

## 1.2 CONTRIBUTIONS ON LÁSZLÓ TENGYELI

### 1.2 ПАМЯТИ ЛАСЛО ТЕНГЕЛИ

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#### FROM KANT TO THE PROBLEM OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL METAPHYSICS. IN MEMORY OF LÁSZLÓ TENGYELI

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The article outlines the central lines of László Tengelyi's intellectual path and hints at some perspectives that could be continued on the basis of his last writings. The first part shows the development of his thought from the first Hungarian works on Kant up to his last book, so as to pose the question of a possible unity in his work. Such a unity can be seen in the diacritical tension, systematically enlarged in each period, between freedom, the story of a told life, expression and the finite projection of a world on the one hand, and guilt as an event of destiny, the region of a wild sense, a wild responsibility and an open infinite on the other hand. A second part presents the main ideas of «World and Infinit. On the Problem of Phenomenological Metaphysics», especially the programme of a phenomenological answer to the problem of metaphysics. The core of this programme is a metaphysics of facticity in the realm of which a methodological transcendentalism and a metontological transcendentalism become possible. A third part tries to situate László Tengelyi's ideas within the context of contemporary «realism». Two of Meillassoux' central arguments are discussed in order to show how László Tengelyi's approach provides a phenomenological answer to their challenges.

*Key words:* Phenomenology, metaphysics, transcendental philosophy, realism, Kant, Tengelyi, Meillassoux.

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## ОТ КАНТА К ПРОБЛЕМЕ ФЕНОМЕНОЛОГИЧЕСКОЙ МЕТАФИЗИКИ. ПАМЯТИ ЛАСЛО ТЕНГЕЛИ

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В статье выделяются центральные линии интеллектуального пути Ласло Тенгели, а также намечается их возможное дальнейшее развитие, основанное на поздних его работах. В первой части статьи показано развитие Тенгели от ранних работ его венгерского периода о Канте вплоть до последней его книги. Кроме того, здесь ставится вопрос о единстве его работ. Такое единство может быть усмотрено в диакритической напряженности, систематически возрастающей в каждый период, между свободой, историей рассказанной жизни, выражением и конечным проектированием мира, с одной стороны, и виной как событием судьбы, областью голого (wild) смысла, голой ответственности и открытой бесконечности, с другой стороны. Во второй части представлены основные идеи его книги «Мир и бесконечность. К проблеме феноменологической метафизики», в особенности программа феноменологического решения проблемы метафизики. Ядро этой программы — метафизика фактичности, в поле которой становятся возможными методологический трансцендентализм и мета-онтологический (metontological) трансцендентализм. В третьей части осуществлена попытка поместить мысль Тенгели в контекст современного «реализма». Обсуждаются два из центральных аргументов Мейясу с целью показать, каким образом подход Ласло Тенгели обеспечивает феноменологический ответ на их вызовы.

*Ключевые слова:* Феноменология, метафизика, трансцендентальная философия, реализм, Кант, Тенгели, Мейясу.

The phenomenological movement inaugurated by Edmund Husserl over a hundred years ago is today a rather marginalized tradition in the philosophical landscape in Germany. It might not be an accident that one of its strongest voices came from outside the country and brought with it a thoroughly international attitude. László Tengelyi was of Hungarian origin and had lived in France before he became professor of philosophy in Wuppertal in 2001, where he stayed until his death in 2014. As a veritable «citizen of the world» and in his profound familiarity with the history of philosophy, he made it his task to continue the phenomenological movement as being able to provide answers to the most fundamental questions of the philosophical tradition, while at the same time engaging phenomenology into a dialogue with the protagonists of contemporary debates on the

international scene. For László Tengelyi, an important feature of phenomenology was that its point of departure in what is today called the «first person perspective» contained an essential potential for critique. He saw in it a philosophical approach that was capable of counteracting ideological tendencies by returning to the concrete experience of the individual. Phenomenological philosophy has lost one of its most important thinkers, when László Tengelyi died much too soon in July 2014.

The following reflections try to outline the central lines of his intellectual path and hint at some perspectives that could be continued on the basis of his last writings. The first part shows the development of his thought from the first Hungarian works on Kant up to his last book, so as to pose the question of a possible unity in his work. A second part presents the main ideas of *World and Infinity. On the Problem of Phenomenological Metaphysics* (Tengelyi, 2014b), especially the programme of a phenomenological answer to the problem of metaphysics. A third part tries to situate László Tengelyi's ideas within the context of contemporary «realism».

## 1. FROM KANT TO THE PROBLEM OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL METAPHYSICS

While his intellectual awakening was triggered by reading Thomas Mann, the beginning of László Tengelyi's philosophical path was marked by an intense work on Immanuel Kant, resulting in two Hungarian books, entitled *Autonomy and the order of the world. Kant on the Fundament of Ethics* (Tengelyi, 1984) and *Kant. The Order of the World and Freedom in the Development of the Critical System* (Tengelyi, 1988). While his first writings focused on the relation between freedom and the order of the world in Kant's critical philosophy, László Tengelyi soon saw himself compelled to exceed Kant's theory of freedom. What was primarily at issue for him here was the problem of evil, for which he did not find an adequate solution in Kant. This led him to Schelling, where he found the notion of freedom towards good *and* evil. In his next book, again written in Hungarian, he reflects upon the problem of guilt and evil in Kant and Schelling, which leads him to the thesis expressed in the title: *Guilt as an Event of Destiny* (Tengelyi, 1992). Guilt cannot be entirely founded in man's freedom, but there remains an uncontrollable moment to be understood as an event of destiny.

In the second period of his thinking, László Tengelyi turned towards German and French phenomenology. His interest was first directed to the problems of the history of a life and narrative identity. His reflections led to the book *The Wild Region in Life-History*, first written in German (Tengelyi, 1998) and then translated into Hungarian (1998), English (2004) and French (2005). The heart of the book lies in the tension between the story of a lived life and the story of a told life, a tension rendered by the double sense of the German word «*Lebensgeschichte*» in the German title *Der Zwitterbegriff Lebensgeschichte*. On the one hand, the identity of a self can be understood narratively through the story of a life. On the other hand, there is a wild sense, spontaneously emerging in experience, a wild sense on which narrative identity is based, but which nevertheless resists a total integration into the story of a told life. This withdrawal of a wild region of sense is extensively analysed with respect to temporality and alterity. The book ends with the outline of an elemental ethic, centred on the notion of a wild responsibility. The English translation of the Hungarian title of this book would be *The Story of a Life and the Event of Destiny*; in this title, the relation between this book and his first works becomes particularly clear. The event-character of guilt, which was the result of the work on Kant and Schelling, already pointed towards this wild region of sense and responsibility. This takes on a broader meaning within the larger context of the phenomenological analyses dealing with the problem of the story of a life.

A third period centres on the notion of experience. The first results of this period were the French book *Experience Regained. Philosophical Essays I* (Tengelyi, 2006) and the German book *Experience and Expression. Phenomenology in Upheaval in Husserl and his Successors* (Tengelyi, 2007). In these phenomenological analyses of experience and its relation to expression, once again László Tengelyi expands his perspective. The tension between the story of a life and the wild region of sense is now enlarged in direction of the tension between expression and experience as such. Thus, the topic of the story of a told life is widened towards a general phenomenology of language, and the analyses of wild sense lead through the notion of experience to an original form of phenomenological realism. In 2014, the second volume of the philosophical essays *The Experience of Singularity. Philosophical Essays II* (2014a) was published in French. These new essays can be situated within the continuity of the second period: their central idea is that of a singularity of the self, only to be experienced in answers to the calls of the

Other and only to be expressed in a necessarily incomplete narration of this experience.

The fourth and last period has its heart in the question and the problem of phenomenological metaphysics. First there is the voluminous book *New Phenomenology in France*, written together with Hans-Dieter Gondek (Tengelyi, 2011). This book is first of all an account of the second generation of French phenomenologists. However László Tengelyi does not content himself purely with giving an overview, but he tries to bring out what it is that holds this generation together. He states that one of the central axes of this generation is the question of the relation between phenomenology and metaphysics. Within this context, he emphasizes especially the approach of Jean-Luc Marion, who understands phenomenology as another First Philosophy, different from the onto-theological metaphysics that was criticized by Heidegger. László Tengelyi wants to continue these developments by aiming directly at another type of *metaphysics*, different from onto-theological metaphysics: a specifically phenomenological metaphysics. In his eyes, a phenomenological metaphysics would be a metaphysics of facticity, in the realm of which a methodological transcendentalism and a metontological transcendentalism become possible. One could say that the view of the tension between wild sense and expression is enlarged here one last time, this time in the metaphysical tension between a projection of the world (*Weltentwurf*) and the infinite: a projection of the world, which is always one projection of the world among others, finds itself in an irrevocable tension with an open infinite which does not cease to trouble every such concrete projection and to push it towards its reorganisation. The tension between wild sense and expression finds its most global and elaborated form in the tension between a phenomenological metaphysics of the projection of the world on the one hand and an open infinite on the other hand.

Is there something that can be identified as a systematic unity in the works of László Tengelyi? And if this is the case, how can this unity be characterized? In my eyes, there is indeed a systematic unity of his life's work: it consists in the tension, systematically enlarged in each period, between freedom, the story of a told life, expression and the finite projection of a world on the one hand, and guilt as an event of destiny, the region of a wild sense, a wild responsibility and an open infinite on the other hand. This tension is not at all to be understood in the sense of a dogmatic dualism, but rather in the sense of a diacritical philosophy as it was outlined by the late Merleau-Ponty.

A diacritical tension on several levels seems to be the guiding thread or the architectonical centre of László Tengelyi's thought. But can it not be said that the heart of his thinking, as its beginning, is essentially Kantian and situates itself in a Kantian lineage? A particular form of post-Hegelian phenomenological Kantianism perhaps, which holds on to a non-synthesizable duality, to an insurmountable abyss between the finite and the infinite, but which also accounts for the historicity of thinking and a facticity that can never fully be mastered by thinking? If this interpretation were correct, the last project *World and Infinity* would be an autonomous and original development of those topics that were at the centre of László Tengelyi's first Hungarian writings on Kant and Schelling.

In now attempting to present the main ideas of *World and Infinity*, it goes without saying that I can only outline some of the most central lines of argument, contained in this very rich and complex book.

## 2. TOWARDS A PHENOMENOLOGICAL METAPHYSICS

It is Heidegger to whom we owe a thesis and an argument about metaphysics that became very influential: for Heidegger, metaphysics as such is onto-theology; onto-theology is a form of a decay of thinking; therefore metaphysics as such is a philosophical dead end. To a large extent this argument depends on the thesis that metaphysics *as such* has an onto-theological structure. It is this Heideggerian thesis that was at the origin of a research programme which was initiated by Jean-Luc Marion, Jean-François Courtine and Rémi Brague. Their aim was to test this global thesis, its significance and its adequacy. Their detailed analyses of several authors from the history of metaphysics led them to the discovery that this Heideggerian thesis not only needs more precision and differentiation for each single author in this tradition, but that it is not even wholly accurate as regards all thinkers within the history of metaphysics. That meant: metaphysics is *not as such* onto-theology in the Heideggerian sense, but it is only so in certain of its forms, especially that of Duns Scotus. Duns Scotus himself was one of the first influences on Heidegger who had written his Habilitation thesis on the medieval philosopher who was the origin of that form of metaphysics referred to by Kant as the «metaphysics of the old». This idea of a plurality of types of metaphysics that are not all onto-theological and especially not all in the same sense was of major significance to László Tengelyi. This finding in French

historiographical research was much more than «purely historical» (if there ever was such a thing): it rather meant an enlargement of the field of metaphysics towards a typology of different fundamental types of metaphysics. It further opened up the possibility of a non-onto-theological type of metaphysics. László Tengelyi's own thesis, which is founded upon this idea, is that besides the Aristotelian, the Plotinian, the Scotist and the Cartesian structural forms of metaphysics, distinguished by the historical research programme, there is a fourth fundamental type of metaphysics: a particularly phenomenological type, and this type can be the form the problem of metaphysics might adopt in our times.

László Tengelyi is not the only one who has argued for a systematic renaissance of metaphysics. Jean-François Courtine speaks of the «end of the “end of metaphysics”» (Courtine, 2005, 13). And maybe the idea of an «end of metaphysics» has always been itself a hidden form of metaphysics; this was at least Levinas' suspicion when he wrote in 1972, that «the end of metaphysics is our unacknowledged metaphysics» (Lévinas, 1972, 76). In the so called «analytic» philosophy, a renaissance of metaphysics has occurred in two senses. On the one hand there is a line of speculative metaphysics that has been developing for decades around the works of Saul Kripke and David Lewis; on the other hand and as a reaction to the speculative line, there is the rather recent development of a scientific metaphysics in the form of a naturalized metaphysics that aims to unite the particular sciences into a single naturalistic worldview.<sup>1</sup> But László Tengelyi takes neither one of these two lines of contemporary analytic metaphysics to be the most fruitful approach. It is rather a more Kantian line that serves as his guiding thread. For Kant, man as such is a metaphysician and naturally tends towards metaphysics; but for Kant, metaphysics is essentially a problem and needs to be understood in its problematic character if one wants to avoid dogmatic metaphysics. Certain conceptions in analytic metaphysics might not sufficiently pay attention to this point: reflections on possible worlds, inspired by Leibniz, show a certain tendency to fall back upon a pre-critical dogmatic form of metaphysics by not sufficiently respecting our epistemological restrictions, and the programme of a naturalized metaphysics seems to contain the counterpart to this programme in that it tends to presuppose a self-contained naturalism that is only to be explored in its structural forms (i.e. by analyzing notions of causality,

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<sup>1</sup> As regards this last, see for example: Kincaid (et al.), 2013 (Kincaid, Ladyman, & Ross, 2013).

law *etc.*). For László Tengelyi, it is rather the Kantian line of critical metaphysics that should be continued and in his eyes this can be done from within the phenomenological tradition. Having emphasized the Kantian line, the question arises: why not stay with Kant himself? Why not stay a Kantian with respect to metaphysics?

In the context of a discussion with Kant and two commentaries by Marc Richir and Jean-Luc Marion, László Tengelyi arrives at the following critique: Kant does in fact achieve a critique of the metaphysics of the pure possible as it was passed on to him by the Scotist tradition; but his own reconfiguration of the possible as «possibility of experience» is not successful in wholly overcoming the dogmatic primacy of the possible. The reason for this lies in a certain ambiguity in Kant: on the one hand, he criticizes a metaphysics of the possible that is detached from experience; on the other hand, he traces all existence and all concrete experience back to a faculty of cognition that always already contains the conditions for all experience as such. The consequence is that it is *a priori* impossible for experience to come up with something unexpected and profoundly new. Phenomena, experience, the appearing objects are all submitted to the strait jacket of the *a priori* conditions of the possibility of experience. There is finally a travestied onto-theo-logy in Kant, an anthropological turn of onto-theo-logy, in the sense that it is no longer God but now the pure I that inflicts the corset on experience. It is precisely with respect to this point that László Tengelyi sees progress in the radicalisation of this with the German Idealists, especially in Schelling whose positive philosophy thinks reality as a *Wirklichkeit* that exceeds all thought, and thus contains the accidental as well as radical contingency.

It is this radicalisation developed by Schelling with respect to the Kantian approach that László Tengelyi sees continued in what he calls a metaphysics of facticity. He finds this metaphysics of facticity in Husserl, but also in Heidegger, and even in Sartre. However, he starts his reflections with Aristotle, whom he takes to be something like a proto-phenomenologist. While for Kant, necessity and apriority are inseparable, they are not inseparable for Aristotle, who develops the idea of a hypothetical necessity, detached from apriority. As long as a being exists, it is necessary, since its existence excludes the possibility of its non-existence. With this Aristotelian idea, László Tengelyi is able to discover the first traces of a metaphysics of facticity in the very beginning of the history of metaphysics. But it is only with Husserl that the real foundations of a metaphysics



of facticity are actually developed; it is Husserl's idea of a metaphysics of original facts (*Urtatsachen*) that, in László Tengelyi's eyes, is crucial here. The central idea is that every eidetic phenomenology is necessarily founded in original facts that serve as the basis for any eidetic variation. There are four types of original facts: the *I* of mineness, the *world* of this *I*, *intersubjectivity* in the sense of an intentional interweavement, and finally *history*. These four original metaphysical facts are what takes the place of the traditional *metaphysica specialis*, and they replace the idea of first causes from traditional metaphysics. These four original facts, that are at the heart of a metaphysics of facticity, cannot be deduced from first causes that are supposed to be their origin. Those metaphysical facts are different from facts in the common sense while on the other hand Aristotelian hypothetical necessity still belongs to a description of facts in the common sense. But these metaphysical facts are not facts within our world but rather essentially depend on the performative phenomenologizing *I*. Going still further than Husserl himself, László Tengelyi proposes the thesis that *phenomenality itself* is also such an original metaphysical fact.

This discovery of the event-character of phenomenality as an original fact prepares the path for a phenomenological reformulation of the *metaphysica generalis*. It opens up the possibility of developing phenomenology as *another First Philosophy*, understood as a phenomenology of the *categories of the phenomenon in its phenomenality*, and not any more of being as being. The categories are here understood as the fundamental traits of experience and László Tengelyi calls them «experientials» (*Experientialien*), thereby varying the Heideggerian expression «existentials». Since those experientials are founded in the original facts, it is in principle impossible to name them once and for all as the discovery of new experientials remains always possible and the procedure for such a discovery would belong to the realm of reflective judgment as described by Kant in his third Critique. For László Tengelyi, the experientials are characterized as tendencies towards a concordance of experience (*Einstimmigkeitstendenzen der Erfahrung*), the first of which would be the existence (*Wirklichkeit*) of a world as a global view of all the unifying tendencies, among which are space, time and the different types of causality.

This realm of a *metaphysica generalis* or of First Philosophy as a phenomenological analysis of the categories of experience leads László Tengelyi to the idea of a phenomenological renewal of transcendental philosophy. However, with him

transcendental philosophy takes on the form of a «methodological transcendentalism». This methodological transcendentalism is distinguished from a transcendental idealism in that it is founded on the original fact of consciousness. The decisive argument for a transcendentalism that is only methodological and not idealistic is to be found in Husserl's idea of a *retrospective constitution* of a nature that precedes consciousness; it is thereby possible that there appears *in* consciousness a reality in the sense of a *Wirklichkeit independent* of consciousness. For László Tengelyi, this means that Husserl's transcendental phenomenology is not an idealism in the traditional sense in which reality would be entirely dependent on consciousness; however, this result also cannot be taken as an argument for a realism in the sense of a dogmatic naturalism or materialism. For the author of *Welt und Unendlichkeit* idealism and realism are names for standpoints within a battle between world-views (*Weltanschauungskampf*) and not really philosophical positions. The idea of a retrospective constitution together with the idea of original facts leads him to the modest position of a methodological transcendentalism as a phenomenological «working philosophy» (*Arbeitsphilosophie*).

This metaphysics of facticity, completed by methodological transcendentalism, takes on the form of a *philosophy of the world and its infinite*. It is this idea that gives the book its title. Neither a philosophy of the subject, nor a philosophy of being, the phenomenology proposed by László Tengelyi is a phenomenology of the world. The heart of this phenomenology of the world is the difference between world and thing, the transcendence of the thing to the world. Because of this central difference, a difference that replaces the Heideggerian ontological difference, the methodological transcendentalism is at the same time a metontological transcendentalism in which a projection of the world configures ever anew what the basic structures of a thing are. László Tengelyi thereby continues the idea of a metontology proposed by Heidegger during his brief metaphysical period between 1928 and 1930. However, his argument is essentially based on a Kantian distinction: the world is not a closed totality of things, but, as Kant shows in the doctrine of the antinomies, it is the totality of phenomena (*das All der Erscheinungen*) that refers in itself to the infinite. In this sense, the world as world opens up to the infinite. It is this idea of an infinite of the world as world in opposition to an infinite beyond the world that László Tengelyi develops through arguments found in Cantor and Husserl. Those dense and complex chapters lead him to

the central idea that the things and the world are characterized by an open infinite that leaves a fundamental place for the profoundly new: the singular things of the world have an open essence, which means their essence can acquire new properties; and the world, in which is included nature as one of its parts, is as such characterized by an open infinite.

In this sense, the title for his phenomenology of the world as a phenomenology of the infinite could also have been «*Die Welt und ihr Unendliches*» — the world and its infinite. In spite of this emphasis on the infinite, our *finitude* is essential for László Tengelyi's approach. It is at this point that we find a differentiating continuation of Heidegger on the one side and of Klaus Held on the other side, in which it is once again Kant who serves as the guideline for László Tengelyi: as finite beings, we develop world-projections (*Weltentwurf*), a term borrowed from Heidegger; however, according to László Tengelyi it is essential for this world projection that it is an *idea of the infinite* and in this we find a renewed version of the Kantian regulative idea. Such an idea of the infinite as contained in a world-projection is always only confirmed by a finite number of concordant experiences. Because of this insurmountable difference between the infinite of a world-projection and its finite confirmation, a world-projection can in principle never be completely justified by experience. Inversely, a finite number of experiences are compatible with several different world-projections. The result of the infinite of the world and the finitude of our experiences is that several different world-projections are possible while none of them can ever be completely justified. We can see that it is a Kantian idea of the infinite that allows László Tengelyi to criticize — in his infinitely elegant way — what he takes to be Heidegger's and Held's over-insistence on finitude. What he himself has labelled the «Wuppertal tradition of a phenomenology of the world» experiences a turn to the infinite with László Tengelyi. Next to the insistence on the infinite, we find another Kantian thought in this argument on the world-projections in the idea that there are antinomies constitutive for thinking, in this instance the antinomy between different world-projections. But how can we deal with this antinomic situation? Can it be resolved? Is there a new type of transcendental resolution that could renew the Kantian resolution of the antinomies through transcendental idealism?

It is at this point of the book, that we are confronted with something that seems to be a meta-level of argument. However, it could be that it is ultimately not really a meta-level at all. László Tengelyi opposes two projections of the world that he takes

to be dominant in our times: a metontological transcendentalism and a naturalistic autarcism. In the centre of metontological transcendentalism, the position he himself defends, there is the idea of a transcendence of things to the world; in the centre of naturalistic autarcism is the belief in a closed totality of nature. In László Tengelyi's eyes the antinomy of those two world-projects cannot be resolved; however, an argument in favour of the transcendental option can be given and this is the argument of an open infinite, developed throughout the interpretation of Husserl. For László Tengelyi, we are inevitably within what he calls an agonal situation, where different world-projections are opposed; no solution of the antinomy is possible, only a lively and deepening thinking of the antinomy itself, continued in the attitude of an «agonal respect» towards the other projection. In the chapter on the agonal world-projections, László Tengelyi seems to move on a meta-level, where the controversy between metontological transcendentalism and naturalistic autarcism is not decided and cannot be decided. One might wonder however, whether this is really a meta-level? Is the agonal situation really unresolvable? Moreover, is this position not too modest?

It might indeed seem as if László Tengelyi's position is too modest in this respect. If metontological transcendentalism and naturalistic autarcism are two projections of the world, they are *both already* anchored in the transcendental perspective of metontological transcendentalism. Naturalistic autarcism as a projection of the world is already founded in the attitude of metontological transcendentalism. Thus, the description of the agonal and antinomic situation would not be a meta-level, but rather an antinomy coming up *inside* metontological transcendentalism, to which priority would therefore be accorded. László Tengelyi thought that such a primacy of metontological transcendentalism would be overly strong and, so to speak, did not testify to a sufficient amount of agonal respect. However, in his last conference (Tengelyi, 2015), held the day of his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2014 one week before his death, he continues the perspective of a thinking of the world by referring to Rickert's idea of a heterological principle, known from the Scotist tradition of disjunctive transcendentals. In Scotist philosophy, disjunctive transcendentals are pairs of concepts that grasp being in its totality. For László Tengelyi, the concepts of «nature» and «history» are to be understood as such disjunctive transcendentals, as soon as they are understood as alternatives of a world which together comprehend being in its totality in our epoch. In the second part of the text, entitled «Nature and history as

alternatives of world», he adds to the heterological principle a Heideggerian principle, which he calls «transcendental principle of the opening of world» and according to which the thinking of the world presupposes a capacity for opening the world through freedom. He continues by a reflection in which Schelling is of central importance: the Schelling of the *Ages of the World* allows him a deeper and explicitly temporal conception of the alternatives of world, in which nature is the age of the world past, history the age of the present world, and in which the two together exhaust being in its totality, without however including the age of the future world, which is an opening that signals towards the infinite, thus transcending all totality of being. This conception thereby outlines a philosophy of the opening of the world, which is not meant to be directed against the position of agonal respect from the book, but which seems however to point towards an integrative transcendental position in which nature is understood as the past of the historical present and the open future.

The debate between naturalism and the transcendental tradition since Kant became a central issue in recent years within the context of the so-called «New» and «Speculative Realism». These realisms are often — but not always — naturalisms or materialisms, aiming at overcoming the transcendental perspective as such. The following part of this text wants to situate the problem of phenomenological metaphysics, as it was formulated by László Tengelyi, with respect to this contemporary debate.

### 3. *THE PROBLEM OF A PHENOMENOLOGICAL METAPHYSICS AND CONTEMPORARY «REALISM»*

There are different lines in the renaissance of metaphysics in our times, not only in analytic philosophy, but also and perhaps it could be said especially in the so called continental tradition. It seems that at least two lines can be distinguished within the continental tradition. On the one hand, there is a renaissance of metaphysics in the context of phenomenologically inspired French historiography of metaphysics, and it is this line that László Tengelyi seeks to continue; on the other hand, there is a renaissance of metaphysics largely inspired by the works of Gilles Deleuze and Alain Badiou, a line that has more recently developed into the growing field of a so called «Speculative»

or «New» realism. While the first field has a certain unity,<sup>2</sup> the second is extremely heterogenic,<sup>3</sup> so heterogenic not only in quality but also in intellectual content to such a degree that one wonders why the different authors even sail under the same flag. Since it is impossible to say something general about this field that would transcend an analysis of the socio-intellectual motives of this movement, I will focus only on the position of the central figure of Speculative Realism, Quentin Meillassoux, a French student of Alain Badiou, in order to develop the implicit answers László Tengelyi's position contains with respect to the challenge raised by Meillassoux.

In his book *After finitude. An essay on the necessity of contingency*, Meillassoux argues against what he calls «correlationism». By «correlationism», he means the whole tradition from Kant to phenomenology and analytic philosophy in which, he believes, speaking of reality has been renounced in limiting oneself to an analysis of the correlation of thinking and its correlate. There are two central arguments that can be taken as the core of Meillassoux's position. The first argument is negative and circles around the problem of what Meillassoux calls the *archi-fossile*. According to Meillassoux, it is impossible for the correlationist tradition to explain an ancestral reality, that is, a reality that existed previous to the existence of consciousness; however, today's sciences arrive at the thesis of such a pre-human reality by the analysis of *archi-fossile* material, and no one, not even the correlationist, doubts their results; therefore, the central thesis of correlationism includes a contradiction. We have already seen how László Tengelyi answers such an objection: it is through the Husserlian idea of a retrospective constitution that the correlationist phenomenologist can account from within consciousness for a reality that is independent of consciousness. The problem of the *archi-fossile* would therefore not be an unresolvable problem for phenomenology.

The second argument is positive and concerns a necessary overcoming of the correlation from within itself: Meillassoux thinks that facticity is not to be understood

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<sup>2</sup> The «father» of «Speculative Realism» is Quentin Meillassoux, the three other founding figures of this movement are Ray Brassier, Iain Hamilton Grant and Graham Harman. Books that were essential to initiating this movement are: (Meillassoux, 2006; Brassier, 2007; Grant, 2006; Harman, 2005). Two central thinkers in the background of this movement are Deleuze and Badiou, see particularly: (Deleuze, 2011; Badiou, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> We can limit ourselves here to mentioning the significant difference between the two «founding fathers» of «New Realism», Maurizio Ferraris and Markus Gabriel. Central to the beginning of this realism are: (Ferraris, 2012; Gabriel, 2013). See more recently in English: (Gabriel, 2015).

as a limit of our thought, but rather as a principle of the Absolute and as such as a principle of reality in itself. The argument is *in nuce* the following: for the correlationist, facticity means that his own existence is not necessary, that he himself could also not exist; the possibility of his own non-existence, however, cannot be taken as a mere correlate of his thought, because it concerns the possibility of the non-existence of his own thinking being. Meillassoux deduces from this that the correlationist can only think his own non-existence if he understands his own facticity as a principle of the in-itself being independent of his own thinking; therefore universal contingency is the only absolute necessity: the result of that is Meillassoux's speculative materialism of the hyper-chaos. If we return to László Tengelyi's metaphysics of facticity, we can say the following: Meillassoux proposes a deduction from the mere necessity of the fact of the performative cogito to the principle of factuality and groundlessness of the Absolute in itself; he thereby converts a moment of the metaphysical original fact, its groundlessness, into a principle of the Absolute in itself. From the perspective of László Tengelyi's approach, this is a speculative *salto mortale* that confounds two moments of facticity: from facticity characterized by an impossibility of giving a reason for the metaphysical existence of the cogito, Meillassoux concludes that the facticity as being-thrown (*Geworfenheit*) is a thrownness into a cosmos that is in itself *positively* characterized by chaos, groundlessness and total contingency. This conclusion however is a *non sequitur*, as an ego with a mere necessity of fact, I am thrown into the middle of something that I am not familiar with and in which I still need to find an orientation, something that I will never have to the full extent. From this, one cannot deduce that that into which I am thrown is positively characterized as a hyper-chaos in itself. Therefore, neither the negative argument nor the positive argument proposed by Meillassoux are strong enough to overcome phenomenology as a variation of the so called «correlationism»; the metaphysics of facticity developed by László Tengelyi contains the resources to answer his challenge.

Like some of the new «realists» (for example Iain Hamilton Grant, Graham Harman), but certainly not all (for example Meillassoux, Benoist), László Tengelyi embraces the renaissance of metaphysics. It is not metaphysics, but rather «realism» that awakens his suspicions. We have already mentioned that in his eyes, «realism» and «idealism» tend to be standpoints without a sufficient philosophical foundation. The

danger of dogmatism would therefore not be on the side of metaphysics, if metaphysics is continued as a problem and in the critical line of phenomenology, but the danger would rather be on the side of a «realism» as opposed to «idealism». For László Tengelyi, what is at issue is rather the finding a notion of reality within the realm of a metaphysics of facticity and metontological transcendentalism, while refraining from the problematic term of «realism». What then is «reality» in his conception?

There are not only the forms of «Speculative Realism» in Meillassoux, Grant, Harman and Brassier and the forms of «New Realism» in Gabriel and Ferraris, but there are also realist tendencies in some of the authors who are close to the phenomenological tradition itself. In fact, that realism was never foreign to phenomenology is confirmed by one brief look at the group of Husserl's earliest students of whom several pursued a realist phenomenology, later on even in contrast to Husserl's own transcendental turn. In order to explicate László Tengelyi's phenomenological notion of reality, I will contrast it briefly with the most elaborate contemporary «realism» developed from within the phenomenological tradition: the one proposed by Jocelyn Benoist. Benoist's «realism» in his *Éléments de philosophie réaliste* (2011) is a «contextual realism»: that means reality, for Benoist, is «what one has» (*ce que l'on a*), the already acquired context, which is normative and necessarily presupposed in every particular intentional act. But for László Tengelyi (and he situates himself here in the thought of Marc Richir) such a context would always already be a holistic version of what Richir calls a «symbolic institution»; reality, on the contrary, is precisely that what *disturbs* such an institutionalized context, that what appears with a surplus of spontaneous sense, transcending the already inquired symbolic institutions. If one wants to speak of «realism» here, it is not a contextual realism, but rather a «subversive realism», in which reality is precisely that which forces open the already acquired context of our habits. However, a further question arises with respect to these opposed notions of reality: should not a phenomenological concept of reality be able to account for the *two* aspects that *both* seem to belong to reality, the reality of a context *and* the reality of that what disturbs the context? And how could this be done? Could it be Kant once again from whom we might take a distinction and transform it phenomenologically, this time the distinction between an «objective reality» in the sense of *Sachhaltigkeit*, that a concept only has if it can be represented in an intuition,



and in the sense of existence, of *Wirklichkeit*, as the correlate of a concrete sensation?

Whatever the answer to this question, for László Tengelyi it would be an answer that proposes a notion of reality within the broader conception of a metaphysics of facticity and its related metontological transcendentalism. Within the realm of a manifold renaissance of metaphysics in our times, it is László Tengelyi who neither falls back into a pre-critical metaphysics of possible worlds, nor naturalizes metaphysics, nor imprudently transcends the Kantian emphasis on our finite capacities forward into the direction of a new philosophy of the Absolute. It seems to me, that in spite of his criticisms of Kant, whom he seeks to transcend through Schelling and phenomenology, his own project can be understood as a project of a genuinely Kantian type, because it pays as much attention to the problematic character of metaphysics itself as to the fact that as philosophers we need to deal with the problems of metaphysics if we want to avoid being secretly swept away by a dogmatic form of metaphysics, even though it may appear under the name of an overcoming of metaphysics as such. In his last book *World and Infinity*, he thus holds on to an idea Kant formulates with the following words at the end of the *Prolegomena*: «That the human mind would someday entirely give up metaphysical investigations is just as little to be expected, as that we would someday gladly give up breathing so as never to take in impure air.» (Kant, 1968, Ak. 4: 367.21-24) It is not about holding one's breath, but about trying to cleanse the metaphysical air we breathe — and it is László Tengelyi who has left us with an impressive proposal of how this might be done.

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