

## PASSAGE AND RUPTURE. THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL NOTION OF TIME

### Summary

Any discussion concerning the phenomenological notion of time and its transformation, when the latter is expressed in singular, may be seen as lacking precision (to say the least) or it can be even considered as an overly presumptuous act: one should bear in mind, after all, that phenomenology has never been perceived as a unitary and well-defined doctrine, theory or system; rather, it has been thought about as a movement. Phenomenology has often been defined as a method in a need of an ever-renewed reassessment, or even as the “method” the essential features of which are the orientation towards experience and the practice of the wakeful attitude, rather than any set of formalised methodological principles. From this point of view, one should understand that when Edmund Husserl, who laid the foundations of the phenomenological method, presents phenomenology as the first philosophy (*prôtē philosophia*), he does not express by this an aspiration towards some fixed foundations (in the sense of Aristotelian metaphysics), but rather sets an objective that extends itself to infinity and which seeks to purge the descriptions of experience of their metaphysical assumptions. Respectively, one should interpret the work of Emmanuel Levinas, a Lithuanian-born French Jewish philosopher, in the context of the self-criticism of phenomenology, *i. e.*, making an assertion that when Levinas expresses his harshest criticism of Husserl, he, in fact, acts in the most phenomenological way.

This is the reason why it may also be more appropriate avoid talking about one defined phenomenological notion of time and rather speak of continuous efforts of phenomenologists to purge the descriptions of the experience of time from the metaphysical assumptions, as we mentioned earlier. Although in partial agreement with such a point of view, we should, however, in the case of phenomenology, draw attention to what Tomas Sodeika, a Lithuanian phenomenologist, using the term coined by science historian Thomas S. Kuhn, calls the “paradigm shift” (the term expresses the points of rupture in the evolution of science)<sup>470</sup>. This is the reason why this monograph attempts to prove that the phenomenological philosophy, in its efforts to solve the “puzzle” of the experience of time, faces the paradigmatic rupture, when the Husserlian “paradigm” of the “living present” (entrenching the privileged status of the present and the continuity of the experience in the passive synthesis of time) is changed by the post-phenomenological “paradigm” of “diachrony” (*i. e.*, the rupture in time, the duality of time) that was introduced by Emmanuel Levinas.

We attempt to show the occurrence of this paradigmatic rupture (or, as we called it, in singular, the transformation of the phenomenological notion of time) at two topical levels: the first level is the one of the temporality as the condition of experience and the second one is the level of the description of a concrete temporal experience that highlights its structure. We also raise a question concerning the relationship of these two topical levels: do they intersect or do they, in fact, eliminate each other?

As it is known, the Husserlian notion of time distances itself from the objective time and turns rather to the experience of time. In this way, Husserl seeks to describe the particularity of temporal experience:

<sup>470</sup> Tomas Sodeika, *Filosofija ir tekstas*. Kaunas: Technologija, 2010, p. 192–206, 220.

in his analyses of time he recurs to the descriptions of the perception of musical melody which emphasise the subjectivity and interiority of time. According to Husserl, the entire variety of the experiences of time can be traced to one fundamental *phenomenon of the irreversible passage of time*, but at the same time he perfectly understands that the phenomenology of time cannot be discussed independently, all by itself: it puts us into the vortex of the matters related to the essential issues of the phenomenology, such as constitution of experience, subjectivity, transcendental, etc. Thus, the phenomenological approach, from the very beginning, contains the seeds of an unavoidable conflict and tension, since, on the one hand, time is presented as the form, condition or foundation of the emergence of any kind of experiences, on the other hand, this very *form, condition or foundation of passage of time cannot remain in the present*. The temporal nature of consciousness itself can be grasped in the description of a recollection: when I remember some event of my past, the experience of the past once again comes to me as something that occurred in the past, and not as an experience of the present in which I remember the past. Thus, at this point, we begin to see in a clearer manner that the phenomenological description of the life of consciousness reveals the self-differentiation of consciousness, its self-alienation, and unsolvable lack of transparency to itself. On the other hand, dealing with the problem of transcendental, it is important for Husserl to advance the transcendental subject as a foundation of experience; this is the reason why retentional and protentional horizon is interpreted as the ground of potentialities that can be actualised and made into the present (*Gegen-wart*), be put forward. This allows noting that, in the case of Husserlian notion of time, the relationship between the levels of the concrete temporal experience and temporality as the condition of experience manifests itself as an intersection of the phenomenological description of time and the epistemological objectives.

It is Martin Heidegger who draws attention to the epistemological orientation of the Husserlian analysis, pointing out that the very manner of asking the question (when temporality is described by the means of perception) has a defining effect on the result of the analysis (the cognitive account of temporality fails to take into consideration temporality as a mode of being, *i. e.*, as the ontological dimension of temporality). The Heideggerian discussion of the ecstatic temporality of *Dasein*, as an attempt to concretise the formal structure of time-consciousness (retention–“now”–protention) that, at the same time, overturns the traditional priority given to the actuality over the potentiality and refuses to understand the temporality only through the present (one can find the traces of such an understanding in the works of Husserl), is important to us. As for the notions of temporality of other members of the phenomenological movement, such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, we do not analyse them at a greater length, since they are based on the Heideggerian interpretation of the Husserlian notion of time and do not question the phenomenological structure of time itself. The analysis of Merleau-Ponty is focused on the temporality at the level of corporeal being, and this allows him to put an emphasis not only on the corporeality as intentionality, but also on the passivity of temporality, referring to the anonymous time of the corporeality. Such an extension, however, does not introduce a change in the structure of the phenomenological time; it rather explicates some features that have been anticipated by Husserl himself. Sartre attempts to provide a new explication of the phenomenological time using the Hegelian concepts of being-for-itself and being-in-itself (facticity of being), which, to our opinion, do not provide a better explanation of the concrete phenomenon of the temporality, but only discerns, at the conceptual level, some structural features of the phenomenon of temporality.

Heideggerian turn towards the concrete existence and the concrete experience of time coincides with the Levinasian aspiration to think of the concreteness of time; however, even if their orientation is the same, their assumptions differ, and, thus, the position of Heidegger is largely criticised by Levinas. Such an active relationship of Levinas both with Heidegger and Husserl allows us to define the Levinasian notion of time as the structural transformation of the phenomenological notion of time. We can see here a move in the direction of post-phenomenology, which allows questioning the very basic assumptions of the phenomenological thought.

According to our analysis, the Levinasian transformation of the notion of time occurs at two levels: first, at the transcendental level, by pushing to the limits the move of reduction that has been applied by Husserl himself, Levinas questions the fundamentality of the transcendental subject; second, at the level of a concrete experience, by putting an emphasis on the experiences that cannot be described based on the phenomenological time structure. It is true that such a possibility is opened by the level of *passive syntheses* that was described by Husserl and that supposes such experiences that cannot become present for a subject. Levinas, however, unlike Husserl, seeks to describe time as rupture, as radical novelty. In this sense, the Levinasian aspirations coincide with the resolve of the post-modern thinker Gilles Deleuze to think time as radical novelty. The source of this idea can be found in the notion of time proposed by Henri Bergson, who exerted influence on both Deleuze and Levinas. As Levinas sees it, the temporal difference at the ontological dimension does not repeal the continuity of Being, thus, he transfers the analysis of temporality to the social dimension, where time as relation to the *other* is relation beyond Being (beyond potentiality). In such a way, the post-phenomenological strategy of thought in the discussion of problem of time allows us to raise the question about

the very identity of philosophy itself. In this discussion, we will appeal to the critical perspective introduced by the deconstruction of Jacques Derrida, which allows an independent reflection on both Husserlian and Levinasian strategies of thought.

*The first part* of this monograph discusses the extent of the phenomenological notion of time, from the constitution of time-consciousness to the temporality as a horizon of worldly existence. In essence, this part is dedicated to the Husserlian and Heideggerian analyses of time. This part has four chapters. The first chapter presents a general discussion on the assumptions at the origin of the investigations on time-consciousness by Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology. The second chapter highlights the fundamental feature of the phenomenological analysis of time, which is the analysis of temporality in the context of the issue of transcendental. The enquiry into the essential content of the phenomenological philosophy allows showing that the phenomenon of temporality is incomparable to any other phenomenon of human experience, since every phenomenon of human experience emerges as a temporal one. It is also argued that the introduction of the time as transcendental condition of experience defines the transcendental nature of the phenomenological philosophy. The notice is made to the fact that the form of phenomenological time that is the basis for the aspiration of the philosophical discourse towards fundamentality and autonomy provides an anticipatory completeness for the horizon of transcendence and, at the same time, causes the variety and openness of the concrete experience. The third chapter analyses the aspect of temporality in the constitution of objects, that was spotted by Husserl and that manifests itself as passive and active syntheses. It argues that the Husserlian analysis of time-consciousness reveals not merely the temporality of immanent objects but also the temporality of a subject. In this way, it seeks to emphasise the role of the aspect of passivity in

the experience of time. It also discusses the complicated issue concerning the relationship between transcendental and concrete experience of time: the structure of the living present, that is the mark of the level of the passive synthesis, discloses the pre-reflective aspect of time and makes the notion of transcendental subject, as the basis for the experience, problematic, since the “I” that functions at the deepest level of time-consciousness remains anonymous to itself. This is the reason why the description of the passivity of temporal experience requires transformation of the notion of subject and it clashes with the Husserlian epistemological objectives. It is also shown that the project of the genetic phenomenology that can be found in the writings of late Husserl attests his attempts to specify the transcendental subject and it enters an indirect dialogue with the Heideggerian investigations of temporality. In the fourth chapter of the first part of this monograph, the analysis of ecstatic time of the Heideggerian *Dasein* reveals an attempt to concretise the transcendental subject and, at the same time, to indicate the time horizon as the potentiality that surpasses the presence, which allows to expand the very notion of presence. Based on the phenomenological notion of time, the Heideggerian philosophy allows the description of the innermost layer of the temporality of *Dasein* not as an anonymous process that sets a limit to reflection, but as mutual relationship between the thrownness (the “having-been”) and the project (the “being ahead of itself”). Thereby, the interpretation of the Heideggerian concept of facticity shows that the Heideggerian analysis of the phenomenon of the being-towards-death reveals the duality of this phenomenon: the originary inauthenticity of a self. This is the reason why the reflection of existence reveals the *Dasein* as being despite itself. However, the fact that the modes of temporality of existence eventually preserve the form of the structure of reflection (since temporality is discussed as the condition of the self-awareness of *Dasein*) shows that the phenomenological

notion of time does not suffice for the disclosure of the passivity of the temporal experience.

*The second part* discusses the post-phenomenological notion of time of Emmanuel Levinas emphasising its relation to the phenomenological analysis of time. The first chapter analyses the Levinasian radicalisation of reduction (at the corporeal and intersubjective levels), the move that seeks to question the fundamentality of the subject. The radicalisation of the reduction shows that the discussion on the temporality as the form of experience does not suffice if one seeks to describe the temporality as the experience of the event of difference (which equally means the explosion, the lack of form). For this reason, the discussion on the issue of time requires the transformation of the phenomenological notion of time at the structural level. The second chapter discusses the concept of the subjectivity caused by the aforementioned reduction and related only to the mode of the present. The third chapter discusses the deformation of the phenomenological time at the level of the description of concrete experience. The transformation of the phenomenological notion of time, that puts an emphasis on the experiences that cannot be described in terms of intentionality allow introducing a structure of temporal diachrony in two directions: at this side of intentionality, through the anarchy of elemental life, and beyond intentionality, through the ethical relation to the *other*. After the transformation of the time-consciousness in these directions, one discloses the passivity of the temporal experience; the temporality is interpreted as the shock of experience, as an irreducible difference. The question concerning the relationship between transcendentalism and the concrete experience of temporality, however, remains open, since the diachrony is introduced as a disturbance of synchronicity that, nonetheless, retains its relation to it. Moreover, the post-phenomenological analysis of the notion of time allows the assertion that it provides not so much a solution to the



problem of time, but, rather, it puts its unsurpassable contradiction in evidence. The aspirations of the post-phenomenological philosophy to describe the passivity of concrete experience of time becomes, paradoxically, the negligence of the concreteness of time, since the concreteness of existence, which is expressed by the diachrony of the subject, is simply seen as finitude, the point from which the leap towards the *other* is made. The fourth chapter is dedicated to the discussion on the strategy of the post-phenomenological thought; to achieve this, the comparison between Levinasian and Derridean strategies concerning the phenomenological time is made and the temporality is thought through as the event of difference. This chapter shows that, in the post-phenomenological philosophy, the rejection of the transcendental dimension of temporality revives the speculative and empirical strategies. This questions the presence of the philosophical discourse to fundamentality and autonomy. At the same time, however, the strategy of the post-phenomenological philosophy allows defining the philosophy as an open way of thought, *i. e.*, where the identity of this thought is defined through the relation to something that is not itself.