

Chapter 2

Psychology as a Phenomenological Science

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The relationship between psychology and phenomenology is not one that is easily traceable (for a discussion on the difficulties of this see, e.g., Graumann 1991). One of the reasons for this opaque matter is that neither psychology nor phenomenology can be defined as *one* subject area. Both have developed over time with different persons representing varying approaches and others yet again further developing these new and hybrid versions of the former. The aim of this chapter is thus not to give a complete overview of psychology, in its general umbrella-like term, as a phenomenological science. But rather to trace some early relations between psychology and phenomenology and to depict a selection of classic studies conducted in Austria and Germany at the turn of the last century in order to show how the authors of these studies used phenomenological approaches to understand the mind (in the sense of the German term: *Bewusstsein*) and human behavior. Furthermore, in outlining some of the main tenants of where phenomenology and psychology have progressed on common grounds, we pay special attention to specific elements belonging to the person–environment relation with the aim of highlighting the need to reintegrate psychological processes and underlying functions of the *personal living space* in contemporary psychological analyses of every day actions.

With this retrospective analysis, the present chapter intends to show that phenomenological approaches—while rare in today’s mainstream psychological research agenda—has a fruitful history in early psychology. We thus begin with a historical reconstruction. The storyline of this reconstruction, however, is told in reversed—we trace a few ending points back to their beginnings. In the second part of this chapter, we then present three case studies of different psychologists using phenomenological approaches for their investigations—namely Kurt Lewin, Martha Muchow, and Gustav Ichheiser—with which we show how phenomenological approaches have historically been implemented. In the last part, we con-

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clude that these classical studies are still highly useful also in today's research endeavors and should be resorted to for further developing a psychology that aims at being a human science.

Historical Reconstruction of Psychology as a Phenomenological Science

Departing from the Phenomena: Gestalt Theory

At the beginning of what Ebbinghaus called the “short history” of psychology as a science was, among others, Fechner's psychophysics—in many respect of model characteristics, in Kuhn's sense paradigmatic. Let us illustrate the problem: Fechner tried to scale the intensity of sensory perception (*Sinneseindrücken*) via the scaling of physical stimuli (*Reizverhältnisse*) causing these sensations. This approach basically represents a type of image theory (*Abbildtheorie*): The (physically measurable) properties of the physical ideal type are described and then the corresponding mental properties and how these manifest themselves within the mental image are looked for. Very specific and exact identifiable stimuli are thus given. The question now is how the perceived information—the content of this perception—is constituted. But what happens if we reverse the question: Given certain perceptual content, what are the relevant stimulus conditions and to what extent can the properties of perceptual content be lead back to properties of the underlying stimuli (*Reizverhältnisse*)? Of course, reversing the question only makes sense if you assume that the content of perception—the phenomena—can have additional properties that differ from those that can be directly derived from the physical determinable stimuli. Indeed, it is precisely this rather simple idea on which the Gestalt concept from the Berlin (and Frankfurt) Gestalt school was originally based. Max Wertheimer's studies, which he started conducting in Frankfurt in 1910 and then published in 1912 with the title *Experimentelle Studien über das Sehen von Bewegung*,¹ became the experimental paradigm of Gestalt theory. What Wertheimer demonstrated went far beyond the mere experimental representation of apparent motion (*Scheinbewegung*): the *phi*-phenomenon—as Wertheimer called it—occurs when the interval between hiding a vertical bar and displaying a second horizontal bar is slightly reduced below the optimal interval of 0.06 s for the production of the stroboscopic effect: What you then see is something which cannot be explained via physical perceptual conditions alone: a movement without a clearly shaped object, a movement within the background color—a “field fulfillment” (*Felderfüllung*) as Wertheimer called it.

The phenomenal given is thus not simply determined by the underlying stimulus conditions, but rather, what we see results from a perceptual organization which is

¹English title: *Experimental studies on the seeing of motion*.

inherent to the perceptual system. This organizational process generates the perceived information from existing stimulus material in a specific order. This Gestalt formation is not random, but rather subject to specific laws (*Gesetzmäßigkeiten*). To capture these dynamic laws becomes the central problem for Gestalt theoretical research on perception. The overriding principle is simplicity, frugality, and economy: From existing stimulus materials, the form that emerges with the least effort, that which is easiest realized, is phenomenally generated. What always remains to be shown is that the realized total form (*Gesamtform*) is critical for what can be seen at a single location within the whole field. The whole determines the parts of which it is composed—this is the fundamental assumption of Gestalt theory.

From psychology of perception, the new approach of Gestalt theory learned that any psychic activity rests upon the realization of simple forms; this, and nothing else, is the significance of the formula of the “tendency toward good Gestalt” (*Tendenz zur guten Gestalt*)—extended to ever new and broader research problems of psychology: first by Wertheimer (1912, 1920) himself to the psychology of productive thinking, subsequently Köhler’s (1917) spectacular experiments on intelligence testing on apes prepared the way for Kurt Lewin’s action theory. His war landscape text from 1917, which will be further discussed below, provided an early glimpse into his later field theory. Important here is the dynamic aspect: “open Gestalt” (“*offene Gestalten*”) go hand in hand with an energetically charged psychic system. The success of action, i.e., the achievement of an action goal, results in a state of reduced tension. Furthermore, the role of meaning plays of course an important role: in—as it will later be called by Lewin—the life space (*Lebensraum*), the specific form—emerging on the grounds of physical environmental conditions—which shows itself as meaningful, is always that form which necessarily leads to a reduction of tension within the system.

Introspection: The Würzburg School

The emergence of psychology was burdened from the very beginning with a heavy methodological problem: If all modern research science must be based on observation, then a genuine research method for a *science* of consciousness must also be based on observation. For a science of *consciousness*, however, this means that the method cannot be any other than observing one’s own conscious processes: The scientific scholar here functions simultaneously as observer and observed. There was however a serious objection against the possibility of formulating a scientific psychology on the grounds of introspection: In the case of self-observation, as Kant (1786/1977) proclaimed, the act of observation may alter or distort the very process intended to be observed. This argument remained unchallenged for a long time: *Direct* access to experience and to conscious mental processes was considered to be unavailable to psychological investigations. This was the reason for Wundt’s reluctance toward introspection, but also Brentano’s insistence for at least the

possibility of a retrospective introspection—i.e., an introspection based on memory. The crucial methodological realization developed out of the Würzburg circle around Oswald Külpe: According to Ach (1905), the fact that after the completion of mental processes, these very processes remain present, “perseveres,” for a while—a fact that had been confirmed by contemporary memory researchers with evidence-based empirical studies—allows an observation corresponding to an observation of a natural object, precisely due to their perseverance. From today’s perspective, it is interesting to see how Ach, after he based his proceedings on solid grounds, justifies introspection against the accusations of “subjectivity:” namely by stressing the dialogic character of the introspective method, i.e., the fact that the introspective data are requested by an experimenter.

Bühler (1907, 1908a, b) used this method to investigate thought processes. He presented various thought problems or thinking tasks (*Denkaufgaben*) and asked the subjects to report how they arrived at the solutions. The actual “carriers” of any “firmly established and continuous thought content” are—as Bühler concluded, thereby positioning his ideas against basic assumptions of the empiricist tradition of his time—non-imaginary mental units, “cognitions” (“*Gedanken*”) as he called them, that function as transcendental given operators in an organized path of thought processes (Bühler 1907, p. 311). Bühler himself seems to have understood these studies as a kind of transfer of Husserl’s phenomenological method into experimental psychology. It is not surprising that Husserl feels his foundation for a scientific philosophy misunderstood (e.g., as expressed in a letter written by Husserl to Bühler dated June 28th, 1927, archived in Graz Archive for Austrian Philosophy). What is important for us here is to merely point out the following relation: from Brentano’s descriptive psychology, a direct path not only leads to Husserl’s phenomenology, but rather, it also leads to the reintroduction of introspection in the context of experimental psychology: Without an exact description of the inner perception, no Psychology rich in content is possible.

The Point of Departure: From Brentano to Husserl

In order to systematically differentiate between physical and mental phenomena, Franz Brentano stated in 1874 his *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* in a passage frequently cited thereafter:

Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction towards an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on. (Brentano 1874/1995, pp. 88–89)

“Reference to a content” here should not be understood as a relation between two separately existing points of reference (*Bezugsglieder*)—that is, as the relation of a subject to an independently existing object outside of the person: “If I, e.g., think about God Jupiter, merely the one who has a mental representation of God Jupiter exists, but in no case [...] does God Jupiter exist” (Kraus 1924, p. XXVI, own translation). More precisely, this means that nothing but the mental act of representation exists. The object the representation refers to is synsemantically included within the representational act. Husserl, who takes up Brentano’s concept of intentionality and further develops it, bases his new science of phenomenology on precisely this assumption: the idea that the constitution of meaning can be reconstructed from this intentional relatedness to the world. In this sense, Husserl refers to the discipline of phenomenology as “*auf die Sachen gerichtet*,” as “directed towards things themselves.” Here, “*Sache*” or “thing” does not simply refer to “facts”—in a positivistic sense—but rather to “conceived realities” (*begriffliche Wirklichkeiten*) (Fellmann 2006, p. 29) or to our conscious ideas of things versus natural objects: things that—regardless of the mode of their existence, real, or imaginary—are meaningful for us precisely because we are directed toward them, because we have mental representations of them. Important here is that for Husserl, these concepts are understood as something pre-linguistic: as something that already and first takes place in experience and sensation.

For a phenomenological orientation in psychology, references to Husserl primarily lead to methodological consequences (see Graumann 1988). Namely, that the construction of meaning, on the one hand, does not result from within, from the inner psychological constitution of a single individual. But, on the other hand, meaning can also not be reconstructed focusing solely on the outside, as the humanitarian psychological approaches, e.g., in the sense of Spranger, assumed, from the cultural realities, from the conditions of an “*objectiven Geistes*” in the Hegelian sense. In the terminology of William Stern’s critical personalism: the construction of meaning emerges neither subjectively from within the person nor objectively from the things themselves—but from the description of intentional relatedness of the person toward the thing. If the intentional person–environment relation now becomes *the* unit of analysis, a phenomenologically oriented psychology must then inevitably deal with the situational circumstances of meaningful actions. This is also precisely from where the interest in our surrounding space, the special environment—the living space—originates. “Who and how someone is arises from the specific environment he inhabits, interacts with, and explores” (Graumann 1988, p. 540, own translation). Here, the “environment” of a person refers to a constituting and constituted space—to a very particular, and by all means socially demarcated space, i.e., defined by social class: that world which is meaningful to persons—their *Lebensraum* (*living space*).

A second aspect is even more important for understanding the following historical case studies: the methodological approach in phenomenology to “bracket” all questions of truth or reality, in Husserl terms *epoché* or “suspension,” calls for simple descriptions of the content of our consciousness. This is also where the phenomenological approach takes a critical stance: critical toward our own

preconceptions—toward the prejudices of our commonsense knowledge—critical toward all that which is taken for granted, usually implicitly present before a thorough investigation even begins and which therefore eludes the examiners analysis.

Worlds We Live and Persons We Encounter

The world, as we experience it, forms itself through our living it and thus presents a unique and indispensable aspect of each human being. How we experience our surroundings, how these experiences change (us), and how we can make sense of the relation between persons and their surroundings have occupied many scholars during the first half of the last century. In the following paragraphs, three studies are selected, which approach this topic from a phenomenological perspective in an exceptional way. With each study—Lewin’s War Landscape, Muchow’s Urban Child’s World, and Ichheiser’s Image of the other Man—a different focus on specific aspects belonging to the overall experience of a personal world is emphasized and a different methodological approach chosen.

Kurt Lewin’s War Landscapes

Die Gegend scheint da “vorne” ein Ende zu haben, dem “Nichts” folgt.² (Lewin 1917, p. 441)

During his years as a soldier, serving in the First World War, the 27-year-old Lewin noticed how the perception of his surroundings changed. He describes these qualitative changes of the landscapes in a little study published during his furlough in 1917. The appearance of a landscape transforms as the soldier, Kurt Lewin, approaches the front line. When the front and therefore the battlefield—the *war landscape*—is still far away, the *peace landscape* endlessly stretches out. It appears round and seemingly with no end or beginning, lacking in direction—“*undirected*.” The soldier has the impression that he could go on marching forever, never to arrive anywhere. Yet, as he approaches the battlefield, borders begin to emerge. The landscape now that has a direction is “*directed*,” it has a front and a back (*ein Hinten*). Lewin argues that this transformation does not simply emerge due to the individual’s awareness of increasing danger, but is experienced as a characteristic belonging to the concrete outside world. Due to the onlooker’s new needs, physical objects appear in a different quality: in battle, e.g., a soldier *needs* physical safety.

Along these lines, Lewin goes on to describes the difference between *peace things* and *battle things*: Same objects take on different qualities and contribute to

²Own translation: “The area ‘up front’ seems to have an end, upon which ‘nothing’ follows.”

the general appearance of the whole situation in a distinct manner. In addition to single objects, personal perception (who is perceiving the landscape—a soldier or a civilian), geographical space (where is the perception taking place—close to the battle field or far away), and social others (who else is within the vicinity—comrades, the enemy, or civilians) all play a part in how the landscape as a whole will be experienced:

The fact that people become members of this battle world is particularly evident in two phenomena: civilians who, by way of exception, have not fled from the battle zone, are still not perceived as things belonging to the battle world, unless they are suspected to be spies. Their presence is even enough to withdraw the battlefield character from the house or farm position within the battlefield; a bombardment of such a houses is therefore perceived as particularly harsh, as a kind of disturbance of peace. (Lewin 1917, p. 445, authors' translation)

Here, the soldier experiences incongruity. Civilians do not belong in battle zones, they are not “war things,” which is why shooting at and wounding or damaging a civilian and his belongings (e.g., the house) is experienced as especially harsh. Civilians and their houses belong to “peace things,” and peace things are not subject to the same experiences one has during battle.

With this little study, Lewin shows how the same landscape and the same objects are experienced by the same person as very different, depending on numerous aspects that are all part of a complete whole: the experience a person has of his world. Furthermore, with this phenomenological description, the intricate interrelations of persons and environment are clearly visible. Part of what characterizes persons, their acts, what they feel, their ways of thinking, and perceiving the world is their living space and vice versa.

Why Lewin did not further develop the phenomenological approach as methodological tool to further investigate the person–environment relation, we could only speculate on. What we do know is that the insights he gained from this little publication remained central. Many concepts he later developed are visible, e.g., the notion of *boundary*, *direction*, or *zone* (see also Heider 1959). But also the forces of the subjective experience of a *life space* and general Gestaltist assumptions are concepts Lewin never tired to emphasize. Marrow (1969), e.g., describes in reference to Lewin's 1930s work on children's behavior and environmental forces how: “[h]e denied the possibilities of an ‘average’ environment, for the same environment may assume a different quality depending on a number of characteristics, all of which affect the immediate circumstances surrounding the child” (Marrow 1969, p. 60).

Martha Muchow's Life Space of the Child

Once it became understood in psychology that, in an objectively equal life space, the “lived world” could be very different depending on the structure of the person who lived this world, it became necessary to turn to the then-current studies of the “person” and to investigate the “personal world.” (Muchow and Muchow, 1935/2015, p. 65)

About the same age as Lewin, two years his junior, Martha Muchow had almost as flourishing a career until 1933 as Lewin did. About 300 km northwest of Berlin, Muchow first studied under William Stern and later became a faculty member of the Hamburg Psychology Institute conducting her own research. With the subjective meaning construction of the children's personal worlds as main study objective, Muchow's study titled *Life space of the urban child* (1935/2015), postmortem published by her brother, can be viewed as milestone for multiple reasons. The most relevant for this chapter is that it was especially designed to capture the world—the life space—as it is and as it presents itself to the child as opposed to how it presents itself to the examiner. As Muchow is not as well known in psychology as, e.g., Lewin, not only her work but also her life and circumstances deserve special attention here.

Parallel to her work as a teacher in Hamburg, Muchow volunteers to assist during her free time in a study on testing youth's intelligence under Stern's supervision in 1917. For the next two years, she participated in developing observational surveys for testing intelligence in schools (Strnad 1949). Once the University of Hamburg was finally founded in 1919, she enrolled to study under Stern's supervision and within a year started working as a full time research and teaching assistant in the Psychological Laboratory (Wohlwill 1985). After completing her university degree in 1923, she continued to conduct her own studies as well as collaborate with Stern and other colleagues in various studies concerning youth related problems. With the overall aim of contributing to the understanding of how to conceptualize the child's world, the question of how the city environment influences or shapes the child came to be the primary concern due to a lecture series on *The city as life space and ways of life*³ conducted by Muchow and colleagues.

***Life Space of the Urban Child* (“der Lebensraum des Großstadtkindes”)**

These lecture series, organized under the mandate of the *Hamburger Volksheim*, were held during the winter months of 1927/28 (Muchow & Muchow 1935/2015) and first piloting studies followed in 1928 and 1929. During the pilot studies, it rapidly became clear that the question of how the city environment *influenced* or *shaped* the child's conception of the world was in itself inadequate and contained fundamental flaws in conceptualizing the person–environment relationship. Rather:

The more the person-world relationship was rationalized in fundamental new manners, the more evident it became that, in the child-city relationship, it is not the world of the city that “only enters in contact with the person (child) through a subsequent convergence.” Rather,

³In German: *Die Großstadt als Lebensraum und Lebensform*.

the world “lived” by the urban child, as is the case with any “lived world,” is a particular life that takes place between person and world. Hence, the objective was no longer to investigate how an urban world, as described in a particular manner, influences children who live there, but to show how children transform their “city” into their environment, and how thereupon the “world lived by the child” represents the city. (Muchow and Muchow 1935/2015, pp. 63–64)

With this new research endeavor, Muchow and her team set out to empirically study children’s urban life spaces from 1930 to 1932 from three perspectives: the *space in which the child lives*, the *space the child experiences*, and finally the *space that is lived by the child* (Muchow & Muchow 1935/2015, p. 65). About 109 children between the ages of nine and 14 were surveyed in the area of Bamberg and Hamburg, a working class neighborhood. Each child was given a regular map of Hamburg and asked to mark with a letter or a number the place where they lived (current and former), the (former and current) schools they attended, and, if applicable, places such as after school centers, sports clubs, gymnasium, library, and homes of friends and (extended) family members. They were then asked to trace and color public places and streets they often visited and knew very well blue and those streets through which they have passed, but did not know quite as well red.

What became visible from these maps was that the life space dimension a singular child occupies differs tremendously from child to child. One of the main findings was that while boys and girls have similar play space ranges, girls had a much smaller roaming space than boys did, approximately half the size. Muchow first concludes that this remarkable difference may be due to the fact that girls usually had to take on household chores and watch little siblings and thus lacked the opportunity to wander off far beyond the home vicinity. After examining this possibility, which she cannot verify from her data, she comes to the conclusion that girls may inherently not strive towards wandering off into far away places as much as boys do (Muchow & Muchow 1935/2015, pp. 82–83).

After mapping out the space that the child experienced, the life spaces were analyzed in a second step with standardized surveys and additional essays. In the surveys, the children were asked to describe in writing the places familiar to them, what they did in these places, and what these places meant to them. For the essay task, children were asked to describe a regular Sunday. From this data, it became apparent that for the participating children, the central living space on Sundays focused on family life at home, while the streets represented the main living space during the week. The analysis of this data focused solely on the different forms of play which indicates, as Faulstich-Wieland and Faulstich (2012) have pointed out, that important parts of the child’s overall living space are not included (e.g., the home space or the school space is not taken into consideration).

The last part of the study, focusing on the space that the child lives, is the most encompassing. With different methods of passive participant observation, the aim was to infer how children transformed urban space from their behavior. Seven distinct spaces were chosen: the loading dock (*der Löschplatz*), a playground, a vacant lot, a residential area, a through street, a main street, and a department store.

Each location and how children use it is described in great detail. In particular, the descriptions of the loading docks are highly revealing in that they vividly depict how children actively live this space according to their own needs. Fenced off from the main road, adults are never spotted on it. As a matter of fact, especially the fence, a simple boundary marker within the adult world, structuring and impeding adult movement (adults are never observed coming into contact with the fence, let alone passing it in order to enter the embankment), is particularly inviting for the children. Almost every child tries to come into direct contact with the fence, which, within the child's world, transforms into a most variable interaction thing: "Therefore, what to us, adults, is an irrelevant and uninteresting object of the surrounding that exists only peripherally, namely our action space, becomes a thing for grasping, jumping, climbing, sitting, and squatting in the world of the child" (Muchow & Muchow 1935/2015, p. 100).

Similar to Lewin's War Landscape study from 1917, Muchow is able to depict the subjectivity, and with it its own validity, of a person's experience of the world. The world of the urban child, as the war landscape of a soldier, has distinct characteristics that are meaningful only in relation to the child or the soldier. To an adult or to a civilian, the same environment will be experienced qualitatively differently. What distinguishes Muchow's study and sets it apart from studies such as the War Landscape (or Ichheiser's study on human misunderstandings discussed below), is that she refrained from using her own introspective reflections to describe a phenomenon as it shows itself, but rather resorted to a multiplicity of research techniques—as today would be termed as triangulation—with the aim of capturing someone else's phenomenal experience of the world. This goal remained central throughout the rest of her work: Muchow literally dedicated her whole life to investigating children and youths in Hamburg.

Despite the fact that Muchow was rather successful in presenting her studies to international colleagues in America in 1930 and 1931, she writes to a friend that she would not consider moving there permanently as: "one would have to do other things than she has planed to do. Only Germany provides her with the space she needs for her endeavors."⁴ Not long after that Muchow witnesses the rapidly growing Nazi regime in Germany, now not only publicly approving anti-Semitism, but rigorously enforcing it via legal action. During the same time of her mother's sudden death in 1933, Professor Stern and her colleague Heinz Werner are dismissed on the grounds of the "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service" (Moser 1991). Muchow nevertheless decides to stay in Germany and, as only Aryan within the Psychological Institute, it becomes her duty to hand over the institute to the newly appointed pedagogue Gustav Deuchler. Due to her remaining close ties and loyalty to Stern, Muchow is under heavy defamation and denunciation (Moser 1991) until she too is finally dismissed in the same year as Stern and Werner on the day of her 41st birthday in 1933. At this point, Muchow has exhausted her energies and decides to take her own life (Wohlwill 1985).

⁴Own translation from a letter cited in Strnad 1949, p. 16.

Gustav Ichheiser's Image of the Other Man

The author aroused our curiosity as a man who is alive to the perplexing and perturbing problems of our time, and a picture of his personality took shape in our minds. (Ichheiser 1940, p. 277)

The final, but equally important, proponent of a phenomenological psychology we would like to introduce here is Gustav Ichheiser. Ichheiser, a contemporary of Lewin and Muchow, started his career as a psychologist in Vienna where he was first inscribed at the Faculty of Philosophy to study psychology. During his years in Vienna, Ichheiser builds his theoretical foundations for all of his later work. The emergence of a Gestalt as dynamically constituted within the interactions of subjective and objective given realities is a field of interest Ichheiser began with his work on aesthetics under Bühler's supervision in 1924 (Ichheiser 1924) and continuously investigated it from various angles and levels—e.g., personal, interpersonal, and group level—until his death in 1969. We here focus on his 1940 publication titled *The image of the other man: Studies in Social Psychology* as his most prominent example. We do not intend to give a full overview of his work here, but rather a brief insight to some work done by an excellent phenomenologically oriented psychologist of the last century, who has largely been neglected.

The Image of the Other Man

In his 1940 publication on the image of the other man, Ichheiser investigates the “so-called phenomena of expression” (p. 279) and differentiates two perspectives that are usually blurred or confused. On the one hand, we have the *expressions* that which person A gives off, and on the other hand, the *impressions*, the image I have formed of person A. Ichheiser points out that while in everyday life, we usually assume that forms of expression are in some factual manner the other person's real character,⁵ professional psychologist often blur these two aspects as well. He thus explicates:

We mean, in the first place, that—to put it in the most general terms—there exist some kind of real relationship between the inner and the outward personality. We mean, in the second place, that the outward forms of expressions of a personality somehow determine the impression which another person receives of that personality; in other words, that the other person interprets and uses them as *symbol* which somehow convey some personal characteristics of that *personality*. (Ichheiser 1940, p. 279)

Ichheiser refers to a personal experience to exemplify this relationship more closely. He describes how he comes across a book by a local author, reads it, and is

⁵Note that Ichheiser's work on attribution goes back to his early works from the 1920s. For a more comprehensive discussion on Ichheiser's contributions to social psychology and attribution theory see Rudmin et al. (1987).

impressed by how much energy and elegance this style of writing displays. An image of the author forms in Ichheiser's mind. A meeting at the author's house is arranged and Ichheiser punctually attends. Yet, at his home he encounters multiple surprises:

[T]he furniture of the room fails to 'correspond' to the image of the man which we should have expected; it does not correspond to the picture which formed itself in our mind on reading the novel. More than that – it really contradicts this picture ... The room disturbs us because it is furnished in bad taste, old-fashioned and overcrowded. (Ichheiser 1940, p. 277)

The confusion Ichheiser experiences continues to grow:

Before we have had time to sort out our conflicting feelings and impressions the door opens and our host enters the room. Our confusion assumes the dimension of a shock. For how can the gentleman who confronts us possibly be the creator of the stirring, powerful work which made so deep and moving an impression on us? Instead of the ascetic figure which we had expected, we find a rotund gentleman of advanced years who greet us with a friendly, good-natured smile. (Ichheiser 1940, pp. 277–278)

At that moment the old man strikes a conversation with a joyful tone and sparkling eyes and Ichheiser's image of the local author is quickly revised, the young demeanor with which the author speaks matches his writing style.

Here, we clearly see the two sides together dynamically forming one phenomenon: the image of a person. The image takes shape and changes over time as encounters with the other man and cues belonging to him are used to match expressions with impressions, forming an overall image. In Ichheiser's descriptions, we can follow these tuning processes continuously and see not only how the phenomena takes shape, but also which mechanisms and facets are involved and how these are all linked: The book itself is youthful and dynamic, the furniture is old-fashioned and somehow seems inappropriate, the physical appearance is old and mild, the actual conversation filled with juvenile spirit, and so on.

The task of the remaining pages of Ichheiser's 1940 publication is to differentiate and analyze underlying psychological mechanisms. The following main components are discussed:

1. *The material of the image of the other man*: All the data, in and by means of which the other man is "given" to us.
2. *Mechanisms of interpretation*: All processes of developing the material, all forms of apperception, all formative tendencies which in one way or another mould [sic] the raw material into the shape of the image of the other man.
3. *Mechanisms of deception*: Mechanisms of all interpretation which function not so much to form, as to falsify and distort the image of the other man.
4. *The image of the other man*: The product and final result of the manipulations of the given material by the mechanisms of interpretation, or in other words, it is the other man as he appears to us when the material has passed through the prism of the mechanism of interpretation.
5. *The consciousness of the other man*: This is the correlative to the image of the other man. It is the form of consciousness which operates in the responsive

social sphere...The structure of the image of the other man and the form of our consciousness of him correspond to each other and are at bottom merely two aspects of the same phenomenon (Ichheiser 1940, pp. 290–291).

Ichheiser uses this phenomenological approach in multiple studies and repeatedly defends it in favor over experimental investigations that dominated psychological investigations of his time. He does this not in order to dismiss experimental methods *per se*, but rather because he believes that many problems are misconceived before investigations even begin and in a second step misanalyzed due to a common fallacy: confusing the description of a phenomenon with the explanation of it. He is convinced that “[o]ur factual understanding is therefore a descriptive (phenomenological) one, which should always be kept in mind” (Ichheiser 1934, p. 130, own translation) and that “[a] last source of deception related to perception psychology can be finally explained with the fact that we are primarily directed not towards describing, but rather towards explaining the phenomenal and that we generally confused descriptive and explanatory method” (Ichheiser 1928, p. 438, own translation).

While Ichheiser managed to escape the Nazi regime in 1938, he struggled until his death to receive recognition from the American scientific community. With the supported of a few colleagues at the University of Chicago, Ichheiser managed to continue to publish throughout most of his life. Without a steady university position and with an interruption of institutionalization for over 10 years on the grounds of being diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia (Ichheiser 1966), Ichheiser nevertheless published outstanding pieces of work that exemplify not only his astute ability to perceive and analyze social problems and human misunderstandings, but also his critical standpoint and his ambitions to proclaim this position at all costs. Not rarely at the cost of his colleagues and friends, whom he himself generally called his “pseudo or quasi friends.”⁶ In 1969, Ichheiser is found dead in his rooms in Chicago with signs of suicide.

Conclusion

For a psychology as a science of the human being, our aim in this chapter was to give a glimpse into the history of psychology, as it emerged in Austria and Germany during the beginning of the last century, in order to show how phenomenological analyses that were rich in content had been included into experimental as well as non experimental research endeavors. After this tradition was brutally interrupted by political circumstances, psychology largely neglected to continue to analyze the intricate processes of person–environment relations through

⁶As can be read in letters kept in the Archives of the University of Chicago Library, Special Collections Research Center, e.g., addressed to Everett Hughes from William Ireland dated February, 1970, in Hughes Everett Cherrington Papers, Box 32, Folder 15.

phenomenological approaches. Yet, psychology, we argue, would gain tremendously in substance if a phenomenological approach is once again embraced and further developed. Cornejo (2008), as fine current example, aptly demonstrates the importance of focusing on the *experience* of relations *between* person, other, and object, within an environment. Directing his attention on the forgotten phenomenological dimension of meaning in language, he argues that:

A minimal communicative situation circumscribes the meaning construction process in micro-social interactions. *It involves: the phenomenological experience of Speaker and Hearer; a social interaction between them; and an environmentally situated Reference.* Approaching the minimal communicative situation therefore requires realizing *that the phenomenological dimension is always implied in any intersubjective encounter.* Intersubjectivity analyses usually ignore this point: Language comprehension is produced *if and only if a common experiencing exists.* (Cornejo 2008, p. 174, our own emphasis added)

Note that the shared experience must exist prior to comprehension. Along similar lines, we would like to bring attention to precisely this phenomenological experience of humans *in relation to their worlds*, to their lived space, and urge future researchers not to neglect the experiential aspect of being a human within an environment. Kharlamov (2012) can be cited as further example of a current psychology scholar who brought forth a developmental model of the experience of spatial encounters. His analysis of city space demonstrates the utmost importance of focusing not only on social, historical/developmental, and object related interactions, but on the lived space that manifests itself between these interactions for understanding the human experience as a whole—as something that goes beyond a simple aggregation of singular (and sometimes conceptualized as unrelated) parts. Such analyses are scarce and present a blind spot in most of contemporary psychology. To join Ichheiser's discontent, we urge the reader to stop and consider turning toward a phenomenological tradition in the sense of a descriptive psychology that is rich in content and to analyze some of the most obvious facts concerning the human condition: the experience of social, historical/developmental, and cultural meaning construction in space.

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