EIDOS AND THE UNSPEAKABLE: A MYSTERY FROM HUSSERL TO AGAMBEN

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Abstract

In his work titled *The Unspeakable Girl: The Myth and Mystery of Kore* (with Monica Ferrando), Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben defines the mythological figure Kore, daughter of Demeter, as "the ideal figure for the supreme initiation and the completion of philosophy" that escapes logos and speech (2010). On the other hand, Edmund Husserl, while criticizing most of the Western philosophers or the canonical philosophy of metaphysics and ontology before his time, Edmund Husserl offers an alternative approach to human cognition (and philosophy) which is based upon seeing and perception, namely phenomenology. The aim of this paper is to present a reading of Agamben's figuration and interpretation of Kore (Persephone) through different moments of the history of philosophy, by respectively alluding to the ideas of Husserl, Ferdinand de Saussure, and Jacques Derrida. Since Agamben's Kore is pure appearance that only shows itself while not being called within logos or named within language, it will be firstly explored through Husserl's phenomenology. Next, the paper will try to discuss the idea of unspeakability via reflections on language recalling the relevant works of Saussure and Derrida. Accordingly, Husserl's reflections on eidos, Saussure's conception of the sign and Derrida's différance will be revisited. Lastly Agamben's depiction of Kore as the unspeakable and its implications will be discussed.

Keywords: Eidos, Agamben, Husserl, Phenomenology, The Unspeakable

HUSSERL'DEN AGAMBEN'E BİÇİM VE DİLEGELMEYENİN GİZEMİ

Öz

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İtalyan filozof Giorgio Agamben *La ragazza indicibile. Mito e mistero di Kore* başlığıyla (Monica Ferrando ile birlikte hazırladığı) 2010 yılında yayınlanan kitabında Demeter'in kızı Kore'nin sözden ve dilden kaçarken felsefeyi hem başlatan hem sonlandıran mitolojik bir figür olduğunu anlatır. Agamben'e göre Kore felsefenin başlangıcını ve sonlanışının ideal bir temsili gibidir. Öte yandan kendinden önceki Batı felsefesi geleneğine eleştirel bir yaklaşımla yeni bir yöntem öneren Edmund Husserl, görüngübilim inşasında bilmeyi, görme ve algılama temelinde yeniden düşünerek yola çıkar ve göz önünde apaçık duran ile saf görmeden söz eder. Agamben'in okuması çerçevesinde Kore (Persephone) sözde yer bulması ve adı konması zor olsa da salt bir figür olarak önümüzde durmaktadır. Buradan hareketle bu çalışma Agamben'in Kore imgesi üzerine ortaya koyduğu düşüncelerinin izlerini felsefe tarihinde geriye dönerek yeniden yorumlamayı denemektedir. Agamben'in bakışı ile Kore kendini gösteren, saf bir görünüm olduğundan, öncelikle Husserl görüngübiliminin belli uğraklarından söz edilmektedir. İkinci olarak Agamben'in metnindeki dilegelmezlik düşüncesini tartışmadan önce, Ferdinand de Saussure ve Jacques Derrida'nın ilgili çalışmalarına değinilmektedir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda kısaca Husserl'in nelik, Saussure'ün im ve Derrida'nın différance üzerine söyledikleri üzerinde durulmaktadır. Böylece dile taşınamayan ya da logos içinde çağrılamayan Kore'nin, dilden kaçarken günümüz felsefesi içinde nasıl bir yer alabileceği ya da düşünülebileceği konusunda bir yorumlama önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kore, Agamben, Husserl, Fenomenoloji, Dilegelmeyen

Introduction

There is a general conviction that Western philosophy –in the traditional sense- came to its end with Hegel whereas the tradition seems to have accrued with Edmund Husserl who, following Brentano's and especially giving its fundamentals to Heideggerian thought, is known to be the founder of phenomenology. "Nowhere is the continuation of the modern philosophy of subjectivity more evident than in the writings of Edmund Husserl". (Taylor, 1986: p.10). Yet it is not that facile to locate Husserl's works and specifically his phenomenology within the metaphysical tradition at once. An attentive survey at the works of Husserl, his concepts, most of which are borrowed from traditional metaphysics, and his transformation of these as well as his attempt to consider an altered conception of subject-object dichotomy render his locus more in a threshold between modern and postmodern philosophy. Accordingly, this paper will attempt to discuss certain concepts of Husserlian phenomenology within its congruities and incongruities with the traditional philosophical thought. Specifically, through the ideas of Saussure and Derrida, the discussion will arrive at a point where Giorgio Agamben introduces an unspeakable and undefinable figure – Kore- as the figure par excellence which signifies both the initiation and completion of philosophy.

1. Husserl's Phenomenology & Knowledge

Husserl criticizes the western metaphysics and attempts to formulate a new answer to the question 'how do I know?' He stresses the knowledge of the I and its objectivity:

> How do I, the knowing subject, know- and how can I know for sure- that not only my experiences, these acts of knowing, exist, but also what they know exists? Indeed, how do I know that there is anything at all that can be set over against knowledge as an object? (Husserl, 1997: p.17)

Husserl discusses accordingly, the idea that human knowledge is delimited by human intellect and cannot reach the things themselves results in an absurd relativism and skepticism within the frames of epistemology and metaphysics. For Husserl, the epistemology and accordingly metaphysics are required for determining the distinction between philosophy and positive sciences. Regarding the epistemological reflection, Husserl claims:

> Only through such reflection does it become clear that the positive sciences are not the ultimate sciences of being. What is required is a science of what exists in the absolute sense. This science, which we call metaphysics, grows out of a "critique" of positive knowledge in the particular sciences. It is based upon the insight acquired by a general critique of knowledge into the essence of knowledge and known objectivity according to its various basic types, that is, according to the various basic correlations between the knowledge and known objectivity (Husserl, 1997: p.19).

Husserl construes his understanding of phenomenology as a *philosophical attitude of thought* (in contrast with the nature attitude) with respect to these functions of metaphysics and epistemology, but with the condition that metaphysical ends of the critique of knowledge should be distanced. By this way, he suggests phenomenology as a reduction of metaphysical attitude to a mere critique of knowledge. Thus, the task of the critique of knowledge is expected to be the clarification of the essence of knowledge and known objectivity. By this way Husserl's phenomenology aims to be the "phenomenology of knowledge and known objectivity" (Husserl, 1997: p.19). This kind of critique of knowledge should also distance itself from all pregiven knowledge. Here, Husserl consults Cartesian doubt as a method. Since this critique cannot presuppose any pregiven knowledge, within the epoché, all knowledge is questioned to depict the primary knowledge via the *pure act of seeing*. According to Husserl, Perception, a very fundamental element of phenomenology, *stands right before* the eyes of the perceiving subjects either in actuality or in imagination:

> Every intellectual experience, indeed, every experience whatsoever, can be made into an object of pure seeing and apprehension while it is occurring. And in this act of seeing it is an absolute givenness. It is given as an existing entity, as a "this here". It would make no sense at all to doubt its being (Husserl, 1997: p.24).

Husserl assures the existence of perception regardless of its modes of being or its givenness in order to "refer as a final criterion in determining what being and being-given might mean"

(Husserl, 1997: p.24). According to Husserl, the phenomenon is directly given to the intentionality and the phenomenological reduction is directed towards the essences of the things. The essence or Eidos is given through the eidetic reduction. The essence refers to what of every individuum which can be object to ideation. "Seeing an essence is also precisely intuition, just as an eidetic object is precisely an object" (Husserl, 1983: p.9). Pure essence or the Eidos can be seen via the eidetic intuition, which differs from empirical intuition. Empirical intuition or, specifically, experience, is consciousness of an individual object; and as an intuitive consciousness it "makes this object given", as perception it makes an individual object given originarily in the consciousness of seizing upon this object "originarily", in its "personal" selfhood (Husserl, 1983: p.9).

As the above quotations indicate, the consciousness or perception according to Husserl (as inherited from Brentano) is always a consciousness or perception of something. This seems to constitute a subversion of the traditional subject-object opposition, in which the object is solely constructed by the subject's knowledge or mind. Nevertheless, by putting forward the knowing or perceiving Ego, Husserl cannot overcome this dichotomy that easily. Accordingly, the 'presence' of the known or perceived object is still constituted via intuition and specifically via *ideation* that is seeing an essence is therefore intuition; and if seeing in the pregnant sense and nor a mere and perhaps vague making present, the seeing I an originarily presentive intuition, seizing upon the essence in its personal selfhood (Husserl, 1983: p.10).

Furthermore, Husserl argues that the eidetic investigation is also of great significance for any experiential science. For Husserl, experiential science refers to sciences of matters of fact and they have their "essential theoretical foundations in eidetic ontologies" (Husserl, 1983: p.18) At this point, he defines regional eidetics along with regional and formal ontologies where his aim for an over-rationalized experiential and a unified science, namely phenomenology becomes visible:

> If we fashion the idea of a perfectly rationalized experiential science of Nature, i.e., one so far advanced in its theorization that every particular included in it has been tracked back to that particular's most universal and essential grounds, then it is clear that the realization of that idea essentially depends on the elaboration of the corresponding eidetic sciences; that is to say, it depends not only on the elaboration of formal mathesis, which is related in one and same manner to all sciences taken universally, but especially on the elaboration of those disciplines of material ontology which explicate with rational purity, i.e., eidetically, the essence of Nature and therefore the essences of all essential sorts of natural objectivites as such (Husserl, 1983: p.19).

In *Ideas*, Husserl also discusses the sphere of essences with a distinction of materially-filled essences and empty essences that are purely logical. In terms of generality and specificity, there is

a hierarchy among them. Pure logic consists of significations and the highest genus is any signification whatever. According to Husserl, each determinate proposition forms an eidetic singularity. Eidetic singular essence contains universal essence either immediately or mediately that the "eidetically singular essence (eidetisch Singulare) thus implies collectively the universals lying above it and which, for their part, level by level, 'lie one inside another,' the higher always lying inside the lower" (Husserl, 1983: p.25). According to Husserl, all categories of formal ontology should be constituted as eidetic singularities which have their highest genus in the essence as he suggests as "any category whatever of formal ontology" (Husserl, 1983: p.25). On the other hand, Husserl argues that it is not right to identify the filling of an empty logical form with the specification to species. He gives the example of Euclidian manifold which is not a generalization but a formal universalization. That is to say, the essences of logical forms are not contained in materially filled singularities as a universal is contained in the relevant singularity. In addition, every formal essence has a formal or mathematical extension, which is different than empirical extension. For Husserl, the empirical extension involves factual being and the positing of the factual being ends in a limitation in the factual being sphere which destructs the pure universality. For this, the use of extensions should be attentively considered, specifically in referring the functioning of essences in universal judgements.

Husserl has further distinctions regarding the objects and essences in the logical variations and formal ontology, such as substrate categories in which he contrasts the formless ultimate essence and the This-here "or pure, syntactically formless, individual single particular" (Husserl, 1983: p.28). In order to clarify the relation between these two, he suggests the distinction of self-sufficient and non-selfsufficient objects. For Husserl, pure logical forms are non-selfsufficient, i.e., the categorical form, object, is not selfsufficient with respect to all object materials, the category, essence, is non-selfsufficient with respect to all determinate essences; and so forth. Husserl concludes that non-selfsufficient essence is an *abstractum* and an absolutely selfsufficient essence is a "concretum" while a "This-here, the material essence of which is a concretum, is called an individuum" (Husserl, 1983: p.29).

After this logical and formal assessments Husserl explains that all empirical sciences should be based upon their relevant regional ontologies instead of solely grounding on pure logic. The mentioned classifications of Husserl serve as a clarification of regions for sciences. Further Husserl suggests that phenomenology is also needed in addition to the purely logical investigations he has conducted. By this way, he arranges the significant space of phenomenology as a science that upholds all other sciences.

Merleau-Ponty writes in his preface to *Phenomenology of Perception* (2005) that phenomenology is "not only the study of essences but also a philosophy, which puts essences back to existence". He claims that Husserl prescribed a philosophical manner with phenomenology, which promised a return to the things themselves. He argues that the I can only conceive himself as an unprivileged part of the world and as an object of "biological, psychological or sociological investigation" and even the scientific knowledge of the I comes from his "particular point of view" (Merleau-Ponty, 2005: p.ix) For Merleau-Ponty, Descartes and Kant construed consciousness as the condition of there being anything at all. Furthermore, according to Merleau-Ponty, Husserl should have replaced noetic analysis that bases the world over the synthesizing act of the subject with noematic reflection that does not constitute itself as the condition of the object but reflect its unity:

> Analytical reflection starts from our experience starts from our experience of the world and goes back to the subject as to a condition of possibility distinct from that experience, revealing the all-embracing synthesis as that without which there would be no world. To the extent it ceases to remain part of our experience and offers, in place of an account; a reconstruction. It is understandable, in view of this, that Husserl, having accused Kant of adopting a 'faculty psychologism', should have urged, in place of a noetic analysis which bases the world on the synthesizing activity of the subject, his own 'noematic reflection' which remains within the object and, instead of begetting it, brings to light its fundamental unity (Merleau-Ponty, 2005: p.x).

In the phenomenological perspective, the world is always already there for perceiving and "before any analysis" as Husserl puts forward in *Ideas*:

> By my seeing, touching, hearing, and so forth, and the different modes of sensuous perception, corporeal physical things with some spatial distribution or other are simply there for me, "on hand" in the literal or figurative sense, whether or not I am particularly heedful of them and busied with them in my considering, thinking, feeling, or willing (Husserl, 1983: p.51).

Husserl's argument is that there is actuality surrounding the perceiving Ego, which is the World with its "two-sidedly infinite temporal horizon" (Husserl, 1983: p.52) Regardless of his standpoint, the world is always there for the Ego. Husserl also emphasizes that the Ego is a part of this surrounding actuality, which involves other egos as well with all kinds of Ego-acts. While perceiving this actuality the Ego perceives not only the surrounding world but also himself as a part of it. Husserl relates this to Cartesian Cogito:

> All of them – including the simple Ego-acts in which I, in spontaneous advertence and seizing, am conscious of the world as immediately present – are embraced by the one Cartesian expression cogito. Living along naturally, I live continually in this fundamental form of "active / aktuellen" living whether, while so living, I state cogito, whether I am directed "reflectively" to the Ego and cogitare. If I am directed to them, a new cogito is alive, one that, for its part, is not reflected o and thus is not objective for me (Husserl, 1983: p.54).

Herein Husserl notes that he relates natural attitude to the real world, which is at hand while he emphasizes that for instance the mathematical world is not there for Ego unless he is in the relevant attitude. In addition, Husserl reconsiders cogito with the alternative cogitatione as a mental process of perception, which can either be actual or non-actional. For him, the consciousness is always a consciousness of something, and a mental process is open to passing from being actional to non-actional and vice versa:

> …it is the essence of a waking Ego's stream of mental processes that the continuously broken chain of cogitations is continually surrounded by a medium of non-actuality which is always ready to change into the mode of actionality, just as, conversely actionality is always ready to change into non-actionality (Husserl, 1983: p.73).

Husserl indicates that every actional cogito is essentially a consciousness of something. Moreover, he attempts to demonstrate the other egos and the intersubjectivity of the natural surroundings. He justifies other perceiving Egos or Ego-Subjects through his own. He attributes each ego a differing standpoint as well as a differing physical appearance. Each consciousness, according to Husserl has different actual perception or memory except for the common objects of consciousness and that is how "we come to an understanding with our fellow human being and in common with the posit an Objective spatiotemporal actuality as our factually existent surrounding world to which we ourselves nonetheless belong" (Husserl, 1983: p.56) In the *Fifth Cartesian Meditation* Husserl, once again, discusses intersubjectivity and puts emphasis the cognition of the Ego as immanent whereas of Alter-Ego as transcendent. Hence, knowledge of the outside for Husserl is transcendental and since he considers the other Ego as a part of objectivity; that is comprehensible. He also argues that as a response to criticism of solipsism that phenomenological way of thinking presumes that the whole world is constituted in the ego, immanently and its knowledge is totally subjective whereas the existing world is in-itself. This setting, the limits of Kantian reason, does not inhibit the phenomenology to seek for a way to reach the world, which exists in itself. For Husserl, the experience of the Other constitutes a transcendental clue over which the Ego develops his cognition of the Alter-Ego. For him existence-sense of the world includes thereness for everyone. In addition, the constitution of the I in Husserl demonstrates a sort of reciprocity both with the surrounding world and the Other Ego.

The Husserlian criticism of metaphysics or his phenomenology seems to reconstruct and provide further justification for the traditional philosophy and its approaches as can be depicted in the summarizing examples given above. Husserl's attempts to subvert the classical understanding of subjectivity as well as to justify a concrete conception of intersubjectivity are

strongly influential and certainly lead to ruptures in the Western thought. Yet, Husserl's significance probably lies in his ambiguous position in the history of philosophy. Like Hegel and his other predecessors, he attempts to forge phenomenology as an exact and a rigorous science, as a πρώτη φιλοσοφία. "Husserl regards philosophy as a "universal science" that seeks perfect clarity and certainty by uncovering the 'absolute foundations' of knowledge" and attempts at an absolutely comprehensive philosophy (Taylor, 1986: p. 10). On the other hand, the determinations of Husserl and the problems he reflects upon seem to have opened a fertile ground both for his followers and opponents, directing the philosophy to various regions of investigation. It is beyond the scope of this paper to present a more elaborate account and discussion on Husserl's thought, considering the greatness of his writings and the responses to him and yet in relation with the already mentioned concepts and problematics, the next section of this study will try to cover certain and potential interactions with the works of Saussure and Derrida.

2. Husserl, Signs, and Différance

Even though not specifically argued within the limits of this study, Husserl pointed out the importance of language or specifically Logos, in human experience, in living in the world, which can also be traced in the phenomenology of Heidegger. The Logos is the medium for the subject for objectivity, therefore as intersubjectivity. Although, Husserl approaches language with a bit of hesitation, meanings exist, and they can only emerge through signifying and signification. "The phenomenological reduction of the natural attitude of consciousness leads Husserl to conclude that the origin of true world is the linguistic activity of transcendental subjectivity" (Taylor, 1986:11).

In Husserl's approach, the sign is bilateral. Firstly, it signifies the present in its givenness and proximity and secondly implies non-proximity or the absence. Ferdinand de Saussure, a contemporary of Husserl, provides an elaborately focused study of language, which "shares many of the assumptions of Hegel and Husserl" (Taylor, 1986:12). In his study of language, Saussure's most prominent points are his re-defining language as a system of differences and the emphasis on the arbitrariness of the bond between the signifier and the signified. Linguistics, mostly defining its topic as the language in the historical or diachronic sense, was to focus on every changing aspect of it, its evolution. Saussure reverses this determination of linguistic interest to the synchronic aspect of language, la langue for specific examination of the system. By excluding

la parole, he intends to resort the individual, so to say changing, incidental aspects of language, to expose its structure. At this point where he excludes the historical contributions to the language he departs from Hegelian influence:

> Unlike Hegel, Saussure maintains that the synchronic and diachronic aspects of language are not equally open to scientific investigation. Since Saussure regards temporal development as inescapably contingent and, hence irreducibly irrational, he limits his scientific analysis to the description of the synchronic features of language system and does not attempt to account for historical changes in the use of language (Taylor, 1986: p.12).

Recalling Husserl's distinction of ideal and empirical language, Saussure's la langue and la parole division allows him to focus on the structural, as well as the distinction of synchrony and diachrony. For Saussure, there are no concepts (essences in the Husserlian sense) before the sign, or language as he writes "Without language, thought is a vague, unchartered nebula. There are no preexisting ideas, and nothing is distinct before the appearance of language" (Saussure, 1986: p.159). Sign, as suggested by him, "unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image" (Saussure, 1986:149). Therefore, the bond between the signifier (the sound-image) and signified (the concept) is not a necessary but an arbitrary, accidental relationship. "The only connection between the signifier and the signified is convention – not logic or rationality; there is no rule, no way to deduce a binding method from anything" (Tompkins, 1988: p.735).

Within the linguistic system of arbitrary signs where they are inscribed, there is no sign that refers to a substantial concept. It is not an essential idea that forms the sign, but the differences among the signs. Saussure points out that "in language there are only differences without positive terms" because these differences are negative inscriptions that are exposed via oppositions (Saussure, 1986: p.167).

Since the sign is supposed to be designated via difference and has no presence or meaning without other signs; Saussure emphasizes that the combination of sound-image and concept; or the thought and sound elements "produces a form, not a substance" (Saussure, 1986: p.161). That is why, it is not possible to consider a substantial being in terms of concepts or signs. Additionally, with the notion of difference, Saussure evokes a subversion of the traditional assumption of identity as primordial to difference and difference as a derivation from identity:

> Saussure reverses this relation by insisting that since identity is derived from difference, the latter has a certain priority over the former. The difference that constitutes identity cannot be reduced to a more fundamental or primary identity. In the face of Western philosophy's preoccupation with the identity of difference, Saussure insists upon the difference of identity (Taylor, 1986:14).

Like Husserl and his phenomenology, Saussure, with his structuralist linguistic contributions, stands at the interstice between the traditional Western metaphysics and poststructuralism.

Derrida on the other hand, as the pioneering deconstructionist, can be posited both against Saussure and Husserl. The phenomenological system of Husserl, which operates, with the fundamental distinctions of eidetic/non-eidetic and presence/absence will be criticized by Derrida for being trapped in traditional metaphysics in Speech and Phenomena:

> In the few lines just touched upon, distrust of metaphysical presuppositions is already presented as the condition for an authentic "theory of knowledge" as if the project of a theory of knowledge, even when it has freed itself by the "critique" of such and such speculative system, did not belong at the outset to the history of metaphysics. Is not the idea of knowledge and of the theory of knowledge in itself metaphysical? (Derrida, 1973: p.5)

From Derrida's perspective, Husserl's phenomenology cannot be justified as a philosophy, which claims to differentiate itself from Western metaphysics. The privileged condition of logos over writing, both in Husserl and Saussure, will prompt another confrontation by Derrida. In contrast with what Husserl and Saussure presuppose with the dichotomies of language as well as thinking, Derrida proposes 'différance' as a non-concept that precedes all concepts, distinctions, presence or logos. By describing différance not as is or a proper presence, or being; but as a movement, Derrida attempts to avoid the metaphysical trap into which Husserl, according to him condemned his phenomenology. The silent difference between two phonemes, namely sound units as in the case of différance, is what makes their functioning possible. This difference escapes hearing and vision, but Derrida alerts that, this escape does not refer to intelligibility or reason as an opposition to intuition. Différance, coming from the verb to differ, with all its correlative meanings or profound etymology, enable Derrida to demonstrate a movement of differences in terms of language that he differentiates with the letter a. According to him, the alterity between différence and différance is silent, mute, and inaudible. It is relativity, yet not a relationship such as the one in binary oppositions. To differ both refers to non-identity and sameness; implying the alterity between identical and same and it refers to temporality:

> We provisionally give the name différance to this sameness which is not identical: by the silent writing of its a, it has the desired advantage of referring to differing, both as spacing/temporalizing and as the movement that structures every dissociation (Derrida, 2004: p.279).

The différance has the intention to disrupt every schema, ever centre with its silent graph. Derrida recalls Hegel's Egyptian Pyramid metaphor for the body of the sign and associates it with the tomb, the tomb of authority and reign in one of his descriptions for différance:

> The a of différance, therefore is not heard; it remains silent, secret, and discreet, like a tomb. It is a tomb that (provided one knows how to decipher its legend) is not far from signaling the death of the king (Derrida, 2004: p.281).

Further, despite its mystical, mysterious appearance or even disappearance, it is not theological or metaphysical, as Derrida mentions, "it belongs to no category of being, present or absent" (Derrida, 2004: p.282) Therefore it cannot be conceived as a transcendental idea or

Being. In addition, différance, despite its functioning as a movement of differences, does not promise finality or completion. It overcomes substantiality. It is the infinite delay of presence, meaning or being. The "word" or "concept" différance is thus itself spread out, in différance, plunged into what it attempts to name and understand. It follows that this "word" or "concept" can be neither a word nor a concept, naming the condition of possibility (and therefore impossibility) of all words and concepts: but at the same time, it is only a word/concept that is sheltered from its own effects:

> …this doubling spreads panic among all words and concepts, allowing them to be what they are only by simultaneously forbidding them from so being in the sense that has always been given to the word (and the concept) "word" and to the concept (and the word) "concept" (Bennington-Derrida, 1999:74).

Consequently, différance implies the restricted reflection of φωνή, it escapes from it as well as it would escape from the ἐποχή, or "the phenomenologist's grasp" (Taylor, 1986: p.10). Furthermore, it seems to have accomplished more than what the phenomenologist aimed at: distorting the substantiality of subjectivity.

3. The Unspeakable Girl and εἶδος

It would be quite true to consider 'eidetic investigation' as a major component of Husserl's phenomenological method. As already indicated previously, it operates with the dichotomy of the eidos and the fact. For him eidos or the essence is the fundamental character or structure of the object. "This eidos is the unchanging form that secures the spatial and temporal presence of the object" (Taylor, 1986:11). Hence, this dichotomy also determines the real and non-real, real being and temporal being. The eidetic phenomenology of Husserl aims at a universal and absolute knowledge through the uncovering of eidos or 'whatness' of things, namely eidetic reduction. Eidos, essences or concepts in this sense enable clarified definitions, presentations, and representations within an ideal system of signs and rigorous significations. In this part of the study, I will try to demonstrate not an eidetic but a mythical way of 'seeing' through Agamben's *The Unspeakable Girl*.

Among the various definitions of Eidos, the most proverbial are form, shape, kind and nature (of something). Eidos is for sure, related to seeing and being seen and phenomenon coming from φαίνω which means to make appear. Further εἴδω or οἶδα refers to knowing. In The Unspeakable Girl Giorgio Agamben revives and reconsiders the myth of Demeter and her daughter Kore (Persephone) in relation with the references of ancient writers such as Aristoteles, Platon, Pindaros, and Homeros but specifically in interaction with the essays of Jung and

Kerényi. Through his work, Agamben points to the association of the Eleusinian rite with seeing and vision as well as theoria and mystical vision. Finally, Agamben tries to show how the unspeakable Kore ends up revealing herself as the figure of philosophical wisdom.

The Urkind in the study of Kerényi and Jung is presented as "an originary child seen not only in its male and female aspects but, above all, in its androgyny" (Agamben, 2014: p.3). It is demonstrated with the hermaphrodite figure of Dionysus. Respectively, Kore's signification is more threatening than of Dionysus' since it blurs the distinction of woman and girl, namely mother and virgin. The eidetic indetermination and the ambiguity of 'how to call' Kore is much more disturbing: "between daughter and mother, virgin and woman, 'the unspeakable girl' presents a third figure which puts into question all we think we know about femininity, and all we think we know about man and woman" (Agamben, 2014: p.6).

According to Agamben, Kore can neither defined by gender, by any social role or identity, therefore remains unspeakable[2]. Yet the image of Kore also recalls what Agamben calls the example: "neither particular nor universal, the example is a singular object that present itself as such, that shows its singularity" (Agamben, 2007: p.10). Through this reading, it can be understood in Aristotelian testimony that the experience in Eleusinian rite was not an "irrational ecstacy but a vision analogous to theoria, to supreme philosophical knowledge" (Agamben, 2014: p.18-19). Referring to Aristoteles's differentiation of naming and proposition, Agamben suggests that the unspeakable girl cannot be said but named, that is she cannot be put in an eidetic judgment but merely and probably inadequately called:

> The knowledge conveyed at Eleusis could thus be expressed in names but not in propositions; 'the unspeakable girl' could be named but not said. In the mystery cult, there is thus no place for the logos apophantikos (assertion) (De interpretatione 17b8) but only for the onoma (name). And in the name is something like a 'touching' and 'seeing' (Agamben, 2014: p.20).

Agamben also points to a similar relation in this interpretation of Plato's Symposium, concluding that there is a very close kinship between philosophy and mystical experience. Although Kore's age is not determined, it is known that she was playing with girls when Hades restrained her. Agamben renders the ironical assumption "that a girl at play became the ideal figure for the supreme initiation and the completion of philosophy, the figure for something that is at once thought and initiation and thus unspeakable – this is the mystery." (Agamben, 2014:

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[2] Agamben previously discusses "infancy" as an "experimentum linguae" through the relationship between philosophy and language, by dwelling upon the limits of language, with references to Benjamin and Kant in his Infancy and History: The Destruction of Experience (1993). Although it is beyond the scope of the present paper, the problem of eidos as represented in "the Unspeakable" via the figure of Kore can be discussed more elaborately when cross-read with the former text and when juxtaposed with Agamben's ideas on community.

p.21) The child's or the Urkind's sudden possession of supreme knowledge is very well reflected herein.

Conclusion

The indeterminate (consciousness or subject) suddenly attains to the knowledge of the immortal life, which construes an opposition and a superior position over mortal world, and all this is actualized via the myth. Moreover, as Agamben discusses, the form and content (eidos and hyle) become unified within the Eleusinian mysteries and therefore they are no longer mysterious. The third figure Kore, or the divine child has distorted the differentiation by eliminating and making the eidetic definition impossible:

> The third element – neutralizing the distinction between form and content – is mysterious because in it there is no longer anything to conceal. Independent of the ideas of patrons and scholars of the period, these images have reached the point at which, because there is nothing left to say in the discursive level, thought and vision coincide. Form and content coincide not because the content now appears unveiled but because, as in the literal meaning of concidere, they 'fall together', are reduced and reconciled. What we are then given to contemplate is pure appearance. The little unspeakable girl shows herself (Agamben, 2014: p. 37).

Is it possible to claim that Agamben phenomenologically reduces Kore or the Unspeakable to its 'Tale Quale' (as such)? Or is it already immanent in the exemplar if we are to call her so? These questions cannot be answered within the scope of a single study. Yet consequently, the non-eidetic figure of Kore somehow finds a way of communicating and interacting through the discourse, paradoxically within philosophical writings through generations. And this is apparently, not only the miracle of the text, but also of philosophy.

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