

# The Phenomenological Movement and Research in the Human Sciences

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*Phenomenology, as a modern movement in philosophy, has focused discussion upon human subjectivity in new and critically important ways. Because human participants can relate intentionally to objects of the world consciousness manifests relationships to things and others that are other than cause-effect relationships. Consequently, the concepts and practices of the natural sciences are not the best model for the human sciences to follow. Husserl in his philosophy introduced a method for a more adequate approach to the achievements of consciousness and when properly modified the phenomenological method can serve as the basis for the human sciences, including nursing. The use of such a method can make the qualitative analysis of phenomena rigorous and scientific.*

In order to establish a relationship among the phenomenological movement, the human sciences, and the process of research, I shall briefly have to discuss the two scholarly pursuits related to knowledge: philosophy and science, and then relate their perspectives to the research process. I want to show that while there is development in these fields that is respectful of tradition, over time, certain movements in these scholarly activities find themselves announcing critical divergences from their traditions. Since it is most fundamental, I will begin with philosophy and then I will speak about science, and finally I will draw out implications of those discussions for research.

I hope to show that as a modern movement in philosophy, phenomenology has focused discussion on human subjectivity in new and critically important ways. Of course, philosophy has always reflected on the human condition and the meaning of personhood, but I believe that phenomenology has advanced this discussion significantly because of the contributions it has made in our understanding of consciousness and subjectivity. This focus has loosened the priority of objectivistic strategies. Secondly, while the human sciences started off in imitation of the natural sciences, during the latter part of the 20th century, they have begun to break away from imitative criteria and have begun to find their own way as sciences. This development has led to a better understanding of humanness and how to make the practice of science compatible with unique human characteristics and avoid reductionistic tendencies. Finally, the last decades of the last century saw a break in the dominance of quantitative methods in the social and human sciences and qualitative methods have begun to emerge that are sufficiently rigorous to claim legitimate scientific status. My ambition with this column is

to argue that a convergence of these three movements—a philosophical focus on human consciousness and subjectivity, the continuing development of a nonreductionistic human science perspective, and the availability of qualitative research methods—can only help the various human sciences to come of age and perhaps genuinely contribute to society the way the natural sciences have. This convergence, I hope, will lead to the development of knowledge that is driven by philosophical anthropological criteria rather than by natural science criteria.

## Philosophy

If one takes a long range view of philosophy, that is, if one goes back to the ancients, then it is easy to argue that every topic in the universe has been spoken about. The only question would be the veracity of the different perspectives. There are different styles of philosophizing, and there are trends and fashions in philosophy that dominate and recede. Although it is true that styles of philosophizing never really disappear, it is nevertheless true that certain epochs are dominated by a particular style. In the 19th and 20th centuries, in the West, at least, the style that dominated was logical empiricism in one form or another. Sometimes it was the excessive form known as positivism and sometimes the more liberal form known as falsificationism, but the core of this philosophy was always that there had to be a sensorially-given substance that was publicly accessible and describable in observation language (Shea, 1971). The symbol of this approach is the thing and the parts or processes that constitute it. Most of us who have been educated to the college and university level are familiar with this approach. Indeed, anyone who became an adult in the 20th century could hardly avoid it.

Even while empiricism was enjoying its greatest popularity, a new philosophy was being initiated in 1900 by Edmund

Husserl (1900/1970), at first implicitly, but overtime, it became clarified and explicit. He named this philosophy *phenomenology* and although it did not dominate, it became a significant movement in the 20th century philosophy. Its adherents do not all agree, and the movement is quite amorphous, but the major contributors—Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur, and Levinas—all agree that the focus of philosophy has to be consciousness, human existence, or the very nature of being itself. In other words, this philosophy introduces a shift of focus away from the thing and nature toward human beings and their worlds.

This shift in the movement of philosophy was aided by Husserl himself when he designated consciousness as the point of departure for phenomenology. He reasoned that anything that had to be dealt with in the world had to come through consciousness. Without consciousness, there is nothing to be said or done. Consequently, Husserl set out to understand consciousness in all of its manifestations. He recognized it to be a medium between human beings and the world and the directed character of consciousness Husserl called, following his teacher, Brentano, *intentionality*. By intentionality Husserl meant that every act of consciousness takes an object that transcends the act. Sometimes the object toward which consciousness is directed is in the world and sometimes it belongs to the same stream of consciousness as the act itself—for example, when we reflect on our dreams or on our own mental processes—but the object always transcends the act. This means that consciousness is, among other things, a principle of openness. Because of consciousness, we are open to the world, to others, and even to ourselves. Most times, awareness accompanies this openness, but not always, since even unconscious acts partake of intentionality. Also, we must appreciate the double connotations of the term *act*: It implies activity, of course, but its primary meaning in this context is *to actualize*. Consciousness actualizes presences; because of it we are present to the world, others, and ourselves. Husserl called this the presentational function of consciousness. Later Husserl demonstrated that the body also participated in consciousness so that the theme of phenomenology ultimately became subjectivity. Subjectivity is a type of being that possesses consciousness and therefore an openness to whatever can present itself to it in ways not completely reducible to cause-effect interactions. In other words, consciousness introduces new types of relationships into the world.

The reason that Husserl made this argument is that, based upon how it presents itself, consciousness is radically different from physical things. Understanding how consciousness is different from a thing will help us to understand how we can be present to nonsensorial givens. First of all, although the environment has an impact on things, there is no evidence that such impact precipitates intentional actions that are qualitatively different from the surroundings of the thing. One can truly say that whatever happens in a thing is the effect of an internal or external cause. This difference was the basis for

Brentano's (1874/1973) attribution of intentionality to conscious beings and not to physical things. A second important difference that Husserl noted is that all material objects that are external to consciousness must be perceived in profiles. That is, while one perceives a table, the whole table is never given in a single act of perception, but only a profile of the table is given which is dependent upon the perspective of the perceiver. We perceive the whole table from the top, or the side, or from underneath, but never the table as such. One must adopt a succession of perspectives in order to get a better sense of the whole table. But when we reflect on our own conscious processes, they are given to us only in one way. They are not given in profiles. I cannot change my perspective when I repeat my reflection. One can perhaps reflect numerous times on the same part of the conscious stream and see new details or observe something different, but the part of the stream under observation comes back in the same way. Finally, consciousness presents itself, when we reflect upon it, exclusively nonsensorially. There is an immediate awareness of our own conscious processes, and yet we cannot at all use the language of things to describe the nature of the object of which we are aware. It has neither color, nor shape, nor size, nor smell, and it is noiseless. In addition Husserl emphasized that, so far as we know, consciousness always comes attached to biological bodies.

Now, the reasons for making these distinctions between things and consciousness is that Husserl also claimed to have found a method which could access consciousness despite its nonphysical character. It also means that the methods of the sciences of nature are not to be models for studying consciousness. I cannot describe the method in full here (see Giorgi, 1997; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003), but I can paraphrase how Husserl described our discriminations of the nonsensorial object. First of all, Husserl acknowledges that reflecting upon a partial stream of consciousness is accessing data. Events that have taken place in my own life are given to me in that fashion and I find myself discriminating among thoughts, images, memories, fantasies, and the flowing of experience with its vague interconnecting bonds. None of this is physical yet only the most resolute skeptic would deny that these happenings take place. How does one discriminate among a thought, an image, and a memory? Mode of presence is the criterion by which Husserl based many of his distinctions. When I am in the process of thinking, I find myself exploring possibilities in relation to a problem and then suddenly a solution appears in the form of an insight. When I say a solution appears I mean that I have an idea or an understanding that meets precisely the requirements that the problem presents. How does it present itself? As an immediate understanding without physical reference. I have a complete sense that if I perform a certain activity my problem is solved and will disappear. Now, this thought comes to my awareness precisely the way that my prereflective streaming of consciousness comes to my awareness. I can only add that I do not create it—at least, if I do, that process is hidden from me—but rather I

would have to say that I discover it. It is something that I did not know previously and now it is present to me—without any sort of sensorial support. If it is a memory that presents itself to me, then I recognize it as an event that I have experienced before and is re-presenting itself to me. My recognition of it as a memory is nonsensorial. If it is an image, I have a quasi-presence or an ephemeral weakened version of the same thing or event that could be or has been bodily perceptually present, but I recognize that it is not the same thing as the thing it represents. I explore it very differently because the object or event itself is in the world and the image belongs to consciousness. In other words, discriminations within our stream of consciousness go on all the time and these discriminations take place without reference to physicality. The significant point is how these discriminations are to be understood: Does one trace them back to some cause in the brain or does one understand them as genuine givens of a different kind? Husserl, of course, argued for the latter alternative.

Unlike empiricism, phenomenology does not seek wholly causal explanations for such discriminations. And this is where the method plays a critical role. In order to concentrate on the contribution of consciousness, Husserl wanted to capture it in the purest state possible. Consequently, he came up with the method he called the phenomenological reduction, which means that past knowledge concerning the phenomenon of interest should be put aside and secondly, that what is presented to consciousness should be seen without the automatic positing of existence that also normally takes place. That is, when something is perceived in the natural attitude, the attitude of everyday life, we automatically also posit its existence; we concur in the belief that the object exists there before us. Husserl was sharp enough to understand the complexity of this simple act of perception and he distinguished between the presence of the object and the positing of its existence. Thus, in the reduction, he wanted to examine the sheer presence of the object and refrain from saying that it exists in the way that it presents itself to us. This is also the basic meaning of phenomenon in phenomenology. It means how the given presents itself to consciousness. The existential affirmation of what is present would involve an extra step. The significance of this distinction is as follows: The range of presences to consciousness is much broader than the range of real existences. For example, there are dreams, images, hallucinations, fantasies, distorted perceptions, memories, and so on. If one had, as with empiricism, to find a causal basis for all of these phenomena, one would be hard pressed. How would one attribute distorted perceptions or hallucinations to causes and distinguish them from veridical perceptions? How is it, for example, that I can form an image of the Hydra of Greek mythology only on the basis of reading about it. How do I transfer linguistic understanding in such a way that the effect is a pictorial understanding of the Hydra? How do physical causes do this? For phenomenology, the problem is different. Phenomenology acknowledges that conscious acts bestow meanings and these meanings can be expressed pictorially or

linguistically. The intentional relation is not a causal relation and the intentional object is not a real object. In Husserl's philosophy, unreal or ideal objects are acknowledged. The real, for Husserl, is any object that is given in space, time, and regulated by causality. But he granted that certain objects, for example ideas, do not have all three above mentioned characteristics. For example, are ideas caused? Do they exist in space? If so, where? They may be temporally determined in the sense that they exist while being contemplated, but since they lack the other two characteristics, they cannot be real. They are unreal. And similarly are the phenomena whose logic we try to unravel. My point is that the nature of the approach to solve these problems is quite different in phenomenology from the empirical approach and discovering what these other strategies are is critical for the development of the human sciences.

Thus, philosophically speaking, the major advance of phenomenology over empiricism is its ability to focus on presences, phenomena, and unreal givens which can all be understood in terms of their meanings and which are the very stuff of subjectivity. To use an awkward expression, subjectivity *means at the world*. That is, a clarification of meaning results in an understanding of the referential possibilities of how a human being will act in the world or in relation to others. And the goal of phenomenological analysis, more than anything else, is to clarify the meaning of all phenomena. It does not explain nor discover causes, but it clarifies. But clarification of an actual lived state of affairs can lead to constructive change because there is often a discrepancy between what we are actually living and what we think we are living. A discovery of this difference and its correction can lead to more authentic living and interaction with others and thus to a better world.

Thus, the introduction of phenomenology on the philosophical scene offered a very important promise. It is a shift of focus from physical nature, cause-effect analyses, impersonal forces and their manipulation and control to human subjectivity, intentionality, the meaning of actions, and the freedom and responsibility that intrinsically belong to them. As you are aware, there are thinkers who try to use the categories of nature to try to fully comprehend human beings. The fact that we humans with biological infrastructures are also bearers of consciousness and its achievements offers no change of principle to such thinkers. At best, such a view can only arrive at partial external success. Yes, if I fall off a high cliff, my body will obey the law of gravity, but my mind may be seeking a way to land safely or else praying that I survive the fall somehow. If I am trapped in a burning building, my body will burn, but my mind may be hoping the firemen will come in time to save me and I will seek the safest corner of the room until they come. We are indeed part nature, but only *part*. It is the other aspect of being human that needs development as well. The uniquely human dimensions of humanity also need to be understood. But can these processes—so unique, so complex—be submitted to scientific analysis? We

thus come to the second theme of this paper: The institution of science and its achievements and possibilities.

## Science

Science is a cultural institution whose main purpose is to gain knowledge. It is the ambition of science to produce knowledge concerning all phenomena that can be experienced. We know that in its modern sense science began in the 17th century with the work of Newton and Galileo and it has progressively advanced and expanded tremendously since then. The scientific approach to nature has produced much that is good and its reputation is well earned and deserved. But sometimes even good things get involved in exaggerations and get placed where they do not belong. Because much of the progress of science is due to the discovery and development of the scientific method, the method became decontextualized and absolutized and thus in later years, any investigation that did not meet the historically established criteria of the scientific method was hastily called unscientific, which meant that the study was not worthy of professional attention. But what is forgotten here, are the three little words, *applied to nature*, or the key adjective, *natural* scientific method. When the natural scientific method is applied to a phenomenon that is not wholly naturalistic, is it still the best method? This is where the scientific method encounters philosophy and one must rethink the situation of research.

Now, I am aware that there are philosophies that claim that human beings are completely naturalistic as well as those that claim that humans cannot be reduced completely to naturalistic components. This debate had been going on for at least 2,000 years and I am not going to resolve it here. However, I do stand on the side of those who claim that humans are part nature, but not fully naturalistic, and I have given you some arguments from Husserl who, I believe, has demonstrated that consciousness is very different from nature and it has to be approached differently in order to be faithfully understood. Consequently, my approach is a bit more pragmatic on this issue. I ask rather, if humans are not completely naturalistic, what is it that one must do in order to approach human phenomena scientifically? How does one create and implement a human science—or is such an expression a contradiction?

Let us go back and unfold the meanings in order to see if a contradiction exists. Science, I said, is a knowledge-producing enterprise. But, of course, not all knowledge is scientific knowledge. There is practical knowledge, common sense knowledge, technical knowledge, and so on—what are the qualifications that are necessary for knowledge to be called scientific? Answers to this question differ in the history and philosophy of knowledge, but my criteria are as follows: First, the knowledge must be potentially systematic. By that I mean that partial bits of knowledge should be able to relate to other bits of knowledge in harmonious ways. Pieces of knowledge obtained in one context should be able to have implications for other isolated parts of knowledge, again in co-

herent implicatory ways. For example, if as a psychologist I learn something basic about perception, I should then be able to indicate something about how behavior will flow and something about what that individual's feelings about the perceived object are. Secondly, the knowledge should be methodically obtained. Certainly, one can spin theories without a methodical basis, but eventually, such theories should be checked by a methodical approach. Moreover, the method selected has to have a social character. That is, a method has to be able to be applied by many even if training is required. A method cannot be the property of a single person. Thirdly, the knowledge should be general, and I mean by general that the knowledge gained should be applicable to situations other than the situation in which the knowledge was initially obtained. Of course, most scientists might want to posit universality as the criterion here, but in the human sciences, *first*, the role of context is too critical and context related knowledge is difficult to universalize. *Secondly*, within the human sciences formalization and abstraction leave too much of the content outside of the analyses and thus fail to do justice to the phenomenon. *Finally*, the knowledge has to be critically evaluated. This means that the researcher should not simply posit what he or she finds without checking that all procedures, analyses, and calculations have been properly implemented. A second level of criticism, of course, comes through publication, which gives qualified members of the scientific community an opportunity to confirm or criticize the knowledge presented. The ultimate concern, of course, is that the knowledge gained is as accurate as possible and as revelatory of the phenomenon being researched as one can obtain. Genuine scientific knowledge shows how the phenomenon is, or will develop, regardless of the consciousness that is observing it.

Now, then, can there be a human science? Can we obtain knowledge about *human beings in situations* that is systematic, methodical, general, and critical? Can those humans, who are called scientists, obtain accurate knowledge about other humans in such a way that they do understand accurately the phenomena about which they gained knowledge? Well, why not? Surely, we can improve upon everyday perception by studying various human phenomena in greater depth. Then why is there a reluctance to acknowledge that human sciences are legitimate sciences? Most probably because knowledge concerning human affairs is not as perfect, solid, or complete as the knowledge of nature. So let me speak to the discrepancy between the more solid knowledge of nature and the more fluid knowledge concerning human phenomena.

First I have to make clearer what is meant by human science. Gusdorf (1967) has traced the history of the human sciences back to the ancients, but no clear definition emerges from an examination of the historical data. Contemporary definitions are equally contentious. My own perspective on this issue is that a human science is a knowledge-acquiring enterprise that uses an approach and method that is faithful to the unique qualities of human beings. That is, it is radically nonreductionistic. No attribute can be assigned to the human

participant in research, in principle, that the researcher is not willing to attribute to him or herself. Thus, the human participant is an embodied conscious being who bestows meaning in the world, with an historical past in the midst of a socio-cultural environment capable of linguistic and other modes of expression with degrees of freedom with respect to choices concerning his or her destiny. The researcher also has all of those characteristics, and thus a human equality is established between the two and the only difference between them in a research situation is the role difference. Of course, the human participant may be factually hampered such as when one does research with schizophrenics or paranoids, or in the case of nursing, when one is dealing with a patient with heart disease or lung cancer. But factual disabilities do not affect the human status of the participant and each individual participant has to be approached with dignity and respect, that is, with ethical responsibility.

One reason that the human sciences lag behind is that there is no general agreement on the essence of being human. I have defined it in terms of a listing of some of the key activities performed by, or existential characteristics attributed to, humans: meaning bestowing acts, historicity, sociality, expressiveness, and freedom. I admit, however, that this definition is provisional and subject to revision. But the principle remains firm: Whatever we attribute in terms of unique human characteristics to the researcher, must also apply to the participant. Merleau-Ponty (1942/1963), however, defined humans not in terms of specific characteristics, but in terms of a human's ability to overturn, or transcend, any received structure in which he or she finds him or herself. This definition implies initiative and creativity and it too will have implications for research. I see my description as an attempt to detail what Merleau-Ponty has written.

But now if we want to understand why scientific knowledge about human beings seems less solid than knowledge about nature, we just have to look at the essential characteristics of human beings in contrast to those of nature. Complexity exists with both, but the qualitative nature of the complexity differs. With nature, there exists no genuine internality or interiority that motivates the discovery of different types of principles. In other words, the same principles can account for the relationship between parts of a thing as can account for the relationship between a thing and its environment. Cause-effect relationships will suffice in both cases. But with human beings there is a transformation of principles. Because we are embodied, we obey physical laws, as I mentioned above, but as we examine the workings of the mind, intentionality and meaningfulness become dominant and these are nonphysical characteristics of humans. Can we subsume the nonphysical characteristics into the laws of the physical characteristics? I doubt it. Rather, we have to assume an attitude and first determine what the essence of the nonphysical is like and then try to determine the principles of regulation related to such phenomena. But what if the phenomenon is essentially free, which by definition means that an antideterminative option is

always possible? This means that a prior knowledge of the specificity of the phenomenon can never be known, but surely the structure of the possibilities of response can be. That is the situation in which we find ourselves with respect to human beings. The very nature of the knowledge is different. It does not give specific answers so much as structural ones. Thus, instead of determinism, cause-effect, manipulation, prediction, and control we get conditioned freedom, motivation, meaningfulness, appeal, and responsibility. Previously, scientists were acting like persons who understood the principles of solids very well, and suddenly came across liquid phenomena, but nevertheless wanted to use the principles of interactions with solids to explain the dynamics of liquids and so they put the liquid in a jar and examined the characteristics of the jar in the belief that they were studying liquids. Unless there is a frank acknowledgment that the nature of consciousness and experience are different from things, and that they are nonreducible phenomena, that is, phenomena in their own right, the human sciences will not come of age and mature. Only by acknowledging faithfully the qualities of the phenomena confronting us can a correct approach to their analysis be obtained.

### Qualitative Research

With the mention of quality, we now come to the third topic that I want to discuss and that is the research situation. As everyone knows, because of the success of the natural sciences and their style of research, the experimental laboratory is held to be the ideal situation for gaining secure knowledge. This privileged setting brings with it many other correlative values, including manipulation, control, predictability, measurement, and so on. Even when one has to depart from the actual setting, the major criteria of the lab still prevail. Perhaps the most over emphasized criteria are quantification and its ally, measurement. In the social sciences there still exists the prejudice that quantification is the royal road to science and that qualitative analyses are intrinsically inferior. I'm not sure what it will take to overcome this prejudicial viewpoint. And I must confess that my own discipline, psychology, is one of the worst offenders. However, at long last, in recent years, there has finally been a crack in the solidity of this prejudice among quantitative psychologists. I have been fighting this battle for over 40 years, but my strategy has been to work on the constructive alternative. That is, to develop and justify research on the qualitative dimensions of phenomena and I will present this logic here. Before I do, I want to mention the critique of measurement being made by Joel Michell (1997, 1999). Michell is an Australian psychologist who specializes in the logic of measurement and he has finally explicitly spoken about what has remained a hidden secret among measurement psychologists who understand the situation fully and an ignorant assumption among most practitioners of statistical procedures who follow instructions in a cookbook way. The fact that psychological variables are quantitative is an as-

sumption that has never been demonstrated. I would generalize his critique and say that that statement is true of all experiential sciences dealing with human beings, including nursing. When you are caring for a patient who is in distress is your *caringness* capable of being broken down into equal additive units? If not, and I don't see how it can be, then measuring your caringness is an illegitimate procedure. Michell (1999) acknowledged that psychology was highly interested in establishing itself as a natural science and so it "presumed an answer to a scientific question, rather than investigating it empirically" (p. xi). Michell (1997) argued that psychology's neglect with respect to acknowledging the fact that the assumption concerning psychological experiences being quantitative was never tested became systemic and this reflects some kind of thought disorder. Again, I would generalize the critique to include all of the human sciences because I am not aware of any social science discipline that has empirically tested whether or not their attributes are quantitative. The assumption of the efficiency of measurement with experiential processes results from the *desire* to be scientific, not from actually being so. As Michell (1999) said,

There are many things in human life which may not be quantitative. They are no worse for that. If nonquantitative, they can be investigated in terms of their own 'categories' and such investigation is no less scientific than measurement. Quantitative structure is but one (important) kind amongst many and it holds no franchise over scientific method in its entirety. (p. xiv)

For whatever reason, it seems that the social or human sciences have not responded to the genuine challenge offered by the qualitative aspects of phenomena, which is to discover a rigorous method for penetrating and understanding them in greater depth with the appropriate categories. Such categories could only emerge with a method that is compatible and harmonious with the way that quality presents itself to consciousness. The imposition of quantitative strategies on qualitative dimensions, such as rating scales and most surveys and questionnaires, is not theoretically satisfactory. At best they only scratch the surface of the qualitative because such methods are not attuned to revealing the essence of qualitative phenomena. We need a method that is as essentially geared to the qualities of humans as quantification is geared toward the essence of things.

Before I present the logic of a qualitative approach based on phenomenology, I want to make clear that the phenomenological approach is not antiquantitative. After all, Husserl began his professional career as a mathematician and logician thus he had no fear of the quantitative nor did he dislike it. He simply did not absolutize the quantitative approach. Thus, theoretically, for phenomenology, if you ask a quantitative question, which relates either to frequencies or magnitude, then you should use a quantitative method. However, if you ask a qualitative question, which relates basically to the question: *what is it like to experience a particular phenomenon?*

then you use a qualitative method. Such a logic is impeccable. I might add that there are those who also argue that every research investigation should use both qualitative and quantitative methods. But I would say that that decision depends upon the question being asked. Good research design follows the sense of the investigation and should not automatically state, in an a priori way, what strategies must be used. This is especially true if it does turn out, as I suspect, that experiential dimensions of phenomena do not have a quantitative structure that will support quantitative methods.

What does phenomenology offer that will help us to devise a logic for qualitative research? First of all, Husserl emphasized that the manner in which an object presents itself to the consciousness of the researcher is critical for determining the strategies that are to be used for studying it. And if we are interested in the quality of the experiences of the other, or even of ourselves, perhaps, how can we learn about them? More concretely, as a psychologist, how can I learn about the anger of the other? Or as a nurse, how can I learn more about the suffering of the other, and what can be done about each? First of all, some form of expression on the part of the person undergoing the experience is necessary. The most concrete form of this expression phenomenologists call *physiognomy* or physiognomic expressions. This is the most inclusive term imaginable. It refers to the actions of the other, the emotional and nonverbal communications, the particularities of the situation in which the other finds him or herself, as well as the emotional tone of the proximate and remote past and future. Much is given to our spontaneous perception in these concrete situations and it is a matter of learning how to explore such physiognomic expressions in a systemic way. Merleau-Ponty has stated that experience tends toward expression, and I would add that expression tends toward a more complete communication. I say *more complete* because expression is already communicative. The more complete communication comes from a description, on the part of the experiencer, of the more intimate horizontal features of the experience not directly accessible to the researcher. So we get a descriptive account that adds to our perceptual observation, although many times we may have only a descriptive account. Obviously, this descriptive account has to be read, then analyzed with the purpose that the implicit and horizontal aspects of the description can be brought to light. Now, of course, the concrete description supplied by the experiencer is specific, particular, and idiographic. Somehow this rough but rich data has to be transformed into a disciplinary expression that has both validity and fidelity to the original concrete expression and description. Husserl maintained that understanding the meaning of an expression or description will achieve this goal.

Of course, *meaning* is a complex term and many levels and modes of meaning exist. Already, for example, a concrete description is filled with meanings. But these meanings were written from the perspective of what phenomenologists call the *natural attitude*, which is the attitude of everyday life. The meanings in the description also refer to the specific person's

world, his or her hopes or ambitions and values and fears. Now Husserl's claim is that, as such, a specific or particular description can never serve as a genuine scientific expression. It has to be transformed in order to meet scientific criteria. The process of transformation begins with a change of attitude. First of all, a disciplinary attitude has to be adopted, for example, nursing or psychological. This will allow the researcher to see the implications of the everyday facts and meanings contained in the description in a disciplinary light. After the adopting of the disciplinary attitude, the phenomenological researcher must perform the eidetic reduction. In classical phenomenological language it means that the researcher has to express what is essential about the specific expressions used by the participant from the disciplinary perspective. One could also say that the researcher clarifies the meaning of the everyday experience by describing its disciplinary meaning. But since the new disciplinary meaning is also reduced to its invariant aspect, that is, is spoken of in terms of its ideal sense, it is no longer specific and particular to the participant who provided the raw data upon which the ideal sense is based. For example, in a study by Stevick (1971) on anger in adolescents, one participant reported that no matter what she did her grandmother always found her to be doing something wrong; another said that her parents would not let her stay out as late as she wishes; and another said that her mother was always asking her to do something she didn't want to do, and all of these instances provoked anger in the participants. The eidetic, invariant meaning for these and other instances was *the normal relationship with the other is altered*, and eventually, in anger, the other is totalized under one perspective or profile: one in authority who blocks my desires. When expressed this way the invariant sense can faithfully comprehend many variations: in one case it was a grandmother, in another case both parents, and in the third case it was a mother alone. But to describe the structure as *one in authority* heightens the psychological meaning without losing any important detail. Again, the factual variations regarding the activities differ: in the first case, perhaps in a typically exaggerated teenage way, the first participant said that the grandmother objected to whatever she did and tried to block her, the second said that the early deadline set by her parents prevented her from enjoying herself the way she liked, and the third participant stated that her mother was always requesting her to do something she didn't want to do and that prevented her from doing what she really wanted to do. To reduce these factual variations to *participants' desires* again heightens the psychological reality, sharpens the meanings of the concrete experiences, and the details that are dropped do not harm the psychological sense of the experience. One goes through the entire description performing this type of analysis.

The eidetic reduction satisfies the scientific criterion that knowledge has to be general. In phenomenological philosophy the result of the eidetic reduction is universality, but the fact that the context and content of the experience play such a

pivotal role limits the generalization in scientific analyses. Analyses of lived experiences depend heavily upon the content in order to determine what they are like and because psychological analyses require *experience-near* terms since the interest is in individually determined meanings raised to the level of psychological generality, these eidetic invariances have a peculiar structure. Unfortunately, in order to attain universality one would have to use very high degrees of abstraction and that would result in the impoverishment of the psychological analyses. Husserl called these invariances, or essences, *morphological essences*, meaning by that they are, in principle inexact, but essences nevertheless. He (Husserl, 1913/1983) wrote:

The vagueness of such concepts, the circumstance that their spheres of application are fluid, does not make them defective; for in the spheres of knowledge where they are used they are absolutely indispensable . . . or in these spheres they are the only legitimate concepts . . . The most perfect geometry and the most perfect practical mastery of it cannot enable the descriptive natural scientist to express (in exact geometrical concepts) what he expresses in such a simple, understandable and completely appropriate manner by the words "notches," "scalloped," "lens-shaped," "umbelliform," and the like—all to [*sic*] them concepts which are *essentially, rather than accidentally inexact and* consequently also non-mathematical. (p. 166)

In other words, to force clarity on a phenomenon that does not have that attribute does not necessarily result in clarity. Rather, the relationship to the nature of the phenomenon being investigated also has to be taken into account. Thus, an ambiguous description of a phenomenon that is intrinsically ambiguous communicates a type of clarity. It is better to be respectful of the given and capture it as it really is than deal with clarities that do not reflect the true state of affairs. Moreover, it does not suffice to try to formalize qualitative dimensions of experience because the content is too important. All formal analyses would be too abstract, and once again, the psychological dimension would become impoverished.

I have argued that the meaning clarifications produced by the analyses can be objective. While meanings are produced by subjectivity, once they are produced, if they can be accessed again by the same subject, then, they can be accessed by other subjects through expression, and this fact opens up the possibility that they can be authentically objective. For Husserlian phenomenology, meaning is a determinate relationship between an act of consciousness and its object. Meanings are correlated with acts of consciousness as they relate to their objects. Actually, within phenomenology, meanings are usually discussed within the context of intentionality, which, as we saw, refers to the fact that acts of consciousness are directed toward objects that transcend the acts in which the objects appear. Thus, three terms are needed to understand meanings: *the act of consciousness, the object toward which the act is directed, and the sense with which the object is presented*. Conscious acts are directed towards ob-

jects and upon reflection, one can discover that the directedness of consciousness towards the object was determinate and the determination with which the object was apprehended is its meaning. Note, one lives the relationship to the object directly and the meaning is, so to speak, attached to the object and discerned upon reflection. The key point is to appreciate that the meaning is not a *third term* between the act and the object, but the particular way that the object is experienced. While Husserl (1983) has a long presentation demonstrating that the intentional matter and intentional quality of the act help constitute the act's directedness and its meaning, the meaning, once constituted, transcends the act just as the object does, and thus its identification can be established and referred to repeatedly. Because of this fact, meanings can be objective even if these objective meanings have to be discriminated from subjective ones. Objective meanings, even if partial, at least allow the object to be presented as it truly is; subjective meanings are determined more by the subjective interest of the person and the givenness of the object simply serves as a point of departure for the interest of the human subject to be expressed. But this state of affairs is very tricky. The human sciences generally have as their task the objective determination of the subjective meanings that persons posit in situations in the world. For example, one of the details that I mentioned when reporting the anger study that I briefly described before was the participant who complained that her parents set her homecoming deadline too early and thus prevented her from having fun as she defined it. Now, if we are to understand how anger developed, we have to understand the participant's subjective determination of the meaning of the parent's deadline. From the parents' perspective, the deadline was probably set so that their daughter would have a greater possibility of being home safely and perhaps so that they could ensure that she wouldn't have the opportunity to travel about with unworthy companions. The parents' rationale is probably the objective meaning of the deadline. But, if the daughter had accepted that, she most probably would not have gotten angry. Thus, in order to understand the psychology of anger one has to grasp the subjective meaning assigned to the situation by the daughter in an objective way. I claim that this is true for all of the human sciences, including nursing.

I am not a nurse, but a psychologist, but I do have lots of research experience with nurses in Scandinavia. In Scandinavian circles nursing is defined as *caring*, and research in nursing deals with how to best implement the process of caring for another. But why should nurses be concerned about caring for

others? What is the situation in the world that brings nursing into being? From my perspective, it seems that caring is required experientially whenever a person is sufficiently injured, handicapped, or in other ways so deficient that he or she cannot sustain a normal place in the lifeworld. It is also possible that some persons are so ill that a return to normal is not possible and so they will require help in the form of care for their entire life. Now the source of the illness may require medical knowledge and technology, but I would say that caring is a genuinely experiential phenomenon, both on the side of the recipient and the giver. This means that the care given has to be responsive to the other's entire situation in the world and not just to the medical and technical aspects of the person's body. I hope that I have demonstrated that phenomenology practiced from within a human science perspective can help us gain accurate knowledge about experiential processes.

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