

Review of: "Distance as the most essential form of human thought and subjectivity"

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This article presents a fundamental topic for the phenomenological research and its general thesis follows an adequate research proposal, but it does it with some imprecisions and rash generalizations, which should be reviewed for the sake of intellectual rigor. The thesis that it proposes to prove is ambitious and requires an appropriate argumentative support. That is why I (I am sorry but) give only two stars because I want to emphasize the need of a revision.

I suggest that the author may review this problematic aspects (I start with the biggest problems, going further towards minor corrections):

1. The general thesis, namely that distance is the most essential form of *human abstract* thinking, seems not to be sufficiently grounded. The author does prove that distance is a necessary condition (or precondition) for thinking, but he does not prove that it is the sufficient condition. The link between distance, language use and thinking is missed in the argumentation. One could argue that every animal perception include some form of taking distance, but it should be proved what it is entailed in the specific human way of taking distance that allows the development of thought. The author affirms in the abstract I, "I will first analyze western philosophical literature to show that distance is not just proper to man/thought but the most essential form of any living body", but this aim disappears in the text: although the authors eventually mentions that hunters required language to communicate, we still need to know: what added language to distance so that abstract thought could be developed? This fundamental idea needs more development, and one should not close the question affirming tout court "language and thought enjoy a correlation they have in Wittgenstein's theory of language". The question is why is this so?
2. Review of the expression "philosophers of distance". If the main thesis of the article is correct, then every theoretical question about the nature of thinking is "a philosophy of distance". For me it is not clear what justifies the designation of some philosophers ""(Max Scheler, Ernst Cassirer, Helmuth Plessner, Arnold Gehlen, and Heidegger)" as "the philosophers of distance". The archive scope of the article is some times not clear, because other authors are further included (Kant, Blumenberg, Husserl, Merleau Ponty, James, Freud, etc.....); are they also "philosophers of distance"? Maybe the expression is too confuse and does not clarify the argument. The narrative of the article, namely that the whole history of philosophy has, first (until Scheler, Cassirer, Plessner, Gehlen and Heidegger) forgotten, and then (until Richir?) insufficiently explained the link between distance and thought seems debatable, moreover when (see point 1) this last link is still a riddle. For instance (following the abstract), implies Plato's division between appearances and ideas any thought about distance?

3. The text says: "For Descartes and, later, Kant, the *thinking subject* was made the metaphysical ground of the possibility of the world (*res extensa*), and *a fortiori*, of knowledge." This sentence needs a review for the sake of truth. Whereas the thinking subject is a metaphysical ground of the possibility *of our knowledge of the world* in both philosophers, 1. Descartes does not ground the possibility of the *res extensa* alone in the thinking subject (see *Metaphysical Meditations*), but needs thereby the idea of God. 2. I would be cautious to affirm that Kant derives "an external reality" (*res extensa*) from a thinking subject.
4. About Husserl some important precissions should be made: 1. The inner body (Leib) is not purely abstract and it is not "unchanging", nor "indeterminate", but the inner sense of a concretely situated body, which is the center of our experience. It does not prevail over the world, neither as a pure exercise of power over it. I have the feeling that the author reads Husserl as a radical dualist, and the question is far more complicated than that. It is unconceivable the inner sense of my body (cinesthetics, sensations etc.) without an existing "external world". 2. (Section 2.3) When Husserl affirms that : "The solipsistic subject could not conceive of itself as a member of nature" he does not mean that we do not have an inner consciousness of the unity of our own Geist-Leib-Körper , but rather that, without intersubjectivity, we cannot conceive ourselves as (mere, external) "natural bodies", precisely because we live in the unity of Leib-Körper (we live inside this unity). So we do not "infer" the unity of our divided composition through intersubjectivity, but instead we realize our inner division and, further, "realize" the unity in that division, through that intersubjective encounter. The nuance is important, because although intersubjectivity allows the reflexive understanding of our inner unity (and we can ask if this reflexive understanding can happen without language), it does not create it. Therefore, for instance, it is different to say that for little children there is no distance (at all), than saying that they do not have reflexive consciousness about it.
5. In the dialog between Heidegger, Hegel and Aristotle the text momentarily suggests an identity between "distance" and "difference" (e.g. "To think is to realize this distance between an abyss and a conceptual ground of language."). The idea could be further developed, (e.g. why is this abyss represented as an espacial distance? what is the relation between language and the abyss? moreover, can we realize that abyss without language?)
6. The last aim of the abstract : "I conclude that there might be a correlation between distance and the degree of development of thought and subjectivities in different socio-cultural milieus" appear in the form of questions in the Conclusion, but I think that clarifying this points requires to follow the first observation above. For instance, the author asks "Is a linguistic group's capacity to make fine differentiations in its grammatical resources indicative of the richness of its world views, philosophical capacities, or its level of progress in science/technology?" But to answer this question we need, first, to analyze the relationship between language and distance.
7. There are few misprints and idiomatic corrections (Logic/Logik, false use of capital letters). But I am not the right person to be a linguistic proof reader, because I am not a native English speaker.