

Phenomenological research in education. A systematic overview of German phenomenological pedagogy from the beginnings up to today

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ABSTRACT

The article provides a systematic overview of the most important approaches in German phenomenological pedagogy to the present: Fischer, Bollnow, Buck, Loch, Rombach, Fink, Schütz, Lippitz and Meyer-Drawe. Phenomenological pedagogy as both theory and empirical research aims at redefining traditional theories of Bildung, learning and education in empirical and systematic ways. They are seen as processes of experience, which take place in a horizon of phenomena of (inter-)generationality, embodiment, responsivity, foreignness and power. The phenomenological methodology combines the question of the subject matter with the methods of description, reduction and variation as guiding concepts. This phenomenological approach differs from hermeneutic and social-theoretical methods. In recent times, epistemological questions are expanded to a genealogical dimension, and methodological approaches are enriched by ethnographical and videographical instruments.

Keywords: Phenomenological pedagogy – Description – Bildung – Learning – Education

La ricerca fenomenologica in educazione. Una panoramica sistematica della pedagogia fenomenologica tedesca dalle origini fino a oggi

L'articolo fornisce una panoramica sistematica degli approcci più importanti della pedagogia fenomenologica tedesca fino ad oggi: Fischer, Bollnow, Buck, Loch, Rombach, Fink, Schütz, Lippitz e Meyer-Drawe. La pedagogia fenomenologica, sia come teoria sia come ricerca empirica, mira a ridefinire in modo empirico e sistematico le teorie tradizionali relative ai concetti di Bildung, apprendimento ed educazione. Essi sono visti come processi di esperienza, che si svolgono in un orizzonte di fenomeni di (inter)generazionalità, incarnazione, responsività, estraneità e potere. La metodologia fenomenologica combina la questione della fondazione disciplinare con i metodi della descrizione, della riduzione e della variazione quali concetti guida. Tale approccio fenomenologico differisce dai metodi ermeneutici e socio-teoretici. Recentemente, le questioni epistemologiche si sono allargate ad una dimensione genealogica, e gli approcci metodologici si sono arricchiti di strumenti etnografici e videografici.

Parole chiave: Pedagogia fenomenologica – Descrizione – Bildung – Apprendimento – Educazione.

DOI: 10.6092/issn.1825-8670/6327

This article provides a systematic overview of the most important approaches in German phenomenological pedagogy to the present. From its very beginnings on, the key topics of Husserl's phenomenology – which are time, lived body or *Leib*, life-world and otherness (Waldenfels, 1992) – are systematically connected with a theory and practice of education and *Bildung*. Phenomenological pedagogy as both theory and empirical research aims at redefining traditional theories of *Bildung* and education in empirical and systematic ways. Phenomenological approaches try to define (pedagogical) experiences in their temporal, sensual and mundane dimensions (Brinkmann, 2010). Within this process of re-definition, the phenomenological methods of description, reduction and variation have been adopted critically and developed further. Phenomenological pedagogy thus can present an epistemological and methodological program of its own, one that differs from other approaches within the field of the human sciences, including hermeneutics.¹

I would like to point out three central areas of research or three main questions of German educational science. To begin with, I will elaborate on the three areas of research: *Bildung* and education (a), epistemological questions (b) and methodological questions (c). I will try to outline this by briefly referring to the most important representatives in German phenomenological research in education. Approaches of scholars like Fischer, Buck, Loch, Rombach, Fink, Schütz, Lippitz and Meyer-Drawe will be sketched out and will then be related to the horizon of the three questions introduced above.

a) Phenomenological pedagogy is concerned with experiences of *Bildung*, learning and education, both empirically and theoretically. I will try to show that phenomenological pedagogy has increasingly developed own approaches to a theory of *Bildung* and education, which identifies these concepts as experiences. Traditional theories of *Bildung* and education, as they have been formulated in Germany by Humboldt, Schleiermacher, Herbart, Hegel and Nietzsche, are re-defined by a phenomenological approach in empirical and systematic ways. Along with diverse models of *Bildung* and learning within phenomenological pedagogy, questions of pedagogical ethics, educational effectiveness and power as well as questions of the specific normativity of pedagogical theory and practice are raised.

b) Epistemological reflections are reflections, which have foundational theoretical character. They refer to questions of the principles, the categories and models as well as to the question of the subject matter of our discipline and profession in comparison and contrast to other disciplines and professions. I will try to show that phenomenological research in education can successfully open new perspectives and definitions of education and *Bildung* as the subject matter of our discipline. To do so, the guiding “operative concepts” (Fink, 2004) of phenomenology (intention and attribution, reduction and variation) and the operative concepts of educational studies (education, generation, *Bildung*, learning, sociality, foreignness) will be critically reflected and made fruitful for further empirical and theoretical

¹ For discussion and translation I thank Sales Rödel.

research in education. Pedagogical experiences can be differentiated from other kinds of experiences; they can be described systematically and with regard to their content.

c) Methodological reflections try to combine the question of the subject matter and the approach or way to the subject matter. Phenomenological pedagogy tries to reflect the problems which arise from the qualitative, rich description of pedagogical experience and situations.

Phenomenological description and the problem of an ontology of reality within pedagogy (Aloys Fischer)

Aloys Fischer (1914) formulated programmatic thoughts on the relation between pedagogy and phenomenology in his paper “Deskriptive Pädagogik” (Fischer, 1914/1961). He was a representative of the “Munich School” surrounding Theodor Lipps and a “pioneer of research in Bildung” (Tippelt, 2004, p. 5). The Munich phenomenologists came into contact with Husserl from 1902. Husserl’s *Logische Untersuchungen* were critically received and connected to psychological and pedagogical questions (Herzog, 1992, pp. 246ff.). The Munich School (e.g. Lipps, Pfänder, Fischer) critically turned against the egological conception of consciousness proposed by Husserl, as they claimed that there is a “primordial experience of reality before the constitution of objects in the sense of Husserl” (ibid., p. 287). With this assumption, the Munich phenomenologists broke away from Husserl’s subject-centered perspective and anticipated thoughts later introduced by Merleau-Ponty. The methodical tool they used to capture the experience of reality is the description. Fischer states that the basic question of all description is what the object or the given of this specific description is. Before labeling an object with terms, researchers should aim to describe it precisely (Fischer, 1914/1961, p. 144).

Fischer combines the question of methodology with the question of the subject matter of pedagogy as a science. He locates the epistemological problem in the fact that educational science, in contrast to sciences with a clearly defined research area (e.g. geology), is notoriously insecure about its own subject matter. This is an insight many pedagogues have formulated to this day, beginning with Herbart. It is exactly the insecure state of educational sciences and its fragmentation into different schools which makes it even more important to find a firm standpoint. According to Fischer, this can only be accomplished by employing phenomenological description. This specific method is used as a way to reach intersubjective validation of experiences and it has maintained its systematic value within the tradition of qualitative research up to today. Fischer proves the fruitfulness of this method in his works on psychology and school pedagogy, where he uses it as a means of intersubjective validation of experiences.

Along with the methodical and constitutive function concerning the subject matter, description also enables us to point out pure facts (*Tatsachen*). After going through the phenomenological reduction (ibid., p. 147), phenomenological description can guarantee a “theory-free” (ibid., p. 142) description, which is also free from preconditions or prejudices. The “ground of certainty” (ibid., p. 144) and grounding fact of educational science is the concept of education. The ontological rehabilitation of the world, which was introduced by the Munich school, is thus combined with an epistemological function in order to assume constitutive and fundamental tasks for educational sciences.

Fischer’s *Realontologie* (ontology of reality) and the separation of its methods from its proper objects, as well as the reduction of the phenomenological method to mere description and pure facts, have been frequently criticized within German educational sciences (Lippitz, 2010). The main point of criticism is that Fischer reduces pedagogy to a science of objective facts, following the model of a rigorous, empiristic science. This reduction springs from a naïve *Realontologie*, and it also implies that many of the guiding motives of phenomenology are neglected, for example the ambivalence of noesis and noema and that of intention and attention. For the field of pedagogy, the problem of a theory-free description and a naïve ontological fundamentation becomes evident in an example given by Fischer himself. He describes a father physically punishing his son after the son ridiculed him in the form of an imitation (Fischer, 1914/1961, p. 150). In the analysis following this example, Fischer tries to exclude all valuations and prejudices by using the method of phenomenological reduction. He tries to point out that the simple fact of a punishment is not to be called pedagogical. It is only the intended effect of the punishment, i.e. the idea that punishment supports the child in his development, which is the genuinely pedagogical element in this example (ibid.). One can clearly see that the acclaimed theory-free description is full of preconditions. It has a strong tendency to the moral and the normative, without being able to clarify the conditions of this normative valuation. From a methodological perspective, Fischer gets into an epistemological circle: he already assumes what he wants to show by description. This is a classical methodological problem of qualitative empirical and theoretical research (Brinkmann, 2015a). Fischer thus restitutes a model of traditional, normative pedagogy of role models and culture within the relation of the generations.

However, Fischer has contributed to the autonomization and scientization of pedagogy as a discipline with his work. Still he has not solved the constitutional problem of the relatively young science of education. The epistemological problem comprising the question of the subject matter, the fundament or the ground, the methodological problem, which is that of description, as well as the methodological circle have since been key issues in phenomenological-pedagogical thinking and reflection.

The anthropological turn and the problems of hermeneutics

After the Second World War² and in the wake of the anthropological³ turn, phenomenology was widely received and further spread in pedagogy. One of the main representatives is Otto F. Bollnow, who combined Heidegger's phenomenology with linguistic-philosophical, anthropological and existential questions. Along with a critical reception of existential philosophy and philosophy of life or *Lebensphilosophie* (in the tradition of Jaspers and Dilthey), Bollnow points out some categories of an "education of discontinuity" (crisis, awakening, admonition, counseling, venture, failure and encounter) which become fruitful for *Bildung* and education (Bollnow, 1959). Bollnow carried out only a few studies which can rightfully be called phenomenological-descriptive. They explored the phenomena of practicing, space and the atmosphere in pedagogy (Bollnow, 1963, 1978, 2001). Bollnow's hermeneutical anthropology and his *Lebensphilosophie* lead to epistemological and ontological problems (Lippitz, 1980, pp. 229ff.) similar to Fischer's notion of *Realontologie*. However, in contrast to Fischer, the ontological dimension is not considered a fact of education, which has to be described empirically, but as an expression of life itself in the sense of *Lebensphilosophie*. It becomes manifest in cultural objectivations (Dilthey, 1997) and can be interpreted hermeneutically as a text. Following Bollnow, the understanding of cultural objectivations is reduced to a singular sense. The multiplicity and ambiguity of sense is thus equalized and foreignness is excluded. Different modes of experience, for example scientific ones, life-world based experience or spiritual experiences, cannot be differentiated (Lippitz, 1980, pp. 229ff.; Brinkmann, 2012, p. 144).

² After 1933 and during the time of Nazi terror, the phenomenological movement in Germany was nearly extinct. Many phenomenologists, e.g. Alfred Schütz, had to leave the country and founded important schools of thinking in the US or had to suffer repressions in Nazi Germany, like Eugen Fink. There are two main works in phenomenological pedagogy from the 1930s which are worth mentioning: Friedrich Copei's book *Der fruchtbare Moment im Bildungsprozess* (The fruitful moment within the process of *Bildung*) (1930) (Copei, 1962). The book is Copei's dissertation, which he submitted to Eduard Spranger. He uses Husserl's model of intentionality to show how "peculiar instances, in which a new insight comes upon us like a flash" (ibid, p. 17) can lead to a "changing effect" in intellectual, aesthetic, ethical and religious experience and in the relation to world and self. Copei uses impressive examples from school lessons to show how these processes of *Bildung* can be initiated in educational settings, using a Socratic technique of questioning. Beside Copei's work, Martha Muchow's studies on the life-world of children from Hamburg can be named as an ethnographically oriented, descriptive and pedagogical research approach. By referring to William Stern's psychology, Muchow describes the different urban milieus of children. Her studies are still considered as pioneering work in the field of childhood studies (Muchow, 1998; Faulstich-Wieland, 2007; Lippitz, 2003b).

³ The term "anthropology" is used in a continental notion within German phenomenological pedagogy. It is not connected to ethnology or ethnography (as in Anglo-American discourses), but offers a perspective on pedagogical questions that is concerned with concepts and notions of mankind and the *logos* of *anthropos* in a historical, philosophical and linguistic sense.

Considering Bollnow's work, we can observe how the core of pedagogy is reduced to the pedagogical relation as suggested by *Geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik*⁴. The subject-centered conception of man behind this approach and the traditionalistic and culturalistic main features of *Geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik* can also be found in Martinus Jan Langeveld's works (Langeveld, 1968). The normative feature of a research program oriented on the life-world becomes very obvious here: The researchers themselves are participants in the field of research, where they are not only pursuing scientific interests, but also interests of orienting their actions, which aim at the humanization of all human relations. Similar to Bollnow, Langeveld does not reflect sufficiently upon assumed ontological "structures of essence" (Langeveld, 1973)⁵, the normative views of a cultural pedagogy and one based on role models. Furthermore, he does not reflect his own operative concepts. Culture is assumed as cultural objectivation and bourgeois norm, an assumption that gives away Langeveld's traditionalistic conception of man (ibid.), which is based on continuity and linearity. Seen from a methodological perspective, phenomenological research in education falls under the spell of hermeneutic thinking.

New approaches within phenomenological pedagogy

At the same time (i.e. the 1960s and 70s) as Bollnow and Langeveld develop their anthropological and hermeneutical approaches, new concepts appear in German discourse, which critically distinguish themselves from the ones named above and develop their own phenomenological theories. Buck, Rombach, Loch, Fink and Schütz refer to Husserl, Heidegger and Gadamer and thus are able to present genuinely phenomenological approaches to learning, *Bildung* and education.

⁴ *Geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik* is a tradition of pedagogical thinking in Germany, which can be dated to the period from the 1930s to the 1960s, the main representatives being Nohl, Spranger and Bollnow. Many thinkers of *Geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik* were involved with the Nazi-movement. They (and also the whole theoretical approach) are seen critically in Germany today.

⁵ See Lippitz (1997), for a concise criticism of Langeveld's phenomenological perspective. Van Manen's *Phenomenology of Practice* (2014) refers mainly to Langeveld, without noticing the later development of phenomenological pedagogy, especially the epistemological and methodological differentiations.

Learning as experience – Günther Buck's pedagogical theory of learning

Günther Buck's study *Lernen und Erfahrung* (Learning and Experience) (Buck, 1989) has become a classic in German pedagogy (Schenk & Pauls, 2014). Buck examines the process of experience in learning. His research is guided by a historical perspective (Aristoteles, Bacon, Hegel and Husserl) and by a systematic perspective and is framed by a hermeneutic of practice (*Handlungshermeneutik*, Buck, 1981). Buck states that teaching and educating is always based on a certain notion of learning but that learning itself is one of the "least explained" (Buck, 1989, p. 8) phenomena. Theoretical pedagogy thus has to begin with an analysis of learning.

Buck is a student of Jaspers and Gadamer. According to Gadamer, understanding and learning are situated in a temporal horizon (Gadamer, 1990). According to Husserl's analysis of intentionality, the structure of experience as a horizon is connected to the circle of anticipation and fulfilment or disappointment of anticipations (Buck, 1989, p. 50). Buck presents a very accurate description of the structure of learning as experience. Anticipation within experience and also the disappointment of this anticipation as a negative moment in experiences of *Bildung* play a major role in this work. Buck defines the concept of negation as the "determinate negation" of a specific anticipation in the sense of Hegel. The negation crosses out an intention and brings a moment of discontinuity into the continuity of experience. Each disappointment of an anticipation is a determinate disappointment or a determinate negation in Hegel's terms (ibid., p. 55). By undergoing a negative experience as disappointment of anticipations in a certain situation, we not only have an experience of something, but also an experience of ourselves. As one's own horizon is changed in an experience, future anticipations as well as past experiences change accordingly (ibid., pp. 60ff.). Learning from experience can then be seen as "learning as experience" (Meyer-Drawe, 2003). Negative experiences enable us to change previous knowledge and experience, at the same time they open us to new experiences. (Brinkmann, 2012, pp. 150ff.). Given this fact, learning is related to the past as well as to the future. By undergoing negative experience, we might become aware of latent horizons and habits (ibid., p. 57). Learning itself is a reflective moment within the process of experience. By using hermeneutic methods of understanding we can explicate this latent sense of experience in learning.

Buck's theory of learning as experience has not only found its way into hermeneutic and phenomenological pedagogy, but also into theory of *Bildung* and *Allgemeine Erziehungswissenschaft*, into biographical research and into qualitative classroom research (Brinkmann, 2014). Meyer-Drawe's phenomenology of re-learning and learning differently (*Umlernen*), (Meyer-Drawe, 2008) the *Innsbrucker Vignettenforschung* (Innsbruck Research Group), who bases its work on ideas of Meyer-Drawe (Schratz et al., 2012), Brinkmann's pedagogical-phenomenological theory of practicing (Brinkmann, 2012) and the videographic research in school interaction (Brinkmann, 2015b) wouldn't have been possible without Buck's groundbreaking works.

Learning and the course of life (Lebenslauf) – Werner Loch

As a student of Otto F. Bollnow, Werner Loch succeeds in developing new approaches to both subject matter and methodology of educational science. He develops a biography-based theory of education (Loch, 1979). Following the ideas of H. Plessner, it is grounded in non-essentialist anthropology and regards the human being as an open question. In biographical research, Loch points out various stages of the *curriculum vitae*, the course of life, and differentiates them in relation to learning and educating (Buck, 2012). Learning is seen as a cognitive-reflective experience and one that is connected to habits. Human learning is based on a mode of “knowing-how” and the process of learning leads to a conscious relation to this “knowing-how” (Loch, 1980). The lived body then becomes important both as a category of reflection and as a phenomenon.

Loch leaves the grounds of genuinely hermeneutic theory and opens his research to psychological and psychoanalytical, sociological and didactical influences, without abandoning a basic phenomenological orientation. He succeeds in fleshing out the “poetic” and “creative” function (Loch, 1998, p. 316) of the phenomenological method and contrasts it to methods of hermeneutics and psychoanalysis.

Structures, operative concepts and co-existential elemental basic phenomena

By the end of the 60s, Heinrich Rombach and Eugen Fink tried to solve some of the epistemological problems as pointed out by Fischer, Bollnow and Langeveld, as well as ontological, anthropological and methodological questions. In these approaches, oppositional to the assumption of traditional metaphysics of the subject, humans are regarded as social and transformative beings. Following Heidegger, they claim that humankind has been misinterpreted as an object among other objects. Such a perspective neglects the constitutive openness and transformativity of human relations to others and to the self.

Heinrich Rombach, a student of Heidegger, Fink and Szilasi, provided a new approach to phenomenological thinking by introducing a structural phenomenology and structural ontology (*Strukturphänomenologie/Strukturontologie*). In a strict delineation from traditional, metaphysical notions of the subject, Rombach develops a social phenomenology, which focuses on the genesis of humans in a social and cultural setting. From an epistemological perspective, pedagogy as a science has to find its place in the structures of the human sciences, if it is not to remain subjective and arbitrary. The key to this scientization is the correct interpretation of pedagogical experience and its connection to a larger context (Rombach, 1979, p. 139). Rombach names some elemental phenomena such as development, freedom, authority, guidance or leadership, *Bildung*, education, and learning etc. (ibid., p. 141). He combines the reflection on elemental phenomena with a reflection on experience as

pedagogical experience. This enables him to distinguish between various kinds of experience (political, economic, aesthetic) and to contrast these with the specific dimension of pedagogical experience.

Co-existence and fragmentarity – Eugen Fink's theory of education and *Bildung*

This differentiation, which is important for educational reflection, was introduced earlier by Rombach's mentor in Freiburg, Eugen Fink. Fink earned his doctorate with Husserl and Heidegger and remained Husserl's loyal assistant, even when Husserl was persecuted by the Nazis. Fink developed a social phenomenology, a co-existential anthropology and a systematic philosophy of education.

Similarly to Loch and Rombach, Fink describes human fundamental phenomena in a phenomenological-praxeological analysis. He differentiates five fundamental phenomena and practices of human *Dasein* (Fink, 1995): play, power, work, love and death. He then adds a sixth one: education (Fink, 1970). They are seen as social, co-existential and embodied practices in time and space of society and as an expression of care about *Dasein*. Within education, caring, learning, wonder and astonishment, questioning as well as counseling become basic practices. At the same time, these practices allow humans to stay in a productive openness towards the world, the foreign and the other.

Fink's fundamental thesis regards "mankind as a fragment" (Fink, 1989); and man as someone who does not exist as a complete being or as an object. The totality of mankind and world, or of mankind and nature, as well as the continuity in the generational succession have broken apart. *Bildung* is then no longer *Allgemeinbildung* or general *Bildung* in a holistic sense, it has become fragmentary *Bildung*. It can then be described as coping with this existential plight. In this definition, *Bildung* becomes a practical-existential experiment of sense under preconditions of a provisional, insecure nature, or, in other words: an existential and co-existential practice as a provisional creation of meaning. It is also a reflective practice, as the operation of phenomenological variation can mark different modes of experiencing in politics, arts, love, time and work as differences and compare these modes. At the same time, the phenomenological reduction enables us to free ourselves from what is taken as a fact and opens perspectives on what is possible. The concept of education is similarly redefined: Fink calls the educational practice "community of questioning". This community is determined by power, society and culture and has its reference point in the collective plight of not-knowing and not-knowing-how (Fink, 1970). Education becomes a community of generations, which generate provisional ideas and educational aims under conditions of mutual foreignness. Education is thus characterized by difference and controversy concerning different interpretations of particular situations. These controversies are those of subjects situated in a socio-political space, which means that education becomes a democratic process.

Existential-critical pedagogy – Egon Schütz

Fink's student Egon Schütz has developed Fink's approach further into an "existential-critical pedagogy" and has deepened it in many studies on anthropology, ethics and aesthetics.⁶

Following Heidegger, Schütz adds five existentials as modes of human "relationship to being" (*Seinsverhältnisse*) to the six co-existential practices by Fink (Schütz, 1979). These existentials are: freedom, reason, historicity, language and the lived body. Schütz radicalizes Fink's thesis of fragmentarity by referring to Heidegger's criticism of humanism and subjectivity, thus opening it for a theory of *Bildung*. The "anthropological circle" as the fundamental mode of human self-understanding constitutes the center of Schütz' theory (Schütz, 1991, 1992). Theoretical, practical, scientific and everyday definitions and conceptions (*Vor-stellungen*) of mankind can never lead to complete self-transparency. Man remains subject to his finiteness and corporality, even within the processes of self-formation (*Sich-Bilden*) and self-imagination (*Sich-Einbilden*) or, in other words, he remains trapped in the anthropological circle. Instead of hoping to find external fixed points, the elementary anthropological thinking tries to observe itself in the process of thinking, which keeps the anthropological difference open. Schütz describes *Bildung* as an existentially risky act of limited freedom, which takes place under the conditions of finiteness, corporality and co-existentiality. He sees education as a co-existential experiment, in which man engages in practices of dealing with himself and with the other as an incomplete or imperfect being. In many of his studies Schütz is able to show that elementary anthropological experience arises in situations of existential negativity, e.g. in borderline situations, crises and other existential turning points in life. Schütz fleshes out these research areas in precise reference to post-structuralist theories, e.g. that of Foucault, Derrida, Levinas, Baudrillard and Wittgenstein (Brinkmann, 2016).

Phenomenological methodology: putting in sense instead of interpreting

Seen from the perspective of methodology, we can state that Rombach, Fink, Loch and Schütz succeed in making the phenomenological method of reduction and variation fruitful for a theory and practice of *Bildung* and education. On the one hand, this new perspective offers a non-technological and non-instrumental understanding of methods, which contrasts with empiristic and psychologistic approaches. On the other hand, the scholars named above offer possibilities to delineate phenomenological research in education from other approaches within the human sciences, especially from hermeneutics. At the same time, they draw connections between phenomenology and post-structural theories. Sense, understanding and

⁶ See the online archive of Egon Schütz' works for a complete list of his work and many open-access documents: <http://www.erziehungswissenschaften.hu-berlin.de/de/allgemeine/egon-schuetz-archiv>.

interpreting are terms of hermeneutics and phenomenology alike. However, phenomenological description refers to intentional acts, in which it differs from empirical observation and hermeneutic interpretation. Phenomenological description aims at „working out, how a creature like man, who is equipped with a lived body, soul, consciousness and conception of self and thus becomes a self, can express sense-giving intentions at all” (Loch, 2001, p. 1198).

On the contrary, hermeneutics, and most social sciences based on hermeneutics, practice a reconstructive interpretation (*Auslegung*) of something that is given as a text. Phenomenology strives to put sense into what is perceived (*Einlegung*)⁷, thus performing a productive and prospective task (Brinkmann, 2014, p. 217). “Thus becomes the constitutive task of phenomenological description, which consequently obtains the character of an ‘attribution’” (Loch, 2001, p. 1205). By using the operation of attribution, phenomenology once more proves its proximity to structuralist and ethnographic research approaches. According to Fink, this productive and creative dimension is guaranteed by reflectively employing the “operative concepts” (Fink, 2004) of phenomenology (description, reduction, variation) (Brinkmann, 2015b). With the phenomenological approaches, the methodological problem of educational science can be treated in a reflective and differentiated manner.

Recent approaches: Lifeworld, inter-corporality, responsivity

During the 80s and 90s, new and genuinely phenomenological approaches were developed in German educational discourse, a development which is closely connected to the scholars Käte Meyer-Drawe and Wilfried Lippitz. Very much like in Schütz’ work, new referential theorists beside Husserl and Heidegger enter the stage: Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, Derrida and Foucault. Within this discourse, special attention has been paid to Waldenfels’ philosophy of responsivity. Waldenfels suggests a concept of sociality, which lies beyond the common categories of regularity, normativity, communication and pragmatism and thus takes into account the claim of the other and the foreign, as well as the dimension of pathos (*Widerfahrnis*) in human experience. With reference to Merleau-Ponty and French post-structuralism, Waldenfels expands Husserl’s concept of intentionality with a phenomenology of corporality, foreignness and “attentionality” (Waldenfels, 1998, 2005, 2007).

In the wake of the opening toward post-structuralist theories, approaches from transcendental and subject-philosophical tradition within pedagogy are increasingly becoming the subject of critical revision. At the same time, the social-theoretical and empirical turns within pedagogy lead to a growth of a qualitative research methods, which have been combined with the approach of “theoretical empiry” (Brinkmann, 2015a). Inter-subjectivity

⁷ The German word *legen* means „to put“, the prefix *ein-* means “in” and the prefix *aus-* means “out”.

and inter-corporality are considered central categories of these approaches and are defined with reference to Waldenfels' concept of responsivity (Waldenfels, 2007). Early studies of Meyer-Drawe and Lippitz are dedicated to the specific sense of children's being-in-the-world (Lippitz, 1984b; 2003b) and to children's learning processes (Lippitz & Meyer-Drawe, 1982).

By referring to Husserl's concept of *Lebenswelt* (life-world), Wilfried Lippitz follows *geisteswissenschaftliche* hermeneutic (i.e. the Utrecht School and Langeveld), phenomenological (i.e. Merleau-Ponty) and socio-theoretical perspectives and critically evaluates them (Lippitz, 2003a). Life-world in Lippitz' understanding means, first of all, being situated mundanely, socially and historically in practical relations to self and world (Lippitz, 1993). In a number of life-world oriented qualitative studies on different dimensions of pedagogical experience, Lippitz fleshes out that the child's sociality is temporally and spatially based (Lippitz, 1993, 2003b). He re-defines the method of description in a hermeneutic-phenomenological perspective under the term of "exemplary description" (Lippitz, 1984a). In later works, he focuses on questions of pedagogical ethics, which he connects to topics of foreignness and alterity in *Bildung* and education by critically referring to Levinas (Lippitz, 2008).

Meyer-Drawe also refers to Merleau-Ponty and his phenomenology of inter-corporality in order to think inter-subjectivity within learning and educating anew (Meyer-Drawe, 1996). She develops an influential theory of learning as experience and learning as a process of re-learning or learning anew (*Umlernen*) (Meyer-Drawe, 2003). In this, negative instances within learning are re-defined within a horizon of embodiment and perception. By referring to Foucault, Meyer-Drawe frames education as a phenomenon and practice of power. She critically examines psychological and neuro-scientific concepts (Meyer-Drawe, 2008).

Other current approaches in phenomenological research in education tie together with the work of Waldenfels, Lippitz and Meyer-Drawe. Kristin Westphal works on aesthetical experience in learning and education, based on a phenomenology and an anthropology of the lived body (Westphal, 2002). Ursula Stenger inquires on creative processes, early childhood experiences and education in daycare centers by referring to theories of Heinrich Rombach (Stenger, 2002). Anselm Böhmer refers to Fink and Patočka for his studies in the field of phenomenological didactics and an a-subjective theory of *Bildung* (Böhmer, 2002). Klaus Stieve presents studies on experiences of materiality and processes of *Bildung* in the field of children's relation to self and world in early childhood (Stieve, 2008). Lastly, Malte Brinkmann makes the phenomenological orientation fruitful for a theory and research of pedagogical experience (Brinkmann, 2015a). Based on a phenomenological theory of practicing (*Übung*) (Brinkmann, 2012), he examines temporal and corporal experiences of power within learning and education by using a specific phenomenological, pedagogical approach of videographical research (Brinkmann, 2015b).

In these approaches, educating, learning and practicing are all seen as processes of experience, which take place in a horizon of phenomena of embodiment, responsivity, foreignness and power. In addition, epistemological questions are enriched by a genealogical dimension, and methodological approaches are enriched by ethnographical and videographical instruments (Brinkmann, 2011).

By adding this perspective, reflection of basic concepts and the general content of the discipline reach a new level of reflectivity, without claiming to present definitive answers.

Conclusion

The epistemological question of the subject matter or the core of pedagogy as a discipline and profession on the one hand, and the methodological question of an adequate research method in connection with the operative terms of phenomenology on the other hand, can already be found in Aloys Fischer's *Descriptive Pedagogy* (1914). Both questions, the substantive and the methodological, have become central to phenomenological educational science. Both Bollnow's and Langeveld's answers to them are strongly anthropological and ontological in nature. The conservatism and traditionalism of *Geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik* that Bollnow affirmed was subsequently overcome by Buck's theory of inductive learning as experience, and, even more clearly, by Rombach's structural pedagogy and Fink's social phenomenology. Fink shows that phenomenological epistemology and methodology hold productive and not yet fully recognized potentials for empirical and theoretical educational science. With Buck's theory of learning as experience, Loch's curricular theory of education and Schütz' existential-critical approach, learning, education and existence are re-defined differently. At the same time, the methodological differences and similarities between phenomenological approaches and hermeneutic or social-theoretical methods become evident. In the work of Lippitz, Meyer-Drawe and other current representatives of phenomenological thinking, methodological and epistemological reflection is brought to a new level. In the course of a social-theoretical turn, the key questions of the discipline are not treated in an ontology-based manner anymore, but in a relational way within the horizons of corporality, responsivity, foreignness and power. The phenomenological sub-discipline within the field of educational sciences can thus still contribute to the autonomization and scientization of the discipline as a whole by defining its key concepts and problems more precisely on a phenomenal level and by delineating it from other disciplines and professions.

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