

BOOK REVIEW

SUSANNE MOSER (Wien)

Crisis as a Driving Force for the Development of Philosophy

Yvanka B. Raynova. *Sein, Sinn und Werte: Phänomenologische und hermeneutische Perspektiven des europäischen Denkens.* Frankfurt am Main, Bern, Bruxelles, New York, Oxford, Warszawa, Wien: 2017, 331 S.¹

In her book *Sein, Sinn und Werte: Phänomenologische und hermeneutische Perspektiven des europäischen Denkens (Being, Meaning and Values: Phenomenological and Hermeneutical Perspectives of European Thought)*, Yvanka B. Raynova refers to a long discourse on the so-called "crisis of philosophy". Even today philosophy is accused to be in a crisis of meaning, to be abstract and unworldly, to be without practical application nor connection to reality and, thus, that it cannot serve the needs of society. In short, philosophy is useless. Raynova's book is directed against such reproaches, with which already Brentano, Husserl and Heidegger had to deal. Her central concern is to show that phenomenology not only arose from a crisis thinking, but that it is crisis itself that made it possible for philosophy to evolve:

The thematization of the 'crisis' was not only beneficial for Husserl's oeuvre (...), but also for Martin Heidegger, Jan Patočka, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Paul Ricœur, Jacques Derrida and others. (10)

Unfolding the diverse facets of this discussion in the phenomenological schools, Raynova displays how the crisis of reason led to a crisis of meaning and of being. According to her, this axiological insecurity came to a head in the area of responsibility, human dignity and human rights and led to the necessity of a rethinking of history and community (ibid.). The hidden purpose of her analyses is to show that philosophy is indeed useful, as a basic knowledge without which the concept of the fundamental values and the history of human rights, upon which the European Community is based, cannot be understood and further developed (cf. Raynova 1999; 2010a; 2010c, 15-36).

¹ The references/citations of the book are given here in brackets. Additional references are made to earlier publications of Raynova, where some of the problems in this book were previously treated.

In the first chapter Raynova turns to the origin of phenomenological research by revisiting the question of Herbert Spiegelberg as to whether the phenomenological movement begins with Franz Brentano. In discussion with Spiegelberg, who, in her opinion, endeavored to prove the originality of Husserl's philosophy while Brentano's influence on Husserl was shown to be negligible and reduced to the role of the teacher, Raynova undertook a quite differentiated study of Husserl's Brentano reception. This enabled her to articulate the main difference between Brentano and Husserl, namely that between descriptive psychology and phenomenology (29), as well to show the various principles that Husserl inherited from Brentano, albeit in a revised form, among other the scientific nature of philosophy, philosophy as a fundamental science and basis of the other sciences, the principles of unprejudiceness and of evidence, and the immanent character of philosophy. From this she concludes that it is not only legitimate but also necessary to begin the history of the phenomenological movement with Franz Brentano. (39)

In the next few chapters, Raynova gives an insight into the plethora of phenomenological research by drawing a line "From Being to Existence" and "The Critique of the Transcendental Ego" (chapter 2) to "The Abyss of Existence and the Indeterminacy of Values" (chapter 3). She acts here as a mediator between the different positions. By means of a comparative hermeneutics, she outlines the long way from Husserl's attempt to connect "true being and cognition" as the task of transcendental philosophy, which aims to expose the meaning of "pure" phenomena (34), through Martin Heidegger's hermeneutic turn, posing anew the question of the meaning of being, till Jean-Paul Sartre's attempt to elaborate a phenomenological ontology (cf. Raynova 1995 and 2015). Even the problem of being as being never became the object of a special enquiry in Paul Ricœur's work, one could speak, according to Raynova, of similarities between Heidegger, Sartre and Ricœur, because the Cogito as "search for the truth" is always dependent on something else than on itself – on the being (Heidegger), on existence (Sartre), on the text or the otherness (Ricœur) – whose disclosure is the basic requirement for the realization of authenticity. (77; cf. Raynova 2010a, 19-36) Especially in the field of values, Raynova demonstrates, in opposition to some critics like Françoise Dastur, that there is an approximation of the value theories of Ricoeur and Sartre, arguing that Ricœur himself rejected to deepen the opposition to Sartre's value conception (98) and adopted his view that there is no final justification in the field of value theory. (97)

The first three chapters may be of great help to those seeking a brief but profound introduction to phenomenology. After this theoretical prelude, chapters 4 and 5 – "From the Truth of Being to the Truth of the Whole" and "Integral Thinking and Conflictual Discourse" – which are dedicated to the Austrian philosopher Leo Gabriel, presents a successive entry into the hermeneutics of European intellectual history. (107) Unlike those who consider Gabriel's key work *Integrale Logik (Integral Logic)* as a counterpart to Hegel's dialectical logic, Raynova argues that the idea of the "truth of the Whole", on which is

based *Integrale Logik*, can be understood as an answer to the 'truth of being' of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (107; cf. Raynova 2010b). Accordingly, she shows how Gabriel transgresses and at the same time unites the concepts of phenomenology, existential philosophy and hermeneutics by reinterpreting the basic notions of phenomenon and logos. For Gabriel, the phenomenon is neither essence (Husserl), nor the self-presenting being of beings (Heidegger), but a figure which emerges through the disclosure of being by the means of translation and interpretation. "Thinking is thus not an immediate being-thought, it is translative, i.e. the creative design of what is perceived is translated into symbols, concepts and sentences." (118) In the process of thinking, the meaningfulness of the concrete is developed, in which thought unfolds its form out of itself in a dialogical mediation.

Raynova emphasizes that Gabriel puts crisis thinking in a completely new light because he interprets the crisis in the sense of a broken whole (129; cf. Raynova 2005) and ascribes to philosophy a special responsibility, namely the "responsibility for the future, for the fulfillment of the task of overcoming the totalitarian systematics in its root, in its logical core of deformation, in order 'to bring the full use of reason' and to recognize the true whole." (136) Since we can never grasp the whole, we need an open system of thought that recognizes the plurality of worldviews and promotes their dialogue. With Ricoeur and Gabriel, Raynova argues the core importance for the European integration process of the preservation of the differences on a higher common level. (147) She underlines, that one must try to integrate the best (Gabriel), but also to create new common values (Ricoeur) with the aim of an "East-West synthesis" (149), in order to overcome the still noticeable divide between the West as the "real" Europe and the East, as the "other" Europe. (149) With Ricoeur Raynova warns against totalitarian value systems, but also against the illusion that there could be a value-neutral community order. One should not resort to a unified value model, which was the project of the Enlightenment and that of Husserl, but – instructed by the crises and the crisis thinking – seek a conflictual value consensus that can only be won from the diversity and the polyphony of European cultures, traditions and discourses.

In the two chapters that follows, Raynova succeeds in showing how the development of crisis thinking based on the problem of responsibility by undertaking an astonishingly broad analysis from Husserl through Heidegger, Sartre, Arendt, Patočka, Jonas and Levinas to Derrida (Chapters 7 and 8). While the early Husserl ascribes to transcendental phenomenology as ultimate knowledge the highest responsibility – the responsibility for the "true being" and the realization of mankind –, one can observe in late Husserl, who was afflicted by the crisis of National Socialism, a historical-philosophical turn. But even where the late Husserl poses concrete ethical and historical questions, he ends, according to Raynova, with statements that sublimate the particular responsibility of the individual in the universal, i.e. in the transcendental of the "absolute self-responsibility" of an "absolute ego-self". (203) Subsequently, Raynova reveals how the crisis of the Second World War brings down the philosophical discourse on responsibility from

its transcendental-philosophical level to the level of the concrete. Responsibility is no longer understood from the transcendental, but from being or from the other. It is no longer related to the special ability of the "European" man to rational, philosophical thinking, nor to a special "philosophical mission" derived chiefly from a teleology of history. (205)

In chapter 9, "Human Rights and Human Dignity", Raynova addresses the widespread claim that Ricœur has given the following definition of human dignity: "The human being is entitled to something by the fact that it is human." (243) By pointing out that the article from which this sentence was taken is not concerned with human dignity, but with human rights, she makes an important contribution offering a first analysis of the conceptions of human rights and human dignity in Ricœur's work. In doing so, Raynova argues that Ricœur conceived human dignity, which he never explicitly defined, through the prism of human capacities, especially of the capacity to take responsibility².

In the last chapter "From the European 'Crisis of Mean' to a 'New Ethos' for Europe", Raynova shows the potential of hermeneutic phenomenology in relation to the problem of the integration of the European community³. Based on Ricœur's vision of a new ethos for Europe, which Raynova considers as a complement to his complex crisis concept, she proposes a new European translation ethos that should overcome existing linguistic asymmetries and discursive dominance. (310) Ricœur's ethos for Europe, which covers three models – the models of translation, memory exchange and forgiveness – displays translation chiefly as "linguistic hospitality" and thus ignores the downsides of translation, especially the real struggles for dominance in translation policy. In order to grasp these, Raynova introduces the concept of "Über-setzung"⁴, of translation as "Super-position", as a term designating "a special form of domination over and through language by the use of the gift of the linguistic hospitality of translation." (298) Translation in this context of Super-position means the setting of a language, language game, idiom or culture over another by exploiting its hospitality. In contrast to Domenico Jervolino's view that Europe has matured through its centuries-long history of conflicts and wars and is ready to become "translator and mediator of the world", Raynova believes that this is not the case at present. (297) Rather, it is regrettable that before the fall of the Berlin Wall there was more interest in a philosophical East-West exchange on the part of the West, than now in the United Europe and also more appreciation. (312) With its criticism of a one-sided "translation", Raynova combines a positive undertaking, namely the development of a new European ethos of translation, because only by showing the one-sidedness in European language and cultural policy the Ricœur's translation paradigm can be seen as really needed and not just perceived as an ideal

² Raynova dedicated different studies on the problem of responsibility in phenomenology (Raynova 2001 and 2016), and in particular on responsibility in Paul Ricoeur's work (Raynova 2008).

³ This topic was also a topic in her interviews with Paul Ricoeur (see Raynova 2004 and 2009), and was discussed in a special study (Raynova 2013).

⁴ Raynova introduced this concept already in earlier publications (Raynova 2006 and 2014).

model of a new ethos for Europe. (313) Because the cultural and scientific diversity of Europe is not something to which one has immediate access, there is a need of a polyphonic approach, which Raynova, following Ricœur and Gabriel, calls a *translative hermeneutics of the European history and values*. (313)

It is no secret that the phenomenological schools are in competition with each other and sometimes even hostile to each other. What's special about Raynova's approach, in my opinion, is that she is well-balanced in her interpretations, letting the various viewpoints to enter in an appreciative polylogue. It is no coincidence that Ricœur's hermeneutic phenomenology, which seeks to mediate between opposite positions, takes a central methodological place in her deliberations. By combining and transforming his dialectical method of suspicion and his discursive mediation into a translative and comparative hermeneutics, and applying it in a problem-related manner, Raynova unfolds the various perspectives of the classics of phenomenology demonstrating their importance for contemporary European thought.

Dr. Susanne Moser, Institut für Axiologische Forschungen, Wien/
Karl Franzens-Universität Graz, susanne.moser[at]univie.ac.at

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