

Phenomenon, sense and substrate – the case for a phenomenological metaphysics

What is the *substrate* of consciousness, or what is it that “*makes* consciousness”? Asking this question amounts to not being satisfied with an answer that may seem self-evident: this substrate is the brain. In fact, situating the substrate of consciousness in the objective body, as part of the world - whether in the context of phenomenology, philosophy of mind or naturalism - leads to a circular ontology: consciousness in the body, the body in the world, the world thought, perceived, conceived, constituted by consciousness. However, even if all circularity is not necessarily problematic, we seek to show that this circularity of a general ontology is indeed fatal. So we take another path, from the subjective body to a substrate that is not located in the world. This substrate is constructed as an abstract notion, by operating two consecutive merges of existing concepts. First we bring together in a single concept, that of *abstract substrate*, the Aristotelian *hylomorphism*, on the one hand, and the idea of *supervenience*, from the philosophy of the mind, on the other hand, by establishing that the two are, in a way, coextensive. We then appeal to the notion of *absolute Life*, introduced by Michel Henry in the last period of his work, interpreting it as a particular case of the notion of abstract substrate. The result of this second conceptual unification, is what we call *transcendental substrate* - transcendental in the Kantian sense. Finally we use the term adherence to designate the lived experience that the transcendental subject makes of the transcendental substrate. Adherence is exactly the opposite of intentionality and this opposition involves others such as: transcendental substrate vs world, contiguity vs distance, subsidizer vs occurring, affectivity vs intentionality, passivity vs activity, substrate vs meaning.