



(Mis)Appropriations of Gadamer in Qualitative Research: A Husserlian Critique (Part 1)

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Abstract

Within the Husserlian phenomenological philosophical tradition, description and interpretation co-exist. However, teaching the practice of phenomenological psychological research requires careful articulation of the differences between a descriptive and an interpretive relationship to what is provided by qualitative data. If as researchers we neglect the epistemological foundations of our work or avoid working through difficult methodological issues, then our work invites dismissal as inadequate science, undermining the effort to strongly establish psychology along qualitative lines. The first article in this two-part discussion provides a Husserlian investigation of the meaning of 'method' for psychology as a human science. This investigation is undertaken in the light of some researchers' appropriations of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics in the service of non-methodical praxes. The second article will address some implications of the attempt to structure qualitative psychological research along 'Gadamerian' lines, taking seriously the references to Gadamer's work made by researchers such as Van Manen and Smith.

Introduction

The question of method is a primary point of contention between those advocating a descriptive phenomenological approach to qualitative research and those advocating an interpretive approach. The descriptive psychological research method delineated by Giorgi (2009) is shaped by the phenomenological philosophical method of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), whereas advocates of interpretive approaches, sometimes described as 'hermeneutic' or 'interpretive phenomenology' approaches, frequently reference the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). Examples include Van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic phenomenology and the interpretive phenomenological analysis of Smith, Flower and Larkin (2009). These approaches tend often invoke Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics while appropriating key

praxis terms from the technical vocabulary of Husserl's phenomenological philosophical method.

In this article I argue that it is a disservice to students to blur or oversimplify the differences between descriptive and interpretive phenomenological research approaches, because they each offer fundamentally different conceptions of perception, understanding and method. The two approaches therefore constitute the research situation in profoundly different ways. However, within a philosophical context, these differences do not represent an intrinsic antagonism between description and interpretation. Mohanty (1987) summarizes the relationship between these two philosophical currents in phenomenology as follows:

In the course of the history of the

phenomenological movement, two kinds of phenomenology have come to compete with each other: descriptive phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology. The former chooses a perceptual model to understand all human experience, the latter a textual model. *For the former, the things to be described are given ... for the other, the textual model, nothing is given ...* the text qua text is an interpretive task, an *Aufgabe*, and its interpretation involves a community of interpreters, rules of interpretation and a history of interpretation ... the very idea of 'grasping' a sense is rejected along with the idea of the meaning of a text. (p. 52, emphasis added)

Within the context of qualitative psychological research the situation is different, because in order to do justice to the interrelatedness of phenomenological description and interpretation, a qualitative method would need to acknowledge both the descriptive and interpretive dimensions of its praxis.

More than merely asserting that there are interpretive and descriptive features, exponents of such approaches would need to carefully delineate both the interpretive and descriptive moments in the praxis they propose. Such care is very necessary both conceptually and in order to enable students to properly grasp the different research attitudes that pertain to each standpoint. The exponents of such a method would need to educate practitioners in the lived-experience of both standpoints, since they imply different relationships to the given, and provide explicit guidance so that researchers learn to shift perspectives from the interpretive to the descriptive as required during the research process. Research is impossible without a perspective from which it is conducted; psychological research is an expression of a particular interest. Descriptive research demands fidelity to the given and is impossible if the lived-experience of such fidelity is not internalized by student-practitioners.

The central concern of this two-part article is the teaching and praxis of descriptive phenomenological psychological research in psychology. I have adopted a mixed philosophical-psychological perspective shaped by the philosophical phenomenology of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, as well as Giorgi's phenomenological psychology. Part 1 of this article is a Husserlian exploration of the meaning of 'method' for psychological human science. Part 2 considers some implications of the attempt to structure qualitative psychological research in accordance with 'Gadamerian' lines, taking seriously the references to his work made by researchers such as Van Manen and Smith.

The Interrelatedness of Hermeneutics and Phenomenology

Mohanty (1984) observes that from a philosophical perspective there need be no intrinsic conflict between description and interpretation because in Husserl's thought "hermeneutics and phenomenology coexist [since] *being given* and *being interpreted* are descriptions of the same situation from two different levels of discourse" (Mohanty, 1984, p. 117, emphasis added). In the first volume of *Ideas*, §3 Husserl (1982) affirms the perceptual presence-for-us of the objects of consciousness themselves in their 'personal' selfhood, which can be described just as they present themselves to consciousness. At the same time Husserl affirms that a scientific perspective is a specialized, adopted attitude within which scientists constitute (not 'construct') their objects of inquiry¹. Consequently then, for phenomenological psychology the given can be described within the limits in which it is given to the researcher's consciousness within a chosen, intersubjective scientific perspective.

In a broad sense this choice of attitude in relation to the given can be correctly termed interpretive. Assuming a scientific attitude or a psychological versus a sociological or anthropological attitude signifies the adoption of a particular perspective over and against other possible perspectives². These can accurately be described as interpretive choices and they flow from the specifiable, motivating interest with which we engage the given. Thus, within the chosen perspective, what is given to the researcher's consciousness can be rigorously described as it presents itself, within the limits of that presentification, without adding non-given meanings, in accordance with Husserl's Principle of All Principles in §24 of the first volume of his *Ideas* (1982, p. 44). In this way, descriptive psychological

¹ Fink's (1995) Sixth Cartesian Meditation, composed in close dialogue with Husserl, notes that "Worldly [empirical] science, originating in the natural attitude, refers to the existent as if beyond it no thematic inquiry were possible ... [science phenomenologically understood], on the contrary, when it refers to the existent, is from the outset open to the constitutive horizon of the existent, it takes the existent as a result of constitution ... only through the phenomenological reduction and ... insight into the constitutive sense of being ... do these sciences themselves become understandable in the ultimate sense of their relation to the existent" (p. 149).

² From a Husserlian perspective one would never claim that psychological meanings are immanent in a subject's experience 'in itself' because for phenomenology there is no 'in itself'; meanings are always *for* consciousness, not in themselves. Hence psychological meanings are only present for those consciousnesses that want to grasp a phenomenon *psychologically*; this is so even if psychology as a discipline is incompletely founded.

researchers follow in Husserl's footsteps, demonstrating fidelity to psychical phenomena as they are given to us. The initial, high-level interpretive choice supports phenomenologists' practice of description without intrinsic conflict. Within the practice of Husserlian phenomenology, description and interpretation refer to different discursive levels of the researcher's relationship to the given (Mohanty, 1984).

Rampant confusion results when researchers conflate these discursive levels, for example due to epistemological naïveté, or make the difference between description and interpretation absolute due to a misplaced purism. For this reason, Mohanty (1984) argues that advocates of descriptive and interpretive approaches "can be either naïve or self-critical. When they are naïve, they perceive each other as opposed. When they are self-critical, they recognize each other as complementary" (p. 60). Consequently, it would be fallacious to argue that qualitative psychological research can only be descriptive. Likewise, it would be naïve to argue that qualitative research can only be, or is always, interpretive.

Articulating the implications of the complementarity of description and interpretation for the practice of psychological research is an important task. However descriptive psychologists must articulate the methodical phenomenological standpoint in its own terms in relation to its hermeneutic 'other' prior to articulating their co-presence within Husserlian phenomenological praxis. I claim this order of priority for two reasons. First, the importation of guiding assumptions from philosophical hermeneutics into psychological research by qualitative researchers is often accomplished in a philosophically superficial manner that neglects problematic epistemological consequences, for example the virtually ignoring of method. Second, a sloganistic echoing of hermeneutic and postmodern assumptions, unaccompanied by a careful examination of the implications of these philosophies for psychology, serves to conceal questionable premises regarding interpretation.

While it might appear that bypassing careful discussions of epistemological-methodological issues in favour of an almost exclusive emphasis on praxis yields more flexible 'user-friendly' approaches to qualitative research, such a strategy simultaneously renders the qualitative research movement vulnerable to (and deserving of) critique for conceptual incoherence. Such deficits strengthen the hand of empiricist psychologists like Proctor and Capaldi (2006) who largely dismiss qualitative psychological research as a misguided attempt to evade the demands of genuine scientific inquiry, an attempt bolstered by faulty arguments resembling those advanced in antiquity by the Sophists (p. 176).

Absorbed by mainstream academic culture, the premises of philosophical hermeneutics are often unrecognized as questionable assumptions. Thus one often encounters carelessly absolute assertions regarding method and interpretation in the qualitative literature.³ At the same time, the extent to which the empirical-positivist model is hegemonic and shapes popular conceptions of science is well recognized.⁴ For this reason science per se is commonly conflated with natural science, and method is often equated with 'the' scientific method of the empirical sciences. However, a parallel problem results from an unreflectively 'pop-hermeneutic' or 'pop-post-modernist' stance, one rarely recognized within the qualitative psychological literature (Applebaum, 2010).⁵

The stance I am referring to is summarized in the catch-phrase 'everything is an interpretation', which is sometimes expressed as a matter of fact rather than understood as a dubious truth-claim⁶. Within contemporary qualitative literature it is not difficult to find assertions that would lead students to believe that

³ Eagleton (1996) has remarked upon this phenomenon among exponents of postmodernism.

⁴ Jagtenberg (1983) observes that naïve empiricism "is deeply entrenched in the standard scientific epistemology that is communicated to young scientists during their socialization" (p. 69). Stam (1992) notes that in psychology "The effects of positivism are insidious. Perhaps a more kindly description is that they serve as an unspoken grammar. We have taken in the residues of positivism (both logical and prelogical) with our education and we no longer acknowledge or recognize the roots of our methodologies" (p. 18).

⁵ Badiou (2004) has written that "three principle orientations can be distinguished in philosophy today" (p. 42), namely hermeneutic, analytic, and postmodernist philosophies. Qualitative researchers like Gergen (1992), Kvale (1996), Smith et al. (2009), and Van Manen (1990) seize upon hermeneutic and/or postmodern philosophies to provide rationales for research praxes.

⁶ Eagleton (1996) observes that the slogan "everything is an interpretation" has added purchase "in an epoch when talk of 'consciousness' had ceased to be sexy"; instead it would appear "more advisable to speak of the world being constructed by, say, discourse rather than the mind," and thus "everything would become an interpretation, including that claim itself" (p. 14). Davis (2009) has argued that within this discourse-centered worldview "a metaphysics of language is substituted for a metaphysics of truth" (p. 15). Commenting on Hirsch's arguments against Gadamer, Polkinghorne (1983) observes that "The statement that is often used to question someone's credibility, 'That's just your interpretation,' would hold only if the person were unwilling to submit the interpretation to a validity process where it could be compared to other interpretations" (p. 232). Arguably, such a validity process would require the strong commitment to methodical, systematic inquiry eschewed by the exponents of philosophical hermeneutics in psychological research (cf Smith et al., 2009).

they need have no concern for epistemology. In the literature referred to, epistemology is dismissed as a philosophical concern rather than a psychological one⁷. Similarly, some qualitative presentations give students the impression that construing research as ‘interpretive’ gives the researcher license to make whatever she will of research data. Interpretation is framed as a liberating exercise in personal creativity unconstrained by intersubjective criteria⁸. Obviously this understanding of research, while ostensibly ‘user-friendly’, is inimical to the actual practice of science. Students are also sometimes led to believe that the choice of a qualitative research method is a secondary, relatively unimportant matter to be guided solely by personal preference and ease of implementation; method being regarded as merely a (mechanical) means to a predetermined end, a misconception critiqued by Cheek (2008).

These assumptions demonstrate an unsustainable aestheticizing and subjectivizing of research on the one hand, and an instrumentalizing conception of method on the other. The implied conceptions of qualitative research are impoverished and intellectually unsupportable, and would yield the field of psychology entirely to positivists, making it only too easy for empirical psychologists to conceive of themselves as the only genuine representatives of science⁹. The present article reflects a pedagogical commitment, because in teaching research methods a ‘descriptivist’ researcher cannot afford to move directly to Mohanty’s philosophical resolution of the tension between description and interpretation. Inevitably a teacher must engage students’ recognized or unrecognized presuppositions indebted to popularizations of hermeneutics or postmodernism, because these often unexamined presuppositions shape the way we encounter the world as researchers¹⁰. The assumption that ‘everything is interpretation’ must be challenged in order to clear the ground for a consideration of other possibilities of

⁷ ἐπιστήμη (*episteme*) means both ‘knowledge’ and ‘science’; when an epistemological interest is absent in qualitative research literature it indicates the lack of a motivating scientific interest.

⁸ When research is framed as an aesthetic activity, the emotional or intellectual ‘impact’ research has on its audience seems to be the only important criterion that remains; see Luce-Kapler (2008).

⁹ Hence Proctor and Capaldi’s (2006) critique of the relativism endemic in much of qualitative psychological research literature bolsters their case that contemporary qualitative psychologists are merely repeating arguments made in the 5th century by the Greek Sophists.

¹⁰ As Feist (2006) observes, social constructivism and postmodernism have much in common. In the present study one might almost substitute ‘everything is interpretation’ with ‘everything is socially constructed’, since the implications for science are similar.

seeing and knowing, such as descriptive phenomenology.

This paper concerns appropriations (arguably misappropriations) of Gadamer’s hermeneutics in qualitative research. I have chosen to focus on a number of Gadamer’s philosophical assertions and indicate why using them as guides for qualitative psychological research is, in my estimation, misguided. I have previously offered a critical assessment of Van Manen’s appropriations of Husserl and Gadamer in the presentation of his hermeneutic phenomenology (Applebaum, 2007) as well as the ways in which Van Manen seeks to deploy Gadamer and Heidegger’s philosophy in advocating an aestheticizing approach to qualitative research (Applebaum, 2010). Due to the limits of space within this article I will present an overview of the problems that result from the appropriation of Gadamer’s work rather than developing detailed critiques of the specific ways in which Van Manen (1990), Kvale (1996), and Smith et al. (2009) mobilize Gadamer’s thought to support their research approaches.

Gadamer’s Philosophical Hermeneutics

In historical terms, the conflict between descriptive-methodical and the interpretive-(un)methodical approach results from a cleavage regarding the meaning of human science that developed in the philosophy of science during the time of Dilthey (1833-1911) and Husserl. Dilthey (1989) argued that the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) ought to be established in a methodical, scientific manner that is true to their human subject matter rather than mimicking the sciences of nature. In Husserl’s (1977) words, Dilthey argued that “over and against ... ‘explanatory’ or ‘constructive’ psychology ... there is a need of a ‘descriptive and analytic’ psychology” (p. 4). Husserl (1977) maintained that human sciences such as psychology must discover their own, non-empirical foundations, because the empiricist worldview can be distortive when applied to the phenomena of consciousness.

Following the descriptive direction of Dilthey and Husserl, qualitative psychological researchers such as Giorgi (1970) view the empirical paradigm as a Procrustean bed that reduces and deforms its object, and argue that psychology ought to be founded as a rigorously methodical human science. However, for Gadamer, Husserl’s criticism of objectivism was inadequate. Warnke (1987) argues that Gadamer rejects Husserl’s approach to overcoming objectivism because:

Phenomenology itself claims to be a *science* of the ways in which objects are given to consciousness — to be sure, not an ‘objective’

science on the model of the natural sciences, but as Husserl always emphasizes, a 'rigorous' science none the less. (p. 36)

Husserl's scientific commitment is a problem for Gadamer. Gadamer's work is animated by an ontological-aesthetic commitment rather than a scientific one, and he regards these two orientations as mutually exclusive.

As noted, exponents of interpretative qualitative research often draw on Gadamer's philosophical assertions to buttress their approaches. One or more of three of Gadamer's philosophical assertions are frequently evident in the assumptive frameworks of 'hermeneutic' or 'interpretive' researchers:

- The human sciences have no method of their own and in principle can have none;
- Every act of understanding is an ineluctably interpretive act; and
- Human science is more akin to art than 'science' — by which is meant natural science.¹¹

Psychological researchers whose approaches echo elements of Gadamer's philosophy tend not to place priority on establishing the scientific status or methodological coherence of their praxes. Hence, Gergen (1992) and Van Manen (1990) represent epistemological-methodological questions as being only a secondary importance, the implication being that methodological clarity is not a prerequisite for qualitative research. These writers also suggest that the very notion of methodological rigour in human science is outmoded and obsolete.¹² As a result the term 'human', the modifier in the phrase 'human science' is privileged, so to speak, while the modified noun 'science' is neglected by some psychological exponents of philosophical hermeneutics. Arguably, the original implication of the phrase 'human science' is that 'science' transcends its empirical interpretation, and that a human application would

¹¹ Researchers who rely on Gadamer do not always endorse all of these assumptions or characterize their approaches as anti-methodical. Interpretive approaches as such are not necessarily anti-methodical, though interpreters who closely follow Gadamer not infrequently echo his disparaging account of method.

¹² This attitude is conveyed in Van Manen's (2002) remark that the "methods, techniques, form, and style" of qualitative research are "mundane issues," whereas "questions of metaphysics ... the limits of language ... the enigmatic nature of words, text, interpretation, and truth" occur at a "more reflective level" (p. i). Van Manen's (2002) counterpoising of meaning and method, implying that they are intrinsically in tension with each other, echoes the assumptions of philosophical hermeneutics. For a detailed critique of Gergen, see Chaikin (1992).

similarly be possible. Thus it is only by adopting a forgetful or pejorative attitude toward 'science' that the 'human' can be split from and exclusively emphasized over and against the scientific.

Furthermore, qualitative researchers' appropriations of Gadamer's hermeneutics, much like their appropriations of the work of postmodern philosophers like Foucault or Derrida, are often unaccompanied by thorough explorations of how such philosophic assertions can be adapted to the human scientific subject matter (Giorgi, personal communication, August 7, 2010). Instead, writers often cite Gadamer's work unaccompanied by detailed efforts to delineate the specifically psychological implications of these philosophical claims, or to justify Gadamer's claims within, for example, the psychological domain (see Smith et al., 2009).

Invocations of Gadamer's philosophy in the service of anti-methodical praxes are common. This continues to occur despite the fact that Gadamer (2006) responded to critics of *Truth and Method* by claiming that he "did not remotely intend to deny the necessity of methodical work within the human sciences" (p. xvii)¹³ and did not aim to provide guidance for the actual practice of human science research. While Husserl's phenomenology was clearly intended as a propaedeutic to the human sciences, including psychology, Gadamer explicitly denies such an intention. Philosophical hermeneutics therefore does not offer support for the clarification of human science methods or propose criteria for scientific understanding, because this is not its purpose. According to Mendelson (1994) Gadamer "insisted that philosophical hermeneutics was not to be understood as a prescriptive methodology or epistemology but as ontology" (p. 118).¹⁴

¹³ Nevertheless, Gadamer's work does lend itself to the anti-methodical reading, a fact that prompted Habermas' sustained critique of *Truth and Method* (Mendelson, 1994). For the purpose of this study, the term 'anti-methodical' is used to characterize research approaches that either directly challenge the validity of methodical inquiry in human science, or reject so-called 'prescriptive' methods in human science research, the reason being that in the absence of prescription (in the sense of explicit, understandable guidelines for inquiry) methodical research is impossible.

¹⁴ Freeman (2008) very usefully contrasts methodical hermeneutics (Dilthey, Betti, Hirsch), critical hermeneutics (Ricoeur, Habermas), and philosophical hermeneutics (Heidegger, Gadamer). She observes that only the latter approach is in principle opposed to methodical articulation, because for Heidegger and Gadamer the hermeneutic process "cannot be controlled ... since there is no method that can predict in advance which prior conceptions or judgments will enable understanding from those that might obscure or distort it" (p. 386). Tellingly, 'method' is

For the preceding reasons, an important caveat must be made concerning my discussion of Gadamer's work. For sympathetic readers of Gadamer, the use of philosophical hermeneutics by qualitative researchers to dilute or even reject methodical research praxes arguably represents a distortion of his philosophy. This study is an attempt to critique the appropriation of Gadamer's philosophical work in the service of particular qualitative research agendas. I am not seeking to criticize Gadamer's philosophy on its philosophical home-ground; that is, I am not criticizing Gadamer's philosophy as ontology.

In addition, I argue that Gadamer places emphasis on indeterminacy, fluidity, and ambiguity - in short, on the many ways in which lived-meanings can be obscure, uncertain, or constantly shifting. Focusing on this dimension of psychical phenomena may reflect Gadamer's effort to counter objectivism's hold upon contemporary thought (Bernstein, 1985). Nonetheless, from a phenomenological perspective the privileging of ambiguity can be detrimental to psychology because it reflects an imbalanced perspective, one neglectful of phenomenal givenness and the manifold ways in which givenness is constitutive of the life-world. In Merleau-Ponty's (1996) *Phenomenology of Perception*, for example, phenomenal ambiguity is both recognized and described, as in his brilliant account of sensory embodiment in the chapter "The Experience of the Body and Classical Psychology".¹⁵

In contrast to interpretive approaches, Giorgi's descriptive approach to qualitative psychological research is shaped by Husserl's philosophical phenomenological method. Giorgi (2009) seeks to articulate an approach to psychological inquiry that is scientific without subscribing to the natural sciences' particular understandings of science and objectivity. Instead, psychology as a human science must demonstrate fidelity to the lived-phenomena of psychological subjectivity (Giorgi, 1970). He acknowledges that psychologists have not yet achieved broad consensus on the meaning of psyche or upon "the methods, procedures, rules of interpretation" (Giorgi, 1985, p. 45) appropriate to the study of the psychical. In this sense, psychology remains an incompletely founded science. In an effort to clarify the meaning of science for qualitative psychology, Giorgi (1997) has articulated criteria for science as a whole, qualitative or quantitative. He

assumed to be predictive and to have a causal relationship with understanding.

¹⁵ He observes that phenomenological investigation does not reveal "a transparent world, free from obscurity and impenetrable solidity ... but that ambiguous life in which the forms of transcendence have their *Ursprung*, and which ... puts me in communication with them, and on this basis makes knowledge possible" (p. 364-365).

proposes that to constitute science, a research approach must be able to yield knowledge that is systematic, methodical, general, and critical (1997, p. 249). Thus, if a research approach is to claim human scientific status its advocates must be able to articulate criteria for science appropriate to the study of lived psychological subjectivity, must elaborate a sense of objectivity which demonstrates fidelity to human rather than natural phenomena, and must articulate their work in terms of a methodical praxis that can be taught to others.

The conception of scientific method underlying Giorgi's work is therefore broader than the particular meaning of 'the' scientific method arrived at by the natural sciences. This conception is founded in the root meaning of the Greek μέθοδος (*methodos*). As a descriptor of scientific practice, qualitative or quantitative, *methodos* implies a reliable path of inquiry that has been used and confirmed over time and can be shared with fellow travellers. If a method is scientific in this way it lends itself to being passed on to a community of fellow researchers whose discoveries can be shared and intersubjectively verified.¹⁶ Scientific discovery envisioned as a shared path of inquiry is never a private achievement, but always an implicitly communal one.

I argue that Gadamer's philosophical claims are unduly restrictive when appropriated as guides for the conducting of qualitative psychological research. In adopting the premises of philosophical hermeneutics to shape human scientific psychological research, researchers abandon the project of human science as envisioned by Dilthey and Husserl.¹⁷ Perhaps more importantly, they are also tacitly accepting the impossibility of a more inclusive, unifying conception of science that would enable qualitative and quantitative psychological researchers to talk to each other and provide rigorous criteria for our varied praxes. The unintended outcome is to strengthen empirical psychologists' claims to be the only genuine representatives of psychological science. In relation to the hermeneutic critics of phenomenological psychology, my argument is that engaging in methodical qualitative research need not imply an 'obsession with method'. With all due respect to Bernstein (1985), seeking a sense of objectivity

¹⁶ Similarly, Kvale (1996) has addressed the mentoring aspect of educating others in qualitative interviewing.

¹⁷ Examples are Van Manen (1990) and Smith et al. (2009), both of whom cite Gadamer. Van Manen (1990) claims that his research approach is phenomenological *because* it has no method, and offers research procedures that are *not* to be used methodically. Smith et al. (2009) also make clear that the research procedures in Interpretive Phenomenology Analysis are not 'prescriptive', and thus are not to be implemented methodically.

appropriate for the psychical does not constitute objectivism, nor does seeking to articulate criteria for human science constitute scientism.¹⁸

Method as Constitutive of Human Science

The most fundamental cleavage between Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy when appropriated in the manner discussed above and Husserlian phenomenology as it has been adapted by Giorgi concerns the meaning and role of method in human science research. In continuity with the methodical-scientific concerns of Dilthey and Husserl, Giorgi's phenomenological psychology views appropriate methods as critical to constituting human scientific praxis on its own home-ground, in contradistinction to the sciences of nature. Bernstein (1985) notes that "as Dilthey interpreted this challenge it meant showing that there is a distinctive subject matter and method appropriate to the *Geisteswissenschaften* that can equal and even rival the claim of the natural sciences to achieve 'objective knowledge'" (p. 37). Giorgi's (1970) position is that "if the full range of experience and behaviour of man as a person is to come under scientific scrutiny, then a different conception of scientific psychology will be necessary ... one that will do justice both to the phenomenon of man as a person and to the practice of science" (p. 2). Giorgi's project echoes Dilthey's call for the development of appropriate methods that are as constitutive of human science as the empirical method is of natural science.

Gadamer followed Husserl and Heidegger in criticizing the use of natural scientific procedures as a model for human scientific praxis. Gadamer argued that prejudice is inevitable, and that no set of methodical procedures is sufficient to guarantee absolute objectivity. This much is in accordance with Husserl's phenomenology. However, Gadamer criticizes Dilthey's scientific and methodological aims as demonstrating an inadequate distinction between natural and human science. For Gadamer, Dilthey responds in an insufficiently radical manner to Mill's assertion that the human sciences ought to be understood "as empirical, inductive sciences differing only in degree from the natural sciences" (Bernstein, 1985, p. 37). For Gadamer the meanings of 'science' and 'method' are effectively exhausted by the natural sciences. The 'human sciences' are envisioned as an altogether distinct tradition and form

¹⁸ Husserl's theory of knowledge is expressed primarily in terms of perception (Pietersma, 2000). Husserl (1982) claimed that phenomenology is the genuine positivism because it insists on the primacy of and fidelity to what is perceived, or in Husserl's words, "what can be seized upon originaliter" (p.39), in contrast to a privileging of theory over perception.

of inquiry that ought not to seek to achieve scientific status and methodical rigour in a sense analogous to the sciences of nature. According to Gadamer (2006):

However strongly Dilthey defended the epistemological independence of the human sciences, what is called 'method' in modern science remains the same everywhere and is only displayed in an especially exemplary form in the natural sciences. *The human sciences have no method of their own.* (p. 7, emphasis added)¹⁹

Gadamer argues that what method cannot achieve in the human sciences "must - and effectively can - be achieved by a discipline of questioning and research, a discipline that guarantees truth" (1986, p. 447). However, as Bernstein (1985) observes, Gadamer "is employing a concept of truth that he never fully makes explicit" (p. 152). Thus, Gadamer neither clarifies what 'truth' means nor what its guarantee would entail; possibly doing so would bring hermeneutics too close to a methodical practice. Gadamer's primary concern is to save our encounter with works of art and literature from the reductive, positivistic regard that he equates with science. As Risser (1997) notes, Gadamer's mission is "in effect to reconstruct the humanist tradition in its broader perspective *beyond* the questions of method and objectivity" (p. 8, emphasis added). Gadamer wants to save the humanities from scientific reductionism but in so doing the meaning of 'human science' is conflated with the humanities and a 'scientific' sense of 'human science' is lost.

For Husserl the problem is a very different one; what is needed is not to set aside method and scientific objectivity, but instead to discover the unique sense of method and objectivity suitable for the human domain, for subjective as opposed to natural phenomena. Philosophical hermeneutics claims that the interpretive experience of truth in relation to a work of art is unmediated and ungovernable by method, because "there is an experience of truth in art that goes beyond methodical knowledge" (Risser, 1997, p. 56). By privileging an ontological conception of 'experience' over the epistemological clarification of experience, Gadamer maintains that "experience, which properly understood is inseparable from the element of historicity, is the alternative to method" (Risser, 1997, p. 210). Regarding Gadamer's conception of experience, Risser (1997) explains:

¹⁹ Given this comment it is difficult to understand the meaning of Gadamer's claim that he does not seek to deny the necessity of methodical work within human science, unless he presumes that the human sciences will of necessity utilize empirical methods that are 'not their own'.

Experience is more than a process in service to the objective order of scientific knowledge. But this does not mean that experience is consequently relegated to a mere subjective order. The issue is rather that genuine experience precedes the methodical process that produces scientific knowledge. Furthermore, the account of experience has shown itself to hold within itself a conception of knowledge that is likewise independent of the methodological procedure of modern science. The concept of experience for which this knowing is appropriate emerges from practical life. (p. 105)

The hermeneutic conception of experience carefully delineated by Risser (1997) is both close to and distant from that of Husserlian phenomenology. It could be said to designate lived-experiences in the life-world from within the natural attitude, but grasped ontologically. Husserl argued that lived-experience has its own intrinsic modes of objectivity; furthermore, the phenomenological understanding of intentionality leads to a radical re-envisioning of the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity, the latter being immanent in rather than opposed to the former. Husserl never subordinates lived-experience to science; science is instead a particular attitude assumed in relation to experience, which always transcends the scientific standpoint. Furthermore, Husserl never reduces knowledge as such to the outcome of a particular method, although he seeks to found scientific knowledge in a methodical manner.

In contrast, Gadamer opposes hermeneutics, philosophy, and the arts to science and method, which are equated with positivism. Consequently:

The hermeneutic phenomenon is not a problem of method at all. It is not concerned with a method of understanding by means of which texts are subjected to scientific investigation like all of the objects of experience. It is not concerned primarily with amassing verified knowledge, such as would satisfy the methodological ideal of science ... the human sciences are connected to modes of experience that lie outside science: with the experiences of philosophy, of art, and of history itself. These are all modes of experience in which a truth is communicated that cannot be verified by the methodological means proper to science. (Gadamer, 2006, p. xx-xxi)

Gadamer characterizes science as a mere 'amassing' of 'verified knowledge', whereas the human sciences deal with an entirely different dimension of human experience, the realm of truth. In this respect, Gadamer was indebted to Heidegger's ontological

account of truth as an experience of disclosure rather than as an accurate perception (Palmer, 1969). The mode of experience that Gadamer terms hermeneutic is therefore an "event" that is a "disclosure of truth" (Palmer, 1969, p. 245).

Seeking to contribute to the founding of the sciences, Husserl's interest was primarily epistemological. His phenomenology recognizes an important distinction between meaningfulness and veracity (Seeböhm, 1982). This distinction, strangely absent from much of the hermeneutically-based psychological literature, which tends to emphasize the ontological 'truth-experience', opens the researcher to engagement with a wide range of lived subjective and intersubjective phenomena and is critical for phenomenological psychological praxis. As Berger (1972) observes, Husserl's phenomenology seeks to render explicit evidence of what is present to consciousness, just as it is present.²⁰ However, such presences are not guarantees of truth; intuitions (the perception of wholes) are by no means infallible.²¹ Within phenomenological psychology a researcher may grasp the psychological structure of a lived experience in a rigorously objective way without passing a judgment as to the truth of that experience. Truth may be addressed, but grasping the lived-meaning of psychical experience takes priority.

This occurs because the psychical realm is envisioned by phenomenological psychology as para-objective, para-rational, and para-normative. It is therefore a domain in which 'truth' may not be the most important question with respect to a given lived phenomenon (Giorgi, 1993). A hallucination can be perceptually present to my friend without requiring that I ascribe truthfulness to it — in fact, to be true to him I may be called upon to doubt the truthfulness of that which is so evidently present to him. The façade that presents itself to me as storefront may be recognized as a two-dimensional movie set. In *Eye and Mind* (1964) Merleau-Ponty evokes André Marchand's words recalling the painter Paul Klee:

²⁰ That which is 'evident' for reflective consciousness is that which is perceptible, clear, or obvious, deriving from the Latin roots meaning 'fully seen'.

²¹ Throughout the history of Western philosophy and psychology 'intuition' has signified the unmediated consciousness of something in contrast to mediate forms of knowing such as logical deduction; therefore, intuition has classically been held to be the guarantor of epistemic certainty. Giorgi (personal communication, June 2000) draws on Husserl's work to define intuition as *the presentational faculty of consciousness*, that activity of consciousness that 'makes present' the objects of perception; within Husserl's perceptual-presentational model the fulfillment of intuition in an act of understanding is a perceptual event.

'In a forest, I have felt many times over that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some days I felt that the trees were looking at me, were speaking to me.' (p.167)

Such lived presences invite phenomenological inquiry. Husserlian phenomenology seeks to explicate the meanings implicit in an experience without needing to pass judgment on the truthfulness of the experience (Seebohm, 1982). We therefore seek to elicit descriptions that are loyal to what has been lived, and this does not require us to assess the truthfulness of the experience itself as a matter of fact. Hence we can interview subjects who report having seen ghosts, without having to affirm or deny the existence of the ghosts themselves. For phenomenology, evidence "is a special mode of the intentional relation connecting the subject to his thoughts," and the correlative "is not truth, it is objectivity" (Berger, 1972, p. 67-68).

Bernstein (1985) notes that throughout Gadamer's career he "sought to show that the humanistic tradition, properly understood, is an essential corrective to the scientism and obsession with instrumental technical thinking that is dominant today" (p. 180). It is these humanistic disciplines, such as philosophy, the arts, and history, which Gadamer maintains have no method of their own. This absence of human scientific method(s) represents a fact rather than a challenge for Gadamer; he does not explore alternate, non-positivistic conceptions of science and method as this is not his interest. He makes no effort to articulate a method for the human sciences; in *Truth and Method* nothing like a 'hermeneutical method' is proposed as an alternative to empiricism, because for him methodical articulation would be a misguided task that is fundamentally untrue to (at least) the philosophical meaning of the human sciences. As Moran (2000) writes, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics "is neither an art nor method of providing accurate interpretations, nor a way of regulating interpretation" (p. 270); instead a methodological interest is entirely absent. Gadamer is "constantly battling against the intrusion of method into hermeneutics and the *Geisteswissenschaften*" (Bernstein, 1985, p. 45) because for him the methodical standpoint implies a positivism that is intrinsically alien to the human sciences. Unfortunately, as Bernstein (1985) recognizes, Gadamer's critique of scientism frequently appears to constitute a critique of science as a whole. Similarly, Gadamer's opposition to objectivism often seems to constitute a rejection of the notion of objectivity itself. Eagleton (1983/2008) has written that for Gadamer, "all interpretation is situational, shaped and constrained by the historically relative criteria of a particular culture; there is no

possibility of knowing the literary text 'as it is'" (p. 62). Yet Gadamer does not directly espouse relativism, he appeals to 'tradition' as the guarantor of intersubjective consensus, but this sense of tradition does not provide support for grounding scientific practice as this is not its intention.²²

From a phenomenological psychological perspective, Gadamer surrenders the field of science to the empiricists. This yielding appears to be the only means by which the human sciences are to be freed from positivism. In this sense, Gadamer does not seek to rescue the sciences from empiricism, but rather to rescue the human sciences from science. His references to 'science' designate empiricism just as his references to 'scientific method' designate the empirical method. The *Geisteswissenschaften*, for Gadamer, have an autonomous existence apart from science, indeed it was precisely this yielding of science as methodical inquiry to the positivists that led to Habermas' (1990) early, critical review of *Truth and Method*. Mendelson's (1994) summary of Habermas' critique, first published in 1967, which is relevant for qualitative researchers, is that:

This opposition between hermeneutical experience and methodical knowing is stated too abstractly ... according to Habermas, the roots of this problem lie in Gadamer's Heideggerian-ontological self-understanding, which does not lend itself to the normative-methodological task of making hermeneutic consciousness effective within science. As a result of this self-understanding, Gadamer is too willing to grant the positivists control over the definition of scientific method and then to show its limits by reference to other experiences of truth, rather than to develop an alternative concept of method which is hermeneutically enlightened. (p. 117-118)

At this stage it is possible to draw some initial conclusions regarding the consequences for qualitative psychology of adopting Gadamer's philosophy as a guide. Researchers would not be invested in establishing their work as scientific, since 'science' is regarded as a restrictive, exclusively positivist notion that is fundamentally alien to the

²² Gadamer's understanding of 'tradition' has been critiqued as inadequate by Eagleton (1983/2008), for whom Gadamer's reliance upon 'tradition' evinces "a grossly complacent theory of history, the projection onto the world at large of a viewpoint for which 'art' means chiefly the classical monuments of the high German tradition ... historical differences are tolerantly conceded, but only because they are effectively liquidated by an understanding which 'bridge[es] the temporal distance which separates the interpreter from the text'" (p. 63).

ontological meaning of the *Geisteswissenschaften*. Scientific criteria and methodological concerns would be immaterial for the conduct of qualitative psychological inquiry, since such concerns represent artefacts of an already-transcended positivism. Instead, the implicit criterion by which qualitative research would be evaluated would be the degree to which such research yields a 'truth experience'. It is questionable whether such a practice should even be framed as 'psychological research', the language of 'encounter' or 'disclosure' might be more descriptive. In experiential terms these consequences may be seen as liberating and unproblematic, freeing researchers to a fuller encounter with lived-subjectivity analogous to the encounter with works of art. Problems arise only if human scientific psychology is viewed as a discipline that seeks to build a body of rigorous, intersubjective knowledge for a community of fellow-researchers.

For Gadamer faith in a method leads to a denial of one's own historicity. Consequently 'method' and 'objectivity' must be transcended because, from this perspective, they necessarily imply the natural scientific worldview. As Risser (1997) explains, Gadamer claims that "there are modes of experience in which a truth is communicated that is not simply a matter of verification through the methodological procedure of modern empirical science" (p. 5). This observation is fully in line with Husserl's critique of empiricism; the difference is that in Gadamer's work, the critique appears directed against science as a whole.

It might be argued that Gadamer's work can serve as corrective for those researchers (qualitative or quantitative) who are prone to naively assume that the mechanical implementation of a method guarantees the truth of findings. However, this argument would be flawed because Gadamer seeks to set aside the methodical interest, not support an awakened, self-responsible methodical praxis. Hence, if the practice of science requires method, Gadamer's philosophical perspective cannot contribute to the conduct of science by researchers, because from this perspective methodical praxis is regarded as irredeemable or at least intrinsically naïve. It therefore appears that philosophical hermeneutics can only contribute to a retrospective interpretation of the limitations of scientific praxis, not support an improved praxis.

It is arguably misguided to seek guidance for the practice of actual human science research in Gadamer's work, since he clearly offered a philosophical reflection, not a reflection on how, in practice, human science research could be effectively conducted. He clearly stated:

I did not intend to produce an art or technique

of understanding ... I did not wish to elaborate a system of rules to describe, let alone direct, the methodical procedure of the human sciences ... nor was it my aim to investigate the theoretical foundation of work in these fields in order to put my findings to practical ends. (Gadamer, 1986, p. xvi)

Gadamer (2006) responded to the criticism that *Truth and Method* is an anti-methodical text by maintaining that he had not denied the necessity of methodical human science research (p. xvii). He states that "my real concern was and is philosophic: not what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens to us over and above our wanting and doing" (2006, p. xxv-xxvi). From a phenomenological standpoint, this distinction is problematic because it implies an untenable split between the conscious intention of the practicing researcher in engaging with participants and data analysis, and what according to Gadamer maintains is 'really' occurring in the research process from a philosophical perspective. The distinction seems to be that the scientific researchers are naïve to their own praxis in a fundamental way that hermeneuticians are not. This split might be accurate in the case of a naïve researcher, one who demonstrates the kind of unreflectively reifying attitude critiqued by Cheek (2008), but experienced psychological researchers need not be so naïve.

Although Gadamer's qualifications of his standpoint are problematic they reveal that it is not possible to inscribe philosophical hermeneutics as one-sidedly 'anti-methodical'. Dostal (1987) has argued that a range of traditional and normative interpretive practices underlie Gadamer's hermeneutics, and disputes the characterization of *Truth and Method* as anti-methodical, arguing that Gadamer "presupposes for any approach to a text something like the traditional philological practices in which he was trained" (p. 425-426). If this is correct, Dostal (1987) has illuminated an aspect of Gadamer's thought that is problematic for qualitative research; Gadamer appears to operate within methodical philological praxes, but his account of understanding renders these praxes invisible because his interest is ontological rather than epistemological. In addition, while adequate consensus regarding methodical philological praxes may well exist within the high German tradition in which Gadamer was educated, no such consensus exists within the far younger tradition of qualitative psychological research. (This consequence flows from the application to psychology of Eagleton's (1983/2008) critique of Gadamer's conception of 'tradition'.) As a result of this implicit consensus within the high German literary tradition, Gadamer can privilege the 'truth-experience' as lived-disclosure while leaving implicit the methods that prepare the ground for such disclosure. This criticism

of Gadamer as a guide for psychological research is predicated upon a Husserlian phenomenological conception of method, which is discussed in the next section.

‘Method’ in Phenomenological Psychology

As was previously noted, within phenomenology μέθοδος (*methodos*) implies a shared path of inquiry in which others can be mentored, and which yields reliable knowledge for a community of fellow researchers. Husserl (1977) described method in the following manner which, paralleling Giorgi’s criteria for science, applies to both qualitative and quantitative inquiry:

Method means: goal-directed activity in an intelligible, insightful manner, which is fit to lead to the goal. Still better, we should say: goal-directed doing, which, with its stage-points, these products, presents the way which the doer goes, goes by doing and seeing. (p. 173, n.1)

In order to achieve intersubjective knowledge, the execution of a method must be adequately transparent and related to an expressed goal. In the context of Husserl’s phenomenology, which is a philosophy of intuition (also in Giorgi’s (2009) approach to phenomenological psychological research), method sets the context and guiding structure for a discovery process that must remain open-ended.²³ Thus, phenomenological psychology human scientific inquiry requires that the researcher engage in an ongoing, dynamic balancing of ‘form’ (structure, essentially repeatable steps, clarity of procedures) and ‘formlessness’ (sensitivity, openness, suspension of preconceptions regarding the data, and adaptability to the data as it presents itself). Research praxis requires a mixture of structure and openness that are understood as jointly constitutive of human-scientific discovery.

It is therefore obvious that when method is conceived of reductively, for example in Cheek’s (2008) words as “a series of steps that must be undertaken in order to produce a predetermined form of research report or finding” (p. 205), then the sense of ‘method’ and ‘research’ within phenomenology are falsified.

Phenomenologists criticize the reification of research methods, on the one hand, and the arbitrariness or failure to adequately shape and guide inquiry on the other. In response to Osborn and Smith (2008), Giorgi

²³ ‘Intuition’ (Ger: *Anschauung*) is a descriptive-technical term in phenomenology that designates the presentational function of consciousness. For phenomenology, intuition does *not* imply reliance upon ‘hunches’, ‘mystical apprehension’, or ‘tacit knowledge’.

(2010) argues that either extreme severely limits the value of research findings.

Toussulis (personal communication, April 13, 2010) frames method envisioned phenomenologically as a ‘scaffold’. This is a fortunate choice of words, because lexically a ‘scaffold’ can be a ‘platform’, a ‘skeletal framework’, a ‘stage’, or a ‘bridge’, and all of these meanings may be relevant for the phenomenological conception of method. The Husserlian method articulated by Giorgi for psychological research does not seek to predetermine the outcome of a given study. For example, if an interviewer has interviewed four participants regarding an experience in which they learned something it is not possible to assume that the data will reveal a shared psychological structure to the phenomenon of learning. The method aims at discovery, not validation of a predetermined hypothesis.

Instead of a verificatory attitude, a phenomenological researcher adopts an attitude of sensitivity to the possibility of such commonality emerging in the course of data analysis. Results present themselves through the course of analysis rather than being preconceived, and findings are not arrived at until the end of the research process. If method is conceived of as (for example) a bridge, it is the supporting structure that makes this journey from indeterminacy to determinacy (in other words, the fulfilment of disciplinary intuitions) possible.²⁴ Basing his psychological research method on Husserl’s philosophical method, Giorgi adopts the epoché, bracketing, and imaginative variation as the core procedures supporting the inquiry. The research process is further shaped by the division of interview transcripts into meaning units, transforming the meaning units into psychologically-revelatory language using imaginative variation, explication of the meaning units to unfold the psychological meanings given in the data, and finally varying of the transformed data of multiple participants to see whether a common psychological structure or structures emerge.²⁵ The bridge of method is what makes this journey possible but the method does not predetermine what will be found nor ensure that a unifying psychological structure is present. To discover that four research participants have experienced learning in fundamentally different

²⁴ Polanyi (1969), a non-phenomenologist, examined intuition in the context of scientific discovery, arguing that “The structure of scientific intuition is the same as that of perception,” and commenting that intuition “is not more mysterious than perception—but not less mysterious either” (p. 118).

²⁵ For a detailed exposition of the method, see Giorgi (2009).

psychological ways (i.e., four substantially distinct psychological structures) would itself be a legitimate research finding.

According to Husserl (1970/1989), phenomenology aims at making insights “accessible to scientific understanding, through a method of disclosure appropriate to it, as a realm of experiential and theoretical self-evidence” (p. 119). Quâ discovery, phenomenological research findings are only recognized in their disclosure. This disclosure is prepared for in numerous ways: through the disciplinary context (the choice of a psychological interest rather than, for example, a sociological one); the disciplinary sensitivity of the researcher based on her training; the focus on a particular phenomenon; and the research question regarding that particular phenomenon.²⁶

Since phenomenology envisions method as a framework within which disciplinary intuitions occur, the researcher must carefully avoid reification, instead adopting an attitude of disposability to discovery. This can also be described as an attitude of attentiveness, which Giorgi (1985) refers to as “‘circumscribed indeterminateness’ or ‘empty determinitiveness’” (p. 13). He bases this presentation on Merleau-Ponty’s (1996) account in the *Phenomenology of Perception* of “that circumscribed ignorance, that still ‘empty’ but already determinate intention which is attention itself” (p. 28). Hence the phenomenological researcher’s attitude is characterized both by ‘form’ and ‘formlessness’ or openness in order to be disposable to the discovery process itself within the context of a disciplinary inquiry (such as psychology).

The foregoing sketch of phenomenological inquiry demonstrates that the phenomenological researcher must be very reflective regarding the meaning of the steps in the method while she engages in them; reification is not an option because it falsifies the meaning of the method and vitiates findings. Methodical inquiry is something that, if unreflectively engaged in, loses its meaningfulness. This fact is aligned with Kvale’s (1996) assertion that the qualitative researcher must be as concerned with what

²⁶ Phenomenological psychology maintains that one can develop one’s sensitivity to psychological phenomena while bracketing any theory-laden interpretive perspectives regarding such phenomena. In other words, the meaning of ‘psychology’ is not exhausted by any given psychological theory; on the contrary, psychological theories if they are coherent rely upon a more inclusive conception of the psychological. Hence, one does not engage in phenomenological research as a cognitive-behaviorist or a Jungian, though one may choose to dialogue with these theoretical perspectives in the light of one’s descriptive research findings.

it means to use a method as she is concerned with how to implement the procedures of that method. I would add one qualification to Kvale’s (1996) distinction - namely, that in the practice of phenomenological research, adequately enacting a methodical step (like imaginative variation) is inseparable from the meaningful intention animating that enactment. In other words, there are no genuinely ‘mechanical’ steps in phenomenological research. The implicit dichotomy between mechanical and meaningful steps in research is a relic of the empirical attitude in which (perhaps) there are steps that may be taken unreflectively. Even the division of an interview transcript into meaning units (for Giorgi, meaning units are created solely for the convenience of the researcher in conducting analysis) is not mechanical, because the researcher establishes divisions in the transcript based on felt shifts in meaning.

The observation that researchers can adopt a reifying attitude toward their method, one that lends itself to a mechanical conception of the research process, is an insight sometimes attributed to hermeneutics. However, this recognition is also evident in Husserl’s phenomenology. In *Crisis* (1970/1989) he observes “to the essence of all method belongs the tendency to superficialize itself in accord with technization” (p. 48).²⁷ In a passage conveying the phenomenological critique of the inadequate practice of methodical research, an alternative to Gadamer’s position is seen; in describing scientific methods in general, Husserl (1970/1989) writes that:

The developed method, the progressive fulfillment of the task, is, as method, an art (τέχνη) which is handed down; but its true meaning is not necessarily handed down with it. And it is precisely for this reason that a theoretical task and achievement like that of a natural science (or any science of the world) – which can master the infinity of its subject matter through infinities of method [footnote: “i.e. the infinite pursuit of its method”] can master the latter infinities only by means of a technical thought and activity which are empty of meaning - can only be and remain

²⁷ As will be recalled, Husserl’s core argument in *Crisis* (1970) is that “The splitting of the world and the transformation of its meaning were the understandable consequences of the exemplary role of the natural-scientific method—or, to put it another way, natural-scientific rationality—a role which was indeed quite unavoidable at the beginning of the modern period” (p. 60-61). Although Husserl was by no means the sole philosophical critic of the natural sciences, a consideration of Husserl’s foundational work makes it immediately evident why Ricoeur (1975/1981) acknowledged phenomenology as the “unsurpassable presupposition of hermeneutics” (p. 101).

meaningful in a true and original sense if the scientist has developed in himself the ability to inquire back into the original meaning of all his meaning-structures and methods, i.e. into the historical meaning of their primal establishment, and especially into the meaning of all the inherited meanings taken over unnoticed in this primal establishment, as well as those taken over later on. (p. 56)

Critically, Husserl has included the Greek τέχνη (*techné*) to emphasize his precise meaning. In Husserl's characterization of scientific method as τέχνη it is important to appreciate that the meaning of *techné* is closer to 'craft' or 'craftsmanship' than to popular contemporary conceptions of 'art', which bear the imprint of romanticism.²⁸ When Husserl points to the risk that any method can be superficialized through technization he does not mean that a praxis which ought to be conceived of as an aesthetic activity instead becomes reduced to technique. Instead, he means that the practitioner has lost sight of the full meaning of a methodical technique or craft and reduced her praxis to an empty exercise, thereby failing to fulfil the original meaning of science.²⁹

This loss is to be avoided through a reflective rather than a naïve conception of science, embodied in an awakened scientific practice. However, a natural scientist, to the extent that she aims solely at becoming merely "a highly brilliant technician of the method", is normally "not at all able to carry out such reflections" (Husserl, 1970/1989, p. 56-57). Also, the development of the sciences requires such dedication to the refinement of technique that such lapses are inevitable. For qualitative researchers, Husserl's *Crisis* ought to be read not only as a critique of the natural sciences but as a critique of the reification of method in principle. Following Husserl, Giorgi (1985) argues that since phenomenology envisions research as a discovery process rather than a process of verification, the reification of any research method is antithetical to the meaning of research.

Kvale (1996) draws upon Gadamer's anti-methodical

²⁸ The classical sense of *techné* implied "an art or craft, i.e. a set of rules, system or method of making or doing, whether of the useful arts, or of the fine arts" (Liddell & Scott, 1940, paragraph 4). When τέχνη was used to describe painters or sculptors in antiquity, it did not designate a romantically elevated 'fine art', but rather a workman's trade, which is why the same term was used to describe the creation of sculpture, shipbuilding, and metalwork.

²⁹ In just the same fashion, for qualitative psychology the alternative to scientism is not art (in the sense of aestheticized praxis) but rather a practice reflecting the genuine (full) meaning of science.

work in his discussion of qualitative interviewing. Citing Gadamer, Kvale (1996) questions whether "qualitative interviewing is most fruitfully conceived of as a method or as a craft" (p. 77).³⁰ Based on the preceding discussion of τέχνη it is evident that it is unnecessary to accept the implied dichotomy. Kvale's (1996) discussion of interviewing is excellent and his distinction is meaningful (and perhaps even critical) when responding to an empirical perspective. However, from a phenomenological perspective the split between method and craft is a false dichotomy and could be seized upon to support an unfortunate aestheticizing of research. Indeed Kvale (1996) writes that "interview research is a craft that, if well carried out, can become an art" (p. 15). The following passage from Kvale (1996) offers useful guidance, but only if method is viewed in an exclusively positivistic sense:

Conceiving of qualitative research interviewing as a method or as a craft involved different logics of practice, and melding the two approaches may lead to a muddled practice and broken expectancies. Thus the methodical requirements of standard predetermined wording and sequences of questions, which are necessary in the method of survey interviewing, will block the force of the qualitative interview craft, which rests on personal competence and judgment in the wording and sequencing of questions. Demands of advance explicit formulations of procedures and questions for a research inquiry, which depend on the skills and know-how of the researcher, marginalize personal intuition, flexibility, and creativity in interview research ... the very personal interaction of the interview, and the interpersonal skills required of the interviewer, defy any formalization into impersonal methodic procedures. (p. 88)

As in a craft, Kvale (1996) argues that learning requires apprenticeship to an experienced practitioner. He argues for a shift "from interview research as methodological rule following, with method as a truth guarantee, to research as a craft, where craftsmanship is learned through practice, and the value of the knowledge produced is the key quality criterion" (p. 304). Such insights are valuable, but reflect an unnecessary limitation to the way in which we understand method.

³⁰ Kvale (1996) observes that: "in the tradition of Gadamer (1975), it is ... explicitly rejected that hermeneutics is a method, and instead understanding is posited as the fundamental mode of being for humans" (p. 211). Nevertheless, Kvale (1996) seeks to unfold the implications of hermeneutics for method.

Conclusion

In the second part of this article I will explore the meaning of 'disclosure' in science from a Husserlian perspective, discuss some of the implications of

Gadamer's rejection of Husserl's philosophical method, and propose some of the consequences of seeking to structure human scientific psychological research using Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics as a guide.

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