

Seminar Notes Phenomenology

- 19th century escape from rationality, logic, detachment, objectivity, etc of analytical philosophy.
- Too detached, no longer has anything of relevance to say to our lived experience in the world.
- Edmund Husserl.
- Return to the study of direct experience, but with a critical and philosophical lens.
- Epoche, bracketing - a useful tool to separate your own beliefs from your experiences - make no presuppositions about the world - just describe what you experience.
- **Problems:**
- Can phenomenology tell us anything about the nature of these events? If experience does tell us about the world, then what about extraordinary experiences?
- Phenomenology - suggests, perhaps, that our experience of phenomena does tell us something useful and important about the world - can give us access to what is going on.
- The way that bracketing has been applied in the social sciences often relativises other worlds, turns them into 'beliefs' about the world. Is this what Husserl intended for phenomenological enquiry?
- Bracketing forces us to make an ontological choice over what aspects of experience are ok to talk about sociologically/psychologically, etc., and those aspects that should be ignored because they are 'unscientific.'
- Resulted in many anthropologists (for example) neglecting to include their own extraordinary experiences as part of their ethnographic writing, e.g. Evans-Pritchard - dismisses his own experience - Bruce Grindal - took 20 years to write about it.
- Kant - the phenomenal and the noumenal realms - we cannot access the noumenal world, only the world that is revealed to our senses (the world of phenomena).
- Or perhaps it suggests a world that is not really objective, and which is made up of many different subjective points of view - not one world, but many - phenomenological approach - postmodernism - ontological turn.
- Raises awareness of subjectivity - biases, ontologies, etc.
- The need for reflexivity.
- Different ways of applying a phenomenological approach - auto-ethnography, and an experience-centred approach.
- Auto-ethnography - using your own body as a research tool, e.g. the phenomenology of landscape - what do you experience in particular places.
- Experience-centred approach - collect other people's phenomenological accounts - allows for the adoption of a comparative approach.