

Phenomenology and case study

My research originates from a phenomenon in life, I found that when an object gradually loses its use, we will also slowly abandon its use, and when an object completely loses its use, we will even choose to throw it away. We subjectively decide to discard an object based on its usefulness. Such a phenomenon triggered my interest in this category of objects. There are two types of objects: natural objects and man-made objects. Natural objects are air, sunlight, mountains, rivers, etc., which have nothing to do with people and do not exist for them. Here I am mainly discussing man-made objects. In our daily life, we generally describe these objects as useful and useless, but because of the differences in individual experience, it is difficult to judge whether an object is useful or useless by a uniform standard. However, the reason why these objects are created is actually the materialisation of human desires, and man-made objects exist to satisfy human desires (Krippendorff, 1989). Once these man-made objects lose their use and are thrown away as rubbish, the object becomes itself, and in this moment, the object takes on a special beauty, and the relationship between man and the object, is transformed. The object is still the same object, but the concept of the object's usefulness and uselessness has changed. When we look at an object in this way, it gives us a different experience and evokes memories associated with the object, be it a person, a happy or sad event, or a piece of history. Artifacts materialise concepts and offer new possibilities for interpreting reality by linking meanings and sensations (Gagliardi, 1999). Through such a perspective, I need to approach the study from a phenomenological point of view.

All phenomenology begins with 'phenomena' (Van Manen, 2017). The phenomenon I mentioned above is based on my ongoing focus on de-functionalised objects, which in phenomenology refers to the experience of living. And the goal of phenomenological research is in describing the experience of life and discovering the meaning of phenomena. In short, therefore, phenomenology to describe the experience of life and to discover the meaning of experience is the study of the nature of the experience of life. Its ultimate goal is to reduce the description of the experience under study to its essential elements or nature. It has been said that phenomenology is the study of the essence of life experience, forming new knowledge based on the experience of life events, making "phenomena" the basis of human science and all knowledge (Qutoshi, 2018). Instead of looking at the essence of what unfolds underneath the phenomenon as if looking in a mirror, based on a certain level of subjective awareness, one returns to the world of people's lives from the old objectivism guided by scientism and natural science, reflecting on the meaning of the subject's behaviour, and I need to let go of my previous past experiences and look at and be in the phenomenon itself with a completely open attitude. Such an approach is also a unique aspect of the phenomenological species, the epoche. for any setting we are completely free to practice this particular suspension, the suspension of all judgement (Cairns, 2012). Through the suspension

session, I can enter into the phenomenon in a more immersive way, but such an approach is actually a great challenge in the implementation stage, as humans are not machines, and subjective emotions, as well as some preconceived judgements, can affect my continued care and interfere with the session. Whereas when conducting phenomenological research we are required to realise that the world experienced by living people is created through the way they interpret and give meaning to it, phenomenology rejects the notion that there is a universal reality, but rather accepts that different people can see things in different ways at different times and in different contexts, and that each alternative version needs to be recognised as valid in its own right (Denscombe, 2017). Because people in different social contexts and cultures may have different perspectives and perceptions when looking at the same thing, phenomenology contrasts in this respect with the positivist approach which is based on the assumption of one reality, whereas the phenomenological approach tends to accept the possibility of multiple realities whereas the positivist approach seeks explanations that conform to one universal reality. When it comes to how phenomenologists actually conduct their research, a key feature of this approach is the emphasis on describing real experiences (Denscombe, 2017). Description in this context refers to the linguistic description of the text, which restores the real phenomenon by describing it, seeking to find out why the experience happened rather than on the interpretation and analysis of the experience. In my research, I will try my best to make a more detailed description of the attributes of things, including shape and size, state of movement, colour, etc., and at the same time, I will also describe the background characteristics that present the phenomenon produced, such as time, weather, environment, etc., to restore the most real phenomenon itself with specific details, which has achieved the purpose of seeking the meaning of the phenomenon, which is also consistent with the function of phenomenology as summarised by Farber in "Giorgi has pointed out that the value of the phenomenological research method lies in the direct access to the meaning of the essence of the phenomenon through questioning, which is different from the quantitative method. Unlike the quantitative approach, which involves a rigorous process of quantitative arithmetic in research, phenomenology does not require rigorous quantitative arithmetic, and uses the researcher as a tool to search for and gain meaning directly from the phenomenon (Giorgi, 2009). Beginning with the thing itself in this way also allows me to gain knowledge from purely subjective perceptions while maintaining the value of thought and reflection. Such an approach begins with the thing itself also allows me to gain knowledge from purely subjective perceptions while maintaining the value of thinking and reflecting, but it also shows a lack of scientific rigour compared to that in quantitative research, a greater emphasis on focusing on direct experience and perception compared to ethnographic research methods, an emphasis on portraying and understanding phenomena, and a focus on the phenomena themselves rather than discussing the influence of the social and cultural contexts on the phenomena, the It focuses only on the phenomena themselves without discussing the impact of the social and cultural context on the phenomena, as well as the relationship between these

phenomena and social structures, values and meaning systems.

In the following I will study Heidegger's interpretive phenomenology specifically through the method of case study, the case I chose comes from my undergraduate classmates' metalwork works, although my research direction is contemporary jewellery, but in my undergraduate period I studied metalwork for four years, so I am very emotionally attached to the subject, at the beginning of the topic, I was torn between jewellery or metalwork as a medium, but considering that metalwork lacked the interactivity compared to jewellery, it was set as jewellery. The two selected cases were not thought to be analysed from a phenomenological point of view when I first saw them, and the study of Heidegger's interpretative phenomenology opened up new ideas for me.

In Heidegger's *Being and Time* Heidegger mentions two words, which are also two states of being with the appliance, present-at-hand and ready-to-hand and illustrates the difference between these two words by using a hammer as an example (Heidegger, 1927). When a craftsman is struggling to swing his hammer, he works so intensely the hammer fits so well that while swinging he is not even aware of the hammer's presence, which is present as it is. Such a state of affairs is called present-at-hand by Heidegger, and it is only when the hammer ceases to function, for example, when it is broken or cannot be found, that we notice the hammer itself. This is the ready-to-hand, in phenomenological terms, the hammer reveals itself as it is, but not in consciousness, but in the practical activity of the worker. It is only when something goes wrong with the hammer and the worker is unable to do his job properly that the worker suddenly realises the existence of the hammer, and it is only at this moment that the hammer becomes the hammer itself. A direct reflection of this idea can be seen in Shuyao Hong's work (*A Hammer of Tea*). The work itself consists of a cup and a hammer, and it is noteworthy that the hammer itself appears as a part of the cup and sinks into it, a combination that creates a great visual impact. In the production process of the work, the hammer is used as a tool for forging and shaping the cup, which is consistent with Heidegger's reference to the hammer's attributes as a tool. According to the author's own description, she wanted to express the connection between the forging process and the use of the cup, she thinks that the hammer is always used as a tool and is always present in the process of forging the cup through continuous hammering, while in the traditional shape of the cup, there will not be a hammer, which she thinks is unfair, and so the hammer is placed as a cup handle in the work. Through her description, it can be analysed that the author herself has realised the importance of the hammer and wanted to change the transformation of his function (from a tool to a cup handle), highlighting the status and presence of the hammer, which the author also hoped that the viewer could value as a hammer itself. From this point of view, the author's intention is obviously successful, this work did bring me a relatively big impact in terms of visual aspect, but under this intuitive feeling, it also made me pay attention to and think about the hammer as a tool, whether an object can be transformed through the

medium of art, so that the viewer can pay attention to the object itself?



Fig 1. A Hammer of Tea.2021

Overall, phenomenology is a research method that emphasises the description of lived experiences and the discovery of their meaning. Through phenomenological research I can gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between people and objects and explore the meaning behind this relationship. When conducting phenomenological research, I need to be aware that the world people experience is created through the way they interpret and give meaning to it, and that different people may see the same thing in different ways at different times and in different circumstances. Phenomenology rejects the notion that there is one universal reality and instead recognises the possibility of multiple realities, with each alternative version acknowledged as valid. In the course of my research, I focus on the description of the phenomenon rather than its interpretation and analysis. This approach emphasises real experiences and seeks ways of revealing the meaning behind the phenomena.

Case study analysis is a method of phenomenological research in which I can better understand the theory of phenomenology and apply it to practical research through the analysis of specific cases. In Heidegger's phenomenology, he proposed two states of reality: the state of readiness and the state of emergence. The transition between these two states is closely related to people's use and perception of objects. By analysing an artist's work *A Hammer of Tea*, I can see how the author transforms the function of the object through the medium of art, drawing the viewer's attention and reflection on the object. By placing the hammer as a handle on the cup, the author highlights the presence of the hammer and hopes that the viewer will pay attention to the hammer itself. This transformation of the artistic medium not only changes the function of the object, but also the perception and cognition of the object.

Through phenomenological research methods, I can gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between people and objects and explore the meaning behind the

objects. Case studies are part of my research methodology. By analysing specific cases, I can better understand the theories of phenomenology and apply them to my research.

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