

LANGUAGE, DESCRIPTION AND NECESSITY. WAS WITTGENSTEIN'S PHENOMENOLOGY A HUSSERLIAN PHENOMENOLOGY?

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In this article we would like to prove that the so-called Ludwig Wittgenstein's phenomenology was not the phenomenology in Husserlian sense. Ludwig Wittgenstein's thought is most often associated with analytical philosophy, pragmatism or a specific metaphilosophical programme. Conversely, the philosopher is rarely considered as belonging to the phenomenological school. What remains problematic is whether 1) Wittgenstein did in fact practice some form of phenomenology and, if so, 2) what school of thought should it be related to? Both problems may be brought down to one basic question of 3) what is phenomenology? The answer to this last question, albeit tentative, will help us answer questions one and two. We can give a preliminary answer to our third question. We could say the following: phenomenology is a method to describe *what* is given for description and *how* it is given in terms of analysing the conditions under which an object may appear. As such, it is a transcendental way to encapsulate conditions determining the possibility of any experience. We may ask now whether Wittgenstein was a phenomenologist by this definition of phenomenology. If we conclude that he was not, we will try to answer our second question — can we talk of Wittgenstein's phenomenology in any other sense, much as we do in the case of phenomenologies of Mach, Einstein or Austin. Ludwig Wittgenstein used the word phenomenology to describe his philosophy twice. First, in his notes from 1929 which later served as material for the posthumously published *Philosophische Bemerkungen*, and then in 1951 in a collection of notes published as *Bemerkungen über die Farben*. Let us consider what he wrote in 1929.

Key words: Description, grammar, Husserl, phenomenology, phenomenological language, philosophical methods, space, Wittgenstein.

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ЯЗЫК, ОПИСАНИЕ И НЕОБХОДИМОСТЬ. БЫЛА ЛИ ФЕНОМЕНОЛОГИЯ ВИТГЕНШТЕЙНА ГУССЕРЛЕВСКОЙ ФЕНОМЕНОЛОГИЕЙ?

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В этой статье мы постараемся доказать, что так называемая феноменология Людвига Витгенштейна не была феноменологией в гуссерлевском смысле слова. Мысль Людвига Витгенштейна чаще всего ассоциируется с аналитической философией, прагматизмом или специфическим метафилософским проектом. Некоторые авторы, напротив, полагают, что философа можно отнести к феноменологической школе. Проблематичным остается 1) действительно ли Витгенштейн практиковал какую-либо форму феноменологии и, если да, то, 2) к какой школе мысли она может быть отнесена? Обе проблемы могут быть сведены к вопросу о том 3) что такое феноменология? Ответ на этот вопрос, пусть и предварительный, поможет нам также ответить на первые два. Мы можем дать предварительный ответ на наш последний вопрос. Мы можем сказать следующее: феноменология — это метод описания того, *что* дано для описания и *как* оно дано, с точки зрения анализа условий, при которых объект может являться. Как таковая, она есть трансцендентальное описание условий, определяющих возможность любого опыта. Затем мы можем задаться вопросом, был ли Витгенштейн феноменологом, исходя из этого определения феноменологии. Если мы придем к выводу, что он не был таковым, мы попробуем ответить на наш второй вопрос: можем ли мы говорить о феноменологии Витгенштейна в каком-либо ином смысле, как в случае с феноменологией Маха, Эйнштейна или Остина. Людвиг Витгенштейн использовал слово «феноменология» для описания своей философии дважды. Первый раз — в записках 1929 года, которые позже послужили материалом для посмертно изданных *Philosophische Bemerkungen*, а далее — в 1951 году в собрании заметок, опубликованных как *Bemerkungen über die Farben*. Мы рассмотрим то, что он написал в 1929 году.

Ключевые слова: Описание, грамматика, Гуссерль, феноменология, феноменологический язык, философские методы, пространство, Витгенштейн.

INTRODUCTION

Ludwig Wittgenstein's thought is most often associated with analytical philosophy, pragmatism or a specific metaphilosophical programme¹. Conversely, the philosopher is rarely considered as belonging to the phenomenological school.

¹ This aspect of Wittgenstein's thought is most often brought up by researcher linked to the so-called *New Wittgenstein* movement. These are, among others: Cora Diamond, James Conant, Stanley Cavell, John McDowell and so on (Crary & Read, 2000).

In international literature many thinkers tried to reconcile Wittgenstein and Husserl as early as the 1950s and 1960s (Duffrene, 1966; Ricoeur, 2014; Spiegelberg, 1968; Peursen, 1959), suggesting either structuralism or hermeneutics as the possible common ground. Another wave of publications on the relationship between phenomenology and analytical philosophy (mainly Frege's) had to do with semantic interpretations of the noema, sense and reduction put forward by the so-called West Coast (Føllesdal, 1969; Dreyfus & Hall, 1982; McIntyre & Smith, 1982) and East Coast (Mohanty, 1982; Drummond 1990; Zahavi, 2004) schools of thought. The third wave of studies into complementarity of Wittgenstein's and Husserl's thought was brought about by works by Jakko Hintikka and his students (Hintikka, 1996a, 1996b; Park, 1998). We would like to look on what Wittgenstein said about phenomenology and how he used this concept.

What remains problematic is whether 1) Wittgenstein did in fact practice some form of phenomenology and, if so, 2) what school of thought should it be related to? Both problems may be brought down to one basic question of 3) what is phenomenology? The answer to this last question, albeit tentative, will help us answer questions one and two.

1.

As early as 1945, Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote in the introduction to his *Phenomenology of Perception*: "It may seem strange that we must continue to ask this question half a century after Husserl's first works. Nonetheless, it is far from being resolved" (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, xx). Can we provide it today, more than a hundred years after the publication of *Logical Investigations*? It seems not. Disputes over the nature of phenomenology, its method, language and validity continue to this day. This is best seen in ever new attempts to "correct" Husserl, write his work "afresh" or "discover" the actual content of his thought. Nonetheless, there is a guiding principle which almost all scholars accept: phenomenology is not a set of propositions, but a kind of method. According to Husserl's description, it is the "first philosophy" investigating what is revealed to the consciousness and the way it is revealed. Phenomenological descriptions are not supposed to be based on assumptions or prejudice. Neither are they to be oriented by any *praxis* or research objectives. Hence, phenomenology is first and foremost a description. The descriptive method is supported by such methodological steps as imaginative variation, *epoché* or phenomenological reductions. If we were to say that, to be a phenomenologist,

one needs to go through every successive step in the Husserl's method, most of Husserl's closest students (e.g. Ingarden or Stein) would not pass the test². What does seem to define a phenomenologist, however, is the fact of providing maximally assumption-free descriptions of an object in its *that* and *how* as well as a certain "something" which might be called a phenomenological attitude. By such attitude we mean a reflexive approach to the objects described or, more precisely, a suspension or neutralising of our intentional acts of seeing, hearing, understanding, loving, multiplying, judging and others. Their content is not lost but rather contemplated or seen from a perspective. "When we move into the phenomenological attitude, we become something like detached observers of the passing scene or like spectators at a game" (Sokolowski, 1999, 48). The phenomenological attitude is also called the transcendental attitude. In our opinion, it leads to determining the conditions under which objects appear as well as describing the constitution of objective sense. Husserl believed that this attitude may be achieved through the so-called transcendental reduction whereby we suspend all our judgments, beliefs or theories about the existence and nature of objects. Merleau-Ponty claims that the aim is to restore the naïveté of the child or the original ability to be astonished by the world.

To give a preliminary answer to our third question, we could say the following: phenomenology is a method to describe *what* is given for description and *how* it is given in terms of analysing the conditions under which an object may appear. As such, it is a transcendental way to encapsulate conditions determining the possibility of any experience. We may ask now whether Wittgenstein was a phenomenologist by this definition of phenomenology. If we conclude that he was not, we will try to answer our second question — can we talk of Wittgenstein's phenomenology in any other sense, much as we do in the case of phenomenologies of Mach, Einstein or Austin.

2.

Ludwig Wittgenstein used the word phenomenology to describe his philosophy twice. First, in his notes from 1929 which later served as material for the posthumously published *Philosophische Bemerkungen*, and then in 1951 in a collection of notes published as *Bemerkungen über die Farben*. Let us consider what he wrote in 1929.

² As mentioned by Andrzej Półtawski (Ingarden's student), Ingarden also wondered whether he is a indeed phenomenologist given the methodological differences between himself and Husserl.

Initial analysis of the notes already suggests that Wittgenstein based his work on some previous concept of phenomenology. He characterised it as a descriptive discipline contrasting it with physics — an explanatory science. According to Wittgenstein, phenomenology should, in a way, be complementary towards physics. Its function would be to mark out potential areas of research. The reason is that “...physics is different from phenomenology in that it wants to establish laws. Phenomenology only establishes possibilities” (Wittgenstein, 1998–2000, MS 105, 5)³. The following page expands on this: “...phenomenology could be the grammar behind the description of the facts upon which physics builds its theories. Explaining is something more than describing. Still, every explanation presupposes a description” (Wittgenstein, 1998–2000, MS 105, 6)⁴. Phenomenology is interested in possibilities whereas physics deals with reality as a collection of facts, i.e. what actually happens. This brings to mind the Aristotelian insight according to which reality is a possibility come true. What, then, is the object of the phenomenological description? It is not facts meaning events which are somehow constituted in reality. Neither is it objects studied by other natural sciences and understood as biological, chemical or cultural facts. As underlined by Husserl, facts of this type are already constituted in appropriate attitudes.

So what did Wittgenstein mean when he said that phenomenology focuses on possibilities? The answer may be found in one of the conversations between Wittgenstein and Waismann: “Physics wants to determine what is regular. It does not deal with what is possible. This is why it does not describe the structure of phenomenological facts. In phenomenology, the issue is always possibility, i.e. sense, instead of truth or falseness” (Wittgenstein, 1984a, 63)⁵. The domain of possibilities overlaps the one of sense, whereas truth or falseness refer to reality which is already

³ „Die Physik unterscheidet sich von der Phänomenologie dadurch daß sie Gesetze feststellen will. Die Phänomenologie stellt nur die Möglichkeiten fest”.

The method of quoting Ludwig Wittgenstein’s works: Texts contained in *Nachlass* (BEE) are quoted following the principles used by the publishers. For example, MS 105, 16: MS means the type of text, followed by its number in Wright’s catalogue (Wright, 1969), page number coming at the end. Text numbers from 101 to 183 refer to manuscripts, 201–245 to typescripts, 301–310 to texts dictated by Wittgenstein. TS 213 is *Big Typescript*. The number after the publication symbol refers to the number of the paragraph.

⁴ „Dann wäre also die Phänomenologie die Grammatik der Beschreibung derjenigen Tatsachen, auf denen die Physik ihre Theorien aufbaut. Erklären ist mehr als beschreiben. Aber jede Erklärung enthält eine Beschreibung”.

⁵ „Die Physik will Regelmäßigkeiten feststellen; sie geht nicht auf das, was möglich ist. Darum gibt die Physik, auch wenn sie vollständig entwickelt ist, keine Beschreibung der Struktur der phänomenologischen Sachverhalte. In der Phänomenologie handelt es sich immer um die Möglichkeit, d.h. um den Sinn, nicht um Wahrheit und Falschheit”.

constituted. Hence, sense refers to truth or falseness as possibility does to reality. It is therefore the condition for the possibility of truth or falseness. In order for the proposition “The computer sits on the desk” to be described as true or false, it must make sense in the first place. There is no sense, for instance, in the proposition “The computer dances on the desk” if we were to understand it literally. So what is sense according to Wittgenstein? Is it strictly related to the semantic content of a proposition or only to the possibility of making true-false judgments about a proposition as was the case in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*? For Husserl, sense is not purely linguistic. It cannot be simply equated to the content of a proposition. Does Wittgenstein believe that sense is intensionality? We will answer this key question further on. Let us now take a closer look at how Wittgenstein understood phenomenology by taking as example his own phenomenological analyses.

3.

According to Ludwig Wittgenstein, “phenomenology” is not a straight-forward, strictly defined notion. It is first of all related to a proto- or pre-science which, as we have said, analyses sense, that is conditions for the possibility of truth and falseness. It is also related to language as a phenomenological *medium*. This creates a certain ambivalence or tension which are fundamental for the project and which Wittgenstein was not able to reduce. On the one hand, he wanted to capture what is unchanging and necessary as the condition for any possible experience and verbal expression. On the other, his aim was to arrive at a clear, unprejudiced description which was to be achieved by none other than the phenomenological language. This kind of language was to reflect or provide an image of experience and its “flow” with the aim to encapsulate what is given directly in notions. However, if we want to know what is given directly, we are open to uncertainty. In his notes, Wittgenstein provides several, not always congruous examples. He mentions direct experience (*die unmittelbare Erfahrung*) (Wittgenstein, 1984b, 1), the world of sensual data (*die Welt der Data*) (Wittgenstein, 1998–2000, MS 105, 96; MS 107, 222; Wittgenstein, 1984b, 48), the world of representations (*die Welt der Vorstellung*) (Wittgenstein, 1984b, 49), or even the visual space (*das Gesichtsraum*) (Wittgenstein, 1998–2000, MS 107, 1). Such an understanding of what is direct brings Wittgenstein closer to Mach rather than Husserl. Mach says that reality is a stream of impressions, sensual data and experiences which are not given as something fixed and stable but as a random and chaotic mass of impressions. Sciences or philosophy practiced scientifically is

supposed to bring conceptual order into this chaos so that we can talk about the world in a meaningful way. Wittgenstein puts it like this: the world is in the “form of a stream”, and “what is direct finds itself in constant flow” (Wittgenstein, 1998–2000, MS 107, 159)⁶. This flow is in a way constituted within the space of vision, taste and kinesthetics (Wittgenstein, 1998–2000, MS 107, 3)⁷. Hence, phenomenological language is to use notions to reflect the flowing of the world and the spaceability of space of which time must be the form.

This immediately raises two problems. The first one was quickly identified by Wittgenstein himself. How can language, with its notions organised around syntactic rules and usage patterns, possibly describe phenomena which, by their very nature, do not have any structure? How does one express what is changeable and fleeting in the framework of what is fixed and fully shaped? As early as in the article from 1929 (*Some Remarks on Logical Form*), Wittgenstein stated that the form of space is not compatible with the forms of everyday language. The problem also bothered Husserl. Discussing the description of space in his lectures of 1905, he said: “What statements can I make about it? While I am seeing it, I can say: this here! — it exists, indubitably” (Husserl, 1999, 47). This statement is not satisfactory, especially when we want to practice science. Can this aporia be circumvented? Yes, it can, but the solutions the two philosophers adopted were radically different. Husserl suggested carrying out a phenomenological reduction, whereas Wittgenstein set about constructing a language which would be able to express the flow of the world.

The other problem related to the incongruity of experience and language is the very way in which Wittgenstein understood phenomenology. Can we ever be successful in our search for what is unchanging and necessary, as postulated by Wittgenstein, given this understanding of experience and reality? As long as he believed that the form of the world is the image of the form of the language, we could answer in the affirmative. However, once the *Tractarian* doctrine of the logical form collapsed, the answer became very problematic. It is justified to ask whether language, being based on grammar and a set of categories, can, as it were, *disclose* anything fixed and necessary about the world apart from its own structure and usage patterns? Does the kind of phenomenology which looks for conditions determining the possibility of practicing science, that is conditions for the possibility of true and

⁶ „Das Unmittelbare ist in ständigem Fluss begriffen. (Es hat tatsächlich die Form eines Strom)“.

⁷ „Ihre Raum ist der kombinierte Gesichts-, Tast- und Muskelgefühlsraum darum kann ich mich in diesen Raum ‚umdrehen‘ und schauen ‚was hinter mir vor geht‘ etc.“.

false statements, go beyond its own limits, i.e. the set of the possible propositions it constructs? As long as we use everyday language or some form of specialist language, the answer is negative. It is only with the use of a new lexicon and syntax that we can step beyond language and capture what is non-linguistic, if such a thing exists at all. This brings us back to Wittgenstein's attempt to construct a phenomenological language.

4.

The question about the possibility of the phenomenological language which would be able to adequately reflect the flow of reality is also the question about the possibility of pure description. Pure description is possible only insofar as it is correlated with the structure of objects. Such correlation may be achieved by, for example, material congruity. A certain state of affairs (with its temporal and spatial form) has its equivalent in a certain expression or a string of expressions. This understanding of correlation seems to be close to Husserl's descriptive phenomenology, but was firmly rejected by Wittgenstein. The latter thought that material correlation may only lead to never-ending descriptions⁸. Then there is formal correlation which is based on the possibility for certain object structures. This position is close to the doctrine known from *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, the only difference being that Wittgenstein definitely rejected the possibility of the isomorphic logical form. He believed that language can be "structured" to reflect the sense of the space being described. It is not quite clear, however, what he meant. His objective was either to radically "temporalise" or "verbalise" linguistic expressions, or else to arrive at the possibility to express in language the relation between a thing and the space in which the thing is given⁹. The former option brings to mind one of Borges's short stories: "There are no nouns in Tlön's conjectural Ursprache, from which the 'present' languages and the dialects are derived: there are impersonal verbs [...]. For example: there is no word corresponding to the word 'moon', but there is a verb which in English would be 'to moon' or 'to moonate'" (Borges, 2000, 32–33)¹⁰. The latter option is somehow related to the quasi-definitions of the state of affairs,

⁸ This was previously brought up by Hegel in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, when he referred to the example of describing a piece of paper.

⁹ This might be about expressing in language the relation between the object and the space in which it is given. See: (Galvez, 2008).

¹⁰ The language which is closest to such verbalisation seems to be Hebrew where words are formed on the basis of verbs rather than nouns as is the case in Polish or English.

fact or space which we know from the *Tractatus*. Examples given by Wittgenstein in his notes do not announce a great revolution. Indeed, any revolution is rather improbable as long as we use propositions with the Leibniz's subject-predicate form. The following short fragment from *Philosophische Bemerkungen* offers a suggestion:

What is necessary to a description that a book is in certain position? The internal description of the book, i.e. of the concept, and the description of its place which it would be possible to give by giving the coordinates of three points. The proposition "such book is here" would mean that it had these three coordinates. But is it not the same when I say "This is a book" or "Here is a book"? The proposition might mean "These are such and such three corners of such and such book". Similarly, you may also say: "This disk is a projection of a circle" or "This is the appearance of a man". What I want to say amounts to this: $F(x)$ must be the external description x . (Wittgenstein, 1984b, 98)¹¹

What this example shows is that the description of an object or a state of affairs is strictly related to the explanation of notions used to make the description. The explanation of notions itself is nothing else than grammatical analysis or, as Wittgenstein puts it in another place, "internal description" i.e. such that focuses on what is constitutive for a given expression. If I say that an object is of such and such colour, I have not said anything about the object yet, because having a colour is constitutive for being an object. The same holds true for such descriptions as "be located", "have weight" or "last in time". When we consider the problem from this perspective, analysis of experience becomes analysis of grammar. Descriptive propositions, so often used by philosophers as the basis for their work, are in fact normative in nature.

We know how Wittgenstein reacted to Moritz Schlick's question about the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgments. Schlick referred directly to the example taken from Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, namely: "An object is not red and green at the same time" (Schlick, 1925, 203; Husserl, 1993). Wittgenstein answered that such propositions say something *a priori* about objects only seemingly. In fact, they are nothing more than rules of grammar or symbolism (Wittgenstein,

¹¹ „Was braucht es zu einer Beschreibung, daß — sagen wir — ein Buch an einer bestimmten Stelle ist? Die interne Beschreibung des Buches, d. i. des Begriffes und die Beschreibung seiner Lage, und die wäre durch Abgabe der Koordinaten dreier Punkte möglich. Der Satz ‚ein solches Buch ist hier‘, würde dann heißen, es hat *diese* drei Tripel von Bestimmungskordinaten. Denn die Angabe des Hier darf eben nicht präjudizieren, was hier ist. Ist es nun aber nicht dasselbe, ob ich sage ‚*dies* ist ein Buch‘ und ‚hier ist ein Buch‘? Der Satz würde dann etwa darauf hinauskommen zu sagen, ‚das sind drei bestimmte Eckpunkte eines solchen Buches‘. Man kann ähnlich auch sagen ‚diese Kreis ist die Projektion einer Kugel‘ oder ‚dies ist die Erscheinung eines Menschen‘. Alles was ich sage, kommt darauf hinaus, daß $F(x)$ eine *externe* Beschreibung von x sein muß“.

1984a, 67–68). What is confusing is the word “can” which also appears in such propositions as “I cannot see this object”, but is used differently. In Husserl’s example the usage is logical or grammatical, i.e. normative, whereas in the latter it is empirical, i.e. descriptive.

The allegation Wittgenstein made against Husserl is equally valid for his own thinking. If phenomenological language is supposed to be the image of space and whatever is given in experience, at the same time expressing what is necessary and fixed, its very possibility becomes questionable. After all, phenomenology will either describe what is given (assuming that phenomenological description is possible, i. e. assumption-free), or it will be grammar — a set of linguistic rules. To be free of assumptions, phenomenology would have to go beyond language, i.e. give language up. And so we are left with grammar which cannot be phenomenology as it does not describe any objects, but only *shows* the rules of using notions through which we talk of things.

5.

Wittgenstein’s phenomenological project turned out to be a philosophical fantasy, an attempt which seems to have been doomed to fail at its very inception. We could identify a lot of reasons, but let us focus on just one, perhaps the most important for our subject matter. Wittgenstein adopted a conviction which can be traced as far back as British empiricism and was characteristic for early analytical philosophy, radical empiricism espoused by Mach or the philosophy of science proposed by Boltzmann and Hertz, a conviction according to which language or, more broadly, the mind is stable or fixed. A proposition based on a rigid logical form is unchanging in its meaning which means it determines a certain possibility which either comes true or not. This constitutes a sort of matrix for facts which are changeable but, once framed within the proposition, can be described, anticipated and combined. Hence, language is not dependent on non-linguistic contexts such as culture or society. As an objective *medium*, it is also independent of subjectivity, i. e. subject-related conditions. “I” is not revealed in the proposition otherwise than as the subject of the utterance or the grammatical subject. Its experiences, history or internal constitution have no material influence on the way language operates. Like Hume, we might say that “I” is nothing else than a bundle of experiences and impressions attributed to a certain subject by force of habit confusing the grammatical subject with the subject of thinking, speaking or doing. If we fail to

take account of subject-related conditions in the analysis of language or experience, experience must come out limited and distorted. Any analyses of the linguistic and epistemological kind which do not factor in the role of the subject are one-dimensional and can never show the dynamics of talking about the world and living it.

As it was understood by Wittgenstein at the turn of the 1930s, language is a dead and distorted thing because its relationship with reality cannot be explained without any reference to the activities undertaken by the speaker who, describing or talking about the world in which he simultaneously acts and lives, creates a dynamic bond between himself and the experienced reality. In this context, it is easy to understand why Wittgenstein was later to turn towards pragmatism and underlined the utmost importance of ostensive acts and activities in language-games which, finally, do provide the link between the speaker and the world.

During the phenomenological phase of his investigations, Wittgenstein understood sense as the content of a proposition. He was not able to show the dynamics of sense generation. He did not arrive at similar conclusions to the ones Husserl drew from his *Logical Investigations* in that he did not appreciate the role of the subject who is not only an empty location of speaking or experiencing but rather represents a kind of inalienable activity. Also, he understood language as filling out empty proposition forms by their corresponding intuitions. It was only after he abandoned the prejudices of British empiricism that he could truly set out on a phenomenological journey¹².

CONCLUSION

Let us now answer the question we posed at the beginning — was Wittgenstein a phenomenologist? We believe he was not. The so-called Wittgenstein's phenomenology was a philosophical attempt which is rather to be linked to phenomenologies of physicists-cum-philosophers or empiricists like Mach than to Husserl's thought. It was far from the perspective of on-going "vigilance" over experience or observing it in order to correct mistakes in perception and speech. Wittgenstein kept vacillating between a project of what phenomenology was supposed to be and its actual application. This tension was not foreign to Husserl

¹² The presence of British empiricism in Husserl's thought was discussed at length by Póltawski (Póltawski, 1973). I write about this problem in: (Piekarski, 2015).

either — dogmatic and critical motifs have indeed been shown to overlap one another in his work. Unlike in the case of Wittgenstein, however, this did not prevent him from building phenomenology as a kind of method and philosophical discipline. As it was soon to be seen, for Wittgenstein, the phenomenological project was just a stop on the way to his later philosophy which was much more independent of the influence exerted by his predecessors. As to the later “phenomenology of colours”, it was not a new, corrected version of phenomenology, but a combination of grammatical analyses with conceptual analysis inspired by Goethe.

Nonetheless, we do find in Wittgenstein’s philosophy one recurring (if we may say so) Husserl-like motif. It does constantly refer to what can be *seen* or what is *revealed*. In the *Tractatus*, it was fundamental to make the distinction between *speaking* and *showing*, the latter being given more importance. This dichotomy is present in all Wittgenstein’s later philosophy. He kept saying that the operation of the language can be *seen*, that there are linguistic facts which are distorted and falsified when *uttered* but which can be *seen*. His recommendation of “To repeat: don’t think, but look!” (Wittgenstein, 1986, 31) seems to betray some kinship with Husserl. We believe that the relation is of a spiritual rather than philosophical and methodological nature.

To better clarify one of the most important and so far unsolved problems bothering philosophers of the 20th and 21st century, namely the problem of the relationship between Anglo-American analytical philosophy and the continental tradition of phenomenology and hermeneutics, we should better understand the relationship between Husserl and Wittgenstein. This article could be understood as a contribution to this aim.

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