

THINGS OF HEAVEN AND EARTH: PHENOMENOLOGY,
MARKETING, AND CONSUMER RESEARCH

Geraldine Fennell, Consultant

Abstract

Most students and users of consumer research are likely to be interested in learning about the world as individual consumers perceive it. Accordingly, a special session was organized to introduce consumer researchers to the largely neglected domain of phenomenological psychology. This paper discusses some respects in which phenomenological interests and method may help to address aspects of marketing practice which up to now have received less than their due attention within the dominant natural scientific tradition. Topics for a continuing dialog with phenomenological psychology are also discussed.

Phenomenal Experience

HORATIO O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!
HAMLET And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.
There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

Hamlet, Act I, Scene 1

The chapter headings in texts on consumer behavior attest to the broad range of topics that authors address but do not routinely include phenomenal experience. The phenomenal experience of consumers is potentially of interest to all of the diverse users of consumer research whether in the context of business or nonprofit organizations, social cause advocacy, or agencies of government. While our reasons may vary widely, many of us who are students of consumer behavior are interested in effecting real-world change in the hope of making things better for individual people. The absence of phenomenal experience as a focus of explicit treatment within the discipline is not readily explained with reference to actual or likely client interests. Its absence becomes understandable only in light of the influence of the natural scientific tradition which explicitly favors the perspective of the observer over that of the observed. Accordingly, the present session has been organized in the belief that consumer researchers would wish to explore a scholarly tradition that has challenged natural science on the issue of perspective namely, phenomenology. The session is intended as an introduction to the history, conceptualization, and methods of phenomenological psychology. The request to our panelists (Churchill and Wertz 1984, Mruk 1984, Myers 1984, Wertz and Greenhut 1984) was to introduce phenomenological psychology to an audience of consumer researchers, sophisticated in all else. There was too little time for the panelists to attempt to become familiar with the literatures of consumer behavior and marketing or, indeed, with the character of real-world marketing assignments. It was suggested to them that the audience and subsequently the reader would, in any event, prefer to learn, at first hand, about phenomenological traditions, conceptualizations, and research approaches. There will be conferences and other opportunities, later, in which our experiences as phenomenologists, consumer researchers, and marketers may be mutually enriching.

At the outset, I should clarify that I claim no expertise in phenomenology i.e., what I have called "big p" phenomenology (Fennell 1984), even though, as a marketing practitioner, I have been doing (small p) phenomenological research all my professional life. It is my hope that when the traditions of phenomenological research have be-

come integrated into our texts, literature, and degree programs that future consumer researchers will not need to make the "big p/small p" distinction. Today's program is one step toward that goal.

The patent reasonableness of studying phenomenal experience as a topic in its own right and of exploring the scholarly grounding in phenomenology for such study speaks for itself. My purpose here is not to belabor that general point but to discuss some specific issues regarding which I am hopeful that phenomenological psychology may be helpful and, perhaps, uniquely availing. My plan for this paper is first to describe some respects in which the research interests of marketing practitioners are poorly served by the currently influential natural scientific paradigm and regarding which phenomenological thought may be especially helpful. I then consider features of current marketing practice that may court phenomenological displeasure. Finally, I describe a research project to which the viewpoints of natural science, phenomenology, marketing practice, and variants may contribute.

Marketing and Natural Science

Activities that are essential to implementing marketing's assignment lack a conceptual foundation in the traditions of mainstream psychology. In contrast, within phenomenology, we find discussion and conceptualization that serve as a context for some of these activities and give marketing practitioners hope that our concerns will be heard by minds that are conceptually prepared.

The practitioner's activities in question are those that implement the distinction between marketing and selling as that distinction is articulated in the marketing concept: Don't sell what you happen to make; make what the customer wants to buy. Marketing, thus contrasted with selling, is the means by which user wants are communicated to producers. "Make what the customer wants to buy" entails accepting influence from one's prospects and, in the research context, implies a relationship between researcher and respondent, or experimenter and subject, that is not easily accommodated within the tradition of mainstream psychology. It demands, in fact, that a goal of research is to stand in the respondent's shoes and appreciate real-world influences from that perspective.

In a competitive environment, a marketing orientation is the counsel of prudence. Without it, you may spend your resources inefficiently in attempting to bring people around to your way of thinking i.e., in trying to make them buy what you "happen" to have made. Meanwhile, your marketing-oriented competitors, operating on the assumption that people are effort minimizers, have first found out what your prospects are looking for and are in a position to plan efficiently to tap into an ongoing system that moves the goods and comes back for more. The marketing concept bids marketers see to it that what is produced is what people want to buy, an assignment that requires marketers to study want-occurrence and satisfaction in its everyday manifestation. By understanding the conditions that give rise to wants, the marketer hopes to participate in want-satisfaction.

Where do marketing practitioners turn for help in the assignment? What methods or models are available? Training in mainstream psychology offers little guidance and

the marketing literature is silent. Finding no ready-made answers, marketing practitioners have developed a two (or more) phase, qualitative-quantitative research approach to describe heterogeneous demand within a market as defined and to assess the current state of want-satisfaction. Mruk's (1984) "integrated description," which grows out of a phenomenological orientation, is strikingly similar in general outline and purpose to the approach that marketing practitioners have devised. In contrast, the corresponding activities of marketing practice lack a conceptual foundation in the currently influential natural scientific tradition and are not perceived to be of systematic interest by marketing scholars. In consequence, three distinct kinds of development have not appeared: (1) Methodological research to improve qualitative technique, (2) Cumulative description of our subject matter, and (3) Basic research directed to explaining endogenous puzzles that description of our subject matter would, inevitably, lay bare. Before returning to discuss these points below, let me first consider an underlying paradox.

The marketing concept embodies the wisdom of humanity's age-old practice of harnessing energy sources found in nature, a practice whose procedures are refined and articulated in what we know as scientific method. The procedures of scientific method have proven their worth in the physical realm. Their unexamined transference to the study of human beings loses sight of their purpose in the physical domain which is to help discover how systems operate in their natural state.¹ What characterizes the use of human energy in the natural state? In part, it is the experienced sense that things should be different, and the use of thought and/or action to bring about change. Personal and environmental forces jointly establish conditions that direct the allocation of human energy, giving rise to wants and the expenditure of effort in want-satisfaction. The allocation of human energy occurs in a variety of circumstances which vary, among others, along a dimension of automaticity-creativity and which include occasions when individuals' conscious experience of the world affects the way they use the resources at their command. Even if we knew all there is to know about the objective conditions that affect the allocation of human energies we could not directly predict behavior from this information alone without also knowing, among other information, the extent to which individual human beings experience the objectively described conditions. Very simply, experiencing the world is part of the natural state of human beings. What is experienced -- sensed, felt, believed, understood, desired, foreseen -- matters in the allocation of human energies. Accordingly, the allocation of human energy in its natural state requires a method of study that is not foreclosed from attempting to assume the subject's perspective and study phenomenal experience. There is no way that marketers may address their assignment, properly understood, without forsaking the observer's perspective and seeking to adopt that of prospective users.

In sum, on one hand, the marketing practitioner's assignment is reminiscent of the classic question of natural science: What do I need to know to harness this source of energy? On the other hand, the failure correctly to distinguish spirit from letter has denied behavioral science access to the genius of scientific method in identifying a system's essential character in its natural state. The upshot is that marketing practitioners have been left to their own devices in pursuing an assignment that should be unproblematic within the scientific tradition.

Do Philosophies Matter?

It is undoubtedly true that psychologists working within the mainstream natural scientific tradition implicitly and even explicitly take account of aspects of their subjects' phenomenal world. From the standpoint of marke-

ting research, in two respects the practice is not as helpful as it might be: (1) It is often relegated to pilot work and occurs without adequate recognition and elaboration at the conceptual level and (2) It rarely addresses the antecedents of goal selection but, typically, focuses on aspects of behavior that are downstream from the events that direct the individual's allocation of resources. This motivational issue is one I have discussed elsewhere (Fennell 1980, 1982) and shall touch on, only briefly, later in the present paper.

Implications for Marketing

Consider how different might have been the course of development of marketing scholarship and practice, if a phenomenological perspective had been dominant in the early days of the marketing concept's articulation. Phenomenologically oriented marketers would have suggested describing the consumer's perspective without theoretical presuppositions. Instead, in the 1950s and 1960s, we had "motivation research" in which researchers, with an avowed commitment to Freudian theorizing, used individual and group interviews to investigate consumer wants. After a few years, marketing practitioners learnt for themselves the phenomenological counsel against theoretical presuppositions. Discarding the theoretical overlay of Freudianism, they retained and still use today the informal individual or group interview, now called "qualitative" or "focused group" research or, more casually, "focus groups."

The fact that marketing practitioners were able to discriminate between what was and was not useful in "motivation research," is creditable but does not lead to the conclusion that conceptual argument for theory-free description of the phenomenal domain is thus shown to be redundant. Indeed, its value in this instance, goes even beyond sparing practitioners the time lost in learning the lesson for themselves. With phenomenological thinking informing the orientation of marketing scholars and practitioners alike, qualitative research and its role in the practitioner's task of want-identification would have been perceived as an integral part of the marketing enterprise. Scholars would have perceived in it a meaningful activity within their conception of science and hence worthy of their theoretical and research attention. Practitioners and, ultimately, consumers would inevitably benefit from the progressive procedural refinement that would accompany a growing understanding of our subject matter and of diverse research objectives. More generally, the marketing discipline would have benefitted from a shared understanding and common purpose between marketing academics and practitioners.

Reality has been otherwise. As Calder (1977 p. 353) noted, "The marketing literature has been of little help to qualitative marketing researchers, offering occasional descriptions of applications . . . and expositions of techniques" but failing to present a general framework based on consideration of the fundamental nature of qualitative research. Calder addresses qualitative research as a phenomenon of commercial marketing research and reports, significantly, that, "For most marketers, qualitative research is defined by the absence of numerical measurement and statistical analysis." Clearly, marketing scholars have not seen in the ubiquitous qualitative research activities of marketing practice a manifestation of one of the scientist's basic tasks namely, description of the subject matter.

Considerable benefits would accrue to the presence of a phenomenological orientation among marketing scholars: (1) Phenomenological psychologists, doubtless, would have criticisms to offer of the way practitioners conduct individual qualitative and focused group research. Their criticisms would lead, in all likelihood, to research streams that rigorously examine the implications of vari-

ation in qualitative technique thus adding to basic knowledge and benefitting practice. (2) Phenomenologically oriented marketing scholars would be interested in substantive output of qualitative research for they, the practitioners, would be bent on describing the phenomena of interest e.g., the activities in conjunction with which people use goods/services. Our discipline would be engaged in developing a data base, in the public domain, descriptive of everyday activities and the phenomenal experience in which they are embedded: a) Marketing practitioners would be in a position to start their individual projects from a base of qualitatively rich description of the behavioral domain of interest. Collectively, we would be spared the horrendous duplication of resources that occurs in repetitively investigating basic orientations to doing the laundry, brushing one's teeth, treating a sore throat, feeding the dog. b) Better yet, we should find in our growing data base, patterns of similarity and difference calling for closer examination and explanation. In this way, our descriptive enterprise would generate its own agenda for explanatory research. (3) Our degree programs would have educated generations of prospective practitioners for whom the implications of the marketing concept would have been made explicit and who would have been exposed in the classroom not only to issues relating to hypothesis testing but to those involved in description as the research activity of prime importance to the practitioner. Information from the growing body of descriptive data would be part of their professional equipment as well as recollections of critical analyses of the data and alternative descriptive methods. (4) With the implications of the marketing concept clarified, discussions of marketing ethics could address issues appropriate to marketing as distinct from selling. For example, in the context of the ubiquitous marketplace and impersonal exchange, at what point, if any, should the marketer intervene to place restrictions on how individuals use their resources?

Accordingly, attention to phenomenal experience, and emphasis on presuppositionless description are directly useful to the marketer's task and help, indirectly, in making clear the implications of the marketing concept. So far from its being competitive with a flourishing natural scientific orientation, the presence of phenomenology in our intellectual traditions would be enriching, bringing us in closer touch with our material and the consumers whom we study, and providing a fund of empirically-generated puzzles for further study. Curiously, in light of their concern to be scientifically respectable, the disciplines of consumer behavior, marketing, and mainstream psychology alike may be faulted for neglecting their respective descriptive assignments. We lack in each field the ever-growing data bank which natural science envisages. Phenomenology's emphasis on description is welcome as a reminder that behavioral scientists have overlooked the painstaking description of subject matter that has occurred elsewhere within the natural scientific tradition without, however, the critical reflection that phenomenology contributes.

Perspectivity and Consumer Research

The selling orientation that still pervades so much of marketing thought and writing, some thirty years after the marketing concept was articulated, may have found a phenomenological climate less congenial than a natural scientific one. Not surprisingly, the failure to appreciate the essential nature of marketing as distinct from selling, in conjunction with the prevailing natural scientific tradition of basic psychology, has had repercussions in the field of consumer research.

In the literatures of marketing and consumer behavior alike, the task and context of selling have received an undue amount of scarce research and theoretical resour-

ces to the detriment of research and theorizing in marketing, properly understood. There is ample evidence, direct and indirect, that authors have in mind a dyadic image of buyer-seller rather than user-producer (e.g., Nord and Peter 1980 p. 38), or envision a buyer in a retail outlet (e.g., Belk 1975), or consider that the choice of seller-buyer dyad is merely "arbitrary" (Hunt 1983 p.13). Indeed, so blurred have the distinctions become in some quarters that, as illustrative of the nonmarketing (sic) perspective he urges consumer researchers to adopt, Olson (1981 p. 1x) asks for a theory of brand loyalty "from the perspective of consumers as effort minimizer." The particular terms used or images held in mind need not be significant, of course, but appear to have been as the field of consumer research developed. Indeed, Holbrook (1984) reports that papers submitted for publication risk reviewer displeasure when the context of use (e.g., dinner preparation activities) is in focus rather than the buying context (e.g., a shopping trip).

In economics, the term "consumer" (one who uses economic goods) contrasts with "producer" (one who grows agricultural products or manufactures raw materials into articles of use) and the term "consumers' goods" (which directly satisfy human wants or desires) contrasts with "producers' goods" (which satisfy wants only directly). Accordingly, we must look to quarters other than economics for the influences that have effectively linked "consumer," in the popular mind, to "buyer" rather than to "user."

With the advent of mass manufacturing and national advertising, new implications for society accrued to the division of labor and the user-producer transaction that it entails. In former years, producers had addressed user wants, face-to-face and in relative privacy. Now, we have remote exchange and the public and ubiquitous marketplace. The user-producer transaction has been broken down into its elements. Specifically, the tasks of ascertaining user wants, designing and making market offerings, announcing the availability of offerings, and effecting exchange, have become institutionalized as distinct business activities and professional specialities of which the public-at-large is differentially aware. Significantly, the two most visible of these elements are the ever-present, pervasive advertising of availability for sale and the actual displaying of items for sale in retail outlets. The implications of the division of labor today are vastly different by comparison with the days when many goods were brought into existence only upon a prospective user's particular request.

Simultaneously, the term "consumer" has changed its connotations. In common usage it appears that "consumer" no longer connotes, in the economist's sense, an individual who uses economic goods as contrasted with a producer who grows or manufactures goods. Instead, it conjures up a human being who is defined by activities having largely to do with the acquisition of goods/services mainly, that is, as one to whom sellers present advertising messages and displays of goods for sale. On this view, the consumer is an individual who is contrasted with salespersons rather than producers and, in a word, is thought of as buyer rather than user of market offerings.

Perhaps the layperson's sense of consumer as buyer was influential in the selection of "buyer" behavior for the title of early consumer behavioral texts. But one must suspect that the orientation of the natural scientific tradition in psychology, on which the texts drew freely, was equally, if not more, decisive. The idea of stimulus-response with emphasis on the scientist's perspective as manipulator of the environment and recorder of observable effects shares ground with the image of a seller-buyer dyad and its attendant emphasis on the seller's perspective and goods-to-be-sold. In contrast, the idea of an individual-in-the-world with emphasis on

the scientist as presuppositionless recorder of the phenomenal domain shares ground with the image of a user-producer dyad and its attendant emphasis on the user's perspective and goods-to-be-designed to bring about the user's desired states. There is a sense in which an experimenter has something to "sell" that is absent in the ideal of the presuppositionless stance of phenomenological description. Indeed, many procedures of scientific method are designed precisely to guard against experimenters "finding" what they look for when support is absent.

In this context, it is especially interesting to note that Wertz and Greenhut (1984), in graciously making their presentation relevant to our concerns, likewise made the "consumer-buyer" association. This start, inauspicious in the view of a marketing researcher, was guided in their work by a phenomenological orientation. The outcome is an account that is largely devoted to the use-context, not the buying context. To a practitioner's ear, Wertz and Greenhut's paper, in its description of the personal and environmental context that gave instrumental value to a crook lock, is evocative of the essential output of exploratory qualitative research at its very best. As Churchill and Wertz (1984) might say, perspectivity notwithstanding, the phenomenon was allowed to show itself. Similarly, Myers' (1984) descriptions of individuals' attachment to special possessions occur in a study that was undertaken with no thought of the concerns of marketing practice. Yet they are evocative of the phenomenal domain as it is sometimes captured and presented in advertising.

A distinction between buying and consuming is to be found in earlier marketing writing (e.g., Alderson 1957, Boyd and Levy 1963) and has recently been reintroduced along with the recommendation that consumer research be reoriented to consuming rather than buying (e.g., Belk 1984, Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). As I shall discuss in the next section, product consumption is not exactly the focus that is of primary interest in exploratory qualitative research,¹ a point that phenomenologists may appreciate.

Dialog with Phenomenology

Brackets and Models

In line with the marketing concept, marketing is the business, and societal, function that is charged with the task of guiding our productive endeavors to devise ever better responses to human wants. Accordingly, marketing

¹The terminology of Calder's (1977) three-way classification of focused group research is not being followed here. The practitioner's use of qualitative research to which I have reference in this paper is, approximately, a mix of Calder's exploratory and phenomenological types, except that: (1) The exploratory function of the research is not, in the context of the project in hand, to generate constructs i.e., abstractions from reality, but, to the contrary, to identify the real-world, physical and psychological elements that constitute the context for the behavior of interest; (2) The sociological emphasis in Calder's phenomenology is troubling in that it suggests that practitioners expect and, indeed, strive to find a common perspective in focused group research. Again, to the contrary, qualitative work is very often undertaken precisely to ascertain the heterogeneous orientations to a behavior of interest, which practitioners expect to find within a group of prospects. A group that is homogeneous on demographic, socio-economic, or other broad population descriptors, likely contains heterogeneous orientations in regard to a focal behavior. The groupings that ultimately are of interest, emerge from research and, indeed, their identification is one of the main objectives of research.

practitioners want to approach the task of want-identification and satisfaction as nearly as possible with clear eyes and a fresh, clean, slate. Phenomenologists are in accord. They caution us to study our subject in its own terms and to approach our topic without presuppositions. There is a special sense in which these counsels are relevant, and potentially helpful, to marketing practice.

In meeting our assignment to make what the customer wants to buy, marketing practitioners are aware of the danger that the existing array of goods/services may restrict the respondent's ability to communicate, and the researcher's to grasp, the user's wants. Accordingly, in the context of marketing, the phenomenological caution reaches to eschewing not only theoretical presuppositions but also those implicit in the current arrangements for want-satisfaction. The research methods of marketing practice reflect the practitioner's sensitivity to the danger. For example, exploratory qualitative research that is undertaken in the interest of maintaining or increasing one's share of toothpaste brand sales opens by stating the focal behavioral domain at the most general level that is relevant e.g., "Our topic for discussion today is personal hygiene routines." Information about respondents' awareness of, beliefs about, and reactions to specific brands of toothpaste is investigated only at the end of the interview, after the fullest possible exploration of the meanings of, feelings toward, beliefs and information about, and environmental contexts for, oral hygiene activities. Marketing practitioners do not, in fact, want to study the consumption of toothpaste, which is already an answer to the marketer's essential assignment. We shall want to hear further from phenomenological psychologists: How may we improve on the approaches we are currently using? What are the phenomenologists' specific suggestions to help us bracket the existing, largely arbitrary, array of products and brands as well as the consumer's, and our own, habits of everyday thought and action?

Each of two kinds of aids that a researcher might use to help in the task of want-identification may court phenomenological displeasure: (1) Some researchers start with items already in existence and, in thought or deed, methodically or otherwise, alone or with the help of colleagues, and/or consumers, change individual dimensions or characteristics of the item and then consider the result for possible usefulness. The technique comes in many forms and I mean, here, to suggest only its general nature. The existing item, even when its characteristics are deliberately varied, still rules as presupposition. (2) An alternative approach risks phenomenological displeasure on another count, since it would resort to the use of a model of sorts. In order to break out of the mindset that existing goods/services impose, the researcher may attempt to elicit accounts of the conditions that give rise to the behavior of interest. What are the conditions, personal and environmental, that performing the focal action (e.g., brushing teeth, feeding the dog) changes and puts to rest? There are a number of reasons, which I have discussed elsewhere (Fennell 1982), why some people may not be especially articulate in describing the conditions in their daily lives for which marketing is to tailor the goods/services that are offered for sale. In these circumstances, it is very useful for the researcher to have some idea of the kinds of conditions that may be present. Either alone, or with the help of colleagues, and/or consumers, the researcher may use a model of these motivating conditions to generate a host of mini-scenarios, concrete in their specification of personal and environmental elements that are potentially relevant to the focal action. Respondents may then be asked to indicate their sense of the scenarios' actual appropriateness to their own circumstances.

Let me put the matter another way. If phenomenology had been influential in the scholarly training of marketers in the 1950s, by now, phenomenological research would have been conducted and published on one or two hundred of the everyday activities, along with/instead of which people use goods and services. Humanity's store of knowledge would have been enriched not only in respect of the activities, taken individually, but also in regard to information of a more universal kind. Conceivably, information relevant to the very topic at issue here would be present in the research namely, the variety of conditions, within individuals over time and across individuals, that may give rise to the "same" focal action. Not only would variety of conditions be discernible in regard to individual activities but similar variegation may be discernible across activity. Turning to activity #201, what would phenomenological psychologists do as they prepare to study the new activity? Would -- could -- they erase the cumulative knowledge contained in the accounts of individual activity and not look for the possible presence of similar features in the personal and environmental conditions in which activity #201 is embedded? Would they want to put the knowledge on one side, denying themselves the fruit of their past labors?

If the circumstances I have described had really come to pass, as psychologists we should, of course, be in a position greatly different from any we have yet experienced. We should be in possession of a body of data systematically descriptive of our subject matter. The distinctive contribution of each of the aspects of the life-world e.g., affective familial relations, action and its consequences, organizing cognition, impinging aspects of the physical and social environments (Churchill and Wertz 1984), would be seen in a more inclusive context. Conceivably, the phenomenological caution against the use of models could be relaxed because the danger of taking the part for the whole would now be greatly reduced.

For the present, marketing practitioners sorely need appropriate models including a general model of action -- models, in fact, whose scope matches that of the life-world. Differentiated reminders of the life-world's "multifaceted wholeness" and "tremendous multi-dimensionality" (Churchill and Wertz 1984) are likely to serve as a helpful antidote to one's own pet part-views and those of influential others in the work environment. As marketers, collaborating with those who understand how goods and services may be fashioned, our assignment is to register and respond to all shadings of human wants, for the satisfaction of which people are ready to allocate resources. Most assuredly, within the bounds of law and ethics, it is not for us to act as gatekeepers. Given the realities of taking action in an organizational environment, the phenomenological counsel to put aside preconceptions may be best served by the availability and use of well-articulated, truly comprehensive models.

Quantification

Let me briefly discuss one other respect in which implementing the marketing concept may risk phenomenological censure. Yet, there is ground for believing that accommodation may be reached.

The body of phenomenological research on everyday activities to which I referred above would take the form, in the context of marketing's assignment, of quantification, within individuals over time, and across individuals, of verbal statements regarding sensations, feelings, beliefs, information, candidate actions/objects, expected, desired states -- all relating to a focal behavioral domain. Phenomenologists remind us that the life-world is intrinsically spatial and temporal, a point that marketing practitioners readily accept. However, for any one assign-

ment the practitioner is interested in a small region of the life-world of many individuals e.g., the personal and environmental context for the activity of feeding the dog in some geographical space during some period of time such as twelve months. Practitioners look to qualitative research to yield two types of information that we consider important namely, specific kinds of sensations, beliefs, feelings, and so on that are relevant to the focal activity -- the "ingredients" that Mruk (1984) refers to and, secondly, all such ingredients that are to be found in a universe of interest. Qualitative research cannot give us a third kind of information that is essential for our tasks namely, incidence in the universe of interest. Hence our use of quantification. There are indications in Mruk's (1984) paper that quantification is problematic for some phenomenologists. Yet, it would seem to be entirely congruent with phenomenological thought that an account of "feeding the dog," as a human activity, is incomplete if it does not reflect the full range of orientations and circumstances, actual and possible, that are relevant to the activity. Quantification adds information that is essential to strategic real-world action and is surely not without interest to the student of the human condition.

Marketing practitioners would raise another issue for dialog with phenomenological psychologists: Can phenomenological analysis be conducted only in the qualitative phase? Practitioners use verbal statements obtained from or suggested by the qualitative research to write questionnaire items for the quantitative phase, a practice that can only fall short of the phenomenological goal of "analysis of the phenomena themselves, not of the expressions that refer to them (Spiegelberg 1983)" (Churchill and Wertz 1984). As a basis for continuing dialog, Mruk's (1984) paper is of great value in building the bridge from both ends. He has already brought a phenomenological perspective to bear in approaching a task that is very similar to the marketer's task of want-identification and satisfaction and he clearly appreciates the importance of quantification. On a point of minor disagreement, marketing practitioners do not see the value of qualitative-quantitative description as being limited to new, emerging, and complex domains, in Mruk's (1984) sense. If one has not previously researched any particular human activity, it is new and, following completion of the research, it is seen as ambiguous, and multifaceted. Mruk's finding of heterogeneity in his universe of interest is no surprise to marketers who are well used to finding heterogeneity for the most mundane of activities.

A Proposal for Research

As a way of helping to bring into focus some issues that emerge from the present dialog between phenomenology and marketing practice, I suggest that we discuss and eventually seek funding for a project to investigate descriptive research along the following lines.

First, we select one focal activity e.g., learning to use a personal computer, attending live theatre, treating a sore throat, and a universe of interest e.g., some or all individuals who perform the focal activity in a certain geographic area and time period. We then formulate a research objective as it might be stated in a business or nonprofit context, directed to (1) Describing the current state of want-satisfaction as regards the focal activity and (2) Making recommendations for remedial action where unmet wants are identified. The research is to be carried out, separately, by phenomenological psychologists and marketing practitioners, and any others who wish to join in, on the understanding that each contribution is to be exemplary of a particular discipline or approach.

The following outputs are mandatory: A final report with recommendations and supporting data and analysis and, if

qualitative and quantitative phases are included, separate reports for each phase, and copies of the research instruments used in each. As part of the project, we shall ask some phenomenological psychologists, marketing practitioners, and other behavioral scientists to bring to bear their special training to comment on the method, findings, and action recommendations of each set of participants. Meanwhile, we shall have put the recommendations into effect with accompanying research appropriate to assessing change attributable to the recommendations.

Concluding Remarks

In the writings of phenomenological psychologists, marketing practitioners find scholarly discussion of issues that are directly relevant to our daily activities. We are happy to discover that the problems we confront as we seek to "make what the customer wants to buy" have been, or may readily be, considered within the phenomenologist's existing sphere of interest. Up to now, circumstances have compelled us to take our (small p) phenomenology into what has been, for us, uncharted waters. Having sparked the interest of some phenomenologists in our tasks, we look forward to continuing the dialog.

My reflections, in this paper, on the potential contributions of phenomenological psychology to consumer research do less than justice in a number of respects. Among those of which I am aware are: (1) I have selected for comment only a few of the many substantive issues that phenomenology addresses, (2) My choice has been guided by issues that seem to be of particular relevance to marketing practice, thus neglecting the perspectives of other users of consumer research, (3) Most grave, perhaps, is that, in suggesting at the outset that our texts in consumer behavior should find room for a chapter devoted to phenomenal experience and the scholarly traditions of phenomenological psychology, I may have seemed to overlook the contributions of phenomenological psychologists in each of the domains currently included in our texts. Realism rather than lack of appreciation dictated my emphasis. Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) have already shown the pervasive relevance of an experiential perspective. Indeed, in the hands of phenomenological psychologists, the natural subdivisions of the field of consumer behavior may turn out to be different from those we have taken over from mainstream psychology. Refreshingly, phenomenological psychologists offer a truly distinctive perspective on our subject matter that can only enrich our thought and inform our research.

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