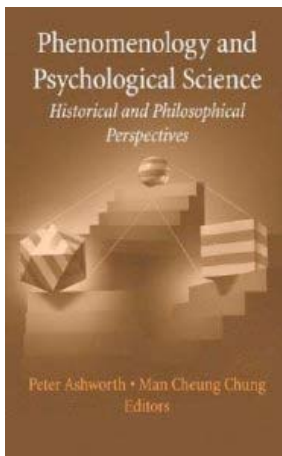


Book Review

Phenomenology and Psychological Science. Historical and Philosophical Perspectives

Edited by Peter D. Ashworth and Man C. Chung
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The relations between the phenomenological tradition and the psychological sciences have a long and articulated history. In some cases the two have been said to represent alternative and incompatible approaches to the understanding of human nature. In others the impact of phenomenological thinking on psychology has been fully acknowledged both from a thematic and from a methodological point of view. The contributions collected in *Phenomenology and Psychological Science. Historical and Philosophical Perspectives* (edited by Peter D. Ashworth and Man C. Chung for Springer Verlag) aim to shed light on such complex relations both from a historical and from a philosophical point of view.

The questions animating the volume are: What should we consider to be the initial contact between phenomenology and psychology? What is the place of phenomenological theories in psychiatry? In which cases did research in psychology consider at least some aspects of the phenomenological tradition? What is the value of phenomenology for psychology? How is phenomenological psychology carried out? How did Husserl's thought influence psychology? What are the differences between Sartre, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty with respect to how philosophy should treat psychological sciences?

The several contributions can be divided up into five main groups. The first copes with the initial contact between phenomenology and psychology; the second focuses on methodological issues of both phenomenology and psychological sciences; the third addresses Husserl's idea of transcendental subjectivity; the fourth is about the critiques moved to the Husserlian phenomenology by his followers; finally, the fifth group of essays tackles conceptual issues coming from the contemporary existential approaches to psychological problems.

In his contribution (*The Meeting between Phenomenology and Psychology*) Ashworth sets the scene for the analysis of the initial contact between phenomenological philosophy and psychological sciences, the common conceptual element between the two being the focus on what it means to have experience of something. Despite their main differences, regarding mostly the role of phenomenological reductions as methodological tools and the role of the world in the understanding of human nature, Ashworth describes both the Husserlian and the Heideggerian approaches as being transcendental in nature. He finally discusses the relationships between phenomenology and some developments in psychology both in American and in German contexts.

Amedeo Giorgi (*The value of Phenomenology for Psychology*) draws a comparison between Husserl's conceptualization of consciousness as essentially intentional and the way early psychologists treated the same topic. He focuses in particular on structural psychologists as Wundt and Titchener, on functionalism, and on James' psychology.



Barbro Giorgi (*Can an Empirical Psychology be drawn from Husserl's Phenomenology?*) discusses how a phenomenological psychology should be carried out and addresses the methodological problems of such an enterprise. The main aim, she argues, should be making explicit the participant's lived psychological meanings. This should be accomplished not through the experimental testing of causal hypothesis but rather through the elucidation of experience. Giorgi finally shows how the main concepts of phenomenological philosophy (i.e., intersubjectivity, intentionality, lifeworld) and the practical research methods applied by phenomenological psychology can be dealt with together in a unique analytical framework.

Dahlberg's contribution (*Did Husserl Change His Mind?*) addresses one of the most controversial themes in the Husserlian phenomenology, namely, the way Husserl conceived of transcendental subjectivity. The focus is here on how we can have access to consciousness through phenomenological reduction. This is a fundamental topic for phenomenology because, through phenomenological reduction, consciousness establishes a distance both between itself and the world and between itself and the natural attitude.

MacDonald (*Husserl against Heidegger against Husserl*) addresses some interesting criticisms Heidegger moves to Husserlian phenomenology. Heidegger, according to MacDonald, pinpoints the following four flaws in Husserl's thought: (i) its over-theorization; (ii) its over-intellectualization; (iii) the splitting of the ego between a transcendental and an empirical ego; (iv) and the separation of consciousness and world by an abyss. Heidegger's criticisms, it is argued, contributed to strengthen the relationship between phenomenological philosophy and psychological sciences. In other words, they provided the phenomenological approach with conceptual and analytical tools that make it available for psychological use.

The two main questions that Groth addresses in her article (*The Influence of Heidegger on Sartre's Existential Psychoanalysis*) are the following: What was Sartre's contribution to psychology? What is the influence that Heidegger exercised on Sartre's thought? As to the first one, Groth focuses above all on the fact that, according to Sartre, human beings are not a cluster of functions and that they constitute rather an entire whole, which we cannot grasp because of our going through a continuous change. As to the second, notwithstanding the big influence of Heidegger on Sartre, there is a rather important difference between the two thinkers. Groth argues, in fact, that the main difference can be traced back to different ways of conceiving the historicity of human beings. While the Heideggerian *Dasein* is fully historical in nature, the same cannot be said about Sartre's humanistic notion of human being.

The two last contributions by Jenner (*Medard Boss' Phenomenologically based Psychopathology*) and Comb (*Contemporary Existentialist Tendencies in Psychology*) are dedicated to a discussion of *Daseinanalysis*. The first addresses the development of Boss' existential psychology. In fact, Boss nurtured a view of psychiatry that goes beyond simplistic medical axioms. The second, instead, focuses on practical issues concerning how both existential psychology and psychiatry clarify the structure of personal experience.

Phenomenology and Psychological Science. Historical and Philosophical Perspectives finally succeeds in conveying to the reader both the complexity and the intricacy of the relations between the phenomenological tradition and psychological sciences. In fact, it makes clear that, if we want to grasp the relevance of the phenomenological tradition to psychology, we have to work through carefully the texts and debates animating the phenomenological movement. The general take of the book, though, does not seem to encourage a constructive dialogue between phenomenologically oriented ways of investigating human nature and the complex epistemic landscape representing the current status of psychological research. On the



contrary, the editors tend to stress the differences between the two approaches and to prevent the achievement of a more comprehensive and fine-grained dialogue among them.

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