The Method of Eidetic Analysis for Psychology

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Abstract

Amedeo Giorgi has asserted that the two key procedures that make psychological research genuinely phenomenological are: 1) the epochés; and 2) the intuition of essence. Giorgi’s insistence on this point is reviewed and the often-misunderstood method of grasping essences is explored. Attention is given to Husserl’s ideas about free imaginative variation and the procedures of eidetic analysis. Examination is made of how Husserl used his method to determine the essence of "psychological phenomena", and of the demands the essential characteristics of psychological subject matter place on the discipline. Implications for the sciences, especially for psychology’s use of the phenomenological method, are spelled out. Basic practices in phenomenological psychological research are addressed, including the roles played by the investigator’s imagination, by descriptions of others’ real lives, and by literary and artistic works in eidetic research. Post-modern critiques of essentialism and of skepticism concerning "essences" are challenged in light of a clarification of the procedure. Finally, it is argued with Giorgi that eidetic analysis is crucial for a genuine science of psychology.

As post-positivist and post-modernist thought has emerged and taken hold, the idea of "essence" has lost favor. Critiques of foundationalism and essentialism are common in both mainstream and avant-garde approaches to human science. Attempting to know the essential qualities of psychological subject matter is thought to involve a false sense of certainty and infallibility, an insensitivity to context and differences among diverse peoples, an ossification of the fluid and dynamic, an intolerance of ambiguity, an assumption of rigid predetermination in human life, and a detachment from existence. Claims about essences are thought to involve problems of dogmatism, universalism, reductionism, idealism, and even biological determinism. On account of inevitable limits of sampling data and of researcher biases and fallibility, assertions of essence are viewed as ignoring such important contexts as gender, culture, and age. Does not essentialism open the door to sexism, racism, ethnocentrism, and ageism? Do not assertions of essence, missing the multiform and changeable character of psychological life, translate politically into totalitarianism and a denial of human freedom?
Giorgi (1989, 2008) has consistently insisted that the intuition of essences is one of the two defining procedures of phenomenological psychological research. It is ironic that a necessary procedure of phenomenology, indeed its methodological sine qua non, would be thought to entail the problems of the very isms that this approach has so strenuously attempted to resolve. Are the principles and procedures designed to guide the intuition of essences, the method of eidetic analysis, self-deluded or at least naïve and passé? Some psychologists who are sympathetic with phenomenology have responded by identifying it as a movement and by taking the existential and hermeneutic turn with Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre; the ethical turn with Lévinas; the narrative turn with Ricoeur, or even a constructionist turn, which make the study of essences a footnote to history. As interest in qualitative research methods grows in the human sciences, fundamental analytic procedures are of great concern. Some contemporary research that presents itself as phenomenological neither mentions nor makes use of the method of eidetic analysis. Is the intuition of essences, as Giorgi suggests, truly necessary for human science?

This chapter addresses the topic of the intuition of essences, which has not been well understood in the qualitative research movement. Here, I will reaffirm Husserl’s view that in order to proceed soundly from a scientific, social and ethical standpoint, human scientists must understand and employ the procedure of eidetic analysis throughout their research and theorizing. I will focus on the nature of this procedure and the general importance of eidetic psychology rather than offer an account of the ways that eidetic analysis has been and can be employed in specific psychological research. Another limit of this chapter is that although I will touch on the link between eidetic and empirical research in psychology, the complexities of this relationship and the details of an eidetically grounded empirical psychology will not be elaborated.

**Background**

At mid-century in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) noted that misunderstandings of the procedure of intuiting essences could lead to the conclusion that phenomenology is a myth or a passing fashion. Recently, Husserlian scholar Rochus Sowa (2008) called “disastrous” Husserl’s adoption of the “tradition laden”, “vague and ambiguous” term essence because of its connotation of irrationalism and esotericism. Although Husserl himself explicitly ruled out “semi-mystical” thoughts concerning essence and eidos, Sowa asserts that Husserl’s term has triggered totally false associations and obscured an unprejudiced view of this research method.

Sowa (2008) argues that of the two fundamental procedures of phenomenology – eidetic analysis and intentional analysis, the former – the intuition of essences, is the truly scientific method, that which grounds phenomenology’s claim to be a science. Thanks to this procedure, Husserl’s philosophy, as a rigorous science, radically guides human rationality; fundamentally distinguishes the physical from the human, socio-historical sciences; and provides psychology with a genuinely scientific research method for the first time in its history. Husserl accepted Dilthey’s contention that psychology of the late 19th century was unscientific and would remain so as long as it erroneously adopted the methods and theoretical assumptions of natural science instead of developing methods and concepts suited to its own subject matter. For Husserl (1911/1965, pp. 102-103), the true method follows from the nature of things to be investigated, not from our prejudices and preconceptions. He argues that the prejudice of naturalism leads to
an inauthentic psychology because it blinds us to the method of seeing essences. At stake for Husserl in identifying and developing the eidetic method is not only the rationality of sciences guided by a rigorous epistemology and ontology, but the overarching ethical imperative that science address the deepest and most far reaching concerns of human society and history with the freedom and responsibility necessary to shape our destiny (Jalberg, 1988).

Development of the Idea

In his focus on "essence", Husserl revives ancient philosophical wisdom in order to address pressing scientific problems. Husserl reaffirms the view that intelligence includes the power to distinguish the essential from the accidental, and that the essential, the eidos, is presented objectively (Cobb-Stevens, 1992). That is, the eidos (Plato’s term [Smith, 2007]) of a subject matter is evident in the way it presents itself. Cobb-Stevens (1990, 1992, 2002) elaborates Husserl’s kinship with Aristotle and his application of ancient philosophy to contemporary science. In emphasizing our grasp of objectivity unmediated by mental representations, Husserl reaffirms the primacy of seeing and intellectual insight over hypotheses, language and historical constructions. Grounded in perception and predication, in what Husserl calls intuition, knowledge takes up real situations and not mental substitutes. To see and to say that “the paper is white” is not to have a mental idea of “white” but to grasp the paper itself through its “look”, the whiteness belonging to the paper (Cobb-Stevens, 1990). The paper is white. The German word Wesen (essence) is derived from was (what) and sein (is) (Smith, 2007). In Husserl’s view, the seeing of essence provides the most fundamental knowledge of what is.

Husserl’s aim is neither to return to ancient ways nor to diminish the importance of the recent advances of science; his efforts are progressive. Phenomenology is a new and strictly scientific style of philosophy (Husserl, 1929/1969, p. 249). Holding modern science in high esteem, Husserl provides it with a rigorous philosophical grounding and shows how science can, for the first time, be extended to human affairs. In his Logical Investigations, Husserl (1901-1902) argues against nominalism and delineates ways of knowing that return, from empty words, abstract models, hypotheses (etc.), to the matters themselves under investigation; the "return to the things themselves" is first principle of Husserl’s phenomenology (Lévinas, 1930/1973).

Husserl is committed to the vision of modern science, in which rationality is wedded to the encounter with the real world. Opposing uncritical dogma, Husserl proclaims: “Let us examine the evidence of ordinary experience, to see what it itself can teach us” (Husserl, 1929/1969, p. 261). There he finds that predication, ideality, concepts – knowledge relates to its objective evidence through intuition. As opposed to mere thinking and empty speaking about something without any specific details, "intuition" is the presentation of the subject matter in the fullness of its concrete presence (Cobb-Stevens, 1990, p. 43). For instance, as opposed to merely thinking or saying that we should consider a relaxing summer vacation in the country, my intuition – in perception or even imagination – might involve laying on a lakeside dock, feeling the warm rays of the sun and a gentle wind caress on my body as I hear the laughter and splashing of my children and turn to see them playing in the shallow water near the sandy shore.

Our direct, intuitive experience of the world is first an apprehension of individual things. Conceptual thought, language, and abstract constructions are erected and inseparably founded on prior intuitions of individual things (Husserl, 1948/1973). Already at work in the experience of a
particular object is a consciousness of its general type, the distinctive familiarity of its look
and/or sound, and this may be articulated in speech (naming, describing). However, this familiar,
objectively experienced kind is not necessarily thematized. The active identification of this
generality – of these types, kinds, genera – is an elementary, intuitive form of insight. When I see
not merely that something is present but what it is that is present, this objective apprehension of
quality is the consciousness of its essence. In seeing a car pass by, I see what is passing by –
something familiar, typical, of which this particular car in its empirical facticity is an example.
Similarly in the case of a plurality of objects like birds (e.g., in a pair or a flock), each individual
has the same "look" and we directly apprehend their sameness, their common properties, their
mutual affinity, their blending and coincidence of likeness, their kinship of objective being – their
kind (Husserl, 1948/1973, p. 322). Although the individuality and commonality of things can be
distinguished, both are concretely, immediately given moments of the beings that we apprehend
(objectively given beyond consciousness). The thematization of this communality at once
illuminates something that pertains to an individual and also to its general core, which is an
objective moment present in many otherwise varying particular individuals, indeed all
individuals of that kind. The individual thing, as an instance of what is not strictly limited to it, is
a moment of an infinite horizon of like objects, a universal (Husserl, 1948/1973, 328).

We can intuitively thematize this objectively given universality by passing beyond what is
particular into an open horizon of multipilization or possibilizing (Zaner’s term, 1973a), toward
an infinity of imaginable examples of the kind. Through this process we may form a concept,
rudimentary knowledge, of what all these individuals are in common. On the basis of such
ordinary acquisition of empirical or actual generalities, we understand what we refer to as
"animals", "plants", "houses" or "cities". When we see a particular dog, its sense or meaning
includes a common way of eating, playing, running, jumping, and even certain kind of teeth,
whether or not we actually see them, all implicit in what we mean by saying "dog" (Husserl,
1948/1973). Essentials are given everywhere in our experience of reality prior to active ideation,
language, and conceptual knowledge, through which they can be thematized and articulated. It is
only the theoretical dogma of naturalism that, by reducing the world to individual physical facts
devoid of meanings, blinds us to essences.

Ordinary experience of the world involves “typification” (Schutz, 1973) and shifts between
our regarding affairs in their particular factuality (this dirty, old Chevy), typicality (a car), and
higher generality (a material thing). Husserl the path from passively preconstituted
typifications to actively formed general concepts in everyday life and in science. The active
thematization of essence involves a shift of consciousness that Zaner (1973a) names
“exemplification”. One can see anything in two ways – in itself, for its own sake, in its unique
individuality, or as an example of something. Husserl offers procedures for making this shift of
attentive seeing rigorously methodical and thereby scientifically generative (Zaner, 1973b). As
indicated above, eidetic consciousness is prior to all concepts and verbal significations.
Knowing and naming are founded on this primary consciousness that takes place in ordinary
experience. To be truly meaningful, to refer to what is (being talked about), predications must
articulate an eidos. Regarding eidetic intuition, Merleau-Ponty writes, “In the silence of primary
consciousness can be seen not only what words mean, but also what things mean: the core of
primary meaning round which the acts of naming and expression take shape” (1962, p. xv).
Most important is to understand that essences are not inferred, deductively or inductively, and they cannot be derived from an abstract system or model. They originate and are given in intuition. In this sense consciousness of essence is akin to perception, the primary awareness of transcendent reality. Essences are not hypotheses, mental constructs, inferences, abstractions, interpretations, or mental phenomena at all but are instead objective characteristics of transcendent objects (Husserl, 1913/1982, p. 42). “Like other objects, they can be intended to correctly, at times falsely, as, e.g., in false geometrical thinking. Though the intuition of and seizing upon essences is a complex act, specifically seeing essences is an originary and presentative act [...] the analogue of sensuous perceiving and not of imagining” (Husserl, 1913/1982, p. 44). Universal intuition (called "ideation"), founded on individual intuition, is a consciousness of the exemplary character of singularities, through perceptual, memorial, or imaginal intuitions that involve a generic judgment ("insight") that is itself intuitive. Essences are found in the very own being of the individual as what that individual is. Presence to evidence, not deduction, makes this form of rationality scientific (Lévinas 1930/1973, p. 111).

A Key Distinction: Formal versus Material Essences

One may intuit the essence of anything – “every kind of state of affairs” (Husserl, 1948/1973, p. 359). In a given individual, many different essences, even different types of essences, and different levels of eidetic generality may be grasped. A sea shell found on the beach is "hard", "shiny", "beautifully colored", "elegantly shaped", "6 inches in circumference", "useful as an ash tray", "a former home", "abalone", "a shell", "organic matter", "a material thing" and "God’s creation". Husserl distinguishes formal essences from material essences. For instance, numbers – 1, 3, 100 – are formal essences. Mathematics and logic are formal eidetic sciences. The truth of the simple equation "2 + 3 = 5" is an eidetic truth, as is the logical law of non-contradiction. Two cats and 3 cats are 5 cats; 2 cats and 3 insects are five animals; 2 rocks and 3 animals are 5 material objects. This eidetic truth is universal inasmuch as it is repeatable again and again through an infinity of exemplary individuals, by different mathematicians, and remains intuitively identical in all instances. The distinctive characteristic of formal essences is the exactness of their ideality. The great achievements of ideation can be seen in Galileo’s mathematization of nature, and in Newton’s specification of the universal law of gravity, which explains both terrestrial and celestial movement of bodies with the same formula. Standardized measurement and quantitative analysis offer tremendous advantage to physics and the other sciences of nature. Exact quantitative idealization of the physical world by measurement is possible because material things are extended in space, independent of each other, and akin in their kind of being to the instruments that calibrate measurement, as the floor is to a ruler or the rotation of a planet is to a clock.

Eidetic thinking is not limited to mathematics and formal logic. Ideation, in addition to the exact idealization of the formal disciplines, is capable of grasping essences of things that are not exactly determinable and even those whose being is not akin to physical things. Whereas mathematics uses the method of idealization, other methods of ideation grasp "vague configurational types" that cannot be determined with exactitude. Husserl calls these material essences morphological, in contrast to the formal. The vagueness and fluidity of concepts concerning such essences is not a defect; they are indispensable and “in those spheres are the
only legitimate concepts” (Husserl, 1913/1982, p. 166). Each kind of subject matter must be
taken as it is given, even if given precisely as fluid. Vague, inexact, changing, continuous matters
give rise to morphological notions like “toothed”, “fluted”, “lenticular”, “flowing” or
“transformational” that cannot be mathematized (Husserl, 1913/1982). Another intrinsic limit of
morphological essences is that they can only be grasped imperfectly and "one-sidedly" in a given
moment of apprehension, and although they may show many-sidedness in a sequence of
intuitions, they cannot be grasped non-perspectivally as one does when one idealizes formal
essences like numbers.

Regional Ontologies

Knowing the essences of various kinds or regions of being makes possible the rational
establishment of distinct sciences. Husserl calls this task regional ontology, which also delineates
the overlapping and interweaving of different sciences, for instance the physical sciences and
psychology, psychology and history (Husserl, 1913/1982, p. 32). Material or morphological
essences of the highest genera such as "physical thing" and "person" ground the distinction of the
natural and human sciences. Distinct regional essences pertain to material object, plants life,
animality, humankind, society or history. Regional ontologies articulate the essences of various
scientific subject matters in their concreteness and yield necessary insights about their differences
without the exactness of geometric and mathematical concepts. A distinct kind of being belongs
each of these regions according to their essences. Because essential characteristics of
ontological regions pervade all factual manifestations within them, eidetic sciences can guide
factual ones. Galileo’s application of geometry and mathematics to physical nature enabled great
progress in modern physics. However, if psychological subject matter is essentially different
from material nature, it would be a mistake to assume that this same method applies. To say that
a planet’s orbit is elliptical, that a lake is 30 meters deep, that a heart beats 78 times a minute, that
a car travels 50 miles an hour involves knowledge of what these matters essentially are (though
not necessarily all of what they are). Geometric and mathematical knowledge of things extended
in space, physical reality, has enabled the natural sciences to make impressive theoretical and
technological progress. Measurement, calculation, causal inferences, model building and practical
applications have enabled natural scientists to know and to shape nature with far reaching
consequence. Husserl claims that psychology has not achieved comparable success because it has
borrowed methods from natural science rather than developing methods in keeping with the
essential qualities and structure of its own subject matter.

According to Husserl’s regional ontology, materiality founds psychological processes, which
in turn found cultural and historical realities, but each level contains something novel that cannot
be reduced to its founding levels. The interwoveness of different regions poses difficult
problems. The physical thing is related to an experiencing subject and to the intersubjective
constitution of the objective physical thing-world. Communities and their institutions are novel
objectivities of a higher order, which defy both naturalistic and psychologistic determinations.
Objects of practical importance and value in the hard reality of our life, such as the state, the law,
customs, and the church are essentially different structures compared with those of material
nature and psychological processes (Husserl, 1913/1982, p. 365). And yet they are related to what
is physical in space and human experiential processes, on which they are founded. Of utmost
importance for science is that each region is clarified with insight into its own essential structure, which would rigorously determine, with methodological and conceptual authenticity, its own appropriate theory of reason (Husserl, 1913/1982). Before turning to Husserl’s delineation of the essential characteristics of mental life, we will delineate in greater detail the method of eidetic analysis on which these insights are based.

**Methodical Procedure: Toward Scientific Method**

Husserl developed a procedure of ideation for performing the basic work of regional ontology and also for use in scientific psychological research. As we discussed above, essences are given in the intuitive consciousness of individuals, but they require active thematization, clarification, and propositional expression (see Mohanty, 1991). In this process there is a “shift of attitude” or focus from the individual as such to the individual as an example, in keeping with the intention to grasp “what-is-exemplified” (Zaner, 1973a, p. 32). The grasp of universal qualities requires more than a comparison of various empirical examples. Husserl stresses that whether the individual that serves as a starting point is factual or imaginal, insight into its essence requires free imaginative variation of the individual example, transforming it into different examples in which what is possible (and impossible) regarding the essence can be discerned. The procedure of imaginative variation is one feature of eidetic analysis that distinguishes it from induction, which is limited to empirically given facts and actual commonalities (Mohanty, 1991). The general essence, the *eidos* is found in those features that are invariant through all possible individual variations, as the general form necessary in order for individuals to be examples of the essence in question. The *eidos* is the congruent and identical content without which the object cannot possibly be an example, a variant of the kind (Husserl, 1948/1973). Although thematically grasping an essence is founded on the consideration of individuals, the essence itself is not strictly individual as it shows itself across infinite variations of different individuals. Indeed, it holds not merely for a large population of empirically real individuals, as do the results of induction, but for the infinity of possible individuals (Mohanty, 1991). Husserl clearly distinguishes this procedure from empirical generalization by: (1) its use of *fantasy*, and (2) its concern with what extends infinitely through all possible variations (Husserl, 1911/1965, p. 112).

Although an essence is intuitively grasped and immediately seen, its rigorous articulation is neither automatic, instantaneous, or easy. This procedure involves judgment that is labor intensive – a step-wise, progressive, sorting, comparing procedure. Eidetic intuition is fallible in that essences can be vaguely represented, represented in symbol, and falsely posited (Husserl, 1911/1925, p. 112). Prior to the thematization of the essence of "dog", one may be familiar with dogs, and if one has any concept and speaks about dogs, one’s concept may be superficial, incomplete – with indeterminate horizons, or even wrong. The foundation, or better, the point of departure for an essential intuition can be a perception, a recollection, a judgment or an imagination. By seeing various different dogs, we may encounter new attributes and may discover more about what "dog" is. Any given idea of "dog" in the course of this process is "open, ever to be corrected" (Husserl, 1948/1973, p. 333). Husserl insists that this method is a process of *clarification* that demands a close, careful, and full presence of individuals and their possible variations so that the matters under investigation can be grasped in their essences and
stated as completely and precisely as they themselves are. Any ideas that are not born out with concrete evidence in all exemplary singulars of a subject matter must be discarded.

Although an eidos can be presented in the data of memory and perception as well pure fantasy (Husserl, 1913/1982, p. 11), Husserl contends that originally presentative perception has primacies for knowledge of factual being as well as for eidetic findings. Factual reality provides great clarity through steady singularizations that spontaneously show themselves (independent of our prior knowledge) and that resist disruption by reflection. Less effort is needed to apprehend original factual examples than to imagine examples. And yet “[…] there are reasons by virtue of which in phenomenology, as in all other eidetic sciences, presentifications and, more precisely, free fantasies acquire a position of primacy over perceptions and do so even in the phenomenology of perception itself […]” (1913/1982, 158-159, italics in original). This privilege resides in the infinite freedom of the imagination for shaping and reshaping variations of exemplary singulars. We can produce and vary in free fantasy spatial formations, melodies, social practices, liking or disliking, willing and, on the basis of ideation, see essences, the particular kind exemplified. The spontaneity of imagination provides ideation with far reaching access to an infinite range of possible examples, which necessarily includes within it all empirical instantiations and evidence of the essence.

Free and arbitrary imaginative variation provides a facility for identifying the core or invariant structure of a given eidos. When the removal of a certain quality or moment alters the individual such that it is no longer an example of the kind in question, we know that quality or moment is essential to the kind. As long as the individual remains an example of the matter in question even after the feature is imaginatively removed, the investigator knows that feature is not essential. Whereas falsification of empirical laws by imagining counter-examples (that is, by invented facts) would be absurd, imagination is the means par excellence for grasping and verifying eidetic law. Futility of the search for counter-examples in prescientific life, in science, and in the imagination, is a validation of eidetic law (Sowa, 2008). Critical thinking in the performance of this method is decisive for its scientific character. Zaner (1973a) stresses the need for continual return to examples through free imagination, in order to revise, reiterate, refute, extend and improve eidetic knowledge. Empirical and imaginative data collection and variation may utilize extreme and unusual states of affairs with the intent of eidetic critique, which is informed by singular cases that falsify and modify our prior knowledge. Sowa notes that this double testability, by fact and fantasy, renders eidetic analyses scientific by Popper’s falsifiability criterion. “(Descriptive eidetics) turns out to be the true and genuine scientific element of Husserl’s phenomenology, and legitimates its claim to being a science” (Sowa, 2008, p. 105).

**General Essence of the Psychological**

Husserl credits Brentano and Dilthey for brilliant intuitive insights that decisively distinguish psychological life from physical nature and thereby provide psychology with a basis for genuinely scientific methods and concepts. First and foremost, Brentano (1874/1973) recognized that human experience is intentional, that consciousness is conscious of something (other than itself). Human experience transcends itself, in contrast to physical things, which reside within themselves. I open the drawer, take out the book, read the title on the cover, and look for the chapter that will be the subject of a lecture. Because experience (as act, perceiving, remembering)
is not extended in space and is nothing in itself, it cannot be measured. Instead, its meaningful ways of relating to situations (beyond experience) must be described and understood.

Dilthey (1874/1977) recognized that lived experience flows, streams, changes through a plurality of various kinds (perceiving, remembering, anticipating, thinking, feeling), manifesting unities in which different moments interrelate and mutually imply each other by virtue of their meaning. Lived experience is essentially temporal, based on a history and reforming, developing, becoming toward a future. Experience includes the first person "I" in embodied, efficacious, practical, value laden, fundamentally social and collective engagement in a meaningful world in which personal experience casts itself and from which it is inseparable. Psychological life is not fragmentable does not contain independent parts, isolated variables that can be exactly measured and known through functional analyses and mathematical models as can physical things. Most importantly, the relations among moments are intelligible by virtue of unities of meaning. Because psychic life is not independent of our experience but is lived through, it need not be inferred but is intuitively present and is, even if difficult to know, accessible to description and intelligible in its motivated, ever-changing, meaningful nexus.

Although neither Brentano nor Dilthey reflectively formulated the method of eidetic analysis, Husserl views their profound insights as eidetic because they delineated core features apart from which human mental life is unimaginable and therefore inconceivable. The living human being is not conceivable, even possible, as a self enclosed, static, asocial, inefficacious, indifferent, contextless collection of mutually external and independent parts that can be separated or fragmented. Just as the human being is inconceivable without intentionality, embodiment, efficacy, values, temporality, sociality, holism, motivation, unity, and the potential for change, these features are also mutually implicit and inconceivable apart from each other. Moreover, these multiple qualities and horizons constituting personal experience make psychological life essentially inexhaustible, fundamentally indeterminate and ambiguous in its very meaningful intelligibility. Psychological life by essence changes, is in flux. No mental process can be accurately viewed as static and enclosed within itself; its interdependencies as part of a larger stream must be grasped. Moments of lived experience are bound together in its streaming and flow one into another one, by their very essence. Therefore nothing can be torn away from or separated from the stream, the concrete context. The unity "I as human" is an identity through this manifold, embodied in perceiving, feeling, judging, willing and so on. In each case this "I" encompasses the whole human – body, temperament, habitualities and convictions (Husserl, 1913/1989). Although Husserl emphasizes the unity of experiential life, this does not mean it is homogeneous or even free of conflict and contradictions. Husserl states that experience may show what cannot be united, for instance, in the “consciousness of deception” (Husserl, 1911/1965, p. 113). However, deception is, by its very meaning, the presence of a surreptitious act and a lie with mutually implicative meanings, together within one (a unitary and as such self-contradictory) experiential life.

Motivation, not causation, is the principle of the human being. Things do not cause interest but arouse interest on the part of a person, who is always already meaningfully engaged in situations ((Husserl, 1913/1989, p. 227). Objects have meaning by way of their utility and values as concern human desires and aims. The potentiality of motility, the "I move", is constitutive of human freedom. “No causal research, no matter how far reaching, can improve the understanding which is ours when we have understood the motivation of a person” (Husserl, 1913/1989, p.
The person is a subject of the surrounding world in an inseparable relation (Husserl, 1913/1989, p. 195). Things immediately excite my desire and frustrate or fulfill my needs. Not given as "stimuli", the surroundings appear through practical intentionalities as useful things – heating materials, choppers, hammers. Husserl writes, “The surrounding world is comprised not of mere things, but of use-Objects (clothes, utensils, guns, tools), works of art, literary products, instruments for religious and judicial activities (seals, official ornaments, coronation insignia, ecclesiastical symbols, etc.” (Husserl, 1913/1982, p. 191).

Human experience and selfhood are also essentially and internally social, founded on community with others and unified by means of a bond of reciprocal and shared ways of being and understanding. Individual humans, as is eidetically evident in their behavior, perception, speech, and throughout their psychological life, are dependent on and constituted in communities, social institutions, moral orders. Inconceivably unrelated to others, whether bound or free and creative, human beings are socially related in their essential being (Husserl, 1913/1989, p. 148). For Husserl, even the experience of oneself as an individual human being is founded on social relatedness. He says, “I fit myself into the family of man […] and then for the first time do I become an ego, and the other precisely an other” (1913/1989, p. 254). Human communities, with their moral and juridical regulations and modes of functioning, have their own history and preserve themselves despite the joining or leaving of individual persons. The individual person is not human except as the bearer of such relations as family, marriage, gender, unions and class. As communal, we are also interrelated with Nature: “The earth and sky, the fields and the woods, the room in which ‘we’ dwell communally, the picture we see […] We could not be persons for others if a common surrounding world did not stand there for us in a community, in an intentional linkage of our lives […] the one is constituted essentially with the other” (Husserl, 1913/1989, p. 201). The individual person is an abstraction from the common, natural world, which is essentially implicated and primary (Husserl, 1913/1989, p. 201).

**Human Science Research Methods: Free From Naturalism**

*The Investigator’s Own Experience as a Source of Examples for Research*

One immediate consequence of Husserl’s liberating human science from naturalism in psychology by returning to the things themselves – to lived experience, is that research scientists can investigate their own personal lives as a legitimate part of their scientific enterprise. The preconceptual spontaneity and immediacy of the researcher’s own lived experience is an invaluable source of psychological data and insight, as Freud and others have profoundly shown without explicit, scientific justification. It is possible to take one’s own experience as exemplifying a particular psychological subject matter, as a basis for ideation and objective knowledge. Provided that one has lived through a topic of investigation, one’s own experience can provide examples on the basis of which essential psychological insights can be achieved through rigorous, methodical ideation. Whether the investigator’s own original sphere of experience is a valuable, sufficient, or even necessary source of examples for research depends on the nature of the research problem and the aims of research. Eidetic investigation requires imaginatively varying these original examples rather than remaining limited to the investigator’s actual experience. Also already within the investigator’s experience are examples of other people living through psychological subject matters under investigation, and these may also be valuable.
Empathic Communication with Others as Source of Examples for Research

The researcher’s essential sociality as a person has implications for necessary extensions of human science method. Husserl says, “The psychologist has the problematic of intentionality through his own original sphere, but this is never isolable for him. Through the empathy of his original sphere of consciousness, through what arises out of it, as a component which is never lacking, he also already has a universal intersubjective horizon […]” (Husserl, 1936/1954, p. 243). The psychological investigator can and often must enter and understand the lives of other people whose communicative expressions serve as an original source of access to psychological realities. It is most often valuable and necessary for psychologists, given the broad empirical diversity and scope of their subject matter, to go beyond what they themselves have lived through in their quest for insight and knowledge. A psychologist need not have actually experienced "schizophrenia", "torture", or "artistic creativity" in order to investigate such phenomena. Husserl says, “In an amazing fashion, (the person’s) intentionality reaches into that of others and vice versa” (Husserl, 1936/1954, p. 254). Phenomenological research can be carried out in communication with others as research participants and partners because others are not outside one’s experience, as two physical objects are mutually external; self and other exist in reciprocal mutuality. People are…

[…] not a multiplicity of separated souls, each reduced to pure interiority, but rather: Just as there is a sole universal nature as a self-enclosed framework of unity, so there is a sole psychic framework, a total framework of all souls, which are united not externally but internally, namely, through the intentional interpenetration [Ineindander] which is the communalization of their lives […]. There is no separation of mutual externality at all for souls in their own essential nature. What is a mutual externality from the point of view of naïve positivity or objectivity is, when seen from the inside, an intentional mutual internality. (Husserl, 1936/1954, p. 255)

I grasp the other’s intentions, according to Husserl, “with intuitive flair” (1913/1989, p. 286). I can put myself in the place of others by empathy, enter the way they experience their situations (their level of education, age), assume their passions, co-perform their psychological acts, and share their meanings.

I not only empathize with (an other person’s) thinking, feeling, and actions but I must also follow him in them, his motives becoming my quasi-motives, ones which, however, motivate, with insight in the mode of intuitively fulfilling empathy. I co-
share his temptations. I co-participate in his fallacies; in the co- there lies an inner co-living. (Husserl, 1913/1989, p. 287)

We capture the development of a person if we reconstruct the course of his life and make it intuitive in such a way that the entirety of his development as a man becomes comprehensible in an experiential way [...]. That is "knowing a person", "the science of the soul", "psychology". (Husserl, 1913/1989, p. 285)

Empathic access to the lives of others provides a second and often necessary source of examples for rigorous psychological ideation. The deliberate, self-critical, and careful collection of diverse examples from the lives of others, freely varied in imagination and analyzed according to their meaningful processes and structures, is crucial to the yield of objective psychological knowledge.

*Cultural Objects and Media as a Source of Examples for Psychological Research*

Eidetic methodology also legitimates and appropriates the full spectrum of cultural expressions in the arts, humanities and popular media as additional bases and reference points for psychological research and insight. The social and imaginative works in the arts and letters suggest their great value for human science research. Some of the most excellent and abundant expressions of psychological life, sources of concrete examples of human life, are found in artistic creations, literary productions, media sources, cultural artifacts, and historical records. Fact and fantasy alike, inasmuch as they provide rich descriptions of human lived experiences, fertilize eidetic knowledge.

It is necessary to exercise one’s fantasy abundantly in the required activity of perfect clarification [...]. It is also necessary to fertilize one’s fantasy by observations in originary intuition, which are as abundant and excellent as possible […]. Extraordinary profit can be drawn from the offerings of history, in even more abundant measure from those of art, and especially from poetry, which are, to be sure imaginative but which, in the originality of their invention of forms, the abundance of their single features and the unbrokenness of their motivations, tower high above the products of our own fantasies and, in addition, when they are apprehended understandingly, become converted into perfectly clear fantasies with particular ease owing to the suggestive power exerted by artistic means of presentation […]. If one is fond of paradoxical phrases, one can actually say, and if one means the ambiguous phrase in the right sense, one can say in strict truth, that feigning [Fiktion] makes up the vital element of phenomenology as of every other eidetic science, that feigning is the source from which the cognition of "eternal truths" is fed. (Husserl, 1913/1982, p. 160)

In a footnote to the last statement, Husserl writes with wry humor: “This sentence, as a quotation, should be especially suited for a naturalistic ridiculing of the eidetic mode of cognition” (1913/1982, p. 160).

It should be noted that scientific practice remains distinct from art, not collapsed into it. Art, literature, media, history and cultural artifacts may well provide revelatory examples of
meaningful human life, but their original thematic disciplinary aim is not ideation, knowledge. Whereas artistic activities and cultural products remain within imaginative, observational, and expressive forms, scientist practice aims at theory. The thematic goal and outcome of scientific research, in utilizing art and literature as a source of examples, is knowledge proper – the conceptual articulation of essences, in this case the invariant psychological structures. Good poems, novels, biographies, anecdotes and stories, though excellent starting points for science, are not themselves psychology (Husserl, 1925/1977, p. 6). Incidentally, cultural objects of the arts, letters and media may play a similar role in history, sociology, literary study, and other human sciences, which in their own respective ways ("attitudes") thematize, conceptualize and communicate distinctive disciplinary knowledge of human beings. Scientific practice is above all characterized by its unique rationality, its use of imaginative variation in the service of ideation, knowledge proper. In illuminating the fundamental unity of human life in its manifold strata and delineating the theory of reason appropriate to each, phenomenology grounds and guides authentic interdisciplinary collaboration, dialogue and knowledge.

**The Cultural Context of Research: Culture-Bound Essences**

We have noted above that human life and human science take place within a cultural context, a "we-horizon". "In communicative society, each member sees what I see and hears what I hear, or at least can do so" (Husserl, 1913/1989, p. 208). Empathy grounds co-existence in the flesh. Because one’s mental life can be experienced by another (and vice versa), human lived experience takes shape within specific cultures and civilizations, which can communicate with and understand each other (Husserl, 1936/1954). Science is a fundamentally social activity (Husserl, 1913/1989).

Psychological research can illuminate and address these cultural horizons. Such investigations may reveal essential differences among peoples’ lived experiences and thereby provide a variegated knowledge of psychological phenomena. Solokowski notes, “(E)ide may indeed be culture-bound; perhaps other traditions do not break up a color continuum or even the animal kingdom the way ours does. The eide are not taken metaphysically, but as moments that can come to be registered as phenomena, and some eide may arise as only for a consciousness that articulates certain distinctions and not others” (1974, p. 75). In other words, what something *is* psychologically is culturally constituted and may be essentially limited to the human life in one or more cultures. A culture-bound psychological phenomenon is unimaginable, inconceivable, and impossible in other cultural contexts, for it is incompossible with the communal lifeworld and institutions of other cultures. Therefore, knowledge of culture-bound psychological structures requires comparative understanding and knowledge of cultures.

For instance, the "mental disorder" *bulimia nervosa* was first observed in the Western world in the last half of the 20th century. Beyond behavioral earmarks of binging and purging, essential to this disorder is a persistent concern about female bodily appearance including the desire to be thin. Although examples of binging and purging behaviors have been found in other cultures and historical periods, they have a different meaning, consistent with contrasting cultural values and structures, such as social status and pleasure – hedonistic privilege. Prior to the introduction of Western television on the island of Fiji, bulimia nervosa was nonexistent. Fijian culture’s indigenous values of beauty did not include female thinness, which is unimaginable within that
culture’s intentionality of desire during that time in history. With the introduction of television, incidents of bulimia emerged and increased as youth began to live a new cultural ideal of thinness (Becker, Burwell, Gilman, Herzog, & Hamburg, 2002). Bulimic binging and purging is essentially related to emergent cultural ideals of female beauty and is therefore a culture-bound phenomenon in that "what it is" involves certain meanings, values, and aims that are shared in some cultures but not others. To assert knowledge of the essential constitution of a culture is not to suggest that culture is static or unchangeable, or that cultures are necessarily separate, as we see in the case of 20th century European and Fijian cultures. From the standpoint of eidetic analysis, "culture" concerns essential meanings and the structures of composibility in collectively shared intentionalities, not merely a de facto collection of people with comparatively high behavioral frequencies.

The Community of Scientists: Broader Accountability and Scientific Progress

Zaner states that the grasping of the other as an alter ego can “have the import of a creative mutuality” because the thou is truly other and free (1973b, p. 209). In this respect, eidetic intuition is open to criticism, entails social collaboration and responsibility between the investigator, other scientists, and lay communities. Zaner appropriates Gabriel Marcel’s (1965) notions of availability, evocation and appeal to characterize this social horizon of human science research (Zaner, 1973b, 210). Lévinas (1961/1969) similarly insists that research ethics demand accountability to others, who are essentially beyond our knowledge and representations. Therefore, knowledge of the essence of psychological life is an appeal to others, who are free to exercise their own potential for presenting counter-examples, imaginatively varying examples, performing their own comparisons, and insightfully describing essences. Eidetic claims can be contested and remain tentative appeals to critical communication (Zaner, 1973b, p. 211). Zaner, in considering those who have moved beyond Husserl’s actual work (e.g., Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Schutz, Lévinas, Ricoeur, and Derrida) likens Husserl to a “mid-wife” of profound and lively children (1973b, p. 212).

Within the context of psychological research proper, eidetic knowledge requires correction and improvement, an inclusive and diasporic communal movement. Husserl calls into question any rigid absolutist a priori by emphasizing that, “every eidetic claim is subject to deception, modification, revision, and even denial – in short, continual criticism” (Husserl, 1911/1965, p. 216). Husserl, for whom evidence involves an “encounter” (1929/1969, p. 36), rejects every absolutism and holds that in the positive sciences, it is an error to interpret knowledge as adequate because the subject matter cannot be known completely (Husserl, 1929/1969, p. 277; Zaner, 1973a, p. 37; Mohanty, 1991, p. 265). Husserl asserts that even the most highly developed science “remains involved in relativities by its essence” (1929/1969, p. 278). We start out with naïve judging, reflect, return to living sources with continual openness to criticism and acceptance of accountability. This availability on the part of the psychological researcher, in its inclusive appeal, sharply contrasts with the deductive stance that in sovereignty asserts abstract axioms/models and inductively calculates empirical probabilities. Social responsibility, justice, and ethical relatedness are at the heart of the scientific objectivity of eidetic method. Cobb-Stevens (1972) asserts that Husserl’s appropriation of the scientific ideal of universal truth in infinity is ultimately an expression of “hope” (Cobb-Stevens, 1992, p. 275).
Eidetic Generality in Contrast to Empirical Generalization

Mainstream psychologists express reservations about the generalizability of qualitative research with naive reference to the relatively few number of participants who provide data in some studies. Phenomenology, apart from its utilization of a large number of examples and imaginative variations, involves a special kind of generality distinct from empirical generalization. Generalization, in scientific parlance, refers to the extension of facts through empirical populations. Phenomenology, even in analyzing the details of one individual experience, aims at the essence of which it is an example. Essence is by nature universal. Eidetic generalities therefore refer to qualitative kinds as such. Although eidetic qualitative knowledge claims and laws apply universally to empirical examples of the kind under investigation, they make no claims about the factual extent of that kind in empirical reality. How common or rare examples of an essence are requires quantitative empirical investigation of the kind. Knowledge of essence is fundamentally different from knowledge of empirical frequency or prevalence.

Higher levels of essential generality, with their greater scope than lower levels, are not to be confused with empirical, quantitative scope, for they concern the extent, the range-restriction, of kinds in comparison to more qualitatively inclusive kinds (Husserl, 1948/1973). The individual example of a phenomenon, as a limit point at the lowest level, admits of a certain (the most restricted scope of) essential generality, for we can imagine various individuals that are exactly the same--independent individuals that are completely alike. Husserl calls this a concretum and points out that because two (and an infinite number of) completely alike individuals are imaginable, the concretum itself has an essence, manifests a kind, a concrete or specific universal which extends beyond the individual to all like it, whether any actually exist in empirical reality or not. Husserl puts it: “This universal, born of the repetition of like independent objects is the lowest generality […]” (Husserl, 1948/1973, p. 335). Because psychologists are not usually interested in singular examples of a matter under investigation, research requires study of different individuals in order to achieve higher levels of generality. Thus there are limits to and gradations in levels of qualitative generality, which do not refer to empirical scope or extent but to other kinds and other levels of generality. Each eidos has universal extension through its empirical and imaginable exemplifications and limited scope in comparison with other eide and more general eide.

As we have seen, each eidetic analysis is conducted within a determinate scope that restricts the examples and thereby limits the qualitative generality of eidetic claims. When we elaborated the essence of the psychic as such and distinguished it from the formal and the physical, our scope of analysis was at a very high level of generality – the characteristics of all psychological phenomena. Eidetic knowledge, nevertheless universal, can reach low levels of generality with more restricted, local, context-bound scopes of qualitative compass. Less general, more specific essences require investigations under the titles of the full variety of psychological subject matters. Because psychological phenomena are essentially context bound and involve multiple strata and dependencies, phenomena under one title can often be fruitfully differentiated according to lower-level, context-bound essences. For instance, it is possible to analyze "hallucination" and to make eidetic claims that cover all hallucinations, but these statements may be less important for psychology than investigations at lower levels of qualitative generality that focus, with more
restricted scope, on alcohol-induced hallucination, paranoid schizophrenic hallucination, and hallucination in the context of religious ritual which admit of qualitatively different eidetic structures. Similarly, in the "the psychology of moral reasoning", essentially different typical structures are dependent on various developmental levels. Social psychology offers eidetic insight into "leadership" that concerns the broadest scope of all examples of leadership and also knowledge of less general styles of leadership (e.g., autocratic, consultative). Detailed knowledge of qualitative kinds is important in every subfield of psychology from learning to cognition, perception, abnormal and developmental. It is characteristic of other human sciences also to investigate such mid-level, context-bound general structures, as Durkheim (1897) does in distinguishing egoistic, altruistic, anomic, and fatalistic kinds of suicide. Again, the empirical prevalence of such kinds is another kind of knowledge that requires other methods.

Various levels of generality may be relevant to the psychologist, depending on the research interest, which may be determined by theoretical or practical aims. For instance, in The Divided Self, Laing (1960) presents an analysis of schizophrenia that is essentially limited. He claims to elaborate only one (among others) paths to, style of, structure of, "type" of schizophrenia. He presumes there are other types, which he does not elaborate and examples of schizophrenia that do not manifest the eidetic structures he delineates. Laing elaborates the essence of this particular way of becoming schizophrenic on the basis of many examples and their imaginative variations, including ones he finds in the clinic, in the psychological literature, in fictional literature, and in film. His analysis applies universally, that is, to all schizophrenics of this type, irrespective of how frequently such examples are manifest in the empirical population of schizophrenics. Eidetic intuition and analysis produces eidetically limited and yet universal generality, which is not to be confused with empirical or quantitatively extended generalization.

**Relations of the Eidetic and the Empirical**

Husserl’s reference to the intuition of essences as "pure" concerns its freedom from all positing of actuality. However, the discerning thinker recognizes that the essence of actuality itself can be grasped, that is, that one can limit the scope of imaginable variations to the realm of real human beings, to what is actually possible. Husserl writes, “If we vary freely but secretly stipulate that the variants must be optional tones in the world, tones heard or able to be heard by human beings on earth, then we have indeed something universal or an eidos, but one related to our actually actual world and restricted to this all-inclusive fact” (Husserl, 1925/1973, p. 55, parentheses mine). Cobb-Stevens (1992) points out that, unlike many contemporary philosophers, Husserl does not extend the method of free variation to improbable scenarios in possible worlds.

Husserl distinguishes "pure" essences, which may serve specifically philosophical purposes, from such *impure eide* as are relevant for psychology, which concerns actual human beings in this world and therefore methodically restricts its focus and scope to what is possible and essential to human beings as empirical realities (Husserl, 1948/1973, p. 374). Hence, although phenomenological psychology is an eidetic discipline and strictly speaking makes no assertions about quantitative empirical extensiveness, its knowledge of essence deliberately focuses on, restricts itself to the structural possibilities of actual human life. Though this discipline is impurely eidetic, it is not empirical. Psychology imaginatively varies examples of psychological
life through potentially infinite variations in order to grasp the essential structural possibilities of humans as actually they exist in the real world.

Zaner (1973a) complains that Husserl’s rigid dichotomy between the eidetic and the empirical is not justified. However, Husserl himself acknowledges an intimate connection of eidetic analysis to empirical reality: “The experienced world is granted to us as the universal permanent ground of being and as the universal field of all our activities. As the firmest and most universal of all our habitualities, the world is valid and remains valid in its actual validity for us, no matter what interests we may pursue; like all interests, those involving eidetic cognition are also related to it” (1948/1973, p. 350; also in 1925/1977, p. 55). Husserl speaks of a “bond of being” between essence and facticity and insists, “[...] every fact and every eidos remains related to the factual world, belonging to this world [...]” (Husserl, 1925/1977, p. 55; 1948/1973, p. 351). It is possible to methodically put this “bond of being” out of play, to achieve perfect purity as does phenomenological philosophy: “Then we find ourselves, so to speak, in a pure world of the imagination, a world of absolutely pure possibility” (Husserl, 1925/1977, p. 55; 1948/1973, p. 351). Such knowing of pure eidos is also practiced in geometry, for instance in the idealization of the exact essence of "circle", which cannot appear intuitively in empirical reality, and in formulating the Pythagorean theorem. All essences, whether pure or empirically restricted, hold for all individual examples (if there are any!) in the empirical world. For good reasons, the psychological researcher seeks morphological knowledge restricted in its extension to actual human life and therefore psychological ideation (theory) deliberately ties itself to empirical reality. Merleau-Ponty says, “The eidetic method is the method of a phenomenological positivism which bases the possible on the real” (1962, XVI-XVII). Husserl, with his profoundly expanded notion of objectivity, says: “If by "positivism" we are to mean the absolutely unbiased grounding of all science on what is "positive", i.e., what can be primordially apprehended, then it is we who are the genuine positivists” (Husserl, 1913/1982, pp. 39-40, italics mine).

Phenomenological, eidetic psychology is an indispensable methodological and conceptual foundation for empirical psychological investigations, just as mathematics has been for physics (Husserl, 1913/1982). For instance, a psychologist investigating the prevalence of "child abuse" in various populations, in order to perform valid measurement, requires guidance by knowledge of what child abuse is, that is, by an essential understanding of the meaning(s) of child abuse that covers all individual examples. Similarly, a psychologist investigating "intelligence" in school age children or the neurological or genetic substrate of adult intelligence must have a sound qualitative understanding of what intelligence is. Historically psychology has skipped over this necessary descriptive, qualitative stage, for instance when it conceptualized intelligence only by means of empirical measurement, assuming that intelligence is equivalent to the IQ without having conducted critical investigation of qualitatively different examples of intelligence. Recently psychologists have gained the essential insight that there are various kinds of intelligence, including the social-emotional and practical in addition to the cognitive. Colaizzi’s (1967) phenomenological replication of a classic learning experiment concludes that the method of paired associates, which involves cued verbalization of previously presented nonsense syllables, is not an example of learning in that participants simply perform previously acquired memorization strategies in this experimental task, and therefore experimenters were not studying examples of learning. The genuineness and qualitative generality of quantitative-empirical
psychology fundamentally rests on critically established eidetic psychological science. Without eidetic knowledge, empirical psychologists literally do not know what they are studying.

The lack of development and systematic employment of eidetic methodology, based on rich, full, and diverse concrete examples of psychological phenomena, has held psychology back from the rigorous clarification of its basic scientific concepts. Husserl says, “[…] it is the fundamental error of modern psychology, preventing it from being psychology in the true, full scientific sense, that it has not recognized and developed this phenomenological method” (Husserl, 1913/1982, p. 189). The eidetic method, which phenomenology provides psychology, is necessary for its scientificity. According to Husserl, “[…] the spell of the naturalistic point of view, to which all of us are at the outset subject […] has blocked the road to a great science unparalleled in fecundity […]” (1913/1982, p. 110). This spell makes it difficult to see essences “or rather, since in fact we do, so to speak, constantly see them, for us to let them have the peculiar value which is theirs instead of absurdly naturalizing them. Intuiting essences conceals no more difficulties or "mystical" secrets than does perception” (Husserl, 1911/1965, p. 110).

Conclusions

Far from being a dogmatic over-reach of knowledge, eidetic analysis involves a fresh, open attitude that is evidence-based, methodical, and self-critical. By beginning with systematically collected examples and varying them imaginatively, psychological conceptualization can be carefully shaped and can faithfully reflect the data, with no prior norms or demands placed on its insights, which follow from an encounter with concrete realities. Far from deriving intelligibility from a realm outside of existence and claiming an apodictic and eternal truth, eidetic analysis engages with the complexities and ambiguities of our pre-conceptually familiar yet intellectually obscure existence. The uncertainties of our knowledge are gradually overcome by grounded and extended intuitive contact with and thinking about psychological subject matters. When distinct concepts are finally formed and articulated through this rigorous encounter, they are asserted only within the limits of their achievement, which calls for tentativeness and humility given the possibilities of error and inadequacy at every step: the collection of examples, the extent and restriction of imaginative variations, the insightful grasping of eidetic law, and the discourse in which insights are communicated (Mohanty, 1991).

Psychological reality, by its very essence, can be known only partially and imperfectly. Therefore eidetic methods must be self-critical and resist final conclusions. Because concepts in psychology are necessarily inexact, they never achieve the formal perfection of mathematics or the exactitude of geometry. Psychological knowledge can always be improved. The essential characteristics of mental life – its change through time, its context boundedness, its inexhaustibility, its openness to possibility, and its transcendence (non-manipulability) – require humility, accountability, and collaborative accommodation on the part of scientists. The phenomenological notion of "essence" is anything but idealistic, for essential structures are restricted to the possibilities of actual psychological life; they are intuitively grasped in and must accept counter-evidence in the real world and revise propositions accordingly. The very procedure of eidetic analysis is designed to rigorously move beyond preconceptual familiarity, preliminary concepts, and empty assertions by engaging continually considering all concrete examples of the subject matter that are relevant to the adopted scope of investigation. This form
of ideation draws conclusions from the real rather than by imposing any pre-established intellectual order.

We have stressed that the intuition of essences, eidetic analysis, is corrigible, is accountable, and involves social responsibility. Critical dialog has its rational basis, on the part of both researcher and critic, in intuitions of the matters under investigation. The rational principles and methodical procedures of eidetic analysis scientifically ground and guide social scientific processes of agreement, disagreement, criticism, and corrective revision of knowledge, whether enacted individually, dialogically, or collectively. Whether an investigation proceeds alone, interpersonally or with a group, the truth of its knowledge claims rests on the objective evidence brought forth by its initial exemplifications, free imaginative variations, and identification of invariants through essential insight. Whether employing our knowledge in the contexts of practice or seeking to improve our knowledge in research, we must remain perpetual beginners, continually returning to concrete intuition as a wellspring of infinite encounter.

References


