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## **HERMENEUTICAL SPHERE BETWEEN FAMILIARITY AND STRANGENESS**

### **Introduction**

Hans Georg Gadamer writes that hermeneutics lies “between strangeness and familiarity”<sup>1</sup>. Hermeneutics does not intend to investigate the existence as it is – “in itself”. Its proper subject of investigation is understanding. We are unable to read out existence. In order to illustrate such a situation we can refer to any measurement. Namely, when we are measuring a section with a measuring rule, it is not as it was given us empirically, without any mediations. To make a measurement we need a rationalizing agent in a form of the said measuring rule. Likewise, hermeneutics focuses on understanding. “[...] we do not have to overcome time distance. It was historicism’s naive assumption that we are moving into the spirit of the bygone epoch, that our thinking is based on its notions and presentations, not on ours, and in this way we reach a historical object”<sup>2</sup>. Therefore it is clear that the object of investigation should not be read in its own form, as it is seen, heard, or what impression it makes. The fact we cannot touch it does not mean we cannot learn it. It can even be said that the distance shows it in a broader context. In consequence, it is better comprehended.

### **Hermeneutical understanding**

Hermeneutical understanding can be described as follows: first of all we have to understand and be guided by understanding, while the under-

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<sup>1</sup> H.G. Gadamer, *Koło jako struktura rozumienia*. W: *Wokół rozumienia. Studia i szkice z hermeneutyki*, tłum. G. Sowinski, Kraków 1993, s. 232.

<sup>2</sup> Tamże.

standing sphere is not limited to science. Other disciplines, which do not belong to science but are essential in comprehending, should also be involved. Distance is a domain of such “understanding”. In result objectivity can appear only when methods of investigations and measurements have been devised. In other words, the object of investigation appears in its own authentic form only when all references to the current matter of investigations disappear.

Hans-Georg Gadamer in *Truth and Method* underlines the importance of understanding distance and writes, that “[...] objective cognition can be reached only from a certain historical distance. [...] Possibility of reviewing the whole, a relative termination of a historical process, its remoteness from the present day views – these are in some sense really positive conditions for historical understanding”<sup>3</sup>. All conditions accompanying current experience are temporary and not established in theory. Therefore we can say that even if in experience we can sense the “thing-in-itself”, we are able to say nothing about it. A physicist, Werner Heisenberg, also confirms this. He writes that “we are constantly encountering structures caused by man, so to some extent we are constantly meeting ourselves”<sup>4</sup>. It means that a man with his nature cannot be an unconcerned observer, who would see things as they are. We have always been on earth and already understood it. In this sense the studied thing has been already defined in structures of understanding. Heisenberg confirms such state of things, and he writes: “[...] science is only a link in an unending trial proceedings of a man with nature, and it cannot describe nature »as it is«”<sup>5</sup>.

## Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology

Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology is similar. It also reflects hermeneutical outline of reality. Meaning and logic of the world are here referred to a given sense in a specific sensory experience. Edmund Husserl in *The Idea of Phenomenology* maintains that empiricity of experience does not define its objectivity. Therefore “[...] I have to [...] make phenomenological reduction, exclusions of all transcendent existence experi-

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<sup>3</sup> Tenże, *Prawda i metoda. Zarys hermeneutyki filozoficznej*, tłum. B. Baran, Warszawa 2004, s. 409.

<sup>4</sup> W. Heisenberg, *Obraz natury w dzisiejszej fizyce*. W: *Ponad granicami*, tłum. K. Wolicki, Warszawa 1979, s. 121.

<sup>5</sup> Tamże, s. 113.

ences”<sup>6</sup>. In his later work, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie*, he states that experiencing reality is not isolating from it using phenomenological reduction, but on experiencing world. Reduction has to facilitate reaching a sense of the world. Husserl writes that the world is “[...] consciously existing-important world”<sup>7</sup>. In such a view the world has a status of validity, which does not derive its basis from transcendence but from intentional consciousness. Ivonne Lorenc emphasizes that “Always, [...] according to Husserl, we are in a meaningful world, which discloses its meaning in intentional acts of turning to it. Interpretation of this world’s meanings may be treated as experience of founding sense”<sup>8</sup>. Husserl confirming his thesis writes that: “[...] the world is aware as a universal horizon, as homogeneous universum of objects [...] this world in our »community-life« is our consciously existing, important world”. To sum it up we can say that cognition gets its reference to an object only when the basis for cognition has been already prepared, when we know what is cognition and the learned object. Then all these cognitive processes can be interpreted and treated as referred to existence. Therefore it should be remembered that studying the world is validated by epistemological analysis, which shows the way of access to existence that is defined by the sphere of understanding consciousness.

It is worth adding that Husserl’s consciousness is the opposition of what it means and of what is described by it. In this sense phenomenology presumes there is a hidden creature in such a division. Because, in effect, realization of everyday world and its “meaning” has to show the person the way to transcendental sphere of consciousness. The author of *Die Krisis* writes that consciousness of everyday life (*Lebenswelt*) leads to “[...] realization of universal investigative assignment of transcendental reduction”<sup>9</sup>. By the very fact determining the sense of everyday life gives

<sup>6</sup> E. Husserl, *Idee fenomenologii. Pięć wykładów*, tłum. J. Sidorek, Warszawa 1990, s. 13.

<sup>7</sup> Tenże, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie*, red. von W. Biemel, Den Haag 1962, s.110.

<sup>8</sup> I. Lorenc, *Między sensem i znaczeniem. Hermeneutyczny wyraz fenomenologii genetycznej*. W: *Horyzonty fenomenologii*, red. D. Bęben, Toruń 2008, s. 8.

<sup>9</sup> „Im Wechsel dieser ineinander fudierten partiellen Einstellungen, wobei die auf die lebensweltlichen Phänomene als Ausgang, nämlich als transzendentaler Leitfaden für die höherstufigen Korrelateinstellungen zu dienen hat, verwirklicht sich die universale Forschungsaufgabe der transzendentalen Reduktion“ – E. Husserl, *Die Krisis...*, s. 177.

a subject a final phenomenological task of transcendental reduction. Its goal is transcendental consciousness.

### **Martin Heidegger's fundamental ontology (“significant”-“labelled”)**

Martin Heidegger steps off such a scheme, as if behind a relational opposition “significant”-“labelled” was something more. Heidegger in *Being and Time* eliminates a gap dividing a subject and cognitive subject<sup>10</sup>. Cognitive subject cannot look at its object from a perspective, because its most basic structure is *being-in-the world*. In other words the subject in such a cognitive diagram does not have to prepare to cognition by achieving source consciousness in transcendental reduction. Edmund Husserl's phenomenology is an example of such a diagram.

Heidegger defines it in a completely different way, and gives the subject a name – *Dasein*. Such a definition has to distinguish its active nature from the whole real world. Such a subject is fundamentally near existence, therefore there is no need of discussing a cognitive relation subject–object. In order to summarize this part of considerations we can say that existence is not concealed behind a relation of a “significant” subject and “labeled” world. It is accessible straight from the source.

### **Heidegger versus Kant**

It is worth adding that according to Heidegger, pure reason must be sensorial. Therefore, not because that “[...] it is linked with a body. Quite the opposite, it is rather a man, a rational being, that can in a transcendental, i.e. metaphysical sense »possess« a body only because transcendence as such is *a priori* sensorial”<sup>11</sup>. Hence transcendence is not defined by a boundary notion – the “thing-in-itself”. It is not existence – thing-in-itself – that has fundamental significance in relation to subject of cognition. The principle of cognition is a sphere of convenience, and thanks to it the subject has an opportunity to perceive reality.

Immanuel Kant discussing inscrutability of the “thing-in-itself” writes

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<sup>10</sup> Por. M. Heidegger, *Bycie i czas*, tłum. B. Baran, Warszawa 2005, s. 196.

<sup>11</sup> Tenże, *Kant a problem metafizyki*, tłum. B. Baran, Warszawa 1989, s. 192.

that it can only occur “[...] in phenomenon”<sup>12</sup>. On the other hand he remarks that “transcendental object being at the basis of phenomena [...] is neither the matter, nor an intelligent, thinking creature, but an unknown basis of phenomena, which deliver us empirical notion [...]”<sup>13</sup>. A question concerning the notion the “thing-in-itself” results from the fact that the subject has an opportunity of cognition only in visual context of space and time. While pure mind aims to go beyond such conditions of cognition. It presumes that at the basis of such cognition there must be the “thing-in-itself”, which cannot be expressed in a cognition framework.

According to Heidegger the problem of the “thing-in-itself” disappears because the mind cannot go beyond the limitation of senses. As I have written, it is sensorial in nature, therefore any transcendence can only be defined as a shortage symptom of sensory perception. For example, when I see a solid body, let’s suppose it is a cube, I can see it from some perspective. It means that I can see the front of it. At the same time I know that what I cannot see is the cube’s back side. The back side of the cube is at the specific moment invisible to me, which does not prevent me from seeing it, because when I walk round the figure I will be able to get its right cognitive perspective. Therefore, the subject is aware of its sensuality and the world seen through it. That is why any other ways of going beyond cognitive abilities are impossible.

## Summary

In the face of the above we can see that Heidegger tries to restore vital function of a relation “significant”-“labeled”, in which, by pointing out a real nature of existence is to be fulfilled. It is not a metaphysical margin which should not be used in cognition. We are thinking using a language, and also existence has a linguistic meaning to us. Therefore it should be a hermeneutical familiarization of the world with calling for presence – its significant marking. Gadamer writes about of fulfilling presence in cognition: “In this way we reach the roots of what may call »theory«: seeing the existing things. It is not a trivial ascertainment of factual presence (*Vorhanden*). Science alike – does not define a »fact« as something simply existing, determined by measuring, calculating, impression. »Fact« is rather a hermeneutical notion, constantly related to a situation of

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<sup>12</sup> I. Kant, *Krytyka czystego rozumu*, t. I, tłum. R. Ingarden, Warszawa 1957, A277, B333.

<sup>13</sup> Tamże, t. 2, A379, A380.

assuming or expecting, to a situation studying understanding more complicated kind”<sup>14</sup>. Therefore it can be said that cognition is objective only when its methods aim to grasp the wider context, not limited to perception or any frames. Here, the most important thing is to understand a situation of cognition, with its domain – distance, not – feeling. Only in this way we can learn objective reality.

A basic hermeneutical rule discussed here is that both, a spatial and historical distance, provide us a better understanding of a studied object, in consequence – cognition. Special attention should be turned to the fact that both, a spatiotemporal situation and historical context undergo changes. Yet, these changes do not deform a cognitive effect, quite the opposite, the object of cognition gets its fullness.

### **Hermeneutyczna sfera pomiędzy zażyłością a obcością**

Niniejszy artykuł jest przedstawieniem wybranych teorii filozoficznych, które w mniejszym bądź większym stopniu inspirowały się myślą hermeneutyczną. Nie chodzi mi tutaj o hermeneutykę w znaczeniu tradycyjnym, odwołującą się do rozumienia tekstów i języka. Zamierzam natomiast zwrócić uwagę na jej walor ontologiczny. Tak ujmowana hermeneutyka nabiera sensu jako rozumienie samego rozumienia oraz rozumienie bytu. Stąd może być pojmowana jako swoiste przed-rozumienie bytu, które umożliwia interpretację poznania i w niej ujęcie przedmiotu.

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<sup>14</sup> H.G. Gadamer, *Pochwała teorii*, tłum. A. Mergler. W: *Teoria, etyka, edukacja. Eseje wybrane*, red. P. Dybel, Warszawa 2008, s. 33.