# Description, Language, Other Minds, Reduction, and Phenomenology

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How to think a unique and determinative turn in analytic philosophy of mind? To answer this question this article first presents an attempt to render clear that analytic phenomenology, by contrast with conceptions of phenomenology of the XXth century, beneficially dispenses with several methodological and conceptual assumptions that were assumed to be compulsory, as phenomenological reduction, a notion of synthesis, and a philosophical notion of the a priori. It then presents some eventual difficulties to the achievement of a phenomenological turn within analytic philosophy, which are, the neglect of historicity, abstractionism, the acknowledgement of the place of language in our lives, and solipsism. It finally presents several demands that concern the felicity of contemporary analytic phenomenologies, namely, anti-abstractionism, fallibilism, attention to polyadic relations, and the integration of ecological and decolonial concerns of our cultures.

*Keywords:* description, language, other minds, reduction, solipsism

## Introduction: Felicities and Infelicities of Phenomenology

To engage in the attempt to think a unique and determinative phenomenological turn in analytic philosophy of mind is to think of an achievement within analytic philosophy, among distinct philosophical conceptions and practices in relation with at least aspects of philosophical conceptions and practices of phenomenology. It is also to think of analytic philosophy as related practices of philosophy that at least can integrate an aspect of phenomenological conceptions and practices of philosophy that became paradigmatic in "continental" philosophy, to account for minds in their relations to their world. To interrogate ourselves with respect to the possibility of the achievement of a phenomenological turn in analytic philosophy is thusly to think of the achievement of autonomy by a philosophical movement within analytic philosophy.

Phenomenology, as a philosophical movement, inspired or initiated in the XXth century by Husserl, was from its beginning concerned with the question of the beginning of philosophy, that of the eventual groundings of a (re)start of philosophy, and that of the method adequate to realize a (re)start of philosophy. The idea of phenomenology can be understood as an instance of the problem of a (re)start of philosophy, motivated by the criticism of the undue neglect of the concrete, lived experience, within then mainstream philosophical practices, and by the diagnosis of the inadequacy of then available philosophical procedures and methods. Slogans and philosophical projects that were inspirational for phenomenology as, "towards the concrete"[1], or claimed by

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[1] After the title of the book of Jean Wahl (1932) which inspired French phenomenologists as Sartre and Merleau-Ponty.

phenomenologists, as the Husserlian slogan "back to the things themselves", "to the phenomena themselves", testify of a tension that pervades the project of making, or constituting, (a) phenomenology: Without returning towards what things always have been, differentiating the philosophical results of the application of phenomenological method from what precedes its application would be philosophically impossible. But if the application of phenomenological method implies to recover philosophical groundings for philosophical accounts of what things were prior to its application, then phenomenology risks turning out to consist in a necessarily deceiving and illusory project, if strictly speaking yet conceivable as a project. This tension was practically solved by the importance and attention provided by practitioners of phenomenologists to the lived, to incarnation or "bodily-experience", by subtle and detailed descriptions of our experiences, perceptions, emotions, relations, actions, situations. Although criticizable, eventually yet underachieved, phenomenology implied the acknowledgment and the realization of a firm demand: that of the mutual adequacy of reality and description (as Sartre, 2003a; Merleau-Ponty, 2012). Reality could not be necessarily as such indescribable, and description, as a practice, could not be as such necessarily deficient, lacking or restrictive[2]. Philosophically, there is no such thing as a reason to discount that we can really describe reality, and assume that we could only describe, as it were, its reminiscences.

That a phenomenological movement already has achieved autonomy within analytical philosophy is undeniable (see Kriegel, 2011; Mendelovici, 2018). Such conceptions argue in favor of internalism[3] with respect to mind: To account for intentionality, for conscious relations of mind with world, involves to account for the intentional dimension of practices such as that of meaning and intending in ways that are *only* or *priorly* internal to mind, and are arguably adequate to integrate the fact of *sui generis* intentional realizations[4]. Such conceptions further present arguments in favor of the *existence* of interiority to philosophically account for the fact of such realizations.

Nevertheless, analytic philosophical attempts that involved addressing the double-difficulty of the accuracy of descriptions of the concrete or lived experiences by philosophers, and of the method adequate for such achievement, and claimed—at least momentarily, a phenomenological aspect of their procedures, had earlier been proposed by Austin and Wittgenstein. Austin claimed for his conception of philosophy the philosophical label of "linguistic phenomenology" (1979, p. 182), and Wittgenstein carried on a reflexion about the means and the eventual success of a phenomenology. Further, inheriting both from phenomenological and analytical conceptions of philosophy has been attempted against the background of some of their achievements (as Cavell (1979, Part 2) did). Historical considerations regarding past achievements and difficulties encountered by past attempts of phenomenologies can thus prove beneficial. This is what I first shall attempt. Clarifying the idea of an analytical conception of phenomenology could be beneficial to interrogate the necessity of the use of the notion of synthesis and that of the sufficiency of the use of the notion of analysis to conceive of phenomenology. For if the assumption of the necessity of the notion of synthesis to conceive of phenomenology surely can seem surprising for practitioners of analytical philosophy of mind, that of the sufficiency of the notion of analysis to conceive of phenomenology surely will seem surprising to practitioners of phenomenology unacquainted with procedures of analytic philosophy.

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[2] See the notion of *apophantic pact* introduced by Imbert (1993, 1-9-18) and that of *phenomenological contract* introduced by Benoist (2016, p. 88).

[3] Whether enactivist or not, on this see Márquez and Soutif (2021).

[4] Although faithful with aspects of Descombes' criticism of the conception of consciousness argued for by phenomenologists as Sartre and Heidegger (2014), the proposed approach maintains the centrality of the notion of consciousness (by contrast with the one of intentionality), mainly due to its pervasiveness among languages and world-conceptions.

With this paper, I propose a reflexion about important aspects of past attempts of conceiving phenomenology to think the eventual successfulness of a phenomenological turn within analytic philosophy of mind. I bring out in a first part some aspects of contemporary analytic conceptions of phenomenology, to account and understand the novelty claimed by contemporary analytic practitioners. I attempt to clarify that contemporary analytic conceptions of phenomenology discharge or do without several traditional methodological requirements (concerning "reduction", "synthesis", "a priori", and "transcendental") of earlier conceptions of phenomenology. I then attempt to bring out eventual difficulties to contemporary analytic conceptions of phenomenology. I will attempt to show that the neglect of history, the underestimation and misconception of the place of language within our lives, and the neglect of the issue of solipsism could eventually raise difficulties to contemporary analytical conceptions of phenomenology. I will thirdly consider philosophical successes of early phenomenology and conceptions inspired by aspects of the practices of phenomenologists to propose a reflexion about requirements beneficial to contemporary practices of phenomenology within analytic philosophy of mind.

## How to Understand the Project of a Phenomenological Turn in Analytic Philosophy of Mind?

### Dispensing With "Reduction"

A first aspect of contemporary analytic conceptions of phenomenology is that none implies the relevance of "reduction" for phenomenology, conceived as a methodological requirement (Husserl, 1983, pp. 60-61). "Reduction" as a practice, that of the suspending of the "natural attitude", was assumed by Husserl as necessary to render conceivable the constitution, and thereby practicable phenomenology. "Reduction" was nevertheless supposed to be "phenomenological" *to* render phenomenology possible. But (quasi-)paradoxically this requirement posed a radical difficulty as "reduction" could be "phenomenological" only if it could not *be* phenomenological. For, "reduction" was designed to address some of the challenges raised by Kant to the (then) traditional conceptions of the a priori, to render possible their overcoming. It was assumed to involve a liberatory philosophical overcoming of the so-called "boundaries" (or philosophically "restrictive" limits) of experience, internal to conceptions of the a priori criticized by Kant (and to an extent, by Descartes). Such philosophical liberation was assumed to be achieved by a correlative "knowledge of essences" obtained by the forbidding of their would-be ordinary negligent overcoming by the endorsement of "natural attitude".

The practice of phenomenological reduction was supposed to provide a practical basis for the establishment of phenomenology as a philosophical practice, and a conceptual basis to discount from phenomenology practices that could not but lead to the neglect of "essences" involved not only by philosophical and ordinary practices. Interrelated difficulties raised by the need for such methodological assumption were realized since early phenomenology, notably by Sartre (2004; 2003a, p. 127). For the presupposition of the need for a person to constitute oneself as "a transcendental subject" as the obverse of a thereby delineated "egological sphere" or "egotistical sphere" had for counterpart the requirement of its being transcended to establish a unique "inter-subjective sphere" (as such "sphere" would need by principle to be the one of every one and no one at once and at each time (Leguérinel, 2015, pp. 105-108)). Sartre argued that such assumption was a problem for phenomenology rather than a practical solution to realize its felicitous descriptive concerns with the concrete or lived experiences (Coorebyter, 2000). For, Husserl's early conception of "transcendence" was supposed to render possible the restitution of its public character to a "phenomenal field" that otherwise could not but be somehow be "private" as not only "ownerless", but also as internal to an interiority that could somehow be by principle

"inaccessible" to other minds. But then phenomenology as a practice could not but involve a sort of double-demand that could not but be failed to be addressed: that of providing a *public* and *presuppositionless* grounding for other knowledges.

Sartre argued for the misleadingness of the assumption of the need for reduction for phenomenology and of its equivocation with a sort of "transcendental" or maybe rather "methodological" solipsism, that needed to be relinquished to account for and describe situations, ordinary or not. Sartre (2003a, Part 3, Chapter 1) thusly addressed to Husserl a criticism similar to that of Putnam (1996, pp. 236-237) to Carnap: that of the difficulty and eventually the impossibility to distinguish "methodological solipsism" from "solipsism". But neither Husserl nor Carnap literally defended solipsism. The concerns of Sartre about solipsism-in-practice are about practices that are detrimental in ways that are firstly external to philosophy. But less than to the works of Husserl, contemporary philosophers refer to the works of Brentano when engaging in the project of accounting for intentionality and arguing in favor of phenomenology.

**The Superfluousness of Synthesis to Account for Description**

However, it nevertheless is of interest to interrogate the achievements of the phenomenologies of the XXth century to address the question of the eventuality of a phenomenological turn within analytic philosophy of mind. What can be kept of the phenomenological method and its results, notably, the rendering explicit and the deepening of lived experience by *means* of description conceived as a *practice*? How to conceive of method if its results are possible but that our earlier conception of method proved to be inadequate?

This might be the problem addressed by Merleau-Ponty with *The Phenomenology of Perception*, for the search of a "pure" description (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, Preface), first manifested the concern of distinguishing descriptions from expressions that could not have counted as descriptions anyway, maybe comparatively by *lack* (of details, realism, resemblance, truthfulness) or by *inadequacy* (as all our expressions are not descriptions, as for example, exclamations). Consciousness could not reduce to its descriptions, to descriptions. But the search for a "pure" description could nevertheless make seem impossible to think that the consciousness of a person may present specificities, or may have led to the distortion of ordinary mutual understandings of individual specificities by engaging us in a relatively misleading conception of embodied consciousness (as Merleau-Ponty's notion of the body as "general means of having a world" (2012, pp. 146-147)). Internalist accounts of intentionality, attempts of isolating and distinguishing features of intentionality, notably to account for the possibility of a truthful agreement with respect to descriptions, lived experiences, specificities, peculiarities, and individual characters can be understood as attempts to respond to such needs.

However, that such attempts are required and satisfactory according to their own aims of accounting for intentionality and for lived experience is unclear. Wittgenstein's criticism of the philosophical quest for "the pure" (2009, §97) is of interest to address this difficulty, as categorial conceptions of experience (according to which categories do not only serve us in realizing actions, but also pervade experience conceived as a field) and peculiarly transcendentalist and categorial conceptions of experiences (according to which at least some of the categories which pervade experience conceived as a field are transcendental, necessary, unavoidable, and a priori) involve the acknowledgement of the need for a prior "purification" of thought and experience, of the disentanglement of the contributions of thought and sensation, of understanding and sensibility to our lives *prior* to the successful and sensible exercise of thought. As a demand that can always be attempted and whose successful realization can always seem to beg the question (for its achievement could somehow seem to

unavoidably require the unconceivable), such philosophical quest for "the pure" could be intrinsically deceptive; or, this aspect of traditional phenomenological conceptions of philosophy to which Wittgenstein drew our attention is ambivalent.

This leaves use before an important intersection concerning the notion of synthesis for phenomenology. Lewis characterizes well the position of the problem that analytic philosophy discovered since its beginnings, maybe as irrecoverable: "Thought can do just two things: it can separate, by analysis, entities which in their temporal or spatial existence are not separated, and it can conjoin, by synthesis, entities which in their existence are disjoined" (1956, p. 55). Thereby Lewis acknowledges a demand internal to traditional epistemology, according to which thought and "the given" (the supposed sphere of all that is assumed in need to be distinguished from and coordinated with thought), are to be conceived of as parallel and mutually heterogeneous. But if these operations are exhaustive of the eventual achievements of thought, that not only what can be thoughtfully done, but that all that can be done by thought is nothing but these two operations, and that phenomenology is meant to account for lived experience and for life without granting that solipsism could be meaningful, then, how to proceed?

Contemporary analytical conceptions of phenomenology and intentionality do not presuppose that the notion of synthesis necessarily and unavoidably has a constitutive place within phenomenology as a practice. That our conscious experiences imply the correlative realization (yet in an unbeknownst way) of an act of synthesis which would unify experience according to our wishes, wills, and intentions is unclear. Why should any analysis have needed to be the analysis of a synthesis if only to count as an analysis (for if it is the case that the unity of experience always implies at least one synthesis, then every analysis of each experience could always be, in the last resort, the analysis of a synthesis)? If the unities presented by our experiences can be explained by means of analysis only, then a sort of conceptual liberation could be realized by dispensing with the recourse to an inadequate notion of synthesis to account for lived experience and to live. It thus is a question of central importance, if we want to conceive and practice philosophy in a liberatory way.

**Giving the "A Priori" Away**

Contrarily to what traditionally has been assumed to be compulsory to account for "the grasp" that thought could have had to have *on* the world, correlated notions of "a priori" and "transcendental" can also be dispensed with. Indeed, a salient aspect of the traditional conceptions of phenomenology is the granting of the need for some philosophical notion of "a priori" (Husserl, 1983; Sartre, 2003a; Merleau-Ponty, 2012). The difficulty involved by such conceptions (except, that of Sartre (2003a)) is that these are mostly incompatible with ordinary uses (although rare) that can be made of the words "a priori". We can use such words to engage about future action and thereby express a commitment with respect to what shall be done by us if conditions are united and met to realize what we envisage together. But traditional philosophical conceptions of the a priori suppose we can seek to bring out what is required and uncontained, and eventually uncontainable by our words and our uses of our words. This diagnosis made by Lewis at the beginnings of analytical philosophy is still relevant. A philosophical motive that explains the recourse to the use of a traditional philosophical notion of "a priori" can be understood in relation to the notion of "transcendental". For transcendentalist conceptions of the "a priori" presuppose that to account for the constitution of experience as a "field" necessarily imply that we do dispose of a system of basic concepts, categories, that *could not* only contingently constitute, but would necessarily have to pervade experience, our experiences, to render their constitutions intelligible and possible. Without such concepts,

no experience would be possible at all. But then, we could not but have to account for the availability of categories conceived as transcendent (by contrast with immanent), necessary (by contrast with contingent), unavoidable (by contrast with avoidable), and a priori (by contrast with a posteriori). Post-Kantian and post-Hegelian philosophies have engaged in such projects, and contemporary readings (Longuenesse, 2005, pp. 18-29) explicated that addressing a criticism of superfluity to such attempts could not have reduced to a mere criticism of coherence. For not only "a priori" but even "pure a priori" concepts have to have been formed and arranged in relation to some past experiences if only to count as relevant to render possible the constitution of our experiences. However, the recourse to the notions of "a priori" or "transcendental" can be dispensed with for two main reasons. The first is that contrarily to what has been presupposed by traditional conceptions of the a priori, it is unclear that we could have *needed* to *oppose* that which is independent from an experience to that which is subsequent to this experience. The effortless intelligibility of many ordinary cases, situations, does testify that the range of case that is basic within our ordinary practices, understandings, actions, does not involve that our concepts and our experiences could have, as such, failed to be on a par, and required to be conceived as mutually heterogenous or homogeneous for their congruency to be then rendered possible, and *if only to be constitutive* of our (linguistic) uses. The second reason concerns our conceptions of the place of language in our lives. Phenomenologists of the XXth century have addressed the difficulty of the acknowledgement of this place, that necessarily is as contingent as our lives, and also contingently necessary as involved by our thoughts concerning our experiences, our descriptions, our actions. Accounts of the appropriation of a language by one's user in ways that would not take for granted the alleged compulsoriness of some set of basic interrelated concepts have been produced (Sartre, 2003; Husserl, 1973). And achievements in logic in the XXth century, those of Frege, Russell, and Wittgenstein, have rendered possible to dispense with the myth of "private realm", of the *existence* of a sort of "inaccessible" interiority (Bouveresse, 1976) whose public character could have needed to be established or re-established. Language could not basically be a property of a person (on this see U çan, 2023). It is without a pun that we can affirm or claim that we can give the a priori away. The kind of considerations involved by traditional conceptions of the a priori could not even oppose untraditional, critical, conceptions of the a priori, as their concerns, interests, are mostly different[5]. Contemporary concerns and critical accounts of "intentionality"—as those of Benoist (2016), Laugier (2000), Narboux (2006; 2015) in their relations to the problem of reference, common to Frege, Husserl, Russell, Sartre and Wittgenstein, i.e., the problem of accounting for referring as an activity within which we can engage in unambiguous manners, testify of the perdurance of critical conceptions of the felicity of early conceptions of phenomenology. The radical novelty of solely analytical conceptions of phenomenology, and the eventual realization of a phenomenological turn within analytic philosophy of mind, thus need to be assessed[6].

## Which Are the Difficulties That Might Prevent the Success of the Phenomenological Turn in Analytical Philosophy?

### The Neglect of Historicity

Difficulties may be encountered and challenges are to be addressed for a phenomenological turn within analytical philosophy to be successful. The first is that of the neglect of historicity (by contrast with historiality, or historicity as an essentialized feature of consciousness). The initiator of phenomenology in the XXth century,

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[5] For a discussion of the difference of the approach of Kant and Wittgenstein in this respect see Sullivan (2013, p. 265).
[6] To an extent, that is the attempt of Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*, where is posed and criticized the double-aporia of hermeneutism and behaviorism (2003, Part 4, Chapter 1, Section 2.D).

Husserl, and arguably one's best critic, Sartre, did start by accounting for, if only to make constructive criticisms, earlier conceptions of "phenomenon", "appearances", "science", "knowledge". A historically accurate conceptual explanation of the possibility of the neglection of historicity was considered to be relevant both to practice phenomenology and establish it as a shared practice. Sartre thusly criticizes (2003; 1988) ahistorical, disembodied, disincarnated conceptions of consciousness: Accounting for consciousness does involve to integrate the facticity, the contingent necessity, of the structures of our consciousnesses, which are, one's place, one's body, one's past, one's situation, one's fellow, one's death.

Then as now, one could wish to object: Is not it the case that consciousness would then need to be conceived "worldlessly" to actually *make* such criticism and reject such conceptions? Is not a double play about consciousness involved by any such approach? But it surely does matter to acknowledge that such claims *really* are assumed to be attempted (as by personalism, and some strands of spiritualism). If we want to criticize conceptual and practical issues raised the mentioned conceptions, then we need the means to disprove such conceptions *in their own terms*, to establish, when required, that the charge of incoherence does not relevantly apply to the conceptions we argue in favor of (Lewis, 1956, pp. 209-210). Contemporary attempts which evacuate the importance of the evaluation of the felicities or infelicities of past conceptions of phenomenology to propose or argue in favor of phenomenology, whether conceived as a solely analytic philosophical project or as a philosophical project that is both analytic and synthetic, ought thus to be interrogated. The reference to Brentano's conception of intentionality surely is of significant philosophical importance to conceive of "intentionality". But such reference could not be equivalent with the establishment of the infelicities of later attempts to conceive of "intentionality" and "phenomenology".

## The Resurgence of Some Old Problems

Intentionality is often held-as-explained, by starting from the introduction of the notion of object, conceived as that towards which mind projects oneself, that towards which mind would owe to project oneself, for mind to avoid its confinement to its own representations and achieve conscious perception of reality. Acknowledging the necessity of the mediation through an object, internal to consciousness, that unavoidably could not lack, would prevent us to conceive consciousness as restrictively limited to "simple" or "mere" appearances of external objects, of which we could and would have nothing but "simple" or "mere" representations. Wittgenstein remarked that the philosophical "sublimation" of the "simple" into "pure" should have had to render possible to *resolve* the two problems at once by *cutting* these and that such sublimation could not render possible such achievement (2009, §46).

This straightforward conceptual structure renders possible to an extent, to distinguish the true and the false, the truthful and the illusory, the factitious and the original, appearance and reality. If the object internal to consciousness somehow matches, or is assumed to match by the perceiver, through the *proxy* of the internal object in which representation consists, with the one external to consciousness, then it is a successful case of perception; it is true to affirm that the perceiver perceives the object, which is the original object out of which representations are obtained (as empiricists argued) or made (as rationalists argued) by the minded perceiver (by contrast with automata). Intentionalism, which assumes that the mediation by an intentional "object" is unavoidable if we want to account for intentionality, avoids some of the pitfalls of representationalism (notably the copy-theory, according to which representations, impressions conceived as internal objects replicate external objects). But intentionalism encounters difficulties in accounting for the activity in which *objectivating* consists.

To realize which are these difficulties we can interrogate ourselves with respect to conditions and (ordinary) procedures to establish that the internal object somehow matches with the external one through the proxy that the internal one would consist in. In the optimal case of the successful perception of an object by a perceiver, the perceiver may express that an object is perceived by oneself. It would not be truthful, in many cases, to claim that the perceiver does perceive an object *despite* one's own words, despite one's own rejection of the success of the perception of that object. So far, no claim has been made. But as it might happen to be the case that someone affirms perceiving an object that no one else achieves to perceive, and also that someone denies perceiving an object that according to everyone else could not possibly remain unperceived, we might be inclined to express and compare our representations of an object to render objective whether the so-called "internal objects" of the perceiver match or not with the "external ones" and with each other. This is an aspect of practices highly important to us (Lewis, 1956, p. 74), as integrating and accounting for specificities of perceptual achievements and eventual dysfunctions of sensory organs is necessary to find practical solutions (as making and wearing glasses). Nevertheless, we might also be inclined to *suppose* that agreement in *public* reference to perceived external objects is dependent upon agreement in *private* reference to internal objects which cannot be perceived. But then, it is unsure that there is any case in which agreement about results of the activity of reference can be truthfully reached in an indisputable way, as if imagination could as such constitute an obstacle to consciousness. The problem is then conceived in ways that seem to unavoidably raise a would-be unsolvable problem with respect to the evaluation of the success of reference conceived as a practice or activity. One way that could have seemed relevant to solve the two problems is to consider that terms by means of which we refer to mental states are substantive (happiness, joyfulness, etc.), and that reference to underlying substantivizations or nominalizations could and would warrant the successfulness of the *private* references made *internally* by consciousness, that, in some sense *could* not be externalized at all. Thus, one could and would need to take one's own mental states for instances that one's own mind would index *sui generis*, by itself, internally to oneself, and out of which an abstraction and eventually generalization could be rendered possible and grounded. According to such accounts of consciousness in its relation to perception, we thus could and would need to wish a "proper oneself", a "oneself proper", or, if you prefer, "a" "self" or "the" "self". Its possession by mind would prevent us to confuse, as expressed by Descombes (2014b, pp. 270, 313), but arguably, as Sartre brought out (2003a, Part 4, Chapter 1, Section 2), impersonality with a threat of an unavoidable defeating of our capacities, faculties, abilities, practices, to generalize, identify, differenciate, structure, and realize. Whether this could be required is at best unclear.

Thus, it might be remarked that a consequence of the use of the mentioned conceptual structure to account for the relations of mind or consciousness with world is the confusion of what is called "aboutness" and "directedness" in conceptions of phenomenology. For it might seem mysterious that we may realize what we did not, notably about one's past, as Sartre did (2004, p. 6): That a consciousness that was ours at an occasion was such consciousness rather than another, although the *differentiation* of such consciousness from other consciousnesses—or conscious moments of our lives—had not happened, until it was (necessarily consciously) *made* by us, and may seem surprising. When we thusly think our consciousnesses, it is not false to affirm of these that *these* are "about", about *that* which we then were conscious of. It could not be problematic to think of a remembrance that it is one, and we can effortlessly think that when we remember, we really think our past, rather than thinking merely "to" our remembrances. However, such affirmation could not be equivalent with the affirmation that consciousness is rendered consciousness or conscious, *because* consciousness necessarily

presents the property, or exhibits the feature "'is' about". For the aboutness of some consciousnesses could not have implied that "aboutness" could be a definitive (in the double-sense of "definitory" and "once and for all") and constitutive characteristic of every consciousness whatsoever. We also, and sometimes firstly need to account for "directed" consciousnesses, "directedness" or consciousness as "aim", to think that we consciously realize *in order to* think that we consciously realize (without problematic circularity and *redundancy*).

In fact, it is not the case that the aboutness of some consciousnesses should have had to have *implied* that mind, that the person, that consciousness *produces* itself from without, as if mind could have *found* itself among its consciousnesses (consider the problem posed by extensionalism, the would-be mysteries of egology, egoism, and egotism). Rather, we remember. Furthermore, we can consciously realize (in the sense of doing) *while* we remember. In such cases, we are conscious both of what happened or occurred and of what we are doing (this case is different from the ones in which we are fully absorbed into what we are doing). And the intelligibility of at least some cases yet imply that we have consciously envisaged what we are doing, a way in which what is not yet (an imagined state of affairs, a future fact), becomes what is the case (a state of affairs that holds, a present fact). Even when one remembers, according to our practice of remembrance, we yet need to think not only that consciousness is about what consciousness was gained of, but also, that it is *consciously* that consciousness was gained of, that consciousness was taken, although such consciousness was not necessarily thusly thought, and that one could not expect without confusion that every consciousness should necessarily be preceded by a reflected version of this consciousness itself (as novelty, spontaneity are possible). But, if we would conceive that the state of affairs, the fact, *is* an object, an intentional object internal to consciousness or mind and that such object could not lack, then we would encounter again the previously explained difficulty. For then everything would be as if the object both must and must not exist for the correlative practice to be possible. At least some contemporary analytic phenomenologies, contemporary intentionalisms, and peculiarly ones which refer to Brentano's conception of intentionality, consist in attempts to answer such difficulties. A remarkable example is that of Voltolini's attempt of distinguishing thoughts conceived as "non-contingent superfacts endowed with meaning by their own (*original* intentionality) and as an essential property (*intrinsic* intentionality)" (2021, p. 133) by means of some advances made by Wittgenstein with the *Tractatus*. For intentionalism, the attempt to account for "intentionality" in primarily "internal" terms presupposes as steps: that the resolution of the would-be problem of intentionality implies distinguishing as such "original intentionality" (as a "property" of mental states understandable by contrast with "factitious" mental states, that are untruthful, unmeant, and by contrast with "secondary" mental states, as factitious mental states presuppose that primarily, mental states are original— a solution to the traditional infinite regress problem with respect to consciousness), and that the resolution of the would-be problem of intentionality implies the mediation through a distinction between "properties" of mental states, conscious realizations (by contrast with "specificities", "singularities", "features"). However, such conceptions immediately raise the problem of abstractionism and such a move can and ought to be doubted. For the recourse to the notion of "property" at this stage is neither internal and intentional enough[7] to satisfy the self-imposed restrictive demands of internalist projects, nor external and unintentional enough to satisfy the unrestrictive demands of externalist projects[8]. Such reading of the *Tractatus* also fails to do justice to important

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[7] As the mediation by the notion of property would involve a mediation by a concept that could not result from the contents of mind or consciousness.

[8] For the intelligibility of the notion of property implies both the existence and the integration within our account of *relations* that could not be internal to a single consciousness only.

achievements of Wittgenstein. Notably: There the use of the notion of "essence" or "essential" is conceived primarily in distinction with "accident" or "accidental" (rather than "unessential" or "factitious"—see Wittgenstein, 2003, 6.1232); the distinction is not meant to apply only to "properties" (say, of objects, states of affairs, facts), but is presented as involving the reconception of our notions of "generality", "logic", and "necessity"; and further, the reconceptions thereby appealed to, are meant to render conceivable the implementation of unfetishized logical notations[9].

### The Place of Language in Our Lives

We can address the fallacy involved by internalisms by reconsidering the place of language in our lives, a question that Austin both posed and addressed (1979, p. 182). A central grief of his, who thereby initiated a quite new approach (although Wittgenstein should probably be credited for its authorship), is the neglect that perspicacity results from the freshening of consciousness by consciousness (and thereby not by consciousness "itself" but by the realization by us of our successful linguistic uses). That we can take consciousness of the means by which consciousnesses can be taken or gained, and that our words can constitute such means are to integrate, at least if we want to account for the fact that we can do by means of our words, exactly what we want to do, *and nothing else* (even if the remaining precision is sometimes contestable). It is the would-be face-to-face of mind and world that Austin criticizes, the would-be philosophical scene or would-be scene of philosophy according to which there could literally be a conceivable recoil of mind with respect to the world[10]. Yet, that the politeness cannot be returned to Austin is unclear. For phenomenologists had already been contesting that we could have had to "extract ourselves" from the world to better understand and explain by describing better. Austin leaves unclear this aspect of his approach, by calling us to "relook at the world without blinkers" (1979, p. 182). For this was already the problem posed by Wittgenstein with the *Tractatus*, peculiarly with his criticism of solipsism. Wittgenstein there did not presuppose that the limits of language could have consisted in restrictions that we then could have needed to remove (what explains his later criticism according to which the transcendental is a philosophical sublimation that can be imaged with the idea of transcendental "glasses", 2009, §103). It is less clear according to Austin that we can simultaneously recuse the soundness and the legitimacy of any supposed attempt to make linguistic limits appear as restrictions. Yet Austin placed or replaced our ordinary linguistic practices at the heart of the practice of phenomenology: We could not dispense with requiring that the results of the practice of phenomenology should be at least as complex, various, rich, and eventually felicitous as the ones obtained by means of our ordinary linguistic practices (as Sartre successfully did). The intelligibility of philosophical explanation could not have been lesser than that of ordinary explanation, of the intelligibility of ordinary situations. It could not have lacked dimensions, without turning out to be incoherent. The abstractionist and intellectualist drifts of Platonism pervading phenomenology are to be criticized as such[11]. Blindness to examples, to the autonomy of their intelligibilities and constitutivities, to their paradigmaticities is a symptom of the difficulties of the tradition, of its incapacity to resolve some problems while supposing that it can exclude the possibility of skepticism. It would thus be misleading to consider that Austin replaced language within the

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[9]  Such issues are not addressed by such strand of internalism, and probably cannot, as the problems raised by the initial spatialization of consciousness, by internalist extentionalism, are not posed.

[10]  "First, words are our tools, and, as a minimum, we should use clean tools: we should know what we mean and what we do not, and we must forearm ourselves against the traps that language sets us. Secondly, words are not (except in their own little corner) facts or things: we need therefore to prise them off the world, to hold them apart from and against it, so that we can realize their inadequacies and arbitrariness, and can relook at the world without blinkers" (Austin, 1979, pp. 181-182).

[11]  See notably the criticism made by Sartre in "Conscience de soi et connaissance de soi" (2003).

ordinary. Austin rather attempted to provide to us and ourselves the means to recover the language of our lives—by contrast Bergson's unfelicitous and misleading presumption that we could have had to revive ourselves by making language revive within our lives (1946, *Philosophical Intuition*). This is a philosophically radical move, very different from the one of the phenomenologists of the XXth century. For the phenomenologies of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and to an extent the one of Sartre, consist in attempts to explain consciousness without presupposing that linguistic and conceptual means involved by the *expressions* of our consciousnesses are *constitutive*. The difference is significant. For if it can be argued that a phenomenological turn in analytic philosophy is a false start, that the *theory* of speech acts should be based upon a *theory* of intentionality, it can also be argued the realization of an analytical *theory* of intentionality reinforces, or even continues, the achievements of Austin. The idea of a phenomenological turn within analytic philosophy thus ought to be interrogated in two ways, rather than in a double-way.

**The Issue of Solipsism**

The neglect of the issue or problem of solipsism—briefly put, the negation or denegation of human reality, is often concealed by confusions. Yet, it is a problem that pervades traditional "continental" conceptions of phenomenology. Husserl, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty pose and criticize solipsism both as a philosophical and ordinary problem (Husserl, 1982; Sartre, 2003a; Merleau-Ponty, 2012). For it is neither a secondary problem, nor a problem that can be treated secondarily. But, that contemporary analytic phenomenology dispenses with the notions, procedures, and practices of traditional phenomenologies could not have implied that thereby, the problem of solipsism is resolved or dissolved. And, it is on the contrary unclear that an analytical turn within phenomenology could have been even conceivable, if the problem of solipsism could have had to be, as such, neglected.

## How Could a Phenomenological Turn in Analytical Philosophy Prove Satisfactory?

**Anti-abstractionism**

A first demand that can be expressed with respect to procedures of analytic phenomenology is to assume a philosophical achievement common to Austin and Wittgenstein: anti-abstractionism. For if anti-abstractionism—the rejection that the groundings of phenomenology as a practice consist in abstractions (eventually in replacement to "essences")—is right, then *theories* of intentionality not only do not, but also *could* not reinforce or continue in any sense whatsoever, phenomenological achievements that yet have already been realized within analytic philosophy (peculiarly Austin's "linguistic phenomenology"). Yet the problematic of the "anchoring" of intentionality, attempts of accounting for the groundings of intentionality, probably *is*, another instance of abstractionism[12].

**Fallibilism**

Fallibilism is quite explicit in the works of Austin. And Wittgenstein did implicitly address the problem raised by the assumption of infallibility that is often made by the tradition (which thereby also loses perfectionism). With respect to our realizations, fallibilism is not a claim, but rather a reminder: If anything can

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[12] For such attempts are related to foundationalim: The selection of another image as paradigmatic (that of anchoring) at best displaces the conceptual problem of accounting for consciousness. And the displacement does not solve and almost cannot fail to pose this problem anew, a problematic aspect of universalism. For a criticism of foundationalism see Wittgenstein, *Philosophie* (1955).

be successful, then that thing can fail, and inversely. Anything that could not fail could not be successful, and inversely. There is nothing to worry about the eventuality of failure, whose obverse is anxiety, which could not be the "essence" of action in any sense whatsoever, but rather is a *dimension* of action. Fallibilism matters as much to conceive of "directedness" of consciousness, or, consciousness as "aim", as to conceive of "aboutness". For, the earlier remarks concerning future states-of-mind, that will result from endorsement of attitudes and realization of actions, also concern states-of-things, facts, past, present, and future. It is not the case that there could not be necessary relations if there was no necessarily existing element. Necessary relations can hold among contingent elements (see U çan, 2023). Except if we wish to speculate, contingent existence is all that we need to account for the fact that some necessary relations hold.

**A Better Explication of Polyadic Relations**

Another demand that can be made to analytic philosophers to achieve a phenomenological turn is a better structural explication of polyadic relations and of the internal character of the relations between language and action. For among our concepts of intentionality and consciousness, if any credential is provided to the centrality of the place of language within our lives, we need to acknowledge that it is the concept of consciousness that is basic, rather than that of intentionality. Different concepts of consciousness are involved by linguistic practitioners with different world-conceptions. But these concepts are nevertheless ordinary to distinct groups of practitioners by contrast with that of intentionality. These ordinary concepts provide dimensions (which can be mutually independent) that philosophical explanations should be able to integrate if only to fulfill the demand of coherency.

**The Integration of Ecological and Decolonial Concerns of Our Cultures**

Constraints that concern contemporary and adequate conceptions of phenomenology could not result only from philosophy. If we conceive of the constitutive dimension of language in its relation to reality, such that we realize (in the sense of gaining consciousness of, but also in the sense of doing) differently by realizing differently what we realize linguistically, then we can also realize that ecological and decolonial concerns mutually imply themselves. Most of the ecological problems to which we are confronted result from the consequences and from the persistence of the functioning of neo-colonial structures of exploitation and oppression (both slavery and colonialism, are yet realities—see the Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage Report (International Labour Organization, 2017)). The realization of a phenomenological turn within analytic philosophy should both be able to account for such realities and to integrate the need for ending these.

## Conclusion

This paper proposed an interrogation about advances, limits, and constraints concerning the achievement of a phenomenological turn within analytic philosophy. In the first part, three aspects of contemporary analytical conceptions of phenomenology were considered: Such conceptions dispense with the would-be methodological requirement of "reduction" as practice, related to a superfluous and inadequate notion of synthesis to account for description, a move which renders possible to dispense with a philosophical notion of the "a priori" to conceive phenomenology. Yet, in the second part, limits and difficulties that might be encountered by contemporary conceptions of phenomenology were addressed. First, the neglect of historicity tends to lead to the reiteration of problems previously solved by phenomenologists. Second, granting the necessity of representational mediation to account for consciousness, perceptive or not, cannot but lead to confuse "aboutness" and "directedness". Third,

language is central *within* and *to* our lives, and phenomenology cannot present lesser dimensions than ordinary linguistic practices without turning out to be infelicitous. Fourth, the issue of solipsism, central to phenomenologies of the XXth is a fundamental philosophical problem that cannot be neglected without failing the acknowledgment of the extent to which humanity consists in a task.

Thus, the third part consisted in the attempt to specify constraints that could not be restrictive and are at least relevant for the assessment of the successfulness of the achievement of a phenomenological turn within analytic philosophy. To turn out to be felicitous, a phenomenology needs to be anti-abstractionist, as abstractionism involves to unduly presuppose the need for some representational mediation to account for each instance of consciousness, perceptive or not. Fallibilism does not involve any renunciation whatsoever with respect to our accounts of consciousness, and, on the contrary, renders conceivable and desirable an evolutive conception of phenomenology. A better explication of polyadic relations and the integration of the ecological and decolonial concerns of our cultures are thus necessary demands to think the future of phenomenologies.

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