





Suspensive listening: the operational key to phenomenological interview

Cristiano Roque Antunes Barreira

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0141-6828>

Achilles Gonçalves Coelho Júnior

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6502-3161>

University of São Paulo
Brazil

Resumo

Na Psicologia, a centralidade da escuta se apresenta como uma questão epistemológica e prática, sendo discutida no âmbito da psicologia fenomenológica e, enquanto escuta suspensiva, como dispositivo que dispara e desenvolve a entrevista como sua chave operativa. Trata-se de uma articulação teórica na perspectiva da fenomenologia clássica de Edmund Husserl, que exige considerar a esfera transcendental e a antropologia resultante das reduções intersubjetivas realizadas pelo fundador da fenomenologia. Para a Psicologia, explicita a relação inerente entre pessoa e cultura, tema que coloca em questão os objetos e o modo de fazer pesquisa empírico-fenomenológica, bem como consequências para a clínica. Os resultados equivalem a uma sequência de análises fenomenológicas, partindo das análises preliminares da entrevista e da escuta, em seus momentos hiléticos e noéticos. A escuta suspensiva é operada como encontro de horizontes de expectativa, indicando sua complexidade e especificidades de sua execução.

Palavras-chaves: escuta; entrevista; psicologia fenomenológica

Abstract

The centrality of listening to Psychology is presented as an epistemological and practical issue, being discussed within the scope of phenomenological psychology and, as suspensive listening, as an operational device that, like a key, triggers and develops the interview. It is a theoretical articulation from the perspective of classical phenomenology by Edmund Husserl, which demands considering the transcendental sphere and the anthropology resulting from the intersubjective reductions carried out by the founder of phenomenology. For Psychology, it explains the inherent relationship between person and culture, a theme that puts objects in question and the way of doing empirical-phenomenological research, as well as consequences for the clinical psychology. The results are equivalent to a sequence of phenomenological analyses, starting with the preliminary analyses of the interview and listening, in its hiletic and noetic moments. Suspensive listening is operated as a meeting of horizons of expectation, indicating its complexity and specificities of its execution.

Keywords: listening; interview; phenomenological psychology

The question of listening is not an exclusive problem of phenomenology, but it is, before that, a capital epistemological topic, even if not enough examined by Psychology.¹ It is difficult to think of Psychology without listening, either as a science or as a profession. This difficulty arises from the fact that, if at any time the problem of its meaning has been systematized phenomenologically and epistemo-

¹ This study was financially supported by FAPESP (Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa de São Paulo – Process 2019/11527-6).



logically, its topicalization seems to have had no greater impact. Therefore, without knowing what it consists of, it is not possible to examine its place in the domain of the area, leaving to question whether, perhaps, without listening there would be Psychology. Although listening is frequently mentioned among psychologists, its definition is non-existent or vague, being designated as a privileged way of opening to subjectivity. In the psychological context, to invoke it is to announce a position of attention, care, interpretation and understanding, meaningful evocation, but still elusive when focusing on what is at the heart of the relational dynamics practiced by psychologists. Against this background, this article focuses on *suspensive listening*; a concept coined over years of empirical research practices, designating the application of phenomenological prerogatives within the scope of the intersubjective relationship (Barreira & Ranieri, 2013; Barreira, 2017, 2018). Suspensive listening results from the submission of listening, or at least in a certain way of experiencing it, to phenomenological analysis, as well as from its operationalization in a phenomenological key.

The foundation of phenomenological psychology is close to rigor, foreshadowed in the famous manifesto by Edmund Husserl, *Philosophy as rigorous science* (1911/1965), giving philosophical work a role that goes beyond the uncertain boundaries of this discipline, imposing itself on the foundation of the sciences as a whole (Farges & Pradelle, 2019; Barreira, 2011). In spite of the fact that the foundations of phenomenological psychology (Massimi & Peres, 2019) are difficult to master, allowing lability in their use, worldwide, few philosophical approaches have had such a significant impact on the production of qualitative research as did phenomenology and derivations such as hermeneutics and existentialism. In the scope of clinical psychology, it was no different, with phenomenological radiations in a wide range of approaches, as demonstrated by the history of its influences in psychological care (Coelho Júnior & Barreira, 2019). Empirical-phenomenological investigation depends on the formulation of intermediate procedures, such as the possible use of interviews, whose coherence with the aims and means of phenomenology, in turn, are previously dependent on an adequate conceptual transposition of the fundamental operations of this perspective. This is true for clinical psychology which, if it is still a space for the investigation of human beings (Amatuzzi, 2001), is a situation of interventional application of psychological knowledge, which does not correspond to the primary nature of phenomenology and encourages different recent systematization efforts for clinical psychology (Giorgi, 2005; Owen, 2006). Empirical-phenomenological research models in psychology have existed for decades (Castro & Gomes, 2011; Barreira, 2018), but not models supported by all the steps of classical phenomenology². This article delves into conceptual

² Classical phenomenology is understood as a way of operating phenomenologically in coherence with the whole proposal of the founder of this philosophy, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), following the



and operational problematizations of suspensive listening, which aim, in the classic way, to combine empirical research practices with phenomenological foundations. However, these problematizations conclude by opening suspensive listening in an unrestricted way to classical phenomenology and research. It is about highlighting the importance of qualifying suspensive listening not only according to its contexts, that is, with the situations in which it is put into practice, but in accordance with the perspectives that inform it, as different hermeneutic and existential lines can be. Even more widely, it is psychological listening itself that is called into question. In this sense, it is necessary to affirm the scope of suspensive listening as a set of intersubjective operations in tune with phenomenology, but also differentiated from it according to its theoretical and practical derivations, that is, philosophical and epistemological, on the one hand, methodological and clinical on the other. Thus, one can speak of “hermeneutical suspensive listening”, in the manner of different interpretative perspectives. Significant efforts to operationalize descriptive suspensions in investigative interviews, such as the notorious example of explicitness interviews (Depraz, Varela, & Vermersch, 2003; Petitmengin, 2006), applied and developed in experimental contexts, dialogue very closely with suspensive listening, although its name designates the instrument and not the listening experience itself. This work does not propose to make any critical cataloging of affinities and diversities contemplated under the name of suspensive listening but proposes its delineation in the matrix of classical phenomenology and transcendental experience as an operational guide.

To this end, this article will situate the context and the transcendental perspective of Husserl’s phenomenology to which, in its emergence, the concept is articulated and affiliated. It will present the rudiments of an intentional analysis of the interview and of the listening to, then, describe the horizon of the suspensive listening as operative key of the phenomenological interview. It concludes by opening suspensive listening to new qualifications that allow the anchoring of psychology to listening as its primary field of experience.

The transcendental sphere: anthropology, psychology and phenomenological listening

The development of phenomenological research in psychology, as well as philosophical research dedicated to Husserl’s unpublished manuscripts in life, has given new impetus to conceptual transpositions and innovations, as is the case with *suspensive listening*, necessary for the affirmation and consolidation of the new psychology desired by the philosopher (Barreira & Ranieri, 2013; Valério & Barreira, 2015; Barreira, 2017; Massimi & Peres, 2019). Two conceptual pairs intersect in

example of Edith Stein (1891-1942) (Ales Bello, 2016, 2019).



favor of this consolidation. A first, already frankly active in the aforementioned research tradition, puts in evidence, incessantly and gradually, the epistemological foundations for an adequate methodological procedure. The second pair, expressive of the results of the analyses of Husserl and Edith Stein and, simultaneously, of the conceptual unfinishedness they inherited as inherent to philosophy, consists of a *philosophical-phenomenological perspective anthropology*, basing the new psychology, that one making itself known and this one outlining its contours.

The importance of this second pair is paramount, because it is known that, in its turn, the power of this perspective is not restricted to rigorous scientific procedures, but that the results of intentional analyses have, due to the evidence explained in its operation, normative scope with undeniable technical and human, procedural and ethical appeal – foundations of applied psychology. Invigorating the rigor of empirical-phenomenological research in psychology, articulating it to a normative plot, repeatedly and renewed, propitiated by the explanations of anthropology of phenomenological perspective, has proven to be one of the most promising ways of consolidating this new psychology. Contrary to what may be suggested, the idea of rigor does not mean a constraint to fixed procedural standards, but rather the well-justified and rationally based opening of its possibilities.

Husserl's understanding of the need to operate the *epoché* in psychology is not only clear, but, in his final work (Husserl, 1926-38/1970), it is an explicit recommendation to the psychologist who must put his/her worldly existence in parentheses to, through empathy, open up to the understanding of the other individual based on the apprehension of his/her experiences (Ales Bello, 2016a). Therefore, the phenomenology of empathy, dispersed in Husserl's work and frontally themed in the thesis defended by Edith Stein in 1917 (Ranieri & Barreira, 2012), is an unavoidable passage for the unfolding of new and consistent conceptual resources for psychology. The presentation and problematization of empathy, as well as the phenomenological anthropology of these authors, by the philosopher Angela Ales Bello, have laid the foundations for this task to be faced.

Always stressing that Husserl's philosophy is a gnosiology, Ales Bello states:

Having highlighted the essential characteristics of the knowledge process led not only to the understanding of such a process, but also to show what the human being consists of; therefore, the theory of knowledge and philosophical-phenomenological anthropology are closely related and are characterized by a reciprocal referral from one another (Ales Bello, 2019, p. 50).

The fact that Husserlian phenomenology is a theory of knowledge aligned it as propaedeutic, or as a basic epistemology for the other sciences (Farge & Pradelle, 2019). Ales Bello, however, has placed an original emphasis on this connection between gnosiology and phenomenological anthropology, opening a different pers-



pective for the foundation of Psychology. From the focus illuminated by the Italian philosopher, each phenomenon examined reveals correlatively the stratification of the corporeal, psychic and spiritual unit that constitutes the human being. In this perspective, the examination of a phenomenon opens it to the totality of the individual's living experience. Thus, if previous approaches were limited, for example, to emphasizing the cognitive reduction of the phenomenon as an idea, the approach inaugurated in psychology by the approach of Ales Bello also examines how the phenomenon is experienced radiating to the human totality, that is, from the pre-reflective to the reflective sphere. The value of the approach promoted by Ales Bello is intimate with his fidelity to phenomenology, which is why the results she emphasizes are not intended to be naturalized as a theory, but to support the attitude of restarting the analyses by returning to the things themselves. Therefore, methodological attention always implies an epistemological style, a constant reflection on its own way of doing things.

Under this classical perspective, suspensive listening was developed in the course of conducting empirical research, in which the descriptive and epistemological insufficiency found in established procedures, which adopt interviews as their instrument, was verified. Either one sought to fill methodological gaps or, alternatively, one would neglect intersubjectivity as a productive sphere of phenomenological research in psychology, allowing the interview to be naturalized as data collection. Suspensive listening consists of a dialogical operation that, in the research process, triggers phenomenological suspension, having as premises, both, what precedes it and what succeeds it. Namely, before delineating its objective and experiential object, from the intentional sample, followed by the *intentional crossing*, the conclusive analytical step in a new model of empirical-phenomenological research (Barreira & Ranieri, 2013; Barreira, 2017, 2018). Methodologically, it is the result of a phenomenology of the interview, pointing out the horizon of operative experiences – the suspensive listening – that, due to a certain internal consistency, authorizes the title of phenomenological interview in the manner of classical phenomenology.

In line with the ambitions of classical phenomenology to establish a phenomenological psychology, the proposal of a suspensive listening as an operative condition for a phenomenological interview is consistent with the fact that, throughout the years of work, Husserl finds multiple paths for phenomenological reduction, among them, in particular, *intersubjective reduction*. Although it was announced in 1910-11, in *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (Husserl, 1910-11/2006), as Ales Bello (2016b, p. 62) warns, as the need for a "double reduction", the intersubjective reduction was systematized initially in *First Philosophy* (Husserl, 1923-24/2019), manuscript of the course taught by the philosopher in 1923 and 1924. For him, just as "we can practice the phenomenological reduction concerning our own acts—



present and intentionally implied, real and imagined acts—we can likewise practice such a reduction with respect to the acts of the other who becomes conscious to us through empathy” (Husserl, 1923-1924/2019, pp. 337 [135]).

The phenomenologist warns, however, that “admittedly, the situation is more complicated concerning the acts of others who are given in empathy” (idem, pp. 337 [135]). The resumption of Husserl’s analytical passages on this is complex; suffice to mention here that they refer to the degrees of temporal stratification through which the transcendental ego has access to itself, comparing it to those stratifications through which the ego accesses the alter ego. The transcendental structure of the human being, that is, the anthropology to which phenomenological analyses arrive, is what this reduction reveals in the agreement of shareable experiences through which, according to the philosopher’s argument:

But once we include the *possibility and actuality of other subjects*, from which we have abstracted just now, [and consider] that other subjects can bear within themselves the same systems of experience and stand thereby in a relation to one another in the way that the intentional *object* of the system of *one* subject is the *same* as that of *another* subject (idem, pp. 380 [179-180]).

In this work, Husserl (1923-24/2019) will still attribute to the analogy between proper bodies what, in *Cartesian Meditations* (Husserl, 1929/1960), will be critically revised, presenting itself as pairing (*paarung*) between proper bodies, which

is indicated there is now no longer something transcendental-subjective from my own circle of life. I can now only take into consideration the alien mentality according to its transcendental content (Husserl, 1923-24/2019, pp. [181]).

What suspensive listening, now described, does is this take into consideration the experiential expression of the other, to which only he/she has access in the first person. Producing an experiential narrative aims, in the investigative step by step, to open a channel of access to the progressive and concentric execution of the indispensable reductions to aim for a result that, evidencing its ultimate configurative elements, makes explicit the experiential structure of the examined phenomenon. Different established models of phenomenological-empirical research in psychology do not claim the articulation of multiple analysis pathways, with proposals limited to eidetic reduction, a situation that makes Holanda and Freitas (2011, p. 99) assess that “the ‘cutout’ of the work of Husserl [...] is responsible for most of the misunderstandings about his ideas”. The controversies surrounding the transition from eidetic to transcendental reduction are directly related to resistance to philosophical adherence to a central axis of his thinking.³ Without understanding the transcendental consciousness, there is no understanding of the territory of experiences as a

³ “So great is the power of prejudice that the epoché and the transcendental reduction have been exposed for decades, at various stages of development, without having been achieved more than



different sphere from that of acts. Events and acts qualified as bodily, psychic and spiritual can be apprehended thanks to an experiential sphere that is neither one type nor the other, but properly transcendental (Ales Bello, 2016a, 2016b, 2019). These have a character of universality and prove transcendental awareness as intersubjective (Husserl, 1929/2013). Experiences are these last elements that, in the analysis of the constitution, show themselves as characteristically bodily, psychic and spiritual, explaining, through empathy and intersubjective reduction, the systems of experience or the transcendental structure of the human being. The phenomenological reduction of worldly experiences, taken from its concreteness, has the purpose of making explicit its eidetic and experiential structure, that is, that configuration of specific experiences, which allow its manifestation in the way they are manifested and in the limits with which they manifest themselves.

It is essential to stress here that it is not possible to understand lived experience as a data of subjective interiority apart from the world, nor a data of singular personal individuality. The lived experience is in the world, however much it is necessary to excavate subjectivity to reveal it in its evidence and distinction. What transcendental epoché does is not to split and separate from the world, it is to consider each thing in turn, aiming to apprehend its meaning, to become aware of how it can participate in the worldly constitution, either in the way of practical, sentimental-evaluative, natural, personal, arithmetic, theoretical, eidetic or transcendental attitude. All of this aligns with the fact that the phenomenology

for it aims to be a science and a method that clarifies possibilities, possibilities of knowledge, possibilities of evaluation, and clarifies them on the basis of their fundamental essence. Such possibilities are generally dubitable, and so research into them will be a general research into essence (Husserl, 1907/1960, pp. 39 [51]).

Focused on the theme of culture, its possibilities of knowledge with the original structures of the world allow an in-depth study of particular cultural dynamics. Therefore, empirical-phenomenological research must and can follow the transcendental footprints in culture, a topic that concerns the psychology of the person, because they are people who create culture and it is culturally that people are constituted and developed as such. According to Husserl's words:

with the systematic progress of transcendental-phenomenological explication of the apodictic ego, the transcendental sense of the world must also become disclosed to us ultimately in the full concreteness with which it is incessantly the life-world for us all. That applies likewise to all the particular formations of the surrounding world, wherein it presents itself to us according to our personal upbringing and development or according to our membership in this or that nation, this or that cultural community (Husserl, 1929/1960,

transcriptions, in the old psychology, distorting the meaning of the first results of the genuinely intentional description"(Husserl, 1926-1938, pp. 253-202).



pp. 136 [163]).

There is a set of themes – united by the idea of the transcendental sense of the world in the full concreteness with which it is the life-world – of the greatest interest for the realization of a psychology of culture, or, as the necessary reveals mutual interweaving of that with this, of a person's psychology. In the wake of phenomenological archeology of cultures (Ales Bello, 1998; Valério & Barreira, 2015), suffice it to say here phenomenological psychology, defending its scope and rejecting that its value and application in psychology may be restricted to, or even prioritize, technical reductions in cognitive themes or experimental research. There is no less rigor or less need for phenomenology in a general psychology focused on the person and culture, suspecting that it can only exist when it is distorted by an experimental-positivist mentality.

Following the spirit of this philosophy, the construction of a phenomenological psychology will not take place through the construction of psychological constructs, as has been agreed in most approaches in the area. Its work is reversed, regressive, deconstructing constructs and always aiming to return to the experiences and their constitutive experiences. The knowledge of its results predisposes those who appropriate it to open themselves intuitively to things themselves, refounding the concepts from phenomenological analysis in its intuitive completion. Without this appropriation and phenomenological mastery, the concepts are operated in an interpretative way, being on the surface of the phenomenological claim. All the steps of this investigative and productive work are based on what is offered from this return to the things themselves. However, it is necessary to continue to problematize in depth how the methodological passages most appropriate to psychology, those of interpersonal encounter, can correspond to the regressive purpose. Taken superficially, the interviews, the most frequent resource in empirical investigations, build discourses, collect data, record representations. The epistemological and methodological deepening of the interview demands that it be systematically theorized as an experiential moment, an interlocution based on intersubjective experience, an intentional conduction of a call to an expressive attitude of a first-hand experience report, that is, an attitude of openness and revelation of the phenomenon as experienced by the person. Although there is no lack of competent developments in interview procedures aimed at experience (Ranieri & Barreira, 2010), psychological clinic as a mobilizing encounter with contact with the experience (Stanghellini, 2004), nor findings that the interview is an intersubjective process (Feijoo & Lessa, 2014), no theoretical systematization placed the issue as a determining step in the whole arc of empirical-phenomenological research. Not being an informative collection, nor a construction of discourse, only an interview processed as conducting, receiving and understanding experiences that present themselves as a particular



phenomenon – the listening itself made available in a suspensive way – can provide psychology with the indispensable resource for, in its praxis, join Husserl's project of transcendental phenomenology.

Phenomenology of the interview

From an objective point of view, in empirical psychological investigations, interviews characterized as open, semi-structured, and in-depth are suitable and consistent with phenomenology. The insufficiency of this characterization is in the only very general commitment to the description of the quality of the desired report, as well as the intersubjective process by which the report is arrived at, which leaves it subject to variations and executions that may be incompatible with the phenomenological purpose of "returning to the things themselves". An illustrative incompatibility occurs in a report that is nothing more than a finished speech or that remains in a *representative* register, that is, that speaks *about* the experience, that *explains* it, that *refers* to it. Having the flexibility, characteristic of open and semi-structured interviews, to ask for more information and ask new questions as the interviewee speaks, although it indicates a condition without which a phenomenological interview cannot be performed it does not apprehend the specifics without which an interview cannot be characterized as phenomenological – at least in the manner of classical phenomenology.

The expression suggests and the thing confirms: an *interview* places points of view to meet, as the etymology that refers to the French *entrevue* wants. "Inter" is based on Latin *inter*, meaning in the middle of; "view" in the Latin *videre*, see. Interviewing can thus be thought of as an act of accessing our own point of view to the point of view of the other, bringing a shared point of view to the middle of *us*. It is equivalent to a meeting of points of view and, etymologically, to happen, it would not require more than two people looking at the same thing together. The convention of the use of the word *interview* is strong enough that this meeting of points of view is situated in a dialogue that implies questions and answers. This ingredient brought by the convention reinforces the idea of displacement from one point of view to the other. It does not take more than that to highlight an essential feature of the interview phenomenon. Therefore, the variety of interview possibilities is enormous and it does not matter to search it in all its typology, but to outline it as a phenomenological interview.

Focused on the experience of first consciousness, the phenomenological interview will aim to produce reports of experience, that is, expressive in first hand, of what was experienced in the first person. If the production of such a report is its intention, one cannot, however, reduce what develops during the interview to just the finished report. The phenomenological interview is itself a phenomenon,



therefore, an experience lived and operationalized as suspensive listening. The deliberate intention of the suspensive listening puts into practice the phenomenological interview, therefore, it invites someone to a speech that is involved and encompasses by active listening and interested in accessing the experience of others. In the phenomenological interview, although the evident role is that of the speaker, the prominence, discreet and tacit, but axial to call and host a speech that is still latent, belongs to the listener. Therefore, listening implies speech, being the very medium (between, *inter*) in which the perceptual encounter takes place. If, on the one hand, it alone is not a guarantee for the evocation of an experiential narrative, the quality of listening draws and sustains the ambience for such qualified speech.

Phenomenology of the Listening

Before proceeding to outline the specificities, complexities and difficulties for carrying out suspensive listening, it is important to indicate some of its eidetic elements, in a preliminary phenomenological reduction of listening. Psychological and operational phenomenon, listening has oscillating and interdependent dosages of two poles, one passive and the other active. Although listening is different from hearing, originally, listening implies⁴ hearing, its passive pole. Materially linked to a sensory organ, hearing means being affected by sound. In Husserl's work, a Greek word (*hyle*) is used to call the living materiality that constitutes corporeality, hyletics (Ghigi, 2003; Barreira, 2014; Valério & Barreira, 2015). The hyletic characteristics of sonority as a reduced phenomenon, argues Husserl in more than one work, have no spatial location. A certain scientific tradition named it secondary quality, unlike those primary qualities that occupy a material place in space and can be perceived by touch and vision, both locally determined. Thus, auditory hyletics opens up as a horizon of temporal extension and spatial indeterminacy. Because it has an outstanding nature of spatiality – in other words, abstracted from space – hearing is the perceptive sense that has the best correlations with symbolic activity, with thought, with the very absence of the confines of the soul warned by Heraclitus. If tact and sight refer to concreteness and evidence, once the sonority can designate things absent from the here and now – invisible and untouchable – it can be assumed that the auditory hyletics was, from the point of view of its historical genesis, determinant for the development of categorical thinking and language itself.⁵ Organically, the auditory sense is the one that least directly can reject

⁴ As an interlocution, there can be listening without hearing and speech without sound, as in the case of communities of deaf people who communicate through a sign language, such as Libras (Brazilian language for the deaf), anchored in the spatialization of language through symbolic gestures.

⁵ As for sign languages, one can ask whether they would have the symbolic and abstract scope that they currently have without the previous base of the language of listeners and speakers, in which the elaboration of meanings that refer to what is absent would have, according to the present hypothesis, developed based on the objectification of sonorous hyletics.



being triggered. You can close your eyes, move away from your body, hold your breath and close your mouth, voluntarily and immediately restricting the activation of vision, touch, smell and taste, but the ears depend on the mediation of other organs, such as hands, to close to the hearing. The ears are “permanently” open, characterizing hearing as the sense less subject to the immediate control of the will, leading, more than the other senses, hearing to combine with reception.

Where there is only hearing (hyletics), listening is disabled due to the absence of its operative (noetic) pole, the pole that takes the hearing with something more than sensoriality, such as attention, appreciation, sense, understanding, meaning. Where there is no “hearing”, there is no listening, but pure cognitive activity, in the limit, manic thinking. Hearing in quotes wants to emphasize that it can occur without the effective (real) sound, being replaced by vision, memory or imagination, as an inner speech, as an attitude of waiting and receptivity in which someone listens to himself/herself, to an Other, to silence, waiting for something to emerge, which, like the poets, does not yet know what it is, but appears as an artistic creation. Regarding artistic exteriorization, music and listening allude to the soul’s own movements, expressing and impressing feelings that dispense with verbal language and take on corporeality. Mentioning it reminds us that, although not privileged in the present section, musicality has notable psychological and therapeutic impacts, denoting an amplitude for suspensive listening that cannot be achieved here. However, if the tones of the sound affection have their cultural example par excellence in musicality, they also fulfill a key particularity for the theme of listening interested in the experience of others, empathic listening. Noteworthy are some intuitions exposed by Edith Stein regarding the “phonic materials” that, even in the absence of human language, the case of our relationship with animals, allows us to enter “the current psychic life while expressing anger, anguish, pain – the whole range of animal affections” (Stein, 1932-33/2000, p. 91 <74>). Using Edith Stein, we can move on to what, based on the affective scale, inhabits the center of suspensive listening as an operation of welcoming and objective interpersonal understanding:

What distinguishes, from the point of view of phonic material, human language from merely affective sounds is the continuity of speech, the composition of the material in fixed, structured (“articulated”) forms and a regular rhythm and tone corresponding to this formation. If we consider the phenomenon of language in its entirety, the articulated forms are converted into carriers of fixed meanings, the flow of speech in a context of meaning; this is how language, as a form of linguistic expression that refers to a context of meaning created in a living way and as a free use of linguistic expression, reaches the goal of communication (Stein, 1932-33/2000, p. 91 <75>).

For a consideration of interpersonal listening in its entirety, the elements exposed during the analysis need to be replaced as a whole. We soon see how listening can occur not only with the ear, but with the person’s whole body and integrality,



considering that gesturality, facial expressiveness, affectivity participate in the empathic and communicative process, as well as reasoning, memories, understanding and everything that is more pertinent to human language. Lingis (2007) emphasize the tact dimension on listening. This places listening as a situated phenomenon, which imposes particularities on the idea of suspension. As a reader, I can interrupt myself and go back a few words, lines, paragraphs and pages back to search for the connections between this and other moments in the text. The possibility of locating a meaning in a given section of the text is offered by the spatial fixation of written signs. The confines of the meaning and precision of the written and read material, therefore, differ from those of speech and listening, less precise, more fluid, subject to the temporal ostensibility of current linguistic expression, to the memory and retention of the here and now of interlocution. The work of listening does not take place together with the stability of the written spatial support, requiring attention and skills that psychological practice ethically exercises underlining facets of communication that philosophical rationalization, in turn, can disregard.

The expertise developed by psychologists has a lot to contribute to clarifying what happens in the act of listening. Directed both to research and to clinical psychology, in the phenomenological field, a unique contribution, in this sense, is the work of the Brazilian psychologist Mauro Martins AmatuZZi (2001) who, relying on Maurice Merleau-Ponty, demonstrates the quality of two types of talk. A second talk (talks about talks) and a first (authentic) talk, which are able to apprehend when the emergence of meaning comes directly from the lived experience. As say Lingis: "With words we stay in touch with things. We also recognize and respect those who have long and deep experience with things"(Lingis, 2007, p.6). We can talk about a "tactful language"remembering with Lingis that "there is a speaking that from a distance makes contact with the heartache, fury, mortification, wariness, and secrecy of a body"(Lingis, 2007, p.4). Such apprehension is empathetic and would not be the same without following the rhythm, silences, pauses and intonations, which, if they are not taken up in articles and reports that communicate research results, are decisive in the interview and analysis process, allowing to recognize reports of own experiences. A talk that keeps congruence between the narrative and feelings that accompany it, or, on the contrary, a talk in which these elements are dissociated, they bring important indexes for the conduct of the interview, sometimes imperceptible when reading a transcribed material. It is true that this may even be irrelevant in certain contexts of listening, which leads to the problem of its relationship with different orientations during listening. To this end, one can legitimately follow the clue left by Husserl on the necessary conversion of attitude to make phenomenology.



Suspensive listening: condition of possibility of phenomenological interview

Usually, listening, like what was said about empathy elsewhere, “is extraordinarily ordinary” (Barreira, 2014, p. 55), being “so common to interpersonal experience that it is hidden, and not becomes thematic, remaining implicit in our worldly consciousness” (idem). Therefore, the beginning of its qualification is favored when its context is outlined, indicating a relational and intentional framework that does not position it arbitrarily. Some common traits of adequate listening between the investigative-comprehensive interview and the nature of the psychological clinic are closely linked, which does not exempt them from a necessary differentiation. Take the clinic attention itself, which is not exclusive to Psychology, as an emblematic starting point for the description of listening according to the orientations (or attitudes) adopted in the interlocution.

Thus, in the health context, clinical care informed by the biomedical model performs a *scientific-natural listening*. This disregards the subjectivity of the patient, guiding and filtering the narratives only in what provides objective data to establish the relationships between circumstances, chronology and symptoms sufficiently for the determination of diagnosis, prognosis and prescription. The natural orientation, understood as the presumption – consistent with that of Natural Science – that there is a world independent of the conscience that apprehends it, is expressed in explanatory and factual narratives that, in general, imply a certain rejection of subjectivity as a participant in the constitution of the world. Narratively, this translates into an objective discourse. The idea of an interview as data collection, for example, is precisely compatible with the natural orientation. Under similar guidance, one should also point out a *psychological-natural listening* in which speech and subjectivity are readily interpreted and framed objectively, seeing a psychic functioning and assigning meanings underlying the narrative according to theoretical assumptions of the adopted perspective, whatever it may be, psychoanalytic, existential, cognitive-behavioral, etc. This is critically exemplified in psychiatry by Stanghellini (2004).

It is not difficult to detect a *listening on psychologism orientation* as well. Following a historicist or subjectivist orientation, it turns, by its time, to the individual’s relative point of view, taking the singularity of the experience as sufficient and independent of any generalizable constitutive trait, dispensing with objective meanings and assuming the relativistic as an insurmountable partiality to rationality. Under this presumption, the distance from partiality can only be reduced by a type of perspectivism that adds, compares, validates, approaches and accommodates different points of view.

The natural and historicist orientations show a predetermined horizon on the



part of those who listen to also direct narrative, if not objectively, subjectively, by only listening to what the assumed attitude puts as their interest. The reflections typical of classical phenomenology do not claim to abolish the horizon, but they do not intend to naively assume the assumptions that inform it. It is for this reason that the theoretical systematization of suspensive listening needs to make explicit its assumptions – that of transcendental phenomenology – justifying what makes it possible and what it aims for in its execution, returning to phenomenological anthropology, intersubjective reduction, empathy and the expressive narrative of intentional experience as structuring elements of its background. Thus, *suspensive listening* synthesizes operations that intend, by means of a dialogical exchange, to bring together the horizons of two poles, that of the speaker and that of the listener, through the empathic apprehension of the experience with its respective mutual understanding.

Every phenomenon has a horizon of indeterminacy, which is valid for the personal perception of each one. One can speak of a singular horizon in which the unique and exclusive personality of each *self* is considered and can be the object of reflection, even if there are dimensions of the self always accessible exclusively to the self. In a personal horizon, there are also more shared spheres, such as a horizon of (relatively) common culture, a historical (relatively) common horizon and a socio-political horizon (relatively) common. The approximation between the horizons of the two poles of listening will be affected by this stratification and by what is more or less common between them. However, it is important to consider, above all, that the horizon of expectation of those who listen deliberately and operationally aims to approach the singular horizon of the speaker. For this, the common aspects of the horizons of both play an important role and that does, largely, exempt from the “natural” orientation. What is natural here is not an adherence to the thesis of the objective existence of the world independent of the subject of its knowledge, but it is equivalent to considering by relatively well known, even if not examined closely, certain things proper to the intersubjectively shared life-world. In effect, suspensive listening performs a zigzag of orientations, oscillating from one to the other in favor of detection and respective plunge into those experiential moments that are decisive for a better understanding of what is sought. A double dynamic of retention and protension, each one living particularly in the horizons of expectations of those who speak and listen, operates converging from the theme experience. The topicalization of experience radiates through both horizons, illuminating them to anyone who is dedicated to pursuing them. The surrounding world and previous knowledge along the shared horizon intersubjectively connect the unique horizons of each pole (monad). The temporality dynamics of each pole is also accompanied by a dynamic of orientations: oscillation between natural, personalistic and phenomenological orientation, through which the horizons are approaching. However,



submission to the comprehensive purpose gives suspension the priority to which other attitudes, prior knowledge, natural and transcendental, come to the rescue. The more these prior knowledge are based on transcendental experiences, that is, on the explanation provided by transcendental reductions, the more predisposition to follow the clues that make empty intuitions into filled intuitions will be on the part of the listener. Husserl declares that: "Thus every transcendental discovery, by doing back into the natural attitude, enriches my psychic life and (apperceptively as a matter of course) that of every other" (Husserl, 1926-38/1970, p. 210 [214]).

Therefore, aiming at what it aims for, within the expectation horizon of classical phenomenological investigation, the guiding *orientation* of suspensive listening is *empathic-psychological*. Its intention is comprehensive and aims to apprehend an lived experience as it appears, as it happens to the individual interviewed. By offering guidance to the speaker, its questions want to move away from only explanatory and factual speech. Antagonistically, directing the narrative to likes and dislikes, feelings and sensations, without describing the situation to which it refers, would fall into a subjectivism that also does not give access to the lived experience. A narrative that is expressive of the interviewee's perception, as closely as possible to what was originally perceived, is sought, avoiding both a narrative of impressions and the distance that would correspond to a perception of perception and, successively, the replacement of perception originated by a chronic discourse and established about it, that is, a naturalistic connection of what was directly experienced, and the same is valid for what results from an objectified polyphony as impersonal speech. Thus, the shared point of view that is desired in a phenomenological interview is the point of view that allows to comprehensively retracing on the lived experience, apprehending its personal chain and accessing its inner sense.

The execution of suspensive listening guides the two subjective poles involved in the process: 1. the interviewer adopts the *empathic-psychological orientation* to apprehend the phenomenon as it is experienced by the interviewee and, for this, both actively directs him/her to his/her own perception and accompanies him/her empathetically in his/her intentional movement towards the topic at hand; 2. the interviewee, guided by the researcher's questions and interests, assumes reflexive *personalistic orientation*, that is, expresses the way he/she personally experiences the theme. In this orientation, it is directed towards a resumption of the perception of what was experienced, with his/her point of view, objects, values, positions, actions, imaginations, affections, interactions. Here, with the interviewee's perception at stake, the researcher suspends the judgments that he/she himself/herself made about the thematized experience, positioning it openly to what is expressed by the person. This interest of those who operate suspensive listening is the opposite of closed anticipation or presumption of contents, senses and meanings about what is being reported, being both a precondition and a dynamic



process of the interview. As a precondition, it is an attitude intentionally assumed by the interviewer who is phenomenologically oriented, moving between natural, empathic-psychological and phenomenological orientation. As a dynamic process, the understanding seeks to confirm and deepen during the interview, in a dialogical coming and going that allows the comprehensive covering of the intentionality of others, including exploring aspects whose meaning is implicit, obscure for the interviewee himself/herself. This movement is directly related to the zigzag oscillation and the dynamics of changing attitudes, natural, empathic-psychological, phenomenological, operating as a synergy of retentions and protections that aims at access to authentic narrative (Amatuzzi, 2001).

Conclusion

The proposition of suspensive listening as the operative key of the phenomenological interview places Husserl's project of psychology at a practical and dialogical moment. Without any abandonment of the theory of knowledge, it is interesting to clarify how, in a specific procedure of interpersonal relationships, scientifically valid knowledge, that is, knowledge of essence can be extracted from a dialogical relational dynamic. In this sense, adopting a pre-transcendental Husserlian perspective, Giorgi (2005) pointed out contributions from the phenomenological perspective to a technical practice, including the application of the psychological phenomenological reduction. What we propose here through suspensive listening is the possibility of moving towards an operationalization of transcendental reduction, following Husserl's project. Whether or not the ideas for suspensive listening are accepted as this operative key, without such an elucidation, the phenomenological psychology project is bound to remain a theoretical project. Against the advancement of this psychology, much conceptual squeamish and precautions act as a kind of theoretical block. This is not new to phenomenology, whose progress has assumed its vocation for philosophical struggle in the name of authentic humanity (Husserl, 1926-1938/1970; Barreira, 2013). As a science and profession, psychology has an ethical mission to assume its part in this fight for authentic science and humanity (Barreira, 2011). The significance of this and its scope can vary, as is the case with the important derivations of classical phenomenology. In this sense, the qualification and the epistemological and practical improvement of suspensive listening, certainly unrestricted to the Husserlian and Steinian perspectives, will have as their determining axes their systematization according to other approaches and according to their application setting.



Referências

- Ales Bello, A. (1998). Hyle, body, life: phenomenological archaeology of the sacred. In M. Kronegger, & A. T. Tymieniecka (Eds.), *Life differentiation and harmony: vegetal, animal, human* (Analecta husserliana, 57; pp. 6374). Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Ales Bello, A. (2016a). *Il senso dell'umano: tra fenomenologia, psicologia e psicopatologia*. Castelveccchi.
- Ales Bello, A. (2016b). *Edmund Husserl: Pensar Deus, crer em Deus*. (A. T. Garcia, & M. L. Fernandes, trad.). Paulus. (Original publicado em 2005).
- Ales Bello, A. (2019). Análise e comentário do texto de Husserl. In E. Husserl. *Il bambino: la genesi del sentire e del conoscere l'altro* (p. 49-64). (A. Ales Bello, Trad.). Fattore Umano Edizioni.
- Amatuzzi, M. M. (2001). *Por uma psicologia humana*. Alínea.
- Barreira, C. R. A. (2011). Da história da fenomenologia à ética na psicologia: tributo ao centenário de Filosofia como Ciência Rigorosa (1911) de Edmund Husserl. *Memorandum*, 20, 135-144. <https://periodicos.ufmg.br/index.php/memorandum/article/view/6628>
- Barreira, C. R. A. (2013). Fenomenologia do combate: da ética da luta à luta pela vida ética. In M. Mahfoud & M. Massimi (Orgs.). *Edith Stein e a psicologia: teoria e pesquisa* (pp. 413-447). Artesã.
- Barreira, C. R. A. (2014). A bela adormecida e outras vinhetas: A empatia, do corpo a corpo cotidiano à clínica. In J. Savian Filho (Ed.). *Empatia. Edmund Husserl e Edith Stein: apresentações didáticas* (pp.53-93). Loyola.
- Barreira, C. R. A. (2017). Análise fenomenológica aplicada à psicologia: recursos operacionais para pesquisa empírica. In M. Mahfoud; J. Savian Filho. *Diálogos com Edith Stein: filosofia, psicologia e educação* (pp.317-368). Paulus.
- Barreira, C. R. A. (2018). Escuta suspensiva. In *Anais do V Seminário Internacional de Pesquisas e Estudos Qualitativos: Pesquisa Qualitativa na Educação e na Ciência em Debate*. SEPQ. <https://sepq.org.br/eventos/vsipeq/documentos/26960325803/10>
- Castro, T. G., & Gomes, W. B. (2011). Movimento fenomenológico: Controvérsias e perspectivas na pesquisa psicológica. *Psicologia: Teoria e Pesquisa*, 27(2), 233-240. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0102-37722011000200014>



- Coelho Júnior, A. G., & Barreira, C. R. A. (2019). Influências fenomenológicas na psicologia clínica. In M. Massimi, & S. Passafaro (Orgs.). *História da psicologia fenomenológica* (pp.333-364). Loyola.
- Depraz, N.E., Varela, F.J., & Vermersch, P. E. (2003). *On becoming aware: A pragmatics of experiencing*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Farges, J., & Pradelle, D. (2019). *Husserl: Phénoménologie et fondements des sciences*. Hermann.
- Feijoo, A. M., & Lessa, M. B. M. F. (2014). *Fenomenologia e práticas clínicas*. IFEN.
- Ghigi, N. (2003). A hilética na fenomenologia: a propósito de alguns escritos de Angela Ales Bello. *Memorandum*, 4, 48-60. <https://periodicos.ufmg.br/index.php/memorandum/article/view/6808>
- Giorgi, B. (2005). Reflections on Therapeutic Practice Guided by a Husserlian Perspective. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 36(2), 141-194. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156916205774651069>
- Holanda, A., & Freitas, J. L. (2011). Fenomenologia e psicologia: vinculações. In A. J. Peixoto (Ed.). *Fenomenologia: diálogos possíveis* (pp. 97-112). Alínea.
- Husserl, E. (1960). *Cartesian Meditations: an introduction to phenomenology*. (D. Cairns, Trans.). Springer. (Original work 1929, posthumously published 1950). <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-009-9997-8>
- Husserl, E. (1965). *Phenomenology and the crisis of philosophy: philosophy as rigorous science and philosophy and the crisis of european man*. (Q. Lauer, Trans.). Harper Torchbooks. (Original work published 1911).
- Husserl, E. (1970). *The crisis of European sciences and transcendental phenomenology: an introduction to phenomenological philosophy*. (D. Carr, Trans.). Northwestern University Press. (Original work 1926-1938, posthumously published 1954).
- Husserl, E. (1999). *The idea of phenomenology*. (L. Hardy, Trans.). Kluwer Academic Publishers. (Original work 1907, posthumously published 1947).
- Husserl, E. (2006). *The basic problems of phenomenology: from the lectures, winter semester, 1910-1911*. (I. Farin; J. G. Hart, Trans.). Springer. (Original work published 1910-11).
- Husserl, E. (2019). *First philosophy: lectures 1923/24 and related texts from The Manuscripts (1920-1925)*. (S. Luft; T. M. Naberhaus, Trans.). Springer Nature B. V. (Original work published 1920-25). <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-024-1597-1>



- Lingis, A. (2007). Contact: tact and caress. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 38, 1-6. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1163/156916207X190210>
- Massimi, M., & Passafaro, S. (2019). *História da psicologia fenomenológica*. Loyola.
- Owen, I.R. (2006). *Psychotherapy and phenomenology: on Freud, Husserl and Heidegger*. iUniverse.
- Petitmengin, C. (2006). Describing one's subjective experience in the second person: an interview method for the science of consciousness. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive sciences*, 5(3), 229-269. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-006-9022-2>
- Ranieri, L. P., & Barreira, C. R. A. (2010). A entrevista fenomenológica. In *Anais do IV Seminário Internacional de Pesquisa e Estudos Qualitativos*. SIPEQ. <https://arquivo.sepq.org.br/IV-SIPEQ/Anais/artigos/46.pdf>
- Ranieri, L. P., & Barreira, C. R. A. (2012). A empatia como vivência. *Memorandum*, 23, 12-31. <https://periodicos.ufmg.br/index.php/memorandum/article/view/6553>
- Stanghellini, G. (2004). The puzzle of psychiatric interview. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 35(2), 173-195. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1569162042652191>
- Stein, E. (2000). *La struttura dela persona umana*. (M. D'Ambra, Trad.). Città Nuova. (Original de 1932-1933, publicação póstuma em 1994).
- Valério, P., & Barreira, C. R. A. (2015). Arqueologia fenomenológica, fenomenologia genética e psicologia: rumo à gênese das manifestações culturais. *Psicologia USP*, 26(3), 430-440. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/0103-656420140075>

Notes about the authors:

Cristiano Roque Antunes Barreira é Full Professor (RDIDP) at the University of São Paulo, at the Ribeirão Preto School of Physical Education and Sport (EEFERP-USP) and advising professor at the Post-Graduate Programs in Psychology (FFCLRP-USP) and Physical Education and Sports (EEFERP-USP). He was a visiting professor and lecturer at different international institutions, such as the University of Bordeaux and the Paris-Cité university. E-mail: crisroba@usp.br

Achilles Gonçalves Coelho Júnior é Doctor's Degree in Sciences from the Post-Graduate Program in Psychology at the Faculty of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters of Ribeirão Preto, University of São Paulo (2018) and Master's De-



gree in Psychology at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (2006). E-mail:
achillescoelho@gmail.com

Data de submissão: 09.13.2022

Data de aceite: 08.03.2023