Phenomenological life-world analysis and interpretive sociology
Finding a pathway through divergent strands

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Structure

1. Remembering Richard Grathoff
2. Phenomenology and sociology (Luckmann; Srubar)
3. Phenomenological sociology (Psathas)
4. Grathoff’s social phenomenology
5. Conclusions
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2. Phenomenology and Sociology

1. Phenomenology as protosociology (Luckmann)
   - Clear distinction between phenomenology and sociology on methodological grounds:
     - Phenomenology is a philosophy. It analyses phenomena of subjective consciousness. Its perspective is egological and its method proceeds reflexively. Its goal is to describe the universal structures of subjective orientation in the life-world.
     - Sociology is a science. It analyses phenomena of the social world. Its perspective is cosmological and its method proceeds inductively. Its goal is to explain the general properties of the objective world.
     - There is no such thing as a “phenomenological sociology”.
− Protosociology and sociology:
  
  • Protosociology as mathesis universalis and tertium comparationis solves the problem of measurement in the social sciences.
  
  • The relationship between phenomenology and sociology is demonstrated by the structure of the *Social Construction* by Berger & Luckmann:
    1. The foundations of knowledge in everyday life (philosophical, presociological, protosociological)
    2. Society as objective reality (sociology)
    3. Society as subjective reality
  
  • Protosociology and sociology of knowledge: parallel action
  
  • Triangulation of the phenomenological method with cosmological sciences of cross-cultural research and of research on the human body
2. Subjective and pragmatic pole of the life-world (Srubar)

- „Pragmatic turn“ of Schutz (before emigration)
- Subjective pole: life-world is perceived and experienced in subjective consciousness (noesis)
- Pragmatic, social pole: life-world is constituted by pragmatic social actions (noema)
- Life-world analysis as philosophical anthropology (Scheler), as tertium comparationis (e.g. for intercultural comparisons)
- Philosophical anthropology and sociology
  - Constitution theory as tertium comparationis (as is protosociology)
  - Life-world with subjective and social, pragmatic pole
  - Foundation not only by acts of consciousness but also by pragmatic actions that constitute the social world
  - Methodology of the social sciences has two pillars: 1. rationality of scientific constructions (hypotheses and models) and 2. a constitution theory of the social world
  - Postulate of adequacy: sociology based on this constitution theory
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3. Phenomenological Sociology

– A new paradigm for US sociology (early 1970s)
  • Goal: “the understanding, description and analysis of the life-world as experienced by those who live it“ (in contrast to approaches that „capture“ phenomena by pre-conceived concepts and theories)

– While phenomenological analysis tackles phenomena of subjective consciousness, phenomenological sociology attempts to analyze the experiences of other people:
  • “My careful, systematic, and wide-ranging questioning must allow me to discover what they are experiencing, how they interpret their experiences, and how they themselves structure the social world in which they live”.

– A „synthesis“ betw. phenomenology and sociology?

Prof. Dr. T.S. Eberle (Institute of Sociology)
– Phenomenological sociology
  • Analysis of how „i“ experience my life-world (back to the phenomena)
  • Analysis of how concrete empirical others experience their life-world
  • Ethnomethodology as a phenomenological approach: empirical research (observation, no interviews)
– Ethnomethodology:
  • Turning phenomenological life-world analysis into a sociological program
  • Explaining social order not by norms and roles but by constitutive rules and sense-making procedures
  • Methodological re-orientation: EM investigates sense-making not egologically in the subjective consciousness but in empirical settings that are intersubjectively available
  • Misreading Schutz, using him as inspiration: restarting the analysis from the scratch
(Ethnomethodology):  
  - The basic question remains the same: asking for the how, the know-how, and investigating the constitution of social phenomena  
  - Different, creative procedures of data gathering and data analysis  
  - Is EM a phenomenological approach?  
    - Garfinkel’s question ‘What makes jurors ‘jurors’?’ or ‘What makes Agnes a woman?’ is therefore a genuine phenomenological question that focuses on the noema.  
    - PH taught him to look of subtleties and details.
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„Milieu and life-world“:

- Leitmotif: reasking Husserl‘s question again and again how the crisis of the sciences can be overcome by founding them in the life-world
- Anamnetic procedure of gradual disclosure
- Schutz-Gurwitsch-correspondence as theoretical basis
- Striving for middle range theories (Merton) instead of all-embracing theories of society
- Developing the “milieu analysis” (based on Scheler and Gurwitsch)
Summing up:

– Grathoff does not separate life-world analysis from sociology but considers it the task of sociology (social phenomenology as social theory).

– Social phenomenology or life-world analysis is a research program; it is far from being terminated.

– Life-world analysis is done by milieu analyses: researching concrete milieus also allows for uncovering life-worldly connections. Social phenomenology is not done by egological analysis but by material studies.

– The dimensions of the life-world are more fundamental than sociological communication theories or semiotic approaches (prepredicate level).

– Empirical research is embedded in a new methodology (different from the traditional one).
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– Grathoff takes a position on the middle ground between life-world analysis as a protosociology and an ethnomethodological approach

– I prefer the term phenomenological sociology, social phenomenology or social theory for the phenomenological life-world analysis

– I even propose to speak of phenomenology as a research method (as in life-world analytic ethnography, phenomenological hermeneutics, and ethnophenomenology) – in order to talk about methodology.
Thomas S. Eberle:

Phenomenology as a research method.