

The Possibility of Dialog between Islamic Philosophy and Western Phenomenology

The phenomenology on its own is not a philosophical field but a great revolution in the thinking of modern world. At the outset Edmond Husserl felt a deviation in the western philosophy, he depicted his attitude towards this trend in his "Crisis" with a sad tone mingled with hopelessness. Initially Husserl was optimistic about the revival of the philosophy era, since he believed that the European civilizations would not survive without philosophy. By European civilizations, he meant the modern world. How is it possible to revive philosophy?

Following Descartes, Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche, Husserl intended to replace a form of Greek or Middle Ages' philosophy with the contemporary philosophy of Europe. Yet, he had to refer to the philosophies to be able to find the source and the time when the probable deviation occurred. When we talk about deviation it may be thought that philosophy was perfect at the beginning, and that it has had a regressive trend.

Husserl did not think that Greeks and Middle Ages had reached the perfect and ideal philosophy. However, he had learned from them that philosophy is a general science in which the essence of things appears. Phenomenology is, in fact, the manifestation of essences. But how are essences manifested? Are they hidden under the external things? Husserl did not believe in Kant's being in itself. Instead, he maintained that phenomenon, which is the very essence, that is pictured in our consciousness in two eidetic reduction and transcendental reduction stages. The question of perception, which had become more and more complicated in Descartes' time, and which was considered as a resolved problem in Kant's era, seems to have been set forth again by Husserl, who does not ignore Cogito. Husserl takes Descartes' speculations seriously, but avoids his objectivism and rationalism. In Husserl's view, Cogito is devoid of content, and perception can not be devoid of content. What is the content of perception? Is the perception of objects in the same form that they exist in the external world? In a sense, the answer to this question is positive. Yet, perception is not the impression of objects in mind; rather it is the manifestation of natures in mind. This matter is somewhat similar to that of Mulla Sadra who considers the objects that are exterior as the accidentally known, and certain form of them that the mind creates as essentially known. The difference in the views of the two philosophers is that Mulla Sadra believed in the external being of objects, but Husserl put it within parentheses, or suspended and avoided it. Now that a comparison has been drawn between the two philosophers of the West and Islamic world, it may be timely to quote the definition of phenomenology from Henry

Corbin, a man who was fond of Islamic philosophy, and was brought up in the field of the philosophy of phenomenology. In one of his lectures delivered in the Faculty of Literature and Humanities, University of Tehran, in 1974, he defines phenomenology in this way:

"La phcnomcnologie consiste a "sauver le phenomene", sauver l' apparence en degageant ou devoilant le cache qui se montre sous cete apparence, le logos du phenomene, la phenomenologie, e'est done dire le cache, l'invisible present sous le visible. C est laisscr se monlrer le phenomene lei qu'il se montre au suiet a qui il se montre, C'cst done une tout autre demarche que celle de IMiisloire de la philosophic ou de la critique histoii quc.

Then, he presents the following definition on the works of some Islamic thinkers:

Mais alors la recherche phcnomcnologique n'esl-elle pas cc que nos vienx trailes mystiques designent eomme kashf al mahjub, le devoilement ce qui est cache? n'est-ce pas aussi ce qui designe le terme de tavvi,l'fondement en hci mcmuntique spiriltiellc quoranique? Ic Ta'wil c'cst ramencr une chose a sa source a son archetype. En l'y reconduisant on la fait passer de niveau en niveau de Pelre, et par le fait meme, on degage la structure d'une essence.

It is doubtful that "essence" in the thinking of Islamic thinkers, particularly the philosophers, would be the same as that of Husserl. Of course, we should not take the unveiling of Ismailian and Sufis' "mystery" identical to "devoilement" of phenomenologist and even Heidegger. In other words, Islamic philosophy and mysticism are neither phenomenology nor its introduction, since phenomenology has nourished in new philosophical thinking context, and has emerged after Kant and Descartes. Yet, the latter presented a plan on the eve of the history of modernity in which there was no occasion for unveiling the "mystery", and everything was based on Cogito. In the sense that Descartes ignored one of the important rules of the old philosophy, that is the congruence of the knowledgeable and the known. Instead he set forth the contradicting plan between the matter and soul. With this plan, he was hardly able to have knowledge about the essence of objects since the philosopher could not find a way to know about the external objects and their essence. Therefore, philosophy followed another way, and instead of discussing the essence of things, it concentrated on the essence of science, perception, possibilities, and conditions or objects. Leibniz presented the subject of the uncertainty of existence and perception hierarchy. He also considered the

intensity of existence proportional to science. But soon afterwards, in the very field of Descartes, Leibniz set forth the "Perception" that precedes apperception. Representative knowledge and assertive knowledge sciences are all of the type of apperception. Particularly the owner of the apperception is aware of his own perception. But perception is neither imagination nor logic. In contrast, it is a kind of ambiguous perception that is clarified and explained to some extent in apperception.

Sadrudin Shirazi had divided perception into perception and apperception before Leibniz. Both considered knowledge and existence as truth but differentiated them. In dividing perception into perception and apperception, Mulla Sadra emphasized on the confirmation of perception. He held that perception and knowledge have certain prerequisites, and that perception is the perception for apperception. That is to say that without perception there would be no knowledge and perception. It is in relation to the origin of existence that man can have knowledge and perception. When Mulla Sadra contemplated on these matters, he had nothing to do with the crisis of philosophy, and was not motivated with desire for the revival of philosophy. However, Husserl had to find a basis for Descartes Cogito and the prerequisites of perception that Kant had stated. Neither intentionality nor reduction of phenomenology were sufficient independently. Intentionality could only indicate that our perceptual relation with the world and objects is not an accidental relation. Act of perception is realized as a result of perceived. The difference between Husserl and Kant is that the former wished to say that philosophy is not a science but that philosophers have changed the matters that are the precondition of perception into problems; whereas the latter did not discuss such matters but stated that each perception is due to the intention and attention of self. Husserl took the term intention and attention from Brentano. This philosopher, in turn, took the mentioned term indirectly from Islamic philosophers through the Middle Ages' philosophers. It is not, therefore, unlikely that the above term has been of interest to Islamic philosophers and phenomenologists. To Islamic philosophers including Avicenna, the first and second intention meant that living beings may be considered from two intentions. In the first, the first object is perception and in the second, the second object that embraces every philosophic problem. In philosophy, the philosopher ignores the first object in order to reach the second object. This is what Mulla Sadra has stated in different forms. When he states that philosophy is the transformation of man to rational world, he means that man in the sensational and imaginal world is unable to comprehend philosophical matters. Man should reach the rational level and become the very wisdom so that he can comprehend the second object. He has also quoted Aristotle to state perception be considered as an incomplete level of knowledge. In its true sense, perception is not knowledge, or at least, it is not a science that has been set forth in the form of proposition and judgment. In contrast, it is something with which the form, direction and outcome of science is determined. In phenomenology, science necessitates an interpretation, and (epoche) the suspension and cancellation of an

order are impossible without them. It also has relationship with promise. As if science and deed come into being with the initial promise of man. Such a relationship and attention are somehow a perception. In other words, man has always had relationship with existence and origin. It is with this relationship that the status of science and deed and manner of man's living are determined. Particularly, we recall Martin Heidegger's statement that: There exists a type of fundamental perception of existence that has made it possible to have philosophy, science, and technology.

5. Finally, Husserl believed in the revival of philosophy in the holistic science, and in eternal wisdom (or in Sohrcvnrđi's words, ancient wisdom). Confirmation and insistence on the existence of philosophy and eternal wisdom are among the important topics in Islamic philosophers' view. The desire for the revival of the philosophy necessitates the confirmation of eternal philosophy. The topic of eternal wisdom may be of interest to both phenomenologists and contemporary Islamic philosophers.