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Phenomenological Approach in Traditional Theater Art

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Abstract

This article aimed at investigating through phenomenology approach with two steps, namely, the first order understanding which is to ask the respondent in order to obtain the accurate explanation and second order understanding where the researcher make an explanation and reinterpretation of the data from the respondent. To validate the significance of phenomenology, hermeneutics is needed, such as interpreting phenomenological things. For instance, in case of tourism management, there has been a tendency for formation change in presenting traditional theater art. Based on the research results, it showed that in reality the presentation of the theater art in tourism give some negative impacts, such as pollution, commercialization, and profanisation towards traditional culture values. Nevertheless, it brings positive points since tourism promotes the traditional theater art, which is potentially facing extinction. Tourism also influences the artists to become more creative.

Keywords: phenomenology, traditional theater art, first order understanding, second order understanding, hermeneutics

1. Introduction

Husserl defines phenomenology as a method to know, to explore, and to interpret the sense experience as well as to recognize the meaning from what has been experienced. In this method, he suggests that the researchers need to conduct participant observation in order to investigate and to know exactly what is experienced by others. His recommendation is focused on the logic that refers to the "meaning" to recognize what is experienced. In Husserl's phenomenology view (in Waters, 1994: 31), a seemingly apparent phenomenon is an independent reflection because it appears as a complete object with transcendental meaning. To understand the transcendental meaning, it is necessary to break through the apparent things. It indicates that in employing the phenomenology method, it must be focused on the data source, not on the result of thoughts.

Schutz is also developed the phenomenological approach by referring to Weber's view about his social action. Schutz actually combines the transcendental phenomenology of Husserl with the interpretation of a social action called "verstehen" from Weber (Collin, 1997: 111). It is based on Weber's theory of action that states something has a subjective significance. Schutz tries to incorporate the concepts from the research subjects to know what and how their understanding around the events of his life.

Further, Schutz mentions that the social world is intersubjective with meaningful experience. Since the starting point of Schutz phenomenology is derived from Weber's theory, the meaning of action becomes very important. The meaning of this action is the motive underlying the action, or called "in order to motive" (motive for), it means to understand the meaning of one's actions, a researcher must clarify the motive behind an action. The meaning of subjective action can be seen through the motives of the culprit itself through the expression of the research subject. Based on "in order to motive", Schutz develops or completes it with a context, or called "because motive" as the answers or the reasons that has been the foundation research subject in doing the action.

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Indeed, Schutz's investigation (Waters 1994: 33) has subjective meaning with the concept of causal relationships, which can truly reveal the original motives behind the individual action.

This phenomenological approach is also developed by Berger by criticizing his two predecessors, Schutz and Husserl. Berger tries to develop the "essence of meaning" from Schutz and the most prominent phenomenology from Berger is synthesizing between the concepts of human and their social environment. Berger also examines Husserl's phenomenological concept of "pure phenomenon" as the root of intellectual idealism that apart from mutual empirical reality. Berger urges that the phenomenology of Schutz and Husserl is conductive and only focused on the empirical level where it has not been able to reveal the problem that truly reflects the real character (Wuthnow 1987: 73). Thus, Berger (1966) offers first order understanding and second order understanding approach.

To obtain first order understanding in the phenomenology method, a researcher has to ask the studied party (respondent) in order to get the accurate explanation. For example, if the respondent stated that he/she was involved in a cultural clash, in this case the information is not enough and the researcher must give follow-up question, such as "how is he/she involved in the cultural clash?" Various questions can be asked to obtain answers about his/her involvement as a perpetrator in the the cultural clash, such as one of puritanical Islam does not hold *slametan* (thanskgiving) when his wife is giving birth while he lives in social traditional society. It can be questioned, what is the motive for not holding *slametan* until he involves in the cultural clash. According to Berger, this kind of information is called externalization.

It means the phenomenological method offered by Berger consisting of two steps. They are the first order understanding which is to ask the respondent in order to obtain the accurate explanation and second order understanding where the researcher make an explanation and reinterpretation of the data from the respondent. Berger's approach, of course, is still in a micro-level which does not influence from the role of social institutions, social stratification, and supremacy that usually dominates one's actions.

To clarify the "meaningful" aspect on phenomenology, the radical action as the cause of the Islamic culture clash in Trucuk was also inspired by subjective meanings since the action was not just in the form of physical action but also containing something came from inside, the meaning behind the radical action. As Collin (1997: 104) notes that human behavior is full of meaning, because it is influenced by experience and understanding. Experience is the basis and source of human behavior. It comes from the subjective human life. This statement shows that human action arises from two separate mental sources, i.e. trust and desire. Therefore, experience is also considered as a source of action derived from unified thoughts and desires. Meanwhile, understanding is believed as reexperiencing experience, recreating, and empathising.

The phenomenological argument emphasizes on human and social facts which are formed when human action along with the meaning shown by the agent. In addition, the meaning will form the fact of pure action. Meaning creates action and acts as a component or aspect. Meaning is an aspect of inner action that unites with the external action to form a unity of action (Collin, 1997: 115). This meaning is as a result of a fact, which exceeds the fact of pure action. This conception forms a constructivism putting human understanding, beliefs, and explanations to create social facts.

2. Phenomenology and Hermeneutic

The actual phenomenological level is limited on the process of human consciousness to observe the phenomena in front of them but, in reality, the process does not only focus on the consciousness issue. It, then, raises the concern on meaning, interpretation, and constructions of thought to respond to the phenomenon (Nouh, 2016: 94). Based on these circumstances, new interpretation emerges and develops into etnometodological and hermeneutic theories while the constructs of thought change into social construction theories. The examples of this new phenomenological development theory are as follows.

Hermeneutic theory was born due to the influence of phenomenology. The phenomenologist, Alfred Schutz (1972), in his book *The Phenomenology of the Social World* attempts to set the foundation of the fundamental characteristics of consciousness, to show the relationship between transcendental phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (1950) and the sociology of *verstehen* from Max Weber (1947: 88).

This Schutz description focuses on the critique of naturalism, i.e. a critical reflection of the consciousness of life as well as the understanding of the world, the symbols, and the ideas. In Schutz's view, the everyday social world is always considered as intersubjective object. The daily life can be gone through and interpreted by Schutz and his friends. The world of one's life as a whole will never be fully personalized because one's consciousness always proves the existence of another consciousness. For example, a person's life history (usually unique) is not totally the product of his/her actions.

Individuals are exponents of life in the universe. They are deemed to have the structure of human life in its entirety, by Wilhelm Dilthey and it is seen descriptively through *verstehen* from Weber (Bendix, 1962) (to understand and to comprehend something deeply). According to Dilthey in his book, *Pattern and Meaning in History*, a hermeneutika expert states that the history and the sciences of human culture can not be approached with habits in the natural sciences. Every period in history is determined by a certain understanding of life.

Dilthey's followers and a prominent hermeneuticist, Hans-Gerg Gadamer (2004) argues that hermeneutic means knowing, understanding, and interpreting. In Gadamer's view, *verstehen* does not only involve the subject and the object, but also the historical process, i.e. the horizon of historical consciousness that covering an interpreter to determine the knowledge. Through *verstehen*, the subject manifests itself in or as an object, so the meaning is obtained based on the signs which are specified in the symbols. To interpret the subject itself, some distance from the object must be taken.

3. Phenomenology in Traditional Theater Art

Phenomenology tries to give a description of human experience. It covers the whole range of human experience on science, technology, art, culture that reveals the way of those phenomena as human construct formation and it is ultimately derived from the common sense. In the beginning, it was found an understanding of common people to experience in their world and how they perceive, interpret, and plan their own actions. Phenomenologists find out where the people are oriented to their daily life.

There is a scientific attitude guided by particular preposition or basic assumptions during the daily life. The common people assume that they are human beings and other creatures also exist. They assume that they get along with others to do the same thing (thinking) in which the assumption of thinking in phenomenology is called subjective experience (Coklin, 2015: 92).. This experience leads people to have thoughts and awareness that have relevance to the world. For this reason, people interact with others by carrying sets of assumptions that are different when they interact with plants and animals. In this case people rarely aware that they are actually assuming the existence and the thoughts.

The world is assumed to provide an order for a pleasant and protective existence. If the perceptions contradict what are felt to be true about the world, in general people will attempt to explain that experience as a deviation in accordance with certain and reasonable explanations. If there is no rational reason that seems to be appropriate to the incident, and then it is considered wrong perception or even be considered as a joke. By doing so, the normality of this world can be maintained.

In relation to social science, phenomenology can be applied to a range of new possibilities related to social and personal issues. The conclusion is that phenomenology can be applied to people in trouble, whose implications can be directed to counseling and therapy issues. For instance, when a couple of husband-wife has not had been blessed with a child, this problem might be discussed with counseling. In other words, phenomenology affects some thinkers and practitioners, to analyze the mode of the patients' complaints.

Practitioners who have discovered the consistency of phenomenology attempted to make phenomenological features and steps to institutionalize. This means that phenomenology is capable to expose objects convincingly, although objects are cognitive objects, actions, and speech (Collin, 1977: 111). Such authentic phenomenological application would accept the institutionalized nature of the social world that inherent emotions and actions that are undifferentiated, in the framework of bargaining reality process. Thus, what the individual done in the process of typification has been in line with the phenomenology instructions.

As an example of this case, Yogyakarta is one of the famous tourist destinations in Indonesia that is rich with various traditional theater arts with 26 types of it. There are 30 locations for traditional theater arts for tourism, including Yogyakarta Palace, Prambanan Temple, Purawisata, Ambarukmo Hotel, Garuda Hotel, Pakualaman Temple, Taman Budaya (Cultural Park), Radio Republik Indonesia, Padhepokan Bagong Kussudiardjo, the nobility, and so forth.

The types of traditional theater arts that are performed are Ramayana Theater, shadow puppet, karawitan concert, classical dance, folk dance, human puppet fragment, and so on. Among those types, the most widely displayed is Ramayana Theater and it becomes a regular performance at indoor and outdoor Prambanan Stage, Dalem Pujakusuman, Purawisata, and several hotels in Yogyakarta. Numerous types of traditional theater arts in Indonesia is indeed an extraordinary asset to be empowered to attract the tourists.

The traditional theater arts in Yogyakarta is very crucial to support the tourism, such as (1) promoting tourism for both domestic and abroad, (2) creating job opportunity and increasing community incomes, (3) attracting tourist attention (4) generating funds to improve the living standards of the community, and (6) raising the dignity, honor, and understanding of humanity (Bandem, 2001: 6).

The development of tourism as an industry is a breakthrough to supporting national income, which began in the year of 1986 in Indonesia. In this country, tourism is a separate industry that is different from other industrial sector. The tourism industry is well suited to the current development since it supports the field of communications, such as transportation, promotion and accommodation and as the result, it contributes to the declining of the domestic unemployment rate.

The escalation of the tourism industry on traditional theater arts in Yogyakarta right now has received many responses from the tourists, either domestic or foreign. In this case, some criticism from various parties appears as a negative signal to refuse the attractions of traditional theater arts as a part of tour packages. For example, Ramayana Theater performance is prepared for the tourist in Prambanan temple in full performance from one to four episodes. However, after this theater performance shows in hotel, it is only presented for 20 minutes. The performance is still surrounded with traditional nuance, but its presentation has been cut into pieces based on the tour package. Obviously, the production of traditional theater arts is more emphasis on pragmatic and market-oriented factors. The artists involved in this traditional theater arts performance has lost the serious feelings and the idealism. Consequently, it makes them present low quality of art performance. (Fenner, 2003: 40).

It happens because the artists are placed as objects for the tourism profits, not as objects that obtain attention from those who manage in government bureaucracy. The honor received by the artists is not enough and this phenomenon that must be found the solution. Actually, the solution for such problems, conceptually, has been handled by the relevant departments.

However, currently, the dancers of Ramayana Theater from the Sekar Wisma art group held a demonstration to the stage management of Prambanan Temple. They demanded a reasonable right for their payments. The artists felt that they did not own the right and justice from the stage manager. They seem to be marginalized and have no freedom to speak.

4. Hermeneutics of Traditional Theater Arts for Tourism

To know hermeneutics of traditional theater arts in Indonesia, the facts and conditions of tourism world in Indonesia need to be clarified. Traditional theater art as a tourism industry is an important potential because it has become an attraction for tourists. The tourists are treated to a variety of traditional theater art performance and it also makes them do not hesitate to spend their money to buy the traditional art merchandise. The expansion of this industrial sector can directly increase the artists' income and it can support the foreign exchange of Indonesia.

However, the tourism activities that bring in billions of dollars cause a phenomenon, especially for the existence of traditional theater arts that have been used as a tourist attraction. As mentioned earlier, it becomes a reality that the presentations of traditional theatre art giving a negative impact. Traditional theater arts for the tourists attraction are presented in a shorter way like the Ramayana Theater in order to make the audience more practical to enjoy it.

With the short possible time, the tourist can be showed various different traditional theater as much as possible. However, surround the artist's community, the disappearance of certain segments in the traditional theater arts performance create some phenomenon. This incident concerns some artists because traditional theater arts should be presented based on the original procedure. If it is left without any correction, it can cause a phenomenon of cultural erosion.

Finally, the traditional theatre art performance that can potentially make a lot of money is not approved by some parties, such as the Head of region and some private parties. They consider that there has been a profanization on traditional theater arts. It has been highlighted that tourism activities resulting negative impacts as well as a social phenomenon. This tourism business is getting worse and raises the emergency signal for the trading of human beings with its cultural products. Without having the art wisdom, tourism can exacerbate the problems in traditional theater arts. Based on Smiers perspective (2009: 59), the cultural products which are produced, distributed, and promoted on a mass scale, such as in the framework of tourism can be bad, morally destructive, and low.

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