



Center for Open Access in Science

Open Journal for
Studies in Philosophy

2020 • Volume 4 • Number 1

<https://doi.org/10.32591/coas.ojsp.0401>

ISSN (Online) 2560-5380

OPEN JOURNAL FOR STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY (OJSP)

ISSN (Online) 2560-5380

<https://www.centerprode.com/ojsp.html>

ojsp@centerprode.com

Publisher:

Center for Open Access in Science (COAS)

Belgrade, SERBIA

<https://www.centerprode.com>

office@centerprode.com

Editor-in-Chief:

Tatyana Vasileva Petkova (PhD)

South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Faculty of Philosophy, Blagoevgrad, BULGARIA

Editorial Board:

Jane Forsey (PhD)

University of Winnipeg, Faculty of Arts, CANADA

Susan T. Gardner (PhD)

Capilano University, School of Humanities, Vancouver, CANADA

Lynn Hughey Engelbert (PhD)

Athabasca University, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Edmonton, CANADA

Vitaly Kosykhin (PhD)

Saratov State University, Faculty of Philosophy, RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Cristóbal Friz Echeverría (PhD)

University of Santiago de Chile, Faculty of Humanities, CHILE

Plamen Makariev (PhD)

Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Philosophy, BULGARIA

Kamen Dimitrov Lozev (PhD)

South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Faculty of Philosophy, Blagoevgrad, BULGARIA

Antoaneta Nikolova (PhD)

South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Faculty of Philosophy, Blagoevgrad, BULGARIA

Adrian Nita (PhD)

Romanian Academy, Institute of Philosophy and Psychology, Bucharest, ROMANIA

Hasnije Ilazi (PhD)

University of Prishtina, Faculty of Philosophy, KOSOVO

Executive Editor:

Goran Pešić

Center for Open Access in Science, Belgrade

CONTENTS

- 1 Thinking Essence, Thinking Technology: A Response to Don Ihde's Charge
Bowen Zha
- 11 Guardians of the Possibility that Claims Can Be False
Susan T. Gardner
- 25 Hermeneutic Phenomenology: Essence in Educational Research
Megh R. Dangal & Rupendra Joshi





Thinking Essence, Thinking Technology: A Response to Don Ihde's Charge

Bowen Zha

Kyushu University, Faculty of Humanities, Fukuoka, JAPAN

Received: 6 April 2020 ▪ Accepted: 25 May 2020 ▪ Published Online: 2 June 2020

Abstract

Heidegger's seminal lecture, *The Question Concerning Technology*, has greatly influenced the contemporary philosophy of technology. However, scholars have different views regarding whether Heidegger's concept of technology is essentialist. On the one hand, Andrew Feenberg and Don Ihde have argued for this description, while on the other, Iain Thomson has claimed that, though Heidegger appears to be a technological essentialist, but does little to discredit his profound ontological understanding of the historical impact of technology. In this essay, I will focus on Ihde's critique and argue that his charge of essentialism is itself a misinterpretation of Heidegger's understanding of technology. I conclude that the meaning of essence in Heidegger's technology should be interpreted as that of "enduring," and in that way, describing Heidegger's concept of technology as essentialism is a metaphysical misinterpretation.

Keywords: Martin Heidegger, Don Ihde, the essence of technology, romanticism, essentialism.

1. Introduction

Martin Heidegger's 1953 lecture *The Questions Concerning Technology* remains one of the most influential textbooks in the philosophy of English technology. Although widely celebrated, Heidegger's dissertation is still regarded as an essentialist explanation of technology. Recently, technical philosophers such as Andrew Feenberg and Peter-Paul Verbeek reiterated this allegation of essentialism.

Many scholars have discussed Feenberg's critique of essentialism: those defending Heidegger, such as Iain Thomson, make the meaning of essentialism more patently clear (Thomson, 2000). Moreover, David Edward Tabachnick has defended varieties of essentialism from Feenberg's charge as an "aggressive" essentialism, a "moderate" essentialism and a "passive" essentialism (Tabachnick, 2007). However, the starting points of critiques as essentialism between Feenberg and Ihde are clearly different. As Robert C. Scharff pointed out, "Feenberg's primary concern is 'the social character of technology';" i.e., on one hand, for Feenberg, the charge of essentialism against Heidegger is not for seeking to clarify the nature of technology, but building the critique of scientism and its social, political, and economic consequences. On the other hand, Ihde's point of critique is "for socio-political issues mostly arise in reply to critics complaining about his 'descriptivism', a charge that typically prompts him to simply appeal to the 'normative implications' of his phenomenological descriptions" (Scharff, 2017). In this essay, my aim is to discuss Heidegger's view of technology within the context of Ihde's interpretations.

In his lecture, Heidegger claims that a free relationship to technology is possible by questioning it and describes a technological phenomena as having an “essence” that does show modern technology itself at the level of what he terms “enframing”: “The essence of modern technology shows itself in what we call enframing (Gestell)” (Heidegger, 2008: 328). For this point, in his major work *Heidegger’s Technologies: Postphenomenological Perspectives*, Ihde emphasizes that Heidegger defined the essence of technology, which he calls a naïve and romantic prejudice, and should be criticized from three critical perspectives relating to Heidegger: historical, anti-romantic and pragmatically anti-essentialist. The premise of the anti-essentialist view is that “there are many varieties of technical experience,” and therefore “one size does not fit all” (Ihde, 2010: 120). The historical angle of criticism focuses on Heidegger’s famous judgment about science and technology, which is that although modern physical science begins earlier than machine-powered technology, “modern technology...is, from the point of view of essence holding sway within it, historically earlier” (Heidegger, 2008: 327). However, in this essay, considering that the target of Ihde’s historical criticism is not only about the essence of technology but more focusing on the relations between the science and technology, here I would like to only focus on the latter two critiques which related to the meaning of essence.

My argument is structured in three sections. In the first section, to minimize potential objections, I will first interpret the criticisms Ihde put forward, including romantic criticisms and essentialist criticisms. In the second section, we will return to Heidegger’s lecture and interpret Heidegger’s understanding of the concept of essence. For grasping the essence of technology under the meaning of Heidegger’s “essence”, I suggest reconsidering Heidegger’s thought on technology and the meaning of enframing, i.e. the *essence* of modern technology that makes modern technology endures. In the last section, I affirm that the two criticisms proposed by Ihde are born from a fundamental misunderstanding of the concept of the *essence* of technology. The key underpinning of his understanding of the meaning of technology is found not in Heidegger’s own words, but rather springs from a traditional metaphysical understanding. These conclusions help justify Heidegger’s innovative approach to understanding technology.

2. Romanticism criticism and anti-essentialism criticism

As mentioned earlier, in *Heidegger’s Technologies*, Ihde explicitly opposed Heidegger’s view of describing the essence of modern technology as enframing. However, this is not sufficient for our purposes, because it cannot tell us why essentialism is inadequate. We need to step nearer to evaluate Ihde’s critiques.

Ihde insists that “there is no essence of technology, although there are many ‘technologies’” (Ihde, 2010: 119); therefore, all essentialist theories of technology are untenable because it is not possible to try to summarize all technologies into one particular essence with certain properties. Based on this view, Ihde gives his propositions: romantic criticism and pragmatist-antiessential criticism. Our next task will be to unravel these two propositions in order to understand why the essence of technology is unreliable. Then we will return to each claim in turn and ask Heidegger if he holds any objectionable doctrine.

2.1 Deromanticizing Heidegger

According to Ihde, some of Heidegger’s technological theories stem from nostalgic, mysterious romanticism. Heidegger has evidenced obvious preferences for specific technical products (including artwork), praising water-driven mills, ancient Greek temples, and ancient stone bridges, while belittling the nearby hydroelectric power stations on the Rhine and modern viaducts. From these examples, it seems that Heidegger’s view of technology related to “a certain suspicion concerning modern technology versus traditional technologies, and the older, smaller

and simpler technologies versus the newer, larger, and more complex technologies” (Ihde, 2010: 76).

However, Ihde found that there is no qualitative difference in the use of natural power as a resource between water-driven mills and hydropower stations. Additionally, according to the research by J. Donald Huges, Ihde points out that the glorious ancient Greek temple reveals a very different “world” from that of Heidegger, which was originally set against the bare dry mountains (Ihde, 2010: 75) Therefore, despite the romantic and poetic imagery, these examples taken by Heidegger cannot be considered an historical and ecological view. Ihde thus pointed out that it should be clear that the romantic thesis pervades Heidegger’s choices of “good” and “bad” technologies and there are two elements for Heidegger’s romanticism preferences.

The first preference Heidegger follows is the principle of “embodiment relations.” “Heidegger prefers, likes, those technologies that express straightforward bodily, perceptual relations with the environment” (Ihde, 2010: 78). By analyzing examples of pens and typewriters, for example, Ihde points out that the reason Heidegger disparages the typewriter is because the pen better blends with the hand to convey a variety of personality, whereas the monotonous mechanics of the typewriter do not. The origin of this principle can be traced back to Heidegger’s preference for simple tools such as hammers in his very famous analysis in *Being and Time*. Through the example of children’s obsession with a spinning top, Ihde claims that we can find an “alterity relations”, on which “to relate to a technology in a positive way and in a situation in which the artifact takes” (Ihde, 2010: 79) Therefore, the preference for embodiment relations is a deep reason for Heidegger’s romantic expression of primitive technological products.

The second element of Heidegger’s preferences is his love of art/poetry and deprecation of technology. In his eyes, art is an authentic and famous expression that gathers “the sky, earth gods and mortals” (Himmel, Erde, Götter und Sterbliche) as the Fourfold (Geviert); in contrast, the modern technology that enframes nature is inauthentic, and this very inauthentic closure places people in danger. But Ihde claims that authenticity is just a romanticized representation of Heidegger’s, which could even be used to beautify something as potentially dangerous as nuclear power plants (Ihde, 2010: 82). The dangerous nuclear power plants can be as “authentic” as a Greek temple under a romantic description. As a result, romanticized expressions are often divorced from reality, obscuring the political implications of real-world technology products:

By adding this politics of our artifacts to the analysis...the account becomes even more powerful. What needs to be noted, however, is that the romantic thesis in its unsaying concealment has all along hidden this politics of the thingly. It hid the Greek politics of the thingly just as well as it hides ours. (Ihde, 2010: 83)

By deromanticizing Heidegger, Ihde shows that returning to ancient times is not the way to solve modern technical problems. There were also ecological/environmental problems caused by the application of technology when building the temple in ancient Greece. His deromanticization also acts to remove the prejudice towards modern technology, and the application of technology in the life-world should be analyzed and evaluated thoroughly from a phenomenological perspective. Therefore, romanticism’s rejection against modern technology is an anachronistic Lutheranism.

We will hold off on evaluating this objection of Ihde’s and asking whether it really applies to Heidegger until the other objection is on the table.

2.2 Anti-essentialism: One size cannot fit all

Let us turn, then, to anti-essentialism. Ihde clarifies: “I claim that technologies are multistable, that is, they have structured ambiguities that allow what first appears as a ‘same’

technology to be differently situated and have different trajectories” (Ihde, 2010: 126).

Furthermore, by analyzing the example of the multidimensionality of the Necker cube, Peter-Paul Verbeek summarizes Ihde’s concept of multistable aspects on one cube to clarify that “what it ‘really’ remains undetermined. It is many things at once; it is ‘stable’ in multiple ways” and he comes to the conclusion that technologies are “only technologies in their concrete use, and this means that one and the same artifact can have different identities in different use contexts” (Peter-Paul Verbeek, 2005: 118)

Ihde acknowledges that Heidegger’s argument on technology is correct and profound at some points, but does one enframing apply to all technologies? Apparently not. Ihde’s anti-essentialist critique of Heidegger begins with the typewriter again, a mechanized writing technique. Ihde claims that there are two reasons Heidegger hates to write on typewriters: typewriters produced seemingly identical text, which is a covering up one’s handwriting and therewith one’s character. In mechanized writing, all human beings look the same, whereas handwriting is the complete preservation of one’s personality. Second, typewriters produce text that is “typed” by the hand with a simple press, while the handwritten text “flows” from the human mind. Compared with typewriters, the pen can be better integrated with the hand to express the thought more smoothly.

The mechanical construction technology of a typewriter is mainly embodied in the mechanical device of keyboard. Therefore, the empirical investigation of Ihde’s postphenomenology is firstly carried out around the evolution of the technology of keyboard, but the function field is transferred from the typewriter keyboard to the musical instrument keyboard.

In the 19th century, key instruments began to appear in large numbers in Europe. The clarinet was equal to the flute and the keyboard, and the piano was equal to the harp and the keyboard. Keyboard is easy for players to operate, can produce more accurate and clear music, so that faster playing skills are possible. But these changes also attracted much criticism: the use of finger placement to produce vibrato was lost, and as well as control over finger positions to correct out of tune sounds. These complaints are similar to Heidegger’s reasons for disregarding the typewriter. However, the appearance and use of the piano obviously did not make the performance of the same music completely uniform, and the distinction between a trained pianist and a beginner is still obvious (Ihde, 2010: 122f).

Second, whether the words “flow” from thought or are “typed” mechanically on the keyboard depends on proficiency in the use of writing instruments. However, there is an inexperienced process of learning and adaptation before any tool is used proficiently, therefore the “withdrawal” phenomenon of tools in ready-to-hand cannot summarize the characteristics of all tool being used. Based on the famous concepts of ready-to-hand and presence-at-hand, Ihde cites:

Any new technology in relation to human praxis, before it can become transparent and thus fully accommodated, must be “embodied” if it is to be “known” at all. In short, something like presence-at-hand, although in phenomenologically different ways, lies at both beginnings and breakages. (Ihde, 2010: 124f)

Ihde uses the period of inexperience when faced with new tools to point out that even handwriting requires an phase of unfamiliarity, as we learning how to write letters with pen and our hand, and that proficiency with the typewriter produced the effect of ideas “flowing” through the typewriter into the text; furthermore, the skillful use of the typewriter can also produce a “flow” of thought from the thought to the text.

Therefore, through a postphenomenological revelation of different writing experiences, Ihde shows that Heidegger’s technological analysis is highly amusing and phenomenologically arbitrary. The clarifying of the essence of technology must be a kind of

metaphysics, essentialism that reduces all different technologies to one essence. In this case, Ihde points out from a historical and empirical view that there are actually many variations of technical experience, and thus makes his statement that “one size cannot fit all.” Returning to the typewriter as an example, Ihde further points out that the phenomenological change of technical experience should have a macro and historical dimension in addition to the micro-level of body perception. In the history of the development of human technology, different periods have used different writing technologies. Ranging from ancient techniques such as the first symbols on turtle shell, cuneiform, ancient Chinese calligraphy, and Egyptian hieroglyphics on papyrus, to a pen, the typewriter, and word processing software, those human-writing technologies “display different patterns of selectivity, of amplification and reduction, such that not everything can be expressed as well or at all, in each variant” (Ihde, 2010: 134).

Ihde’s criticism of Heidegger can thus be summarized in the following two points: (1) Heidegger’s view on technology focuses on embodiment relation and ready-to-hand technology, specifically in traditional technology such as the hammer. He has a romantic tendency and prefers technologies with classical elements, such as Greek temples. (2) The diverse background of technology indicates that technology itself cannot be reduced to a single essence; not everything can be expressed as well or at all in each variant.

3. Heidegger on the essence of technology

What exactly is Heidegger’s understanding of the essence of technology? Heidegger’s most famous claim, that the essence of technology is nothing technological, may not initially seem to be of much help. Let us turn to the meaning of “essence” first. In the broadest terms, essentialism implies that things have an “essence”. Rather than being artificial, all objects or beings, whether rocks, clouds, horses or people, have a quality, character or nature intrinsic to their being which could distinguish them from other things. Aristotle explains, “the essence of a thing is what it is said to be in respect of itself” (*Metaphysics*, 1029b14).

However, Heidegger’s understanding of “essence” differs from the traditional definition. Traditionally, this concept has two meanings: the first is the “What” (Was, quidditas and essentia) something is. The second meaning refers to the genus (Gattung) of the thing, that is, the universal which encompasses all actual and possible versions of that thing (Heidegger, 2008: 334) In terms of the essence of the tree, for example, according to two traditional meanings, it implies both the sameness of Treeness (Baumhafte) attributed to trees of all kinds and the genus that contains all actual and possible trees. The two essential concepts mentioned above, that is, the stipulation of content or universal beings, are actually at the ontic level.

However, “essence” here is not defined with genus and essentia. Heidegger says that when we speak of the “essence of a house” and the “essence of a state” we do not mean a generic type, “rather we mean the ways in which house and state hold sway, administer themselves, develop and decay” (Heidegger, 2008: 335), thus in a more original ontological meaning, “enduring”. The reason why it is called “more original ontological meaning” is that what Heidegger wants to trace is what makes the concept of essence on a metaphysical and ontic level possible, and thus that is more qualified to be called the original concept of essence.

Only by this meaning, the essence as the universal being is fundamentally based on the abstraction of the enduring beings. That is to say, it is only by being enduring that can something be abstracted from its “whatness” or genus, and thus the essence in the sense of universal is possible, and the universal being in the sense of genus is possible.

But this is only the first step. Actually, Heidegger already notices that “Socrates and Plato already think the essence of something as what it is that unfolds essentially, in the sense of what endures.” However, his dilemma is that “it can never in any way be established that enduring

is based solely on... what metaphysics in its most varied interpretations thinks as *essentia*” (Heidegger, 2008: 335f) Therefore, since essence is traced back to enduring beings, Heidegger questions further about *the conditions that make the ontic essence possible*.

For something being possible to endure, as a premise, it needs to get to become their own constantly endures to be presence. Only in the enduring, can enduring beings become themselves so that can be understood as the essence in the meaning of metaphysics by us. Thus, in this space before something becomes itself, enduring must be considered as a possible condition for beings enduring. In this way, essence cannot be conceived as the unchanging state of what remains of the continuant, but must be grasped as the continuous formation that makes the continuant possible.

For example, when we describe someone as a good or a bad person, we often judge whether the person’s essence (whatness) is good or bad by thinking about the person’s usual behavior, which is in the general metaphysical way. But what Heidegger is trying to ask is, “what are the conditions that make this person endure him/herself?” i.e., to consistently do good or bad things. This factor is the essence that determines whether the person is good or bad. For without this decisive factor, the element of the person continuing to do something good or bad disappears, and we cannot grasp his essence. It is difficult to define the essence of a murderer who, for argument’s sake, would also sacrifice himself on behalf of all humankind to save the planet as good or bad.

Heidegger’s attribution of the concept of essence to enduring has an etymological basis. It is from the verb “essence” (wesen) that the noun essence (Wesen) is derived, and the verb wesen is the same as wahren (to last or endure). As mentioned above, Heidegger takes “essence of a house”(Hauswesen) and “essence of a state” (Staatswesen) to point out that actually we mean “the ways in which house and state hold sway, administer themselves, develop, and decay – the way they essentially unfold (wesen)” (Heidegger, 2008: 335). Furthermore, as Heidegger quoted that, Hebel uses die Weserei, city hall, in his poem, “inasmuch as there the life of the community gathers and village existence is constantly in play” (*Ibid.*). In other words, as an example of this enduring meaning, the community will *endur* to thrive only if the city hall *endures* to thrive and flourish.

Therefore, in Heidegger’s view, the original essence is enduring. That is to say, as the dominant force, it ultimately determines the character of beings, which is, what it is; and also determines the universal being, that is, the beings in the “genus”.

Thus, different from the traditional essence concept of genus and universal being, essence for Heidegger is the transcendentalization of traditional essential concepts. What Heidegger is concerned about is in what meaning and with what conditions the meaning of metaphysical essence could become possible. Because the concept of essence in this original sense is the premise for the possibility of the concept of essence in the traditional meaning, it is qualified to be called the real “essence”.

4. Thinking essence, thinking technology

With this interpretation of essence in mind, let us now evaluate Ihde’s objections.

4.1 Romanticism?

Ihde points out that Heidegger’s romanticism takes two basic forms, “embodiment relations” and a tendency to favor the artistic and traditional. However, when we combine the two criticisms of Ihde, it seems that there is an irreconcilable contradiction in his claim of Heidegger’s romanticism.

A simple example is that of the Greek temples that are so praised in Heidegger’s work.

There is no indication of the embodiment relationship that defines the other, ancient or simple modes of technology that are valued over modern ones. Furthermore, considering the structure and structure of the ancient Greek temples, even in the present day, the difficulty and complexity of the structure cannot be considered “simple”. “Greek architecture does not amaze and overwhelm with mere scale and complexity; it has vigor, harmony, and refinement that thrill the mind as well as the eye” (Trachtenberg, 2003: 91).

Secondly, Ihde seems to imply that Heidegger has a deep ecological orientation, that is, his preferences are for those technologies that do not negatively affect the environment. However, the Greek temple example does not lead to an eco-friendly conclusion, because the reason Heidegger considers the Greek temple as a good example is not that the temple did not cause environmental destruction, but rather that it encompasses the meaning of essence in which Greek values were preserved and thus enduring, that is “the temple held up to the Greeks what was important, and so let there be meaningful differences such as victory and disgrace, disaster and blessing” (Dreyfus, 2006: 353).

Heidegger, to say the least, did not pay much attention to environmental preservation as we would consider it as in modern times, but was more concerned about a more technically danger caused by framing nature which would prevent us from the various understandings and revealings of the being. For Heidegger, the danger is not “the destruction of nature or culture but certain totalizing kinds of practices – a leveling of our understanding of being” (Dreyfus, 2006: 361).

Here, there is an incredible difference in the thought on technology between Ihde and Heidegger. By analyzing all kinds of practical technology forms, what Ihde wants to reveal is a phenomenological description of technology products, and through the phenomenological view, the way how products of technology reveal their beingness in an ontic way. And on this point, I have to admit that it is impossible to grasp the essence of technology if this essence is drawn from various, disparate technologies.

However, if Ihde starts from this perspective, there is a major flaw in his empirical theory when he criticizes Heidegger. When Ihde pointed out what he thought was deficient in Heidegger’s theory of technology, that is, when he claimed that in Heidegger’s technology, it “appear(s) that the two most frequently patterned such differences relate to a certain suspicion concerning modern technology versus traditional technologies, and the older, smaller and simpler technologies versus the newer, larger, and more complex technologies” (Ihde, 2010: 76), how did he himself define “traditional” and “modern” technology from the perspective of technological development?

In other words, if Ihde criticizes Heidegger from the empirical perspective of a variety of technical products for Heidegger’s tendency to favor traditional technology, Ihde himself lacks a standard for distinguishing traditional technology from Modern technology. Therefore, I claim that it is impossible to make this discernment between traditional and modern technology using empirical and historical perspectives.

As Ihde himself points out, the ancient waterwheel was no different from the hydroelectric power station on the Rhine. So again, if we for example think of the invention and use of the steam engine as a watershed between tradition and modernity, how can we tell the difference between the technology that was used in the decade before the invention of the steam engine and the technology that was used in the decade after the invention of the steam engine? The development of technology is continuous, and the argument against the criticism of Heidegger from the empirical perspective is itself untenable. It is a continuum fallacy.

So, we can say that Ihde’s critique of Heidegger’s romanticism is essentially a strawman based on a misunderstanding and misinterpretation of Heidegger’s use of “essence”. Heidegger’s

concern with the technology problem is not trying to form all kinds of technologies itself, but the phenomena that how would the enframing endure and what makes it possible, and the essence underlying and causing enframing which he called Metaphysic.

Let us turn to one of Ihde’s more telling objections, his claim that Heidegger’s understanding of technology is one size fits all.

4.2 *One size “fits” all?*

Ihde claims that the diverse background of technology indicates that technology itself has been reduced to a single essence, hence his conclusion that one size cannot fit all. But this stems from a traditional understanding of essence, which is the essence as *genue*. Meanwhile what Heidegger asks is not “the essence of technology...that Heidegger is not seeking a definition. His question cannot be answered by defining our concept of technology” (Dreyfus, 2006: 361), but the essence that makes modern technology enduring in the way that all beings are considered a resource.

Let’s return to the thought of Heidegger. First, Heidegger is not opposed to the use of modern technology, nor is he a Luddierism. He sees that “it would be foolish to attack technology blindly. It would be shortsighted to condemn it as the work of the devil. We depend on technical devices; they even challenge us to ever greater advances” (Heidegger, 1975: 53). Secondly, what Heidegger criticizes is not modern technology itself, but the essence and the phenomena causes and endures it – that is, a metaphysical way of thinking: “We pursue the development of our potential simply for the sake of further growth. We have no specific goals” (Dreyfus, 2006: 362).

The difference between Heidegger’s concept of technology and Ihde’s is that Heidegger is always at the understanding and revealing of being, that is, the primitive state of beings, to consider how beings become themselves (*Seinlassen*), thus criticizing modern technology. Of course, there’s no denying that Heidegger also noticed that “the same artifact can have different identities in different use contexts” (Peter-Paul Verbeek, 2005: 118).

In the activities of modern society, our human activities are no different from those of ancient Greece. But Heidegger notices that the “essence” of our activities has changed:

The forester who measures the felled timber in the woods and who to all appearances walks the forest path in the same way his grandfather did is today ordered by the industry that produces commercial woods, whether he knows it or not. (Heidegger, 2008: 323)

This example of the forester shows that, in the same technological activities when contexts have changed, although the technological form is the same, the meanings have changed. This is an excellent example of what Ihde calls the technical context for defining technology. But what Heidegger sees is not just the various ontic forms, but is the changing of foundational essences for human because of the enframed by modern technology.

5. Conclusion

Heidegger’s critique is not a critique of the product of technologies, but of the force that makes modern technology activities endure – the enframing. Enframing is not the essence of modern technology in the ontic and metaphysical meaning, but in the ontological, which enables modern technology to continue to endure. Ihde, on the other hand, does not see the meaning of essence as that which makes beings endure, so his critique of Heidegger is thus reduced to a fundamentally erroneous.

Acknowledgements

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

The author declares no competing interests.

The author would like to express his very great appreciation to Lilly Gray for her valuable and constructive suggestions on editing of this research work. Her willingness to give her time so generously has been very much appreciated.

References

- Dreyfus, H. L. (2006). Heidegger on the connection between nihilism, art, technology, and politics. In C. B. Guignon (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Heidegger* (pp. 345-372). Cambridge University Press.
- Heidegger, M. (1975). *Discourse on thinking*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Heidegger, M. (2008). *Basic writing*. Harper.
- Ihde, D. (2010). *Heidegger's technologies: Postphenomenological perspectives*. Fordham University Press.
- Peter-Paul Verbeek, T. R. (2005). *What things do: Philosophical reflections on technology, agency, and design*. The Pennsylvania State University Press University Park, Pennsylvania.
- Scharff, R. C. (2017). On living with technology through renunciation and releasement. *Foundations of Science volume 22*, 255-260.
- Tabachnick, D. E. (2007). Heidegger's essentialist responses to the challenge of technology. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 487-505.
- Thomson, I. (2000). What's wrong with being a technological essentialist? A response to Feenberg. *Inquiry*, 429-44.
- Trachtenberg, M. (2003). *Architecture: From prehistory to postmodernity*. Pearson.





Guardians of the Possibility that Claims Can Be False

Susan T. Gardner

Capilano University, Vancouver, CANADA
Philosophy Department

Received: 7 June 2020 ▪ Accepted: 14 August 2020 ▪ Published Online: 28 August 2020

Abstract

It is difficult to be a philosopher in this postmodern era. This is so because philosophers, who heretofore have been the archetype of persons eager to engage in reasoned discourse, regardless of their differences, suddenly seem unable to talk to each other, primarily due to claim by postmoderns that non-postmoderns are naïve in their blindness to the fact that truth the claims cannot be true in any objective sense, and that claims to objectivity have been used maliciously throughout the ages to wield oppression. After exploring some of the seductive arguments of the post-modern position, and suggesting a re-working of the non-post-modern position, this paper will conclude that philosophical educators carry a heavy responsibility for limiting the real-life damage that has been produced by this philosophical truth-storm by siding firmly with its less contentious opposite by becoming guardians of the possibility that claims can be false.

Keywords: post-modern, truth, regimes of truth, realists, falsification.

1. Introduction

It is difficult to be a philosopher in this postmodern era. This is so because philosophers, who heretofore have been the archetype of persons eager and willing to engage in reasoned discourse, regardless of their differences, suddenly seem unable to talk to each other. Though this discord had been described in various ways (Reed, 63-90), its fundamental touchstone is grounded in the claim by postmoderns that non-postmoderns are naïve in their blindness to the fact that truth claims cannot be true in any objective sense, and that claims to objectivity have been used maliciously throughout the ages to oppress. *It is true that homosexuals are mentally ill (just look it up in the annals of Psychiatry). It is true that females are constitutionally incapable of great scholarship (browse through the genders of the authors who have written great books—including philosophy books!). It is true that blacks are inferior to whites (you don't see any Africans kidnapping white Europeans and sending them into slavery, do you?).* People thus seem to be getting away literally with murder, by cloaking their actions with the veil of truth. Surely, it follows, then, that any serious attempt to de-escalate human harm must include the banning not only of literal armed weapons, but all notions of truth as well.

While on the surface this argument seems to have some merit, we need to recognize that if we take this claim seriously, not only is it hard to be a philosopher, it is hard to imagine being anything—educator, doctor, parent, whatever. If there is no truth, what do you teach students? If there is no truth, how can you evaluate one remedy compared to the next? If there is no truth, there can be no better or worse ways to raise a child, so who cares?

And that is the problem, **who cares?** Ultimately, it is a belief in the possibility of truth that is the magnet that keeps self-conscious language-users trying to improve their ability to live life well in the face of infinite struggle. And while postmoderns scoff at the Enlightenment idea that humanity in general is somehow making progress toward a better world (though Steven Pinker (2018) offers a range of empirical evidence to contradict this postmodern view), if, in doing so, they undermine the belief that individuals can construct better or worse ways to deal with the challenges they face, then for sure, why not just wallow in the falsity of the fake world described so eloquently by Baudrillard (1994)?

In what is to follow, I will try to sketch out a viable position for non-postmoderns (whom I refer to as “optimists”) in the face of this challenge. We will begin with a summary of why these two positions have difficulty engaging in dialogue. It will then be suggested that bridging this impasse might be helped by introducing the notion of “truthier.” This will be followed by brief sketches as to why Foucault and Rorty are so suspicious of the notion of truth, and briefly explore what insights may be gleaned from their positions. We will then move to real life and, on the one hand, show how the postmodern scorn of truth shows itself in a personal one-on-one encounter, while on the other, move the focus to journalists, whom *Time Magazine* has called “The Guardians” (*Time Magazine*, 2018), and who, quite literally, stake their lives in defense of truth. It is from this article that the present one borrows its name.

Ultimately this tangle about truth lays down the gauntlet to those of us who are philosophical educators as to how to guide our students (whether they be primary, secondary, or university students) in their thinking about this issue. Do we hold up the “Guardians of Truth” as role models, or do we pied piper them down the road of postmodern truth-bashers? The answer that will be suggested is this: we carry a heavy responsibility for limiting the real-life damage that has been produced by this philosophical truth-storm by siding firmly with its seemingly less contentious opposite: namely, that it is possible for claims to be false. If we are guardians of this possibility, we will, in turn, be able to support the creative impulse to imagine every conceivable alternative to any given suggestion, situation or problem, as long as we also assume that it will then be critically assessed as to whether the reasoning or evidence supporting the suggestion is faulty (relative to other alternatives).

This position is one that was most famously promulgated by Karl Popper (1934, 1960a, 1960b) and one that has the potential to flourish in the Community of Philosophical Inquiry (CPI)—the heart of the Philosophy for/with Children (P4/wC) movement—as long as facilitators of CPIs recognize the importance of being such a guardian, and so eschew the false democratic relativist seduction (along with the titillation of being a member in good standing of the latest postmodern fad) of assuming that everyone’s opinion is as good as everyone else’s.

And so, let us begin.

2. Why dialogue between postmoderns and non-postmoderns is so difficult?

Faith in reason has been, for many of us, the source of an abiding optimism that somehow we can learn to bridge the divides that we humans “naturally” create (a view shared by Joshua Greene (2014) who writes so eloquently about the inevitability of *Moral Tribes*). We “optimists” believe that surely we can reason together that skin color is not a valid indicator of merit; that having a different religion does not justify murder; that poverty cannot be equated with laziness.

But what happens when reason (and its presumed goal: truth) becomes the divide? What happens when this tribal tendency is articulated as “us” against “those who worship at the altar of logos”? The divide, then, becomes nuclear. Any attempt to dissipate this kind of “othering” can, by definition, only entrench it. If the “logos others” try to reason that this divide is not helpful,

by that very reasoning, they are reinforcing their position as those who worship at the alter of logos. And those on the “us against logos” side remain utterly immune from critique, as any kind of “reasonable” critique is precisely the sort of move that is definitional of those “others” who worship at the alter of logos and hence, is inadmissible.

And this rabbit hole is so deep and so dark that those who would argue against “othering” of this sort are ipso facto sucked into “othering” those who are “othering,” and so inevitably partake in a move that they are recommending against. This kind of othering, in other words, renders the optimist potentially powerless and speechless.

Those who worship at the alter of logo might still try to defend their position by first acquiescing to the charges that logos can be dogmatic and moralistic. Indeed, logos IS dogmatic and moralistic: logos will indeed dogmatically defend, for instance, the moral claim that difference in skin color alone cannot be justified as grounds for discrimination. And those who worship at the alter of logos will also admit that there have been atrocities and power moves that have been committed in the name of truth that turned out to be patently untrue. But they will argue that atrocities and power moves have been committed in the name of love as well, and that in both these cases, the most reasonable move is to get rid of the bathwater only.

But, none of this can possibly bridge the divide, can it (?), because this argument is reasonable and hence, by definition, is not admissible to those intent on “othering” reason itself.

It would seem that once this divide is established, loyalty toward one side or the other can only be a matter of aesthetic judgment and emotional appeal; a decision about what kind of human being one wants to be. It would seem that once this divide is established, the world toward which the optimist is striving cannot be.

Speaking as an optimist, I would recommend to other optimists that rather than engaging in a battle that cannot be won, they focus, instead, on cleaning up their own houses: that they discard the tendency to embrace righteousness (Haidt, 2012), but rather, (1) try to soften the edges of what others have found worrisome of about truth and reason, and (2) try to dive into the opposing position in order to glean whether that perspective enhances one’s understanding of the issue at hand.

It is to these two moves that we will now turn, first by articulating the advantage of adopting the notion of “truthier” (what I have elsewhere referred to as “truth with a small t”, 2009, 29-33) instead of sticking firmly to the absolutist notion of “Truth,” and then by visiting briefly with Foucault and Rorty, both of whom have deep worries about the notion of truth.

3. “Truthier”

The term “truth” is common in science, but it is not an accurate turn of phrase. A more accurate way of speaking about claims that are held to be true would be to refer to them as claims that have not yet been proven false (Gardner, 2009: 28). What a good scientist does, when faced with an intriguing hypothesis, is to flip it on its head and try and prove it false (the null hypothesis). Only after s/he has failed to prove the theory false (i.e., it is not the case that theory X is not true) is s/he justified in proclaiming its truth but even then only conditionally: s/he must always be open to reevaluating her position in light of new reasoning and/or evidence (Gardner, 2009: 28).

Always being open to reevaluate one’s position seems admirable until we reexamine our assumptions about truth. Truth, after all, carries with it the notion of infallibility. If a claim is not “True” for all time, then it is not “True” at all. Something cannot be True now, and false later (Gardner, 2009: 29).

The answer to this apparent conundrum is that when scientists use the word “true,” they are not referring to a product that is independent of the process. And since the process is not one of verification but falsification, when a scientist says that a theory or claim is true, what she means is that “a rigorous, objective, multifaceted and public attempts to prove the theory false have been futile.” Since this phrase is cumbersome, and since theoretically the opposite of being false is true, labelling it true with a lower-case “t” – as opposed to absolute Truth with a capital “T” – seems fairly innocuous.

On the other hand, using the label “true,” even with a lower-case “t,” is only innocuous if those within the discourse understand the truth-seeking process; that this process requires that one first try to falsify each proposal in and of itself (local sufficiency: Gardner, 2009: 33) and thereafter compare its relative adequacy to competing alternatives (global sufficiency: Gardner: 33). Given the fact that the winner of the truth-seeking process is always relative to alternatives, and given the fact that it is impossible for we mortals to ever eliminate all possible contenders for Truth but one, we can know for sure, that we can never reach Truth with a capital T. Since using the word “true” always carries with it the potential that someone may think we mean True, with a capital “T”,¹ it may be helpful to refer to the survivor of this two-step process as “truthier,” as it will remind us that this accolade is a function both of the number of alternatives considered and the rigor of the falsification process. It will also remind us that the “truth” to which mortals have access is never absolute, and that, as in science, so in ethics, we must always be open to reevaluating our positions in light of competing alternatives² (Gardner, 2009: 31).

With this softening of the notion of “Truth” by adopting the notion of “truthier,” let us move now to two figures who are deeply worried about truth to see if, given this move, any complementary energy might emerge.

4. Foucault

Only two months before he died in 1984, Michael Foucault gave a series of lectures at the Collège de France entitled *The Courage of Truth: The Government of Self and Others II*. Through a detailed analysis of various works from Antiquity, Foucault argues that, like Socrates, it is imperative that all of us recognize that care for ourselves requires that we have the courage to tell the truth – or what he refers to as “parrhesia” (free-spokenness) (2). He says:

...in his act of telling the truth, the individual constitutes himself and is constituted by others as a subject of a discourse of truth, the form in which he presents himself to himself and to others as someone who tells the truth (3).

This emphasis of truth-telling as the concluding remarks of his life’s work may seem at odds with the common assumption that it is Foucault who ushered in an era of post-truth (defined by Oxford dictionaries as “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief” (Fake News, 2019)).

¹ Thus, Reed and Johnson (1999) make the claim that non-postmoderns are after “absolute certainty. They are after a truth which is indubitable, which is proven, and which is beyond suspicion” (p. 68).

² Lee McIntyre (2015) echoes this view when he says “No scientific theory, no matter how well corroborated by the evidence can ever be proven absolutely true.” “All scientific belief. . . is tentative and open ended.” “In science, truth is a guiding ideal, not a destination. . . it nonetheless leads us *toward* truth and so is a model of respect for the formulation of true beliefs” (p. 9).

Yet Foucault emphasizes in these last lectures that when he says it is imperative that we all tell the truth, this cannot mean simply saying how you feel or whatever comes to mind. Such a person, Foucault says:

...then becomes and appears as an impotent chatterbox, someone who cannot restrain himself, or at any rate, someone who cannot index-link his discourse to a principle of rationality and truth (9-10).

Thus, the 50 million-dollar question with regard to telling the truth is that, given Foucault's own assumptions about the circular relation between power and truth – that the former constitutes what we take as true, while the latter reinforces the former, how can a potential “parrhesiast” know whether s/he is authentically telling the truth, or merely parroting the views of the powerful forces to which s/he is subject?

Lorenzini (2015) argues that an explanation lies in noting that the notion of “regimes of truth” changed fundamentally for Foucault, beginning with his 1980 lecture at the Collège de France. In that lecture, Lorenzini claims that Foucault adopted the dominant epistemological conception of truth, and rejected the notion that one might speak of “regime of truth” as one does of a political regime. “Truth, if it is really true, does not need a supplement of force, an enforcement, a supplement of vigor and constraint to be accepted.”

Lorenzini goes on to say, however, that the notion of “regimes of truth” nonetheless remains helpful in that “under every argument, every reasoning, every “evidence,” there is a certain assertion that doesn't belong to the logical realm, but rather is a sort of commitment...” “...No game of truth has the privilege of being “pure”: every game of truth is necessarily linked to a regime of truth that determines the obligations of the individuals who are implicated in it...”

It is this notion of “regimes of truth” that has played mischief in the public at large, with Rorty (1998) noting, for example, that

“Some over enthusiastic Foucauldians, alas, have tried to make the term ‘rational persuasion’ inapplicable to *anything*: they have done so by treating even the most judicious, courteous and apparently unfettered parliamentary of academic debate as an instance of “violence,” because certain alternatives that the participants consider unworthy of serious consideration are ‘marginalized’” (p. 93).

Mischief aside, however, keeping the notion of “regime of truth” in our back pockets may be helpful in reminding us that, once under the influence of such a regime (which we always are – see reference above to *Moral Tribes*), we need to beware that our base-line assumptions, which are inevitably implicated in our identities, may make it difficult to see the positives aspect of opposing positions. Such an awareness, in turn, might help dissipate the intractability of inter-regime clashes that are clearly evident in politics, (liberals versus conservatives), religion (sects even within the same religion), in general customs (e.g., the West's contempt for Eastern modesty), as well as in academia: materialists vs. non-materialist, behaviorists versus non-behaviorists, Marxists versus non-Marxists, and so on. Keeping alive this notion of a regime of truth may also turn out to be an important antidote to Kuhn's notion of paradigms (1996), as it at least leaves open the possibility of “inter-regime communication” in a way that inter-paradigm communication does not.

So being alert to the possibility that what you take to be true may be more a function of regime loyalty than considered reason is an important step forward toward “truth.” However, it does nothing to solve the original problem of how a so-called parrhesiast can know that s/he is telling the truth and not simply parroting the dictates of the regime to which s/he is subject.

Looking once again at Foucault's last lectures, since more than 40% of this work is devoted to describing the Cynic, it would seem that he is implicitly advocating that we follow in

the Cynic’s footsteps whom he describes as a militant (pp. 280-285), who battles against every propriety, custom, convention, institution, law, and attitude, in her aspiration to change the world.

This suggestion that we become parrhesiasts by bashing away at all that is accepted, or common practice, harmonizes well with the new popularity of Freire’s (2000) notion of bashing away at oppressive structures, as well as the recent emphasis in education on “questioning.” And echoing this view, Moghtader in his book *Foucault and Educational Ethics* (2015), argues that it is imperative that in education we problematize what is considered normal (p. 10), that critique as an attitude and activity is absolutely essential in transforming the subject (pp. 18-20), and that it is critical that students question the regimes of truth (p. 97).

Interestingly, bashing away at what is considered normal also seems like a project right at home in a falsification truth-seeking process described above. However, there are two dangers lurking in this emphasis on cynical critique. One is that a deeper look suggests that such a “regime” is underpinned by a kind of “original sin” mentality with regard to human kind: if it is human-made, it must be bad. It thus gives rise to the image of a self-destructive psychosis hitting the crew of the Ship of Theseus driving them to bash away at all the planks of the ship at the same time³. Otto Neurath (1921), an original member of the Vienna Circle uses exactly this metaphor when arguing that science doesn’t need an unchangeable solid foundation; we could continuously replace old truths with new truths, as long as we don’t try to do it all at the same time. Though slightly different in its intent, Matt Lipman (1991: 16) also uses a boat metaphor: that like a captain of a ship, in a CPI, one tacks one way, and then another, but always goes forward. Gardner (2009: 30) uses the more modern metaphor of a jet engine that we go forward towards truth by throwing out what is false. In all cases, though, the integrity of the structure as a whole is critical in making any kind of progress. One need not be a misanthrope, in other words, in order to be a truth-teller.

The second danger in promulgating critique alone is that such cynics are in danger of puffing themselves up with arrogant holier-than-thou attitudes solely on the basis that they are bashing away at conventional wisdom in a way that others are not. Such wholesale critique is not worthy of admiration. As Popper was at pains to point out (1960a: 134-5), in order for critique to do any useful work at all, one must first come up with a myriad of creative intuitive and bold (1960b: 191) ideas and conjectures that are only thereafter subject to falsification in order to test their potential worth. Creative positive interesting and relevant (Popper, 1960b: 190-191) suggestions that are potential answers to our problems (p. 190) are what is to be admired, otherwise, critique is just barren and destructive (p. 189).⁴

In conclusion, then, while critique is to be admired, it must be focused on one precise bounded issue at a time, and accompanied by a genuine attempt to articulate a positive alternative. This is an important principle for all facilitators of CPI’s: that they be encouraged to avoid CPI’s that are little more than pity-parties, and instead ask participants to suggest alternatives to structures, institutions and actions with which they disapprove.

5. Rorty

When my 80-pound Rottweiler puppy, Tsara, sees “the cat on the mat,” she will react on assumption that this is **true**, not—as Rorty (1999) claims humans do – because of some language game or because she is able to persuade a large portion of her fellow canines that she is

³ Since assumptions about truth are the nails that keep the planks of any convention in place in the first place, turning one’s back on the possibility of truth has the same impact.

⁴ This sort of barren and destructive smugness was painfully evident at the start of 2019 when the British Parliament voted down Teresa May’s Brexit plan by historic margins despite no one offering even a hint of a positive alternatives.

justified in that belief. She starts the chase because she has an acute Darwinian sense of what is and is not true, or real, as a function of her past bodily interactions with the world. She is, as am I, a realist.

Rorty claims to be an anti-realist, at least in the sense of trying to show that realists who believe that they can tap into reality as it is in itself (p. 72), to understand reality in a “view-from-nowhere” are wrong (p. 45, p. 68). But neither Tsara or I are realists in that sense. Indeed, such “view-from-nowhere realists,” or what might be called using Kant’s phraseology “noumenal realists,” are, it seems to me, non-existent (a position in line with Charles Taylor, Rorty, p. 86) unless one counts Searle who claims that it is at least possible to imagine a world of molecules without an embodied perceiver in a way that imagining blue solid objects in such a world is not (Searle, 1992: 211).

So perhaps the more apt description of Tsara and me (again using Kant’s terminology) is that we are “phenomenal realists” in the sense that we believe that our sense of reality, *whether we like it or not*, emerges as a function of our continuing bodily interaction with world (this wall is solid relative to my body but would not be if I were intelligent electron). And the stability of these beliefs in the real world – about whether or not it is true that “the cat is on the mat,” – endure as a function of the fit between inter-sensory predictions – that, once the chase is initiated, there is a fluffy solid object that yells “meow” and scampers away (a position that mirrors Samuel Johnson’s refutation of Berkeley Idealism⁵ by kicking, and hence feeling, a stone after it has been perceived).

What is important about being a “phenomenal realist,” as opposed to an anti-realist, is that it allows one to make a distinction between self-world concepts over which I, as an individual, have no control (a rose is a rose, is a rose), and self-other concepts, such as “What is fair?” “What is just?” which are ones that demand my input. The latter fall far more easily under Rorty’s rubric of language games than the former, and hence, such a restriction helps us see what is important and insightful about Rorty’s position. Interestingly, this distinction between self-world and self-others is one that Wolf and Gardner (2018) argue is important for youngsters to understand, not because youngsters tend to be Roritarians, but, rather, because they tend to be the opposite: since they have no input on what counts as a cat, they assume that, likewise, they have no input into what counts as fair.

A second advantage of being a phenomenal realist is that it helps us to make an important distinction between two different ways that the word “objective” is used. Though Rorty would disagree (p. 6, p. 29, p. 63) and call us “metaphysical activists” (p. 29), a phenomenal realist can argue that the term “objective” can be used when making a claim about “matters of fact” in the phenomenal world. This sense of objective, let’s call it “objectivity 1,” finds its meaning in juxtaposition to “subjective appearance” in the sense that minds can’t just wish cats on and off mats. This sense of objective, which is appropriately used within the self-world conceptual framework, is ultimately grounded in the correspondence theory of truth (something Rorty is trying strenuously to deny).

Within the self-other conceptual framework, i.e., when we are talking about values, there is much merit to Rorty’s suggestion that we toss out the use of “objective” in the above sense. Rorty says “we deny that the search for objectivity is a search for reality and urge that it be seen instead as a search for the widest possible intersubjective agreement” (p. 63).

Still, one gets into a tangle, as Rorty does, when pressed to explain how appeal to the widest possible audience is anything more than a fallacious “appeal to the crowd.” Rorty specifically denies that this notion of intersubjective justification is a matter of counting heads (p. 55), and tries to find a way out by appealing to “better audiences” (p. 22). Since Rorty wants to get

⁵ <https://askaphilosopher.org/2015/10/13/when-dr-johnson-kicked-the-stone/>.

rid of any notion of objectivity, he is blocked from borrowing from Pierce (1955: 5-22) the notion of the ideal community of inquiry whose primary descriptive is “objectivity” in what we can refer here to here as “sense 2”: that by subjecting claims to opposition in communal inquiry, we can be more assured that our views are not colored by special interests, ideology, willful blindness, and so on. “Objectivity in sense 2,” in other words, finds meaning in juxtaposition to the notion of “subjective bias”: that we know our minds can change our perception of reality, so beware. This is in contrast to “objectivity in sense 1”: that we know that there are parts of reality that our minds cannot change, so beware.

Being a phenomenal realist, thus, has many advantages, so the question arises as to why Rorty adopts such an adamant anti-realist and anti-truth position. The answer seems to rest with Rorty’s view that the notion of truth does no work (p. 19). Once I have come up with the best possible justification, I cannot do anything else to show that a claim is true, so why not just say that the claim is justified? Why add true?

This is an important challenge, particularly since we have already conceded Rorty’s point that, when using the word “true,” we are not referring to a product that is independent of the truth-seeking process. So why not go along with Rorty and toss truth? The answer is that since the phenomenal realist believes that, for all practical purposes, there really are real lions, tigers and bears, it follows that the true/false distinction carries with it a unique normative force that is tied to the baseline value of survival. Clearly, it is absolutely imperative that all animals teach their offspring to be what Rorty pejoratively calls “well-oiled representation machines” (32) and to “get it right” when it comes to dealing with real-world threats. And this quest for truth for physical survival built into all animate beings, in turn, migrates into the quest for the survival of “who it is that I want to be” for self-conscious entities. Hence the urgency to answer such questions as “Is it true that this is fair?” “Is it true that this is just?” Without this notion of truth, the point of attempting to justify one’s claims to wider or better audiences evaporates.⁶

Rorty is unmoved by this argument and so, in claiming that the justification can be measured as a function of the quantity and/or quality of the audience persuaded, Rorty takes his place near or at the head of the pack of Postmodernism. Given Rorty’s project, however, we should note that the title “postmodern” is really a misnomer as it fits just as well under the distinctly premodern schema of the Sophists (you should enhance your rhetorical skills to convince an ever wider audience) or the Rationalists (the only thing that counts is in the mind). This in turn should alert us to the fact that, to do justice to Rorty’s position, an extensive review of multiple major trends in the history of philosophy would be required (empiricism versus rationalism, early versus later Wittgenstein, Kant versus Hegel, justification versus causation, and so on).

For that reason, let us revert back to our original goal of working out a position that a philosophical educator might feel justified to embrace in light of Rorty’s long shadow. My suggestion is that we should be comfortable with leaving Rorty behind for the following six reasons.

(1) It is not clear how one can coherently make the claim that “it is true that there is no truth,” nor is it clear, even on Rorty’s own terms, how he can consider his position justified given

⁶ Crispin Wright (1992), who takes on this notion of reduction to justification only, argues that warranted assertibility and truth are distinct in that although aiming at one is, necessarily, aiming at the other, success in one need not be success in the other (19). To this Rorty answers “the fact that beliefs can be justified without being true does not entail that two norms are invoked. ...It merely show that what can be justified to some audiences cannot be justified to others” (27). Though we ought to note that it is not evident what Rorty could possibly mean by saying that a claim could be justified but not true, as on his reduction, this collapses into saying that a claim is justified and not justified.

that even he admits that his viewpoint appeals to a much smaller audience than that of the realist (p. 41).

(2) Nor is it evident how one can, on the one hand, claim that we should appeal to wider and wider audiences while on the other saying that there are no such things as external objects, and hence no people to make up an audience.

(3) The whole project is shockingly anthropocentrically arrogant in that the use of symbolic language (which is most obviously pronounced in the human animal) takes up all the oxygen in the room, while the living body, which is common to all animals, and whose survival depends on “getting it right,” is noticeably absent.⁷

(4) Since believing that one could be wrong depends on believing that one could be right,⁸ and since a healthy belief in one’s own fallibility is absolutely essential for opening up the possibility to being open to a better and deeper understanding of any situation, paradoxically a belief in truth, and hence its opposite, will help to knock us off our pedestals of certainty (Burton, 2008).

(5) Since the motive for engaging in the difficult sometimes arduous task of inquiry depends on the magnet of truth that, in turn, ultimately gets its value from survival (either of the body or the self), throwing out truth will magnify the seduction of just believing whatever one wants to believe.

(6) Embracing Rorty’s position that “to say that truth is our goal is merely to say something like: we hope to justify our belief to as many and as large an audience as possible” (p. 39), is to adopt an attitude that does little good and much harm, at least in the sense of contributing to the disorientation that is rampant in Trump’s world (though, of course, not just in US). *Let’s get as many people as possible to believe that more migrants are slipping into the United States than ever, though, those who are paid to keep track, say the reverse. Let’s get as many people as possible to believe that the killing of students in Tiananmen Square was justified because otherwise they would have overrun the Chinese army. Let’s get as many people as possible to believe that the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia had nothing to do with the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi because Crown Princes, after all, don’t do that sort of thing. Let’s get as many people as possible to believe that there is no such thing as climate change (well that should be easy given the oceans of money available to Big Oil).*⁹

In an interview with *The Guardian*¹⁰ while touring the UK to promote his new book *From Bacteria to Bach and Back* (2018), American philosopher Daniel Dennett, in discussing the recent upheavals in contemporary politics said the following: “Philosophy has not covered itself in glory in the way it has handled this. Maybe people will now begin to realise that philosophers aren’t quite so innocuous after all. Sometimes, views can have terrifying consequences that might actually come true. I think what the postmodernists did was truly evil.

⁷ Rorty recognizes and simply dismisses this worry and overtly claims that “we have no duties to anything nonhuman” (p. 127).

⁸ The very idea of error or of doubt (in its normal straightforward sense) implies the idea of an objective truth that we may fail to reach (Popper, 1960b: 186).

⁹ In a 2018 *National Post* article entitled “It’s true, Humanity is winning,” Rober Fulford, writes: A year ago, Donald Trump said, “The murder rate in our country is the highest it’s been in 47 years, right?” No, dead wrong. The rate is close to historic lows, at less than half its peak. But Trump wasn’t lying. He had heard that idea somewhere, and probably it felt right to him, so he said it. And he promised to end this American carnage.” This actually matches the public perception. During the 1992-2015, a majority of Americans told pollsters that they believed violent crime in the US was steadily increasing, though violent crime rate was steadily decreasing all those years. Thus Rorty’s appeal to ever wider audiences.

¹⁰ <https://www.philosophytalk.org/blog/postmodernism-blame-post-truth>.

They are responsible for the intellectual fad that made it respectable to be cynical about truth and facts.”

Disregard for truth, however, is not evident only in world events; its invisible harm shows up in ordinary person-to-person communicative interchanges – something of which we all ought to be aware.

6. Scorn for truth in the most ordinary of interchanges

Scorn for truth is found not just in philosophy nor in obviously self-serving political pronouncements; it also invades, in the most insidious way, ordinary real-world communicative interaction. For that reason, we all need to be alert to that possibility, so that we are not flummoxed, as a Canadian Professor of Philosophy (P) was in 2018, when engaging in a perfectly ordinary informal conversation with a first-year university student (S).

P: So, you are from Iraq?

S: Yes (with a bit of a grimace)

P: How long have you been in Canada?

S: About three years.

P: I suspect you have some difficult memories.

S: Things are terrible in Iraq. A lot of my family is still there. All the fighting is awful. It is practically lawless. I hate the Americans.

P: I can understand why you say that.

S: You don't understand! Everything is all their fault! The Shia and the Sunni all got along fine until the Americans starting stirring up trouble. And I know why they are continuing to stir up trouble. If there were no factions in the Muslim world, we would be the strongest group in the world. The Americans know that. That is why they are ensuring the Shia and Sunni keep fighting each other.

P: But, Ramni, The Shia and Sunni have been fighting each other since Mohammed died in 632. America only came into existence in 1783. So, the Shia and the Sunni were killing each other for more than 1000 years before America even came into existence.

S: I don't care. That is what is what I need to believe. If it weren't for America, I know that the Shia and the Sunni would not be fighting each other. I will argue with anybody about that. It is important for me to believe that, so that is what I believe.

It is a sad day to hear a university student say, “I will believe that I need to believe.” Still, a silver lining in the above black cloud can be found in the fact that this student eventually enrolled in a critical thinking course that required an emersion into strategies of finding “truthier” answers to real-life questions that students faced. What was particularly interesting was this student’s comment that she was intrigued by the suggestion that what she should count as true was not up to her. She said it never occurred to her. So, contra Dennett, perhaps philosophy can actually do some good after all.

7. In defense of truth

In stark opposition to post-truth pressures, there are a whole group of people who quite literally stake their lives in defense of truth. These are the courageous journalists whom *Time Magazine* named as the 2018 “Person of the Year.” Edward Felsenthal, in the article “The Choice,”

writes that “From Russia to Riyadh to Silicon Valley, manipulation and abuse of truth is the common thread in so many of this year’s major headlines, an insidious and growing threat to freedom” (p. 44). And he goes on to argue that while the press sometimes gets it wrong, nonetheless, for their effort in pursuit of greater truth, for their insistence on speaking up and speaking out, a tactic that saw 52 journalists murdered in 2018 (p. 45) and 262 imprisoned in 2017 (some for life), we are all in their debt.

In the same issue, Karl Vick, writes, “efforts to undermine factual truth, and those who honestly seek it out, call into doubt the functioning of democracy” (p. 57). “We can’t reason together if we don’t know what we are talking about. But the information must be trusted” (p. 57).

So why should we trust the information that journalists provide? Well, for one, journalism is a profession bound by five core principles,¹¹ the first of which is “truth and accuracy.” The alternative (which somewhere over two thirds of Americans embrace, Vick, p. 62) is social media, which is notoriously populated by self-serving manipulators, and technically designed to solidify personal bias.

According to Thomas Jefferson our freedom depends on a free press, and he even went so far as to say that, if given the choice between government and newspapers, he would do without government (Vick, p. 65). He would rejoice in recognizing journalists as heroes.

8. Conclusion

In his book detailing the neuroscience of how we make decisions, Jonah Lehrer (2010), makes the case similar to the one articulated by Daniel Kahneman (2013), that there are two kinds of thinking: the fast kind in which alternatives are assessed unconsciously (p. 18) as a function of predictions of dopamine hits (emotional rewards) (p. 36), and the slow kind that involves rational thought. He argues that rationality would virtually never kick in unless we not only made mistakes, but focused on learning from them (p. 52). Lehrer calls this the “oh, shit!” circuit (p. 38) and argues that “the best decision makers are students of error, determined to learn from what went wrong” (p. 250).

However, as Popper has pointed out (1960b: 186), “the very idea of error or of doubt (in its normal straightforward sense) implies the idea of an objective truth that we may fail to reach.” So, if we throw out truth in order to placate our postmodern friends, then we throw out error, and if we throw out error, we will entrench this post-truth era in which decisions are made as a function of whatever emotive script we happen to have introjected. The result will not only be the loss of truth, the loss of reason, and the loss of democracy, it will ring the death knell for both individual autonomy and human dignity.

We, who are philosophical educators, and hence, presumably, devoted to the pursuit of wisdom, have a responsibility protect all in our circle of influence from this utterly dehumanizing outcome. It is for that reason that it is imperative that we professionals, like our journalistic cousins, adopt a professional ethic that ensures that we are committed to be guardians of the possibility that claims can be false.¹²

¹¹ <https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/who-we-are/5-principles-of-journalism>.

¹² I am happy to note that a very recent and excellent P4C book by Topping, Trickey, and Cleghorn, entitled *A Teacher’s Guide to Philosophy for Children* (2019) devotes an entire chapter to making the case that all whiffs of post-truth assumptions must be dissipated with vigor from philosophical education.

Acknowledgements

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

The author declares no competing interests.

References

- Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and Simulation. The Precession of Simulacra*. University of Michigan Press. p. 1. Archived from (PDF) on 2012-03-09.
- Burton, R. A. (2008). *On being certain: On believing that you are right even when you are not*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.
- Fake News (2019). In *Collins English Dictionary Complete and Unabridged Edition (13th Edition)*. 2018. Glasgow, UK: HarperCollins. Available at: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/fake-news> [January].
- Felsenthal, E. (2018). "The Choice". *Time Magazine*. "Person of the Year". Dec. 24, 31. 44-49.
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. Introduction by Donaldo Macedo. New York: Continuum.
- Foucault, M. (2008). *The courage of truth: The government of self and others II*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fulford, R. (2018). "It's true, Humanity is winning". *National Post*, March 10, A13.
- Gardner, S. T. (2009). *Thinking your way to freedom: How to own your own practical reasoning*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Greene, J. (2014). *Moral tribes: Emotion, reason, and the gap between us and them*. New York: Penguin.
- Haidt, J. (2012). *The righteous mind: When good people are divided by politics and religion*. New York: Pantheon.
- Kahneman, D. (2013). *Thinking fast and slow*. Toronto: Anchor Canada.
- Kuhn, Th. (1962). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lehrer, J. (2010). *How do we decide*. New York: Mariner Books.
- Lipman, M. (1991). *Thinking in education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lorenzini, D. (2015). What is a "Regime of Truth"? *Le Foucauldien*, 1(1), 1. <http://doi.org/10.16995/lefou.2>
- McIntyre, L. (2015). *Respecting truth: Willful ignorance in the Internet age*. New York: Routledge.
- Moghtader, B. (2015). *Foucault and educational ethics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- Neurath, O. (1921/1973). *Anti-Spengler*. Vienna Circle Collection vol. 1: *Empiricism and Sociology*. http://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-010-2525-6_6. ISBN 978-90-277-0259-3.
- Peirce, Ch. S. (1955). The fixation of belief. In J. Buchlar (Ed.), *Philosophical writings of Peirce*. New York: Dover.
- Pinker, S. (2018). *Enlightenment now: The case for reason, science, humanism, and progress*. New York: Penguin.

- Popper, K. (1934/1985). Falsification versus conventionalism. In D. Miller (Ed.), *Popper selections*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Popper, K. (1960a/1985). The growth of scientific knowledge. In D. Miller (Ed.), *Popper selections*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Popper, K. (1960b/1985). Truth and approximations to truth. In D. Miller (Ed.), *Popper selections*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Reed, R. F., & Johnson, T. W. (1999). *Friendship and moral Education: Twin pillars of philosophy for childhood*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Rorty, R. (1998). *Truth and progress: Philosophical papers*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, J. (1992). *Rediscovery of the mind*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Time Magazine* (2018). "Person of the Year". Dec. 24, 31.
- Topping, K. J., Trickey, S., & Cleghorn, P. (2019). *A teacher's guide to philosophy for children*. New York: Routledge.
- Vick, K. (2018). "The Choice". *Time Magazine*. "Person of the Year". Dec.24, 31. 50-81.
- Wolf, A., & Gardner, S. T. (2018). An education for "practical" conceptual analysis in the practice of "philosophy for children". *Analytic Teaching and Philosophical Praxis*, 39(1), 73-88.
- Wright, C. (1992). *Truth and objectivity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.





Hermeneutic Phenomenology: Essence in Educational Research

Megh R. Dangal

*Kathmandu University, NEPAL
School of Arts, Department of Development Studies*

Rupendra Joshi

*Tribhuvan University, Lalitpur, NEPAL
Faculty of Management*

Received: 16 June 2020 ▪ Accepted: 1 October 2020 ▪ Published Online: 26 October 2020

Abstract

This article shows how and why hermeneutic phenomenological research can promote knowledge and understanding in research practices in education. The main focus of the article is aimed to provide rich textual descriptions of the experiencing of selected phenomena in the life world of individuals that are able to connect with the experience of all. It gives a brief overview of hermeneutic phenomenology and discuss its use in research work in education. The paper also presents on the diverse field of application, recent developments and the essence of hermeneutic phenomenological in education research. The article further examines the philosophical standpoint and establishes its linkages with various other methodologies. Finally, paper concludes with Clark Moustakas phenomenological data analysis for the analysis of the gathered data consisting three main components: phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis to come to the conclusion. This article demonstrates and explores the value of hermeneutics as a credible, rigorous, and creative way to address the different aspects of professional practices and how hermeneutic phenomenology is useful in studying the personal and social facets of making psychological knowledge and searching for philosophical truth as a research methods in educational research.

Keywords: phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology, phenomenon, essence, lived experience, educational research.

1. Introduction: Hermeneutic phenomenology

Hermeneutics is the theory and practice of interpretation (van Manen, 2014). It is a method of textural analysis with an artful form of understanding and a process of exposing hidden meanings (van Manen, 2006). Hermeneutics was derived from the Greek verb, *hermeneuein*, to “interpret”, and from the noun, *hermeneia*, or “*interpretation*” (Thompson, 1990). Therefore, it is associated with the interpretation of the text.

Hermeneutic phenomenology aims to elucidate lived meanings. It means it attempts to describe and interpret lived experiences meanings to a certain degree of depth and richness (van Manen, 1990). Hermeneutics focuses on subjective experience of individuals and groups and

is an attempt to unveil the world as experienced by the subject through their life world stories and this type of research is conducted through empirical (collection of experiences) and reflective (analysis of their meanings) activities (van Manen, 1990). Crowther, Ironside, Spence and Smythe (2016) state that hermeneutic phenomenology is a methodological approach not bounded by structured stages of a method, instead it is related to how one attunes, questions, and thinks in a circular manner. According to Patton (2002), hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on exploring on how human beings experience the phenomenon i.e., how human being perceive it, describe it, make sense of it to reach understanding. In hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher does not only describe the phenomena but jointly interprets the whole process of understanding of phenomena along with the participants. As a result, the validity of the interpretation is (Creswell, 2009).

Hermeneutic phenomenologist requires interpretation to bring out the ways in which the meaning occurs in a context. The lived experience of the participants needs to be seen in the context of that individual's life situation. It is an interpretive research that advocates the natural setting of qualitative research and seeks a deeper understanding of what it means to be human (Gearing, 2004). It is the study of everyday, lived experiences and the meanings we construct from them (van Manen, 1990). It is based on two main assumptions of phenomenological research i.e., human seeks meaning in their lives, and there are multiple realities in socially constructed meaning.

According to Christensen, Johnson and Turner (2010) the primary objective of phenomenological research is to explicate the meaning, structure, and essence of the live experiences of a person, or a group of people, around a specific phenomenon. This research approach allows the researchers to reveal the "essence of things" and provides insights into social phenomenon (Creswell, 2015). Phenomena are the building blocks of human science and the basis for all knowledge (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology includes transcendental, existential, and hermeneutics, among others (Audi, 2001). There are different approaches to phenomenology. Embree (1997) identified seven approaches namely: descriptive (transcendental) phenomenology, naturalistic phenomenology, existential phenomenology, generative historicist phenomenology, genetic phenomenology, hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenology, and realistic phenomenology.

Amongst these phenomenological approaches, *transcendental* and *interpretive phenomenology* are the two main approaches that are used to get the insightful information and in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of the participants for research purposes. The present study is confined only to hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenology (Singleton, 2015).

A phenomenon can be an emotion, relationship, or an entity, a program, an organization, or a culture (Patton, 2002). It is believed that hermeneutics without phenomenology is interpretation without context, without situating in it and phenomenology without hermeneutics is arguably nothing but a façade (Moustakas, 1994).

Hermeneutic phenomenology is heading towards bridging the gap that lies between what theory and educational research documents. It tries to fill up the gap between theory and documents. It tries to fill up the gap between theory and documents that should take place in the classroom and what actually takes place in everyday pedagogical practice (Friensen, 2012). Hermeneutic phenomenology gives the teacher a different knowledge and deeper understanding of what actually goes on in classrooms (Friensen, 2012). It is a seamless way of seeing pedagogy. It rests on three basic components; head (thinking), heart (feeling), and hand (acting) (Singleton, 2015). The general purpose of the phenomenological study is to understand and describe a specific phenomenon in depth and reach at the essence of participants' lived experience of the phenomenon. But the main purposes are:

- (1) to seek reality from individuals' narratives of their experiences and feelings, and

(2) to produce in-depth description of the phenomenon.

Hermeneutic phenomenology puts great emphasis on the knowledge construction and reconstruction process based on the participants experiences and enables the researcher to explore more authentic perspective of the participants (Langdrige, 2007).

1.1 Hermeneutics and interpretation

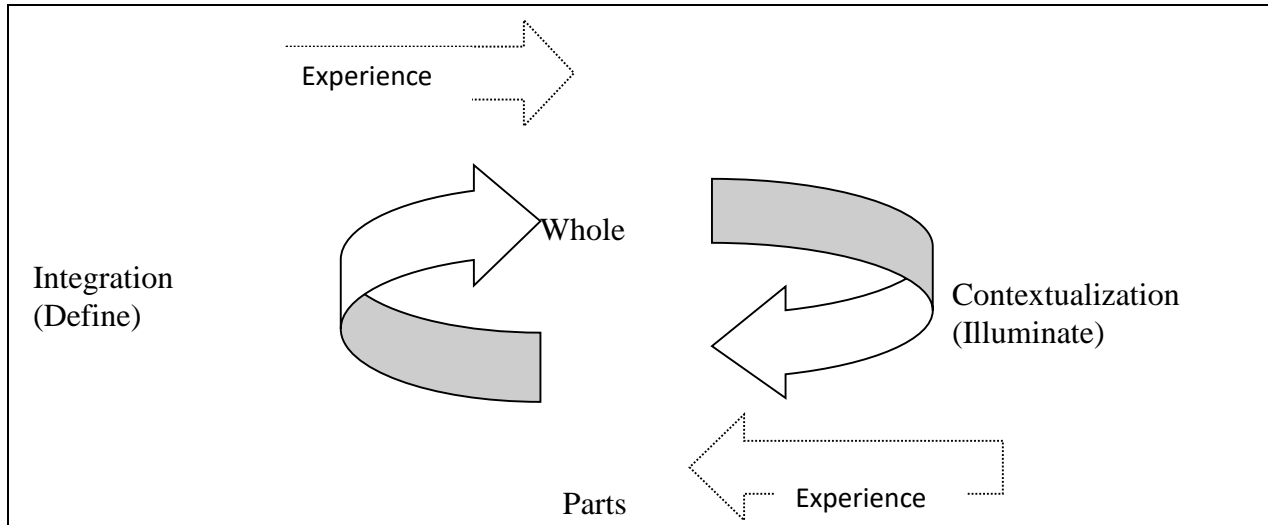
Hermeneutics need interpretation and interpretation refers to the meanings derived from the analysis of the collected data, information, and evidences. Patton (2002) defines interpretation as: “attaching significance to what was found, making sense of findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, considering meanings, and otherwise imposing order on an unruly but patterned world (p. 480).”

As a hermeneutic phenomenological study, the interpretive meanings are as significant as the experiential descriptions of the lived experiences (Risser, 1997) and allows interpretation through the lenses of researchers and make the meanings in a way that is credible and faithful to the participants and their interpretations. Besides, the interpretation is implicated to make sense of data by drawing on the researchers’ subjective understanding and life experiences (Finlay, 2003). According to Heidegger (1982) hermeneutics can be defined as a way to “interpret the shared meanings and practices that we have for our experiences within a context” (Maloney, 1993: 40) of the participants as lived experiences of the participants is the main insightful source of information. Hermeneutics pertains to the process of exposing hidden meanings (Allen, 1995). In hermeneutic phenomenology, the researchers interpret human experiences as a text that offers rich and deep accounts of phenomena (Hein & Austin, 2001). The interpretive process continues until a moment in time where one reaches to sensible meanings of the experience, free from inner contradictions (Kvale, 1996).

1.2 Hermeneutic circle

In hermeneutics, hermeneutic circle explores the understanding of the context of the participants. So, it refers to the interpretive process that moves from components of experience to the whole experience and back again and is continued to deepen the depth of understanding and engagement with texts (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). Hermeneutic circle describes how the part and whole are related and interrelated with each other in understanding and interpreting the process. Without understanding the component, the whole is incomplete. The component and whole gives the complete meaning and therefore is circular (Gadamer, 1975). It shows the dialectical relationship between the part and the whole. For example: the word or sentence spoken by the person is the context that reveals his/her socio-culture, tradition, history and so on and shows the dialectical relationship between the context of the words spoken and the context of the socio-culture context. The hermeneutic circle of interpretation is an ongoing process with movement from whole to the part and back to the whole (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). Therefore, it is a circle of understanding.

Stephenson, Giles and Bissaker (2018) writes that engaging with research texts in a different ways, and coming back to the same piece of text over and over again in order to have further meanings and understandings is a hermeneutic circle. With the help of this hermeneutic circle, the researcher goes back and forth, closer and further, away and towards the ontological nature of the subject matter (Stephenson et al., 2018). Therefore, hermeneutic circling brings researchers own experiences back to life in vivid ways along with deeper exploration of the understandings they’ve garnered in their earlier experiences.



The basic form of the hermeneutic circle (Bontekoe, 1996, p. 4).

Figure 1. Hermeneutic circle

As per Heidegger, hermeneutic circle is the process that explains “how what is understood forms the basis for grasping that which still remains to be understood” (Bontekoe, 1996: 2). In the hermeneutic circle, we not only make progress towards sense and meaning by questioning prior knowledge but also expand it into new horizons of meanings (Mullay, 1997). Thus, the hermeneutic circle is a metaphor for understanding and interpretation, which is viewed as a movement between parts (data) and whole (evolving understanding of the phenomenon), each giving meaning to the other such that understanding is circular and iterative (see Figure 1). In this context, the text is a creation of the researcher from the collected data of the participants. The dialogue between the researcher and the text give the understanding of the text as a whole of the research (Bontekoe, 1996) giving the hermeneutic research goal to fuse the horizons of past, present, and future understanding using the hermeneutic circle (van Manen, 2014)

The idea of the hermeneutic circle is much more complex and multi-layered than what is currently reflected. Hermeneutics can be applied in knowing and understanding meaning embedded in different subjects (Carpenter, 2007). The in-depth studies of hermeneutics in IS (Information System) help to solve the previously divided philosophy of positivism and interpretivism (Kroeze & Zyl, 2018).

Hermeneutic circle is popular in IS research and practice. Hansen and Rennecker (2010) refer hermeneutics to the basic meaning of movement between partial and holistic understanding concept. This concept can be used as a model and extended to facilitate the process of understanding and consensus in groups. Therefore, Hansen and Rennecker (2010) refer the hermeneutic circle as the lifecycle of information systems. Ying et al. (2006) refer to the hermeneutic circle to show how holistic understanding follows from an iterative interpretive process between the parts and the whole, or the individual and the group. According to Myers (2004), hermeneutics can be used to interpret texts and text analogues (such as organizational culture), to enhance systems development and to evaluate how systems are accepted and how they affect organizations and society after implementation. Hermeneutics enriches IS (Information System) philosophy, theory, research and practice (Kroeze & Zyl, 2018). As per Hansen and Rennecker (2010), when groups or teams have to understand the given (same) text and have to agree on the meaning of the text (as in systems analysis and design projects), hermeneutic principles could be helpful to facilitate an iterative process of insight, communication and finding consensus.

1.3 *Philosophical standpoint*

From the lens of Philosophy, hermeneutics has been theorized and applied as a philosophical framework and interpretive research methodology paying attention to linguistic, social, cultural, science, technology, information system and historical contexts to understand the life world and human experiences (Charlene et al., 2017). Hermeneutic Phenomenology as a qualitative research methodology is concerned with the phenomenon of human consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). This methodology allows the researchers to reveal the “essence of things” and provides insights into social phenomenon. This methodology is being used in psychology, education, nursing, and other research. The main purpose of the phenomenological approach is to illuminate and identify the phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a particular situation. This methodology is particularly effective in bringing the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives in order to understand the text of the context.

Philosophy is concerned with different views about how the world works. It focuses on reality, knowledge and existence (van Manen, 2014). Each and every one individual view of the world is closely linked to what one perceives as reality. The perceive reality and the world around may be different. This individual perception of reality affects gaining of knowledge of the world and the act within it. The hermeneutic phenomenology tells about the individual perceptions about understanding and belief of a particular situation and culture. This gives researcher to open up the hidden meanings that the people are holding in their back up and making interpretation (van Manen, 2006).

According to Christensen, Johnson and Turner (2010), the primary objective of phenomenological study is to explicate the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experiences of the person, or a group of people around a specific phenomenon. In broad sense, the purpose of phenomenology is to describe particular phenomena, or the appearance of things, as lived experience (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007).

Hermeneutic phenomenology is an approach of knowledge production and strong inclination towards social inquiry methods. Hermeneutic phenomenology is characterized by features of social science research and differs from natural sciences (Kinsella, 2006). Qualitative research and hermeneutic Phenomenology run parallel to each other as both give emphasis on understanding and interpretation as opposed to explanation and verification (Kinsella, 2006). Gadamer (2006) demonstrates that understanding is the fundamental for interpretation of any kind and thus qualitative research and hermeneutics are inter-connected. Hermeneutic approach holds that social life is ‘meaning’ of an action and therefore social science research must interpret the meaning of social action (Carpenter, 2007). Further, hermeneutics phenomenology rejects the notion of explaining human behavior through positivist approaches.

When we observe hermeneutics from the ontological lens, we observe that reality is perceived as an individual construct dependent to different situations (Crotty, 1988). The reality can be external to individuals or produced by individual consciousness (Cohen & Morrison, 2000). It refers to our assumptions about how we see the world. It is the theory or study of being as such. Ontology is an explicit specification of conceptualization (Rockmore, 2011). It is the branch of metaphysics (philosophy concerning the overall nature of what things are) concerned with identifying, in the most general terms, the kinds of things that actually exist. The hermeneutic sees the text of the individual from his/her own perception being as such and understand and interpret the embedded meanings within them.

From the epistemological perspective hermeneutics is precisely concerned with providing the kind of philosophical grounding for deciding the kinds of possible knowledge that can ensure the adequacy and legitimacy (Rockmore, 2011) as epistemology is related to the study of nature, origin, and limits of human knowledge. Crotty (1998) asserted that “epistemology is a

way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know”. It refers to the knowledge and the notion that the research work is supposed to make contribution to knowledge itself. Thus, hermeneutic phenomenology is rested on the ground of subjective knowledge (Hartley, 2006). Philosophically hermeneutic phenomenology helps the researchers to bring the historical context, cultural traditions, and people prior knowledge into the hermeneutic circle because such prior knowledge served as an enabler to understand the text (Jacobs, 2014). This philosophical stand point reflect and influence on how one thinks about and seeing the world that help to act in inquiry and practice within the ontological and epistemological orientation (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

2. Diverse field of application and recent development

Hermeneutic Phenomenology is used as a research method in education and other related field such as, healthcare, social work and so on. Hermeneutic takes the concrete minutiae of pedagogy and classroom interaction (Johnson & Christensen, 2007). It acknowledges the ethical knowledge possessed by the teachers (Todders, 2007).

It has close connection with other theories like feminist, grounded, case study and narrative research. Phenomenology provides deeper understanding of experiences of certain phenomena of different persons in different context. Being able to understand some common phenomenon by the researcher would be very useful to the therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, policy-makers, teachers, and health personnel (Todders, 2007).

Phenomenology can be used in all the sectors where human instincts, desires, perceptions, feelings, emotions, understandings play a vital role. May it be to access the consumer behavior to assess their choice in economics; to find out the social trend of crime; to assess the cultural transmission phenomena in sociology; may it be to assess the students behavior on learning in Education; can be used to know the felt need of change in certain aspect of social problem in development Studies and so on (Creswell, 2009). So, its scope cannot be limited within a certain periphery and moreover depends on the researcher conscience and prudence to use the method. It can be equally applied in diverse field of education like, life-skills, technical and vocational teaching, classroom management, curriculum development and so on.

A researcher is a seeker of meaning in hermeneutic phenomenology. Its purpose is not to provide information, but to enhance the perspectives and provide exact form of understanding that are situational, relational, and enactive (van Manen, 2014). Therefore, hermeneutic has reflexivity that shows how philosophical and methodological perspectives are practiced and presented and makes sense of human experiences. It prepares report with human existence in a linguistic form (Gadamer, 2006). When hermeneutic phenomenology is used as educational research, it takes teacher as a process of information that involves relational sensibilities and ontological understandings (Giles, 2014) and one can learn from teacher’s everyday experiences of ‘being-in’ their practice. Stephenson, Giles and Bissaker (2018) explain that teaching should be thought of as a phenomenon of inquiry that can be hermeneutically explored through gathering of information, telling and interpretive activities that show the essence and ontological nature of becoming a teacher.

Hermeneutics Phenomenology allows researcher to gain deeper knowledge and understanding to new perspectives on human experiences through interpreting text highlighting the cultural, historical, philosophical, and linguistic characteristics of the research (Charlene et al., 2017). Therefore, researchers can apply the hermeneutics in the diverse fields such as education, clinical psychology, criminology, legal studies, family sciences, nursing, and medicine.

Recent developments in the field of hermeneutic phenomenology are very difficult to locate because of its huge applicability to different research problem and scenario. From the above discussion also, it is now clear that the hermeneutics is applicable in almost all aspects of

qualitative research (Edie, 1987). It can be equally applied from education to nursing, social science and others. The applicability of hermeneutic phenomenology has also been extended to the quantitative research as well. Therefore, the recent development of hermeneutic phenomenology has been in the field of mixed research. Moreover, to be precise, hermeneutics is now being extensively applied in nursing, information system research, anthropology, etc (Creswell, 2015).

According to Babich (2014), hermeneutics has multidimensionality. The multidimensionality of hermeneutic phenomenology is not limited to certain subject area, it goes beyond the social science and equally applicable for the philosophy of technology, metaphysics, epistemology including aesthetics, as well as explorations of the history of philosophy, theology, and information system (IS). In the beginning hermeneutics was dealt only with the interpretation of biblical texts, and later has been extended to general understanding (Boell & Cezec-Kecmanović, 2011). Hermeneutics is not only concerned with understanding the text, it is related with the process of developing understanding of text under certain pretext (Boell & Cezec-Kecmanović, 2011).

3. Dimensions of experience and challenges in Hermeneutics Phenomenology

The experience of human beings consists of two interrelated dimensions: *noesis* and *noema* (Muostaksa, 1994). Noesis refers to the act of experience, such as perceiving, feeling, thinking, remembering, or judging, whereas noema refers to the object of action, such as perceived, felt, thought, the remembered, and the judged (Audi, 2001). The combination of these two dimensions of the experience makes up the consciousness of an experience (Noesis + Noema → Perception).

The relationship between these two essentials is commonly referred as intentionality. When experience is observed from the phenomenological perspective, all the experience of the mankind is intentional experience (van Manen, 2014). Consciousness is always a consciousness of an object because one cannot be conscious without being conscious of something, and the consciousness of an object requires a subject (Muostakas, 1994). When a person uses a computer in the Internet café for the educational purpose, it is the noema of the experience and using computers in the internet café is the noesis of the experience (Cilesiz, 2011). Hence, these two dimensions are so interrelated that one cannot exist without the other. Each and every experience consists of textures and structures that give rise to the essence of the experience. Texture is the different outside appearances and the structure is the account of the texture or the underlying issue of the texture. Therefore, experience is the manifestation of the essence.

One of the important assumptions of Husserlian phenomenology is bracketing in which the researcher declares personal biases, assumptions, and presuppositions and put them aside (Gearing, 2004). The aim of this is to keep what is already known about the description of the phenomenon separately from participants' description. The researchers should avoid any imposition of their assumptions on the data collection process or the structure of the data (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). This gives clear understanding and interpretation of the participants' feelings. To study human experience, one needs to go through description of the major concepts and essences along with looking for meanings embedded in common life practices which is a big challenge for hermeneutic phenomenologists.

Gadamer (2006) assert phenomenology means adopting a certain attitude, a particular mode of attention towards the world and the way we conceptualize the meaning of experience. He called this phenomenological *reduction*, and argued that there is a need to constantly go "back to the things themselves" and the way they are presented to us. An important way of checking the validity of a phenomenological analysis is to compare the analysis against the

original data, “the things themselves” which in itself is a challenge for researcher (Gadamer, 2006).

4. Research design and paradigm of hermeneutic phenomenology

Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation (Crotty, 1998). So, hermeneutics use the Interpretive Research Paradigm (IRP) to conduct the research process. The interpretive research paradigm is based on the epistemology of idealism (in idealism, knowledge is viewed as a social construction) and encompasses a number of research approaches, which have a central goal of seeking to interpret the social world (Hein & Austin, 2001). The interpretive paradigm reflects recognition that meaning is a human construction. According to the interpretive paradigm, the meaning people attribute to things in the world around them is not only constructed but contingent. This means that the meaning constructed depends heavily on contextual features, that is, on the particular history, place, and culture that people bring to any act of meaning-making (Cilesiz, 2011).

The Interpretive Research Paradigm (IRP) allows or enables the researcher to have in-depth knowledge or deeper understanding of the experiences of the participants through the in-depth interview. It is reflexive in nature and the reflexivity enables the researcher towards the deeper understanding of the phenomenon being researched. As per the interpretive research paradigm, the meaning people attribute to things in the world around them is not only constructed but contingent (Stiegler, 2010). It means that the meaning constructed depends heavily on contextual features and the culture that people bring to any act of meaning-making. In the words of Hiedegger, to be human means to be constantly interpreting the world around us, and to live within a world made up of interpretations (Hiedegger, 1982). The hermeneutic phenomenology is aimed at producing rich textual descriptions of the experiencing of the participants life world.

The given research design/model clearly describes how hermeneutics phenomenology take place in the given context to interpret the original data of the participants. The knowledge gained from the internal and external world help to have experiences amongst the participants which then through the hermeneutic circle establishes the whole of the text and give rise to the essence of understanding. The data collected through in-depth interview and participants’ observation are analyzed by using Moustakas Phenomenological Data Analysis tools to get the inference and interpretation of the findings. Interpretivism is more based on humanistic philosophy than positivism and provides a basis for a wide variety of qualitative research (Gadamer, 2006). Hiedegger believed that the meaning embedded in common life practices is not obscure, it can be extracted from the narratives generated by people and the relationship between an individual and his/her world should be the focus of phenomenological inquiry (Lopez & Wills, 2004). The use of hermeneutic phenomenology enables the researcher in exploring the participants’ experiences with further abstraction and interpretation. It helps in explicating meanings and assumptions in the participants’ texts that they have difficulty in articulating by themselves.

5. Data collection tools for hermeneutic phenomenology

Data collection is an essential component in conducting research. It is a hard and tough task. The most common means of data collection in a phenomenological study is through in-depth interviews to gather lived experiences of the participants' detailed and insights of their experiences and participants' observation (Creswell, 2009).

5.1 *In-depth interview*

In-depth interview is a technique designed to give an opportunity to express participants in a way ordinary life rarely affords them. It is one of the most commonly used techniques in qualitative research. In hermeneutic phenomenology, interview (in-depth) serves very specific purposes (van Manen, 1990). According to Patton (2002), the researcher should conduct in-depth interview with the people who live with or have directly experienced the phenomenon in order to explore the experience of phenomenon. During in-depth interview, the person being interviewed is considered the expert and the interviewer is considered the student. It is usually conducted face-to-face and involve one interviewer and one participant (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The face-to-face nature of the interview allows for immediate clarification or expansion of the participants' thoughts and access to non-verbal cues such as gestures and facial expressions (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007).

In-depth interviews are useful for learning about the perspective of individuals. It helps to understand about the personal feelings, opinions, and experiences (Frechtling et al., 1997). It gives an opportunity for researcher to gain insight into how people interpret and order world. This interview is especially appropriate for addressing sensitive topics that people might be reluctant to discuss in a group.

5.2 *Participants' observation*

Observation is the direct way of collecting and gathering information by observing events as they occur. Observation is used to access the phenomenon for communicating between the researcher and the participants in the context to observe interactions and possible influencing factors (Creswell, 2009). It helps to verbalize the participants reasoning, reflect upon it, and explain the rationale for it. It is the process of recognizing and noting people, objects, and occurrences rather than asking for information (Creswell, 2015). Observations are used in hermeneutics to have prompt reflections from the participants on their current and past learning journey's and experiences, and to provide points of references for interpretation of findings (Allen, 1995). Besides, by conducting observations the researcher become able to back up his/her interview data and its accuracy with his/her own experience.

This tool helps to generate the data in the real form because the researcher eyes are the only instruments to capture information of the objects in the study (Kavle, 1996). Creswell (1994) viewed that in observation the researcher is actively involved in the reality of the participants' responses. Participant-observation allows the researcher to be physically present in the events being studied.

6. Phenomenological data analysis

Phenomenological data analysis starts with bracketing-off the researcher's subjectivity which refers to setting aside the researcher's prejudgments and predisposition towards the phenomenon (Moustaksa, 1994) i.e., researchers keep their subjectivity in reserve throughout the

study which Moustakas named this act as “epoche process or bracketing”. Moustakas phenomenological data analysis includes:

- (a) Phenomenological reduction,
- (b) Imaginative variation, and
- (c) Synthesis.

The above procedure includes the following steps:

- (1) Horizontalize the data (Listing all relevant expressions),
- (2) Transforming the data into statements,
- (3) Creation of individual textural description,
- (4) Elaborating on the individual textural description,
- (5) Identifying similarities in the textures of participants.

In horizontalization, transcripts are read for multiple times with a fresh look, and every statement related to the phenomenon are treated with equal value by recording the relevant statements and eliminating those that are not directly related to it.

In reduction of experience, horizons, the filtrate data, are clustered into themes so that each of the theme has only one meaning. This step is followed by thematizing the invariant constituents called as the core themes of the experience.

The themes derived from the participants’ experiences are then compared to other methods like: observations, field notes, interview, and literature to verify accuracy. In crafting of individual texture, participants’ experiences are described and explained using verbatim in a narrative format to facilitate the participants’ experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Similarly, in construction of individual structural description, imaginative variation is used where researcher imagines how the experience occurred and creates the structure. This imaginative variation is followed by construction of composite structural description where structures are added at the end of each paragraph to create structural description. And at the last of the analysis, texture and the structure are synthesize by writing composite narratives by creating meaning units common to all participants to reach to the essence of the experience of the phenomenon.

7. Quality considerations

Patton (2002) states that validity and reliability are two important factors to be considered by qualitative researcher in order to maintain the quality of the qualitative research. Healy and Perry (2000) assert that reliability and validity are essential criterion for quality in qualitative research. Reliability and validity are commonly used for testing or evaluating in quantitative research (Golafshani, 2003). Speziale and Carpenter (2007) describe that trustworthiness establishes the validity and reliability in qualitative research.

Lewis and Ritchie (2014) point out that quality of the data and its interpretation are important in maintaining the reliability of findings of a research.

Qualitative research is trustworthy when it accurately represents the experiences of the study participants. The researcher uses Lincoln and Guba (1985) model that identifies credibility, applicability or transferability, consistency or dependability and neutrality or confirmability as essential criterion for establishing trustworthiness and quality in qualitative research:

- (i) Credibility,
- (ii) Applicability or Transferability,
- (iii) Consistency or Dependability,
- (iv) Neutrality or Confirmability.

7.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to establishing that the results of qualitative research are believable from the perspective of the participants as the participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the result. Credibility is concerned with the aspect of truth-value. It is equivalent to internal validity in quantitative research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). It is the truth of how the participants know and experience the phenomenon. Guba and Lincoln (1989) claimed that the credibility of a study is determined when co-researchers or readers are confronted with the experience, they can recognize it. Credibility establishes whether the research findings represent plausible information gathered from the participants' original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants' original views (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility can be established through prolonged engagement, reflexivity, triangulation, peer and participants debriefing and the process of member checking (sending all transcripts of the interviews to the participants for feedback and presenting findings to the participants) to test the findings and interpretations with the participants. Hermeneutics thus follows these mentioned activities and establishes and demonstrates credibility through the participants' behavioral experiences and their original data.

7.2 Applicability or transferability

Applicability or transferability refers to the generalizability of the inquiry. It means, the study findings/results of the qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings in similar situations. It is also called "fittingness" as it determines whether the findings fit in or are transferable to similar situations (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). In qualitative research, the researcher facilitates the transferability judgment by a potential user through thick description (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Transferability enables the reader to assess whether the findings are transferable or not to their own settings. In qualitative research, the transfer concerns only to case-to-case transfer (Tobin & Begley, 2004). It is the judgment of the participant to transfer or not the findings/results of the research, not the researcher, because the researcher does not know their specific settings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Transferability refers to the degree that findings from research can be generalized to other contexts (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In hermeneutics, applicability relates to how well the research findings describe factors that influenced the acculturation of international occupational therapy graduates who did not participate in the project. Findings of qualitative studies are generally less amenable to generalization as each participant's situation is considered unique. An essential element of hermeneutics is a thorough understanding of context and its influence upon a studied phenomenon. An understanding of the applicability of findings to other situations is therefore facilitated through the use of hermeneutics (Carpenter, 2007).

7.3 Dependability or consistency

Dependability is another criterion to measure trustworthiness of the research findings. It is the stability of data over time (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). It is related to consistency of findings. It means, when the study is repeated in a similar context with the same participants, the findings would be consistent. Since there can be no validity without reliability, thus there can be no credibility without dependability (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). Dependability involves participants' evaluation of the findings, interpretation and recommendations of the study received from participants of the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

An evaluation of consistency determines whether the process of the study was "consistent, reasonably stable over time and across researchers and methods" (Miles & Huberman,

1994: 278). Hermeneutics provides both the science and the tools that are needed for consistent interpretation of findings (Gadamer, 2006). The constructs of the hermeneutic circle, fusion of horizons and dialogue, integrated into the hermeneutic spiral assist the researcher to consistently address the interpretation of a phenomenon. Explicit procedures are also to be developed and use for selecting the participants for each study phase as well as for collecting and analyzing data in order to promote consistency (Paterson & Higgs, 2005).

7.4 Neutrality or confirmability

Neutrality or confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others (Krefting, 1991). Confirmability is concerned with establishing that the data and interpretations of the findings are clearly derived from the data and not from the figments of the researcher's imagination (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), confirmability is established when credibility, transferability, and dependability are all achieved. An advantage of the hermeneutic process was the accommodation provided for the preexisting knowledge.

Hermeneutics recognizes that the researcher brings prior knowledge and assumptions into the research process (Gadamer, 1975). As a research strategy, hermeneutics moves beyond description to interpret a phenomenon in light of previous knowledge and theories. The perspectives of researcher and the text become interlocked and findings emerge as a shared understanding of reality. Several initiatives are to be undertaken to ensure that a broad viewpoint of acculturation issues emerged from the study and that the perspectives of participants are not unduly influenced (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Using field notes assist in identifying potential biases and assumptions that may arise while interpreting the data provided by participants. Field notes are therefore shared with interview participants four to ensure that their information is appropriately interpreted and conveyed. Attention is also given in obtaining data from a wide range of participants (Roulston, 2011).

7.5 Triangulation of data

Triangulation of data is another milestone to make the research more qualitative. Quality of the research can be enhanced through triangulation of the data (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) claims that the validity and credibility of the findings can be ascertained by data triangulation. Triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from two or more sources (Honorene, 2016). If triangulation of data (use of two or more methods) reinforces the same conclusion, then validity claims are strengthened. Hermeneutic phenomenology also uses triangulation of data for the validity and credibility of the research findings to strengthen the quality of research. According to Honorene (2016) triangulation makes the research result bias free, valid and generalizable. Denzin (1978) describes four different forms of triangulation:

- (1) Data triangulation,
- (2) Investigator triangulation,
- (3) Theory triangulation,
- (4) Methodological triangulation.

In data triangulation two or more than two methods of analyzing data is used including time, space, and persons in a study. The findings of the study can be corroborated and any weaknesses in the data can be compensated for by the strengths of other data, thereby increasing the validity and reliability of the results (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Data triangulation helps to

reduce the risk of false interpretations. It can also provide a more complete and comprehensive perspective on a given situation and generate new insights into that situation.

Investigator triangulation involves use of more than one investigator (interviewer, observer, researcher or data analyst) in a study. The investigator triangulation helps to confirm findings across investigators and enhances the credibility of the findings (Denzin, 1978). This type of triangulation is more use in interpretation of textural and structural analysis of the data.

In theory triangulation, multiple theories are used to analyze or to interpret data. Use of multiple theories look at a situation/phenomenon from different perspectives through different lenses with different questions in mind (Denzin, 1978).

Similarly, in methodological triangulation different methods are used to gather the data. Use of different methods increases the confidence of the result of the findings (Bryman, 1988). This help to decrease the deficiencies and biases that come from any single method and compensate the weakness of one method by the strengths of another.

8. Conclusion

The most important part in hermeneutic phenomenology is the textural and structural analysis of the lived experiences of the participants where what is expressed by the participants and how it is expressed give the essence of the phenomenon. It is important to note and comprehend that all qualitative research has a phenomenological aspect, but the phenomenological approach cannot be applied to all qualitative research. The hermeneutic phenomenology provides the ways to consider the phenomena of human experience to the means of expressing them and the use of bracketing depends on the researcher conscience and understanding that can address the research question of the study. Therefore, the present study shows how we use hermeneutic phenomenology as research method in education in getting the true reality by understanding the lived experiences of the participants.

Hermeneutics articulates a process and direction for progressively integrating multiple sources and layers of experience and knowing. A creative and credible strategy describing through the metaphors of dialogue, fusion of horizons and hermeneutic circle gives in better understanding and interpretation of the text in the given context. The fusions of past horizons of knowledge with the new information gained through dialogue help to understood in relation to the hermeneutic circle and gain the in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of the participants. Thus, it is imperative to use hermeneutic phenomenology in education research to address and validate the contemporary issues and problems prevailing in the society.

Acknowledgements

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

The authors declare no competing interests.

References

- Ajjawi, R., & Higgs, J. (2007). Using hermeneutic phenomenology to investigate how experiences practitioners learn to communicate clinical reasoning. *The Qualitative Report*, 12(4), 612-638. <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR12-4/ajjawi.pdf>.
- Alibali, M. (2006). *Does visual scaffolding facilitate students' learning?* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Allen, D. (1995). Hermeneutics: Philosophical traditions and nursing practice research. *Nursing Quarterly*, 8(4), 174-182.
- Audi, R. (2001). *The Cambridge dictionary of Philosophy (2nd ed.)*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Babich, B. (2014). The multidimensionality of hermeneutic phenomenology: From philology through science and technology to theology. *Contributions to Phenomenology*, 70. <http://www.springer.com/series/5811>
- Boell, S. K., & Cezec-Kecmanović, D. (2011). Are systematic reviews better, less biased and of higher quality? *European Conference on Information Systems 2011 (ECIS 2011)*. Paper 223. <http://aisel.aisnet.org/ecis2011/>.
- Bontekoe, R. (1996). *Dimensions of the hermeneutic circle*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International.
- Bryman, A. (1988). *Quantity and quality in social research*. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Carpenter, D. R. (2007). *Phenomenology as method*. Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott.
- Charlene, A., Guo-Brennan, L., & Weeks, L. (2017). Conducting hermeneutic research in international settings: Philosophical, practical, and ethical considerations. *Journal of Applied Hermeneutics*. Author(s).
- Christensen, L. B., Johnson, R. B., & Turner, L. A. (Eds.). (2010). *Research methods, design, and analysis*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Cilesiz, S. (2011). A phenomenological approach to experiences with technology: current state, promise, and future directions for research. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 59(4), 487-510. <http://about.jstor.org/terms>.
- Cohen, L., & Morrison, K. (2000). *Research methods in education (5th Ed.)*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Creswell, J. (1994). *Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. (2009). *Research design (3rd Ed.)*. Thousand Oaks: Sage publication.
- Creswell, J. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (3rd Ed.)*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publication Ltd.
- Creswell, J. (2015). *Educational research (4th Ed.)*. India: Pearson.
- Crowther, S., Ironside, P., Spence, D., & Smythe, L. (2016). Crafting stories in hermeneutic phenomenology research: A methodological device. *Qualitative Health Research*, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316656161>
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process (1st ed.)*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Denzin, N. (1978). *Sociological methods: A sourcebook*. NY: McGrawHill.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research (2nd Ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The sage handbook of qualitative research (4th Ed.)*. Thousand Oaks: Sage publication.

- Edie, J. M. (1987). *Edmund Husserl's phenomenology: A critical commentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Embree, L. (1997). *What is phenomenology?* Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic.
- Finley, L. (2003). Through the looking glass: Inter-subjectivity and hermeneutic reflection. In L. Finley & B. Gough (Eds.). *Reflexivity: A practical guide for researchers in health and social sciences* (pp. 105-119). Oxford, England: Blackwell Science.
- Frechthing, F. M., Sugai, G., & Horner, R. H. (1997). *Interpreting results of social handbook of qualitative research*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Friensen, N. (2012). *Hermeneutic phenomenology in education*. Boston: Sense Publishers.
- Gadamer, H. G. (1975). *Truth and method*. London: Sheed and Ward.
- Gadamer, H. G. (2006). Classical and philosophical hermeneutics. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 23(1), 29 -56.
- Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The Quality Report*, 8(4), 597-606.
- Gearing, R. (2004). Bracketing in research: A typology. *Qualitative Health Research*, 14(10), 1429-1452.
- Giles, D. (2014). Appreciatively building higher educator's relational sensibilities. *The Journal of Meaning-Centered Education*, 2.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Hansen, S., & Rennecker, J. (2010). Getting on the same page: Collective hermeneutics in a systems development team. *Information and Organization*, 20(1), 44-63.
- Hartley, D. (2006). *Pulling us apart? Relativism and instrumentalism in contemporary educational research*. *Educational Review*, 58(3), 269-272.
- Healy, M., & Perry, C. (2000). Comprehensive criteria to judge validity and reliability of qualitative research within the realism. *Qualitative Market Research*, 3(3), 118-126.
- Heidegger, M. (1982). *The basic problem of phenomenology*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Hein, S. F., & Austin, W. J. (2001). Empirical and hermeneutic approaches to phenomenological research in psychology: A comparison. *Psychological methods*, 6, 3-17.
- Honorene, J. (2016). Understanding the role of triangulation in research. *Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*, 4(31), 91-95.
- Jacobs, A. H. M. (2014). Critical hermeneutics and higher education: A perspective on texts, meaning and institutional culture. *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 33(3), 297-310. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02580136.2014.948327>
- Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. (2007). *Educational quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research*. Boston: Sense Publishers.
- Kavle, S. (1996). Interviews. In *An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. California: Sage Publications.
- Kinsella, E. A. (2006). Hermeneutics and critical hermeneutics: Exploring possibilities within the art of interpretation. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 7(3). <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/145/319>. Article 19.
- Krefting, L. (1991). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 45, 214-222.
- Kroeze, J., & Zyl, I. (2018). *The theme of hermeneutics in IS: The need for a structured literature review*. <http://www.researchgate.net/publication/324571303>.
- Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Practical guidance to qualitative research. *European Journal of General Practice*. Taylor & Francis.

- Langdrige, D. (2007). *Phenomenological psychology: Theory, research and method*. London: Pearson Education Ltd.
- Lewis, J., & Ritchie, J. (2014). Generalizing from qualitative research. *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. London: Sage Publications.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage
- Lopez, K., & Wills, D. (2004). Descriptive versus interpretive phenomenology: Their contribution to nursing knowledge. *Quality Health Research*, 14, 726-735.
- Maloney, M. (1993). *Silent strength: A Heideggerian hermeneutical analysis of the stories of older women*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Georgia State University, Atlanta.
- Myers, M. D. (2004). Hermeneutics in information systems research. In J. Mingers & L. Willcocks (Eds.) *Social theory and philosophy for information systems* (pp. 103- 128). West Sussex: Wiley & Sons.
- Miles, M., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mullaly, B. (1997). *Structural social work* (2nd Ed.). Don Mills, Ontario, Canada: Oxford University Press.
- Paterson, M., & Higgs, J. (2005). Using hermeneutics as a qualitative research approach in professional practices. *The qualitative Report*, 10(2), 339-357.
<http://nsuworkas.nova.edu/tqr/vol10/iss2/9>.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Risser, J. (1997). *Hermeneutics and the voice of the other*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Rockmore, T. (2011). *Kant and phenomenology*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Roulston, K. (2010). *Reflective interviewing: A guide to theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Singleton, J. (2015). Head, heart and hands model for transformative learning: Place as context for changing sustainability values. *Journal of Sustainability Education*, 9. Retrieved from <http://www.susted.org/>.
- Speziale, H., & Carpenter, D. R. (2007). *Qualitative research in nursing: Advancing the humanistic imperative* (4th Ed.). Philadelphia: Lippincott, Williams and Wilkins.
- Stephenson, H., Giles, D., & Bissaker, K. (2018). The power of hermeneutic phenomenology in restoring the centrality of experiences in work-integrated learning. *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning*, 19(3), 261-271.
- Stiegler, B. (2010). *Taking care of youth and the generation*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Thompson, T. (1990). *Hermeneutic inquiry*. In L.E. Moody (Ed.), *Advancing nursing science through research*. Newbury park, CA: Sage.
- Tobin, G. A., & Begley, C. M. (2004). *Methodological rigour within a qualitative framework*. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 48, 388-396. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2004.03207.x>
- Todders, L. (2007). *Embodied enquiry: Phenomenological touchstones for research, psychotherapy and spirituality*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- van Manen, M. (1990) *Researching live experience*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- van Manen, M. (2006). *Researching lived experience*. Ontario: The Althouse Press.
- van Manen, M. (2014). *Phenomenology of practice: Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research and writing*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Ying, T., Wang, E., Jiang, J., & Klein, G. (2006). Knowledge integration in ERP project success: A hermeneutic focus. *International Research Workshop on IT Project Management 2006*. <http://aisel.aisnet.org/irwitpm2006/5>.



AIMS AND SCOPE

The OJSP, as an international multi-disciplinary peer-reviewed **online open access academic journal**, publishes academic articles deal with different problems and topics in various areas of philosophy (history of philosophy, middle eastern philosophy, Indian philosophy, Buddhist philosophy, East Asian philosophy, African philosophy, indigenous American philosophy, epistemology, ethics, value theory, aesthetics, logic, legal philosophy, metaphysics, philosophy of science, social philosophy, philosophy of language, philosophy of education, political philosophy, feminist philosophy, philosophy of religion, philosophical schools, applied philosophy, etc.).

The OJSP provides a platform for the manuscripts from different areas of research, which may rest on the full spectrum of established methodologies, including theoretical discussion and empirical investigations. The manuscripts may represent a variety of theoretical perspectives and different methodological approaches.

The OJSP is already indexed in Crossref (DOI), DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals), BASE (Bielefeld Academic Search Engine), Google Scholar, J-Gate, ResearchBib and WorldCat - OCLC, and is applied for indexing in the other bases (Clarivate Analytics – SCIE, ESCI and AHCI, Scopus, ERIH Plus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, Cabell's Directory, SHERPA/RoMEO, EZB - Electronic Journals Library, etc.).

The authors of articles accepted for publishing in the OJSP should get the ORCID number (www.orcid.org), and Thomson-Reuters' Researcher ID (www.researcherid.com).

The journal is now publishing 2 times a year.

PEER REVIEW POLICY

All manuscripts submitted for publishing in the OJSP are expected to be free from language errors and must be written and formatted strictly according to the latest edition of the APA style. Manuscripts that are not entirely written according to APA style and/or do not reflect an expert use of the English language will **not** be considered for publication and will **not** be sent to the journal reviewers for evaluation. It is completely the author's responsibility to comply with the rules. We highly recommend that non-native speakers of English have manuscripts proofread by a copy editor before submission. However, proof of copy editing does *not* guarantee acceptance of a manuscript for publication in the OJSP.

The OJSP operates a double-blind peer reviewing process. The manuscript should not include authors' names, institutional affiliations, contact information. Also, authors' own works need to be blinded in the references (see the APA style). All submitted manuscripts are reviewed by the editors, and only those meeting the aims and scope of the journal will be sent for outside review. Each manuscript is reviewed by at least two reviewers.

The editors are doing their best to reduce the time that elapses between a paper's submission and publication in a regular issue. It is expected that the review and publication processes will be completed in about 2-3 months after submission depending on reviewers' feedback and the editors' final decision. If revisions are requested some changing and corrections then publication time becomes longer. At the end of the review process, accepted papers will be published on the journal's website.

OPEN ACCESS POLICY



The OJSP is an open access journal which means that all content is freely available without charge to the user or his/her institution. Users are allowed to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of the articles, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without asking prior permission from the publisher or the author. This is in accordance with the BOAI definition of open access.



All articles published in the OJSP are licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Authors hold the copyrights of their own articles by acknowledging that their articles are originally published in the OJSP.

