

## Naturalizing Phenomenology

Kendler (2005) referred to the book *Naturalizing Phenomenology* (Petitot, Varela, Pachoud, & Roy, 1999). Three aspects of it that Kendler did not discuss but that invite necessary examination for clarification of the relationship between psychology (especially cognitive psychology) and phenomenology are the issue of mathematics, the concern for temporality, and the theoretical dialogue between the natural science approach and the phenomenological approach that takes place throughout that book.

The “naturalization” project of the book is inclusionary. The editors, who are the authors of the first chapter of the book, state in that chapter that the contributors of the three last articles “illustrate a more skeptical attitude about the very possibility of naturalizing Husserlian phenomenology” (Petitot et al., 1999, p. 80). Two of those three contributors “argue on the basis of a close examination of Husserl’s theory that Husserlianism cannot be naturalized without losing precisely what makes it valuable from either a descriptive or a philosophical point of view” (Petitot et al., 1999, p. 80). The four editors of this extraordinary book are affiliated with French universities. Of the 22 contributors to the volume, only 5 teach at American universities. The book is a model for American psychologists who propose to clarify psychology and phenomenology—both those whose conviction is that psychological research should be “naturalized” and those whose commitment is to the qualitative research tradition of human science.

## Conclusion

Kendler (2005) advocated the “moral pluralism” of democracy. A similar position of advocacy for “methodological pluralism” is required (cf. Farber, 1967, p. 6). Recognition and respectful consideration of other methodologies in psychology advance the discipline and safeguard against intellectual parochialism and prejudice.

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## A Clarification of Heidegger’s Phenomenology

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Kendler’s (May–June 2005) article, “Psychology and Phenomenology: A Clarification,” itself calls for clarifications regarding its characterization of Heideggerian phenomenology. Kendler drew on his admittedly “limited understanding” (p. 322) of Heidegger and rested his critique upon a critical confusion that pervaded his presentation—a confusion of the *ontological* and *ontic* dimensions of Heidegger’s work. Heidegger (1927/1962) sought to discover invariant structures of how Dasein (a person) exists in relation to its world—its ontological (philosophy of being) structures. These structures are analogous to templates to be “filled in” by theoretically infinite ways of manifesting them (ontic or particular manifestations of our shared ontological structures). Giorgi and Giorgi’s (2003) description of the invariant structures of a cup might serve to illustrate. In encountering many actual, particular (ontic) cups and their variations in size, color, material, and so forth, one can begin to induce those features of “cup-ness” that must remain the

same across all particular variations in order for a cup to be a cup. Concavity, nonporousness, and manageability by the hands emerge as the invariant parameters of cup-ness. These comprise the ontological structures of cup-ness. All that is free to vary in cup-ness, things like color, size, and material, are ontic variations of cup-ness. Whereas these dimensions may vary, they do so only within the constraints of the ontological structure (e.g., the material may vary, but only as long as it is nonporous).

In his depiction of authenticity as an objective set of values that form “a universal ethical system that is right for all humanity” (Kendler, 2005, p. 321), Kendler made the mistake of taking an ontological structure to instead prescribe an ontically particular way of living these structures out. Authenticity has to do with taking up our human capacity to discern meaning and to choose in light of our facticity, fallenness, and so forth—in short, to be responsible—but it is not a prescriptive admonition to live by supposedly “objectively right” values. This flies in the face of Kendler’s assertion that Heidegger’s “psychology” (he is an ontologist) is a “fulfillment theory” that seeks to discover a standard for human behavior. Heidegger is clear that *fallen* and *authentic* are not ethical but ontological terms. Indeed the designation of some act or thought or other comportment of Dasein as “authentic” is not related to its status as “behavior” but to its being taken up by Dasein in accordance with its ontological structure as finite, thrown, projecting, and so forth. Thus, the same “behavior” might be authentic or inauthentic depending on how it is lived by a particular Dasein in a particular context. Given Kendler’s charge of Heidegger’s supposed “snobbish elitist” (p. 323) insistence on “uniformity of existential meaning” (p. 323), it is no small irony that I must here protest that this does not constitute a moral relativism. This is because Heidegger was not conducting an ethical inquiry but an ontological one. For Heidegger, authenticity is an ontological possibility of Dasein, who is “proximally and for the most part” fallen. This fallenness, however, is not a moral or ethical shortcoming calling for redress but is as much an ontological structure of Dasein as the possibility of authenticity. Thus, neither constitutes an ethical “should.”

Another example of this ontic–ontological confusion is apparent when Kendler (2005, p. 320), citing McCall (1983), asserted that “Heidegger fashioned a distinctive personality theory.” Although it might well be that the psychological construct of

personality can be understood as an individual's way of living out invariant ontological structures, Heidegger himself never spoke to or in terms of "personality" as such. Describing the invariant structures of human existing in and to the world is not the same as a "personality theory."

Beyond the confusion of ontological structure with ontic particulars, Kendler's (2005) characterization of phenomenological inquiry as "naive" calls for a response. I would concur that the findings of phenomenological inquiry are distinct from those of empirical science but not in terms of their naiveté. Indeed, whether one agrees with the epistemology of the co-constitution of phenomena or not, the epistemological rigor with which phenomenological psychologists consider *approach*—a term which "denote[s] the ways a science's basic presuppositions are intimately interrelated with the content it takes up and the methods it evolves" (von Eckartsberg, 1998, p. 4)—belies this charge (see also Giorgi, 1970, 1985; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). Indeed, the historical response of natural science psychology to the "quantity objection"—the assertion that subjective phenomena cannot be quantified or empirically observed—a response that has been described as "ignoring the question" (see Hornstein, 1988), seems equally ripe for such a critique.

Cognitive models in psychology, too, are fraught with "naive" presumptions regarding cognition. The idea that cognition mediates between "sensory input" and "behavioral output" rests on an uncritical acceptance of an empirical positivist epistemology that presumes the independence from conscious experience of an "outer" world without any recourse, by definition, to this transcendent world via our senses. This presupposition informs Kendler's (2005) description of the goal of phenomenological inquiry as a "cloning of conscious experience" (p. 320). To attend to experience as experienced does not mean to somehow enter the mind of the other and "reproduce" his or her conscious experience as a sort of "content" but rather to be mindful of both my research participant's co-constituting presence in and to a world of emergent meaning and to my own co-constituting presence to the data. Reproduction of the other's consciousness as content is not the goal of phenomenological inquiry in psychology so much as developing an illuminative understanding of an experience. Kendler's critique and mischaracterization rely on precisely the epistemological presumptions Heidegger wished to challenge. In its insistent focus on experience as such, phenomenology is both radi-

cally more empirical and epistemologically less naive than Kendler acknowledged.

A full response to Kendler's (2005) presentation of phenomenology is beyond the scope of this forum, but it is heartening to see these matters come up for consideration in *American Psychologist*. Still, it is disappointing to see such a mischaracterization of phenomenology become the basis for such discussion.

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### The Ideology of Logic in Contemporary Psychology

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In his article "Psychology and Phenomenology: A Clarification," Howard Kendler (May–June 2005) sought to resolve the methodological issue that divides much of contemporary psychology—namely, the difference between natural science and human

science in their respective views of psychological life. Whereas Kendler provided an evocative historical account of conflicts over how psychology has interpreted consciousness, the force of his analysis depends on the extent to which the proverbial "is/ought" distinction, invoked any time the question of "science" is at stake, can have any meaningful purchase in the face of a radical phenomenology like that of Martin Heidegger. Regrettably, Kendler's position in the end eclipses any intention to clarify our understanding of the relationship between "natural" and "human" science.

In order to contain the threat to natural science psychology that Heidegger's phenomenology poses, Kendler (2005) lumped Heidegger and Maslow together and dismissed their view as "fulfillment theories in the sense that they seek to identify an appropriate standard for human behavior" (p. 320). He wrote that despite their different orientations, both propose "an answer to the question of how life *ought* to be lived. . . . Both positions are expressions of a *moral realism*" (p. 321). Kendler then went on to claim that their shared view commits a "natural fallacy" insofar as it is impossible to validate their moral principles from empirical evidence (p. 321). With this, Kendler established a deep, arbitrary divide between "natural science conclusions" and "phenomenological convictions," a divide that pits logical analysis of empirical evidence against the subjective experience of human understanding (p. 322).

The basis of Kendler's (2005) argument teeters on the assertion that "the natural scientist, in contrast to the human scientist, will not accept phenomenological convictions occurring outside the context of logic and empiricism" (p. 322). That is, Kendler posited phenomenology as a project "outside" the logic and empiricism of natural science as something "other" than science. In fact, throughout his article he referred to phenomenology in its variant forms as emanations from the subjective imagination of its author (p. 321). Although this view may hold true for some humanistic psychologists, it is categorically not true of Heideggerian phenomenology and its adumbrations for a human science. Had Kendler read Heidegger rather than simply accept McCall's (as cited in Kendler, 2005) anthropocentric interpretation of Heidegger, he would have seen that the entirety of Heidegger's work questions the possibility of any metaphysical difference to establish an "outside" in