

The Phenomenological Method: An Overview of Contemporary Approaches

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Abstract:

This study provides an overview of contemporary approaches to the phenomenological method and its development in modern philosophical and social thought. Phenomenology, originally formulated by Edmund Husserl, aimed to analyze lived experience and the intentional structures that make meaning possible. Over time, this philosophical method evolved through several new directions that expanded its analytical scope.

The study highlights the contribution of Alfred Schütz, who developed social phenomenology by applying Husserl's concepts to the analysis of social action and the lived world, emphasizing how meaning emerges through intersubjective interaction. It also examines the work of Don Ihde, whose post-phenomenology investigates the mediating role of technology in shaping human perception, knowledge, and everyday experience.

Another important perspective is presented by Giorgio Agamben, who proposes a linguistic or philological phenomenology that focuses on language as the condition through which existence and meaning become possible. In addition, the philosophy of Bernard Stiegler introduces technogenetic phenomenology, arguing that technology is not merely a tool but a fundamental structure that shapes memory, attention, temporality, and human individuation.

Overall, the article demonstrates that contemporary phenomenology is a dynamic and multidisciplinary framework for understanding human experience, social reality, language, and technological transformations in the modern world.

Keywords: Phenomenology, Social phenomenology, Postphenomenology, Language, Technology

1. Introduction:

The question of 'method' has once again become a central theme in philosophical and humanistic discourse, particularly following the questioning of numerous epistemological hypotheses due to transformations in the technological world, the convergence of various modes of experience, and the densification of meaning within everyday life. It has become increasingly difficult to think about the self, society, technology, or language without questioning the fundamental structures that govern the emergence of phenomena and guide the possibilities for understanding them. This context highlights the need to rethink phenomenology, not as a simple classical school of thought, but as a dynamic and evolving method that reinvents itself with each generation, constantly redefining its relationship with the social sciences, philosophies of technology, philological analyses of texts, and anthropological changes brought about by contemporary technological advances.

Since Edmund Husserl, phenomenology has moved beyond its role as a simple 'description of experience.' This project has evolved into an attempt to restore rationality within lived experience itself, through the analysis of the intentional structures that make experience possible. Alfred Schütz's

contribution, with his social phenomenology, represents a turning point where Husserlian concepts, such as the intentional horizon, are transposed into the realm of the social world. Schütz's work reveals that "meaning" is not a given, but is constructed within reciprocal networks of mutual understanding, intersubjective dependence and intertwined interpretations of various contexts. This development extended phenomenology beyond the limits of subjective consciousness, making it a tool for analysing the structures of the shared lived world that underlie all human action.

Conversely, Don Ihde's post-phenomenology offers a renewed perspective, where the human body and technology, as tools of mediation, form a unified analytical framework. Here, perception itself is constituted by modes of "mediation" enabled by technology, presenting new possibilities for apprehending the world while obscuring others. In this context, technological experience is not a simple extension of tools, but a radical reconfiguration of the very ways in which the world is experienced and apprehended.

Giorgio Agamben introduces an original approach that can be described as philological phenomenology. His analysis intertwines the study of language, ritual, and historical forms of speech and action with an investigation of the conditions that allow a human being to emerge as a "capable being" or a "disabled being". From this perspective, phenomenology becomes an exploration of human potentialities – both what is lost and what is regained – through a careful examination of the temporal structures, linguistic forms, and cultural and political frameworks within which the self is constituted.

Bernard Stiegler's contribution marks a decisive turning point in the dialogue between philosophy and technology. Through the development of what can be called technogenetic phenomenology, Stiegler conceives of technology not as a set of external tools added to the human being, but as a constitutive structure that shapes memory, attention, desire, and modes of life themselves. From this perspective, humanity is not a "natural being" that merely incorporates technology; on the contrary, it is a being that has always been co-constituted by it, so that understanding technological phenomena becomes a prerequisite for understanding social and cultural phenomena.

The presentation of these currents of thought is not a mere historical exercise; it is an epistemological necessity in an era when phenomena are condensing and the strata of experience are intermingling. Modern phenomenology has thus evolved into a set of "pathways" that converge on a fundamental question: how to rethink the appearance of things, the way in which something is given to consciousness, and the method that allows us to describe this giving without reducing it to preconceived interpretations. In this context, the importance of this study becomes clear: contemporary phenomenology, in its various currents, is not simply a historical extension, but a living project for understanding human beings in relation to themselves, others, language, the world, and the technology that has reconfigured all forms of human existence.

2. Social phenomenology: Alfred Schutz

Alfred Schutz (1899–1959) studied sociology, law and commerce at the University of Vienna, where he was deeply influenced by major figures such as philosopher and economist Ludwig von Mises and sociologist Max Weber. This interdisciplinary education, combining philosophy, economics and sociology, provided him with a rich intellectual background for understanding the social world from both a methodological and empirical perspective, with a particular focus on the meanings that individuals attribute to their actions and experiences.

Later, Schutz became interested in the philosophy of Henri Bergson, particularly his concept of «inner time» (the internal time of subjective experience), and broadened his field of investigation to phenomenology as formulated by Edmund Husserl. Schutz sought to understand how meaning is constituted within individuals' inner time, thus establishing himself as one of the most eminent social phenomenologists. This philosophical shift is significant: Schutz synthesises Husserl's abstract phenomenology with a practical application to social contexts, studying how meaning emerges within social action, and not only within individual consciousness.

Although Schutz did not attend Husserl's lectures directly, he studied his writings with great rigour, which led to the publication of *The Phenomenology of the Social World* (1932), a work praised by Husserl himself. In this book, Schutz emphasises the importance of the «Lebenswelt» (lived world) as a framework for understanding social meaning, arguing that social reality cannot be grasped solely through objective data, but also through the lived experience of individuals.

In 1927, Schutz became an executive at the Raiffeisen Bank in Vienna, a position that led Husserl to describe him, in a now famous phrase, as 'a banker by day and a philosopher by night,' illustrating the balance between the practical application of theoretical thought and immersion in philosophical reflection. In 1939, Schutz emigrated to the United States and, from 1943 onwards, taught at the New School for Social Research and Columbia University in New York. He thus introduced phenomenology to North America, not from a purely philosophical point of view, but through its applications in sociology. His work formed an essential foundation for the methodologies of social phenomenology, centred on the relationship between the individual and society and on how social meaning is apprehended.

Phenomenology evolved, in part, thanks to a broader understanding of human consciousness, oriented towards the diversity of human experiences and the ontologies they give rise to. This change manifested itself in various fields of sociology, such as symbolic interactionism, new ethnography and ethnomethodology, with Schutz's work playing a decisive role in these developments.

Schutz's phenomenological studies were collected in «*Collected Papers: Studies in Social Theory*» (1967), to which were added posthumously published research works, notably «*The Structures of the Life-World*» (1973), co-authored with Thomas Luckmann, and «*On Phenomenology and Social Relations*» (1970), co-edited with Helmut Wagner. All of these works highlight the importance Schutz attached to:

1. ««Social action»»: considered the central unit for understanding the social world, where meanings are constructed through the interaction of individuals.
2. ««The Lebenswelt»»: a framework for understanding how individuals perceive the social world and reality, beyond simple theoretical abstraction.
3. ««The plurality of existence»»: the recognition of the diversity of human experiences and the multiple frameworks of meaning in which individuals evolve.
4. ««Natural attitude»»: referring to the implicit assumptions on which individuals rely concerning the world and everyday life, a concept essential to understanding social phenomenology.

Schutz's work inspired new trends in social science in North America and contributed to the systematic dissemination of phenomenological philosophy. His approach was not limited to describing the social world; he sought to interpret the formation of meaning in human action and its links to historical and cultural experiences.

In the late 1960s, with the rise of counterculture and the New Left, there was a growing awareness of the inability of traditional theoretical frameworks to grasp social phenomena. Thinkers such as Alvin Gouldner, Erving Goffman, Jack Douglas, and C. Wright Mills described this failure as a 'paradigmatic crisis' in the social sciences. Some sociologists, such as Peter Berger and Jack Douglas, adopted an existentialist approach to the study of social phenomena, focusing on concepts such as love, intimacy and deviance, as well as other manifestations of everyday life. Others turned to symbolic interactionism, ethnography, and ethnomethodology to study social, cultural, and mental meanings and their structures, rather than focusing on abstract behaviours. Schutz's work laid the philosophical foundations for these developments, emphasising the importance of subjective experience and intentional action in the construction of meaning.

Although existential phenomenology, ethnography, and ethnomethodology are characterised by distinct epistemological assumptions and methodologies, they have partially paved the way for social phenomenology, both in philosophy and in academic research. Ethnography has provided tools for examining how individuals construct meaning from their experiences and cultural impact, while ethnomethodology has enabled the social sciences to study everyday practices and the meanings attributed to them. Radical reflexive studies, such as those of Harold Garfinkel in ethnomethodology, have emphasised that the researcher's participation must be understood as an integral part of the research data.

2.1. The meaning of phenomenology

Phenomenology is the study of «meaning». Meaning is not an intrinsic property of certain experiences that appear in our consciousness, but the result of interpreting a past experience evoked in the present (now) through a reflective perspective.

As long as my actions are directed towards specific things, they have no intrinsic meaning; they only acquire meaning when I remember them as specific experiences from the past, that is, when I consider them reflexively. As Schutz states: 'Only those experiences that can be remembered beyond their immediate reality, and whose formation can be questioned, are those that acquire personal meaning' (Schutz, 1973, vol. I, p. 210).

2.2. Alfred Schutz and the distinction between empirical phenomenology and eidetic phenomenology

Schutz (1973) distinguishes between «empirical phenomenology» and «eidetic phenomenology», emphasising that this distinction is not limited to everyday subjects or to the conception of phenomena as empirical (e.g., a chair) or mental (e.g., fear) entities. The key point is that «eidetic phenomenology» aims to understand the intrinsic meaning of a phenomenon (whether an object or an experience) through the eidetic method, known as "variation in the imagination", without resorting to different experimental samples.

In Husserl's transcendental approach, «eidetic phenomenology» is often practised in a theoretically abstract manner, but his successors in the social sciences have broadened the concept of eidetic to include empirical examples. Thus, much of phenomenology since Husserl can be considered «empirical phenomenology». The phenomenological interest lies in understanding the structure of the empirical meaning of phenomena and the semantic relationships between social action and the lived and cultural context of the individual, which makes it distinctive and meaningful. While most qualitative social sciences take these meanings for granted, Schutz developed a social

phenomenological methodology centred on the phenomenological structure of the «Lebenswelt» (lived world) («Lebenswelt», 1973).

Furthermore, some of his studies, such as *The Stranger*, *The Homecomer*, and *Making Music Together* (1971), offer exemplary models for the phenomenological study of the social and cultural world, emphasising human relationships, symbolic interactions, and their semantic dimensions.

3. Technology and post-phenomenology: Don Ihde

Don Ihde (1934–), born in the United States, has established himself as one of the most important contemporary philosophers in the philosophy of technology and applied phenomenology. He is best known for founding post-phenomenology, a philosophical methodology that re-examines the relationship between humans and technology, thus going beyond the traditional framework of classical phenomenology.

Ihde coined the term «postphenomenology» to propose a new philosophical programme addressing issues insufficiently explored by classical phenomenology, notably the practical and material relationship between humans and technological tools. Drawing on the pragmatism of William James and John Dewey, Ihde conceives of the philosophy of technology as a means of understanding practical experience, rather than as a mere theoretical analysis of consciousness or the mind.

Unlike classical phenomenology, such as that of Husserl, which focused on the study of human experience from the perspective of consciousness and subjectivity, Ihde criticises its lack of attention to the material dimension of tools and technology, which are nevertheless an integral part of everyday human experience. This is where the importance of material phenomenology, or empirical phenomenology, lies: it places humans in direct interaction with the technological environment, exploring how tools influence perception, knowledge and practical experience.

Ihde develops his ideas in part as a reaction to Dutch philosophy of technology, influenced by figures such as Hans Achterhuis and Peter-Paul Verbeek, who examined the relationship between humans and technological tools in various practical contexts, such as medicine, industry, and scientific production. However, Ihde maintains a critical stance towards the classical phenomenological tradition, showing limited patience for the persistent veneration of philosophers such as Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty, who approached human experience from a more abstract than practical philosophical perspective.

Ihde states:

‘I do not consider myself superior to phenomenology, but rather a different evolution of it, one that seeks to rethink the relationship between humans and technology in a practical and critical way. I don't see why we should always venerate the founders; development is essential to broadening the horizons of philosophy, and post-phenomenology is one possible path.’ "

Despite this criticism, Ihde acknowledges the contributions of philosophers such as Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and the hermeneutic tradition, notably Gadamer and Ricoeur. However, he focuses his criticism on the following aspects:

«««Husserlian objectivity»», which tends to dissociate human experience from the material dimension of tools and technologies.

«««Heideggerian romanticism»», which, while offering profound philosophical and aesthetic reflections on technology, remains disconnected from practical, everyday interaction with modern tools.

«The linguistic dimension of the hermeneutic tradition», which privileges texts and symbols at the expense of material and practical interaction between humans and the technological environment.

3.1.«Philosophy of technology and material phenomenology»

Ihde emphasises that the philosophy of technology (or technoscientific studies) must take into account the materiality and practical impact of tools on everyday life. While Husserl did not directly address the question of technology, and Heidegger offered philosophical analyses of technology that were more aesthetic and contemplative than empirical, Merleau-Ponty's approach, although relevant, often remained indirect in its relationship to technology. Ihde's contribution, on the other hand, offers a perspective that integrates sensory experience, knowledge and the body into the analysis of technology.

Ihde states:

"Technologies must be understood phenomenologically, in the context of our sensory experience and their practical use, as a relationship between humans and technology, and not as mere abstract objects " (Ihde, 1993, p. 34).

This perspective positions technology as an active component of human experience, interacting with the body, knowledge and perception, and playing a key role in the formation of social and cultural relationships, influencing everyday values and behaviours.

3.2.Four types of human-technology relationships

Ihde categorises relationships between humans and technology into four main types, which shed light on the dimensions of the technological experience:

1. «Embodiment relationship»:

This relationship concerns technologies that become extensions of the human body, such as glasses, protective clothing, a blind person's white cane, or an elderly person's walking aid. The technology then becomes an extension of the body, often «transparent», meaning that it is no longer perceived as an independent entity when in use, but as an integral part of our perception of the environment. For example, when a blind person uses a white cane, their perception of the ground is extended by the tip of the cane, which becomes an extension of their fingertips, making the technological experience a truly physical one, contributing to our spatial and temporal perception.

2. «Hermeneutic relationship»:

This occurs when technology is used to interpret and understand the world. Examples include the microscope, the thermometer and road signs. In this case, technology does not extend the body but acts as an «interpretive medium», helping us to read data and transform it into understandable knowledge. Here, technology functions as a text, where the user translates symbols and tools to understand the natural and social world.

3. Relationship of otherness:

This type of relationship occurs when humans treat technology as an independent or quasi-personal entity. For example, interacting with a car or computer as if it had a personality or will of its own. Interaction with the device becomes a quasi-social experience, where it is perceived as a participant in a dialogue or activity, similar to artificial intelligence or robots. This relationship raises profound philosophical questions about the nature of the «Other» and the relationship between humans and technology, especially when smart devices simulate cognitive and social abilities.

4. Background relationships:

These are technologies that operate in the background of our everyday environment, without us directly noticing them, such as heating, electricity or sanitation systems. These technologies structure our daily lives and create a network of imperceptible interactions that are essential to our daily activities. These relationships demonstrate how technology becomes an integral part of the environmental structure, influencing our behaviour without conscious and direct intervention, thus participating latently in the formation of human experience.

3.3. The expressive dimension of phenomenology

Ihde's interest is not limited to technology, but also extends to the expressive dimension of phenomenology. He asserts that technological experience also includes expression and creativity. He notes:

‘Husserlian phenomenology, in particular, may be seen as a retreat from the emphasis on reference in analytic philosophy, but the deeper interest lies elsewhere: in expression’ (Ihde, 1983, p. 167). He distinguishes between «referential/denotative» meaning and «expressive/ poetic» meaning to emphasise that technology is not limited to transmitting information or facilitating work; it also contributes to human expressive and cultural experience. Interaction with technology is not neutral; it shapes perception, emotions and social behaviour.

4. Ihde's philosophy and its social and ethical dimension

Ihde's philosophy has an implicit ethical and social dimension, suggesting that technology is not simply a tool, but an essential component of human experience and moral responsibility. Our relationship with technology involves choices about the use of tools and their impact on society and the environment. For example, in the field of health, understanding the relationship between patients and medical devices is crucial to ensuring effective and sustainable care. Similarly, in the field of artificial intelligence, ethical issues related to privacy, control and responsibility become central.

In this sense, Ihde offers a practical and critical philosophical framework for understanding the interaction between humans and technology, going beyond simple theoretical interpretation to serve as a tool for social and ethical analysis, as well as for understanding cognitive and bodily experience.

5. Giorgio Agamben's linguistic phenomenology

Giorgio Agamben's philosophical project can be reconstructed as a rigorous phenomenological inquiry centred on language itself. Rather than treating phenomenology as a descriptive analysis of lived consciousness, Agamben reorients it towards the conditions of the emergence of meaning, experience and existence. The focus of his work is not on interpreting phenomena, but on clarifying the threshold at which appearance becomes possible, where language, existence and experience intersect in a relationship that is not accidental but irreducible.

Since its inception, Agamben's thought has been marked by a decisive intuition: existence is not given directly, but only insofar as it is exposed to language. Language is not a tool that represents an already existing reality, but rather the very event that makes reality accessible. From this perspective, phenomenology is inseparable from linguistic expression. Every appearance is both an existential and a linguistic event. Therefore, philosophy cannot question what appears without also questioning how this appearance occurs, where it occurs, and from what linguistic position.

This approach places Agamben in a fruitful tension between phenomenology and analytical philosophy. While his influence by Heidegger is evident—particularly in his thesis that language is the place where being manifests itself—his work is also consistent with the analytical interest in the

limits of meaning and the conditions of signification. Meaning is not intrinsic content, but rather a function of exposure: a thing only becomes thinkable to the extent that it enters the realm of expression. Thus, the fundamental philosophical task becomes the analysis of the thresholds that govern this transition to language.

Agamben radicalises this task through a unique linguistic practice. In his writings, linguistics is no longer merely a historical branch concerned with the evolution of words, but rather a method for revealing the operational structures that allow concepts to move across disparate fields—such as law, theology, politics, and metaphysics—without exhausting their meanings. This revolves around the concept of the ‘imprint’. An imprint is neither a sign nor a concept, but rather a functional sign that directs the use, circulation, and power of a concept according to context. Through imprints, meaning acquires its historical effectiveness while remaining structurally indeterminate.

This approach leads to what might be called ‘linguistic phenomenology’: an analysis of phenomena based on the classification of linguistic forms rather than on introspective description. Concepts are not treated as fixed units, but as sites of tension, whose understanding depends on underlying linguistic processes. The phenomenological dimension lies precisely in showing how these processes make appearance possible, while making their complete objective understanding impossible.

At the heart of this conceptual framework, Agamben reactivates the Aristotelian distinction between possibility (*dynamis*) and act (*energeia*). Potentiality is not simply defined as what can be realised, but more radically as the capacity for non-realisation. This suspended potentiality – this capacity for non-realisation – constitutes the most authentic mode of existence. Phenomenologically, this means that appearance is always accompanied by a reserve of non-appearance. What appears does so only against the backdrop of what may remain hidden.

Agamben's analysis of language, aesthetics and politics is based on this logic. Experience is not a given, but a field of availability, organised by interruptions, pauses and thresholds. Meaning does not emerge through continuity, but through interruption. Interruption is not a defect in meaning, but a necessary condition for it. What allows something to appear is precisely the interruption that prevents its complete absorption into presence.

In this sense, Agamben's reflections on prose, poetry, and rhythm are not incidental to his philosophy, but rather paradigmatic. Pause is a temporal structure of appearance: it opens up a space in which meaning can emerge without being fixed. Here, Agamben echoes the idea that meaning reveals itself rather than imposing itself. Philosophical concepts, like poetic forms, operate through presentation rather than definition.

This logic reaches its peak in Agamben's theory of models and examples. An example does not function as a special case subject to a universal rule; rather, it demonstrates the comprehensibility of a phenomenon by revealing the pattern of its emergence. Typological knowledge does not proceed inductively or deductively, but through a movement of demonstration that allows the universal to appear within the particular without abstraction. Knowledge, therefore, is not a matter of inference, but of disclosure.

Phenomenological rules themselves form the basis of Agamben's political analyses. Concepts such as life, sovereignty, exception and law are not merely neutral descriptions, but linguistic tools that structure the field of political emergence. Politics is not primarily an institutional field, but an existential one, determined by the way language expresses inclusion and exclusion, appearance and

abandonment. Law not only regulates life, but also produces specific patterns of appearance and disappearance within the political system.

Through these diverse studies, a coherent phenomenological thesis emerges: absence is not a negation of appearance, but one of its fundamental modes. Love, community, possibility, and existence are all concepts of being that resist complete definition. They refer to forms of life that remain exposed without being exhausted by references. These forms are not indeterminate because of deficiency, but because of abundance—because of their refusal to reduce possibility to reality.

Thus, the difficulty Agamben faces, and which is often highlighted, is not stylistic, but methodological. It reflects a categorical refusal to freeze meaning prematurely. His writing style lies on the threshold of analysis and presentation, concept and gesture, philosophy and poetry. Silence, pause, and hesitation are all inherent elements of this practice, functioning as phenomenological factors rather than mere rhetorical flourishes.

Taken as a whole, Agamben's project can be understood as an attempt to establish a philological phenomenology in which language is no longer a vehicle of meaning, but the place of its emergence. Language is the event through which being becomes available without becoming fully present. It is the condition in which potentiality can appear as such. Phenomenology, thus reconfigured, becomes not the science of experience, but the analysis of the conditions that allow experience – and non-experience – to take place.

Agamben's project, in its general form, can be understood as an attempt to establish a linguistic phenomenology in which language is not a means to meaning, but rather the site of its emergence. For him, language is the event through which existence becomes possible without being fully present. It is the condition under which possibility can manifest itself. In this sense, phenomenology, after its reformulation, becomes not the science of experience, but the analysis of the conditions that constitute the possibility—or lack thereof—of experience.

6. Technogenetic phenomenology in Bernard Stiegler

Bernard Stiegler's philosophical project can be rigorously reconstructed as a «technogenetic phenomenology»: an investigation into the conditions under which human temporality, experience and individuation become possible through technical externalisation. Phenomenology, for Stiegler, is no longer a descriptive analysis of consciousness or an ontology of being alone, but an investigation of the «technical conditions of appearance», that is, the mediations through which time, memory, attention and meaning are constituted.

At the heart of Stiegler's thought lies a decisive reversal of the classical phenomenological framework. Consciousness (Husserl) and being (Heidegger) cannot be understood independently of technology, for technology is not secondary to human existence, but constitutive of it. Technology is not an instrument added to a pre-existing human essence; it is the «transcendental condition» that brings such an essence into being. Human existence is therefore irreducibly prosthetic: it is formed thanks to external supports that shape its temporal and cognitive structure.

This insight stems from Stiegler's systematic re-reading of the myth of Prometheus and Epimetheus, which he elevates from a cultural narrative to an ontological paradigm. The myth articulates an original «default state»: humans are defined not by a natural property or intrinsic capacity, but by a lack. Humans are born without specific qualities, without a fixed mode of survival, and therefore

without essence. This original indeterminacy is not an empirical deficiency, but an ontological condition. Humanity is 'originally without origin': it exists only through complementation.

Technology appears here as the response to this default state. The theft of fire does not symbolise a contingent discovery, but the inaugural act of humanisation. Fire functions as the first temporal technology: it allows the regulation of rhythms, the suspension of immediate natural constraints, and the transformation of biological time into organised and transmissible time. In this sense, technology is fundamentally temporal. It is the condition in which time is articulated, shared, and accumulated. Stiegler's originality lies in the link he establishes between this technicality of time and Husserl's phenomenology of retention. While Husserl distinguishes between primary retention (the immediate detention of the recent past) and secondary retention (memory as reminiscence), Stiegler introduces a third decisive level: tertiary retention. Tertiary retentions are technical inscriptions – tools, images, writing, recordings, digital media – that externalise memory and make it transmissible beyond individual consciousness. These retentions are not neutral media; they actively shape perception, expectation and attention. They condition what can be experienced, remembered and anticipated.

Phenomenologically, this means that consciousness is always already mediated. There is no pure flow of experience, free from all technical influence. Attention itself – often considered a psychological faculty – is, for Stiegler, a technically constituted temporal synthesis. Attention emerges from the accumulation and synchronisation of retentions and protentions organised by technical environments. To be attentive is to inhabit a technically structured time.

This leads to Stiegler's central concept of «individuation», borrowed from Simondon but radically expanded. Individuation is not an internal psychological process; it is a relational and technical becoming. Because human beings are fundamentally incomplete, they individuate themselves through external supports. Technology is therefore not opposed to individuation, but to its very medium. However, this same medium can also produce «de-individuation» when technical systems compromise the subject's ability to organise their own temporal horizons.

This is where Stiegler's phenomenology becomes crucial. Contemporary technical systems – notably digital media, algorithmic platforms and attention economies – reconfigure tertiary retentions in such a way as to short-circuit temporal synthesis. By capturing and monetising attention, these systems industrialise protention itself, replacing anticipation with compulsive reaction. The result is a collapse of temporal depth: consciousness loses its ability to project itself, to desire and to remember in a meaningful way. What emerges is what Stiegler calls «ontological stupidity»: not a lack of intelligence, but a loss of temporal articulation.

Stiegler's analysis of attention thus takes on an explicitly ethical and political dimension. Care (or «care») is no longer just an existential structure, as in Heidegger, but a technopolitical task. Caring for individuals – especially young people – means caring for the technical conditions that shape attention. Education, family and culture are no longer sufficient on their own, because attention is now mainly shaped by industrial temporal objects. The crisis in education is therefore neither moral nor psychological, but phenomenological: it concerns the destruction of the conditions of temporal individuation.

In this sense, Stiegler's critique of capitalism is not unrelated to his phenomenology. Capitalism appears as a technical regime that exploits tertiary retentions in order to extract value from attention itself. Time becomes a consumable resource and desire is reduced to immediate gratification. The

danger lies not in technology as such, but in a specific technical configuration that transforms a medium of individuation into a machine of regression.

Nevertheless, Stiegler's project remains fundamentally non-technophobic. Technology is always pharmacological: both poison and remedy. The same externalizations that produce de-individuation also harbour the possibility of new forms of collective individuation. The task of philosophy is therefore not to reject technology, but to rethink and reorganise it. Technogenetic phenomenology seeks to reveal the conditions under which technology can once again support temporal depth, attention and meaning.

In its systematic ambition, Stiegler's work proposes a profound reconfiguration of phenomenology itself. Appearance no longer rests on consciousness or being alone, but on technical externalisation. Time is not simply experienced; it is produced, transmitted and transformed by artefacts. Humans are not the origin of technology; technology is the origin of humans. Phenomenology thus becomes an analysis of the «technical genesis of experience» – a discipline that questions not only how things appear, but also the prosthetic structures that make appearance possible.

7. Conclusion

An analysis of contemporary phenomenological trends reveals that phenomenology is neither a single method nor a closed framework, but rather a vast network of approaches converging on a central question: how does the world appear to us? And how is our experience of it constructed? Schütz proposed a social approach to understanding meaning within reciprocal action; Ihde offered tools for analysing the “technological transformation of experience”; Agamben provided a philological understanding of the construction of human potentials in time and language; while Stiegler presented a radical vision of technology as a fundamental condition of human existence.

These approaches clearly demonstrate that the study of current human phenomena cannot be confined to traditional descriptive methods, closed structuralist approaches, or psychological or social analyses isolated from their technological and linguistic contexts. All contemporary human phenomena have an intrinsic complexity that requires intentional analysis on several levels: that of lived experience, that of symbolic systems, that of technology, and that of the social structures that constitute the framework for their emergence.

This study is therefore a clear call to re-establish rigorous methodologies, foremost among which is the phenomenological method, as an essential tool for analysing phenomena in all their density, complexity and stratified nature. Without a method to structure our approach to phenomena, we lose the ability to distinguish between what is really given by experience and what is imposed on us by our preconceived ideas. Therefore, the application of the phenomenological method, in its various branches, is not an academic luxury, but a *sine qua non* for understanding the social, technological and cultural worlds in an era of unprecedented rapid change.

What we need today is not simply ‘new discourses’, but a method that allows us to understand phenomena as they are, in their plurality and tensions, in their dialectic between life and technology, between language and time, between the individual and the other. Thus, phenomenology, in its social, technological, philological and technogenetic forms, becomes not only part of the history of philosophy, but also an open horizon for rethinking the human being itself, its destiny and the conditions of possibility of meaning in a world that is no longer simple or transparent, but which

nevertheless remains describable and understandable – provided we possess the method capable of revealing it as it appears.

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