



University of St.Gallen

Phenomenological life-world analysis and interpretive sociology

Finding a pathway through divergent strands

Thomas S. Eberle

University of St. Gallen, Switzerland

thomas.eberle@unisg.ch

Structure

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





University of St.Gallen

Prof. Dr. T.S. Eberle (Institute of Sociology)

Structure

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



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



Structure

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



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?



- 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.



Structure

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



„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
- Anamnestic 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).



Structure

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



- 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.

In: Flick, U., The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis. London, Thousand Oaks, New Dehli: Sage Publ., 2013: S. 184-202.

