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## With the Lifeworld as Ground. A Research Approach for Empirical Research in Education: The Gothenburg Tradition

by Jan Bengtsson

### Abstract

*This article is intended as a brief introduction to the lifeworld approach to empirical research in education. One decisive feature of this approach is the inclusion of an explicit discussion of its ontological assumptions in the research design. This does not yet belong to the routines of empirical research in education. Some methodological consequences of taking the lifeworld ontology as a ground for empirical research are discussed as well as the importance of creativity in the choice of method for particular projects. In this way, the lifeworld approach has its own particular perspective in phenomenological, empirical research in education. The article concludes with a description of an empirical study based on the lifeworld approach in order to illuminate the possibilities for empirical research in education as well as the significance of this approach for education.*

### Introduction

The existence of phenomenology as a movement has been acknowledge since Herbert Spiegelberg's (1960) publication of his extensive study of phenomenological philosophy. This study was enlarged in co-operation with Karl Schuhmann in 1982 (Spiegelberg & Schuhmann, 1982). This movement can be divided into at least five different directions (Bengtsson, 1991). The first three are strongly connected to Husserl's original development of phenomenology. Phenomenology's origins go back to the Austrian school, founded by Franz Brentano. It is within this school that Husserl found a platform for his phenomenology. This first direction could be characterized as a pre-phenomenological period. The second direction starts with Husserl's break with the Austrian school and his criticism of psychologism (Husserl, 1980a). During this period, Husserl developed his first understanding of phenomenology as descriptive phenomenology. However, by 1907 (Husserl, 1950) Husserl was already on his way to a

new phenomenological direction, which he would term transcendental phenomenology, introduced as pure phenomenology (Husserl, 1976). The other two directions are phenomenology of existence and phenomenological hermeneutics. Both of these directions originated in Heidegger's (1927) early philosophy and have been continued by other leading phenomenologists such as Sartre, de Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty in the phenomenology of existence, and by Gadamer and Ricœur, in phenomenological hermeneutics.

From this simple description of the phenomenological movement it is possible to conclude that phenomenology is not one single thing and therefore does not exist in a singular definite form. It is thus important to always be explicit about what direction within the phenomenological movement is used in any phenomenological investigation. It is equally important to realize that the phenomenological movement involves different directions because these directions are not identical. These differences

sometimes include contrasting knowledge claims and in these cases the directions are not always compatible. Notions and methods can therefore not be mixed freely between the phenomenological directions.

The research approach introduced in this Special Edition is based on lifeworld phenomenology (Bengtsson, 1984; 1986; 1988a). This approach uses resources from lifeworld phenomenology. Books and articles about phenomenology frequently assert that Husserl introduced both the word and the notion of the lifeworld in his late work, which was published posthumously in the book *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie* [The crisis of European sciences and transcendental phenomenology] (Husserl, 1954). This assertion is, however, incorrect (Bengtsson, 1984). Husserl's use of the word lifeworld can at least be traced back to the years 1916–17 when he wrote a manuscript entitled *Lebenswelt – Wissenschaft – Philosophie: Naïves hinleben in der Welt – Symbolisches festlegen durch Urteile der Welt – Begründung* [Lifeworld – science – philosophy: naïve living in the world – symbolic fixation through judgments about the world – founding]. This manuscript predates the publication of his article *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie* [The crisis of European sciences and transcendental phenomenology] in 1936 (Husserl, 1936) by 20 years. In fact, Husserl's notion of the lifeworld was introduced even earlier than this date, but he referred to it using other terms, such as “the world of the natural attitude” (Husserl, 1976, p. 56).

The above discussion serves to illustrate two points about the lifeworld. Firstly, the notion of the lifeworld was introduced in Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, but was not part of pure phenomenology. The lifeworld thus belongs to mundane phenomenology. It is pre-transcendental and not transcendental; it precedes and is presupposed by transcendental phenomenology in its efforts to demonstrate the pure constitution of the lifeworld. However, if the transcendental argument is conclusive, transcendental phenomenology cannot presuppose the lifeworld completely. Transcendental phenomenology has to go beyond the lifeworld in order to be pure and cannot accept that the lifeworld is also presupposed in the reflection and explication of the lifeworld. However, the lifeworld phenomenology used in the lifeworld approach contained in this Special Edition is consequent in affirming the presupposition of the lifeworld on all levels. There is no way to escape the lifeworld. Thus, lifeworld phenomenology is differentiated from the knowledge claims of transcendental phenomenology.

Secondly, the notion of the lifeworld is not identical with the term ‘lifeworld’. As already noted, Husserl used several terms to describe the concept of the lifeworld. This is also true of other scholars in the phenomenological movement. Heidegger (1927) used the term ‘being-in-the-world’ (*in-der-Welt-sein*), Merleau-Ponty (1945) ‘being-to-the-world’ (*être-au-monde*), and Schutz (1962) ‘world of daily life’. Each of these scholars added their particular accent to the understanding of the lifeworld. Among other things, Heidegger stressed the practical and historical dimension of the lifeworld, Merleau-Ponty its embodiment and Schutz its social dimensions. Together, these scholars provide a differentiated understanding of the lifeworld containing a large number of partial theories and concepts. This constitutes the core of the resources of the lifeworld approach.

The understanding outlined above highlights the double function of the lifeworld. This is expressed in the title of this article: “with the lifeworld as ground”. On the one hand, the lifeworld is a factual ground that cannot be overcome through philosophical reflection or scientific research (the philosopher and the researcher are always already in the world), and on the other hand, the lifeworld is a theoretical ground for empirical research (the theoretical resources for research).

The theories and concepts of lifeworld phenomenology are, however, not directly available for use in empirical research. With the exception of Schutz none of the lifeworld phenomenologists mentioned above were interested in using lifeworld phenomenology in empirical research or in showing how an empirical research approach could be based on their theories. Their projects were strictly philosophical and they used the theory of the lifeworld to answer philosophical questions. This also applies to Merleau-Ponty, despite the fact that he introduced empirical results from psychology and medicine into his discussions. Schutz (1932, 1962) tried to make the notion of the lifeworld useful to the social sciences. However, he avoided taking a stance regarding transcendental phenomenology's claim of reducing the lifeworld to pure consciousness (Bengtsson, 2002) and he combined lifeworld phenomenology with a methodology based on neo-Kantian hermeneutics based on Max Weber. The inconsistency between lifeworld phenomenology and phenomenological hermeneutics, on the one hand, and neo-Kantian hermeneutics, on the other hand, will be discussed later in this paper.

The empirical research approach discussed in this Special Edition aims to make the transition from philosophical to empirical research explicit. It also

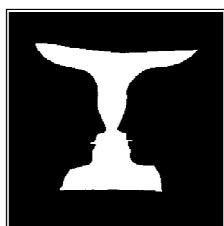
aims to offer a research approach that is consequently and coherently based on lifeworld phenomenology.

### Philosophy of science of the lifeworld approach

I believe that the ground of empirical research can be formulated in the following manner. All empirical research tries to establish knowledge about some delimited part of reality. In doing this, assumptions are made, often unconsciously, about this reality. Assumptions are also made about how it is possible to acquire knowledge about this reality. Theories about those kinds of assumptions belong to two different branches of philosophy, namely ontology and epistemology respectively.

Ontological and epistemological assumptions constitute the philosophical ground of empirical research in the sense that they are presupposed in all empirical research. The ground, however, does not need to be understood in an absolute sense. In the following section I will limit the discussion to ontological assumptions, not because epistemological assumptions are less important, but because the space of an article is not enough to discuss both assumptions. I have chosen to focus on ontological assumptions because they are less noticed (Bengtsson, 1988b, 1991). Ontological assumptions could be described as the medium through which research is conducted. From a different perspective they could be described as the invisible that makes the visible appear. I think, however, that the gestalt figure of the face-vase, introduced by the Danish psychologist Edgar Rubin (1915), adds a new dimension to understanding the relationship between philosophical assumptions and empirical research.

*Figure 1: Edgar Rubin's face-vase*  
(Source: Rubin 1915, figure 3).



Within this figure, or figures, there is interdependence between figure and background. If the vase is figure, it is so only because the surrounding background is seen in a particular way. However, this can change radically. The figure suddenly switches and the vase becomes the background and the earlier background appears as two faces looking towards each other. Thus, if the background is changed a new figure appears. If this principle is applied to empirical

research, it could be said that the empirical reality that is open for study depends on the ontological assumptions that are made. When the assumptions are changed a different reality appears.

In other words, empirical research is not free of philosophical assumptions. These assumptions are different in different research traditions, but they are always presupposed. In some traditions, such as philosophical positivism, they are even denied, but this is, of course, also a theory, although of a particular kind. In other traditions, the assumptions are not denied, but they are also not made explicit. Instead, they function implicitly in the research. Such a tradition could be called naïve positivism. Some assumptions are always presupposed in empirical research and these assumptions need to be made as explicit as possible; otherwise it is not possible for the researcher to take a position regarding these assumptions. The assumptions should also be made explicit to other researchers in order to facilitate examination and discussion about them. If the presuppositions of research are not open to examination, the research's contribution to scientific knowledge could be brought into question. In order to avoid this questioning the methods used in a particular study are always presented in empirical research reports. The ontological presuppositions for the choice of method should also be explicated in order to determine the research's contribution. However, these ontological presuppositions might not always be completely and finally explicated. Later in this article I will return to a discussion of the methodological consequences of ontology.

### Ontological options

Against this background the question arises of what ontological options are available. Ontology has existed for as long as philosophy, which has existed for at least 2500 years. It is, of course, impossible to provide even an outline of this history. The task therefore has to be limited in a way that is relevant to its purpose. I have decided on the following strategy. To start with, the task can be limited to the history of Western philosophy and further limited to its history since the Renaissance. It is during this period that empirical research originated and corresponding ontological theories were introduced. Contemporary empirical research is still to a large extent based on theories from this founding period (Bengtsson, 2013). The task can further be limited to some of the classical theories developed since the Renaissance in order to compare some of their essential assumptions and consequences for educational research with the lifeworld ontology.

One of the most influential ontological theories was the dualism of Descartes (Descartes, 1975).<sup>1</sup> According to this ontology, everything that exists can be understood with the help of two different kinds of qualities: material and mental. There is no relationship between these two kinds of qualities. They coexist but are incompatible with each other. This has been the crucial problem of dualism since its beginning. I will illustrate the problem through the use of an example. In the morning, when I am slicing fruit, I suddenly cut my finger. The finger has a wound, it bleeds and it hurts. Dualism can offer a way of analysing this example. The wound in my finger is physical and so is the blood. The wound and the blood are of the same kind and stand in a causal relationship to each other. The wound in the skin is the cause of the blood streaming out of the finger. The pain, however, is of a totally different kind and has nothing to do with material qualities. Dualism is therefore able to understand material as well as mental qualities, but they are divided in two separate realms that never meet. It thus remains a mystery what the pain has to do with the wound and the blood and vice-versa.

Historically, two forms of monism have played the role of ontological theories competing with dualism. According to these theories, a single quality is enough to understand all that exists. These two forms of monism are usually referred to as materialism and idealism. Idealism argues that the only quality that is needed in order to understand reality is mental qualities of different kinds such as mental states, cognitions or ideas. Materialism turns this ontology upside down, so to speak, and argues that all that exists are material qualities of different kinds and in different constellations. Both forms of monism overcome one of the basic problems of dualism, in that they are able to explain the relationship between material and mental qualities. This problem simply disappears in monism. If only one kind of quality exists, there cannot be any problem in understanding the relationship between different kinds of qualities. However, a new question arises: Is it really possible to understand everything that exists with only one kind of quality? According to both forms of monism, everything can be reduced to only one kind of quality. Materialism reduces mental qualities to material qualities, arguing that all mental qualities can be understood as material qualities. Idealism uses the same strategy, but argues for the inverse reduction,

<sup>1</sup> Descartes' ontology is sometimes called metaphysics. However, his theory is very modern for its time in the sense that it is not dependent on metaphysical notions such as God. Although he introduces God in his discussion, God is a hypothesis that does not have a function in his theory of reality. This is a typical strategy in Renaissance thinking in relation to separating religion and research.

namely that all material qualities can be reduced to different kinds of mental qualities.

Materialism was the ontological foundation of psychology and educational research when they were established as scientific disciplines in the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Wilhelm Wundt is often considered to be the father of this scientific endeavour (Wundt, 1873). He started the first psychological laboratory, as it was called, in 1879 in Leipzig, Germany. This was soon followed by psychological laboratories all over Europe and the USA. The inspiration for this psychology was the natural sciences (as can be seen in the choice of name and its technical use). In the psychological laboratories experiments were conducted in order to measure mental activities by way of physiological changes in the physical body. Wilhelm Wundt was also educated in medicine. This knowledge was transferred to educational research, which was understood as the application of psychological knowledge to educational problems (Bengtsson, 2006b).

A second major direction in psychology and educational research based on a materialistic ontology is behaviourism. Watson provided behaviourism with its first influential formulation at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Watson, 1919), and scholars like Skinner refined the research direction (Skinner, 1971). This form of materialism differs considerably from the former physiological approach. In behaviourism, patterns of behaviour are studied in the form of the organism's reaction to causal stimuli in the physical environment. While the physiological approach focused on inner processes in the organism, behaviourism observed outer physical behaviour.

There are also different forms of idealism in the history of psychology and educational research. Piaget's individual constructivism is an example of an approach that is clearly idealistic in its research approach. This is a neo-Kantian approach that assumes that children construct their reality cognitively. It is therefore the task of empirical research to find out what cognitions children need in order to understand reality. Consequently, during numerous equilibrative thought experiments of learning, Piaget exposed children to dilemmas that are supposed to be handled by purely logical means and integrated into a final equilibration of a logical and total system (see for instance Piaget, 1937; 1946; critical discussions by Merleau-Ponty, 2001; Hundeide, 1977).

Different forms of social constructivism also have idealistic tendencies. Although the social and communicative aspects of the constructions are always stressed, the constitutive role of the human body is mostly neglected (Lave & Wegner, 1991;

Wertsch, 1991, 1998). There is sometimes a very strong focus on linguistic meaning, arguing that no meaning exists outside texts, narratives or language in general. Language in its different forms is supposed to constitute a self-sufficient, although not stable, meaning system (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

The possibility of monism replacing dualism depends on its power to convince researchers of the reduction of reality to one of two different kinds of qualities. Methodological consequences of the two forms of monism seem to be that materialism prefers methods like experiment and observation, while idealism prefers methods like interviews and intellectual tasks. This methodological choice came to the fore in the 1980s when qualitative approaches were introduced in educational research. The credo of the qualitative movement at that time was often expressed in the rhetorical question, "If you want to know something about other people, why don't you ask them?" (Kvale, 1996, p. 1). This question was addressed to educational researchers who used behaviouristic methods such as observation and it presupposed that these methods could and should be replaced by interviews.

### Lifeworld ontology

Lifeworld ontology represents a different understanding of reality. If it were not for phenomenology's continuing criticism of all kinds of -isms since its very beginning<sup>2</sup>, the lifeworld ontology could have continued the tradition of constructing names with the suffix -ism and used the name pluralism. In this context, pluralism means that reality is conceived of as complex, consisting of a large number of different qualities that cannot be reduced to each other. In this sense it is, of course, harmless to use the word pluralism as a synonym for the lifeworld ontology, because it means reduction to complexity, which is the opposition of traditional reductionism.

In order to make the assertion of the complexity of reality credible, it is necessary to show this by way of some simple, but hopefully convincing, examples. In our everyday life, tools of different kinds surround us. Heidegger (1972) calls them *Zeuge* and they can be exemplified by items such as pen, paper, books, tables, clothes, shoes, glasses, and cell phones. Tools all have a particular quality in common that cannot be

reduced to either physical or mental qualities. This quality could perhaps be referred to as 'utility quality' and it is experienced as the possibility of use. The cell phone, for instance, is made of several material qualities, mainly plastic and metal, but it also has a utility quality that cannot be reduced to material qualities. Despite this, the quality is an experienced quality of this material thing; to be precise it is experienced as the possibility of calling people with the cell phone. If we could not experience this quality, the item could not be used as a cell phone and then we would question whether it was actually a cell phone. It should also be obvious that the utility quality is not a mental quality; it is a quality of this particular material thing, not something that we can find in inner life. The utility quality of the cell phone should also not be confused with the technical function of the cell phone. We do not need any technical knowledge about the cell phone, we do not need to understand what makes it work, in order to experience it as a cell phone and know how to use it as a cell phone.

In preschools, children might find things like swings, seesaws, balls and other objects to play with. Such things are not neutral for the children. They have a very particular quality, which could best be described by words such as requiredness or appeal (Langeveld, 1984). The ball is there to be kicked, the swing requires swinging on, and the seesaw includes a social dimension in its appeal by requiring two children to use it together. This kind of requiredness can also be found in the exteriority as well as in the interiority of buildings and in places (Bengtsson, 2011). Libraries demand silence, churches a respect for the sacred, and a bump on the road not only requires us to slow down but also has built-in consequences if not obeyed.

All tools and toys (actually, all things of all kinds) only exist together with other things. In the lifeworld there are, strictly speaking, no single things. Every object that we experience or handle is surrounded by other objects, and every object refers in its turn to further objects outside the present surroundings. However, all objects in the present surrounding and in the lifeworld are not of equal significance. Depending on the person's activities, certain objects are singled out and they include references to appresented or co-experienced other objects inside and outside the present surrounding.<sup>3</sup> However, the person's field of

<sup>2</sup> In the first book in which Husserl introduced phenomenology, *Logische Untersuchungen* [Logical investigations], volume one, *Prolegomena zur reinen Logik* [Prolegomena to pure logic] (Husserl, 1980a), his criticism against psychologism in logic was so strong that he convinced most people at this time about the mistakes of reductionism and established phenomenology as a strong position.

<sup>3</sup> In this text I use the term 'appresentation' for the simultaneous apprehension of different aspects of objects. In this way, appresentation means that all presentations or appearances of experience always and by necessity include additions without which the experienced objects would not be complete. Although the literal sense of appresentation is the addition of something to the presentation, this language might be misleading, because presentation and

activity does not only consist of different things, but also includes references to other persons with whom he or she interacts, has interacted or will interact. In this way, things, persons and activities constitute a regional world that is not limited to what is present, but includes other things, persons and activities that are possible to experience, interact with and perform within this world. Each regional world also constitutes its own particular history. The lifeworld is everything that is possible to experience and do for a particular individual, and the lifeworld consists of different regional worlds in which the individual lives, for instance the family, the working place and recreational activities with friends (Bengtsson, 1999, 2006a, 2010).

A second major characteristic of lifeworld ontology is the intertwinement or the interdependence of life and world (Bengtsson, 1988a). This point rejects dualistic ontology. The concept of the lifeworld is very peculiar and could perhaps be explained as a kind of in-betweenness. In other words, the lifeworld is neither an objective world in itself, nor a subjective world, but something in between. Ambiguity is a necessary feature of intertwinement. World and life are interdependent in the sense that life is always worldly and the world is always what it is for a living being. Thus, the world is open and uncompleted to the same extent as life. Life and world have identity, but it is not permanent or objective or universal. In this way, life and world are always already a unity that can be separated only afterwards (Heidegger, 1927; Husserl, 1954; Merleau-Ponty, 1945). It is therefore mistake to present a choice between life and world, despite the fact that we have learnt to do this in the Western history of ontology.

We have to learn to see reality more in terms of both-and instead of either-or. This applies not only to life and world, but also dualities such as body and mind, object and subject, outer and inner, physical and mental, sensuous and cognitive, reason and emotion, self and other, and individual and society. I will use an example from the previous discussion of the dualistic understanding of the relationship between

appresentation constitute an inseparable unity with a mutual dependency upon each other. For this reason, the term co-presentation might be a better choice of word. A simple example might shed some light on this relationship. A book, for instance, cannot be identified by its present presentation in perception. The book is always more than its experienced cover. It is actually not a book at all without the written pages between its covers, although they are not presented when the book is lying closed on the desk in front of me. In the same way, the book also appresents references to my friend to whom the book belongs and who lives in another part of the city, and it refers to the paper on which I am working.

body and mind to illustrate this point. In lifeworld ontology, body and mind are mutually dependent on each other. The mind is embodied and the body is animated. I call the unity of body and mind 'lived body' to separate it from the physical body as well as from the inner experienced body and to indicate an originally combined and integrated position. The lived body is both physical and mental, object and subject, integrated in 'my own body (*le corps propre*)', to use Merleau-Ponty's (1945) expression.

In relation to the previous example of slicing fruit, lifeworld ontology will permit a different analysis of the relation between the wound, the blood and the pain. When I cut my finger, this is not the same as slicing fruit. The cut in my finger hurts. The same is also true the other way around, the pain is not a disembodied mental state, but perfectly integrated with my body in the sense that I know exactly where the pain is; it is in my wounded index finger, not in the foot, not in the head, and not in the middle finger. Body and mind are integrated in the lived body.

The implications of the lived body can easily be extended. According to this ontological theory, the lived body is present in whatever we do and experience. We cannot leave it behind us, as we can with a bicycle, and pick it up later. It is always with us. Instead of saying that I have a body, it could be said that I am my body. Thus, the lived body is the subject of everything that we do and experience. In this way, the lived body is our access to the world. If something happens to our body, the world changes correspondingly. When we have a headache, the world is not accessible in the same way as it usually is, and if we lose our sight or an arm, the world changes in several respects. It is also possible to integrate physical things with the lived body. One common example is the blind man's stick (Merleau-Ponty, 1945). The stick is a thing among other things in the world, but when the blind person has learned to use the stick, it is no longer experienced as a thing but becomes an extension of the lived body through which the world is experienced. In a similar way, other things such as bicycles and cars can be integrated with the lived body and extend experiences and actions of the lived body.

It should also be noted that the central notion of phenomenon has an intertwined character. The word 'phenomenon' has Greek origins and means 'that which appears'. Phenomenology uses the word in the same way and in no other way. A characteristic of a phenomenon in this sense is its intertwinement between object and subject. One of the conditions for something to appear is that there must be someone for whom it appears. In the history of Western ontology and epistemology, a second reality, more real than the world of phenomena and a condition for the latter, has

often been assumed. Kant's 'thing in itself' is one famous example (Kant, 1976). However, this raises questions as to how we can ever know anything about this second reality. It also brings into question our reasons for assuming its existence. The only reality we know anything about is the world in which we live and which appears to us in one way or another, that is, the lifeworld. Husserl (1954) wrote about the assumption of a reality behind the reality that appears to us as a doubling of reality. Heidegger (1973) objected to Kant's ideas and held that "[t]he 'scandal of philosophy' is not that this proof has yet to be given [that is, a proof of the existence of things in themselves behind our experiences], but that *such proofs are expected and attempted again and again*" (p. 249).

### Regional ontology

Although ontological assumptions are presupposed in all empirical research, this does not imply that empirical research has to develop a general ontology as this falls within the realm of philosophy. Empirical research does not need a general ontological theory that includes everything that exists. Instead, it is enough to have an ontology delimited to a particular part of reality, in our case to educational reality. However, it is necessary to have such a theory and this theory needs to be made explicit within empirical research. Within the lifeworld approach, this delimited kind of ontology is referred to as regional ontology (Bengtsson, 1988b, 1991, 2005). It is important to note that this notion of regional ontology should not be confused with Husserl's (1952) idea of regional ontology, although it is inspired by this idea. Husserl divides everything that exists into three regions or realms of existence, that is, material nature, animal nature and spiritual (*geistige*) worlds. This is an understanding of reality in the sense of a general ontology.

My own understanding of regional ontology can now be further specified. It is not enough to delimit regional ontology to educational reality in general. It also has to be limited to the particular reality that is in focus in particular projects of educational research. In other words, regional ontology must be limited to that part of reality that the research question has singled out in its formulation. This view corresponds with the starting point in the section above concerning the philosophy of science of the lifeworld approach. It suggests that all empirical research is trying to establish knowledge about some delimited part of reality. The intention of these delimitations is to adapt ontology to empirical research. Ontology is, therefore, not approached for its own sake. Instead, it should be understood as an instrument for doing empirical research and is not developed further than is necessary for this purpose. It is on this point that I

diverge from Husserl's idea of a regional ontology (as well as from Heidegger's and Merleau-Ponty's ontologies). Husserl was never interested in elaborating ontology for the sake of doing empirical research. His interest was purely philosophical. My notion of regional ontology is in this respect closer to Schutz's (1932, 1962) intentions with his development of a theory of the social world as the foundation of the social sciences. However, Schutz (1932, 1962) did not use the term regional ontology. If Schutz's (1932, 1962) theory could be called a regional ontology, it is a regional ontology of the discipline of the social sciences rather than a regional ontology in the proper sense of the term.

The question of what the regional ontology of the lifeworld approach is still remains to be answered. This question has to be answered in several steps. Firstly, the lifeworld ontology offers a general perspective on how to perceive and encounter the reality of an empirical study. Through lifeworld ontology, reality appears in a particular way.

Secondly, the lifeworld ontology offers a number of concepts and theories about the lifeworld. These concepts and theories together constitute the theoretical resources of the lifeworld approach. They are not all relevant in all empirical studies. A selection has to be made in accordance with the research question. This point seems to not have been observed in Peter Ashworth's (2003) empirical research approach based on the lifeworld. In a Special Issue about this approach in the *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, he lists seven universal categories. He himself calls them "fragments" to indicate that they "together do not yet constitute a full account of the essence of the lifeworld" (Ashworth, 2003, p. 147), but insists that they should nevertheless enable "the detailed description of a given lifeworld" (Ashworth, 2003, p. 147). The used categories are selfhood, sociality, embodiment, temporality, spatiality, project and discourse. I question whether the same categories could be used in different studies irrespective of the research question. To my understanding of phenomenology, it also sounds strange use a limited number of categories to understand the lifeworld, regardless of whether there are more than seven categories. To me, this seems to be a variation of Kant's formalism. Husserl stated that phenomenology was a task for generations of phenomenologists. Van Deurzen (1997) has extended the number of categories to 4 x 19 categories in order to describe human existence, and I am not convinced that this is exhaustive. It gives the impression of being a taxonomy, which is inconsistent with the lifeworld approach. The lifeworld approach is an explorative approach whereas taxonomies normally have a deductive purpose.

Thirdly, the concepts and theories about the lifeworld have to be adapted to the particular research question. Their purpose is to enable the researcher to identify and understand phenomena in a lifeworld sensitive way. The more general they are, the less useful they are in explorative research. Intentionality, for example, can be a useful concept in many studies, but it is not exactly the same in allocating marks as in discussing marks, in social relations between teachers and students, in teachers' working pleasure, in pre-school children's outdoor activities in nature or in teachers' use of self-knowledge in their professional life. When we want to research new worlds, we need to know in order to find, but we also need to find in order to know. We need a pre-understanding of the other world, but this is never the same as already understanding it in advance. Research has to live with this ambiguity.

### Some methodological consequences

Lifeworld ontology has very definite consequences for methodology. I will discuss some of these consequences for methods of collection such as observation and interview as well as methods of interpretation of the collected material.

Lifeworld ontology gives us the opportunity to observe and understand reality in a particular way. We are therefore able to access the study of different educational settings. The world is full of things and qualities that are neither objective nor subjective (such as tools and their utility qualities) and these things and qualities constitute regional worlds of people using them in particular ways. Thus, education takes place in a world of things, activities and interactions. The participating persons need to have a practical understanding of these things, activities and interactions. If we want to understand educational situations, we have to understand them in their lived and worldly context as this is where they have their meaning.

However, the individuals are not only social and worldly agents. They are also embodied subjects. Against this background it is possible to use observations in a new sense. For instance, if we observe other people in action, the content of the observation is not limited to material qualities. The people we see have lived bodies that consist of neither purely physical behaviour nor purely interior mental life. Mental life is expressed in the body, and bodily movements are mental. Body and mind constitute an undivided unity in which the body is subject and the mind is embodied. In this way, the behaviour of a person allows us to understand something about his/her life; the behaviour has a particular meaning that is available to us. This meaning, however, is not hidden behind the behaviour in the subjective

intentions of the agent as is believed by the neo-Kantian tradition of hermeneutics.<sup>4</sup> Instead, the meaning is experienced in the bodily movements of the other person and, together with the meanings of a specific surrounding of particular things and other people, it constitutes a particular world of meaning. For example, the teacher can see that a child might be in need of some help with his/her arithmetic, that another child is uninterested in his/her work today, and that a third child seeks contact with another child. As an observer, the researcher can see what the teacher sees and does, as well as what the children see and do. This does not mean that other people are easy to read. However, the possibility of observing the meaningful behaviour of another person can be used as a starting point for new and extended observations that form part of an interpretation process that takes into consideration previous and present as well as following events. Observations are not limited to meaningful behaviour. Speech activities might also be included. This is the lived language that people spontaneously use in their practice in distinction to the language they use when they reflect upon their practice in an interview. Observations in this sense have been used in several empirical studies in the lifeworld approach (Ferm, 2004; Friberg, 2001; Greve, 2007; Johansson, 1999, 2007; Løkken, 2000, 2004).

The agents might sometimes not even be able themselves to tell about such things as their intentions, feelings, thoughts and perceptions of their actions (Dahlberg, 2006). If the teacher is understood as an embodied subject and the actions take place within a regional world of professional practice, the mind of the teacher is integrated with the body in the sense that the mind has settled in the body as a way of thinking, seeing, feeling and being as a professional in a habitualized world of practice (Bengtsson, 1993). Research experience shows that there is often a difference between what teachers say they do and what they actually do in the classroom (Claesson, 2004). This does not mean that teachers are lying. They simply do not have the necessary distance from their own practice to be able to describe what they are doing. Instead, they are more likely to describe an ideal of their work.

These comments should not be taken to mean that interviews should be excluded from the lifeworld approach. However, just as observing people's physical behaviour only tells us some things about them in the same way interviewing people only tells us certain things about them. The advantage of

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<sup>4</sup> Important representatives of this tradition are Wilhem Dilthey and Max Weber. Although Schutz (1932, 1962) based his social theory on phenomenology, he continued the neo-Kantian hermeneutics in his methodology.

interviews is that they allow people to talk about situations that are passed, situations that ethically delicate for participation such as sexuality or violence and situations that are hard to observe, such as working pleasure. When interviews are used within the lifeworld approach it is important to understand that the interviewer should help the interviewee to introduce a distance from his/her own lifeworld and conduct the interview in a corresponding manner. In this way the interviewees are helped to reflect upon and talk about different aspects of their lives. The persons should be stimulated and helped to see their lives and experiences in their worldly and embodied existence and not as decontextualized experiences or cognitions. In order to avoid general answers about the interviewees' lives, it can be useful to ask for examples. Different strategies have been used in interviews of people in the lifeworld approach. These include in-depth interviews and narrations, which are sometimes complemented by drawings, writings, models (Alerby, 1998; Andrén, 2012; Hörnqvist, 1999; Houmann, 2010; Kostenius, 2008; Nielsen, 2005; Öhlén, 2000; Öhring, 2000; Orlenius, 1999; Vinterek, 2001).

Interviews and observations are not seen as opposing factors in the lifeworld approach as they were in the early days of qualitative research. Instead, these methods may be used separately, depending on the research question, but they can also be combined in different ways in order to complement each other. If different methods are used, however, it is necessary that they have the same theoretical ground. Methods are never free from theoretical assumptions. If different methods with different theoretical assumptions are used in the same research project, the results from the different methods can come into conflict with each other and will not contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon. With the lifeworld as a ground, several studies have used mixed methods (Berndtsson, 2001; Carlsson, 2011; Claesson, 1999, 2004; Grundén, 2005; Hautaniemi, 2004; Hertting, 2007; Hugo, 2007).

This paper has already touched upon hermeneutics several times. It seems necessary to comment on the relationship between lifeworld phenomenology and hermeneutics. In this way the discussion of methods is continued by way of a discussion of interpretation. Classical phenomenology (such as that form of phenomenology represented by the Hegelian tradition as an example) and classical hermeneutics (represented by scholars from the days of Schleiermacher through to neo-Kantians such as Dilthey and Weber) are certainly two different traditions. However, in the new phenomenology started by Husserl around 1900, possibilities for integration of the two traditions were revealed. Heidegger was the first phenomenologist to introduce

hermeneutics in phenomenology (Heidegger, 1927). In so doing he renewed both Husserl's phenomenology and hermeneutics. Gadamer (1960) and Ricœur (1965, 1969) continued this direction in different ways. The ground for the integration of phenomenology and hermeneutics can be found in lifeworld phenomenology (Bengtsson, 1988b). Phenomenology and hermeneutics are thus not parallel traditions that never meet in the lifeworld approach.

In the lifeworld approach, interpretation and understanding are not limited to texts, but also include tools and actions. The neo-Kantian tradition also includes the interpretation of actions, but in contrast to lifeworld hermeneutics, this approach looked for the meaning of texts and the actions behind them in the intentions or life of authors or agents. Lifeworld hermeneutics tries to understand texts and actions by the meaning that is expressed in the text and action respectively. This idea goes back to Husserl's criticism of psychologism in logics and mathematics in the first volume of *Logische Untersuchungen* [Logical investigations] (Husserl, 1980a). Schutz (1932) continued the neo-Kantian tradition in his hermeneutics of social actions instead of developing the new possibilities in phenomenology (cf., Bengtsson, 1998, 2002).

Interpretation in empirical research can also not be limited to the interpretation of transcribed interviews or observations. Seen from the perspective of lifeworld hermeneutics, interpretation already starts in the interview and observation, and the object of interpretation is not the transcriptions, but the interviews and the observations.

In the lifeworld approach, empirical research in education implies that the both the people who are studied and the researchers are inseparably embedded in their different lifeworlds. Bridges must therefore be built between the lifeworld of the researcher and the lifeworld of the participants of the study. The primary means for building bridges involves creating encounters with other lifeworlds (Bengtsson, 1999). Two main methods have been discussed for this purpose, observation and interview, and it has been mentioned that these methods can be combined. The use of both methods implies the existence of the hermeneutic circle from the beginning of the research. We always already understand and interpret through our being in the world. It is not possible to escape the hermeneutic circle, but the encounters offer the possibility of exposing and confronting our pre-judgements (*Vor-urteile* - to use Gadamer's (1960) word) and letting the other lifeworlds speak in their otherness. Encounters enable the researcher to make discoveries and to change pre-judgements.

## Choice of method

So far only methodological questions relating to the lifeworld approach have been discussed. However, methodology is concerned with general principles or guidelines on how to conduct research. It can therefore not be equated with the choice of method in particular empirical projects that seek to answer specific research questions. This is of particular importance for the lifeworld approach, where creativity is demanded in the choice of method (Bengtsson, 1999). In other words, the lifeworld approach is not equivalent to a particular method. The choice of method should instead be made based on a combination of the research question and the ontological understanding (in this case lifeworld ontology) of the particular reality that the project intends to study.

To deepen the understanding of the principle of creativity of method it could be described in the context of a phenomenological dilemma. The phenomenological movement started with a demand that phenomenology should “go back to the things themselves” (Husserl, 1980b, p. 6) as they appear and do full justice to these things. This demand, however, can easily come into conflict with a demand for method in scientific research. The prescriptive rules of scientific methods only provide the type of knowledge that the methods permit. However, in that case, research seems to do more justice to its methods than to the things themselves. Consequently, it seems that the researcher has to choose between following the things or some particular method. This choice is not as simple as it might seem. This is because the phenomenological demand of doing justice to the things seems itself to be a methodological principle. The dilemma is therefore actually a paradox.

The conflict between following the things or a particular method only exists if the method must be applied in all research, or in other words if this implies that a general methodology exists that should be used indiscriminately in all educational research. This demand is in conflict with the demand of following the things. However, it is also possible to develop methods from the combination of the particular research question and the ontological understanding of the things to be studied. If research is done in this way then there is no conflict between method and things.

The paradox thus only exists if the demand for going back to the things is understood as a developed method. However, it is certainly not a developed method. Instead, it is generally formulated and contains no prescriptions regarding the procedure for concrete research questions. I would propose that within empirical research it should be understood as a

kind of general principle for choice of method. In that case, it should be read as a requirement to let the choice of method be decided by its ability to do justice to the regional lifeworld to be studied. An example can be found in Eva Johansson’s thesis described below.

The lifeworld approach therefore cannot present a rigid procedure that can be used in all empirical lifeworld research and that can be used for judging research results. This also applies to methods of gathering and analysing empirical material. It is not possible to trust one correct method in the lifeworld approach and the researcher must therefore carefully work out and argue for a chosen method or methods in a project. Consequently, the lifeworld approach stimulates creativity of methods.

The illusory conflict between the demand of going back to the things themselves and the demand of scientific method has sometimes led to a neglect of method in phenomenological empirical research. This is, for instance, the case with the Utrecht school that represents an anthropological-phenomenological approach to educational research. The research in this approach has often been more or less impressionistic and lacks discussion regarding the way in which the results were determined. In Van Manen’s (1990) version of phenomenology, phenomenological research has been compared to the art of poetry and “a primal telling” (p. 13) that gives voice to the world. This phenomenological direction therefore provides as little description and discussion of method as does poetry. However, the opposite tendency is also represented in the phenomenological tradition, and relates to the demand for strict scientific principles of method. Examples are Moustaka’s (1994) and Giorgi’s (1997; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008) more or less detailed procedures for conducting phenomenological empirical research. All three of these procedures demand the application of the phenomenological epoché, the particular method that Husserl introduced in his transcendental phenomenology for philosophical purposes (Husserl, 1976), and a general procedure for analysis of all studies (Giorgi, 2010). Peter Ashworth continues this methodology, but has added a number of categories of the lifeworld to enable descriptions (described above) (Ashworth, 2003; Ashworth, Freewood, & Mac-donald, 2003). The lifeworld approach offers an alternative to these two options of doing empirical phenomenological research.

## Reporting results

A lot of contemporary research in different directions of qualitative research uses the word ‘findings’ for its results. However, this is a very misleading term. This becomes clear as some examples of its use are

discussed. For example: “We found mushrooms just outside our house” or “we found a parking-place outside the railway-station”. If the word is used in this manner to describe research results it provides the impression of an effortless finding of the results or simply coming across these results. However, all parts of research are hard work and this includes arriving at and reporting results.

At least three ways of reporting results have been used in the lifeworld approach. Firstly, reporting separately for each individual within a project (Berndtsson, 2001; Claesson, 1999; 2004; Nielsen, 2005); secondly, reporting thematically across the individuals (Alerby, 1998; Carlsson, 2011; Ferm, 2004; Friberg, 2001; Greve, 2007; Grundén, 2005; Hautaniemi, 2004; Hertting, 2007; Hörnqvist, 1999; Houmann, 2010; Hugo, 2007; Johansson, 1999, 2007; Kostenius, 2008; Løkken, 2000; Öhrling, 2000; Orlenius, 1999; Vinterek, 2001); and thirdly, reporting first individually and then, based on these results, thematically (Andrén, 2012; Öhlén, 2000). The work of reporting the results starts with interpreting what people have said or/and done. It is appropriate at this juncture to introduce critical distance in the work, both in relation to the researcher and to the people included in the study. This can be done by means of self-reflection and collegial discussion (Bengtsson, 1993). I also believe that Ricoeur’s (1965) hermeneutics of suspicion as well as Dahlberg, Dahlberg and Nyström’s (2008) notion of bridling can be of use in this context. When an understanding of the said or/and observed has been reached, the work of reporting the results continues by means of the systematic organization of answers to the research question. Strict procedures are not a guarantee of relevant results.

The language used in reporting results is always the language of the researcher, irrespective of whether the study is based on interviews or observations of activities, including speech. In the lifeworld approach language is not limited to ordinary language, but also includes the use of phenomenological language. It seems unprofessional to not use the wealth of this language to provide more precise and profound descriptions of the results. Phenomenological language cannot, however, be used in a general way, but instead has to be used descriptively. The word ‘horizon’ could be an example. It has been used in a general way to describe the perception of space (Husserl, 1972; Merleau-Ponty, 1945), the experience of time (Husserl, 1972; Merleau-Ponty, 1945) and understanding (Gadamer, 1960). However, it has also been used descriptively in order to refer to displaced horizons in describing the changed world of everyday life for people who have lost their sight (Berndtsson, 2001).

The results of the lifeworld approach cannot be generalized for the simple reason that the principle of induction is not (and cannot be) used. This principle cannot be used because the number of participants involved in these explorative studies is insufficient for generalization. For the same reason, participants are not selected randomly but instead are selected according to a strategy. This strategy relates to the question of what type of participant can bring something new to the exploration of the field. The principle of induction is not used because it is questionable in general. Although it is not necessary to agree with Popper’s own theory, he certainly formulated strong criticism against induction (Popper, 1959). It is also not possible to make claims of essences based on the results of the lifeworld approach. An essence, in the strict sense of the word, has to describe the necessary and sufficient qualities of an object. In other words, an essence must describe how it has to be at all times, in all cultures and for all people. It is not possible for empirical research to fulfil this task. Empirical research can identify empirical themes, but these should not be confused with essence. The strength of the results of the lifeworld approach is that they are able to show the significance of the results in relation to other empirical and theoretical research within the field of the research question and its use for practice.

### Example

In order to demonstrate what the lifeworld approach can offer for empirical research in education, I now outline an example from research in the Gothenburg tradition, a doctoral thesis by Eva Johansson (Johansson, 1999).

Johansson’s thesis is a study of small children’s moral values and norms in their interaction in preschool. The children’s interaction with the preschool teachers was not included in the project. The study was based on the daily interaction among 19 children, ten boys and nine girls, aged one to three years. The interaction was followed for seven months and video recorded. The research questions were based on the lifeworld assumption that interaction between people is meaningful and accessible for the parties involved. One important part of people’s interaction is its moral dimension, which is experienced and expressed through people’s embodied interactions with each other. A research question could therefore focus on the values and norms that small children experience and express. According to Piaget (1932), small children cannot be asked this question because morality is linked to the Kantian idea of self-responsibility. Consequently, people can be moral only when they know themselves and take responsibility for their own actions, and small

children have not reached this stage. Piaget (1932) therefore describes small children as simply amoral.

In lifeworld ontology, meaning and value in interaction do not primarily refer to people's inner subjective intentions, but instead refer to the meaning and value that they experience and express through their lived bodies. For this reason, the study was based on observations of the children's embodied interaction. There were two reasons why interviews were not considered an appropriate research method. First, the moral values and norms were not supposed to be found within the children, but instead in the embodied interaction between them. Second, the children were too young to have functional language. Thought experiments were also excluded as a research method for two reasons. Firstly, because morality was not conceptualised as an intellectual task or ability. Secondly, because the children were too young to solve intellectual dilemmas. It was also important for the lifeworld approach that the children's moral interaction be studied in its lived environment. This is because the meaning and value of experiences and expressions never occur alone; instead they occur together with the meanings and values of specific things and other people that constitute a particular regional world of meaning. It was, therefore, not an alternative to use thought experiments or interviews outside the lived world of interaction where the meanings and values are created and sustained.

Johansson's (1999) thesis thus used observation, documented by video records, to build bridges between the researcher's world and the children's world. In this manner, the meaning of the experiences and the expressions of the interaction were available to the observing researcher, but they were available from within the world of an observing adult researcher. This does not mean that the children's morality was not understood in its otherness. The values and norms of the children were certainly observed, but it was neither necessary nor possible to completely take the children's perspective. Taking another person's perspective would imply experiencing in the same way as the other person, and this is not possible without reducing his/her otherness. The researcher, therefore, has to begin with what is observed from his/her perspective and then try to confront this with the encountered world of the children. Johansson's (1999) study is based on very rich empirical material, with observations of many interactional situations over an extended period of time. By recording all these situations, she could confront her initial understandings of them by looking at them several times and in this sense developing an ongoing hermeneutical dialogue with the situations. In this way, her results could be reported in an explicit, argued way.

In the results of her study, Johansson (1999) showed that morality is an important part of the children's life at the preschool. The children defended and valued their own rights and cared for others' well-being. They defended their rights to things, as well as to sharing worlds with peers. Their concern for other children's well-being was expressed in efforts to comfort and protect them from harmful situations. Johansson's (1999) results clearly show that even very small children experience and express moral values and norms. By doing so, she showed that the results of Piaget's research were wrong. This is indeed a strong contribution to this field of knowledge.

## Conclusion

In this article, I have tried to show some distinctive characteristics of the lifeworld approach and its consequences for empirical research in education. First, I have argued for the necessity of being explicit about the direction within the phenomenological movement from which a phenomenological study is conducted. The lifeworld approach is based on lifeworld phenomenology. Second, I have tried to show that a transition from philosophical to empirical research is needed. Third, as a way of achieving the transition, I have suggested the inclusion of an explicit discussion of the ontological and epistemological assumptions in the research design. Fourth, I have compared three traditional ontologies with the lifeworld ontology in order to highlight some significant differences in the understanding of reality. Fifth, I have argued for the necessity of delimiting ontology to the regional ontology of the particular reality that is in focus in particular projects of educational research. In other words, I have argued that ontology should be focused on that part of reality that the research question has singled out in its formulation. The intention of this delimitation is to adapt ontology to empirical research. Sixth, I have discussed some methodological consequences of the traditional ontological theories and the lifeworld ontology in order to make some of the particularities of the lifeworld approach visible. Seventh, I have shown the importance of creativity in the choice of method for empirical research. This principle offers an alternative to the demand for strict, scientific procedures for all research and to the neglect of methods in research. Instead, the choice of method should be made based on a combination of the research question and the ontological understanding of the particular reality that the project intends to study. Eighth, I have discussed ways of reporting results in the lifeworld approach. Finally, I have shown what the lifeworld approach can offer for empirical research in education by presenting the

design and results of one empirical study based on the lifeworld approach.

In the lifeworld approach, the integration of philosophy and empirical research is not only an ideal. It is also an explicitly developed approach that is realized in ongoing research. The research

approach is consequently and coherently based on lifeworld phenomenology. This gives the lifeworld approach its own particular perspective in phenomenological, empirical research in education.

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### About the Author



Jan Bengtsson, who held the post of Professor in the Department of Pedagogical, Curricular and Professional Studies, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, passed away on 31 August. Throughout his long illness, which was bravely borne, Jan continued to be academically active but very sadly never lived to see the publication of this paper which is part of a Special Edition of which he was Guest Editor.

Professor Bengtsson previously studied at the University of Vienna (Austria), the University of Freiburg (Germany), Ruhr-University in Bochum (Germany), and the University of Grenoble (France).

During his lengthy career, Jan had been a Visiting Scholar at several institutions such as the Husserl-Archives in Louvain (Belgium), the University of Grenoble (France), the University of Århus (Denmark), the University of California at Berkeley (USA), the National Institute of Educational Research in Paris (France) and the University of Queensland (Brisbane, Australia). He had also been a Visiting Professor at the Universities of Helsinki (Finland) and Oslo (Norway) as well as the University of Agder in Norway.

Over the years, Jan founded several scientific organizations in the Nordic countries such as the Centre of Lifeworld Phenomenological Research (University of Gothenburg) and the Nordic Society for Philosophy of Education.

Jan's research areas were diverse, and included the fields of teaching, teachers and learning, school architecture, history of scientific research, the philosophy of education, and phenomenology.

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## Language and lifeworld Schutz and Habermas on idealization

### *Linguagem e mundo-da-vida* *Schutz e Habermas sobre idealização*

 Jan Strassheim\*

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**Abstract:** Jürgen Habermas seminally criticized Alfred Schutz. This paper traces the disagreement back to a different role of idealization. Schutz's social theory is based on "types" as idealizations with an inherent dynamics, while Habermas's social theory is based on ideally stable "rules". First, a rule model of linguistic communication is assessed against analyses from linguistics and the philosophy and sociology of language. A rule model, it is found, fails to meet its theoretical goal of explaining linguistic communication. Hypothetical rules of language would not explain our intuitive understanding of the minimal propositional contents expressed by utterances. The rules would be both insufficient and unreliable in every single instance of language use. Against this background, the relation between language and "lifeworld" is then re-evaluated. A lifeworld cannot build on a rule model of language as its foundation. Nor can it supplement such a model in order to save it. Unlike a rule model, Schutz's claim that language and lifeworld are interconnected and structured by "types" that can accommodate the flexibility and precision of linguistic communication. While further research is needed, this conclusion indicates that phenomenology has been unduly neglected in social philosophy and should receive as much attention as it has in sociology.

**Keywords:** Theories of communication. Typification. Linguistic rules. Phenomenology of the life-world. John Searle.

**Resumo:** Jürgen Habermas criticou Alfred Schutz de maneira seminal. Este artigo traça tal divergência até a diferença na conceitualização de idealização. A teoria social de Schutz é baseada em "tipos" enquanto idealizações com uma dinâmica inerente, enquanto a teoria social de Habermas é baseada em "regras" idealmente estáveis. Primeiramente, um modelo de regra de comunicação linguística é avaliado de acordo com análises da linguística, da filosofia e da sociologia da linguagem. É constatado que um modelo falha em alcançar seu objetivo teórico de explicar a comunicação linguística. Regras de linguagem hipotéticas, portanto, não explicariam nossa compreensão intuitiva de conteúdos proposicionais mínimos expressos em enunciados.

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As regras seriam tanto insuficientes quanto incertas em todas as instâncias do uso da linguagem. Neste contexto, a relação entre linguagem e “mundo-da-vida” é reavaliada. Um mundo-da-vida não pode ser constituído sobre um modelo de linguagem, nem mesmo suplementar tal modelo a fim de preservá-lo. Diferentemente de um modelo, Schutz reivindica que linguagem e mundo-da-vida estão interconectados e estruturados em “tipos” que podem acomodar a flexibilidade e a precisão da comunicação linguística. Embora seja necessário o aprofundamento da pesquisa, as conclusões apontam que a fenomenologia tem sido indevidamente negligenciada pela filosofia social, e deveria receber maior atenção, assim como tem recebido na sociologia.

**Palavras-chave:** Teorias da comunicação. Tipificação. Regras linguísticas. Fenomenologia do mundo-da-vida. John Searle.

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## Introduction

Phenomenology has had a lasting influence in sociology. One important road for its influence was Alfred Schutz’s theory of the social world inspired by phenomenology.<sup>1</sup> Given that phenomenology, originally a philosophical approach, left a footprint in the discipline dedicated to the study of the social, we should expect a comparable influence within philosophy itself where it deals with social theory. But the story is quite different here. Leading social philosophers John Searle and Jürgen Habermas dismissed phenomenology, and Schutz’s work in particular, as either irrelevant or obsolete. These prominent dismissals had a lasting effect in the field. Despite recent work arguing the significance of phenomenology for dominant philosophical discourses on social phenomena (Zahavi and Satne, 2016), it seems fair to say that phenomenology is still marginal at best in philosophical social theory. This raises the question, relevant to any sociological approach influenced by Schutz or other phenomenologists, whether a phenomenological take on the social world is outdated on its philosophical home ground.

Searle criticized Schutz for ignoring the fundamental role of language in the construction of social reality. Schutz, he says, took language “for granted” (Searle, 2006, p. 14). But in view of Schutz’s extensive work on language and its role in the construction of social reality, Searle’s remark leaves unclear what it is, in his mind, that Schutz neglected. Unfortunately, Searle never elaborated on his criticism.<sup>2</sup> The work of Jürgen Habermas, whose view of language

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<sup>1</sup> Approaches influenced by Schutz include Berger and Luckmann (1966); Garfinkel (1967); Goffman (1974); Schutz and Luckmann (1989).

<sup>2</sup> Searle qualified his criticism of Schutz in his public lecture “Language, collective intentionality, and social ontology” at the conference *Collective Intentionality VII* in Basel, Switzerland, on 24 August 2010 by adding, “though perhaps I should not say Schutz, because I haven’t read him”.

builds heavily on Searle's, gives us a better understanding of the objections involved. Habermas too criticized Schutz early on for allegedly ignoring the fundamental role of language (Habermas, 1988, p. 112). But he goes into more detail as to how Schutz's approach differs from his own.

In the present paper, the disagreement between Habermas and Schutz will be reconstructed in terms of the different roles they accord to *idealization* both at the level of the social world and in a theory of it. This difference is bound up with that between Schutz's concept of "type" and Habermas's concept of "rule". Two distinct accounts of how our flexible and precise linguistic communication is possible are built on these two concepts. These accounts yield two different theories of how language and the lifeworld beyond language are related to each other. I will contrast the two accounts and then assess a rule model of linguistic communication against evidence from linguistics and the philosophy and sociology of language. From this I will draw some conclusions about the theoretical viability of the two positions as accounts of how language and lifeworld are related.

Eventually, Schutz's earlier position will be found not only to stand against the objections, but to be actually more advanced on a theoretical level than the position of Habermas. Insofar as the disagreement between the two concerns questions fundamental to any theory of the social world, be it philosophical or sociological, this conclusion indicates that phenomenology has been unduly neglected in social philosophy and that it offers the resources for further productive developments in social theory.

## **The puzzle of communication: idealization in Schutz and Habermas**

Communication is a curious phenomenon if we recall that, as individuals, we have different outlooks, moods and perspectives, beliefs and memories, plans, priorities and desires. How is it possible that two or more individuals pay attention to the same event in their environment, correctly attribute complex thoughts or emotions to one another, act in unison, or even fight each other with a shared understanding of what they are fighting about? How can we coordinate our individual standpoints in concrete situations?

An obvious answer is that we talk or write in a shared language. Like other means of communication, language works through material signals which can be produced and perceived by different individuals and which can thus connect these individuals. But language stands out among other means of communication thanks to its high precision and flexibility. It can be tailored to an indefinite range of ever new purposes and situations. It makes sense then to

see language as “the paramount vehicle of communication” (Schutz, 1964a, p.160), a point on which Schutz and Habermas could certainly agree. But then the question is: how can different individuals use words to understand each other in ever new situations? On what basis is our precise and flexible linguistic communication possible?

In order to approach this question, we should start by trying to say what a language is. A commonsensical reply would be that a language provides a system of more or less fixed patterns: words and their usual meanings, correct grammar, standard expressions etc. Native speakers simply use these patterns as a matter of daily routine, but they can be made explicit in dictionaries or in explanations we give to non-native speakers. To share a language is to share such a system of patterns, and to use them in a way which is similar across different individuals in the group. But just how ‘fixed’ are the patterns? This question leads to a theoretical crossroads which has to do with *idealization*.

Schutz describes linguistic patterns in terms of “typification”. Types shape and motivate most of our experience and action. Typical traits we can recognize and reproduce enable us to live in a familiar world and to share this world with others who operate on similar types. Our “lifeworld”, as Schutz calls it with reference to Husserl, operates on typical patterns. “The typifying medium *par excellence*” (Schutz, 1962a, p. 14) is language. Through its grammar and vocabulary, a language draws distinctions and singles out certain objects, events and relations. According to Schutz, these linguistic patterns correlate with what the users of the language – especially its native speakers – find typically relevant.

The important point is that types, as Schutz uses the term, have a peculiar *dynamics*. Most of the time, we take our typical expectations and routines “for granted” without even questioning them. But we do so only “until further notice”. A type can be “questioned” at any time if necessary, and it can be modified or given up as the case requires. Schutz’s insistence on the dynamic character of a type reflects his particular phenomenological stance. Husserl’s “eidetic” method was to look for ideally invariant structures of consciousness. Schutz (1966b) contended that this method cannot be applied to patterns on a social scale. Schutzian “types” may change over time, and they are not uniformly valid for different individuals within a group.

Types, as Schutz points out, are rooted in three basic “idealizations” used by the actors in a social world. (1) When I stick to a typical expectation, I assume that things will remain just as they used to be (an idealization Husserl calls “*and so forth*”). (2) When I act according to a typical routine, I assume that my action will proceed just the way it used to do (an idealization Husserl

calls “*I can do it again*”). (3) In my communication with others, I operate on a meta-idealization, (the “general thesis of reciprocal perspectives”): I assume that we use the exact same types and that we will continue to do so. But none of these idealizations is compulsive or beyond doubt. All three basic assumptions follow the dynamics of the typical: they are “taken for granted”, but only “until further notice”.<sup>3</sup> Schutz’s theory of the social world makes a point of reflecting this inherent dynamics of its object rather than imputing ideally invariant structures to it.

Habermas disagrees. Referring to Schutz and Luckmann’s characterization of the “lifeworld” as “taken for granted until further notice”, he strikes out the qualification “until further notice”, claiming that “the commonality of the lifeworld has to be understood in a radical sense” (Habermas, 1987). The basis for his claim is a theory of communication which has at its heart a rule model of language. According to the model, grammatical and semantic patterns are not variable types, but stable “rules” which are identical both for all individuals in a group and across the different situations to which they are applied.

Habermas makes it explicit that this too is an idealization. Empirically, languages change over time. Individual linguistic habits and competence vary with dialects, social class, gender and age, and to some extent idiosyncratically. Furthermore, since people sometimes speak vaguely, figuratively or ironically, they may use the same words in different ways on different occasions. However, Habermas argues, idealization is necessary for a theoretical goal: the goal of “making clear the mechanism relevant to the coordinating power of speech acts” (Habermas, 1984b, p. 298). His argument goes like this: Only by assuming certain ideally stable rules in communication can we explain how individuals with different perspectives are able to understand each other in an infinite variety of situations. Therefore, to the extent that social actors aim at understanding each other, they will strive to follow the rules and expect others to do so as well. In this sense, stable rules are not only an idealization constructed by the social theorist in order to explain communication, but they are part of the social world itself.

To be sure, Habermas does not see the social world as a pre-established harmony commanded through and through by rules that everybody follows. On the contrary, he wants to account for a plurality of “validity claims” made

<sup>3</sup> This should be noted especially for the general thesis of reciprocal perspectives. It is a set of “idealizations” which establishes a “communicative common environment”; the general thesis is known to be (strictly speaking) false by the actors, who take it for granted only “until further notice” or “until counter-evidence appears” (Schutz, 1962a; Schutz, 1962b, p. 316). On the first two idealizations, see e.g. Schutz (1964b).

by individuals with differing beliefs and preferences on different occasions. But what underlies such a plurality, he says, is a mutual understanding about the content of the respective claims. Without understanding what it is that others claim to be true or advisable, I cannot even begin to check if their claims are valid. And without others understanding me, I cannot contradict them or make claims of my own. “Understandability” lies beyond the plurality of “validity claims” since it is a precondition for making such claims at all (Habermas, 1984a, p.139). Debate and the communicative assertion of individual differences is only possible where there is a common ground, and that ground is provided, in Habermas’s view, by the rules of a shared language.

Finally, given this fundamental role, Habermas presents language as paramount not only in communication, but in the “lifeworld” as a whole which provides “structures of linguistically generated intersubjectivity” (Habermas, 1987, p.130).

Habermas presents this latter characterization of the “lifeworld” as a criticism of Schutz. As I have suggested, the difference between them lies not so much in the role of language, which both consider a central element of a social world. The crucial difference lies in their different views of linguistic patterns as (1) mere “types”, i.e. as “taken for granted”, but only “until further notice” (Schutz) – or (2) as “rules”, i.e. as ideally *invariant* (Habermas).

But which view is the better one? We cannot decide by merely pointing to the fact that linguistic patterns do in fact vary over time and from individual to individual. Neither view ignores this fact, and both refer to “idealizations” of invariability on the part of the language users themselves. Schutz and Habermas differ, however, in the way they describe the dynamics of these idealizations in use (type vs. rule). We can find a way of assessing their descriptions if we read them as theoretical answers to the question asked above: on what basis is our precise and flexible linguistic communication possible? In the next section, I would like to examine whether a rule model of language (like that of Habermas) can offer us a convincing answer to this question. I will then return to the wider problem of how language and lifeworld are related.

### **Assessing a rule model of linguistic communication**

In order to assess a rule model of language, we need a fair criterion for its performance. On the one hand, we should not put unreasonable demands on what Habermas calls the “coordinating power of speech acts”. A phrase may be loaded with emotional nuances, connotations and personal experiences, but not all of this is actually communicated, and even less is communicated through language. All that language *must* do in Habermas’s theory is provide

a common ground on which plurality can unfold. On the other hand, the bar should not be too low either. What two or more individuals share using language in a concrete situation should have a minimum of specificity within that situation. Otherwise, we would fail to grasp the key role of language as a precise and flexible means of communication. In other words, we are looking for a robust core of meaning communicated through language.

Since Aristotle, a fruitful notion of such a meaning core has been handed down which Habermas (1998a) uses too: the *proposition*.<sup>4</sup> A proposition is usually thought of as a representation which can be true or false and which would be either true or false given specific conditions, such as a certain state of affairs in the world. Many linguistic utterances (spoken or written) express a propositional meaning.<sup>5</sup> With a declarative sentence, we can claim that certain truth conditions hold, whereas we can use interrogative sentences to inquire about the same conditions. With other types of utterances, we can promise that certain truth conditions will be fulfilled, we can order or ask others to fulfill them, etc. Propositions seem to be the gist of what we talk about, of what we actually *say* and not just ‘mean’. They are specific enough to meet the lower bar for what is communicated, but they are not too specific to explode it. In most cases, the propositional content which an utterance expresses on a given occasion is easily identified and easily agreed upon. It is more or less obvious to the intuition of anyone who knows the language well enough. This would be consistent with the idea that language is a central element of a “lifeworld” as a world of shared familiarity.

We can now reconstruct the claim behind a rule model of linguistic communication. The claim is that our shared intuition about the propositional meaning core of an utterance in a specific situation can be explained with reference to “rules” in our shared language. These rules are assumed to be ideally stable across individuals and situations in the sense outlined above. In the following, I would like to assess the model by assuming hypothetically that such rules of language exist and checking whether their existence could in principle explain the possibility of precise and flexible linguistic communication as we know it. Following much of the literature in linguistics and the philosophy and sociology of language, our everyday intuitions about the propositional meaning of example expressions in various situations will be used as a yardstick. I will first ask to what extent ideally stable rules would *sufficiently* explain these intuitions (would they be precise enough?).

<sup>4</sup> Propositions also have a central role in Searle (2010, p. 27–30).

<sup>5</sup> Not every utterance seems to express a proposition (‘Hello?’ or ‘Alas!’ may not).

I will then ask to what extent they would do so *reliably* (would they flexible enough?).

### ***Would rules sufficiently explain meaning?***

If the rules of language furnished *everything* we need to construe propositional meanings, we might expect the same sentence to have the same meaning in every situation of utterance. This is obviously not the case wherever indexical expressions occur. The pronoun ‘I’ does not always denote the same person regardless of who utters a sentence such as ‘I feel sick’. But surely knowing *who* is said to feel sick in a given situation is part of knowing the propositional meaning of the utterance (i.e. knowing under which circumstances it would be true or false). The same problem arises with indexicals such as ‘here’, ‘now’ or ‘this’, and it can hardly be avoided. Although the rules need not sufficiently determine the meanings in all possible cases of language use, sentences without indexicals are rare at best; in fact, it is doubtful whether we could form sentences which truly dispense with indexicals at all (Lyons, 1977, ch. 15).

But perhaps the claim can be modified to accommodate indexicals. Indexicals are, as the word suggests, ‘pointers’, expressions which point at data beyond what is expressed. They indicate the direction in which a missing piece of information is to be sought. For instance, the word ‘I’, as a rule, triggers a search for information *and* it seems to determine, again as a rule, that a person is referred to, and more specifically, the person uttering the sentence (Kaplan, 1989).

Whether or not this solution works for the word ‘I’ (see below for some doubts), it appears less than adequate in other cases. Take the word ‘here’. We might venture the analogous rule that ‘here’ points to a place, and more specifically, to a place near the speaker (as opposed to ‘there’). However, the places to which ‘here’ refers in different contexts are completely different both in kind and in relation to the speaker. ‘Here’ may be a smallish area beneath the speaker’s feet (‘Watch out, the ground is getting soft *here!*’), or a square surface a few meters in front of them (‘The car was parked right *here*, wasn’t it?’); ‘here’ may be the whole region excepting the zoological gardens (‘There are no hyenas living *here*, right?’), a radius small enough to be reached by car (‘Is there a gas station *here*?’), or the inside of the speaker’s lower left canine tooth (‘The pain is *here*.’).<sup>6</sup> Evidently, any general rule to the effect that the word ‘here’ refers to ‘a place near the speaker’ falls far short, both in precision

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<sup>6</sup> For similar examples see Hanks (1992) and Wittgenstein (2001, § 88).

and in quality, of localizations which are intuitively clear and which concern, in some of these examples, the whole point of the utterance. Similar remarks could be made about other indexical and deictic expression such as ‘that’ (as in ‘What the hell was *that*?’), ‘it’, ‘then’ or ‘earlier’, despite the fact that logicians have observed the problem and tried to solve it since antiquity (Bühler, 2011, p. 118).<sup>7</sup> Apparently, the rules do not provide a “common ground” for our intuitive understanding of certain expressions. It seems more like the other way around: we read our understanding into the rules.

But a rule model might still contain this problem. It might concede that as far as indexicals are concerned, the rules do not sufficiently determine propositional meaning. But at least indexical expressions tell us exactly *when* and *at which places in a sentence* the rules fall short, thus delimiting sharply the problematic fields. In other words, indexicals could be read as public *signals* of their own insufficiency. The ‘pointer’ may not tell us clearly enough how the additional information is to be gathered, but at least it indicates that something is missing and triggers a search for information. It would be similar to a variable in an equation (as suggested by Lewis, 1970). And this would be part of the linguistic *rules* for an indexical.

Nevertheless, the problem reaches beyond indexical expressions. We can approach the full extent of the problem by seeing the poor specificity of indexicals as a case of vagueness or ambiguity: ‘a place near the speaker’ is too general, too wide a formula if compared to the various places the word ‘here’ may refer to. But indexicals are not the only linguistic structures suffering from this semantic anemia. Another example is the genitive case of many languages, which marks a noun as modifying another noun and which has various equivalents and companions (such as the noun compound or the possessive pronoun) in other languages.<sup>8</sup> The genitive family may signify basically any sort of relation; compare ‘my money’, ‘my dessert’, ‘my arm’, ‘my boss’, ‘my idea’, ‘my party’, ‘my turn’... The genitive has been described as semantically ambiguous, as referring to an abstract “relation R” or as “semantically non-specific” (Atlas, 2007, p. 227). Whatever the analysis of the rules involved, they certainly give us less than the propositional meaning expressed on concrete occasions.

<sup>7</sup> It might be argued that an indexical gains its full meaning only within the wider linguistic context of (a) the whole sentence, or of (b) the discourse in which the sentence occurs. In response, we could (*ad a*) give identical example sentences where the same indexical has different meanings in different contexts, and (*ad b*) point out that the above examples are clear in their meaning although presented as isolated sentences and would remain so if presented as the sole dialogue in a film skit or as speech bubbles in pictures.

<sup>8</sup> On noun compounds see Bühler (2011, p. 75, 196, 406).

The same has been said for other types of words or constructions, including those which look at first sight like firm anchors for truth conditions, such as definite descriptions ('the king of France') and proper names (Recanati, 2010). Linguistic rules alone do not tell us who or what is referred to with these items. What is more, such examples of entire linguistic categories do not even begin to address the semantics of individual content words, of certain classes of nouns, verbs, adjectives or adverbs, or of more complex collocations which seriously underdetermine their propositional meanings (e.g. Bühler, 2011; Wittgenstein, 2001; Waismann, 1951; Atlas, 1989; Travis, 2008; Wilson and Sperber, 2012).

Most of this has been argued even for grammatically complete sentences. However, we do not always talk or write like this. Elliptical utterances and single words make up much of our daily language use. Perhaps we could treat such expressions as no more than lazy abbreviations of full sentences.<sup>9</sup> But then the problem recurs in a different shape: how is it possible that we reconstruct those full sentences with such great ease in communication?

Phenomena of this kind have given rise to a variety of analyses as to what problem exactly linguistic rules run into where language users have no apparent problem at all. Some rules are too general and in need of specification, some rules branch out and need disambiguation, some are vague and lack any consistent standard of application. Whatever the analysis, the putative rules fall short of the concrete propositional meaning in ways which are not foreseen in the rules themselves. A giant additional apparatus of ever more fine-grained rules along with meta-rules for the application of lower-level rules could not (even if it were, despite an infinite rule regress, logically feasible) produce the wealth of actual meanings in context. This is because novel situations may arise which language users handle in novel ways. Our everyday intuitions of meaning are not grounded or generated by 'rules' alone.

I started out this discussion with indexicals. But the real problem lies with the insufficiency of rules in non-indexical expressions because the model cannot 'contain' this insufficiency. An indexical *signals* its own poverty and it may do so by virtue of a rule. But in many other linguistic devices, hypothetical rules fall short of the actual meaning in a concrete situation. And this very fact is *hidden* if we consider the rules only. The indexical signals, on a regular basis, a gap which needs to be filled or "saturated". But in other cases, our common understanding is based on a process of "free enrichment" (Recanati, 2002; Carston, 2002), an addition of meaning which is "free" in the

<sup>9</sup> This was argued by the early Jerrold Katz (Recanati, 1994).

sense that it need not be triggered by a rule. This, however, implies that even those cases become problematic in which the rules *would* be sufficient. What I mean is this. In some cases, competent language use requires us to decide that the addition of meaning is required beyond what the rules prescribe. This decision is “free”, i.e. it is not triggered by the rules themselves. But then the assessment that *no* such addition is required *equally* depends on a decision which is not covered by the rules alone. Even where the rules alone *would* give us all we need to construct the propositional meaning, our shared intuitive understanding that this is the case depends on an informed judgment made outside of the rule apparatus. Hence, the assumed rules are insufficient to explain our successful communication in *any* single case.<sup>10</sup> They do not fully explain it even for a part or subdomain of language use.

### *Would rules reliably explain meaning?*

I argued that hypothetical ‘rules’ of language fall short of propositional meanings. Assuming their existence would not sufficiently explain our linguistic intuitions. But perhaps rules would at least work *reliably*? Might not the rules of our language supply us with hard kernels or frames of shared meaning around which softer layers and textures are built as the situation requires? In this way, the rules would, without compromising their ideal stability, allow for a great deal of flexibility in whatever meaning is added.

We could begin to test the claim using, once again, the word ‘here’ (the fact that ‘here’ is an indexical is not important to the following discussion). If the rules for this word determine that it refer to ‘a place near the speaker’, we may concede that this information is too general and too meagre for a full proposition. But we could still claim that the word ‘here’ is *reliably* used to tell us at least this much. It would always refer, first, to *a place*, and, second, to a place *near the speaker*, whatever this means more specifically in context.

However, even this is *not always* conveyed by ‘here’. Sometimes, the word is not used to refer to a place near the speaker but to a place near the audience. A doctor who, applying pressure to the area above her patient’s liver, asks ‘Does it hurt *here*?’ is speaking from the patient’s point of view.<sup>11</sup> True, the

<sup>10</sup>The proponent of a rule model might want to make the ‘hidden’ problem public. For instance, she could mark, in the form of rules, all expressions which have displayed an insufficiency in the past or which might do so in certain cases. Or she could stipulate “hidden indexicals” (Recanati [2002] and Hall [2009] for a criticism of Jason Stanley’s suggestions) in an attempt to turn ‘free enrichment’ into mere ‘saturation’. But given the scale of the problem, she would in both cases restate the problem within the rule format itself: all, or most, language rules are insufficient – as a rule.

<sup>11</sup>John Lyons (1977, p. 677) calls this ‘empathetic deixis’.

patient's liver is near the doctor too, and she is even touching the spot in question. But even if she touched her own abdomen, her question 'Does it hurt *here*?' would be understood as referring to the corresponding area of her patient's body. In the case of a video conference, this area may be thousands of miles away from her. In the case of a health program on TV, she may refer to millions of livers scattered across the country. The localizations of 'here' with respect to the speaker will sometimes change within one utterance, for instance if somebody moves their finger across a map and states 'If we started out *here* and our current standpoint is *here*, we should be able to get out of the forest ... well, *here*'. When telling a story, someone may say 'He rode into the deserted town. What had happened *here*?' and refer, not to a place near himself or even near the audience, but to a place near a third party (besides, both place and party may be fictional).

Worse still, 'here' may not even refer to a *place*. It often refers to a point in time or to a topic, as in 'I must object *here*', 'Let's finish *here* for today', or (when listening to a CD together) 'The solo gets boring *here*, I think'. In still other cases, the word 'here' does not refer to anything at all but 'exemplifies' some of its own features (as any word can): it may be given as an example of a word with four letters, of an indexical expression (as seen above) – or even as an example of an example (as in the sentence you are reading right now).<sup>12</sup>

This variation in the meaning of 'here' represents phenomena which appear far more widely than this particular example. Some of the uses of 'here' are cases of *indirect speech* in a wide sense (for an early overview, see Vološinov, 1986). We often speak or write from the points of view of others. Sometimes we do so more directly by quoting, aping, echoing, or anticipating their words. Sometimes we do so more indirectly, as in descriptions given by ethnologists, historians or psychiatrists which change freely between the author's perspective and their subject's. This is to say nothing of jokes, theatrical performances, or lyrical texts. Indirect speech of one sort or another breaks even the seemingly reliable rule that the pronoun 'I' refer to the person uttering the sentence. Some other examples I have given point to the vast field of *tropes* such as metaphor ('here' referring to a point in time or a topic may be thought of as a metaphor), metonymy, hyperbole, oxymoron, irony, etc. It is clear that tropes will often produce radically different truth-conditions from what could be expected by looking only at the rules of semantics and

<sup>12</sup>Nelson Goodman (1968, p.95) does not analyze the circumstances under which what he calls "exemplification" is used and how it is recognized, and his later work consistently leaves this question open. A rule model would be required to answer the question, somehow or other, in the rule format.

grammar. These so-called ‘rhetorical devices’ structure large parts of our everyday language use.

Neither ‘indirect speech’ nor ‘tropes’ are restricted to particular words or domains. They can make even the slimmest rules unreliable for more or less any expression used in an indirect or figurative utterance. But comparable phenomena affect words and phrases even in their direct and literal application. The meaning of a word in context can sometimes be seen as the concrete application of an inherently vague concept. But meaning in context is often too far off from anything like the dictionary meaning, even though it is neither indirect nor figurative. In such cases, the underlying concepts do not seem to exhibit mere “vagueness”, but an “open texture” (Waismann, 1951). On a similar note, cognitive scientists argue for the idea of “ad hoc categories” or “ad hoc concepts”, which are constructed for the situation at hand by narrowing or widening in specific ways the concepts encoded by the language (Barsalou, 1983; Carston, 2002; Wilson and Carston, 2007; Vega Moreno, 2007).

All of the language uses outlined in this section produce different truth-conditions from what could be expected on the basis of rules of language, however reliable these rules may seem if considered in abstract. If we tried simply to apply the rules found in dictionaries and grammar books to such utterances, we would not end up with the propositional contents that we – and other users of the language – understand the utterances actually to express. Our intuitive agreement on the core meaning is not accounted for by the power of rigorous rules in such cases. On the contrary, we seem to coordinate with intuitive ease in *loosening*, *bending* and *breaking* the rules. The rules are unreliable.

Could a rule model dispose of this problem by postulating additional rules? We should doubt it given the possibilities of flexibility and innovativeness which the research cited has consistently shown to exist. Some ‘dead’ metaphors, for example, might fit into a rule model since they are so standard that we could state extra rules for what they mean. But many metaphors are original and some are truly creative, as observed in the language performance even of small children (Bühler, 2011, p. 395). Again, this should not surprise us because language is used to say novel things in novel situations.

But perhaps the model can at least *contain* the problem? Some linguistic or paralinguistic signals indicate ‘deviant’ uses of one kind or another, e.g. quotation marks flagging indirect speech, or an ironical tone of voice. Sometimes, the ‘deviant’ uses are made explicit with the help of hedging expressions, introductions and comments. If an indexical signals its own insufficiency (as discussed above), then these devices might signal

the unreliability of whatever falls into their domain. However, it is first of all not clear whether all of these cues themselves work according to reliable ‘rules’.<sup>13</sup> But even if they do, they are not always present when the phenomena in question occur. We do not say ‘metaphorically speaking’ every time we use a metaphor. Most of the examples, given above, for different uses of the word ‘here’ work without any open signal of ‘deviant’ use. Apparently, we are so familiar with implicit deviations from linguistic rules that we do not need to signal them. Often we would even *avoid* signaling them, as in certain forms of irony, linguistic play of flirtation. Moreover, the phenomena of “open texture” concepts and “ad hoc” meaning construction occur in direct, literal, straightforward uses of language as well. It does not seem useful to call such uses ‘deviant’ to start with. As with the other cases, they pose a problem for a rule model, but not for our everyday understanding of language which that model is supposed to explain.

If the rule model cannot ‘contain’ the unreliability of rules, the problem reaches the same proportions as that of their insufficiency. The reasons are the same. If the decision to ‘deviate’ from a (hypothetical) rule apparatus is not itself triggered by a rule, then neither is the decision *not* to deviate, i.e. to simply follow the rules. Even if there were only a few spots of ‘hidden’ unreliability, the fact that these spots are not themselves signaled on a reliable basis would be enough to demonstrate that *never* and *nowhere* do linguistic rules provide a reliable ground for our intuitive grasp of propositional content.<sup>14</sup> Rules then cannot even give us stable kernels or frames of shared meaning. Our use of language is too flexible for that, and it has no need for it either.

## Language and lifeworld

The previous sections have shown that even if we assume the existence of stable ‘rules’ of language, we do not gain either a sufficient or a reliable ground for explaining our intuitions about the propositional meaning of utterances in context. Since the rules themselves do not signal where they are sufficient and reliable and where they are not, both problems affect the whole of language use. A rule model of language therefore does not work even for ‘regular’ or ‘normal’ cases, or for a part or sub-domain of language use. A rule model

<sup>13</sup> John Gumperz discusses a broad range of what he calls “contextualization cues” (Gumperz, 1992), but importantly, he does *not* present these as strictly rule-governed, but as dynamic and context-sensitive.

<sup>14</sup> To put it differently: if we aim to explain our linguistic coordination, any supposed priority of “normal” rule-following over what Habermas would call “parasitic” uses of language collapses because the rules of language themselves are unable to draw this distinction.

fails to answer the question: on what basis our precise and flexible linguistic communication is possible?

This assessment does not necessarily cast doubt on the important role of language for communication and for a shared lifeworld more generally. It does, however, require a different view of language and linguistic communication. On the level of theory, the idealizations behind a rule model become useless. The model fails to meet the theoretical goal for the sake of which, in Habermas's case, the idealization of stable 'rules' of language was explicitly constructed in the first place. But if this is the case, the reason for attributing similar idealizations to the language users themselves also disappears. We do not follow ideally stable 'rules' in our linguistic production and comprehension, and we do not expect others to do so. We do tend to follow linguistic patterns and expect others to do so. But we are able and quite ready to deviate from the patterns, to modify or ignore them in actual use. In other words, we are oriented towards the patterns of our language only "until further notice", as Schutz would put it. To the extent that in doing so, we employ a kind of idealization (in the sense outlined above), it is best described as a dynamics of typicality. Linguistic patterns are *types* after all, as Schutz had claimed.

This implies a more complex relation between language and lifeworld. Habermas seems to suggest that the idealization of stable rules is a successful model for linguistic communication and should therefore be extended to the lifeworld. But if a rule model cannot explain communication even in the case of language, this strategy seems much less promising. The lifeworld cannot be thought of as an outgrowth of "linguistically generated" structures (Habermas, 1987, p. 130) from an already solid linguistic basis. Measured against the propositional meaning cores actually communicated by utterances, hypothetical rules of language are both insufficient and unreliable throughout. We do not base our shared understanding strictly on linguistic patterns and on them alone. Instead, we use our shared understanding in deciding where to follow the patterns and where to complement or suspend them. In a nutshell, Schutz already offered this argument when he criticized Husserl's view of the relation between language and lifeworld. It is not the use of language and other symbol systems which constitutes a "common environment", Schutz argued, but the other way around: it is a common environment which enables us to communicate using language (Schutz, 1966a, p. 38).

On the face of it, Habermas may be read as advocating a similar view. When we produce and understand utterances, we activate "background knowledge" (Habermas, 1998a, p. 240) which is part of our lifeworld as a "common ground of shared convictions" (Habermas, 1998a, p. 236). Returning

to some of the examples given above, we could say that everyday knowledge about parking and filling up cars supplies more specific meanings for ‘here’ in some cases, and familiarity with doctor-patient interactions makes it clear that the patient’s liver is meant by ‘here’ even when the doctor is pointing at herself. Nevertheless, we should reiterate: this “background knowledge” is not a supplement which builds on an autonomous foundation provided by rule-governed linguistic communication. Nor is it needed merely to fill gaps in such a foundation. Instead, this supplement is needed to make a rule model of communication work for any part of language in the first place.

Therefore, when Habermas writes that linguistic expressions are “embedded in the context of a lifeworld that is in turn linguistically constituted” (Habermas, 1998b, p. 334) or when he characterizes knowledge in terms of “*grammatically regulated* relations among the elements of a *linguistically organized* stock of knowledge” (Habermas, 1987, p. 124), we should clarify his claims. If a rule model is to make sense at all, our lifeworld must follow ideally stable ‘rules’ of its own. More precisely: (1) The patterns of the lifeworld must have the same format as the hypothetical rules of language, and in *this* sense (if we think of language as a paradigmatic system of rules) we might say they are “linguistically organized”. (2) Second, these rules must be distinct from the rules of language.<sup>15</sup> After all, lifeworld knowledge not only supplies utterances with full meanings (which is why rules of language alone are insufficient), but it is even able to override or modify the application of the linguistic rules (which is why they are unreliable). Would this extended rule model be plausible?

If they are to rescue the rule model, the ‘rules’ of the lifeworld have to carry a heavy burden. They must provide the context which gives an utterance its meaning. And they must do so not only in some cases, but even in cases where the bare rules of language would be sufficient, since only from the context can we judge where the ‘rules’ are sufficient and where they are not. Due to the flexibility of language, there are in principle no outer limits to what can be part of the context relevant to propositional meaning. Depending on the situation, the relevant context may contain linguistic elements as well as culture-specific knowledge; but it may also include information from the

<sup>15</sup> Searle makes similar claims (which should be clarified in the same way). The shared “skills and abilities” of what he calls our collective “Background” (Searle, 1983, p. 141) are a “reflection of”, “sensitive to”, “so to speak, functionally equivalent to” rules which are the reason for their existence, although they are not identical with them (Searle, 1995, p. 142). The “Background” is structured by “institutions” (for Searle, this includes linguistic rules), and institutions rely on a “formal linguistic mechanism” (Searle, 2010, p. 7) as the “glue that holds society together” (Searle, 1995, p. 9).

perception or memory of the participants in a communicative event, or information related to their current goals or emotional states (Sperber and Wilson, 1986, p. 132). Due to the precision of language, there are also in principle no ‘inner’ limits to the degree of detail required of this contextual information. If we wish to save the rule model at the basic level of propositional meaning, all these possible fields of context must be “regulated”, in advance, in every possible degree of detail by stable ‘rules’. If any possibly relevant element were left out, the problem of insufficiency and unreliability would recur on the level of the lifeworld and again infect all of it, because the rules could not ‘contain’ the problem. The decision whether or not the rules of the lifeworld are sufficient and reliable would then depend, in *all* cases, on a decision made outside the extended rule apparatus.

By treating the lifeworld in this way as an indefinitely extensive and fine-grained apparatus of ideally stable rules, we could indeed save the rule model. We would give an answer to the question how precise and flexible linguistic communication is possible and how individuals can understand each other in ever new situations. However, this answer would deny any differences between the individual standpoints. It would describe the social world not only as a pre-established harmony, but as a world in which everybody has the exact same reaction to a given situation and *therefore* understands what others mean by what they say. In fact, intersubjective agreement would be so perfect that there would be little need for words at all. This consequence is absurd, and it would certainly exclude the plurality of “validity claims” which Habermas sought to ground with the help of his rule model of language.

Naturally, Habermas would not want to claim anything like this. He wants to combine a rule model with plurality and variation:

Certainly, grammatical rules guarantee an identity of meaning for linguistic expressions. But at the same time, they must leave room for individual nuances and innovative unpredictability in the use of these expressions, whose identity of meaning is only presumed (Habermas, 1992, p. 47).

Yet for the reasons given, such a mixed solution<sup>16</sup> is not theoretically feasible. Linguistic rules are never reliable and therefore never “guarantee an identity of meaning” – unless we go all the way and accept the absurd rule

<sup>16</sup> A comparable mixed solution is offered by Searle, who wants to combine guarantees of social coordination we earn by using language “in the stereotypical appropriate way” (Searle, 1995, p. 132) with “spontaneity, creativity, and originality” (Searle, 1995, p. 141) in our social behavior.

model of the entire lifeworld sketched above. But giving up an ideal identity of meaning means giving up the ideal stability of the ‘rules’, and with them the rule model as a whole.

What is the alternative? We could say that an identity of meaning is “only presumed” (to echo Habermas) in the following sense: social actors are oriented towards an ideal identity of meaning when using language and they tend to expect it from the linguistic performances of others; but at the same time, they are always open to producing and recognizing deviations from the ideal. But then we are talking about a quite different kind of idealization. It is more aptly expressed by Schutz’s concept of “types” which are “taken for granted until further notice”.<sup>17</sup> Schutz’s position, which describes both linguistic patterns and the patterns of the lifeworld in terms of types, is the more viable one.

## **Conclusions: Phenomenology and social theory**

Is phenomenology outdated in social theory? I will first summarize the argument and conclusions of this paper and then sketch some perspectives for further research.

This paper focused on Jürgen Habermas’s seminal criticism of Alfred Schutz. Their disagreement was reconstructed in terms of different roles they provide for idealization within a theory of linguistic communication. Given that our empirical language use differs across individuals and situations, the assumption of shared patterns already implies a degree of idealization. Schutz analyzes linguistic patterns in terms of “types”. These are “taken for granted” by the social actors, who operate on a number of basic idealizations. But types are taken for granted “only until further notice”, and in this sense they involve a dynamics of variation. Habermas explicitly rejects this dynamics, claiming that a stronger kind of idealization is needed to explain the possibility of communication. To the extent that only ideally stable “rules” make it possible for the social actors to communicate, Habermas argues, these rules are more than theoretical constructs; they are part of social reality itself. In his model, the ‘rules’ of language give us a solid ground of mutual understanding upon which a plurality of individual “validity claims” becomes possible.

<sup>17</sup>In later texts, Habermas might even have tacitly recanted his “radical” understanding of the lifeworld to which I referred to above. He now uses the formula “until further notice” (“*bis auf weiteres*”) himself, but without referring to Schutz, and even the implicit reference is lost in English translations such as “at least provisionally” (Habermas, 2008, p. 36) or “only *pro tempore*” (Habermas, 2008, p. 41).

A rule model was first assessed as far as patterns of language are concerned. Assuming hypothetically that these patterns are ideal ‘rules’, it was asked whether such rules could provide a ground for our intuitive understanding of what an utterance means. In order to choose a fair criterion, meaning was conceived as the propositional core content expressed by an utterance in context. This is a minimal requirement for grasping the flexibility and precision of language. A discussion of example utterances as well as a review of evidence and analyses from linguistics and the philosophy and sociology of language showed that the models fails even according to this minimal criterion. Putative rules of language give us less than what we understand to be the propositional content. The rules are *insufficient*. This is true not only in certain cases or domains of language use, but in every single instance. The reason is that the rules do not signal those cases where we actually know they need to be complemented. Hence, the rules do not explain our mutual understanding even in cases where applying the rules alone would be enough. Furthermore, our intuitive grasp of propositional meaning deviates from any putative rules of language. The rules are *unreliable* not only in certain cases or domains, but in every single instance. The reason is again that the rules do not signal those cases where our intuitive understanding deviates from them. Hence, the rules do not explain our mutual understanding even in cases where merely following the rules would yield the correct interpretation.

In conclusion, a rule model of language fails to answer the question: on what basis is our precise and flexible linguistic communication possible? It should be stressed that this failure is not only empirical, but first and foremost theoretical: The strong idealization of stable ‘rules’ of language does not meet the theoretical goal for which Habermas explicitly introduced it: to explain the possibility of communication.

Both Schutz and Habermas stress the central role that the patterns of a shared language play within a lifeworld in the sense of a shared and familiar social world. Habermas seems to go further when he claims that our language is the foundation for our lifeworld, and that a lifeworld is “linguistically constituted”. Schutz criticized a similar position in the late Husserl, countering that linguistic communication is only possible at all within a wider framework of understanding. Given that linguistic rules alone are insufficient and unreliable and depend for communication on a mutual understanding which is able to complement or override them, Schutz is right.

It was considered whether Habermas’s rule model would work if extended it to the “lifeworld”. Rather than building on language as a sound foundation, this would mean adding more idealizations so that a rule model can work for

language to start with. But while this strategy might be consistent in itself, it would lead to unacceptable conclusions. The reason is that there are in principle no boundaries to the context which can be relevant to understanding propositional meaning. In order to save the rule model of language, we would have to assume that the action and experience of every individual in a group follows shared and stable rules down to the last detail. We would thereby eliminate any differences between individuals, let alone a plurality of “validity claims”. Since this conclusion is absurd, Habermas’s idealizations fail to explain our communication even in an extended version applied to the lifeworld.

Instead, I suggested adopting the Schutzian view of both language and lifeworld in terms of *types* rather than rules. Like a rule model, this view accounts for the importance of shared, taken-for-granted patterns in linguistic communication and in the wider framework of a lifeworld. But unlike a rule model, the dynamics of types can equally account for the flexibility and precision of our linguistic communication. Schutz’s position allows us to state that language is a central medium of typification within a lifeworld. But at the same time, it allows us to recognize that communication in that medium is not autonomous but involves an interplay with types outside language proper, e.g. with routines of action or patterns of attention and perception which are “socially derived”, as Schutz would put it.

Insofar as the possibility of communication is essential to a social world, and insofar as language is the most flexible and precise means of communication, this would mean that phenomenology is not outdated in social theory, as Habermas and Searle<sup>18</sup> have claimed. On the contrary, Schutz’s approach seems to be the more advanced. Judging from the argument made in this paper, not only are sociologists right in seriously discussing phenomenological arguments, but social philosophers should do so as well. Various points made here were already made by Schutz in criticism of Husserl (and other phenomenologists). There is a rich history of phenomenological thought before rule models became dominant in various fields, and this history should be tapped in order to take the discussion forward.

Of course, the history of phenomenology does not offer ready and complete solutions to problems in social theory, and the discussion is not closed. In the context of this paper, the claim that we communicate using

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<sup>18</sup>The parallels between Habermas and Searle noted in the course of the paper indicate that Habermas’s criticism is similar to what John Searle may have had in mind when stating his (equally seminal) dismissal of Schutz’s approach.

mere *types* needs a more complex explanation than that given by a rule model. Yet phenomenology is not a thing of the past. Contemporary developments in phenomenology beyond Schutz may be instrumental on the way towards a fuller explanation. To conclude, I would only like to hint at one aspect important to the present discussion.

The dynamics of types can accommodate the flexibility and precision of language because types are taken for granted only “until further notice”. But this latter qualification needs explaining. First of all, it must be more than a clause stating that we can deviate from a type if we run into a problem which forces us to do so. This is because the various phenomena exemplified above, while posing problems for a rule model, do not usually pose problems for language users. When people talk or write using metaphors, irony, ellipsis etc., they usually do so without hesitation and without first considering a more regular expression. Likewise, when people understand the meaning of such utterances, they usually do so directly and automatically, without first constructing a more regular interpretation and then dismissing it. Both the production and the interpretation of utterances actively and easily transcend typical patterns. Therefore, in addition to a tendency to follow types (to “take them for granted”), we should assume a tendency to *transcend* the types we take for granted. Such “spontaneity” can also be seen in fields of experience and action outside language use proper, and a phenomenological framework is suited to reflect both tendencies (Straßheim, 2016a; 2016b). The crucial point for a collaboration between phenomenology, sociology and social philosophy is that an active tendency to transcend types not only operates on the level of the individual but is a constitutive element of social phenomena. In our everyday language, we spontaneously supplement, modify or ignore shared typical patterns, and what is vital: we do so *together*. A theory aiming to capture the possibility of communication cannot, on pain of failure, idealize away from this fact.

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## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Understanding Melasma: Lifeworld Reflective Approach

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** Adopting new attitude toward patients with skin diseases taken into consideration their lifeworld which enable understanding and effective communication. Second aim is to evaluate the impact of Melasma on patient lifeworld and quality of life in a sample of Iraqi women.

**Methods:** This study was conducted at my private clinic in the period between April 20114 and March 2015. DLQI is administered & all women answered questions on a 0-3 scale based on their experience during the previous 7 days. The scores are then tabulated and expressed as a number from 0 to 30 or, alternatively, as a percentage of the maximum score, with higher values indicative of poorer outcomes. A maximum score of 30 means that the quality of life of the sufferer is greatly affected. A descriptive analysis of the score was performed. In addition we use interpretative phenomenology (lifeworld approach) which is a qualitative research method that describes the meaning of a lived experience from the perspective of the patient. Phenomenology seeks to achieve a deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied through a rigorous, systematic examination of it from inside perspective. Its aim is to describe the essences of lived experiences.

**Results:** Seventy patients with melasma were participated in this study; 49(70%) married and 21 (30%) unmarried with an age range from 18 to 48 years and the mean  $\pm$  SD (30.1  $\pm$  6.3) & 78.6% of women were under 35. They were mostly married (70%) & about 81.42 had suffered from melasma for 4 years, and 18.57% for more than 5 years. The mean  $\pm$  SD DLQI score was (12.52  $\pm$  6.44) (median: 13) .Women under 35 years of age had a higher score than those over 35 years of age (12.77 vs. 5.2). Also the score is higher in unmarried women than married (19.24 vs. 9.53). Mean MASI score was 9.15. which is not correlated with DLQI score. Mean disease duration was 2.98. We found that QOL in Iraqi patients (both on DQL questionnaire & interpretive phenomenology methods) was significantly affected, the burden higher in unmarried compared to married women. Presence of melasma was associated with higher DLQI scores, indicating worse life quality.

**Conclusion:** the study revealed that melasma has a deleterious impact on the HRQOL. It severely affects patient lifeworld and consequently their well-being, and socioeconomic effect through continuous seeking for whitening drugs that give them false hope.

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## INTRODUCTION

Most academic researches about melasma was done using quantitative research paradigm in which the focus is directed to its physical appearance, epidemiology and pathogenesis rather than its psychological effect. In this

study we are interested in other aspect of this skin condition, in the patient lifeworld , disclosing the meaning of what is like to live with melasma , the paradigm that produced the psychological

manifestations through them patients wellbeing and self –image affected.

Approaching melasma phenomenologically can establish a shared ground that condition the possibility of empathy and communication in clinical encounter and providing the scientific basis for lifeworld medicine that can bridge the gap between doctors and patients and provide radical therapy of the crisis of health care system. To understand the importance of our research we need to look at sources of this crisis that result in patient dissatisfaction and poor compliance and relationship with health care professionals.

### The philosophical root of the crisis in medicine

Traditionally doctor approach their patients- in all specialties– through biomechanical model, in which patients are reduced to their biological body as if they are machine. Utilization of this model has led, in part, to a quality of care crisis in medicine, in which patients perceive physicians as not sufficiently compassionate or empathic towards their suffering<sup>1</sup>.

Biomechanical attitude is constructed historically through dualistic philosophy as declared by Rene' Descartes. He split the mind from the body, and on the one hand imparted to the mind a person's identity and

vitality while on the other hand he reduced the body to a machine made from inanimate material<sup>2</sup>.

### Cartesian body as basis of modern medicine

Cartesian machine-body constitutes the paradigm of contemporary medicine. This paradigm is responsible for dehumanization of our medical practice and discourse about patients, seeing them in objective \ detached way as if they are objects<sup>2,3</sup>.

This medical attitude is the dominant one till now in spite of introducing many reforms in health care system and medical education like : patient centered medicine , narrative medicine , problem base learning and competency based education in addition to medical humanity courses , unfortunately still the reform is cosmetic not therapeutic<sup>4,5</sup>.

Even after introducing patient \ person centred medicine the gap is still wide and not bridged, what happened is just new cliché, guideline and disciplinary action are shown formally but the behavior of health care professional guided by informal Cartesian philosophy .These reform cannot lead transformative changes as they are working at single loop level which is efficient in managing the problem temporarily but not leading transformative change (Figure 1)<sup>6</sup>.

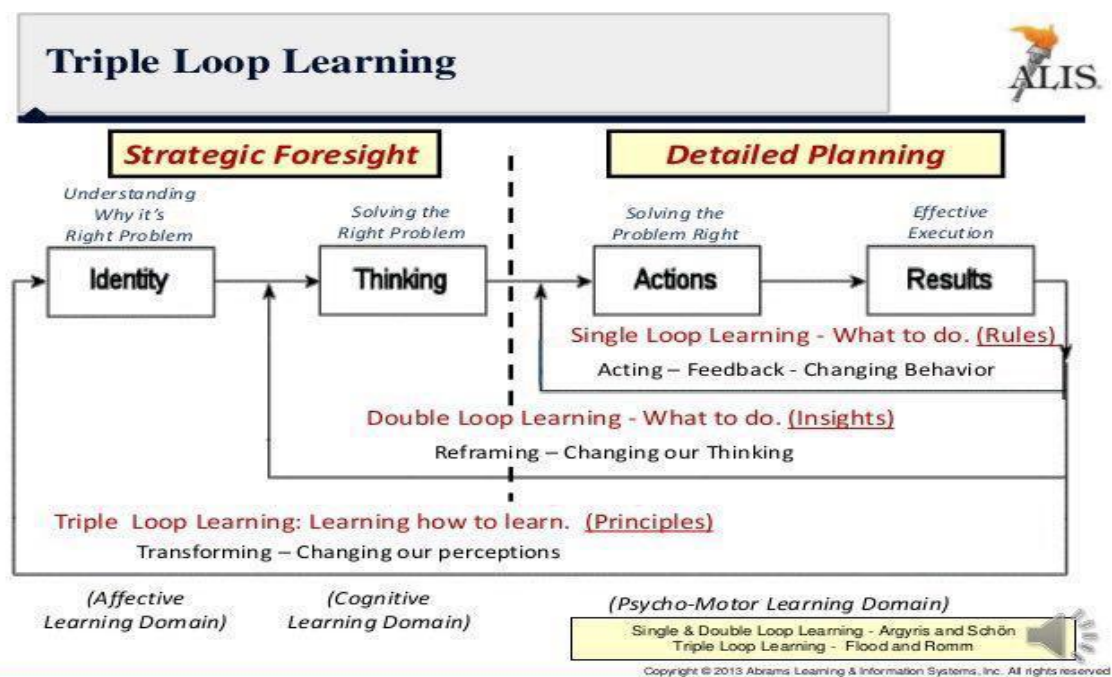


Fig. 1 Triple Loop Learning

I recommend reading this presentation about strategic foresight which enable us understanding how transformative reform can be achieved and how can be prepared for future ([www.alisinc.com](http://www.alisinc.com)). Phenomenology is a form of triple loop learning, it is effective and efficient tool for strategic foresight in addition to its role as qualitative research paradigm.

The result of medical education and health care system can be radically changed only if the reform started at the level of identity (perception\attitude \principles\heart) in which the being of doctors (their professional identity)

are transformed. The result of such radical reform is a shift in the medical gaze from the patient as physical body to patient as embodiment of lifeworld.

This radical shift in perception and attitude is better expressed through the language of Martin Buber (1878 – 1965)<sup>7</sup>. His notions of I-Thou and I-It relationships is a manifestation of the relevant paradigms that underpin theses relationship. Hence the biomechanical paradigm underpin the (I-It relationships) in which doctors need to be detached and objective if they want to fix the disorder of the body machine, and consequently they don't need

to exercise empathy and compassion as long as the patient is seen as (It\ object\case) .

In Habermas language I-it relationship is embodiment of instrumental mind which apply the system without caring for the lifeworld of people, as it is aim is just success not communication and consensus<sup>7</sup>.

Lifeworld phenomenological approach to medicine is the bases of I-Thou relationships, characterized by empathy, autonomy, respect, reciprocity, and acceptance of the unique other as the patient seen as whole \ lived body. In Habermas language I-thou relationship is embodiment using communicative mind which aim at mutual understanding rather than control, prediction and explanation. The “I- it “perspective is necessary for medical education and practice but it should be founded on “I –Thou “relationship, on lifeworld, creating partnership, dialogue relationship that can legitimize any medical intervention within empathic attitude of care. Hence the problem is not related to knowledge and skill of doctors but to the kind of attitude and perception reproduced and adopted by traditional medical education.

For this reason the gulf between patients and health care system will not be bridged unless the paradigm and related attitude about body, health, and illness is transformed. Phenomenology is the best alternative to Cartesian medicine that can lead such radical reform and change using lifeworld approach and system thinking that create new ontology and epistemology and methodology of medicine as science and art<sup>6,7</sup>.

#### **What is Cartesian medicine?**

Medical education discourse is framed through dualistic philosophy about human being which is received without questioning. In this dualistic Cartesian philosophy our concept about body is reduced to anatomical\ pathological discourse. Cartesian body is just a corpse and this Cartesian corpse has had an acute impact upon the practice of modern medicine as shown by Leder.

“Modern medicine, profoundly Cartesian in spirit, has continued to use the corpse as a methodological tool and regulative ideal”<sup>3</sup> .

The paradigm of positivism gave primacy to the material objects as a ultimate foundation of scientific knowledge over subjective experience and values, which are regarded a bias that should be bracketed. Positivism claims that any judgement or decision that is not empirically verified is not scientific, that is, it is not reliable, not objective and generalizable.

#### **Husserlian Medicine: Phenomenology as new foundation of medicine**

Phenomenology introduced by Edmund Husserl at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century as therapy of this pathology and crisis induced by this positivistic \reductive paradigm which reduced the truth to the mathematical truth<sup>10</sup> .

The same pathology is applied to medicine that is founded on Cartesian dualistic philosophy in which doctors reduced the person to only one aspect of his

lifeworld which is the biological body, which is isolated as if it is independent from the whole.

Phenomenology is the antidote to any reductive approach in which analytical thinking try to break the whole into isolated independent pieces for the sake of objective, statistical knowledge on the expense of the whole (the big picture).

Changing the mental frame (paradigm), can change the perception and consequently the medical attitude. Phenomenology introduced as new frame of reference, new paradigm with new view about nature of reality and knowledge. It started as response to dominance of positivistic philosophy in which Subjective dimension of the experience is excluded from the scientific approach. Phenomenology offered radical therapy to any claim that overlook the lifeworld of being human<sup>7,8</sup> .

The antidote in phenomenology which ensure not falling into a reductive mind , is its slogan of going back **to the things themselves, to the lifeworld** putting between brackets all theoretically constructed knowledge ,prejudice and presupposition that become barriers to see things as they are , making our experience dead one instead of being lived experience. Prejudices and presupposition work like boxes that enclosed our thinking and perception limiting what can appear to us<sup>9</sup> .

Phenomenology started its work only if we get out of this imposed boxes by tradition and our community of practice, this getting out is called Epoche, bracketing .

Bracketing is one of the essential technique used by phenomenology, it is critical stance in which one put aside any theoretical claims, paradigms, dealing with them as presupposition, and waiting their emergence from the lifeworld. The legitimacy of any discourse is derived from this lived world in which we meet human as whole, within context, cultural, social, personal context. The return to lifeworld is to a return to the contextualization of patients and seeing them as individual person with whole framework this attitude is foundation of system thinking practice that is known as phronesis<sup>9,10</sup> .

#### **From Cartesian body to embodiment**

According to Baron· phenomenology seek to reunite **science with life** and to explore the relationship between the **abstract world of the sciences** and the concrete world of human experience<sup>11</sup> .

Physically speaking the body is weighed, measured objectively from third. It is seen by the others as this physical object. Phenomenologically speaking, the body is subjective. Seen from inside there is feelings, perceptions and sensations, the seat of subjectivity, the place where consciousness occurs. As such the body is a subject-object, a unique being that can be experienced both from a first- and a third-person point of view<sup>12</sup> .

One of the aim of our study is to give voice to first – person perspective, shedding light on experience of melasma as seen from inside, as it is lived by patients which condition the possibility for understanding the patient lifeworld as person fulfilling the call for person centred medicine.

If the doctors really want to bridge the gap between *body as machine* and *body as subject* they need a Janus head, One head with two faces, flexible and dynamic, directed at both world (medical world and lifeworld) motivated by call for empathy and understanding in addition to diagnosis and treatment. This Janus head medicine is essential for reflective humanistic practice known as professionalism<sup>13</sup>.

#### **Dermatological approach to melasma:**

Melasma is a common cause of acquired hyperpigmentation and is a chronic disease appearing in the form of asymptomatic brownish blemishes, localized on photo-exposed areas especially on the face – cheeks, forehead, upper lip, nose and chin<sup>14</sup>.

Factors associated with melasma include exposure to ultraviolet light, genetic influences, hormones associated with pregnancy, oral contraceptives, hormone replacement therapy, thyroid autoimmunity, cosmetic ingredients, and phototoxic drugs, with ultraviolet light exposure and genetic factors being the strongest predictors<sup>15, 16</sup>.

This approach is interested in translating the sign and symptom into definite diagnosis for the sake of treatment. For this reason patient lived experience of diseases is overlooked as long as it is not important for the diagnosis.

#### **Research methods**

##### **What kind of research methods do we need to study lived experience?**

Two methods used in this study which are grounded into two different research paradigm. The first one is a questionnaire (Dermatology Life Quality Index (DLQI) grounded into positivistic paradigm (quantitative design) which represent its finding in the form a statistical figure about the quality of life. And the second one is semi-structured interview grounded into phenomenological paradigm (qualitative design) representing its finding as themes.

#### **The Dermatology Life Quality Index**

The Dermatology Life Quality Index (DLQI) was the first dermatology specific Health-related QoL questionnaire. It was published in 1994 by Finlay and Khan<sup>and</sup> has already been used with various dermatoses, including melasma<sup>18</sup>. The Dermatology Life Quality Index (DLQI) was originally developed in English and has been translated and validated in multiple languages<sup>19</sup>.

The Dermatology Life Quality Index (DLQI) is a 10 item instrument that is used in a wide range of dermatological conditions and across a wide range of disease severity as a quality of life instrument. The total scale score has a range of 0 to 30. A score of 0–1 is generally recognized as demonstrating that the patient has experienced no effect on quality of life due to skin conditions. A score of 2–5 represents a small effect, 6–10 a moderate effect, 11–20 a very large effect, and 21–30 an extremely large effect<sup>18, 20</sup>.

The DLQI is a self-administered, easy and user-friendly questionnaire with an average completion time of 126s. The 10 items of the questionnaire focus on a variety of

health dimensions, including symptoms, feelings, daily activities, leisure, work/school, relationships, and treatment<sup>21</sup>.

The World Health Organization presented a classification system defining health as “not merely the absence of disease but complete physical, psychological and social well-being.”, this definition gives the qualitative research significance and validity in medical researches<sup>22</sup>.

Quality of life (QOL) indices assess the effects of disease on patients’ well-being.

Melasma has significant emotional and psychological effects. The impact of disease upon patients’ overall wellbeing, their family and personal relationships, and upon their work has become an increasingly important focus of treatment.

The increased attention to HRQOL is a consequence of a greater understanding within the dermatology community that more comprehensive outcome measures can lead to better treatment strategies by providing valuable information that assists clinicians and patients<sup>15</sup>.

The DLQI has been the most utilized and validated instrument of HRQOL in skin diseases, for example, psoriasis. It is short, practical, and applicable to many dermatological disorders. Finlay and Khan showed that DLQI scores for patients with psoriasis, atopic eczema, generalized improvement resulting from treatment, increasing the scope of therapeutic results<sup>18, 22, 23</sup>.

#### **Lifeworld reflective Approach:**

The second method used is semi-structured interview grounded in the interpretive phenomenology paradigm (lifeworld reflective approach) which express its results through words and narrative representing themes shared by the patients. It is important to remember that in any scientific research, the kind of question determine the which kind of research paradigm is chosen. For this reason lifeworld approach which is extension of qualitative research methodology should be primary to any alternative quantitative approach<sup>24, 25</sup>.

#### **The primacy of perception:**

##### **“The perceiving mind is an incarnated mind”. Merleau-Ponty**

We perceive with our bodies, the body is the way through which we enter the world. In our lifeworld we perceive with our skin, any one can imagine how the perception of others, ourselves, if we get vitiligo, alopecia, psoriasis. As if experience can give us imaginary picture about the lifeworld with such skin conditions.

The condition that make skin diseases having such impact on our lifeworld is explored in our study, the effect of skin disease on our self-image is evident, our skin is our mode of appearance in lifeworld, and it is social organ rather than just biological<sup>7</sup>.

To access the lifeworld of melasma, we need to shift our attitude from medical to phenomenological attitude in which new meanings of illness will be disclosed like shame, loss of self-esteem, distorted self-image, embarrassment, feeling strange to ourselves.

The call for a Paradigm shift from Dualistic (biomechanical) medicine to phenomenological one is adopted to treat the crisis of medicine in which patients perceive physicians as not sufficiently compassionate or empathic towards their suffering. Working from the biomechanical model of the body, today's physician operates primarily as a mechanic or technician, whose clinical gaze is focused neither on the patient as a whole nor on the patient's lived context but exclusively on the diseased body or body part. Utilization of this model has led, in part, to a quality of care crisis in medicine, in which patients<sup>1</sup>. This is one of the rationale behind using phenomenology as lifeworld reflective approach, & as a foundation of new medicine.

**Lifeworld reflective approach** developed by Karin Dahlberg, Nancy Drew & Maria Nyström (2001) unifying the principles of phenomenology and hermeneutics through the concept of lifeworld. The authors have chosen to draw upon the philosophy of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and H.G.Gadamer, all great philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century who have led paradigm shift from **positivism\analytical** philosophy of modernism to **interpretive\system thinking** philosophy of postmodernism.

The main theses in lifeworld approach is primacy of the whole over parts, seeing the whole is the ultimate foundation for integrated, organized decision in any field.

We can say that qualitative research through phenomenology can capture the whole while quantitative approach can see just the parts, so integrating both approach is what is meant by system thinking.

For example, regarding melasma, in traditional medicine, it is reduced to the objective \clinical side of the medical problem overlooking the subjective \patient experience of this problem.

The first approach is needed to explain, predict, control, treat the diseases physically, but if we are interested in understanding how this medical problem affect patient perception of himself and his lifeworld we need new attitude, paradigm shift from biomechanical model to phenomenological \lifeworld one.

#### **What is lifeworld?**

The concept \lifeworld" has been introduced into philosophy by Edmund Husserl in his late work \The crisis of the european sciences and the transcendental phenomenology" (see [Hu54]). With the term \lifeworld" Husserl names - in the frame of his phenomenological philosophy - the concrete context of the world. This context is intersubjectively experienced by humans in original evidence and is therefore ordered before the objective-scientific cognition of the world. Husserl uses it to designate "the only real world, the one that is actually given through perception" "the origin ground of all theoretical and practical life" "the constant ground of validity" "a source of self-evidence" and "a source of verification"

Our life-world reflects both our way of being in the world and the structure of meaningful relationships that we create in the world.

Five elements of 'lifeworld' have been articulated, building on Husserl's consideration of what makes up the human experience of life. These are temporality, spatiality, intersubjectivity, embodiment and mood. These five elements will be discussed in detail in the results.

Lifeworld reflective approach is an embodiment of Interpretive (Hermeneutic) phenomenology, which is a paradigm of qualitative research and essential methodology and method to disclose the lived experience of the patient, it is greatly cited in nursing research and qualitative studies<sup>11, 12, 13, 14</sup>.

Hermeneutic phenomenology as a philosophical movement originates with Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) as transcendental phenomenology and developed into hermeneutic and existential version through the work of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002)<sup>15</sup>.

Phenomenology, inaugurated earlier by Edmund Husserl, is a method that involves **bracketing** or holding in abeyance the "natural attitude," theoretical discourse, which includes scientific claims and so-called "common sense",<sup>16</sup> describing how things in general, including we ourselves, come to appear as "phenomena" in our **pre-reflective**, everyday experience (lifeworld), and identifying the essential structures of the phenomena, their modes of appearing, and the nature of human experience that lets them appear as they do<sup>17</sup>.

In particular, phenomenology **strives to avoid any assumptions** about body, human, "mind" and "matter," assumptions that arise from high-level theorizing with no basis in lifeworld. Hermeneutic phenomenologists interpret human experiences not only from the viewpoints of individuals under study, but also from social and historical effects<sup>18</sup>.

Heidegger states, 'interpretation functions as disclosure. That is, interpretation discloses. What is 'already there' in its totality. Interpretation allows that which is already understood, to be revealed. When things in the world have been understood through. Interpretation we can say that they have meaning. When meaning is achieved, the reality of what is already there has been made manifest. Thus, the phenomenon is revealed'<sup>15</sup>.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

A total of 70 patients with melasma (49 married and 21 unmarried) with an age range from 18 to 48 years and a mean & SD (30.1 ± 6.3) were enrolled in this study.

Full clinical examination was done of all patients, including Wood's light.

We administered the DLQI to patients who were seen & all women answered questions on a 0-3 scale based on their experience during the previous 7 days.

A maximum score of 30 means that the quality of life of the sufferer is greatly affected. A descriptive analysis of

the score was performed the length of time of the patient had suffered from the pathology.

Exclusion criteria were: male sex, age less than 18 years, or if they were not willing to fill out the DLQI.

The DLQI is easy to administer and can be completed within 3 minutes.

Regarding hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenology (IP): The starting point of IP is a deconstruction of a Cartesian theoretical and epistemological understanding of the human world and the commonalities of human experience.

The interpretive researcher creates a dialog between practical concerns and lived experience through engaged reasoning and imaginative dwelling in the immediacy of the participants' worlds.

We applied it to 10 patients, through interviewing them for half hour, we asked the patient about the lived meaning of living with melasma for them, how they appear to their self and others after having melasma.

## RESULTS

Seventy patients with melasma were included in this study; 49 married and 21 unmarried with an age range from 18 to 48 years and the mean  $\pm$  SD ( $30.1 \pm 6.3$ ), 78.6% of women were under 35 years old .

They were mostly married 70% and about 81.42% had suffered from melasma for 4 years, and 18.57% for more than 5 years.

The mean  $\pm$  SD DLQI score was  $12.52 \pm 6.44$  (median: 13) .Women under 35 years of age had a higher score than those over 35 years of age ( $12.77$  vs.  $5.2$ ). Also the score is higher in unmarried women than married ( $19.24$  vs.  $9.53$ ). Mean MASI score was 9.15. Mean disease duration was 2.98. We found that QOL in Iraqi patients (both on DQL questionnaire & interpretive phenomenology methods) was significantly affected (burden higher in unmarried compared to married women). Presence of melasma was associated with higher DLQI scores, indicating worse life quality.

### Results of Lifeworld reflective approach:

To enter the lifeworld of patient we need to know the meaning of bracketing and how we can achieve it.

Bracketing (German: Einklammerung; also called epoché, transcendental reduction, or phenomenological reduction) is a term in the philosophical movement of phenomenology describing the *act of suspending judgment about the natural world to instead focus on analysis of experience*<sup>19, 20</sup>.

Beech (1999) offers the following definition: 'Bracketing is a fundamental methodological principle. You hold all preconceptions in abeyance in order to reach experiences before they are made sense of and ordered into concepts that relate to previous knowledge and experiences'<sup>21</sup>.

These preconceptions and habits of mind, which are characteristic of everyday understanding, make up what is referred to in phenomenology as the 'natural attitude' (Paley 1997)<sup>22</sup>.

Paterson and Zderad (1988) offered the following practical advice regarding how to undertake bracketing:

- Ask oneself 'what am I taking for granted?'
- open up one's own perspective in order to break through one's tunnel vision of routine<sup>23</sup>.

Doctors or Researchers are human beings, and it is natural that they will bring their own personal experiences, preconceptions, beliefs and attitudes to the research situation or clinical encounter<sup>24</sup>.

Bracketing is critical reflective attitude, in which putting these prejudgment between brackets and going to patients themselves as persons, as lifeworld.

Without bracketing there is no emergence of lifeworld, we will see the person as medical cases in need for treatment not understanding and empathy.

Bracketing is the condition that make not just lifeworld emerge but it is the foundation of, listening, respect and professionalism.

Bracketing is a form of paradigm shift in which the background against which the patient appear as just medical case is shifted to new ground.

Seeing the patient as a person implies successful bracketing, successful paradigm shift, that condition the possibility of empathy, understanding, communication and I –You attitude.

Bracketing make listening possible , as we put aside our preunderstanding ,presupposition ,expectation ,we enter in the waiting \listening mode .The success of bracketing need will to understand patient lifeworld and time and patience.

The goal of medicine should be revisited and become broad enough to include lifeworld of both patient and doctors.

The goal of medicine should be caring about knowing about the meaning of any disease from patient perspective and about how he/she live with disease socially and spiritually sexually economically.

Without bracketing there is not only the absence of lifeworld but there is no empathy and no caring. Hence bracketing is the door to access the lifeworld, and to do phenomenology. It is a threshold concept can result in transformative experience and learning.

Medical attitude is part of natural attitude that should be bracketed if we want to know the meaning of the melasma from the patient point of view.

Melasma as skin problem affect the patient perception in way changing his view of himself and relation to place, time, others and mood.

Clinical meeting can help patient become aware of the way melasma become lifeworld, become perception, become new identity. This understanding can make patient cope with this skin disorder in rational way.

Bracketing of our medical attitude, medical world in which we are directed by biomedical paradigm that expect specific answered from the patient to achieve diagnosis and treatment.

After thematic analysis four themes found in the narrative of 10 patient's interviewed using lifeworld reflective approach:

Melasma as lived experience effect the patient construction of reality and the meanings through which seeing their self and others. Shame is primary theme the

condition ,that become ground against which other feelings emerge like shy , this make her build new reality that become her lifeworld .Melasma become lifeworld rather just skin disorder .Patients feel shame as background condition other feelings and mood like embarrassment, low-self-esteem, disfiguring, and poor self-image to figure out at every social meeting. Their personal identity is transformed to the degree to hate herself and try to hide in deferent manner reaching to the degree of suicide.

Dolezal, Luna (2015) in her great book: *The Body and Shame* “Shame as a topic of inquiry is compelling because it reaches to the heart of what it means to be human: each of us has experienced the pain of shame, it burns brightest in our memories ready to resurface, and to be relived, at any moment. We live our lives painstakingly avoiding shame; indeed, some thinkers argue that it shapes every action and encounter. As a result, shame helps make us who we are.”

Really I found this meaning through my clinical encounter and through my lived experience of melasma. Our interview questions were motivated by these five themes of lifeworld which are: Temporality, spatiality, intersubjectivity, embodiment and mood<sup>25, 27, 28, 29, 30</sup>.

#### **Regarding (lived time) Temporality:**

Surely melasma affect patient lived experience of the time. Human being in general avoid any thing make them looking older, most of the patients reported that their feeling of their face become older, they look like older than their age. .We can understand why woman motivated to treat melasma at any cost, they are trying to restore their youth. Remembering the past face led to grief feeling as they lose their beautiful smooth one color .Thinking about future make them anxious and irritable and emotionally labile & few patients become hopeless and felt helplessness of restoring their previous self-image.

#### **Regarding (lived space) spatiality:**

Spatiality refers to our environment as humans, our world and our experience of living in that environment. The way we interact with our environment and the nature of that environment have a positive or negative impact on our well-being<sup>7, 26, 27</sup>.

Patient with melasma animate their lived space through their feeling of shame and embarrassment that make their social space very limited looks like a prison.

Their effort of changing mood through changing their place was failed, because their embodied perception is transformed by melasma.

Interviews also revealed that melasma become their lived space , it is not just skin that give boundary to body organs ,it is social boundary , it condition the possible environment that can participate in it as person with confidence. Melasma through its phenomenological effect make them house-ridden.

#### **Intersubjectivity:**

Skin is not just biological organ , it is social , intersubjective organ, it is given subjectively to other as white or colored ,clean or not , uniform or disfigured beautiful , or not beautiful it is a mirror reflect or

embodiment of thoughts ,feeling and moods .Our self – image is formed mainly through our appearance of skin especially its color. Color of skin is primary attribute through which we framed as white and black or just colored.

White color has been socially and culturally constructed as beautiful and good, so the others color are inferior in the traditional social value system of beauty. This discrimination according skin color make patient with melasma seeing themselves shifted to the category of colored people and created a big problem threatening their wellbeing and their self-esteem. This social meaning of color and whiteness is the background against which patient with skin dyspigmentation see themselves and consequently seeking medical help and making them more vulnerable for exploitation by counterfeit drugs promising them of whiteness. The meaning of having white skin has phenomenological meaning of being beautiful, powerful, accepted, trusted, loveable, sexy and other positive meaning framed with this word. Hence skin color connect us to the other through theses meaning which make patient strive to achieve them Through intersubjectivity, we locate ourselves meaningfully in our interpersonal world, who am I close to, who am I worried about, who am I looking forward to seeing? What am I looking forward to doing? Intersubjectivity also articulates how we are in relation to culture and tradition that impact on how we view ourselves and others<sup>7, 26, 27, 28</sup>.

Skin color affect Forms of intersubjectivity can humanize or dehumanize us such as kindness or violence and can have a positive or negative impact on our well-being. Through interview all patients favored chronic internal disease like diabetes mellitus, hypertension which have life threatening instead of melasma which is medically benign condition. The reason is melasma as change in skin color is intersubjective. We become phenomena, visible as having discolored face. Melasma facilitate symbolic violence experienced by many patients from their husbands and neighbors. They labeled them as discolored person , it become stigma and source of shame .For this reason they favor to hide either in their home or hide behind veils .Melasma made patient see The other as the hell<sup>31</sup>.

Intersubjectivity and embodiment are essential themes in Husserlian phenomenology that challenges the Cartesian mind/ body dualism that splits our science, culture resulting in dehumanized practice and crisis in medicine .Hence they are essential therapeutic intervention in medical education and health system reform

#### **Embodiment:**

Skin as embodiment of our way of perception, our mode of being is determined by our skin color and skin health. Being human, we live within our bodies and we experience the world through them in a positive or negative way. Embodiment in public health and epidemiology is the means by which humans biologically incorporate the physical and social

environment in which they live throughout their lives. An underpinning assumption of the term embodiment is that one's biology cannot be understood without considering psychosocial and sociocultural aspects of individual development and societies history<sup>7, 33</sup>. Melasma is embodiment of the patient lifeworld. many Patient especially those who are not single reported sudden loss of beloved one or stressful experience the day before getting melasma, the darkening of their face embody dark lived time. This phenomena of embodiment reported in other autoimmune disease like psoriasis, vitiligo and alopecia Skin as Embodiment become the way we experience the world that includes our perceptions of our context and its possibilities or limits.

#### **Mood:**

In phenomenology the affectivity attitude and mood are primary they determine the horizon of our world. Melasma can be a cause and result of negative mood.

Mood is intimate to how we are as human beings and is both impacted upon and impacts upon ones spatial, temporal, intersubjective and embodied horizons and our ability to realize potential<sup>7</sup>.

Interview revealed how our relation to Lived time condition our mood as anxiety and sometimes hopelessness if our attention is directed to the future and sorrow and grief when we remember our past memories about our face when it was beautiful and young looking.

## **DISCUSSION**

Changes in the Patient lifeworld because of diseases in general is the reason behind seeking medical help. Regarding skin disease and especially pigmentary disorder is damaging patient self-image and their connection to others and their jobs.

Health care professional who are sensitive to patient lifeworld can offer holistic care and can help patient restore his calm and coping with such chronic illness. In addition lifeworld can be one of determinant factors in pathogenesis of melasma and consequently discussing such issue can be not just help in communication and compliance but can be therapeutic.

Lifeworld reflective approach is one of the important road to qualitative research, it is largely concerned with studying how people make meaning of their experience and how make these meaning disclosed through semi structured interview. Qualitative researchers will study phenomena as they appear, interpreting or making sense of what is happening in terms of the meanings people apply to them.

Qualitative research are of great value for both the patient and doctors, because it throws light on area usually overlooked, area that can bridge the gap between medical world (machine-world) and lifeworld.

Our study makes use of two approaches to the patients with melasma. First one is the DQLI which inspired by quantitative design. This approach revealed severe effect of melasma on the quality of the life of the patients. We find that the DLQI is a useful instrument for obtaining information about the impact of dermatologic disease on

a person's QOL. The instrument is efficient to use and the questionnaire form is easy to complete.

Although, melasma is considered a 'less serious' condition from the life-threatening \ medical point of view, patients are concerned and bothered severely, they are disabled, searching for any kind of help. We believe that most people in kerbala city have easy access to whitening agents which are usually composed mainly of highly potent topical corticosteroid that result in critical side effect like rosacea and skin atrophy. What made patient so vulnerable and easily cheated by commercial drugs are their severe change in their lifeworld, they need to restore their self-image, their social confidence ay any expense. Lifeworld phenomenology appracoch led patient to be aware of this tacit dimension of melasma which control their behavior without being aware. Dialogue and interview induced self –awareness and possibility of finding meaning of being with melasma and trying to cultivate their self in more mature way. This approach help them connect with themselves again and trusted their self and being capable of living with melasma and avoiding negative self –image that made them disable. Introducing traditional therapy of melasma on such base result in better response and facilitate rapid remission and less relapse in many patient.

The famous definition of "health" proposed by the World Health Organization (total physical, mental, and social well-being) underlines the fact that the fundamental outcome, which is health, must not be evaluated in negatives alone (absence of disease), but must also include the subject's perception and relation to the outside world.

Lifeworld reflective approach is about restoring patient wellbeing not just their original skin color. We can have melasma but we are leading happy life. Wellbeing is not conditioned by only physical integrity.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

We recommend Lifeworld approach as integral to the traditional medical approach which focus only on physical aspect of diseases seeking for diagnosis and treatment. In Lifeworld approach our clinical gaze is directed at patient lifeworld, their wellbeing, patient perception and conception of melasma can affect their psychological and social behavior and understanding of their selves and others. Integration of both approach :lifeworld and medical is as if looking at the diseases with both two eyes, from inside and outside perspective. The effect of lifeworld approach on both doctors and patient is well studied to the degree to adopt it as fifth wave in health care system in many European country can improve patient –doctor relationship and effective communication, Giving space and time for patients to talk about their lived experience and the possibility for shared understanding of the impact of the diseases on their lifeworld (social, personal, financial, sexual) and consequently facilitate deeper awareness and empathy<sup>9</sup>. This research paper is the first in my lifeworld dermatology series about applying lifeworld reflective

approach to other skin diseases, recommending using this new paradigm as basis of medicine as whole.

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# Lifeworld

**Lifeworld** (German: *Lebenswelt*) may be conceived as a universe of what is self-evident or given,<sup>[1]</sup> a world that subjects may experience together.<sup>[2]</sup> For Edmund Husserl, the lifeworld is the fundamental for all epistemological enquiries. The concept has its origin in biology and cultural Protestantism<sup>[3][4]</sup>

The lifeworld concept is used in philosophy and in some social sciences, particularly sociology and anthropology. The concept emphasizes a state of affairs in which the world is experienced, the world is lived (German *erlebt*). The lifeworld is a pre-epistemological stepping stone for phenomenological analysis in the Husserlian tradition.

## Contents

**The phenomenological concept**

**The sociological concept**

**The epistemological concept**

**See also**

**References**

**Further reading**

**External links**

## The phenomenological concept

Edmund Husserl introduced the concept of the lifeworld in his *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936):

In whatever way we may be conscious of the world as universal horizon, as coherent universe of existing objects, we, each "I-the-man" and all of us together, belong to the world as living with one another in the world; and the world is our world, valid for our consciousness as existing precisely through this 'living together.' We, as living in wakeful world-consciousness, are constantly active on the basis of our passive having of the world... Obviously this is true not only for me, the individual ego; rather we, in living together, have the world pre-given in this together, belong, the world as world for all, pre-given with this ontic meaning... The we-subjectivity [is] constantly functioning.<sup>[5]</sup>

This collective inter-subjective pool of perceiving, Husserl explains, is both universally present and, for humanity's purposes, capable of arriving at 'objective truth,' or at least as close to objectivity as possible.<sup>[6]</sup> The 'lifeworld' is a grand theatre of objects variously arranged in space and time relative to perceiving subjects, is already-always there, and is the "ground" for all shared human experience.<sup>[7]</sup> Husserl's formulation of the lifeworld was also influenced by Wilhelm Dilthey's "life-nexus" (German *Lebenszusammenhang*) and Martin Heidegger's Being-in-the-world (German *In-der-Welt-Sein*). The concept was further developed by students of Husserl such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jan Patočka, and Alfred Schütz. The lifeworld can be thought of as the horizon of all our experiences, in the sense that it is that background on which all things appear as themselves and meaningful. The lifeworld cannot, however, be understood in a purely static manner; it isn't an unchangeable background, but rather a dynamic horizon in which we *live*, and which "lives with us" in the sense that nothing can appear in our lifeworld except *lived*.

The concept represented a turning point in Husserl's phenomenology from the tradition of Descartes and Kant. Up until then, Husserl had been focused on finding, elucidating, and explaining an absolute foundation of philosophy in consciousness, without any presuppositions except what can be found through the reflective analysis of consciousness and what is immediately present to it.

Originally, all judgments of the real were to be "bracketed" or suspended, and then analyzed to bring to light the role of consciousness in constituting or constructing them. With the concept of the lifeworld, however, Husserl embarked on a different path, which recognizes that, even at its deepest level, consciousness is already embedded in and operating in a world of meanings and pre-judgements that are socially, culturally, and historically constituted. Phenomenology thereby became the study not just of the pure consciousness and meanings of a transcendental ego, as in Husserl's earlier work, but of consciousness and meaning in context. The lifeworld is one of the more complicated concepts in phenomenology, mainly because of its status as both personal and intersubjective.

Even if a person's historicity is intimately tied up with his lifeworld, and each person thus has a lifeworld, this doesn't necessarily mean that the lifeworld is a purely individual phenomenon. In keeping with the phenomenological notion of intersubjectivity, the lifeworld can be intersubjective even though each individual *necessarily* carries his own "personal" lifeworld ("homeworld"); meaning is intersubjectively accessible, and can be communicated (shared by one's "homecomrades"). However, a homeworld is also always limited by an alienworld. The internal "meanings" of this alienworld *can* be communicated, but can never be apprehended as *alien*; the alien can only be appropriated or assimilated into the lifeworld, and only understood on the background of the lifeworld.

## The sociological concept

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The Husserlian elucidation of lifeworld provided a starting point for the phenomenological sociology of Alfred Schütz, who tried to synthesize Husserl's phenomenology of consciousness, meaning, and the life-world with Max Weber's sociology and its focus on subjectively meaningful action. Jürgen Habermas has further developed the concept of the lifeworld in his social theory. For Habermas, the lifeworld is more or less the "background" environment of competences, practices, and attitudes representable in terms of one's cognitive horizon. Compared to Husserl with his focus on consciousness, however, Habermas, whose social theory is grounded in communication, focuses on the lifeworld as consisting of socially and culturally sedimented linguistic meanings. It is the lived realm of informal, culturally-grounded understandings and mutual accommodations. Rationalization and colonization of the lifeworld by the instrumental rationality of bureaucracies and market-forces is a primary concern of Habermas's two-volume *Theory of Communicative Action*

For Habermas, communicative action is governed by practical rationality—ideas of social importance are mediated through the process of linguistic communication according to the rules of practical rationality. By contrast, technical rationality governs *systems* of instrumentality, like industries, or on a larger scale, the capitalist economy or the democratic political government. Ideas of instrumental importance to a system are mediated according to the rules of that system (the most obvious example is the capitalist economy's use of currency). Self-deception, and thus systematically distorted communication, is possible only when the lifeworld has been 'colonized' by instrumental rationality, so some social norm comes into existence and enjoys legitimate power even though it is not justifiable. This occurs when means of mediating instrumental ideas gains communicative power—as when someone pays a group of people to stay quiet during a public debate, or if financial or administrative resources are used to advertise some social viewpoint. When people take the resulting consensus as normatively relevant, the lifeworld has been colonized and communication has been systematically distorted. The 'colonization' metaphor is used because the use of steering media to arrive at social consensus is not native to the lifeworld—the decision-making processes of the systems world must encroach on the lifeworld in a way that is in a sense imperialistic:

“ When stripped of their ideological veils, the imperatives of autonomous subsystems make their way into the lifeworld from the outside—like colonial masters coming into a tribal society—and force a process of assimilation upon it. The diffused perspectives of the local culture cannot be sufficiently coordinated to permit the play of the metropolis and the world market to be grasped from the periphery.<sup>[8]</sup> ”

The fragmentation of consciousness associated with the two Marxist concepts of alienation and false consciousness illustrate why, in Habermas' perspective, they are merely special cases of the more general phenomenon of lifeworld colonization.

Social coordination and systemic regulation occur by means of shared practices, beliefs, values, and structures of communicative interaction, which may be institutionally based. We are inevitably lifeworldly, such that individuals and interactions draw from custom and cultural traditions to construct identities, define situations, coordinate action, and create social solidarity. Ideally this

occurs by communicatively coming to understanding (German Verstehen), but it also occurs through pragmatic negotiations (compare: Seidman, 1997:197).

The lifeworld is related to further concepts such as Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus and to the sociological notion of everyday life.

## The epistemological concept

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In the course of recent constructivist discourses a discussion about the lifeworld term took place as well. Björn Kraus' relational-constructivist<sup>[9]</sup> version of the lifeworld term considers its phenomenological roots (Husserl and Schütz), but expands it within the range of epistemological constructivist theory building.<sup>[10]</sup> In consequence, a new approach is created, which is not only focusing on the individual perspective upon the lifeworld term, but is also taking account of social and material environmental conditions and their relevance as emphasized for example by Habermas. Essential therefore is Kraus' basic assumption that cognitive development depends on two determining factors. On the one hand a person's own reality is her subjective construct. On the other hand this construct—in spite of all subjectivity—is not random: Since a person is still linked to her environment, her own reality is influenced by the conditions of this environment (German Grundsätzliche Doppelbindung menschlicher Strukturumweltentwicklung).<sup>[11]</sup>

Building up on this point of view, a separation of individual perception and the social and material environmental conditions is made possible. Kraus accordingly picks up the lifeworld term, adds the term "life conditions" (German Lebenslage<sup>[12]</sup>) and opposes the two terms to each other

By this means, lifeworld describes a person's subjectively experienced world, whereas life conditions describe the person's actual circumstances in life. Accordingly, it could be said that a person's lifeworld is built depending on their particular life conditions. More precisely, the life conditions include the material and immaterial living circumstances as for example employment situation, availability of material resources, housing conditions, social environment (friends, foes, acquaintances, relatives, etc.) as well as the persons physical condition (fat/thin, tall/small, female/male, healthy/sick, etc.). The lifeworld, in contrast, describes the subjective perception of these conditions.<sup>[13]</sup>

Kraus uses the epistemological distinction between subjective reality and objective reality. Thus, a person's lifeworld correlates with the person's life conditions in the same way than subjective reality correlates with objective reality. The one is the insurmountable, subjective construct built depending on the other one's conditions.<sup>[14]</sup>

Kraus defined lifeworld and life conditions as follows:

*"Life conditions mean a person's material and immaterial circumstances of life.*

*Lifeworld means a person's subjective construction of reality, which he or she forms under the condition of his or her life circumstances.*<sup>[15]</sup>

This contrasting comparison provides a conceptual specification, enabling in the first step the distinction between a subjectively experienced world and its material and social conditions and allowing in the second step to focus on these conditions' relevance for the subjective construction of reality

With this in mind, Manfred Ferdinand, who is reviewing the lifeworld terms used by Alfred Schütz, Edmund Husserl, Björn Kraus and Ludwig Wittgenstein, concludes: Kraus' "thoughts on a constructivist comprehension of lifeworlds contours the integration of micro-, meso- and macroscopic approaches, as it is demanded by Invernizzi and Butterwege: This integration is not only necessary in order to relate the subjective perspectives and the objective frame conditions to each other but also because the objective frame conditions obtain their relevance for the subjective lifeworlds not before they are perceived and assessed."<sup>[16]</sup>

## See also

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- Umwelt

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12. See Neurath 1931 / Meiser 1956 in Björn Kraus: Lebenswelt und Lebensweltorientierung – eine begriffliche Revision als Angebot an eine systemisch-konstruktivistische Sozialarbeitswissenschaft. Kontext. Zeitschrift für Systemische Therapie und Familientherapie. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. Heft 37/02, 2006 p. 116–129. Also available online: <http://www.webnetwork-nordwest.de/sowi/article.php?sid=92> 2004, p. 7. See also Björn Kraus 2013, p. 143 ff.
13. See Björn Kraus: *Erkennen und Entscheiden. Grundlagen und Konsequenzen eines erkenntnistheoretischen Konstruktivismus für die Soziale Arbeit* Beltz Juventa, Weinheim/Basel 2013. P. 152 f.
14. See Björn Kraus: *The Life We Live and the Life We Experience: Introducing the Epistemological Difference between "Lifeworld" (Lebenswelt) and "Life Conditions" (Lebenslage)* Social Work and Society International Online Journal. Vol. 13, No. 2 2015, <http://www.socwork.net/sws/article/view/438> Björn Kraus: *Erkennen und Entscheiden*. Beltz Juventa, Weinheim/Basel 2013. P. 152.
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16. See Manfred Ferdinand: *Lebenswelten - Lebensschnüre*. Heidelberger Studien zur praktischen Theologie.: Lit Verlag: Münster 2014, S. 31.

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## External links

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-  The dictionary definition of lifeworld at Wiktionary

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