

SSPPP 2023

Ca' Foscari University Venice

ABSTRACTS OF THE SEMINARS

Daniele De Santis (Charles University, Prague)

Lives without Future. Boethius, Husserl and the “Consolatio Philosophiae”

The idea that philosophy should teach us how to face death dates as early as Plato's *Phaedo*, where the image of the philosopher as the one who knows how to die is iconically presented for the first time. With Boethius' Latin dialogue *De consolatio philosophiae* an additional element is added to this famous picture: philosophy does not only or simply teach us how to die; rather, it teaches us in the first place how to live knowing that we will die. Using these two dialogues as a sort of backdrop, in my presentation I will draw on Husserl's own reflections on how to live a life that has no future. How I can live a life which all of sudden could end before I am even able to give my contribution to the world? How can I live knowing that my life will soon come to an end? How can I live a life knowing that it has no future? These are the kinds of questions with which Husserl struggles in many of his texts and manuscripts written right after WWI.

The presentation will be divided into three parts. In the first part, I will draw on Plato and Boethius in order to present the overall question I want to address; in the second part, I will provide a map of the many different forms of irrationalities that, according to Husserl, affect our own human finite existence in the world. Finally, the third part will discuss some of the variations upon the idea of future-less lives or lives without future with which Husserl grapples in some of his manuscripts and texts, thereby also measuring their possible practical implications for phenomenology.

Reading list

Husserliana volume 42

- G. Heffernan, M. Cavallaro (ed.), *The Existential Husserl* (Springer 2022)
- D. De Santis, "Problemas límite de la fenomenología trascendental: teleología, generatividad, absoluto." In: A. Serrano de Haro (Ed.), *Guía Comares de Husserl*. Granada: Comares Editorial, 2021, pp. 237-255
- O. Balaban, The Human Origins of "Fortuna" in Machiavelli's Thought. *History of Political Thought*, 1990, 11, pp. 21-36

Nicolas de Warren (Pennsylvania State University)

The Intimacy of Disappearance

In a poem of exceptional insight, Jack Gilbert evokes a grieving for the death of a beloved one – his wife – that does not exclusively possess the character of distinct memories and ample recollections, and hence, which cannot be solely understood as an interiorized image, representation, or object, to which, belatedly, one remains attached in lieu of the beloved, whose presence is no more. Although the beloved is no longer present, their presence nonetheless abides with a spectral insistence that does not let us go. As suggested by Gilbert’s exquisite poetical thought, such mourning attests to an intimacy of disappearance within the interstices of memory, thus highlighting the brightness and colorations of what that person continues to mean for us beyond the sharp resolution or dim fading of remembrance. Who is this beloved, who stills in me, after their departure from the world, once words are no longer whispered between us, once silence no longer hushes among us? The aim of this session is to explore the ruminations of Jan Patocka in an unfinished text, “Phenomenology of Life After Death,” drafted after the death of his wife, where the venerable Prague philosopher addresses the question “who do we in fact intend [as an intentional object] when thinking of the dead?”

Reading list

This short text has recently been translated into English and will be published later this year. The English translation will be provided to students before the seminar.

Matteo Giannasi (Ca’ Foscari University Venice)

What Will Happen?

What will happen next? What will happen in the long run? What will happen when I die? What will happen after I die, and after all life is over? What difference does it make, now?

The lecture will address the impact of Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology upon the series of mortal questions listed above. It will show how Husserlian phenomenology attempted not only to provide fresh epistemological foundations to human culture and science, but also to tackle metaphysical and even theological questions in a classical fashion: by providing straightforward answers to them.

The discussion will focus upon the ontological consequences of a transcendental approach to the concepts of event and future. It will address, in particular, the difference between transcendental/phenomenological, epistemological, and ontological interpretations of modality. Finally, it will distinguish between different phenomenological notions of possibility and point out their relevance for the interpretation of individual and social experiences.

Sara Heinämaa (University of Jyväskylä)

Life After Loss of the World: Pure Appearances, Perceptual Faith, and Others

In 1996, Jill Bolte Taylor, an American neuroscientist, experienced a major brain stroke, at the age of 37 years. The stroke was caused by a severe hemorrhage in the left hemisphere of her brain. Recover took eight years and required numerous periods of therapy and self-therapy. In her book *My Stroke of Insight: A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey* (2008), Taylor describes her experiences during the stroke, and immediately before and after it, and depicts the stroke as an event of getting deeply immersed in a stream of vivid impressions and submerged in a life in the present, without articulated horizons of past or future. Moreover, she characterizes the stream of impressions which she lived through as consisting of both pleasant and unpleasant appearances, or more precisely, as forming a continuum in which euphoric impressions were followed by the most painful ones, which were replaced by wonder, beauty and bliss, and then again by agony. I will illuminate and clarify the experiential condition that Taylor describes with the help of classical and existential phenomenological tools of analysis. I draw from three sources: (i) Husserl's discussion of *pure appearances*, (ii) Merleau-Ponty's reconceptualization of *perceptual faith* as an emotive relation and (iii) Husserl's analysis of *conative consciousness*, that is, the will. Ultimately, I will argue that what Taylor went through was *a loss of the world* and that, even though this loss entailed the loss of other persons as worldly entities, it did not affect or neutralize their emotive and affective powers. This, I suggest, allows us to understand how Taylor was able to break free from the stream of immediate impressions, despite her lack of contact with the world or interest in its transcendent existence.

Reading list

Husserl, Edmund Hua43/2: "IX. Das Gefallen am Schönen und der Schönheitswert (1925)", and "Beilage XIX–XX", in *Studien zur Struktur des Bewusstseins, Teilband II: Gefühl und Wert (Texte aus dem Nachlass 1896–1925)*, *Husserliana XLIII/2*, eds. Ulrich Melle and Thomas Vongehr, Dordrecht: Springer, 2020, pp. 247–255 and 256–258.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice [1964]: "The perceptual faith and its obscurity," in Chapter "1. Reflection and Interrogation," in *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern UP pp. 3–14.

Sophie Loidolt (TU Darmstadt)

Political life after metaphysics: a dialogue between Arendt and Jonas

Hannah Arendt and Hans Jonas were not only study friends since Marburg times; they also remained friends across the catastrophes of the 20th century, exchanging views as philosophers on how to lead a political and ethical life "afterwards". In this context, Jonas is known as the thinker of the "principle of responsibility," in that he urged early on the ecological and technological responsibility of human beings for their future world. Arendt, on the other hand, is known as the thinker of the political who, despite her rather gloomy prognoses in "The Human Condition," never gave up hope that people could "begin again."

The difference between the two manifests itself particularly clearly in their attitude to the question of metaphysics: do we need metaphysics to "save" ourselves, or does a new danger lie precisely in this? Larry Vogel pointedly sums their debate up as follows: "If Jonas espies Arendt's post-metaphysical thinking through the filter of his worries about our assault on nature, Arendt would see Jonas' metaphysics through the lens of her concerns with totalitarianism." (Vogel 2008, 12) In

order to shed more light on this antagonism, my lecture will, after some introductory remarks on the political world and worldlessness, move on to a “close reading” of a discussion between Arendt and Jonas which took place at a conference in Toronto in 1972. It will serve as a burning glass to confront ourselves with questions that are also very relevant in today's situation: Do we need "a" "truth" to take the right action fast enough? Do we need to know what human beings are supposed to be in order to imagine a future? Can philosophy or metaphysics help us in this, or are we thrown back to the immanence space of the political in order not to let our common life on this planet become a common perdition?

Reading list

Arendt, Hannah 1979. “Hannah Arendt on Hannah Arendt,” in Melvin A. Hill (ed.): Hannah Arendt. The Recovery of the Public World. New York: St. Martin's, 301–39.

Arendt, Hannah 1998. The Human Condition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jonas, Hans. 1984. The Imperative of Responsibility. In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Vogel, Lawrence A.: The Responsibility of Thinking in Dark Times: Hannah Arendt versus Hans Jonas. In: *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 29.1 (2008): S. 253–293. (Online-publication)

Bongardt, Michael, et al. (eds.). 2021. Hans Jonas Handbuch. Leben – Werk – Wirkung. Berlin: Metzler.

Claudio Majolino (University of Lille)

Erotic desire and immortality. An inquiry into and through Husserl's transcendental phenomenology

In the *Symposium*, Plato has Diotima emphasize the close relationship between *eros*, understood as the desire to possess what is good (τὰγαθὰ), and *happiness* (εὐδαιμον ἔσται) (204e 5-6), since, “those who are happy owe this happiness of theirs to the possession of what is good” (205a 1-2). The erotic desire common to all human beings is, therefore, desire to possess what is good forever (τὰγαθὰ βούλεσθαι αὐτοῖς εἶναι ἀεὶ) (205a 5-7). If so, Diotima concludes, such desire turns out to be nothing but desire of immortality (δὲ ἀναγκαῖον ἐπιθυμεῖν (...) ἀθανασίας) (206e 9-207a 1-4). What is noteworthy about this Platonic account expressed by Diotima is that immortality, understood as the correlate of a rather specific form of erotic desire, is something to be obtained not *after life* but *in this life*. In other words, *erotic immortality*, unlike *metaphysical immortality* (such as the one spelled out in the *Phaedo*) does not rely on the assumption of the existence of an immortal soul. In the concluding part of the dialogue, Plato illustrates this point by indicating three ways to fulfil such desire of immortality within the time span of a mortal life: biological procreation (i.e. the reproduction of the species), political and poetical creation (i.e. the accomplishment of memorable acts) and wisdom (i.e. the very activity of philosophy). In this lecture my goal will be threefold. (1) I will begin by reminding two non-erotic ways in which Husserl frames the issue of immortality: the *transcendental* (as when Husserl states that the “transcendental ego is immortal”; cf. Hua XI, 337) and the *metaphysical* (as when he critically discusses the possibility of personal immortality in the traditional sense; cf. Hua XXXIV, 471). (2) After that, I will dwell on Husserl's own account of *erotic immortality*, which

neglects Plato's preliminary reference to biological procreation, and focuses exclusively on the eroticism of politics and art, on the one hand, and the infinite task of philosophy, on the other (Hua VI, XIII, XIV passim). (3) I will finally leave Husserl's texts aside and ask the following questions: what kind of conscious experience corresponds to Plato's erotic desire of immortality? What is its structural form of intentionality? By drawing from Husserl's phenomenology of practical-axiological consciousness, I will try to answer to these questions and give a non-platonic name to this non-objectifying act aiming at the realization of life after life in this very life, be it through political action, artistic creation or philosophical understanding.

Reading list

Plato, *Symposium*

E. Husserl, *Husserliana* VI (*The Crisis*); XIII-XIV (*On Intersubjectivity*), XLII (*Limit problems*) (selected passages)

E. Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* I (selected passages)

Gian Luigi Paltrinieri (Ca' Foscari University Venice)

Some phenomenological notes on human religious way of living

Delving into the general title of the seminar, which is "life after life", rather than "life after death", my contribution will focus on how the expectation and hope of a future beyond this earthly life transform and orient precisely this earthly life. It is the promise of a future that makes believers resurrect, right here and now, in their present, in this world. I will especially consider Martin Heidegger's "Phenomenology of Religious Life" (1920-1922), where the latter shows that for a religious individual, in the monotheistic sense of Jerusalem, faith, hope and expectation are not confessional opinions or doctrinal beliefs, but concrete ways of being in this world. Yet today, in the age of contemporary secularization, God is often a merely personal God, functioning as an individual "comfort". I ask: is a comforting God still a divine God? Does hope in the future perhaps lead to a devaluation of the present or, on the contrary, just to its vivification? The answers here cannot ever be univocal. I will also ask the question: which is, instead, the way of waiting for and relating to death and future of those who are atheists? The point is that an atheist is not simply someone who denies the existence of God or someone who lacks something, but rather is someone who says "yes" to her/his own finitude and then to the world, by virtue of the richness of experiential relationships in which this world consists.

Reading list

Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Fear*, Cambridge: Polity Press 2006

Capobianco Richard (ed.), *Heidegger and the Holy*, London: Rowman & Littlefield Pub Inc 2022

Dawkins Richard, *The God Delusion*, New York: Black Swan 2007

Feuerbach Ludwig, *The Essence of Religion*, translated by A. Loos, Kessinger Publishing 2010

Heidegger Martin, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2010.

Emiliano Trizio (Ca' Foscari University Venice)

What will survive? Technology and the fate of life in this world

Individual death has never been the only form of "end" threatening human existence, nor necessarily the most dreaded by individuals and groups across different cultures and value-systems. The possible end of one's family, city, nation, culture and language or even of humankind as a whole, each being affected by a respective form of finitude, has always been anticipated as troublesome and unsettling even to a higher degree than one's own death, as literature, art, and philosophy have attested in so many ways. The idea according to which an individual's life can be sacrificed for the survival of the community is but an extreme case highlighting this complex state of affair. Characteristic of these

forms of end is that they amount to discontinuities within individual and collective life, and that they point to a persistence of life in this world (the case of the end of humankind requiring a specific discussion) rather than to the possibility of a metaphysical afterlife.

In this seminar, relying the phenomenological notions of *Lebenswelt* (“life-world”) and on the more specific notion of *Zweckwelt* (“Goal-world”), I will first try to identify what characterizes the different structures of individual and collective life whose possible end is a cause of anxiety, i.e., what makes them “spaces of sense” whose persistence is endowed with value. Subsequently, I will outline an analysis of the impact of technology on such structures, exploring the way in which technology erodes the conditions of their existence or preserve them in a new form. Technical transformations will thus appear as sources of a specific form of anxiety corresponding to “end as metamorphosis” rather than to “end as annihilation”. Finally, I will raise the question whether a crucial resource of phenomenological tradition in the age of technology consists precisely in providing insight into the nature and value of every possible life in this world.

Reading list

In ways admittedly difficult to anticipate in this abstract, the seminar will make free use of themes and ideas suggested by Giacomo Leopardi’s poem *Wild Broom or the Flower of the Desert*, and Lars von Trier’s movie *Melancholia*.)