

Critical Statement and Analysis of Phenomenological Approach and Its Implications in Education Field

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Received 15 October 2024; accepted 25 November 2024

Published online 26 December 2024

Abstract

Phenomenological approach, in its highest intention, aims to understand the nature of phenomena and the quality of realizing and promoting them, as well as perceiving the existence itself as the essence of living and emergence of any phenomenon. The domain of phenomenology in this literature covers three phenomenological viewpoints: transcendental phenomenology, existential phenomenology and phenomenological understanding. We possess two types of understanding: physical (existential) understanding which is based on overwhelming our existence in absolute existence; the second type is acquirable understanding which is related to knowledge of nature (not being). Our physical science is acquired by our direct existential overwhelming in absolute existence, while our acquirable science is formed from the universe and its phenomena due to our planning perception. The applied method in the structure of article is analytical-inferential. Phenomenological implications in education field can be acquired both in inventing teaching techniques and education domain.

Key words: Phenomenology; Understanding (acquirable and physical); Becoming; Dialectic; Education

Kohandel, H., Sokhanwar, M. D., Qasemi, S., & Tawasoly, M. (2024). Critical Statement and Analysis of Phenomenological Approach and Its Implications in Education Field. *Cross-*

Cultural Communication, 20(4), 18-23. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/13618>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/13618>

INTRODUCTION

According to philology, the term “phenomenology” means “studying” or “stable cognition”; since everything which appears is stable, the domain of phenomenology is practically infinite and it cannot be placed in the range of a particular field of science. Thus, we cannot hinder someone who claims to be an expert in phenomenology, provided that his/her approach is somehow related to the root of term “phenomenology”: “if we confine ourselves to the word root, we can state that any one studies the emergence and appearance of something, so it can be concluded that anyone who describes the appearance of a phenomenon is active in phenomenology” (Dartig, 2010); but the sparks of this approach in its deep and scientific concept, were first introduced by Hegel, and Husserl collected and prepared its principles and presented as a great philosophical movement in 20th century. After that, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty described and widened its requirements.

Although Hegel has scrutinized the phenomenology deeply in his first great book, “the phenomenology of spirit”, but it seems he has not been the first philosopher to address the gradual cognition of phenomena. Generally, since the age of Heraclitus and Plato, the phenomena have been considered temporary and inconsiderable. Later and in the modern era, Hume’s empiricism belief is often introduced with the term “originality of phenomenon” which has implicated negation of any kind of essence, either physical or spiritual (Mojtahedi, 2010). However, it is Hegel’s book which introduces the term “phenomenon” to the philosophy in an absolute way. Hegel may be the first scholar who applies “phenomenon” in a concept

which is not a ghost far away from nature any longer. Hegel, like Plato, considers the cognition of beings possible and on the other side, he does not observe them as objects outside the territory of mind, but sees them in the domain of physical universe. Here, his idea is consistent with Kant and Hume. According to Hegel, phenomenon is not a curtain which conceals the vision, but each phenomenon reveals one stage of vision. Husserl agrees with Hegel in the idea of phenomenon leads to vision of nature (Jomadi, 2006).

Kant has discussed some topics on phenomenology and its contrast with noumenon (thing-in-itself) which many of his successors such as Hegel and Fichte are influenced by such contrast- although mostly from its nugatory aspect. Kant mentions transcendental idealism as a teaching which states we just possess the previous knowledge of appearances, not of the “things-in-itself” (object per se). He also opines that category applies to phenomena, not to rational beings. Phenomenon is belonging of possible experience, while rational being is the belonging of pure thought and is something that cannot be considered as the belonging of experience. It seems natural to connect these two distinctions and assume that Kant believes phenomena are only recognizable by experience, and things-in-itself are just the same as rational beings and cannot be recognized, since nothing can be recognized by pure thought. For instance, Kant states that the concept of rational beings is only applicable in a nugatory way to determine the limits of our knowledge, but cannot be used positively for determining the things as they are per se (Scruton, 2009).

However, it was not the phenomenology of Kant and Hegel which continued as an intellectual movement, but its real originator was Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) who shed new light on this abolished structure. Thus, after presenting the accessories of phenomenology, here we state its principles which were originated by Husserl.

HUSSERL'S TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGY

Husserl was born in 1859 in a Jewish family. He became acquainted with what was called “intentional aspect” in the philosophy of school by courses presented by “Brentano”, the professor of University of Vienna. Although Brentano was attempting to revive the reputation of philosophy by depending empirical psychology, Husserl intended to achieve this purpose using a completely theoretical field of science: mathematics.

Since 1903, Husserl gradually abandoned describing his own philosophy as a kind of psychology and differentiated it from any branch of psychology by applying the term “phenomenology” to it (Rashidian, 2009).

The term “phenomenology” means “what appears” or “what which shows itself”. In other words,

phenomenology describes different methods in which object can be stabilized. From the phenomenological view, the phenomena are the techniques in which the object can “be”. The way of objects appearance is a part of their beings. The objects exist as they appear. What matters on this matter is that the animals have a method of appearance which is different from one of the plants; because the animals are distinctive from the plants in their beings, and it applies to other species (Sakolovsky, 2009).

Metaphysical phenomenologists negate Descartes, so they are not essentialist. Phenomenology passes both ontology and epistemology. According to Husserl, phenomenology is descriptive psychology. Psychology means the recognition of awareness, Husserl opines. So, phenomenology is a method which describes awareness and its modes. Descartes believes in two other essences beside the awareness, but Husserl believes in awareness which absorb everything in itself, so how come I have a body? Husserl attempts to show that body is a component of human's awareness. That is, body is a form of our awareness. Body is the object of awareness, not the opposite of it. In existential phenomenology, we do not consider anything independent from human's awareness. In the relationship between spirit and body, we do not study the existential relation between them, but see the body within the awareness of body. So, body is not something independent of awareness (Khatami, 2008).

Epoche: the first and most important stage of concept of Husserl method is the concept of “Epoche” (suspense) (Moerer & Creswell, 2004). Like Descartes, Husserl introduces his philosophical method by suspending any natural belief, such as belief in the existence of universe, and also the belief in mathematics and logic, and generally any previously accepted theoretical system in order to be able to achieve what is offered to us immediately. He calls this suspension “Epoche” (Inwood, 1999).

Henceforth, the origin and reality of Cartesian doubt and its complete development should be searched in the Epoche of phenomenology. Epoche is neither the real doubt about natural universe nor the sophisticated negation of the world. It is the suspension of judgment. Although Epoche of Husserl is inspired from Cartesian doubt but its starting point is different from it. In Husserl's view, if Descartes had waited following his second hesitation and not exited the territory of “I” or immediate forfeiture, he would have reached the notion of phenomenology much earlier than Husserl himself (same reference); however, he sees Descartes as the beginner of a new type of philosophy. Historically, Descartes introduces us with the origins of transcendental philosophy. Since then, the real foundation of philosophy should not be investigated in the object, but beside awareness and subject.

The aim of philosophy should be discovering the territory of pure existence of human's awareness as the constitutor of eternal and essential beings, Husserl opines. So, anything which hinders this discovery should be

eliminated. Therefore, reducing the entry and passage is the phenomenology in order to make the independent world of awareness speak (Jomadi, 2006).

In Husserl's standpoint, phenomenology is the process of studying affairs which are revealed for us immediately. But what is revealed for us immediately is not anything other than the territory of awareness. So, phenomenology is a method for describing awareness structures in the manner we experience. In fact, the ultimate aim of this method is to move toward the objects itself by suspending all prerequisites and previous theoretical frameworks. Generally speaking, Husserl believes that this retrograding move toward the origin of speaking is considered; this move is called "Epoche (suspension)" by Husserl. To expurgate and widen the aforementioned reflection, it should be noted that though Husserl views phenomenology as a method to study the awareness structures by suspending any object outside of awareness territory, but this belief does not intend to confine itself in the territory of awareness and draw a non-traversable line between the area of awareness and outside. Phenomenology is a move in the opposite direction of subjectivism and its aim is to create a bridge between the two territories of object and subject. In fact, the purpose of phenomenology is to base our knowledge of universe on our existential experience in awareness territory (Zamaniha, 2010).

Intentionality: following defining the concept of "Epoche" and "Ego", we introduce the most important element in Husserl's phenomenology: intentionality. As it was previously mentioned, the concept of perception intentionality in Husserl's view is influenced by Brentano's standpoint on the intentional feature of mental phenomena.

Phenomenology is actually is method to analyze the issues which are revealed for us in the territory of immediate awareness. With consideration in awareness actions and inspired by Brentano, Husserl concludes that the main feature of all awareness-induced actions is the description which he introduces it as "intentionality". Intentionality means that awareness is always a belonging or has an intentional direction, that is, it is always directed to something outside itself. For example, if we believe, we hate or we love, it certainly is what we believe in, hate or love (same reference).

In fact, one of the aims of suspension is elimination any non-being to observe the being. Being is what does not succumb to reduction.

Van Manen believes that the aim of phenomenology research is to describe and identify the phenomena explicitly, as they are being perceived by individuals in a special situation (Van Manen, 1990). Some believes that phenomenology intends to understanding the shared experience of some groups of people (Yanowa & Schwartz, 2006).

Lifeworld: it is the last horizon Husserl's philosophy discusses. The concept of lifeworld has been considered a key element in the thoughts of his predecessors, such as Heidegger and Gadamer. Lifeworld is defined as our shared and living world of experience. Since Galilei, this world has been dominated by the scientific meaning of world (Khatami, 2008).

Lifeworld never belongs to the territory of identification. It is the base of any kind of experience. This horizon is the prerequisite of any branch of science and that is why it is more fundamental than science (Touran, 2010).

IMPLICATIONS OF PHENOMENOLOGY APPROACH IN EDUCATION FIELD

The implication inspired by projection of perception and being (human): since human's perception is inherently enthusiastic for novel experiences, so it is necessary for educator to provide the learning environment with educational equipment to direct the students' experience toward the lofty purpose of education, which is facilitating and accelerating the process of growth. On human's physical understanding and existential property which draws him to being because of being overwhelmed with being, it should be mentioned that since human is the only being which is attracted to absolute being (belonged being), he is able to both degrade himself to the inferior or transcend to the highest levels of beings; in other words, human's desire to perfectionism is because of his existential belonging (to absolute being). Our responsibility on this field is to encourage the learner, which is considered as the potential being, to walk in the path of sublimation and existential perfection (by joining the absolute beings).

Another implication of human's belonging existence is that human being has always tended to God because of his belonging to absolute being. Therefore, all perfectionist properties such as worshipping, science seeking, prosperity craving, etc. have been embedded in human's spirit. The educator's duty is to guide this spiritual stream and prevent any kind of falsification in human's innate properties.

The emanated implication of "becoming": as it was mentioned, the occurred becoming in human perception is an inherent (not adventitious) becoming. This type of becoming requires providing material for its "form". This "material" is provided in the process of acquirable understanding by experience and immediate existential understanding because of closeness to God (or walking in path of God). This becoming stream of perception (in both acquirable and existential meanings) has a transcendental move until the absolute perception is realized.

In short, since the properties of perception is from the type of openness and projection, some implications are

arisen from the mentioned category in education field: first, since one of the essential features of perception is the capability of transforming its nature from the inferior level to superior one, so we have to thoroughly benefit from the idea of transformation of perception in education field and do our best to promote the students' perception of lower levels of perception (imaginary perception) toward the higher level (rational perception). We will present the proper strategies to operate the mentioned idea. The other implication which is emanated from the projection of perception is that since the essential property of perception is its openness and projection toward being and unknown territories and acquiring higher perception means achieving more power, so the most fundamental duty as educators is to provide a proper environment in terms of humanistic and educational values, to promote the perception of learners which in turn results in the sublimation of the society.

Therefore, we agree with Dewey who defines education as the reconstruction of experiences or facilitation of growth process: "education is a stream which contains innovation or readjustment of experiments which enrich individual's experiences, strengthening him in future experiment." (Dewey, 1960) Rousseau perceives the proper education as preventing from imposing beliefs to provide the situation for growing in freedom (Rousseau, 2009). As our perception is inherently open to acquiring new experiences, so our sole duty is to provide the appropriate ground in the direction of its natural growth; in other words, the mission of an instructor is not conveying the pre-collected educational courses, but he/she has to create the proper setting for students' active encounter with it. As we stated that one of the properties of perception is the capability of its continuous transformation from one form to another without being destroyed (e.g. transformation of a sensory perception to an imaginary one or to a behavior), so one of the educator's most significant responsibility is to generate a suitable context for learner's sensory encounter with the mentioned situation (since sensory perception is considered as the base of any perception and behavior). If a learner confronts with an unpleasant situation, this unpleasant sensory perception will have its destructive effect on the person's perception, feeling and deeds by changing itself to another perception or action (perception is not destroyed, but transformed into another form).

Another implication of novel idea: according to the aforementioned statements, revelatory perception inside the phenomena is an inclusive perception by absolute spirit and also the tool for achieving new perception is inside human. So, the human being can obtain the latent perceptions of life via perception tools. Since both of them, the conception tool and latent inclusive perception inside the phenomena are created and applied by God, so all possible (potential) perceptions in the relationship

between human and phenomena have been written in God's wisdom. So, God possesses absolute perception on all phenomena. The educative referent from the dominance of God's wisdom on all sciences is: since God has an absolute perception on all phenomena in all places and all times and only good deeds are arisen from Him, so we have to construct our behavior and thoughts based on the roadmap He has determined for us (the prophets and their Books). In other words, any kind of plan in educational field, especially about the human's ultimate objectives should be provided based on the instructions of Creator, which is the wisest and most generous.

The implication derived from association of perception and action based on faith and will: one of topics which have been brought up under the new idea is the effect of deeds based on faith and will along with real and conscious perception of it on human's existential promotion. But what should be mentioned primarily is the issue of consolidation and visualization of practices, since if the deeds are not associated with eternity, talking about the effect of deeds on human's existential promotion will be a useless discussion. Visualization of practices is shaping and forming immaterial things such as human's beliefs, moralities, acts and works. Visualization of practices implies the appearance of human practices in the mundane world in afterlife. In other words: any action in this world, either good deeds or bad deeds, has a physical appearance which we are able to observe in this world, and it has a heavenly aspect which is latent within the action. In the afterlife, after the transformations occur in it, it will lose its physical appearance and will emerge with its heavenly appearance, resulting in the doer's joy and happiness, or his/her pain and depression.

One of the verses which imply the visualization of practices is:

"This is the book which says truly against you. We were recording what you had been doing." (Holy Quran, Jasieh Surah, verse 29).

As it was stated, human craves for perfection inherently and any deviation in this matter is the result of ignoring the Voice of God and following bestial instincts; since the perception cannot solely elevate human's existence (it is neither its necessary nor sufficient prerequisite), so this perception should be associated with faith-based action to result in existential elevation and transcendence. The mundane world is place of cultivation and afterlife is the time of harvest; all of our actions (which are naturally done by our body organs) are recorded through transforming into words in hollow forms (lies) and full forms (truth). Therefore, one of the fundamental implications of new approach is to encourage the educator to do good deeds, which is only possible by consolidating one's faith and will. It is notable that the explanation emanated from phenomenological understanding states that the human deeds are recorded as follows:

Firstly, all of our actions are recorded by intuition to be kept, and then are transformed into words for their nature to be deeply analyzed. As any real perception is associated with its respective action, so it is recommended to act in the way we have been properly taught. Better to say, if we act as we have been taught, we will have higher existential position in comparison to the situation in which we do our best to comprehend everything, but are not able to perform. "Nothing is preserved and kept for human except what he has tried for". (Holy Quran, Najm Surah, verse 39.) Perception without action is like a monad without content and will not result in human's transcendence. On the other hand, acting without perception is like a monad without shape which does not transcend human's spirit.

The implication derived by the levels of perception: it implies that each individual (or even each phenomenon) can perceive God by his/her level of perception and being. Since the human beings are different in the two aforementioned categories, so it is impossible for two individuals to have the same perception of God. The other point is that God can be observed by our perception and we will never be able to perceive Him as He is. In other words, science has different levels and positions and people can have different perceptions. These various perceptions are so that will induce positioning. Therefore, one of the most important points which should be taught and learned is to believe in the different levels of perception and inference of facts and show this belief in our practice. Practically believing in this means to compromise before other people's beliefs (Soroush, what is science? What is philosophy? 2009). This compromising is a public recommendation which post-modernists scholars advise against the various modern meta-narrations which were imposed upon the minority group.

CONCLUSION

One of the emanations derived by phenomenological approach is that we are required to base all our confrontations with phenomena (including natural, lingual, social, and educative phenomena) on phenomenological approach and this needs our precise concentration on all verses. One of other derived inferences of the mentioned idea is the projective aspect of the properties of perception. In other words, since the property of acquirable perception tends to project itself to new horizons and experiences and is susceptible to transformation, it provides us with the science material (experience) constantly and we shape and form this meaningless material with the aid of our previous findings (in the form of words) and widen our perception of our existed experiences using phenomenological approach.

In the domain of acquirable perception, we try to deepen the perception of phenomenon by the practices of phenomenological approach. Existential perception which is dependent on the being of the human will make the existential perception of a positive becoming when his being projects itself toward absolute being. When the being of a human becomes far from absolute being will have the negative becoming and this degradation will result in reducing existential and perceptive level of human.

One of the important points on this matter is that the intentionality of acquirable perception which is directed toward a phenomenon outside itself is based on human's openness. From this view, acquirable perception can be observed as the partial or reasoned wisdom and existential perception as innate wisdom. So, without having a solemn connection with general wisdom, partial wisdom will not fulfill its ultimate desire which is the faith-oriented perception. Since the images are of secondary importance and only words are genuine and real, we need to use this achievement in our instruction techniques. We have to present all our primary teaching on a special phenomenon in the form of images and then transform the visual data into words. Also, the subject of reality of the words and its eternity can be applied in encouraging people to do good deeds. Since our actions are transformed into words to be carved in our sheet of action (or in its figurative concept, in heaven) and the realization of our deeds will determine our real existential position in the afterlife, so we should improve our practices in the mundane world to provide ourselves with a lofty position which reflects our real existential level in the afterlife.

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