

PHENOMENOLOGY AS A STYLE OF RESEARCH AND PRACTICE¹

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The paper presents analysis of principles, treatments and ways of using phenomenology in psychology. Six different ways of using phenomenological method in psychology are discerned: as

- (1) a method of clarifying of phenomena of consciousness and concepts,
- (2) a way of differentiation, description and analysis of psychopathological phenomena,
- (3) a way of understanding and penetration to the living world of a person,
- (4) a form of subjective self-reports of participants,
- (5) a method of psychotherapeutic work with experience,

(6) a qualitative research strategy in academic psychology. The approach to phenomenology as a special style of research and practice, which implies the intuitive, reflective, unprejudiced, descriptive, detailed approach to phenomena, is developed.

Some preliminaries

Since the beginning phenomenology appeared in Husserl's works as a form of research-interrelation between sign, referents, meanings and structures of our experiences, ways of our everyday perception of things and work of consciousness, which provides coherence, meaningfulness and safeness of our experience in time. Unfortunately, the name of Husserl is referred more often in Western and Russian psychology in the contexts of highly philosophical debates - about destiny of science, relations between natural and human science, description and explanation, phenomenon and being. And to much less it is discussed that Husserl and his followers made very delicate and penetrating descriptive research of perception, thought, intuition, imagination, statement, symbolical representations, meaning, value, subjective time and other phenomena, which is interesting for psychology. The research that is the main achievement and a visiting card of phenomenology. Exactly this research, rather than original views and concepts of Husserl, on which evaluation of his works in psychology is usually based, attracted attention of many known psychologists at the beginning of the 20th century. Husserl by himself saw in this research the main contribution of phenomenology to psychology.

Phenomenological method is the most characteristic feature of phenomenology as a trend. As Herbert Spiegelberg noted, it is factually the single place, where different adherents of the trend make agreement between each other (Spiegelberg, 1969). Adolf Reinach and Moris Merleau-Ponty said that phenomenology is first of all the method of cognition, rather than system of views and truths (Reinach, 1969; Merleau-Ponty, 1962). It should be practiced and identified as a *manner* or *style* of thinking (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Approach to phenomenology as a fixed conceptual system doesn't correspond with the original meaning of it and should give place to the approach to it as to a method or methodology. In this regard many works about phenomenology suffer from the disadvantage of transforming it to strict theory, or conception.

Variants of phenomenological method in psychology

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The concept "phenomenological method" became firmly established in psychology already by 1920-30s. But on closer examination we can discern several different ways of treatment and use of it. Furthermore, it is still not clear and well founded why in this case we should talk exactly about "method" - if we take into account a little different requirements to the status of method in psychology, than in philosophy. We will try to clarify this question. We discern six different ways of treatment and use of the phenomenological method in psychology. They differ between each other in their tasks, focus and procedures.

1. *The method of clarifying of phenomena of consciousness and concepts* (Husserl, Pfender, Geiger, Scheler, Merleau-Ponty, and others). We can distinguish its initial variant as it was offered by Husserl and used traditionally in classical phenomenological research. In this variant it meant way of intuitive clarification, reflective analysis and thorough description of content presented in the consciousness, that let to lead us to clarify, strict and adequately the philosophical and scientist concepts, which we use. We can discern two basic principles of any phenomenological research. *Principle of presupposition-lessness* consists in refusal of believes and presuppositions, which were not explored completely, refusal of phenomenologically unclarified, untested and untestable presuppositions (Spiegelberg, 1969). According to *principle of evidence*, which Husserl called "principle of all principles", we should accept and describe everything what is given in such way and limits, in which it appears for us. We can discern also several constitutive procedures of classical Phenomenological method: (1) *phenomenological reduction*, which implies interruption of diverse assumptions, believes, opinions, conceptions of Phenomenon, in order to free it from all trans-phenomenal elements; (2) *phenomenological intuition*, which means receptive penetration, concentration and intuitive grasping of phenomenon, with the purpose to achieve the most clarity of it; (3) *phenomenological analysis*, which is based on free imaginative variations with different sides and constituents of phenomenon, with the purpose to ascertain the invariant meaning structure of it; (4) *phenomenological description*, which is a procedure of the most full and transparent designation, predication and language expression of primary data of experience, discovered in reflection.

2. *Way of differentiation and analysis of psychopathological phenomena* (Jaspers, Minkowski, von Gebattel, Straus, Ellenberger, and others). One of the first attempts to use the phenomenological method beyond philosophy was using it to describe psychopathological phenomena. In such way Karl Jaspers and his colleagues used the method, while paying much attention to interviews with patients. Phenomenology was defined by Jaspers as a method of research, based on self-descriptions of patients, as a way of gathering, differentiation, description and systematization of locally experienced phenomena (Jaspers, 1963). This variety of the method got the name of *descriptive phenomenology* or descriptive psychiatry. Further to it Eugene Minkowski offered to use also *structural analysis*, the goal of which is to find the main disorder. By using this method Minkowski made detailed phenomenological research of schizophrenia, showed the peculiar feature of patient's perception of time and loss of the special feeling of "living impulse" (Minkowski, 1958). Henry Ellenberger discerns also a third variety of this method, which he calls *categorical analysis*. The goal of it is to reconstruct patients' world of experience by analyzing their categories of time, space, reasoning, materiality and others (Ellenberger, 1958).

3. *Way of understanding and penetration to the living world of a person* (Binswanger, May, Laing, Rogers, Van den Berg, and others). Despite the conditional character of the difference between this and previous group of authors, we consider it important to emphasize a slightly different sense, which the phenomenological method began to acquire due to the increasing re-orientation to existential themes. Works by Ludwig Binswanger had critical role in this regard. Together with Minkowski Binswanger laid foundation for phenomenological psychiatry, but later he became to consider it as a constituent part of a wider perspective - existential analysis.

Phenomenology, according to Binswanger, should be more than just "descriptive psychology" or "descriptive psychiatry", which strives to demarcate phenomena by kinds and types. Phenomenology should help a psychiatrist to understand, to penetrate, to scrutinize the structure and ways of being-in-the-world of a diseased person (Binswanger, 1963). In this way phenomenological analysis should become a constituent part of a wider method - existential analysis. In contrast to the traditional phenomenological method, which paid attention only to direct experience of person, existential analysis supposed research of biography, based on interpretative psychoanalytical methods. In the same way Ronald Laing used phenomenology, who put idea of understanding and respect to living being of person to the foundation of a whole protest movement in psychiatry - antipsychiatry. In a similar way the method was used by Rollo May and other existential psychologists.

4. *Form of subjective self-reports of participants* (Katz, Rubin, Wertheimer^ Koffka, Dunker). In Gestalt psychology phenomenological method is used to research cognitive processes and was taken as the main method of psychological research, together with methods of observation, experimentation and measurement (Koffka, 1924). Koffka distinguishes 2 classes of concepts, which psychology uses: *functional* and *descriptive*. Functional concepts are the concepts, in which we as external observers describe behavior of other persons. Descriptive concepts are concepts that the person by himself uses to comment upon his experiences. For example, when we say that "the person feels weariness" because he is doing some physical job more slowly and weakly, we use functional concepts. The concepts, which the person uses by himself for describing his state ("I feel tired", "it has become difficult"), are descriptive. Koffka thought that interest to experience is a distinctive trait for psychology, therefore descriptive concepts are so important for it.

5. *Method of psychotherapeutic work with experience* (Perls, Rogers, Gendlin, May, Bugental, Buytendijk, Keen, Kruger, Langle, Spinelli, etc.). The use of the phenomenological method in psychotherapy became a new, unexpected and highly productive way of application of the method. Husserl obviously couldn't expect that his method would find so strange application. One of the first Gestalt therapy integrated the principles and the method of phenomenology. Fritz Perls's emphasis on the analysis of *evident* and obvious contents (in contrast to hidden, based on assumptions, accepted dogmatically) and on *phenomenological descriptions* of experience (not interpretations from some theoretical or common sense standpoint). In contrast to causal approach of Freud, oriented to a search of hidden reasons of behavior of person, Perls established the descriptive approach, oriented to the discovery of way of passing of some experience (preference to the question "how?", rather than 'why?') (Perls, 1973). In practice it means that when the client says something about his fear, a psychotherapist doesn't hurry up to search the "real" reason of it or to give back his view of the situation, but asks: "Tell me, please, what do you feel?" "Describe, how you are afraid of it?", "What is going on with you at this moment?" In the similar way Karl Rogers used phenomenological method, which strives to stay on the descriptive level and refrain from interpretative comments (Spinelli, 1995). In the same way Eugene Gendlin used his method of focusing, when a psychotherapist strives to help to the client to concentrate and find the most proper image, symbol or word for his bodily felt meanings (Gendlin, 1962). In a similar way many others psychotherapists used this method.

6. *Qualitative research strategy* (Giorgi, van Kaam, Colaizzi, Fisher, Wertz, Polkinghorne, Moustakas). Finally, the phenomenological method as a qualitative research strategy in academic psychology became another new and perspective direction of development. In such form it appeared in Adrian van Kaam work, who coming from Rogerian client-centered perspective and general phenomenological perspective explored phenomenon of "feeling understood". As we know, this approach attracted Amedeo Giorgi, who presented detailed grounds for using phenomenological

method in psychological research and explicated procedures for data gathering and analyzing (Giorgi, 1975). Giorgi and his colleagues Paul Colaizzi, William and Constant Fisher, Rolf von Eckartsberg were the formulators of phenomenological method in psychology. There are several variants of it (A. Van Kaam, A. Giorgi, P. Colaizzi, D. Polkinghorne, C. Moustakas, F. Wertz). Also "experiential method" of Jim Barrell and John Heron, and "heuristic research" of Carl Moustakas are close to this method. All of these methods are treated as *types of qualitative research*, together with biographical, narrative, ethnographical research, grounded theory, discourse-analysis, etc. All of this types are called and presented as "research methods", although in my opinion it would be more correct here to talk about general *research strategy* (as it is doing Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (Denzin, Lincoln, 2000)). The set of methods is the same for all of qualitative research: unstructured interview, observation, analysis of documentation and audio-visual materials. These methods are used just in different ways in a different strategies and get their special conceptual frame (phenomenology, ethnography, narrative theory, postmodern theory, etc.), focus and way of data analysis. Therefore we consider it would be more correct to talk in this regard about "phenomenological research strategy" or just "phenomenological research" in psychology.

Conclusions

The presented review shows how many different directions of elaboration in psychology got the original phenomenological method. This review shows how hasty it is to speak about this "method" as about something very known and understandable for everybody, without indicating what exactly we are talking about. We don't think it is correct to speak about "phenomenological research methods" (Moustakas, 1994), as if there were a whole group of equal methods. We think that it is the most correct and well-grounded to distinguish:

- phenomenological method as a general philosophical method;
- procedure of phenomenological description as a constituent part of others methods of empirical research in psychology;
- phenomenological modes of psychotherapy practice;
- phenomenological research strategy as a type of qualitative research in psychology.

But despite the diversity of treatments, we attempted to present the advantages of "phenomenological method" as a kind of *style of research and practice* - would we consider the philosophical cognition of primary data of experience, therapeutic understanding of client's subjective world, or strategy of qualitative research. This style implies the *intuitive, reflective, unprejudiced, descriptive, detailed approach* to phenomena. And this was the initial meaning and the aim of phenomenology as a trend.

Ways of Treatment and Use of the Phenomenological Method in Psychology

the method of clarifying of phenomena of consciousness and concepts	Husserl, Pfender, Geiger, Scheler, Merleau-Ponty
way of differentiation and analysis of psychopathological phenomena	Jaspers, Minkowski, von Gebattel, Straus, Ellenberger
way of understanding and penetration to the living world of a person	Binswanger, May, Laing, Rogers, Van den Berg
form of subjective self-reports of participants	Katz, Rubin, Wertheimer, Koffka, Dunker

method of psychotherapeutic work with experience	Perls, Rogers, Gendlin, May, Bugental, Buytendijk, Keen, Kruger, Langle, Spinelli
qualitative research strategy	Giorgi, van Kaam, Colaizzi, Fisher, Wertz, Polkinghorne, Moustakas

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