

Introduction: The Lebenswelt origins of the sciences

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Ethnomethodology's initiatives originated with Husserl's program; however, it has developed its own rival program for investigating the lebenswelt origin of the sciences, a program that is one of ethnomethodology's central research areas. These lebenswelt origins are also properly a central subject for sociological studies of social order, including peer reviewed social studies of science. Unfortunately, while these "origins" are mentioned and described by Husserl, they witnessably escape Husserl's formal descriptions of his program and are left to live undisclosed and unmentioned behind the disciplinary particulars of the various sciences.

Husserl's Gottingen lectures already exhibit the policies of Husserl's program. And still in *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Husserl's program is discussed as the lebenswelt origin of the sciences. Ethnomethodology's Hybrid Studies of work and science specify Husserl's program, offering a more detailed description of the lebenswelt

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origin of the sciences. While Husserl provided the direction for our ethnomethodological investigations, the lived work of various sciences—in their coherent, work-site specific organizational Things-in-distinctive-details, case by case for the particular sciences—are obscured by Husserl's use of formal generalities in both *The Gottingen Lectures* and *The Crisis*. Regrettably, and as a certainty, both of Husserl's treatises lose the phenomenon they were written carefully to describe. That is, they lose the phenomenon of the actual work-sites of any science. And there they also lose the *instructed actions* of the scientists, i.e. their actual world-generating collaborations. They lose the phenomenon by losing *just-how* their instructed actions are administered to reveal for the scientists their work, as well as the objects they are studying.

In Husserl's program, the lebenswelt origins, being only formally exhibited by the lectures, do not actually describe any lebenswelt practices. They do not *exhibit* lebenswelt practices with lived-in-the-course instructed actions. They merely allude to lebenswelt practices. The real achievement of Husserl's program, then, is that the actual lived work of sciences are alluded to as lived practices. And that is no small achievement.

The Gottingen Lectures and *The Crisis* assert the promises of Husserl's monumental program. Their incongruous anomaly is that their promise was neither noticed nor recognized by bench practitioners of any science. The program of *The Crisis* was never taken up by scientists, nor was it welcomed as filling a "gap" in the coherence of a particular science, in and as of its discovered topics and practices.¹

Nevertheless, despite the fact that scientists rarely welcomed Husserl's inquiries, in epistemological philosophy the program remains venerated as Husserl's achievement. Yet even there Husserl's program has not been taken up in a radical way, as the familiar haecceities² of an actual science. It has only been used to illustrate cases for epistemological arguments *about* the sciences. Hence, the task of taking up Husserl's program seriously remains.

This is not to say that no ground has been gained. Very little in *The Gottingen Lectures* redescribes the lived work of any actual science. On the contrary, the lectures forcefully point to the *absence* of haecceities in any and every particular science. These absent details can involve the shop talk, local gestural organization, the local endogenous practices of social order production and accountability, and their coherent substantive material, which might include board notes, personal notebooks, diaries, diagrams, scribblings, books,

¹ The phrase "in and as of" intends to retain the *actual* state of affairs of a social practice. Instead of conceiving of a metaphysical object, "science," which "has" certain practices, a science *consists* of its practices. It does not exist apart from them; in fact, the task of any inquiry into the lebenswelt origins of sciences takes its departure from this recognition. A science is nothing more than, and nothing less than, the activities of its practitioners. The phrase promises to retain the important insight, which is consistent with Husserl's own phenomenological discoveries, that a science does not merely exist in its practices, it exists *as* its practices. The perspective is vital to an anti-essentialist inquiry, and the phrase is employed frequently in ethnomethodology (cf. Garfinkel, 2002, p. 92, 99, 138, 207, 211, 246, 247; Garfinkel and Wieder, 1992, p. 175).

² The term "haecceity" refers to the character of being here and now, the "just-thisness" of any activity. It is related to the *hic* of "*hic et nunc*".

manuals, sketches, post-its, photographs, graphics, door names and warnings, wall notices, texts, gestures read as instructed actions, shop organization, equipment arrangements, architecture and all varieties of bench-work. Also absent are *the shop floor problems*.³

All these are the mundane Things of the lebenswelt.

In contrast to the absent haecceities of the shop floor problems in Husserl's program—and contrary to their *absence* as a requirement of evidently good work in a discovering science—is their *emphasis* in the bibliography of ethnomethodological studies of work and sciences.

It might be said that Husserl's deep phenomenology of his *Crisis* put ethnomethodology on its feet, and is considered by ethnomethodology to be ethnomethodology's educated proxy. But that would be wrong. There is much more to the relationship than that. The two—Husserl's statements on the lebenswelt and ethnomethodology's investigations of work and sciences—are more realistically related. For decades, ethnomethodology has taken up the question, "What would it take to turn Husserl's transcendental phenomenological documented conjecture, which Husserl knew as the lebenswelt origins of the sciences, into a demonstrable phenomenon?" What would such a literature be concerned with? What might it look like? What would it provide for? Let us begin to answer these questions.

Unlike the usual style of a book review that is fair to the two sides of a dispute that it describes, the following argument respectfully thinks to make hash of Husserl's side while entirely favoring the side of ethnomethodology. For instance, we are interested in the Gottingen lectures to the extent that they exhibit as identifying policies Husserl's program of lived work in the sciences. *All* sciences, natural and social, are eligible for case-specific examination. On the eligibility count of *all* sciences there can be no mistake. As Husserl correctly knew and taught, his program is an unprecedented achievement in philosophy, in epistemology particularly, and in the philosophy of science and social studies of science. Nevertheless, Husserl's program was never taken up by any actual science. Nor was his program ever demonstrated as the actual lived day's shop talk and bench-work of any actual scientist in any actual discipline that consisted in and as any actual science-specific work-site haecceities of just *that* science, and here the "that" could be astronomy, mathematics, microbiology, structural engineering, laparoscopic surgery, computing science, all of which have been studied ethnomethodologically, each in and as its distinctive, ordinary, witnessable, collaboratively staffed business at hand.

³ "Shop floor problems" is a reference to the aircraft manufacturer McDonnell Douglas' capacity to make airplanes, a capacity that is dependent upon the local and mundane ways that workers on the shop floor get their work accomplished, ways that eluded McDonnell Douglas' front office staff, whose theorizing about aircraft production blinded them to the real ways their firm was building airplanes. The gap in their knowledge became apparent only after a series of deficit induced layoffs during which so many workers were furloughed they could no longer retrieve the local routines in play for accomplishing the manufacturing.

The sciences have had nothing seriously to do with Husserl's plans for them. However Husserl's program did serve ethnomethodology's authors as indispensable precursors to ethnomethodology's Tutorial Problems and Hybrid Studies of work and science. These studies are now available as successors and rivals to Husserl's program. The lebenswelt origins of the sciences was first identified by Husserl and his company of scholars. Their scholarship made available the lived work of the sciences. Their program is a paradigmatic exhibit of *formal analytic methods* in specifying and describing the lived work as Things of the sciences in their social organizational details. We ethnomethodologists wish to explicate Husserl's program and to use Husserl's venerable provisions for the lived origins of sciences-*in-their-details*, which for us has become ethnomethodology's emphasis on details, *on organizational things in their details*, that is, on what the coherences of details in scientific work is, actually and not imaginably.

Husserl's *Crisis* and the forgotten genealogy of science that it recounts specify *the epistemological issue* that also occupied the Gottingen lectures as their central subject. This vital issue is: making contact with a transcendent object. Just-how is such contact actually made, by scientists? And just-how, on occasion and in any actual case, is actual contact with a transcendent *not* made? How do scientists make that contact? And with what details is that contact maintained? This issue is a central subject for ethnomethodological inquiry. The subject is known both to Husserl and to ethnomethodology as the lebenswelt origins of the sciences.

For Husserl the issue is already identified and settled. But the issue is settled with the critically important achievement of transcendental phenomenological philosophy, and is exhibited with a coherent administration of Husserl's epistemological policies of logic and praxis. These policies describe the lived work of the particular sciences exhibited in details of *formal generalities* of epistemological philosophy. (See Garfinkel and Wieder, 1992) These are procedurally coherent details of formal generalities, and this generalization is a practice that has *its own* lived details. And it is a practice that any Husserlian phenomenologist with expertise can accomplish. These formal analytic methods of epistemological philosophy specify as "the characterization problem" *how a thing comes to be known*, but this can be made accountable in its discipline-specific, coherent appearances as the organizational Thing *it is*.

The methods of ethnomethodological studies of work and science also settle the issue, but these methods are contrary to Husserl's methods. In contrast to Husserl's methods that settle the issue, ethnomethodological studies of work and science respecify the lebenswelt origins of the sciences as these are made accountable in instructable discipline-specific details. Their redescription is an *exhibition* of the lebenswelt origins of the sciences as the lived practices of scientists. Everything in the shop floor problem that is of practical consequence when the two programs are compared is meant to answer the question "*just what* are the details all about?" Everything in the comparison turns on what details could possibly be.

Ethnomethodology starts with and dwells upon immediate appearances. That is to say, our issue is that of making adequate and evident provision for researchable, congregationally produced and concertedly accountable structures of mutually instructable actions of an ordinary society of scientists. Just how are *structures of social action as witnessable properties of endogenous populations* actually and accountably produced? That is, produced as instructed actions, in any actual case. Our interest is directed to locating a particular discipline's domain-specific details of lived work. These domain-specific details are available only in the open, unrestricted horizons (and this "horizon" is the horizon we learned from Husserl), and infinite tasks, that compose the domain of a particular science. Scientists make their work-place-specific formal methods work. And they make them work in their details. That work, with those details, is what ethnomethodological studies of the lebenswelt of scientists are concerned to describe.