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Apocalyptic Phenomenology: The Culmination of the Phenomenological Movement

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Abstract: In this article, I delineate a notion of phenomenology, which differs in many ways from earlier approaches. I term this understanding apocalyptic in the sense that this phenomenology discloses not only the essences of particular things, logical entities, ideas, and transcendental processes, but beyond them, it reveals reality in its essential openness to newness. The term *apocalypsis* refers not simply to the unveiling of something unknown earlier, but more importantly to the central determinant of reality in that it discloses irreducible newness. I show that the phenomenon of self-disclosure or revelation was at the center of the work of the first phenomenologists, such as Franz Brentano and Edmund Husserl; I emphasize the notion of phenomenological revelation in the thought of Max Scheler and Martin Heidegger. In this context, I offer an interpretation of the phenomenologies of Emmanuel Lévinas, Michel Henry, and Jean-Luc Marion. I argue that the notion of *nouveauté novatrice* of Miklos Vetö is a phenomenologically inspired insight into the nature of the essence of phenomenology. I claim that newness is the core of reality engendering a new conception of phenomenology as a philosophy of reality—a phenomenology aptly termed neology, a development of what is known as “the phenomenological movement”.

Keywords: phenomenology; phenomenological movement; apocalyptic; philosophy of revelation; newness; neology



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1. Introduction

Phenomenology is the most influential philosophical movement in the past century. Its prehistory reaches back to the beginnings of Western philosophy. The Platonic notion of illumination combined with Aristotelian analysis is what appears perspicuous again and again in many phenomenological texts (Carman 2007, p. 16). In particular, phenomenology is rooted in what we term Austrian philosophy (Moran 2012, p. 28); its ramifications have entered contemporary sciences in some form or other beginning with mathematics and logic through psychology and sociology to metaphysics and philosophy of religion. While a few other philosophical currents have proved similarly significant, in particular various trends in Anglo-American thought, phenomenology not only permeated Continental philosophy but some of its terms, such as intentionality, have proved to be central in contemporary English-language philosophies as well. While reading the main phenomenological authors is often difficult (they wrote originally in languages other than English), the results of thorough work on these texts are detectable in the writings of different authors such as Noam Chomsky, Leo Strauss, Roderick Chisholm, Dagfinn Føllesdal, Michael Dummett, Thomas Nagel, Josef Seifert, or William Desmond (cf. among others Smith and Smith 1995; Smith 2003; Desmond 2005; Seifert 2008; Simpson 2012; Drummond 2022).

Austrian philosophy was shaped not only by the so-called second scholasticism but also by the emerging neo-Aristotelism of the nineteenth century (Liberatore 1857; McCool 1989). The method of Austrian philosophy inherited the Platonic-Augustinian tradition of intuitive knowledge, which characteristically appears in most Austrian authors, such as Bernard Bolzano, Anton Günther, Franz Brentano, Edmund Husserl, or Rudolf Steiner (see

Steiner 1983, p. 60; Føllesdal 2020; Fisette et al. 2020; Mezei). These authors also emphasized the importance of analytical interpretations of the contents of intuition in various ways leading to logical corollaries of philosophical importance. Moreover, many Austrian thinkers underlined the unity of intuition and logical reference in what we term the understanding of structures or *Gestalten* (cf. Ehrenfels 1929; Fisette 2016). In this kind of understanding, the core perception of essences entails their structural components, modalities, and ramifications. It belongs to this understanding that the perception and its entailments are given in a whole, the object of direct intuition, in which reality discloses itself in a dynamically complex unity. This unity is at the same time teleological because its *telos* or purpose is the understanding of the meaningful unity in which the perceiver plays a crucial role (cf. Cassedy 2022). Illumination and teleology, to use these reputable expressions of Western philosophy, are decisive in phenomenology with the important addition that they are considered two sides of the same coin, and their correlation is investigated analytically in various phenomenological works (Schuhmann 2012; Husserl 2013).

Methodologically, Brentano, Husserl, Scheler, Heidegger, Dietrich von Hildebrand, as well as Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Lévinas, Michel Henry, and Jean-Luc Marion understood their phenomenological procedures along the lines of the above summary—with characteristic differences, though, which will be described in more detail below (cf. Zahavi 2018). The central understanding of the methodologically most reflective authors is that the method is not produced on the basis of a subjective decision or a certain tradition, but determined by the object of the phenomenological study, i.e., the essence itself. It may seem that the method and the content of the act of knowledge, i.e., intuition, form a circle: methodically, one reaches the object that determines the method of its own perception. This circle, nevertheless, is not logically circular; in reality, knowledge is such that it is always determined by the object of knowledge so that knowledge is teleological, i.e., it strives for its fulfillment in understanding, which is by definition an understanding of meaning (cf. Cassedy 2022, pp. 183–85). The teleological nature of knowledge determines the processes of knowledge at various levels beginning with external perceptions through forms of inner discernment to the understanding of the meaning and to various corollaries that refer to the whole of meaning given in the original insight. Knowledge is defined by its ultimate object, and the object—in various forms corresponding to the level of knowledge—forms the particular epistemic way in the process. In other words, in the phenomenological dynamism of knowledge, method and content, procedure and object are interrelated precisely in accordance with Husserl's well-known principle of “the universal *a priori* of correlation” (Husserl 1970, pp. 159–61). While this expression refers *prima facie* to the correlation between intention and object, its validity is obvious in other respects as well, such as the correlation between method and object, form and content, or reference and meaning.

In the present article, this methodological conception is applied in two ways. First, on the essence of phenomenology (traditionally also termed noumenology, cf. Hyppolite 1974, p. 541; Seifert 1987, pp. 303–24). Second, on the history of the phenomenological movement. As to the first way, it is the essence that defines its understanding, since it communicates itself to the corresponding receiver, i.e., the one that conceives the essence. This is the main point in Husserl's “universal *a priori* of correlation” (Husserl 1970, pp. 159–61): reality communicates itself in the structure of intentionality. As to the second way, “the phenomenological movement” is understood here in terms of the self-development of what is given in phenomenology, i.e., the fundamental reality of newness. The phenomenological movement in the strictly historical sense is merely the approximation of the self-development of the phenomenological essence as given in its universally correlative nature. This methodological configuration is expressed in the Graphical Abstract attached to this article.

The essence of phenomenology is disclosure. Essences are given or appear, in other words, they communicate themselves in the process of knowledge. This understanding is rooted in Husserl's notion of *Gegebenheit*, i.e., original presentation or givenness (Husserl

1998, pp. 8–9). Heidegger further developed this notion in his characteristic understanding of *es gibt*, which is based on the dual meaning of the term as “there is” and “it gives” (cf. Heidegger 2007, p. 9). This approach provides the basis of Marion’s notion of gift or donation (Marion 2002), while he tends to understand *donation* as a one-sided act of the giver and neglects the complex role of the receiver. In reality, we as phenomenologists are *a priori* invited to receive what is given, i.e., to take part in the process of the self-disclosure of essences so that our participation is part and parcel of this self-disclosure. *Tua res agitur*, as Husserl formulated (following Horace, cf. Husserl 1989, p. 430); to which Heidegger added: *Mea res agitur* (Heidegger 2004, p. 113). For both thinkers, we are entangled in the process of knowledge as co-constitutors of reality (cf. Husserl 1989, p. 220 et passim). To put this important notion into an even more precise formula: *Nostra res agitur*, i.e., we deal here with our mutually shared reality. This is what warrants the objectivity of knowledge: objectivity is co-considered with subjectivity in a whole entailing the subject and the object in the overall unity of meaning. Reality is self-constitution, but not without the correlative poles of subjectivity and objectivity, and not without the universal process of self-disclosing and self-fulfillment. This fulfillment is necessarily realized in and through various particular developments that are sublated, as it were, in the overall renewal of the whole.

This complex process is directed by the principle of *refusivum sui*, i.e., the principle which combines and fulfills the processes of self-withdrawal and self-restoration (as the Latin verb *refundo* means both a negative and a positive process, such as going off and going back, being withdrawn and being restored). The refuse method, as I term it (Mezei 2022), uses the multivalence of the Latin term to point out not only the entanglement of the negative and the positive aspects but more importantly the holistic nature of their structured unity. Subject and object, person and community, historical foundation and re-foundation, cultural and even political processes are determined by the principle of *refusivum sui* at the general as well as the particular levels so that the negative points to the positive moment and *vice versa* (more detail in Mezei 2017, pp. 255–58).

What is taking place in this complex process determined by the refuse principle? The short answer is *newness*. When I say “newness”, I do not mean the “birth” of newness, because newness in its essential form is *not* born; it is essentially new. Yet it is also dynamically new, so that newness appears, i.e., it is disclosed. Newness is irreducibly new, and if one applies the expression “birth” to its disclosure, this refers to the secondary or relative form of newness. When newness is considered in its irreducible newness, it is absolute *per se*. When it is considered in its relations or relativity, it is newness *per aliud*. I will say more about this below.

If we perceive an essence phenomenologically, we perceive its meaningful whole as entailing relative and absolute newness at the same time. When I grasp the essence of the Sun as the most important star for the Earth, I grasp it sensually and conceive its physical existence. The Sun is new in this particular act of grasping, i.e., subjectively. At the same time, I also grasp that it is the Sun in a certain position. e.g., at noon, which means that the subjective newness of the act of grasping entails the objectivity of the position of the Sun on its celestial path. I also perceive the relative newness of the Sun concerning its rise in the morning and set in the evening. I realize that in all its variations, in its daily rising and setting, there is a core dimension of the Sun as being produced at some point in its history and will reach its collapse in the future. I understand that the existence of the Sun refers to an intrinsic feature of the universe to produce suns. This feature of original newness defines even the relative newness of the Sun as perceived in its actual position. Amid all these perceptions, I conceive the Sun as the source of life on Earth, the origin of light and darkness, biology and human history, religious and poetical symbolism, an entity entailing various aspects of our existence. Through these perceptions intrinsically interconnected to one another, an essential perception takes place, i.e., the direct noumenological perceiving of the Sun as the expression of the absolute source in absolute newness. This irreducible

newness of the Sun remains central to our understanding even in the context of its various relative forms.

One may say that the external perception of the Sun has priority over the noumenological perception. This is not even true in the chronological sense, because it is not the perception that defines the Sun. On the contrary, it is the Sun that defines its own perception at various levels. This is a simple fact: we cannot perceive the Sun if there is *no* Sun; and we would not even possess the faculty of sight if the light in the universe, embodied in the radiation of the Sun, did not originally define the optical organs of living beings and, beyond them, earthly life as such. This originally defining character of the Sun reaches back to the absolute newness of the Sun, a newness culminating in our understanding of its noumenological essence entailing all its external dimensions given in a variety of perceptions.

The above example shows why I term phenomenology apocalyptic. Phenomenology is apocalyptic insofar as it is essential self-disclosure. As the Sun discloses itself in the universe and makes its own perception possible and factual (through various steps of physical, chemical, biological, and cultural developments), phenomenology is apocalyptic in that it discloses reality *per se*. It can be said that to apply the adjective “apocalyptic” to phenomenology is to use a pleonasm; phenomenology is by definition self-disclosure, as the origin of its name suggests (cf. [Schuhmann 2012](#)). However, when I add *apocalyptic*, I want to emphasize what is latently present in the original expression. There is a further reason to use this adjective. Apocalyptic does not merely mean appearing; due to the semantic development of the Greek *apocalypsis*, it may also refer to the ultimate fulfillment of things as the result of a universal drama. Let me understand the drama of *apocalypsis* (as described especially in The Book of Revelation, cf. Rev 3:12; 21:2) as the drama of the phenomenological understanding expressed in an enciphered way. This understanding culminates in the self-disclosure of newness (described in the image of the New Jerusalem), so the use of the adjective is justified concerning the ultimate newness as the fulfillment of phenomenology. Indeed, this fulfillment is also the fulfillment of reality as a whole, in which the phenomenologist co-constitutes the renewal of reality *per se*.

Apocalyptic phenomenology has therefore the following aspects:

- It is phenomenology in the original sense of the *phainomenon* as the self-disclosure of an essence, a *noumenon*;
- It is phenomenology as the realization of the universal *a priori* of correlation;
- It is apocalyptic in the sense of the emphatic expression of phenomenology as a philosophy of revelation;
- It is apocalyptic in the sense of the ultimate fulfillment not only of particular aspects of reality but also of reality as a whole;
- It is apocalyptic in the sense of being disclosed in an appropriate study of the history of the phenomenological movement as a philosophical school. In this sense, the historical label “the phenomenological movement” discloses a higher phenomenological meaning—the meaning of the movement of self-disclosure—culminating in what I term apocalyptic phenomenology.

In what follows I explain in more detail what I summarized in this introductory part, namely, how I understand phenomenology, what I mean by apocalyptic, in which sense I connect these two terms so that another term, neology can be used as the label for the apocalyptic phenomenology of newness. Finally, I offer a short conclusion of the findings of this paper.

2. Phenomenology

Phenomenology in the philosophical sense has been considered in one or more of the following ways:

- It is identical to the phenomenological movement rooted in Austrian philosophy and developed by its influential representatives as described for the first time in detail by Herbert Spiegelberg ([Spiegelberg 1960](#), vols I-II; [Zahavi 2018](#)).

- It is seen as a complex methodology by which experience is analyzed. As a result, we arrive at a better, deeper, and more complete understanding of reality, while the concrete form of this understanding varies in the works of different phenomenological authors beginning with the logical-transcendental to the existential and the theological approaches (Luft and Overgaard 2012, pp. 243–87).
- It is conceived as a set of philosophical problems, such as intentionality, consciousness, being, time, the other, life, icon, idol, etc., which are central in various branches of contemporary philosophy (Luft and Overgaard 2012, pp. 123–371).
- Phenomenology can also be seen as an introduction to the establishment of a new kind of metaphysics in the future, as proposed by Edmund Husserl and realized in specific ways by Martin Heidegger or by his strongest critic Emmanuel Lévinas (Luijpen 1965; Walton 2012).
- Phenomenology has been considered a language game originating in German and French philosophical vocabularies that cannot be properly translated into plain philosophical English. Its problems can be better understood if they are formulated in a more accessible way, such as when “intentionality” is termed “aboutness” and analyzed accordingly (Drummond 2012).

Every approach has a point of interest, but if any of them is considered exclusively, an error occurs. Phenomenology as “the phenomenological movement” (Spiegelberg 1960, vols I-II) is considered centrally important in recent history of philosophy but there are two further factors to be taken into account. First, phenomenology as a historical form reevaluated the most important developments of Western philosophy and offered critical improvements not only by connecting empiricism and rationalism but also by opening a radical rethinking of earlier ontologies and metaphysics in a new way. Between Brentano and Marion, or between Dietrich von Hildebrand and Josef Seifert, phenomenology took the form of a new understanding of illumination, an understanding leading to a rethinking of revelation in its presence to persons. Second, “the phenomenological movement”, even though described in historical terms, is correctly conceived as a self-developing problem with possibilities of further improvements only partially materialized in the thought of historical personalities, such as Scheler, Heidegger, or Desmond. This is an important point to emphasize: the problem of phenomenology is all-embracing and the points of view of phenomenologists do not describe the entire context (including the understanding presented here). Comparable to the periodic table of chemical elements, there are further possibilities in the phenomenological problem to be expressed; more importantly, it is the ultimate possibility of phenomenology to be understood as the fullness not only of historical figures and their characteristic approaches but also as the overall context of philosophy. In this latter sense, “the phenomenological movement” parallels the movement of Hegel’s Spirit (cf. Hyppolite 1974), or even more, it expresses the self-development of reality *per se*, in which historical figures point beyond themselves to the structures of essential self-disclosure, i.e., to the self-communicating of reality *per se*.

A similar interpretation can be presented concerning the methodology and the specific problems of phenomenology. If the phenomenological method is intended to describe reality together with its ramifications, then the phenomenological method is insufficiently defined in terms of the *epoche*, the reductions, value insight, illumination, empirical and linguistic analysis, etc. (Husserl 1965; cf. McCormick and Elliston 1981). As always, it is the object that defines the method by which the object can be properly conceived. If phenomenology aspires to a non-reductive understanding of reality, it is reality itself that prescribes the method. This methodology necessarily entails certain steps, such as the *epoche* and various reductions, but more than a simple sum of steps the phenomenological method requires methodological holism. Suffice it to claim here that methodological holism does not only describe the fundamental movements of reality but conceives of the purpose of such movement as well, i.e., its teleological character. Methodologically, phenomenology leads to this *telos*, as already Husserl noted (Husserl 1970, p. 70; Walton 2012), while it is logically obvious that the nature of this *telos*, i.e., the fulfillment of phenomenology belongs

to a realm different from the realm in which the methodological procedure is carried out. To put it simply, the fulfillment of phenomenology is beyond phenomenology, and the reality it refers to stands similarly on a metaphenomenological level.

The particular problems of phenomenology—such as intentionality, the transcendental ego, the genesis of time, the problem of *Dasein*, the Other, the saturated phenomenon, or the in-between of metaxology—are to be considered as individual stars shining in the unlimited realm of the heavens. However, it is the problem of the heavens, as it were, that we must face above all particular problems. Just like in contemporary cosmology, where the problem of dark matter and dark energy constitute the overall problem of understanding properly the universe (Papantonopoulos 2007), the universe of phenomenology is to be problematized at the highest level possible, i.e., on the level of “the phenomenological movement” essentially understood. One can repeat here the famous question of Leibniz, reiterated by Schelling and Heidegger: Why is there anything rather than nothing? (Heidegger 1959, pp. 7–8). Far from being nonsensical (Witherall 2001), this question opens the way to the ultimate answer phenomenology is capable of giving to the problem of reality. This answer is irreducible newness as the essence of reality.

Even philosophers with a sympathetic reading of phenomenologists revisit time and again the question of the language of phenomenology (e.g., Scruton 2015, pp. 75, 240). Certainly, plain philosophical English helps us understand many problems of philosophy on an introductory level. We may be satisfied with this and claim that raising further questions is unnecessary, even boring, or pompous (such as Ryle 2009, p. 231). Whoever reads the phenomenological authors in their original languages will realize, however, that there are complexities in the phenomenological vocabulary that cannot be easily expressed in another language, while the problems themselves as formulated in a given language are clear, legitimate, and meaningful. Let me refer as the simplest example to the formula of “intentional inexistence” of objects in Brentano’s works (cf. Brentano 1973, p. 124). Inexistence means non-existence in plain English, but for Brentano, the Latin *inexistentia* (hence German *Inexistenz*) had the meaning of immanent existence, i.e., immanent in the subject. This semantic problem is easy to overcome, but what about the more stubborn problems connected to the expression “*Realität*” in Husserl, “*Wert*” in Scheler, “*Dasein*” in Heidegger, or “*autrement q’être*” in Lévinas, etc.? Is it obvious that the *être* or *autrui* are best translated as being or otherness? I do not mention the difficulties of the language of Merleau-Ponty, Michel Henry, or the late Heidegger (cf. his polysemic *Ereignis*). Important here is the requirement to combine meaningful English—as the global language of philosophy today—with the nuances of the original meaning of the phenomenological vocabulary. The point is to be seen if we compare the problems of phenomenology with current problems of consciousness, qualia, or subjectivity in contemporary philosophy. It seems that these problems were not only accessed and evaluated in philosophical cultures linguistically different from the contemporary English culture but even resolved on a level only approximated by contemporary authors—such as the relationship between the mind and the universe (Nagel 2021; cf. Husserl 1965, pp. 79–122; Carman 2007).

Phenomenology, like the universe in which we live, is in constant movement. Our task is to understand the nature of this dynamic and, at the same time, the nature of our point of view in which understanding becomes possible. Like the universe, phenomenology has a temporal beginning and a termination; yet its genesis reveals infinitely more than its historical textbook or the list of the authors working in its sway. Phenomenology is universal in and beyond historical genesis; in and beyond particular problems; and perhaps even in and beyond the notion of phenomenology I explain here in terms of apocalyptic phenomenology, a phenomenology considered the culmination *par excellence* of “the phenomenological movement”.

“Culminating” in this context refers to the self-disclosure of the essence of phenomenology in ultimate evidence that was missing before. It is not the textual shape of this disclosure that is convincing, but rather the problem itself conceived on the basis of a linguistically fragile summary as presented here. The problem itself has historical, logical, and purely

phenomenological aspects. Historically, more than a century after the rise of phenomenology it has become obvious that phenomenology is not only an isolated historical school; it is a *movement* in which the initial problems are gradually clarified and developed into a new comprehensive understanding of reality. This process points to the essence of phenomenology as the movement of the self-disclosure of reality. Logically, this self-disclosure is the central phenomenon of newness. Newness, however, is taken here not in the trivial sense of daily life (though even here essential newness appears), but in the sense of Husserl's *Letztbegründung* (ultimate grounding, cf. Husserl 1965, p. 112, etc.) or Heidegger's *zweiter Anfang, neuer Anfang, or anderer Anfang* (second, new, or other beginning, cf. Heidegger 2014, passim). Josef Seifert's battle cry of "back to the things in themselves" (Seifert 1987) stresses the same point: the discovery of the genuine essence not only of things but rather of "the phenomenological movement" in the higher sense, i.e., as the dynamic self-disclosure of reality. *Phenomenologically*, the essence of phenomenology springs forth from this self-disclosure that has effects on real history: not only on the history of phenomenology as a school but also on the broader history of humanity, as Husserl already suggested (Husserl 1970, p. 17).

3. Apocalyptic

Apocalupsis as a term shows a remarkable semantic development. The Greek word, as is known, was a simple translation of the Hebrew *gala* (cf. Strong 1890, H1540) and has the following meanings in the Tanakh: uncover, discover, captive, carry away, reveal, open, captivity, shew, remove, appear. The fundamental meaning of *gala* is then "to become visible and capable of being grasped". *Gala* as a reference to the appearance of God is translated with *apocalupto* in the Septuagint (cf. 1 Sam 3:21). This meaning is the origin of the prophetic form *gala* as a description of the vision of God and his angels (cf. Isa 40:50; Dan 10:1; Mezei (2017, 2021a)). The genre became popular in heterodox and gnostic literature during the last two centuries BC and the first centuries CE leading to the literary form we also find in the New Testament in The Book of Revelation (the Greek title is *Apocalupsis*) as well as in several parabiblical writings. The term *apocalyptic literature* was first used during the nineteenth century, and the meaning "a cataclysmic event" was not applied before the 1970s (cf. Coppola and Milius 1979). The meaning of apocalyptic as prophetically referring to the ultimate battle between good and evil powers is rooted in the narrative of The Book of Revelation (Kovacs and Rowland 2004, pp. 149–59).

Judaism, Christianity, and even Islam emerged as specific forms of apocalyptic in the above sense. They interpret history in apocalyptic terms with relevance for the community and its members. It is not the emphasis on the fulfillment of history that is central in these forms but rather divine disclosure. In its further semantic developments apocalyptic retains its biblical meaning of the disclosure of truth, the truth of salvation and damnation. *Apocalupsis* was translated as *revelatio* into Latin during the fourth century possibly by St Jerome. While the Greek expression could have been better rendered by *develatio* in classical Latin, the prefix *re-* must have had a stronger undertone for the translator (perhaps inspired by the similar function of the prefix in *religio*, cf. Augustinus 1877, p. 606). Even in this somewhat ambiguous form, *revelatio* has become the term for divine disclosure in various settings throughout the centuries. When the problem of supernatural revelation became emphatically addressed more or less from the seventeenth century, overall theological and philosophical reflections were necessary to defend the traditional understanding of *apocalupsis*. This is how various philosophies of revelation have come to the fore and keep their important role even in contemporary philosophy and theology (Mezei 2017, pp. 1–58; Benes 2022).

This is, however, only one side of the story. The other side is that the apocalyptic undertone of modern and contemporary cultural developments makes it clear that we still live in the age of apocalypticism inherited from the beginning of our epoch (cf. Derrida 1984). If one thinks of the decisive events of Western history throughout the past two millennia, it cannot be doubted that the motive of an apocalyptically understood fabric of

history, culture, politics, and personal fate is what keeps our era together. The conflicts between Judaism and Christianity, paganism and orthodoxy, Islam and Christendom, humanism and reformation, enlightenment and romanticism, communism and democracy, liberalism and conservatism are forms of an apocalyptic mentality that became even stronger after the “end of history” (cf. Fukuyama 1992) and its failure (Menand 2018). The “apocalyptic shift” in contemporary culture is also obvious in various ways (DiTommaso 2020). It is especially “the apocalypse of the German soul”, as Hans Urs von Balthasar expressed himself, that marks the most important Western developments during the past centuries with a special emphasis on philosophical apocalypticism (Balthasar 1998).

4. Apocalyptic Phenomenology

How are these developments related to “the phenomenological movement”? As described above, phenomenology is essentially the self-disclosure of reality, a noumenology in which the phenomenologists—individually and in community with one another—take part as co-constitutors (cf. Husserl 1989, pp. 181–223). The title of phenomenology—the discipline of what discloses itself or appears—has an overall apocalyptic character in the sense I summarized above. Ultimately, phenomenology tends to become “apocalyptic”, i.e., the overall constitutive science of reality as self-disclosure (for more details cf. Mezei 2017, p. 344). I emphasize here that a phenomenology of the inapparent (Heidegger 1977, p. 399) belongs to the same realm; for what does not disclose itself discloses itself inasmuch as it does not disclose itself. The logical content of this paradoxical proposition is that negativity is always conceived of in terms of a function of positivity; ontologically “nothing” is a function of “being”, and epistemologically “ignorance” is a function of “knowledge”. As we know from the theory of law, *ignorantia iuris non excusat*, i.e., ignorance is considered in the context of legal knowledge (a conception reaching back to Aristotle[1979] 1984, vol. II, 1114a2).

Phenomenology as what instantiates the self-disclosure of reality is apocalyptic in a fundamental sense. However, some further points underpin the apocalyptic nature of phenomenology. First, the history of the phenomenological movement is rooted in a millennial conception of the fulfillment and renewal of philosophy around 1900; second, phenomenology as a philosophy is linked to philosophies of revelation (apocalyptic) in the work of leading authors; and third, phenomenology aims at the realization of newness, the central feature of apocalyptic thinking. Let us see these points one by one.

4.1. The Millennial Character of “the Phenomenological Movement”

Husserl published his breakthrough *Logische Untersuchungen* in two volumes in 1900 and 1901 (Husserl 1984; English translation Husserl 1982). These years were determined by millennial phantasies in the Western world, so in religion as in the sciences, and to some extent in philosophy as well. While Husserl kept a certain distance from various philosophical enthusiasts—he was originally a mathematician—then contemporary philosophy, even academic philosophy showed a different picture. The speculative atmosphere of academic philosophy was time and again challenged by popular and ingenious authors, such as Eduard von Hartmann, Ernst Haeckel, and Friedrich Nietzsche. Franz Brentano appeared in academic philosophy as an exceptional figure, originally a Catholic priest interested in empirical psychology, the emerging disciple considered capable of supplying philosophy with a solid scientific grounding. As a consequence of the turbulent history of the last decades of the nineteenth century (e.g., the occupation of Rome and the declaration of papal infallibility in 1870) the priest Brentano chose laicization and marriage, which led to the loss of his university chair in Catholic Vienna. However, the influence of his ideas remained strong in the younger generation, thus also among the first students of phenomenology.

Husserl’s work made the impression of a new beginning of philosophy in the eyes of many of his contemporaries, a beginning breaking the spell of exhausted philosophies of the previous century and opening the fully new dimension of direct experience and its

objective description (Husserl 1982; contemporary reviews reprinted in Noack 1973). The objectivity of phenomenological truth—as opposed to naturalism, psychologism, historicism, and ideologies (*Weltanschauungen*)—appeared as a sort of philosophical revelation among students of the first decade of the twentieth century. While the Göttingen circle of Husserl was rather balanced academically, the Munich circle had a different shape due to the charismatic figure of Johannes Daubert (Salice 2020). Members of the circle, such as Max Scheler, contributed to the experience of a philosophical revolution, indeed the end of a dead era of philosophy and the birth of the new age. This—broadly so-called—millennialism of philosophy was accompanied by a series of religious conversions, a unique phenomenon in the history of philosophy (Walther 1955, p. 16; Spiegelberg 1960, vol. I, pp. 172–73; Hildebrand 2000).

Husserl considered his phenomenology an introduction to a new era where pure science and pure philosophy are amalgamated in a never-heard-of synthesis. *Philosophy as a Rigorous Science* (Husserl 1965) was the manifesto of this intention. It aimed at the new foundation of philosophy for the new age of humanity, which precedes the ultimate fulfillment given in the teleological structure of history (Husserl 1970, p. 70). While Husserl kept the image of the reserved university professor, many of his central ideas—most importantly his emphasis on the final foundation of philosophy (*Letztbegründung*, Husserl 1956, pp. 169–70)—have a millennial flair and can be best understood in the context of the epochal purpose to renew philosophy.

Husserl's self-interpretation had followers. Either in German or French phenomenologies, in the philosophical revivals of Central Europe, or Italy and Spain, phenomenologists have undertaken the most serious effort to realize the promise of phenomenology. Even among the representatives of subsequent developments of hermeneutics, structuralism, linguistics, sociology, grammatology, etc. we find traces of the millennial vocation originated in the first phenomenologists. In most of these endeavors, phenomenological millennialism takes the form of apocalypticism, such as in the works of Heidegger, Lévinas, or Derrida (Derrida 1984; cf. Gaston 2011; Toadvine 2018). Phenomenology proves in this genealogy thoroughly apocalyptic in the historical sense.

4.2. Phenomenology as Philosophy of Revelation

The history of phenomenology can be overviewed by applying the notion of revelation (see the details in Mezei 2022). At the end of the nineteenth century, the concept was mainly used by theologies representing a more or less doctrinal understanding. Yet there were signs of change. For instance, Bernard Bolzano already developed a universal pattern to understand revelation as the central phenomenon of metaphysical forms (Bolzano 1994, vol. I). Moreover, the philosophical notion of revelation of the Hegelian and Schellingian type bears the title of “self-revelation” (*Selbstoffenbarung*), in which it is not particular things that are revealed but the essence of the Godhead itself (Mezei 2017, pp. 109–51). This essence is historically synthesized for Hegel and positively active for Schelling. *Revelation as history*—Avery Dulles's second model of revelation (Dulles 1992, pp. 53–68)—is closely bound up with the dynamic understanding of self-revelation, itself based on the notion of salvation history (Pannenberg 1979).

Husserl's phenomenology maintained a strong criticism of mystical philosophies, a follow-up of Brentano's rationalism. Phenomenology appeared to be another corrective of theosophical philosophies along the lines of Brentano's “four phases of philosophy” (Mezei and Smith 1998). Husserl's logical focus and rigorous analysis in his breakthrough work (Husserl 1982) seemed to follow scholastically inspired minimalism with the result of demonstrating the self-contained existence of the logical realm and its irreducibility to historicism, relativism, or psychologism (Spiegelberg 1960, vol. I, pp. 172–73). Yet the ambiguities concerning a minimalist notion of positivism originate already in Schelling who introduced the positivity of factual philosophy as opposed to Hegel's “speculations”. The fundamental facts of philosophy were mystical for Schelling (Schelling 2010, p. 64); his notion of experience was also connected to the tradition of illumination. Similarly, the

very title of phenomenology put Husserl's endeavor into the context of the sources of the notion of revelation. Husserl's emphasis on the insight into the essence of logical facts and states of affairs made his phenomenology an heir to the tradition of illumination, as was recognized by the first critiques of phenomenology (Geyser 1924, pp. 12–3; Hessen 1955, vol. I, pp. 243–45; Przywara 2014, pp. 409–30). Thus, phenomenology could be comfortably seen as belonging to the line originating in the Platonic and New Testament conceptions of *epopteia*, i.e., enlightenment (Phaedrus 250c, cf. Plato 1997, p. 528; cf. 2 Peter 1:16). It is not accidental that Husserl concludes his *Cartesian Meditations* with the sentence from St Augustine: *Noli foras ire, in te redi, in interiore homine habitat veritas* (Husserl 1960, p. 157). Thereby Husserl wished to express the close connection of phenomenology to the doctrine of illumination. Indeed, revelation—as illumination, but also as the fundamental disclosure, i.e., *apocalupsis* of reality—was central to the Platonic-Augustinian tradition. Thus, phenomenology, as a modern reformulation of some pivotal tenets of this tradition, represents a historical continuity in this regard. Given the original meaning of *apocalupsis* and its relation to revelation, phenomenology can be rightly termed apocalyptic in the historical sense.

This background gained more and more momentum in the history of phenomenology. Beginning with the later Husserl through Max Scheler to Martin Heidegger metaphysical problems became central in the framework just outlined. The transcendental ego (Husserl), the value (Scheler), the Encompassing (Jaspers), Being (Heidegger), or even Analogy (Przywara) or Ambiguity (Merleau-Ponty) can be understood as versions of the fundamental problem of phenomenology, i.e., the problem of reality as self-disclosure. Reality is essentially self-disclosing, self-manifesting, or self-revealing even in its hiddenness and precisely in virtue of its hiding; and it is disclosed by philosophers capable of grasping the core of this manifestation by an act of metaphysical empiricism. Heidegger's famous etymology of *aletheia* as unconcealment (*Unverborgenheit*) is repeatedly conceived as the discovery of being in terms of an original self-disclosure, i.e., revelation (cf. Heidegger 1976, p. 180). When Sartre criticizes Husserl and Heidegger for not comprehending properly the emptiness of being (Sartre 1978, pp. 233–52), he proposes a similar kind of understanding in terms of the skeptical mind. And when Lévinas raises the point that infinity, as opposed to totality, expresses itself *in the face of the other*—because Infinity is the infinite other—he again follows the same path to a new phenomenological experience that serves as the ultimate foundation of a new metaphysics now termed “ethics” (Lévinas 1969).

Whoever has some understanding of the authors I just mentioned will not doubt that the common core of their enterprises is indeed the problem of reality in terms of self-disclosure (self-communication or appearing, cf. Graves 2021; Mezei 2021b). And while the theological understanding of divine revelation may be both thematically and methodologically different from these endeavors, the overall relationship between the phenomenological conceptions of disclosure and the theological narratives of God's self-revelation is evident. This linkage is given in the context of the history of terms and ideas and is even more obvious in philosophy. This latter was recognized by Michel Henry who attempted to cover the common core of Marxism, theology, and phenomenology by a reinterpretation of life as the most fundamental form of manifestation (Henry 2015). This manifestation originates, for Henry, in the self-disclosing words of Christ in the Gospel of John, “I am” This “I am” so deeply Biblical (cf. Exod 3:14), is the foremost expression of reality in an ultimately personal fashion (Henry 2003, for a strong criticism see Hao 2022). While Jean-Luc Marion repeatedly talks of the phenomenology of revelation, his inductive approach is theoretically problematic. His approach starts with saturated phenomena and aims to arrive at the absoluteness of revelation inductively. However, induction results in probability, yet the reality of self-disclosure or revelation cannot be conceived properly in such terms. (cf. Marion 2002).

4.3. A Phenomenology of Newness

The notion of revelation is ultimately linked to the notion of the full renewal of reality (cf. Mezei 2021a; Mezei et al. 2021). In the history of philosophy, the newness of reality comes to the fore only with the notion of divine revelation combining original newness (creation) and ultimate renewal (final fulfillment) into a meaningful whole. Phenomenology is rooted in this tradition in various ways: not only in the notion of divine illumination, as is obvious, but also in the notion of newness *per se*. Newness appears in phenomenology both as its central object and ultimate purpose. The discovery of the phenomenon itself, i.e., the object of pure experience, but also that of the *a priori* of universal correlation are not simply discoveries; they are new philosophical matters. Husserl attempted to conceptualize the problem of newness in the framework of the constitution of time (Husserl 2001). He even seems to have understood that the core of newness or original newness (*Urneuheit*, cf. Husserl 2001, p. 203) is beyond the horizon of time; yet he did not arrive at a description of newness and remains ambiguous as to the reality of *Urneuheit* (Husserl 2001, p. 428). For Heidegger, newness is sometimes presented in an unfavorable light (Heidegger 2014, pp. 195, 442, etc.), the background of which is again an insufficient notion of newness.

5. Newness

Apocalyptic phenomenology is about newness *per se*: the self-disclosure of reality in the ultimate disclosure where reality appears as original and irreducible givenness. Since newness is closely related to the Christian understanding of revelation (specifically expressed in the last chapter of The Book of Revelation), phenomenology is rightly termed apocalyptic. To understand the importance of newness, I offer the following: 1. A short description of what is new; 2. A description and classification of the notion of newness; 3. The central concept of Miklos Vetö, a great philosopher friend, i.e., the idea of *nouveauté novatrice* or renewing newness. I conclude that beyond all other types of newness, *nouveauté novatrice* is the central concern of phenomenology as neology.

5.1. What Is New?

Newness is such a common experience that we tend to overview its all-permeating presence. In writing this sentence, the sentence is new; it was never present in my mind before in this actual form. The saying in the Gospel comes to mind: “Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.” (Matt 13:52) This seems to confirm our everyday experience where newness and oldness are correlatives. However, the more precise assessment shows that newness has full priority; without newness, there is no oldness; yet this is not true contrariwise, because there *is* original newness without an antecedent. There is a newness *per se* which is not time-related; indeed, it is time in its various meanings that rises out of original newness. This non-temporal dimension constitutes temporality and that is why it is possible to conceive temporality as such, i.e., on the basis of the non-temporal. Temporal newness cannot be conceived without non-temporal newness.

5.2. Several Kinds of Newness

Thus, we deal with several kinds of newness. First, I distinguish between newness, novelty, and innovation. Newness is the general category of anything new; novelty is the feature of new things, events, or developments; and innovation is related to the creative mind producing inventions of various sorts. Of course, animals are innovative, but this is usually limited to their peculiar mode of life (cf. Godfrey-Smith 2016, Chp. 4).

There is an even more important distinction: the one between absolute and relative newness. Absolute newness is that which is new *per se*. Relative newness is considered new exclusively *per aliud*, i.e., with respect to an antecedent. Beyond this clear distinction, we may use absolute newness in two senses: in the one sense, it is distinguished from relative newness, i.e., *per se* newness from *per aliud* newness. In a higher sense, however, *per se* and

per aliud newness belong together and form absolute newness by their intrinsic interaction. It is easy to see that there is no relative newness without absolute newness; and in any instantiation of relative newness, there is a core of absolute newness. It is also easy to see that absolute newness can never be fully isolated from relative newness. The latter defines the former, the *per se* core defines the *per aliud* dimension in such a way that out of this interaction absolute newness is absolutely renewed. Considered in this way, *per se* and *per aliud* newness are two facets of absolute newness in which *per se* newness grounds *per aliud* newness and *per aliud* newness enriches absolute newness. While temporality belongs to the *per aliud* dimension of newness, the absolute dynamism of newness is fundamentally enriched by the temporal dimension of newness in its absolute nature.

5.3. Philosophies of Newness

There are recurring attempts to deal with the problem of newness in philosophy. Charles Sanders Peirce developed various approaches to “what is definitely new” on the basis of his concept of abduction. Abduction, however, is “guessing”, i.e., forming a hypothesis concerning new facts (Peirce 1992, vol. 2. pp. 88, 107). For Peirce, newness is always related to oldness, and he does not seem to realize the importance of the distinction and unity of *per se* and *per aliud* newness. Husserl, as mentioned, offers a deeper conception of newness with his notion of *Urneuheit*. The context of his investigation is time-consciousness where the rise of an original presentation occurs. This presentation is the source of derivative presentations and as such it is new. Original newness is a central problem for Husserl, while in his analysis he does not leave the context of time (cf. Husserl 2001, pp. 3–15). However, to understand newness as a temporal phenomenon, we entail a non-temporal point of view and thus the non-temporal core of newness. While it is possible to consider further approaches to this problem, let it suffice here to mention only one more: Alfred North Whitehead’s idea of “novelty” remains similarly relativistic as it grasps newness merely in terms of achievement or result at the levels of the universe and knowledge. Even God as the “organ” of novelty is conceived in terms of self-transcendence by which it reaches novelty (cf. Whitehead 1978, p. 21, etc.).

Newness cannot be reduced to contents of time-consciousness, not even to borderline concepts, not to mention a consequence, a result, or an achievement. Newness in its core is absolute, an idea appearing in some form in the encyclical letter *Fides et ratio* with an emphasis on “radical”, i.e., original newness (John Paul II 1998). The newness here is *per se* in its character with the *per aliud* instantiation in the form of salvation. Certainly, we are aware of the ramifications of absolute newness, such as the newness as consequence, result, or even the borderline concept of *Urneuheit*. In absolute newness, these aspects merge in such a way that the various aspects become possible and actual in the original matrix of absolute newness. Absolute newness cannot be reduced to its particular aspects, while relative forms of newness enrich absolute newness in their own ways.

5.4. Nouveauté Novatrice

Miklos Vetö’s understanding of newness is uniquely important. As he explains, newness is the appearance of irreducible uniqueness; this newness is given in what he terms *nouveauté novatrice*, renewing newness, i.e., absolute newness that is new in itself and creates relative newness. Newness is absolute in itself but never closed up in itself; it produces renewal. This activity of renewing newness also entails its own renewal in the full possible sense; precisely, in the sense of absolute self-renewal. God is absolute self-renewal in the infinite sense, i.e., as pure act; and it is in this pure act where all derivative forms of newness originate in some form (Vetö 2012, pp. 43–46; Vetö 2018, pp. 32–38). The source of various forms of newness is *par excellence* newness; and this cannot be dealt with properly in terms of relative forms, not even all the possible relative forms of newness. *Nouveauté novatrice* is the name of *par excellence* newness for Vetö inasmuch as newness *per se* produces newness *per aliud*.

Phenomenology is centrally about newness; even oldness, phenomenologically conceived, appears in the context of newness. And this is not possible otherwise; negativity can be conceived only in the context of positivity, sickness in the context of health, death in the context of life, etc. Apocalyptic phenomenology is the term we can apply when phenomenology is focused on the problem of newness self-revealing in all aspects of reality.

6. Neology

Apocalyptic phenomenology, a noumenology of self-disclosing essences in the framework of reality *per se*, may be termed *neology*. We know the linguistic expression neologism for words newly created and introduced to reach a certain semantic purpose. As Peirce writes, “Science is continually gaining new conceptions; and every new scientific conception should receive a new word, or better, a new family of cognate words.” (Peirce 1992, vol 2, p. 246). To create a new conception is to produce a neologism. In a new understanding, it is crucially important to produce new expressions. Neologisms, however, are different from neology, i.e., the discipline of describing, analyzing, and interpreting various forms of newness in their ultimate framework. If phenomenology is about the self-disclosure of essences, and apocalyptic phenomenology emphasizes the self-disclosing of reality *per se*, the focus on the content of this self-disclosure, i.e., newness, can be termed neology. Neology naturally entails linguistic neologisms, as this has recurrently happened in the history of philosophy, see e.g., William Desmond’s *metaxology* (Desmond 2020, pp. 226–52). To grasp a certain phenomenon in a more precise way, often a new term is introduced. Such is “phenomenology” itself the meaning of which is better grasped in the form of “apocalyptic phenomenology”, i.e., the phenomenology of newness.

This does not mean that neology should be used exclusively for a phenomenological philosophy of newness. Phenomenology in its essence is apocalyptic in the sense I have described above; it is also obvious that phenomenologists themselves are rarely aware of the central importance of newness in the absolute and relative senses as the focus of phenomenology. Based on what I have delineated, neology can be used to describe what is reached in apocalyptic phenomenology, i.e., the reality of newness and, more precisely, the newness of reality. Taken in this sense we understand that apocalyptic phenomenology as neology is indeed the culmination of “the phenomenological movement” understood not only in the historical sense but more importantly in the sense of the self-constituting reality of newness where phenomenologists are co-constitutors.

7. Conclusions

I have argued for a novel understanding of phenomenology as the self-disclosure of essences and that of reality *per se*, an understanding both semantically and historically appropriately designated as apocalyptic. I have introduced the latter adjective based on the original meanings of phenomenology and *apocalupsis*. I have shown that phenomenology is intertwined with various meanings of *apocalupsis* so much that phenomenology can be consistently interpreted as a philosophy of revelation. As I have explained, the notion of “radical revelation” is phenomenological, and its ramifications offer, as it were, the periodic table of “the phenomenological movement”. Indeed, the historically so-called phenomenological movement can be characterized as millennial in several senses; this is also expressed in that phenomenology can be described as a philosophy of revelation. Strongly resistant to criticisms concerning some “theological turn” in phenomenology (Janicaud and Coutine 2002; Janicaud 2005; Koci 2022), phenomenology cannot be detached from the dimension of divine revelation. Even less can it be detached from this dimension as the genuine focus of phenomenology has been newness–newness in several senses, but most importantly in the sense of the movement of absolute self-renewal as already summarized in the image of “the new heaven and new earth” (Rev 21:1-27). Even though one is aware of the historical implications of “the phenomenological movement”, this movement is underdetermined by the more or less known authors in and around the schools of phenomenology. It is the higher sense of “the phenomenological movement” that throws light on the meaning of this

movement, i.e., the self-disclosure of reality in the form of the hierarchy of various sorts of newness. Here the most important distinction is between absolute and relative newness, while further distinctions, including the various natural and cultural forms of novelty, can be defined as well. Apocalyptic phenomenology is essentially a phenomenology of newness, which can be addressed in a less complicated manner as neology—a neology introducing not only linguistic neologisms but also a better understanding of the self-development of “the phenomenological movement” in the concrete form of apocalyptic phenomenology as the culmination of the phenomenological movement.¹

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Notes

¹ The author of this article was schooled in the philosophical academy founded by Professor Josef Seifert. This school maintained a genealogy of personal discipleship beginning with Franz Brentano through Edmund Husserl, Max Scheler, and Dietrich von Hildebrand up to its founder and first rector. At the same time, Barry Smith, for a while also a member of this school, defined the original orientation of the author through his expertise on Austrian Philosophy interpreted in the context of an Oxford-style logical analysis. Thinkers like Roderick Chisholm, Richard Swinburne, and Alvin Plantinga have influenced the shaping of what is now termed apocalyptic phenomenology in their characteristic ways. Even more importantly, the thought of Miklos Vetö, William Desmond and Sir Roger Scruton must be mentioned among the factors of influence as these thinkers connected Central-European thought with French and Anglo-American thinking. Overwhelmingly significant in this context is the Central-European tradition itself, which includes thinkers of various national origins, a tradition apparently fragmented today but at its core it possesses epochal importance. Central-European thought carries an intellectual richness that can and must be explored for the sake of a fruitful philosophical development of the present and the future.

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