

Comment

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Clarifications With Respect to Psychology and Phenomenology

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Kendler's (May–June 2005) article is important and complicated. I discuss it from three perspectives: the issue of subjectivity in phenomenology that he raised, the relevance of American phenomenological psychology to the topic to which Kendler oddly made no reference, and the promotion of and reservations about the “naturalization” of phenomenology in relation to psychology.

Subjectivity and Objectivity

Kendler (2005) raised the issue of subjectivity in his reference to the philosophy of Edmund Husserl as a “radical theory of subjectivity” (p. 319). Edmund Husserl is acknowledged as the originator of the phenomenology movement, which Kendler declared “an important philosophical orientation that arose in Western Europe during the 20th century . . .” (p. 318). Husserl's (1913/1998) usage of “subjectivity” and his understanding of “objectivity” in the context of his “transcendental phenomenology” is a philosophically sophisticated employment of those terms.

For the sake of clarification of this theory, one should at least make some comment on Husserl's philosophical usage of “subjectivity” and how he understands “objectivity” in his works (e.g., Husserl,

1913/1998). Kendler (2005) did not, however, make the briefest reference to any of Husserl's works. These works are primary sources for any article that proposes “a clarification” of psychology and phenomenology.

Føllesdal (1998), the one secondary source for Husserl that Kendler allowed in his article, pointed out in his 14-page encyclopedic entry that in the context of Husserl's concern for intersubjectivity in phenomenology, “a notion of objectivity arises . . . and we also experience ourselves as confronted with a reality to which our beliefs and anticipations have to adapt” (p. 582). Føllesdal also commented that Husserl's use, “here and in many other places, of the reflexive form ‘an object constitutes itself,’ reflects his view that he did not regard the object as being produced by consciousness” (p. 577). Moreover, in his entry, Føllesdal referred to a statement in Husserl's writings that asserted the factual existence of the real world, that it is quite indubitable that the world exists, and that phenomenology's task is to understand this indubitability (p. 577).

Inclusion of these observations in the article would have given at least some sense of “phenomenological objectivity”—otherwise totally omitted in the article. The only reference from Føllesdal to Husserl's phenomenology that Kendler (2005, p. 319) did give is the reference to Husserl's “radical theory of subjectivity” mentioned earlier.

The absence of referencing to Husserl himself on his understanding of subjectivity/objectivity creates, for a trusting individual's reading of Kendler's (2005) article, a situation in which there is default to the conventional, and oftentimes colloquial-sense, understanding of “subjectivity” and “objectivity.” Subjectivity may become caricatured as “subjectivism,” a state of understanding as unacceptable as the caricaturing of “objectivity” as “objectivism.” In effect, the stage is set for a misconstrual of Husserl's phenomenological project—and for the later incantation of “phenomenological convictions” as a subjectivist al-

ternative for the objective truth of natural science findings.

American Phenomenological Psychology

Kendler (2005) made no reference to American phenomenological psychology or philosophy. Discussions of phenomenological philosophy began in this country as early as 1917 (Farber, 1967, p. 17). Beginnings of a phenomenological psychology in America occurred as early as the 1930s; research efforts of American psychologists continued this work in a nonprogrammatic but notable and published manner to the 1960s, and since the 1960s, American psychologists have continued it in a programmatic way (Cloonan, 1995). A graduate program of phenomenological psychology was instituted at Duquesne University in the early 1960s, and a phenomenological psychology program continues at the Saybrook Graduate School; both schools' PhD graduates are associated with various academic institutions throughout the nation (e.g., Fordham University, Yale University, Seattle University, etc.). In 1970, the *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* was founded by Amedeo P. Giorgi.

Giorgi (1985; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003) is the developer of a phenomenological psychological methodology that has had both national and international recognition. It offers an empirically oriented human science alternative to the natural science approach. (The term *empirical* is plurivocally defined by natural and human scientists.) Kendler did not mention the work of Giorgi or of any other phenomenological psychologist.

American phenomenological psychology research programs and publications are not without significance (e.g., Kugelmann, 2005; Wertz, 2005). The double irony of Kendler's (2005) omission of references to American phenomenological psychologists and their work rests on the “Phenomenology” part of the title of an article that is published in a journal in America, and on the name of that journal, *American Psychologist*.

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