

Phenomenology of Management – Didactic Aspects

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A good didactic is the awareness of one’s own imperfections and unreachable ideals that involves us more.

[B.B.]

| **Abstract**

Purpose

The purpose of this article is to present the phenomenological method in the science of management and managers’ education.

| **Methodology**

The phenomenological method (“phenomenological lens” and “3i” formula) is used.

| **Findings**

The article presents the view that introducing the phenomenological method into managers’ education will increase their ethical level and efficiency. Phenomenological analysis shows that the phenomenological method, i.e. “phenomenological lens” and “3i” formula, have high educational usefulness, and, moreover, allow creation of a coherent philosophy for the education of managers.

| Originality

Phenomenology is an important perspective of research in the science of management and didactic process.

Key words: phenomenology of management, phenomenological praxeology, phenomenological lens, “3i” formula

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| Introduction

The beginning of the twenty-first century has revealed weaknesses in business ethics and corporate social responsibility (CSR) in organizations. Business ethics strives to prevent negative phenomena in the economic sphere. However, the recent serious moral crises in the business world show that such ethics have not lived up to expectations. Reducing business ethics only to codes of ethics and ethics programs has proved to be a far-reaching simplification. Some academics have declared the complete failure of business ethics itself. The question of ethics in business is less dependent on the number of codes of ethics and more on the perception of their role by entrepreneurs and managers. Often, business ethics is treated instrumentally and used as a kind of curtain for unfair practices.

An important issue is the process of managerial education, which unfortunately is still based on instrumental rationality. Managerial education needs a shift from training a “one-dimensional man” model to introducing a personalistic-phenomenological model (Bombała 2002). Phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view. It can play an important part in creating the new paradigm of managerial education. The phenomenological method has found wide application in social sciences, particularly in psychology and pedagogy. That method has also been tried to be introduced in management studies. As early as 1982, P. Sanders stated that phenomenology was a *new star on the* [organizational] *research horizon* (Sanders 1982: 353). However, phenomenology has not gained any appreciation in management science and management education.

My vision of phenomenology in management concentrates on the art of leadership as the core of management. That issue is the major concern of my book “Fenomenologia zarządzania. Przywództwo” (Phenomenology of the management. Leadership) (Bombała 2010). In this article, I present the educational usefulness of the phenomenological method, i.e. I seek the essence (*eidos*) of “learning-to” in the context of the personal development of students. I present the view that introducing phenomenological methods (“phenomenological lens” and “3i” formula) into managers’ education will increase their ethical level and efficiency. In my phenomenology (phenome-

nological praxeology), the main instrument (method) is a “phenomenological lens.” It focuses on what is ontological and what is ontic, existential and existent in Heidegger’s sense. The second method of the “3i” formula consists of three terms: interpretation, inspiration, and illumination. Interpretation is a specific variant of the hermeneutic method; inspiration is a variation of the phenomenological method; and illumination is a variation of the heuristic method.

| **Phenomenology of “learning-to” – to be an aficionado**

A phenomenological analysis of everyday life from the perspective of someone who experiences it is most useful in empowering workers and students. Carl Rogers says that today we are dealing with a completely new situation in communication and education. The aim of education is to facilitate change and learning. More and more, we realize that no knowledge is stable and that only the process of seeking knowledge gives a basis for safety. This change, relying on the process rather than static knowledge in the search for meaning, has become the foundation of education in the modern world (Rogers 1983: 104).

This type of analysis is called metacognition, which is often referred to as “thinking about thinking” and helps students in learning. Metacognition focuses on self-reflection. Reflective thinking allows students (employees) to understand the undertaken actions and to transform them into knowledge and effective patterns of action. The most commonly used technique is “learning by doing” and “experimental learning.” By knowing how to learn and knowing which strategies are used best, students acquire valuable skills that distinguish “student experts” from the “beginner students” (Ridley et al. 1992: 293–306).

However, how to implement this goal? Rogers explains that the initiation of such a science is based not only on teaching leadership skills, scientific knowledge, program planning, use of audio-video equipment, a strict program of teaching, and lectures or masses of books (although each of them can be used as an important resource). Such learning is based on certain qualities relating to the attitude that occurs in the personal relationship between the helper and learner (Rogers 1983: 105–106). The authenticity of the “helper” is the first of these qualities relating to the attitudes that facilitate learning. This quality is the foundation of truthfulness and credibility of the teacher. It happens when a person enters into a relationship with learners without inserting a mask. This means that the feelings that one experiences are authentic and that one can nourish them, be them, and be able to communicate them – this means that oneself is authentic. As a result, the helper is able to lead to an authentic encounter with the learner.

The second characteristic is the attitude of valuing quality, acceptance and trust, which also proves to be highly effective in facilitating the learning process. Rogers avoids depreciating students’ feelings and views and focuses on concern for the student, not on possessive protectiveness. It is an acceptance of another person, who after all is a separate person, with self-esteem. This forms the basis of trust and belief that the other person is somehow completely reliable. There is no

attitude of fear or hesitation in accepting the student or when approaching a new problem, and there is acceptance of satisfaction with the completed tasks.

Regarding the third quality, Rogers states that it is creating a climate for self-initiation. It is clear from experience that creating such a climate requires empathic understanding. When the teacher possesses the ability to understand the student and his internal reaction, and when he or she understands the complicated problem of the educational process, the probability of the success of this process is increased. This kind of understanding is different than the usual critical understanding, which follows the pattern: *I know what is wrong with you.*” But when there is sensitive understanding (i.e. empathy), the reaction occurs in the learner in a sense, according to the formula: *Finally someone understands how I feel and seems to have no desire to analyze me or judge me. Now I can flourish and grow and I can learn.* It is an attitude “to become the other” viewing the world through his eyes.

This approach triggers enormous emotional and intellectual potential. Rogers summarized his concept of the ten principles of learning (Rogers 1969: 114):

1. Each person has natural learning opportunities.
2. Significant progress in learning takes place when the issue is seen as valuable in the context of the goals that a person wants to achieve.
3. Learning, which requires changes in the perception of oneself and poses a threat, raises resistance.
4. Information threatening one’s own ego is more easily assimilated if the threat is minimal.
5. When the threat to one’s own ego is small, learning can go further.
6. Much meaningful knowledge is acquired by doing.
7. Learning takes place efficiently when the student participates responsibly in the learning process.
8. Self-initiated learning, which embraces the whole person, feelings and intellect, is the most persistent and pervasive.
9. Independence, creativity and independence are easier when self-criticism and self-esteem are essential and evaluation by others is of secondary importance.
10. The most useful knowledge is the result of exploring the learning process, opening up to experience and engaging oneself in the process of change.

Rogers’ method of communication and learning offers outstanding practicality. In practice, the teaching is important to use three simple rules that are subject to agreement between the “different worlds.” They are:

1. Coherence between the internal states and external behaviour of the sender.
2. An unconditionally positive attitude, acceptance of which does not depend on the behaviour of the caller.
3. Complete empathy and understanding and a temporary suspension of judgments.

Establishing relationships in phenomenological terms means to recognize and emphasize the identity of another person. Like Rogers, this issue was approached by Clark Moustakas. He applied an interesting scheme to investigate an excellent relationship (Moustakas 2001: 53):

1. Describe briefly the nature of the relationship.
2. Choose one episode, event, or situation in which your own sense of being recognized, accepted and appreciated, was highlighted by someone.
3. Describe the characteristics of a person who aroused in you self-esteem and self-confidence and then sketch a comprehensive portrait of the person's relationship with you.
4. Explain this portrait and attach to it everything that is important to expand this description, if necessary.

As a result of this scheme to analyze the relationship between the teacher and the pupil, Moustakas discovered the profile of an "ideal" teacher. Such a teacher recognizes the student as a unique being, believes in him or her and gives a feeling that is special, distinct and incomparable with others. The teacher communicates with the pupil in a direct and honest language, creates an atmosphere of freedom, openness, trust, responsibility and reveals his or her own thoughts and feelings. Entering the world of the student to understand, affirm, encourage and create space for his or her development suggests a certain point of view, when asked to do so. The teacher affirms interests, needs and desires and adapts easily to the mood of the student, participates in activities and, when necessary, takes action to stir creative activity (Moustakas 2001: 54–55).

For Max Scheler, the wider context of the problem shows love and hate as the primary acts in relation to the knowledge of an object. A person reacts emotionally with the primary feelings toward the object of cognition, i.e. love and hate (Scheler 1986: 228–318). Only on this basis is true knowledge possible. Thus, Scheler's statement that the *aficionado* is always the forerunner of the researcher, and deserves special attention. This statement contains a deeper meaning, because it is not purely sensual feelings, but rather the emotional spiritual experience of which the present is qualitatively equivalent to the ideal value. Only then can it be captured clearly and directly. In turn, acts of love and hate are the prerequisite and foundation of all other acts of emotion, on the basis of which values are captured (Scheler 1987: 272–275). In the foundation of phenomenology of "learning-to", you can assume Scheler's act of love as the cause and condition of all knowledge, because love always raises cognition and volition, the mother of the spirit and the intellect.

| Phenomenology of "learning-to" as the "3i" formula

As previously stated, In my phenomenology of management (phenomenological praxeology), the main instrument (method) is a "phenomenological lens." It focuses on what is ontological and what is ontic, existential and existent in Heidegger's sense (Heidegger 2008: 28). It allows for more accurate analysis of the object, both from the philosophical (ontological) and scientific

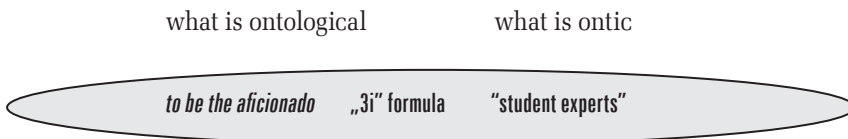
(ontic) perspectives. Such a lens is the key concept of the phenomenology of management and, at the same time, a crucial instrument in the diagnosis and development of an organization. As a meta-method it gives a view of the object from different perspectives and acts as a “binder” linking diverse factors affecting this object (Bombała 2010: 29).

Figure 1 | Diagnostic and prognostic (design) function of the phenomenological lens



In the teaching process and diagnosis of the organization, I also use the second method of the “3i” formula (Bombała 2008: 383). This formula consists of three terms/metaphors: interpretation, inspiration, illumination (see Figure 1). Interpretation is a specific variant of the hermeneutic method and is used in a critical analysis of the literature to increase student knowledge. Inspiration, which is a variation of the phenomenological method, through an in-depth case study is used to define the problems (the search of their essence) and also to obtain diagnostic skills. Illumination (creativity), a variation of the heuristic method of phenomenological deconstruction, helps in creative design, which serves to strengthen self-confidence and build competence in “student experts” (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 | Phenomenology of “learning-to” in the phenomenological lens



The teaching process is divided into two stages: cognitive and creative. The first step is to explore existing knowledge, while the second step triggers the student’s creative potential. The method that allows the combination of both creative and creating reality is the “3i” formula. It can be used to develop creativity not only for students but also workers in the process of empowerment. The development process will be conducted in this case from interpretation and inspiration to illumination:

- Interpretation is the analysis of different schools, concepts, methods and management techniques;
- Inspiration is a study of cases (can also inspire a work of arts, nature);
- Illumination is the search for his/her own vision of the organization using the methods of creative thinking (metacognition and heuristic techniques).

The highest efficiency of the educational process is obtained not by classic lecture, but with the independence and empowerment of students. This is achieved not only by persuading them to absorb the current theory, but also by scientific creativity. It is empowering them to explore and make mistakes, but also to create new things. Specular reflection of the teaching “3i” formula is itself a “3i” formula in the diagnosis and improvement of the organization. In this case, it describes three ways to create and develop the organization:

1. Illumination (revelation) describes the creation and development of an autonomous vision of the organization by its founder (e.g., Thomas Bata or Ricardo Semler’s vision of company).
2. Inspiration is the process of creating businesses under the influence of certain ideas, beliefs, and patterns (such as servant leadership that has a religious inspiration).
3. Interpretation reflects the most common pattern of establishment and development organization, which is based on the dominant and fashionable theories.

Reflection on academic education allows one to discover a deeper dimension. Phenomenological analysis reveals that the essence of the activity (eidos) of a university teacher is to help in revealing the “horizons” of individuals as persons, not their fulfilment. This support can and should contain certain patterns of achieving it. So it follows the development (moral flight), not degradation of personal relationships inside and relationships with others. The pattern of “filling” one’s horizon by the student and the manager, as with every human being, is based on the effort to *be* someone, not to *do* something.

This pattern is found in Ricardo Semler’s “business philosophy”, which he concludes in his autobiography (Semler 1995). It has great educational value. A comprehensive analysis of cultural change in the company Semco, according to the “3i” formula, leads to the conclusion that he has developed both practical and ethical concepts of doing business (Bombała 2010: 120). Initially, his company was not different from any other. It had a traditional organization chart in the shape of a pyramid, regulations, instructions, etc. However, Semler came to a conclusion that radically changed the way the company was managed. Inspiration supplied him with the story of the three masters of stonework. When they were asked what their job was, the first replied that it involved the processing of stones. The second replied that he used a special technique to form stones in a unique way. The third smiled and said: “I build cathedrals.” Semler wanted his staff to consist of cathedral builders.

One of the first moves under the new strategy was the common sense elimination of rules and decision processes. This stemmed from the conviction that development cannot be limited by regulations. As a result, organizational culture has been radically transformed into a personalistic culture. i.e. sociocraton (Bombała 2003). Currently, the employees themselves determine the volume of production and marketing plans, participate in the design of new products, determine the amounts of salaries and participate in the decisions of allocation. The crux of the problem is precisely the hierarchical pyramid, the basic organizing principle of modern business. The new structure, largely amorphous, helped to liberate people from the tyranny of the hierarchy. They

were free to act as leaders if they wanted to and enjoyed the respect gained through their efforts and skills.

In this reflection on human economic activity, which concluded in his autobiography, Semler allows for in-depth analysis and self-reflection. It is something more than just a case study, although it includes an analysis of one company, and it is also something more than a textbook. Therefore, his autobiography can be regarded as a kind of an introductory guide to the world of entrepreneurship, i.e. the entrepreneurial existence.

The value of Semler's autobiography constitutes not only knowledge of entrepreneurship. Students emphasize that in contrast to the textbooks that present "dry" facts and are difficult to understand and use in practice knowledge, Semler's book is "alive", vivid, stimulates imagination and the inquiring mind, and most importantly is inspiring. The feelings that Semler evokes are best illustrated by the opinion of one of the extra-mural students: *A fantastic, open guy, an artist in business, full of engagement and respect for himself and co-workers. Amazing! It is improbable that it happens in our world and more precisely in Brazilian economic conditions – similar to the Polish ones.*

| **Case Study: the phenomenology of "learning-to" in action**

I use the "3i" formula in the exercises on the subject "Organization and management" at the University of Warmia and Mazury. During the workshops, students freely form research teams that prepare panel discussions based on literature study. The teams aim to provide the knowledge gained to other members of the classroom group. This is done in such a way as to interest all members of the group. Multimedia techniques are the preferred means of communicating information.

I have included below the students reflections about progress and achievements of their teams in seeking answers to the research question: *What factors lead to harmony of spirit (in Karol Adamiecki's sense) in an organization?* (compiled by Angelika Ciarkowska, Aleksandra Wilga, Marta Bartwicka).

Our task was to give an answer to the research question: *What factors lead to harmony of spirit in the organization?* By analyzing the literature, we came to certain conclusions. Organization of a person, people and society is an everyday occurrence. The collective action of man is also an everyday occurrence. In fact, we do not know when man began to realize that most of the actions that yield success are based on collective effort. Organization and management theory is a relatively young field, dating back to 1903, the year in which a fundamental breakthrough in management and organization issues occurred. In that year, a young Polish engineer Karol Adamiecki published a public article on how to organize collective work. As he says: *one of the fundamental principles of action is fair and honest conduct.* According Adamiecki it is one of the

most important principles of economic life, which many want to avoid, but to which, sooner or later, they must return. Adamiecki criticized instrumental rationality because he believed that it leads to maximizing the chances of some groups at the expense of minimizing others.

When we analyzed the concepts of this Polish theorist, several important statements emerged:

- Rationalization of work should be done in the interests of society as a whole;
- Organizing the work of individuals should be an action aimed at saving manpower;
- The most important issue is “spiritual harmony”;
- To build a “spiritual harmony”, consent is required between employees and employers. We must organize human work in the name of the working man’s highest good, and use discipline flowing from the higher moral motives.

We may conclude Adamiecki based his views on the principle that the more moral something was, the more profitable it was; not only for the company, but also for the entire society (Bombała 2006). This was all the more surprising given the fact that 100 years ago, Karol Adamiecki was able to create concepts that differed so significantly from the practices of his time.

We are also intrigued by Ricardo Semler and the example of his method of business management. He underwent a process of change, which is very well described by B. Bombała as the “3i” formula. In 1980 at age 21, Semler took over the company from his father, who operated on the traditional principles of a pyramid-shaped organizational structure. In the first stage (interpretation), he introduced changes to the company in line with fashionable management concepts that were profitable.

Analyzing the second phase (inspiration), to each of us at the very beginning it seemed that the changes that were introduced were not enough. Only when we understood the final stage when Semler resigned completely from the control of his employees, did we understand how much he risked and what benefit he received. However, to begin any changes, you need some inspiration. In the case of Semler, it was the parable of the three masters of stonework. Semler wanted his employees to be as dedicated and creative as the builder of cathedrals.

The most astonishing thing for us was one of the reforms in the Semco company, namely the elimination of receptionists, assistants and secretaries. According to Semler, such work does not give satisfaction and opportunities for improvement. Each of us in the discussion agreed with this statement. We concluded that routine can “kill” good intentions, commitment and creativity.

In comparing the two concepts we have come to the conclusion that they differ in only certain, historically and culturally-conditioned elements (language). We found that both Karol Adamiecki and Ricardo Semler based their concepts on a subjective view of man. We wondered whether in our region there is a company that operates on similar principles; we often asked

these questions to people who work and to family members. However, we did not received positive responses.

Conclusions

The personalistic-phenomenological model is a major alternative to the economic and technocratic concept of “one dimensional man.” Phenomenology is therefore an important perspective for research in the science of management and didactic process. Phenomenological analysis shows that the didactic process is difficult and complicated. In the foundation of the phenomenology of “learning-to” is Scheler’s act of love as the cause and condition of all knowledge, because love always raises cognition and volition, the mother of the spirit and the intellect. The “learning-to” is in fact deep self and interpersonal transformation (phenomenological deconstruction). Will it be a phenomenological deconstruction that will lead to an efficient system for managers’ learning? This will depend on the influence of the phenomenological-personalistic paradigm on the learning process. I maintain – the use of phenomenology (“phenomenological lens” and “3I” formula) has outstanding educational and ethical value, and moreover allows us to create a coherent philosophy for the education of managers.

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