

Summary of PhD dissertation

The Space of Thinking

Perspectivism, Movement and Affectivity in Philosophical Thinking

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The aim of the dissertation and scope of the theme:

The aim of the dissertation is to describe the space of thinking. The unfolding of the meaning of space will be presented through the experience of philosophical thinking. This description will confront the reader with the complexity of the experience of thinking. This complexity is the space of thinking itself. The analysis is far from being exhaustive, but will introduce a number of different approaches to bring forth the features of the space in question. The introduction of each new approach will lead to further concepts which in turn will be able to contribute to the specification of the main line of argumentation. Experience of thinking will be first examined from the point of view of perspectivism. The relationship between object and sense is the starting point of our argument. A single object may carry more than one, mutually incompatible meanings implicating different perspectives of interpretation, while at the same time the equivocity thus appearing is also supposed to be eliminated. This investigation will inevitably lead to the analysis of two additional aspects— *movement* and *affectivity* of thought (this latter having been elaborated by Lévinas and Merleau-Ponty). Movement will lead to the differentiation between two types of thinking, the ruminating-analytical mode on the one hand and the accelerating-insightful on the other. As regards affectivity we analyse the various challenges provoking thought in the first place and the desire of thought thereby awaken and we come to the conclusion that philosophical thinking cannot emancipate itself from these affective parameters, and what is more it would never be able to emerge in its full complexity without them. These moments are in close communication with one another and we gather that first of all they are the ones responsible for the unfolding of the space of thinking. The horizon of the issue is opened up by perspectivism while the backbone of this paper is altogether drawn up by the analysis of the experience of thinking through these three concepts. Our aim is to suggest that perspectivism, movement and affectivity of thinking have a vital role in bringing forth a realm where as diverse conceptual forms as the Platonic ideas, Aristotle's ethics, the Cartesian *cogito*, Locke's empiricism or our own thoughts share such a common dimension from the elements of which a plurality of specific, new configurations of thought may evolve. In the second part of this paper, relations between the configurations of thought-form will be examined as they appear in the space of thinking as enemies of each other on the one hand, and as a system of possible

interrelations on the other. We hope these descriptions will make it absolutely clear that heterogeneous thought forms refer to a common space which assigns the specificity of philosophical thinking. The space of thinking cannot therefore be defined, but only adumbrated by approaching it from a number of different viewpoints.

Methods

As philosophical thinking gave birth to a rather colourful and heterogeneous array of philosophical traditions, it is desirable to choose an approach for the analysis that is able to embrace the antagonistic philosophical statements with due flexibility. We need therefore an approach which – as a matter of principle – doesn't exclude certain conceptual structures, but on the contrary, proves to be capable of exposing the diverse conceptual configurations in a manner that makes them appear to us in accordance with their inherent logic without any externally imposed interpretations. We also insist that different philosophies are not only to be examined as to their themes, tools, objectives, etc. but also from the perspective of how they are practised, whereby the emerging thinking process, that is the very living experience of thinking is brought forth. Finally, it is also important that we find a proper framework to delineate the experience of thinking in its relation to the multi-layered multiplicity of meaning appearing emerging therein, which is also a part of this experience. We were able to find these conditions in certain tendencies of two contemporary philosophical movements, namely in phenomenology and post-structuralism, as it was developed in G. Deleuze's oeuvre. This paper does not draw upon the totality of these two sources, but only on some of their aspects which may assist in shedding some light on some features of the experience of philosophical thinking and onto the philosophical space this experience opens up. Hence, beyond relying on them, often do we take a critical distance towards them.

It would be hard to argue with the statement that all kinds of thinking go together with the emergence of some sort of sense. In contrast to other philosophical attitudes, one of the special characteristics of phenomenology is that it not only tacitly presupposes the above statement, but makes it its very starting point and considers it as its principal subject matter all along. This conviction manifests itself in the well-known concept of intentionality: only those things appear in whatever form that have a meaning, and

conversely only those things are meaningful which do appear in one form or another. As opposed to logical positivism, which came into being only a few years later, phenomenology doesn't examine what meaning is or what the conditions of being meaningful or meaningless are; but rather it provides the descriptive analysis of given sense-formations, that is, it tries to arrange and describe those elements that define the appearance of *an already existing meaning*. It is probably the crucial advantage of the phenomenological approach over other approaches that – in alignment with its methodological principle – it attempts to maintain a complete openness towards all possible formations of meaning.

Certain aspects of this approach seem to be eligible for relying on them in the course of our considerations. It is the part of the idea and method of phenomenology to analyse all things appearing, thus to analyse different configurations of thought, and further its most important field of examination is the relations between the experience and the tradition of thinking. However, we have to make certain corrections in it, namely as to its preconceptions left unreflected. First, we relinquish the idea of original experience and, instead, we propose to speak of diverse configurations of thought-forms which are not amenable to be ordered in a single hierarchy. Doing this, we are faithful to the original objective of phenomenology according to which no configuration of thought-forms can be excluded from thinking. The second modification we propose touches upon the relation of phenomenology to tradition. Within the subjective perspective of phenomenology, tradition is nothing but the totality of available thought-forms (from antiquity down to and including the present time) providing the constant backdrop of actual, living thinking. If tradition is separated from the experience of living thinking and transformed into a historical edifice, it will be reduced to a given schema (the schema of history) which is – along rationalism, empiricisms, phenomenology, structuralism, etc. – only one possible thought form along many others. On the other hand it will be separated from the living experience of thinking as if philosophical thinking and philosophical tradition had nothing to do with each other. We suggest therefore an approach where different kinds of thought-forms and tendencies – traditional and contemporary – constitute one single space. If we are to practise a truly metaphilosophical form of thinking, we are bound to take into account the whole array of diverse philosophical systems, directions, strategies and at the same time to look for connections, correspondences within this diversity. These attempts find their inspiration in certain tendencies of post-structuralism and in the work of Gilles

Deleuze in particular; the latter may enrich and complement the phenomenological analyses of emerging thought-forms.

We will bear in mind two ideas from the arborescent scholarly activities of Gilles Deleuze. One is about the relationship between the experience of philosophical thinking and the history of philosophy. Deleuze cuts the philosophical tradition with his own “plane” of thinking and the analyses of points of intersection and their links reveal at the same time his convictions about the nature of thinking and define the outlines of one particular philosophical canon. Both his reconstruction of the philosophical tradition and his reflections upon the nature of philosophical thinking tend to be selective: he admits certain authors and elements while excludes others from the common platform of thinking. In his book entitled *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (1991) (*What Is Philosophy?*) (co-author: Guattari) he proposes another model for approaching the tradition of philosophy. On the one hand he maintains some form of temporal existence while abandons chronological historicity on the other. Philosophies develop in a certain order. E.g. the appearance of the Kantian revolution required the previous existence of Hume-ian and Leibnizian thoughts; the genealogy of particular concepts, however, does not coincide with the linear/chronological history of philosophy. Platonic reflection (the realm of ideas) is included in Kantian thought, but Augustine is missing, while Augustinian time itself assumes a new meaning in Husserl's phenomenology of time-consciousness, as Heidegger's Being can also be reinterpreted through an Aristotelian filter. The whole process of thinking moves outside historical time, or rather it meanders through and through historical time. Deleuze proposes to see philosophies as layers of earth spread above each other: they follow a historical chronology in their development, but their actual operation span over ages. Planes or strata overlap and move into each other; some of them slip down into other layers, others crumble or pull apart. Certain layers may even reappear in time, as the Platonic thought reappears among Neo-Platonists or like the Kantian plane in the thinking of Neo-Kantians. This means that philosophical reflection doesn't move within the same story rather within a geographical-spatial framework.

Deleuze describes philosophy under two headings: as the experience of philosophical thinking and as the history of philosophy. When he writes about philosophical thinking, he elaborates his points through the selection of a certain number of correspondences in the tradition, his approach being selective as well. He includes all philosophical tendencies in his stratigraphic model and embeds the philosophical tradition into a new framework: he changes chronology into the simultaneous interaction of

different philosophies. First of all, this latter approach is very promising, since in line with the phenomenological attitude we believe that the philosophical tradition is built up from the appearance of diverse conceptual configurations and not from figures ordered in advance in a preestablished scheme of organisation. We also find the way Deleuze investigates this new terrain very fruitful (the examination of the moving of different thoughts between each other, their correlative perspectives revealed) fruitful. At the same time, we think – contrary to Deleuze – that we will be able to get closer to the experience of philosophical thinking only if we accept the totality of tradition as a whole, that is, if we take into consideration all possible conceptual configurations, and, *vice-versa*, that we will only be able to appreciate philosophical tradition if it is not detached from the experience of thinking, i.e. if the two are examined together in close correlation. From this it follows that when philosophical reflexion examines its relation with the philosophical tradition, it must not follow any selective principle and the examination of the traditions must be inextricably bound up with the experience of thinking. On the basis of this double correlation, we are in a position to consider the types of connection between possible perspectives instantiated by different conceptual configurations and also how these heterogeneous perspectives may exclude each other.

The main theses of the dissertation:

This thesis wishes to put forward the idea that philosophical thinking inevitably takes place in-between perspectives. If there was no discrepancy between perspective, it couldn't take place at all, since the diplopia emerging from the primordially perspectival nature of thinking evokes philosophical reflection in the first place. At the same time, if it has emerged, it cannot get rid of this beneficial burden of diplopia without annihilating itself thereby. The presence of an irreducible multiplicity of perspectives, however, doesn't demonstrate the vanity of philosophical reflection, but – on the contrary – it indicates that it never ceases to have ever new tasks: it must continuously attempt to render comprehensible that which, due to the ineliminable perspectivism, risks to become unintelligible. Perspectivism of thinking has further far-reaching consequences, which highly determine the whole argumentation of the dissertation.

We are aware of philosophical reflection exclusively through the experience of thinking, therefore if the subject matter of this paper is philosophical reflection, we will always go by the analysis of the concrete experience of thinking itself. This experience calls the attention to the fact that perspectivism doesn't emerge at beginnings only, but – necessarily – it reemerges continually: it repeats itself at different levels in the course of philosophical reflection. From the possible interpretations of a single object the way leads to the level of different philosophical traditions, also teeming with rival and apparently incompatible perspectives. Philosophical thinking generates perspectives one after another and when we examine the experience of thinking, we, ourselves, are seeking for a perspective that can determine the motion and order of these perspectives. One result of this quest is the discovery that different perspectives arising continually in the course of philosophical reflection do not delineate a meta-perspective, but rather they form an ever changing unity within an ever changing framework. This frame of perspectives is the space of thinking, which due to the perspectival nature of thinking is bound to remain open and, since each new perspective changes the very overall frame, the space of thinking keeps modifying itself throughout the process. Philosophical thinking unfolds in and is revealed as a changing, open space. Accordingly, philosophical thinking is a multi-level process occurring during the course of time not amenable to any brief definition, but rendered comprehensible in the long process of indirect description. During this description we struggled for focusing on elements that can delineate the space of thinking. We applied a three-step procedure, each step being further broken down into sub-steps. First, we followed up the unfolding of emerging perspectives, then, second, we exposed the relations between given perspectives and, third, we tried to describe how tradition and the living experience of thinking mutually implicate each other.

Philosophical thinking, during the search for meaning arising from perspectivism, accomplishes different movements: where it is searching, analysing it is slowed down dwelling upon the subject matter, and when it suddenly recognizes something or embraces something new, or is able even capture a whole series of intuitions, it accelerates and becomes capable of unbelievable speed. The experience of thinking and the delineation of philosophical thought are – in our view – inseparable from the various movements executed by thinking. These motions are however motivated and accompanied by different affections. This way, the affective power of the *challenge* of something radically alien motivates philosophical thinking again and again to return the object apparently devoid of sense. As such, this imperative incites philosophical thinking to search for perspectives. At

the same time, however, another definitive affective urge takes shape during this quest, the one which takes part in finding out and linking together different perspectives. This is a certain philosophical sensitivity that is able to acknowledge the problem and the relations of meaning. The desire permeating the whole process is responsible for the sense of reflection and continuously puts the capacity of thinking to the test. Without desire, we would never learn the limits and experience the expanse of thinking. Philosophical thinking is dependent on conditions that are apparently different from and heterogeneous to it. However this description also wants to emphasize that without motion and the affective moment, philosophical reflection could not come about in its entirety. New phases emerge in this process which, though in changing order, but jointly represent the complexity of philosophical reflection and constitute necessary cornerstones of the space of thinking. These are the following: the appearance of dichotomy and the streaming of meaning; the appearance of proto-perspectives and rumination over them; acceleration of thinking and the production of new perspectives (kept up by the line of flight of desire); development of dead ends; journeys in time and space between different perspectives; etc.

Thereafter, following the thoughts of Deleuze and subscribing to his phenomenologically valid insights, we analyse conceptual configurations already appropriated by thinking supplying the substance that shapes the space of thinking along the emerging new perspective. The stake of the analysis is the following: is it possible to embrace certain relations between different perspectives if all possible mental configurations are admitted in the same terrain of research? If the answer is yes, then the concept of the space of thinking can be further refined and expanded, through the typology of relations. Pursuing this project, we took a look at the enemies of philosophical thinking. What are the elements that cannot make common cause with the heterogeneous abundance of thoughts? This examination ended with a surprising result. All enemies of thinking crop up within the bounds of philosophy itself, generated by the very perspectivism of the philosophical enterprise. Each enemy within the terrain of philosophy has a local importance only. It means that philosophy has no general enemy; there are enemies of particular conceptual configurations only, but these are not necessarily hostile to other conceptual configurations. Through this, the space of reflection reaches its maximum spaciousness, since everything becomes its part. At the same time, as a second phase, we tried to focus on the relations of perspectives. At this point, we call attention to the trivial, but nevertheless essential fact that the heterogeneous population of evolving perspectives can develop links towards each other on the bases of different aspects. Distant authors like

Plato or Kant or directions that are very far from each other, like empiricism and transcendental philosophy may find themselves suddenly on the same platform. This way wholly different and distant systems, concepts, procedures, themes, etc. can be linked together in no time depending on a common perspective from which the analogy between them may suddenly reveal itself. In the closing part of the dissertation we examine the links between the operating thinking and the tradition, i.e. the connection between two apparently different blocks of the space of reflection. Thinking seeks universality and tries to embrace all thought-configurations ever discovered in its own shape. On the other hand, tradition never ceases to modify itself taking the ever new perspectives generated by thinking into account. At the same time, the unsurpassable perspectivism of thought constitutes the ultimate obstacle to the universalising attempts of thinking. With the appearance of allegedly all-encompassing viewpoint alternative perspectives immediately emerge if only virtually at first. Our final conclusion is that perspectivism does not imply relativism, since acknowledging the right of alternative meanings to exist, it does not cease to require the justification of any perspective that may take shape within the overall space of thinking.

List of publications

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G. Deleuze, F. Guattari: *Mi a filozófia (What is Philosophy?)*, Műcsarnok kiadó, Budapest (forthcoming: 2011. szeptember)

Presentations, conference-talks:

Cluj, March 2009: Conference on Philosophy jointly organized by Babes-Bolyai University and the Hungarian Association of Phenomenology
Title of paper: *A vágy fenomenológiája – Phenomenology of Desire*

Budapest, December 2008, ELTE BTK; Conference organized by the Hungarian Association of Phenomenology on the 100th Anniversary of Merleau-Ponty.
Title of paper: *Merleau-Ponty és a Jó ideája – Merleau-Ponty and the Idea of the Good*

Prague, October-September 2008: Corporeity and Affectivity
Fifthcentral and Eastern European Conference On Phenomenology
Title of paper: *Ethics of Merleau-Ponty*

May 2007, Budapest, ELTE: Conference organized by the Hungarian Association of Phenomenology for young researchers
Title of paper: *Intenzitások – Intensities*

Miskolc, December 2006: Conference organized by the Hungarian Association of Phenomenology and the University of Miskolc on the 100th Anniversary of E. Lévinas
Title of paper: *Fizika és etika – Psychics and Ethics*

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Title of paper: *Erőmegnyilvánulás és cselekvőképesség – Manifestation of Power and Capacity*

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