

Introduction

Teleology and World from Different Perspectives: Philosophy of Mind and Transcendental Phenomenology

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During the last century, most philosophers of science have tried to expunge teleological explanations from the fields of epistemology. They took for granted that the Darwinian concepts of natural selection and evolution effectively dispense us with any presence of goal-directedness in nature: based on an anti-metaphysical attitude, they hold purposes and goals to be of religious and spiritual nature, thereby obstacles to any effective comprehension of biological processes. Accordingly, teleological categories have been abandoned in many ways in favor of mechanical causes and non-teleological processes: since Darwin demonstrated that no teleology is required in order to explain the natural world, causal explanations became the only tools to investigate natural processes (see Bedau 1991, for a compelling reflection on teleological categories and on their relations with the natural world).

This leads many philosophers to think that teleological categories cannot play any role in the philosophy of mind without also implying metaphysical presuppositions: an example of that is Davidson's conviction according to which the explanatory accounts of the human behavior displays a strictly causal nature and the reasons guiding human actions in general can be defined in terms of

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their causal structure (see Davidson 1963). More recently, a fervid attack against any kind of teleological “realism” has been presented in Mele (2000), who criticizes traditional teleological explanations construed as purposes and goals and argues for a causal explanation of all mental events.

In contrast to this, there are philosophers who tried to work out a teleological view within a naturalistic account by adopting a biological language: it is the case of the biological teleology. According to such perspective, a state can be deemed *teleological* if it shows what it is *for*. Generally speaking, biological teleology endorses the idea of a teleological structure existing at the very biological level (see Godfrey-Smith 1994, Griffiths 1993, Millikan 1984, Wright 1973).

However, biological teleology is mainly grounded on a materialistic perspective: intentional states are conceived as reducible states and the study of our selected traits throughout the evolution offers a scientifically plausible model in order to comprehend the structure of mental contents. What follows therefrom is the elimination of all psychological explanations understood in terms of ends and goals. The traditional teleological explanations are replaced by a perspective that attributes to the analysis of physical states and to the natural principle of organization the fundamental role of investigating intentional items. Our everyday evidence of being oriented by traditional intentional categories is deemed an illusion and teleology is seen as a way to comprehend the functional organization of a biological system. According to this materialistic perspective, the reducibility of mental contents automatically excludes the epistemological relevance of any subjective quality or first-person access to our intentional states.

In light of this, the present issue of the Journal “Humana.mente” wants to consider the possibility of rehabilitating a teleological explanation of the world from the points of view of the anti-reductionist philosophy of mind and from that of transcendental phenomenology. These two perspectives share the conviction that teleological considerations can be reintroduced in our worldview without contesting the results of the various scientific disciplines and, at the same time, without endorsing reductive physicalism in philosophy. Nonetheless, they develop their conceptions of teleology autonomously and often in a contrasting way. Accordingly, the main aim of the present issue is to launch a preparatory, yet crucial operation: we would like to contribute to clarifying the different conceptions of teleology that anti-reductionist philosophy of mind and transcendental phenomenology respectively endorse.

The first two articles of the volume fit into the tradition of the so-called *anti-reductionism* in philosophy of mind.

Alberto Carrara proposes a comparison between Thomas Aquinas's view of natural human inclinations and the "triune brain" model Paul MacLean developed from 1949 to 1952. Carrara's analysis aims at explaining the reasons why human beings act according to their will and create social relationships with other fellow human beings. This contribution has the merit to define in a precise way how we can explore and re-update the philosophical notion of human form as an intrinsic condition that reveals human teleological inclinations towards survival and social activities. Carrara strives to demonstrate that human inclinations towards ends and goals can be effectively described as expressing an intrinsic final causality compatible with brain's structures and natural science.

In the second article of this volume, Andrea Lavazza shows a similar approach by describing the main features that qualify human being's mental domain and differentiate it from artificial intelligence. Starting from the description of the mark of the mental, Lavazza tries to demonstrate that smart robots express a sort of intentionality, yet probably lack consciousness of the mental states. Lavazza focuses on the decisive role that the notion of intentionality plays in the rehabilitation of teleology. In this context, Husserl's basic idea of teleology functions as an authoritative term of comparison and to also introduce the intuitive difference between human beings and intelligent machines based on the *homo pictor* thought experiment proposed by Hans Jonas. Lavazza sees Husserl's idea of teleology as rooted into the notion of an instinctive intentionality manifesting itself as a drive that does not yet have a world of representation before it. Even though he does not overlook that Husserl adopts an overwhelming teleological point of view, which also includes culture and history, Lavazza limits his analysis to the living body's level and thereby takes Husserl's perspective to be a sort of anticipation of the so-called naturalized teleology, which sees a finalism inscribed in the laws of physics.

The third article of the volume represents a bridge between the treatment of teleological categories characterizing the anti-reductionist philosophy of mind and the one carried on by transcendental phenomenology. In the first part of his article, Jacob Rump makes a comparison between Millikan's biological approach to teleology and Husserl's transcendental phenomenology: according to Millikan, the intentional contents need to be explained in terms of pure natural functions and teleology reveals what a state was selected for. The natural

world is seen as pervaded by an intentional or purposive structure and biological functions are often defined as “teleonomic”.

In order to distinguish this perspective from that of Husserl, Rump highlights all the controversial assumptions about intentionality Millikan presupposes. In fact, whereas Millikan’s account ends up assuming a sharp separation between teleology and intentional explanations in terms of reasons and self-determination, Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology avoids this problem by recognizing the fundamental role of teleology as a part of the human rational activity.

The last three articles fully belong to the field of phenomenological studies. In the first one, Emiliano Trizio explores how Husserl aims at reintroducing teleological consideration in our worldview, without interfering with the explanations provided by natural sciences. Trizio singles out two strictly connected groups of teleological considerations: the first one regards the teleology immanent to the intentional structure of consciousness, whereas the second is concerned with the very teleology of the world history. The factual course of intentional acts cannot be seen as a chaos of adumbrations; rather, it is a synthetic unity giving consciousness the shape of a unitary stream on which the empirical world, as a scientifically determinable one, is rooted. By focusing on the transcendental significance of embodiment and normality, Trizio accounts for the strict correlation between the world and transcendental intersubjectivity. In so doing, he substantially identifies Husserl’s idea of an inner history belonging to the constituting subjectivity with the notion of an ultimate, ideal telos of the historical world in which transcendental subjectivity would find its own self-objectification.

Daniele De Santis further goes in-depth on Husserl’s conception of the world, by arguing that if phenomenology’s ultimate aspiration consists on elucidating the “sense” that the world has for human beings, then it becomes crucial to show that there can be only one real world, rather than a multiplicity of separate and unrelated worlds. In the first part of his contribution, De Santis considers some examples of the so-called analytical philosophy (Rorty, D. Lewis) and other taken by the continental tradition (Wandenfels, Kuhn) that argue for the existence of multiple worlds. According to De Santis, they (explicitly or not) end up denying the fundamental phenomenological idea of synthesis as the original form of consciousness. In the second part of his article, De Santis focuses on Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditations* by investigating the formation of the transcendental argument and by shedding light on the meaning

and the connections being between some crucial notions of Husserl's phenomenology such as "Synthesis der Identifikation", "Wirklichkeit", the "Koexistenz" of my ego and that of the other, and finally the conviction that the objective world has existence by virtue of a harmonious confirmation (Bewährung) of the apperceptive constitution.

In the last article, Andreas Elpidorou tackled the problem of teleology based on two seemingly conflicting approaches to affectivity: an evolutionary description of the emotions, on the one hand, and Sartre's phenomenological view, on the other hand. By focusing on the notion of function as well as on the problem of the origin of consciousness from the prehistory of human existence, Elpidorou seeks the point of conjunction between these two different accounts of emotions. His merit is to show how the conflict between these two perspectives can be interpreted in such a way to shed some light on the transition from the attribution of a biological significance to emotions to the role they play in both a person's practical and motivational life.

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