that are radically „other" to each other.

One possible point where such a social philosophy could take its departure is a phenomenological concept of community. Unlike most tendencies in social theories, phenomenology defines its base on the various – not only conflicting or incoherent, but in the case of Merleau-Ponty: inconsistent – phenomena of „being-in-the-world". The thinkers of a phenomenological community elaborated this point to the extent of a theoretical statement on the „plurality of worlds" (Richir 1992b: 52sqq) and the communication among them (a phenomenology of language). Such a philosophy has many achievements that are clearly relevant in the situation described above. Here I would like to address two of these achievements: 1. the community conceived this way is origin and result at the same time, giving rise to a theory of a historically grounded formation of a previously not given and heterogeneous communicative integration; 2. social mediation defining the subject of action is an open, non-totalizing process, which makes it possible to conceptualize an integrative action that does not neutralize heterogeneity. Lastly I will criticize a third property of phenomenological theory of community, namely its passivity, which for me makes it impossible to take this theory as is, barring a unifying *action* that is in my mind the only possibility for an authentic integration (a non-representative form of social integration).

Without doubt, phenomenology has a vague relation to social philosophy. Their relationship is clearly existent but not clearly defined. One of the major subject-matters of the late history of phenomenology was inter-subjectivity, a theme that is predominant in contemporary social philosophy as well. Moreover, social philosophy often declares its debt to phenomenology in this regard. But the phenomenological concepts of inter-subjectivity are not evidently equivalent to corresponding concepts in social philosophy. It is even questionable whether phenomenological terminology utilized in social theories – like the Husserlian concept *Lebenswelt,* which has a noticeably successful carrier in various social theories – does not lead to a fatally limited meaning of these terms. It seems that what is missing from them is exactly what distinguished phenomenology from sociology, namely the „metaphysical" positioning of its subject.

The term „phenomenological community" is not among the most well--known concepts of phenomenology. It was used by Marc Richir – perhaps the most important contemporary thinker of the phenomenology of

language – referring to Merleau-Ponty's concept of „natural" community (Richir 1992a). Taking this concept as the focus of our consideration has at least two advantages: first, it is a radical concept that is taking phenomenology to its limits; second, it is an essential concept, and thus it allows us to grasp directly the problems inherent in phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty serves here as a point of departure, since he is, without doubt, the most radical thinker of social being among the phenomenologists. Nonetheless, the concept of „phenomenological community" is – as I would like to point out – clearly unsatisfactory if one is determined to engage the problems of integrative social agency, which is a theory of a community based on social activism. Though phenomenological community gives us a stable conceptual ground for establishing a theory of this kind of agency (being anarchical and non-teleological), its essential passivity, non-constructivity and non-integrativity offers no way for integrative social constructivism.

Community as Origin and Result

It is somewhat of a commonplace that every social philosophy has to presuppose some kind of original, that is, non-constituted (natural), kind of inter-subjectivity.[1] In its narrow meaning, as I would like to employ the

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1   Early modern political philosophy made use of the concept of „natural state" for this theoretical requirement. Later social philosophy often explicitly relied on the reformulation of this concept making use of an inter-subjectivist vocabulary instead that of the natural law. Take for example the early Hegel, who utilized Hobbes' idea of struggle among the subjects in the natural state to establish a theory of inter-subjectivity as a „struggle for recognition". For Hegel the real radicalism of Hobbes consisted in establishing political philosophy on the lack of pre-established hierarchy of subjects in the natural state. On the other hand the lack of hierarchy unavoidably supposes a perpetual power struggle among the people. Hegel in his early works intended to reinterpret the Hobbsean struggle as a „struggle for recognition" that is an original (non-constituted, natural) inter-subjectivity (Axel Honneth 1996: 7–30). On the other hand Marx opposed firmly the idea of finding this „original" inter-subjectivity in any natural state. He established the social philosophy on the most advanced form of inter-subjectivity, on the „present fact" of reified work. In the *Economical manuscripts of 1844* he writes: „Versetzen wir uns nicht wie der Nationalökonom, wenn er erklären will, in einen nur erdichteten Urzustand. Ein solcher Urzustand erklärt nichts. Er schiebt bloß die Frage in eine graue, nebelhafte Ferne. Er unterstellt in der Form der Tatsache, des Ereignisses, was er deduzieren soll, nämlich das notwendige Verhältnis zwischen zwei Dingen, z.B. zwischen Teilung der Arbeit und Austausch. So erklärt die Theologie den Ursprung des Bösen durch den Sündenfall, d. h., er unterstellt als ein Faktum, in der Form der Geschichte, was er erklären soll. Wir gehn von einem nationalökonomischen, gegenwärtigen Faktum aus" (Marx 1968: 511). Still, it remains a question how one can oppose to this fact a non-reified form of inter-subjectivity; on what grounds non-institutional community („communism") is possible. Does it precede reification or follow? One has to conclude that original inter-subjectivity must always be both an origin and a result.

term in this paper, social philosophy is not merely philosophy *on* society, rather a philosophy *based on* inter-subjectivity or social agency. Thus the task before a genuine inter-subjective social philosophy is actually twofold. To establish philosophy of society on inter-subjectivity one must be able to trace constituted forms of inter-subjectivity (state, institutions, etc), to non-constituted ones (or at least ones with some kind of original legitimacy as we shall see).[2] Moreover to establish social philosophy based on inter-subjectivity rather than subjectivity one must be able to trace pure theoretical or epistemological concepts, like perception, consciousness, self-consciousness etc. to these original forms of inter-subjectivity. Essentially, this original state is what I call – following Richir – the phenomenological community.

Origin in Merleau-Ponty is always formulated in metaphysical terminology. One must not forget that Merlaeu-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible* is an ontological project. He took this effort in its strictest sense; ultimately he meant to redefine the concept of „nature" itself. One can actually describe the latest philosophy of Merleau-Ponty as an effort to redefine the opposition between culture and nature by a phenomenological ontology of nature and institution respectively.[3] Thus „phenomenological community" is nature itself taken in a redefined sense. Merleau-Ponty's prime example to contrast with his own is the concept of nature in the Cartesian sense, which is infinity of the physical universe, or more precisely, an infinite extension. Nature in his sense is not the „infinite universe" that – according to Koyré (Koyré 1957) – replaced the „closed world" of antiquity, although it can be formulated by redefining its key terms, in this case: infinity. In a working note of February 17 1957 this reference to Koyré is apparent:

> Infinity: it is to be sure a conquest to have conceived the universe as infinity – or at least on the ground of infinity (the Cartesians).

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2   Again taking the example of Hegel, he argues that Kant errs in not realizing that the concept of 'Ich" which he seems to take as a non-constituted basis that transcendental constitution presupposes, is itself a result of abstraction. „Ich hingegen ist die einfache Gewißheit seiner selbst. Aber Ich überhaupt ist auch *zugleich* ein Konkretes, oder Ich ist vielmehr das Konkreteste, – das Bewußtsein seiner als unendlich mannigfaltiger Welt. Daß Ich Anfang und Grund der Philosophie sei, dazu wird die Absonderung dieses Konkreten erfordert, - der absolute Akt, wodurch Ich von sich selbst gereinigt wird und als abstraktes Ich in sein Bewußtsein tritt. Allein dies reine Ich ist nun *nicht* ein unmittelbares, noch das bekannte, das gewöhnliche Ich unseres Bewußtseins, woran unmittelbar und für jeden die Wissenschaft angeknüpft werden sollte." (Hegel 1986: 76)

3   Two major subject-matters of his courses he thought in the Collège de France in the fifties are nature and institution. See Merleau-Ponty (1995) and (2003). In the working notes of *The Visible and The Invisible* it is a constant theme as well. See also Barbaras.

But have the Cartesians really done so? – Have they really seen the depth of being, which is recognized only with the notion of infinity [an inexhaustible reserve of being which is not only this and that but could have been other (Leibniz) or is effectively more than we know (Spinoza, the unknown attributes)]?

Their notion of infinity is positive. They have devaluated the closed world for the benefit of a positive infinity, of which they speak as one speaks of some thing, which they *demonstrate* in „objective philosophy" – the signs are reversed: all the determinations are negation in the sense of: are *only* negation – This is to elude infinity rather than to recognize it Infinity congealed or given to a thought that possesses it at least enough to be able to prove it.

The veritable infinity cannot be that: it must be what exceeds us: the infinity of *Offenheit* and not *Unendlichkeit* – Infinity of the *Lebenswelt* and not infinity of idealization – Negative infinity, therefore – Meaning or reason which are contingency (Merleau-Ponty 1960: 169).

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The phenomenological community is the borderless world of openness (*Offenheit*), not the infinity of the physical world (the „nature" of the 17th century philosophy and also of later natural science), nor the „actual infinity" of Cantorian mathematics. It cannot be taken as „some thing", because it is precisely the open horizon of things. Infinity taken as borderlessness is what Richir calls a „phenomenological *apeiron*". *Apeiron* meaning here 'what cannot be defined': Greek thinking thought what has no border (*peras*) is indefinable. The infinity of the physical world can be proved, the infinite set of mathematics can be defined, but the phenomenological *apeiron* is a sensual *world* of incompossibilities, a world of otherness, a world of inconsistency. Phenomenology according to Merleau-Ponty is a meaningful language of an inconsistent world.[4] The „depth of being" is an indefinite and indefinable open horizon of actual being that cannot be conceived as a reserve of possible, or actual but unrecognizable being.[5] It is rather a reserve of „incompossibles." Negative infinity is

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4   Hence the constant struggle for a philosophical language, which cannot be based on formal logic. However, this is not an apodictique necessity. Lyotard tried to give a solid and consistent metalanguage to a Merleau-Pontyan world of sensual incompossibilities, rejecting his quest for a new, „corporal" language.

5   One can wonder here if Merleau-Ponty thought of this „openness" as a form of „possible worlds", which the reference to Leibniz (and Spinoza in a way) certainly proposes. Both Heidegger and Sartre thought that the open horizon of the world can be conceptualized by reformulating the notion of „possibility", in case of Sartre this involved an explicit critique of Leibnizian concept of possibility. But the reference here is misleading. Merleau-Ponty does not ask if Leibniz and Spinoza would have formulated the problem of openness right (Leibiz as possible worlds, Spinoza as infinite number of attributes unrecognizable by men), but that they might have indeed seen the „depth of being" though they have definitely formulated it wrong.

precisely this background of an indefinable horizon behind every actual, given being. „It is this negative that makes possible the *vertical* world, the union of the incompossibles, the being in transcendence, and the topological space and the time in joints and members, in disjunction and dis-membering" (Merleau-Ponty 1969: 227). The sensible world, the world of the *chair* is radically open, by virtue of its incompossibility, thus the phenomenological community is not an ideological or political community, it is not unified by any *telos* or *arkhé*, it cannot be unified by any idea or ideal.

This ontology is therefore the ontology of the „phenomenological *apeiron*", which is fundamental and original in an absolute way; it gives foundation to any existential orientation. On the other hand it is itself a result. Its primordiality is „an-archistic" since it is based on the openness of the negative infinity and negative infinity itself is constituted in inter-subjectivity and has an immanent history.[6]

The first working note of *The Visible and the Invisible* from January 1959. mentions three pillars of the project: the „subject-object question, the question of inter-subjectivity, the question of Nature" (Merleau-Ponty 1969: 165). But this superficial equality among the pillars is misleading. In fact between the „subject-object question" and „the question of Nature" it is precisely the question of inter-subjectivity that mediates, or to put it in a more fundamental way: inter-subjectivity constitutes the essence of all of the major concepts here: the essence of nature, the essence of the subject and the essence of the object. Redefining the concept of „nature" means first and foremost to take away its „objectivist" meaning as we have seen above. But this may in no way lead to a „subjectivist" meaning of the term. In the first chapter Merleau-Ponty dismisses the possibility of a subjectivist ontology with the same, or even more radical, vigor as the objectivist: „We would arrive at the same conclusion if, instead of underscoring the inconsistencies of the 'objective' order, we would address ourselves to the 'subjective' order which, in the ideology of science, is its counterpart and necessary complement – and perhaps our conclusion would be more easily accepted through this way. For here the disorder and the incoherence are manifest, and one can say without exaggeration that our fundamental concepts – that of the psychism and of psychology – are as mythical as the classifications of the societies called archaic"

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6   Again, one can compare this to Hegel's project in the *Science of Logic*: the science (philosophy) must start with something that is absolute and thus *Unmittelbares* but it also has to be *vermittelt* at the same time (Hegel 1986: 65)

(Merleau-Ponty 1969: 18). The subjectivist form of a possible ontology would not be other than the „*Gegenabstraktion*" (Merlau-Ponty 1969: 167) of the objectivist one. The emergence of the ontological point of view in Merleau-Ponty's late philosophy is precisely a solution for an unresolved problem of the first period where these mutually abstract categories (although in a phenomenologically neutralized way) stood firmly opposed (Barbaras 1991: 21–36). Ontology of nature means ontology of a pre-subjective (and without doubt: pre-objective) nature, the ontology of sensual world, that is the ontology of original „inter-corporeity".

Since redefining nature is not possible neither through subjectivity nor objectivity, he had to find a *tertium* that he called the ontology of the *être sauvage*, that is an ontology of the inter-subjective nature. It is of paramount importance that inter-subjectivity does not precede nature *in time*, nature is not posterior to inter-subjectivity: „the objective transcendence is not posterior to the position of the other: the world is already there, in its objective transcendence, before this analysis, and it is its very meaning that will be rendered explicit as meaning" (Merleau-Ponty 1969: 172). It precedes it as a *conditio sine qua non*, a condition of its possibility. This is why one can reasonably say that for Merleau-Ponty inter-subjectivity is the *essence* of nature. Since there is no nature without (inter-)subjectivity, or more precisely the concept of nature without subjectivity is the product of the philosophy of the *âge classique* (and the natural sciences based on it), one can revise Descartes' error of defining nature as *res extensa* by rethinking the essence of nature as inter-subjectivity. Descartes called essence the property that is the condition of possibility of all other properties in a given substance. Likewise in Merleau-Ponty it is chiasm, interpenetration between subjects, inter-corporeity that can be called the essence of nature. This is what constitutes the „depth of being", the indefinable infinity (*apeiron*), the horizon of any being.

Thus phenomenological community is more than just one form of community among others. It is the „aesthetic" (that is: sensual) world that is common for all of us. There is no human nature, no universal humanity but the infinite openness of the sensory world, an element in which the subjects can reach each other, in which their relations and thus they themselves continuously constitute and what is continuously constituted by these very subjects at the same time. What makes the phenomenological community an *original* concept is its difference to institutions in its exemption from time. Merleau-Ponty defines institution by duration, (Merleau-Ponty 2003: 6) but phenomenological community (or nature)

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has no duration. Having no duration on the other hand does not mean it is exempt from constitution. Although Merleau-Ponty avoids using the word „constitution" in a positive way in his late philosophy (a constitutive subject being the main target of his critique), inter-subjective constitution of objectivity is still an unquestioned theoretical achievement (of Husserl, naturally) for him. Nature differs from institution not by its supposedly unconstitutional essence but by its non-duration. Essential passivity defines both of them: the subject is earning its meaning from them but while in the case of institution it is a series of events that is the basis of this meaning in case of nature it is a pre-eventual world of inter-corporeity.

Richir opposes phenomenological community to „symbolical community", that is, to any community based on symbolic institutional act, subsisting as an institution or symbolic form. This actually includes any kind of suspension of the „phenomenological apeiron", the indefinable „depth" of the phenomenological community. This is why at first glance every social relationship seems to be subject to a symbolic *order*, a system of power-relations. As we have seen phenomenological community is a new definition of nature, so any „cultural" institution is its counterpart. Now the vague relation between social philosophy and phenomenology I have mentioned in the introduction is finally taking shape: that of an inconsistency in the suggested theory. It seems that while it is possible to fulfill the second task of a social philosophy with phenomenology (to trace the theoretical concepts to inter-subjectivity) it is impossible to fulfill the first one: the phenomenological reduction deprives us from saying anything on symbolic communities; one cannot trace their reality to inter-subjective constitution. But this is to reach a hasty conclusion. Although Richir does think of institutions as a non-phenomenological subject-matter, Merleau-Ponty precisely did not. While Richir is concerned with a „hyperbolic reduction" to be able to reach a metaphysical ground where social communities do not matter anymore, only the „apeiron" of the phenomenological inter-subjectivity, Merleau-Ponty on the other hand was deeply engaged in social issues and on what kind of answer philosophy can offer to social questions. The question of institution in the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty shows this clearly. My own suggestion however will lead in another direction: there must be a third kind of community between symbolic (institutional) and phenomenological: a form of integration that does not lead to representational forms of the community.

Mediation

The phenomenological community is characterized by its *openness*. To further define the meaning of this characteristic we look into the concept of *mediation* of the subject that is the constitution of the subject through the mediation of the community. From the standpoint of the inter-subjectivity the most important philosophical statement of even the earliest forms of social philosophy was that the theory of the subject cannot be elaborated on the grounds of the immediate recognition of the „I". Hegel has shown that self-consciousness (*Selbstbewusstsein*) is constituted through inter-subjectivity rather than the supposedly immediate evidence of the consciousness. „Hegel's dialectic of self-consciousness passes over the relation of solitary reflection in favor of the complementary relationship between individuals who know each other. The experience of self-consciousness is no longer considered the original one. Rather, for Hegel it results from the experience of interaction, in which I learn to see myself through the eyes of other subjects. The consciousness of myself is the derivation of the intersection [*Verschränkung*] of perspectives. Self-consciousness is formed only on the basis of mutual recognition; it must be tied to my being mirrored in the consciousness of another subject. That is why Hegel cannot answer the question of the origin of the identity of the „I" as Fichte does, with a foundation of self-consciousness returning into itself, but solely with a theory of spirit. Then spirit is not the fundament underlying the subjectivity of the self in self-consciousness, but rather the medium within which one „I" communicates with another „I", and from which, as an absolute mediation, the two mutually form each other into subjects" (Habermas 1973b: 144–145). The fact, that the „I", the transcendental subject loses its originality, that it cannot be a stable ground to build a philosophy of reflection upon, makes it clear that social-philosophy is not a mere supplement to theoretical philosophy but a form of theoretical philosophy itself. Social philosophy from the very beginning of its history was a radical critique of philosophy as such. Hegel in his early works reinterpreted Kant's theory of „synthesis" in inter-subjective terminology, later Marx replaced the epistemological term of „synthesis" with the social philosophical term „social labour" (see Habermas 1973a: 36–59) both philosophers strongly implied that the most important categories of transcendental philosophy can only be defined through social philosophy.

Nevertheless the point of departure of *phenomenological* philosophies of inter-subjectivity is the immediateness of the „I". Husserl's insistence

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on the absolute evidence of the I is well-known and broadly interpreted. On the other hand the immediate givenness of the „I" does not mean that it would be possible to determine or define the „I" in any immediate manner. Therefore it is impossible to think of it as the „transcendental unity of the apperception" as Kant did. Richir claims that all of the enigmas in the interpretation of Husserl's *Fifth Cartesian Meditation* derive from the fact that with the immediate givenness of the monadic subjectivity the other is given essentially with the same immediacy. There is no subjectivity without inter-subjectivity. The other is given through an „analogical appresentation" in the same manner as the primordial sphere of the monadic subjectivity.

The only – and without doubt essential – difference between the givenness of the primordial sphere of the ego and the sphere of the other is that the later is not and cannot be *present*. Although the givennes of the other is the „first genuine transcendence" of the consciousness, by experiencing it the consciousness transcends itself (Husserl 1973: 8–9), it is however a condition of possibility of a common world: the objectivity is constituted through inter-subjectivity, through the absence of the other. Indeed this is one of the major characteristics that *define* phenomenological inter-subjectivity. While mediation in the Hegelian tradition means the dialectic comprehended as the „identity of the universal and the singular", (Habermas 1973b: 146) in the phenomenological tradition it is comprehended as the mediation between present and absent.

It is however one of the most crucial difference between Merleau-Ponty and Husserl, that for Merleau-Ponty the mediation between „I" and other is *at the same time* a mediation between present and absent on one side and universal and singular on the other. While Husserl's concern is the inter-subjective constitution of the objective world and Hegel's is the constitution of the singularity of the „I" through the universality of the spirit (or in his early works: the mutual constitution of the spirit and the singular subject), Merleau-Ponty poses another question: how is it possible to mediate between incompossible worlds.

In one unfinished text published after his death he wrote about the questions posed by modern painting: „the question of knowing how one can communicate without the aid of a preestablished nature upon which all men's senses open and of knowing how there can be communication prior to communication and, finally, how there can be a reason before reason" (Merlau-Ponty 1973: 56). This is the same question as the one he is confronted in his own philosophy. At the time of his ultimate work,

The Visible and the Invisible it is also clear that „communication prior to communication" can only mean a communication on the basis of a world of „incompossibilities", a world where communicating subjects are radically other to each other. For Merlau-Ponty the universality of the inter-subjective „Nature" in its redefined sense (just like the particularity of institutions) is a problematic one. It is precisely a universality burdened with the (dialectical) identity of presence and absence. The universality of the Hegelian „spirit" (identity of universality and singularity) is insufficient, since the „phenomenological *apeiron*", the „depth of being" is indefinable and inconsistent by virtue of a phenomenological kind of inter-subjectivity: presence and absence. The „wild spirit" (*esprit sauvage*) as opposed to the Hegelian one is characterized by a universal inter-subjectivity of present-absent. The absent, the invisible is certainly immediately given, put precisely as something that cannot be present immediately: „*Urpresentiert* as *Nichturpresentierbar.*"

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> A certain relation between the visible and the invisible, where the invisible is not only non-visible (what has been or will be seen and is not seen, or what is seen by an other than me, not by me), but where its absence counts in the world (it is 'behind' the visible, imminent or eminent visibility, it is *Urpresentiert* precisely as *Nichturpresentierbar*, as another dimension) where the lacuna that marks its place is one of the points of passage of the 'world.' It is this negative that makes possible the vertical world, the union of the incompossibles, the being in transcendence, and the topological space and the time in joints and members, in disjunction and dis-membering (Merleau-Ponty 1969: 227–228).

Between incompossible worlds there is still a „transpassibility", that of communication. Language in a phenomenological sense is not a Saussurean „*langue*", but a „*parole*", a corporeal communication between incompossible worlds. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of language tries to grasp this language of the inconsistency (Merleau-Ponty 1960: 19–69). Nature (phenomenological community) itself has a language the signs are „quasi-corporeal".

Phenomenological unconsciousness and social action

According to Marc Richir the phenomenological community is essentially passive. It works as a „phenomenological unconsciousness", structuring the passive syntheses. This interpretation seems accurate to me. The phenomenological community always remains passive, since it is without *arkhe* or *telos*, it has no other choice than to remain deconstructed. From the viewpoint of the phenomenological community the integrated community

will always be a transcendental illusion, a Kantian „regulative idea“, un-reachable goal. But this is the point where the roads diverge, where phe-nomenology proves to be insufficient. Richir blames Merleau-Ponty for being unfaithful of the phenomenological community when he tries to move further, to establish a theory of institutions. And he indeed might be right – as I see it – in claiming that institutions will always be „symbolic“, they always turn the phenomenological language (the communication among radically other subjects) into a symbolic order in the Lacanian sense (communication according to a *discourse*). This is why I think it is necessary to find another form of social integration.

Is it possible to think of a political and social community, which is not symbolic? It must be a form of community based on *participation* and not *representation*. A symbolic institution is always a representational one; it is structured according to a system, a *langue*. A community based on par-ticipation at least has the possibility to transgress the symbolic order. It all depends on the concept and praxis of integration we use. There must be a *tertium* between phenomenological community and symbolic institutions, between the passive language of the phenomenological unconsciousness and the institutional political discourse. There must be a form of integra-tion of the phenomenological community that does not want to totalize it, does not want to give it an ideology, does not want to close it and oppo-se it to other political communities. I call this form *integration through differentiation* and I claim that the Spinozean concept of integration fulfills these criteria. Although I have no opportunity to elaborate this here further, integrity according to Spinoza does not mean totalization but the interde-pendent processes of differentiation and involvement in a common cau-sation. According to him the more differentiated an *individuum* (*individuum* being any set of causations cooperating in a common effect), the greater its power to act as a self-sufficient cause. Spinoza offers us a model of co-operation that relies on the participation by the very essence (his „incom-possibility“, singularity) of an individual, not the determination of the individual as a part of the totality of the process.

The theory of the phenomenological community is the ontology of a disintegrated but common world. Social action never happens on the basis of chaos but of the inter-subjective world. Badiou is right about saying that an event is always undetermined, but has no right to claim that one must suppose the absolute otherness of the multitude of beings.[7]

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7   See (Badiou 1988: 41–59) where he puts forward the ontology of a pure multiplicity, the ontology of the absolute heterogeneity.

What I call a *radical* heterogeneity is definitely not an *absolute* hetero-geneity: it is the in*com*posibility but „transpassibility" of worlds, a phe-nomenological *aperion* a multiplicity of „vertical" worlds. What I call social action is always given together with the construction of a subject. A social action is when a community is produced, which is no longer a phenomenological community, not the inter-corporeal experience of the borderless sensible world, but the event of integration. Every action is integration and only action integrates through differentiation. The social action produces a „we", a first person plural subject, but this subject is necessarily transitory. If it would not be than it would be an institution: it would be symbolic community, it would be representation but it would not be action anymore.

The phenomenological community should not be transgressed in the direction of political institution but in the direction of social integration. But integration through differentiation can only be produced by common action, not by common ideology, ideas, or ideals. If one wants to radically criticize the concept of social integration one does not need to find new ideals to synthesize society. We do not gain anything by substituting the idea of the nation with any other idea, if we substitute the nation state with another form of the state. We have to criticize the very notion of the state, social integration must not be built on the state but social action, cooperation. The phenomenological community might offer a basis for this aim, but the event of cooperative action transgresses it in the direction of an integrated community.

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Žolt Bagi

Fenomenološka zajednica i integrativna društvena delatnost.
Kritika jednog fenomenološkog pojma inter-subjektivnosti

Apstrakt

Termin „fenomenološka zajednica“ nije među najpoznatijim konceptima fenomenologije. On je bio upotrebljen od strane Marka Rišira koji se služio konceptom „prirodne“ zajednice kod Merlo-Pontija. Rad ispituje ovaj koncept iz perspektive socijalne filozofije. U njemu se analizira relevantnost tog koncepta u kontekstu posthegelijanske filozofije intersubjektivnosti. Zajednica shvaćena na ovaj način je istovremeno izvor i rezultat, a time nastaje teorija istorijski zasnovanog formiranja komunikativne integracije koja prethodno nije data i heterogena je. Zatim društveno posredovanje, koje određuje subjekta delanje, shvaćeno je kao otvoren, ne-totalizirajući proces koji omogućava da se konceptualizuje integrativno delanje koje ne neutralizuje heterogenost savremenog društva. Teorija fenomenološke zajednice je ontologija dezintegrisanog, ali zajedničkog sveta. Društveno delanje se nikada ne odvija na osnovu haosa, već na osnovu inter-subjektivnog sveta, a tako on može da rezultira novom osnovom za takvo delanje. Sa druge strane, „fenomenološka zajednica“ je u suštini forma „pasivne sinteze“, što znači da je ona nesposobna da zasniva ujedinjavajuće *delanje*, koje je jedina mogućnost za autentičnu integraciju (kao ne-reprezentativna forma društvene integracije). Dakle, ona mora da se kritikuje.

Ključne reči: Inter-subjektivnost, Mark Rišir, Moris Merlo-Ponti, priroda, beskonačnost, fenomenologija, socijalna filozofija, integracija