

Study on Phenomenological Philosophy of Social Sciences

ZHANG Xiao-long

(School of Marxism, Hohai University, Nanjing 211100, China)

bfwj107@126.com

Key words: phenomenological attitude; lifeworld; self

Abstract: This article attempts to confirm the legitimacy of the philosophy of social sciences with the perspective of phenomenology. So we believe it is important like phenomenological attitude, lifeworld or self – realization and so on . When the social science and even the science taken into a paradox that the subject is abandoned, the phenomenology provide us with the possibility of intervention in the field of philosophy of social science. Based on the criticism and the responsible attitude of phenomenology, the focus changes from objectivity analysis to self - realization in the philosophy of Social Sciences.

1. Introduction

Phenomenological reflections of social sciences constitute an important part of the philosophy of social science since the 20th century^[1]. Since Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, many phenomenologists such as Scheler, Heidegger, Merleau Ponty, Alfred Schutz and others have been able to inherit and develop Husserl's phenomenology, and their phenomenological reflection on the social sciences formed a special path in the field of the philosophy of social science. It is different from the law of the traditional philosophy of social science, but more concerned about the way back to the social science itself, and brings social science of different understanding.

In the past two decades, the philosophy of social science has become a dynamic and important research field. The basic problem is not only to explore the scientific status of social knowledge, but to put forward many basic problems in the field of specific social sciences, such as Paul A. Roth, Brian Fay, Nancy Cartwright, Mark Risjord, Alex Rosenberg and so on. But in terms of phenomenological path, it can be divided into the following three categories: First, the viewpoints or theories of social science by phenomenologists represented by Husserl. A real phenomenological attitude taken by Husserl, and his research has inherently revealed the phenomenological path of the philosophy of social science. Followed by such as Scheler, Heidegger, Merleau Ponty and other phenomenologists, they have put forward their different understanding of the social sciences, and the philosophy of social science and even social science also have a greater impact. Second, Schutz and his students do study on phenomenology as the basic principles of the philosophy of social science. In the 1930s, Schutz analysed the unique position of the social sciences and the methodology and basic concepts of the social sciences. In the 1970s, a large number of relevant books had been published, such as "Phenomenology and Social Sciences"(Maurice Natanson,1973), "phenomenology, language and the Social Sciences"(Maurice Roche,1973), "The Phenomenology and the Social Sciences: A Dialogue"(Joseph Bien,1978). Thirdly, in the field of specific social sciences, scholars applied phenomenological research consciously or not. After the 1970s, some of the concept and theories of phenomenology had been regarded as prerequisites by some social scientists. Peter Berg and Thomas Luckman, Gulwich, Gaffenel, Geertz are such research representatives. In the new century, some scholars have continued to focus on phenomenological studies the philosophy of social science, such as "Phenomenology and Social Studies - From Awareness to Cultural Criticism" (Brian Fay,2003) and "Phenomenology Sociology" (Ferguson,2006), their constructive research based on phenomenology, not only developed phenomenology, but also enriched the study of social sciences.

2. From natural attitude to phenomenological attitude

In the natural attitude, scientific theory has become a closed rules of the system by making judgments to experienced things, and beginning to reflect the proposition, and finally to experiencing to prove the proposition. In a reflection way, phenomenological attitude completely overturns all beliefs in a natural attitude, including world beliefs. So Robert Sokolowski said: “The *natural attitude* is the focus we have when we are involved in our original, world-directed stance, when we intend things, situations, facts, and any other kinds of objects. The natural attitude is, we might say, the default perspective, the one we start off from, the one we are in originally. We do not move into it from anything more basic. The *phenomenological attitude*, on the other hand, is the focus we have when we reflect upon the natural attitude and all the intentionalities that occur within it. It is within the phenomenological attitude that we carry out philosophical analyses”^[2]. The deep penetration of science in life makes people forget the original state of life, and the effectiveness of people's lives to be judged by science. However, when the science is misunderstood, the result must be absurd which we promote action with opposition between scientific and non-scientific. Phenomenological attitude makes us concern the study of phenomenology in social science. It is an attempt to make social science as the object of our rational discourse, from a phenomenological point of view, to further understand how social science becomes a rational discourse object, and after it becomes a rational discourse object, we can say something about its basis, methods, goals and so on. Phenomenology made its own unique reflection.

When the social science and even the science into a paradox that the subject of the high and abandoned, the phenomenology provide us with the possibility of intervention in the field of philosophy of social science. Based on the criticism and the responsible attitude of phenomenology towards ourselves and culture, we have faithfully grasped all the phenomena that social science has shown to us.

The phenomenological philosophy of social sciences must be intentional. Intentionality show the plight and the reasons of the absence of subject on the traditional social science understanding, and think that the development of social science today is bound to face this problem. Further, intentionality also shows how phenomenology can achieve a new breakthrough in the understanding of social science, which provides the possibility for phenomenology to intervene in the social sciences and connects science with the subject, self, and rationality. So, we can stick to the basic position of phenomenology by intentionality, and make a breakthrough in understanding the premise.

Time research is the real beginning of phenomenological philosophy of social science. Inner time-consciousness not only explains the foundation of intentionality, but also affects the reconstruction of the cognitive framework of social science particularly. At the same time, through the analysis of the inner time-consciousness, we show how the identity can be constructed in the complex and diverse phenomena, and how it clearly manifests the transcendence of human beings. So we can understand social sciences in the transcendence of man.

3. From the subject to the lifeworld

The involvement of phenomenology has led us to see the contradiction of a modern science, including the social sciences: science is due to the upsurge of subject on the enlightenment, but its success is marked by the exclusion of the subject. The difference between natural science and social sciences is that natural science is completely out of the “lifeworld”, and apart from the subject. Husserl said: “The result of this abstraction is the things purely as bodies; but these are taken as concrete real objects, the totality of which makes up a world which becomes the subject matter of research.”^[3] But it is the reason why the object of the natural science has lost its reality. Phenomenology tries to show that the specific science is based on the life world, and it is thy highly idealized result of our experience. Robert Sokolowski writes, “So long as a science is merely objective, it is lost in positivity. We have truth about things, but we have no truth about our possession of these things. We forget ourselves and lose ourselves even as we are fascinated by the things we know. The scientific truths are left floating and unpossessed. They seem to be nobody's truth. To round out the science, to be

fully scientific, we would need to investigate the subjective structural activities at work in the science, and to do so is not simply to continue doing molecular biology or solid state physics.”^[4] People in the lifeworld build a cultural world in the mutual understanding, so the life world is a intersubjective cultural world as the beginning. Only returning the original self-evident lifeworld, we can realize that this is not only related to the contradiction of the subject, but also the rationality of the discussion itself, it may correctly respond to the basic problems of social science.

Phenomenology puts forward different standards for evaluating a good social science. It is placed on the objective criteria of knowledge in positivism, while historicalism combines both objective and subjective criteria. Different from them, the evaluation of phenomenological theory is the realization of human self-planning, that is, it no longer focus on how the entry of the subject affect the evaluation of the theory, but that the evaluation must be related to the subject. It brings objective standards into the realization of self, of which the most typical example is the reflexive bring objectivity in social science theory

The critical spirit and responsible attitude of phenomenology, requires that the social sciences should face up to the limited cognitive ability of mankind, so the nature of the social sciences is particularly reflected in its own faultability. But phenomenology does not represent a closed view, and it can help people to appreciate the infinite diversity reflected in the realization of the essence of mankind itself, which fully explained that social science is not a certain explanation for social and human behavior. Phenomenological analysis of the social sciences is precisely to illustrate how and why we can be the creators of our own essence and meaning. So to a certain extent, phenomenology for the social sciences, its value is reflected in the re-selection of meaning and provide a variety of possibilities, of course, which also means that the attitude of a choice of life.

4. From objectivity analysis to self - realization

As mentioned above, the intervention of the subject offers the standards to evaluate social science in phenomenological attitude. The starting point of evaluation is the realization of human self-planning by the phenomenology, that is, it no longer asked how the entry of the subject affect the evaluation of the theory, but that the evaluation itself must be related to the subject. Phenomenology combines the understanding of social sciences with human existence, recognizing that the scientificity of the social sciences does not come from objectivity, but in the way that social science is self-fulfilling itself. Social science is about the way of human self-realization. And rational regulate our self-realization as the object of self-orientation. Husserl writes, “It is reason which ultimately gives meaning to everything that is thought to be, all things, values, and ends—their meaning understood as their normative relatedness to what, since the beginnings of philosophy, is meant by the word ‘truth’—truth in itself—and correlatively the term ‘what is’”^[5] Thus the philosophy of social science does not provide us with a closed knowledge system, but to help us find a new possibility of social science.

Unlike naturalism of the social sciences, the phenomenological approach does not focus on some predictive and controlled behavior, but rather wants to obtain the meaning and value of the object and the self at the same time. The object is different between social science and nature science, so we can talk about the premise of them. The distinction is necessary for research, but has nothing to do with the scientific nature of social science. About the method, there is no such a way of belonging to the social science, any method, when it is interpreted or understood, it be used for social science research, as long as we can enhance the understanding of the object.

The social sciences pay more attention to the individual on the basis of the universal necessity and objectivity of knowledge. In this sense, the social sciences can be closer to philosophy than to the natural sciences. The most fundamental question of social science concern can only be the realization of self. The possible essence of mankind achieved on the nature that depends on the movement of rationality. Rationality is the essential part of human self-realization, so the realization of self is the process of rational movement.

Unlike the traditional philosophy of science, there is no definite answer to the demarcation of science under phenomenological attitude. In our discussion, Change is happening in the boundaries of social science from the traditional positivism gradually to the rational inquiry of things and the

scientific meaning of the system of knowledge. It should be noted that this change is not based on the overthrow of the positivism, It just needs experience to prove that it is possible to think of a proposition as a prerequisite.

References

- [1] Nancy Cartwright and Elenonra Montuschi, *Philosophy of Social Science : A New Introduction*, oxford university press, pp.1-62,014.
- [2] Robert Sokolowski, introduction to phenomenology, The Press Syndicate Of The University Of Cambridge, pp.42,2000.
- [3] Husserl, The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology, trans. Divad Carr, Northwertern University Press, pp.60,1970.
- [4] Robert Sokolowski, introduction to phenomenology, The Press Syndicate Of The University Of Cambridge, pp.52,2000.
- [5] Husserl, The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology, trans. Divad Carr, Northwertern University Press, pp.12-13,1970.