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What's your philosophy? The phenomenological tradition and Cognitive Linguistics

Picking up the thread of Geeraerts 1985: 309-370, and Geeraerts 1993, which were the first publications in the history of Cognitive Linguistics to analyze the specific relevance of phenomenology, this talk will offer a couple of footnotes to the current Cognitive Linguistic interest in phenomenology, as embodied by works such as Zlatev et al. 2008, Zlatev 2010. In particular, it will be argued that a recourse to phenomenology as a methodological bedrock for Cognitive Linguistics is not immune to some of the issues that loom large in the philosophical history of phenomenology. First, the method of phenomenological reduction is sensitive to an idealistic shift, as Husserl's work illustrates. As such, it may be a less reliable methodological basis than suggested. Second, the phenomenological tradition is not a homogeneous one. The internal variety – the tensions, splits, and divergencies from Husserl over Heidegger and Merleau Ponty to Gadamer and Levinas – of philosophical phenomenology should be included in the discussion to arrive at a proper understanding of the relationship with Cognitive Linguistics. The outspoken tension, for instance, between the corporality of intentionality emphasized by the early Merleau Ponty and the historicity of experience in Heidegger illustrates that defining the exact relationship between experience and usage on the one hand, and system and community on the other, is just as much a problem for phenomenology as for linguistics.

References

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