



Civilizar Ciencias Sociales y Humanas

ISSN: 1657-8953

ISSN: 2619-189X

Universidad Sergio Arboleda

Pérez Vargas, John Jairo; Nieto Bravo, Johan Andrés; Santamaría Rodríguez, Juan Esteban  
Hermeneutics and Phenomenology in Human and Social Sciences Research\*

Civilizar Ciencias Sociales y Humanas, vol. 20, núm. 38, 2020, Enero-Junio, pp. 137-144

Universidad Sergio Arboleda

DOI: 10.22518/jour.ccsch/2020.1a10

Disponible en: <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=100266325012>

- Cómo citar el artículo
- Número completo
- Más información del artículo
- Página de la revista en redalyc.org



Sistema de Información Científica Redalyc  
Red de Revistas Científicas de América Latina y el Caribe, España y Portugal  
Proyecto académico sin fines de lucro, desarrollado bajo la iniciativa de acceso  
abierto

## Hermeneutics and Phenomenology in Human and Social Sciences Research\*



John Jairo Pérez Vargas<sup>§</sup>  
Johan Andrés Nieto Bravo<sup>‡</sup>  
Juan Esteban Santamaría Rodríguez<sup>¶</sup>

\* Article product of research of the process of doctoral formation in Education of the authors in the Catholic University of Córdoba, Argentina.

<sup>§</sup> PhD student in Education at the Universidad Católica de Córdoba, Argentina. Specialist and Master in Bioethics from Universidad del Bosque, Bogotá, Colombia. B.A. in Theology from the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogotá, Colombia. Researcher in the Educational Research Group. Full-time professor at the School of Education of the Universidad Santo Tomás, Colombia. E-mail: [johnjapeva@gmail.com](mailto:johnjapeva@gmail.com) y [johnperezv@ustadistancia.edu.co](mailto:johnperezv@ustadistancia.edu.co)  
 0000-0001-9978-3997

<sup>‡</sup> PhD student in Education at the Universidad Católica de Córdoba, Argentina. Master in Education from the Universidad Santo Tomás, Bogotá, Colombia. B.A. in Philosophy and Religious Education from the Universidad Santo Tomás, Bogotá, Colombia. Researcher of the Educational Research Group. Full-time professor at the School of Education of the Universidad Santo Tomás, Colombia. E-mail: [johannieto@ustadistancia.edu.co](mailto:johannieto@ustadistancia.edu.co)  
 0000-0002-8608-8511

<sup>¶</sup> PhD student in Education at the Universidad Católica de Córdoba, Argentina. Master's and Bachelor's degrees in Theology from the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana. Specialist in Pedagogy for Higher Education from the Universidad Santo Tomás, Colombia. Researcher at the Ibero-American Institute of The Hague for Peace, Human Rights and International Justice (the Netherlands). Assistant researcher at the Latin American Centre for Pedagogical Epistemology-CESPE (Cuba). Lecturer and researcher at the School of Theology of the Universidad Santo Tomás, Colombia. E-mail: [juanessantrax87@gmail.com](mailto:juanessantrax87@gmail.com)  
 00-0002-4632-4700

How to cite this article:  
Pérez, J., Nieto-Bravo, J., y Santamaría-Rodríguez, J. (2019). Hermeneutics and Phenomenology in Human and Social Sciences Research. *Civilizar: Ciencias Sociales y Humanas*, 20(38), 137-146. doi: [10.22518/jour.ccsch/2020.1a10](https://doi.org/10.22518/jour.ccsch/2020.1a10)

Received: 06/06/2019  
Revised: 22/08/2019  
Accepted: 30/08/2019

Licencia Creative Commons  
Atribución-NoComercial-  
SinDerivar 4.0 Internacional  
(CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).



### Resumen

Este artículo de reflexión problematiza las relaciones entre la fenomenología y la hermenéutica como lugares epistémicos del quehacer investigativo por medio de un abordaje documental construido en dos fases. En primer lugar, el texto reflexiona alrededor del uso terminológico presente en los paradigmas, enfoques, perspectivas epistemológicas y métodos investigativos, identificando con ello que no existe unicidad de criterios en sus referencias y aproximaciones en los tratados de metodología de la investigación analizados. De igual manera, se evidencian que hay propuestas metodológicas que comprenden la fenomenología y la hermenéutica de manera complementaria, articulada o aislada sin permitir con ello lugares precisos de comprensión que permitan situar su aplicación en la investigación. En razón de lo anterior, la segunda fase propone una aproximación individual a los antecedentes y comprensiones de la fenomenología y la hermenéutica, identificado particularidades que les caracterizan, posibles diferencias teórico-prácticas y aproximaciones que se pueden establecer de cara a su relevancia desde el marco epistémico y metodológico de la investigación en las ciencias humanas y sociales.

### Palabras clave

Hermenéutica, fenomenología, investigación, Ciencias humanas y sociales, metodología de la investigación.

### Abstract

This article of reflection problematizes the relationships between phenomenology and hermeneutics as epistemic places of research work through a documentary approach built in two phases. First, the text reflects on the terminological use present in the paradigms, approaches, epistemological perspectives, and research methods, thereby identifying that there is no criteria univocity in its references and approaches about research methodology treaties. Likewise, it is evident that there are methodological proposals that include phenomenology and hermeneutics in a complementary, articulated, or isolated way without allowing precise places of understanding that allow to locate their application in research. Based on the aforementioned, the second phase proposes an individual approach to the background and comprehensions of phenomenology and hermeneutics, identifying particularities that characterize them, possible theoretical-practical differences and approaches that can be established in view of their relevance from the epistemic and methodological framework of research in human and social sciences.

### Keywords

Hermeneutics, phenomenology, research, human and social sciences.

## Introduction

Research processes in human and social sciences require from their researchers to deal with concepts such as phenomenology and hermeneutics. Both are frequently employed in the field of qualitative research methodology as an epistemological perspective that places the enunciation of research in these fields of knowledge. From its origins, the contribution to the understanding of phenomena or facts of a human and social nature has been unquantifiable, thus constituting recurrent tools that researchers and/or research groups use to lay the foundations of their investigations and processes.

Although the use of these tools is frequent, and in some cases necessary and relevant, there are tensions in its appropriation at the epistemological and methodological level. These elements constitute the first tension in relation to their role and place in research as they do not appear to be univocal according to several authors approaches or research manuals. In a second instance, they demand the recognition of their implications, characteristics, impacts, or particularities. All this to be able to decant the alternatives that they offer to the social research from their episteme and methods.

This article investigates phenomenology and hermeneutics to identify their contributions and uses in the field of human and social research. By recognizing their particularities, implications, and possibilities of articulation or independent work, this research opens paths to approach their horizons of understanding, which will be a substantial contribution to clarify their relevance in human and social research in correlation to the specificities of research projects that emerge daily.

Surrounding these arguments, it is suggested a documentary research that goes into the investigation from the proposals emanated from texts of some representatives of the methodology in investigation, with the purpose of examining and recognizing some tensions around the epistemic and methodological approaches in the field of phenomenology and hermeneutics. From this identification, the subject is further explored with other texts of methodological and epistemological nature which contribute to the analysis and recognition of its particularities and relationalities.

The document consists of a first section that deals with the subject in an investigative manner

by recognizing the place of these areas in research methodology. It describes at a general level some tensions and possibilities in their uses. Later, the research goes deeper into the understanding of phenomenology and hermeneutics in relation to their epistemologies and methodological uses, pointing out some of their particularities, similarities, differences, and/or possible articulations.

## The use of hermeneutics and phenomenology in research

When speaking of research in human and social sciences, it is common to find at some point in the methodological discussion references to phenomenology and hermeneutics, either to use them as an epistemological approach or perspective, or to understand them and take another option. In this sense, it can be affirmed that its presence is constant in the construction of the methodological sustenances within the investigation of the investigation in this field of knowledge, marking with its punctual theoretical-practical orientations by the episteme that underlies them.

Both phenomenology and hermeneutics, in the field of research in the human and social sciences, are addressed from different points: approaches, paradigms, and methods, among others. Considering this observation, a problem in this place of research, of its use and references is that the space they occupy is not completely precise, since it depends on the understanding that researchers make of them; due to the fact that in the methodological documentation on the subject, there is no unity of criteria and comprehensions. This makes it difficult to approach hermeneutics and phenomenology in the research field.

In accordance with the previous, next, there will be proposed four samples presenting recurrences of authors who were selected for their academic production in the field of research methodology. The objective is to present, know, dimension, and problematize these dilemmas about the use of phenomenology and hermeneutics in the field of research in human and social sciences. Then, based on these observations, it will be possible to open the road to the understanding of their scopes and implications in this type of research.

Within his work, José Marín (2006) inscribes phenomenology and hermeneutics within the field of approaches, understood as an action or an effect of locating an object in a precise place. For this author,

approaches can be analytical or systemic. The former are characterized by their focus on the parts; the latter, on the totality of phenomena, events, and objects, among others. Within them, he situates phenomenology and hermeneutics in a macro-context of research approaches in the human and social sciences that also includes historical, social-critical, and complex systems approaches.

On the other hand, Pablo Páramo (2011) situates phenomenology and hermeneutics in the field of epistemological positions or paradigms, understanding these as the set of philosophical assumptions that researchers use, most of the time in a tacit manner, to approach the search for knowledge (p. 22). With this description, the epistemic and methodological uses of phenomenology or hermeneutics are relevant in research work and must shape the course of all research in accordance with its particularities.

For their part, Alicia Gurdíán (2007) and Bolaños (2015) place phenomenology and hermeneutics at the level of a method. That implies that their use must have a clear intentionality, order, and systematicity that, in the end, leads to procedures and measurable results that support the research work.

Based on the proposals of these authors, there is a latent dilemma in the comprehension of the use of phenomenology and hermeneutics in the research field. As it is appreciated, there is not a unique, clear, and defined positioning in the research field; which, for example, makes that the conception or foundation of key courses and research panoramas for the methodological elaborations of researches in human and social sciences enter in a loop of conceptual and epistemic disruptives.

In this regard, Pablo Páramo (2011) draws attention by stating that the study of the recent evolution of the different epistemological positions makes it clear that the aim is not to unify the different epistemological discourses in a single paradigm, nor to seek a homogeneous and hegemonic discourse on how to build knowledge, which was more typical of modernity —although it is possible to adopt some basic rules on the different routes of carrying out research, such as that theories must be coherent, logically firm and correspond to the observation data obtained in an objective way and be processed appropriately (p. 29).

In addition to Páramo's proposal (2011), it is important to recognize that research in the human

and social sciences does not have a formula of an algorithmic nature, which leads to a unique and precise epistemological or methodological foundation or meaning that allows the establishment of a uniqueness of theories leading to methodological approaches. The tools of the researchers are multiple and so are their uses. For this reason, the constitution of a method for one author or researcher is not the same as for another. The same happens with approaches, perspectives, and paradigms, among other aspects that surround the methodological panorama (Rivadeneira, 2015).

Thereby, applied to the subject of phenomenology and hermeneutics —regardless of whether they are recognized as approaches, as paradigms or as methods— it is important to consider their meaning, the implications that they have within the research and the place that researchers determine for them. To this end, the scope and possibilities offered within the methodologies are considered, through which the relevance and coherence of the research work is guaranteed.

The approach to these understandings at the level of research methodology allows expand the scope of phenomenology and hermeneutics. This aspect is not a minor issue since its origins and subsequent developments have been closely related while several proposals of methodologists conceive their independent use.

The possibility of articulation or independence discussed between the epistemological nature of phenomenology and hermeneutics is based on the methodological orientations that analyse the world and its place referred to at an epistemic level in the research processes. It is for this reason that, below, a brief approach is proposed around both phenomenology and hermeneutics to analyze their origins, proposals, limits, and possibilities of articulation. Based on this analysis, it is also intended to characterize their identity traits, thus allowing researchers to have points of reference when determining the epistemic and methodological place of their research, as well as their possibilities of articulation or independent work.

### **Phenomenology as an epistemological setting for research**

In the research method, it is relevant to identify a double discussion of meaning in which the nomothetic intentionality of explanation and the ideographic perspective of interpretation and description

are confronted (Wright, 1979). The methodological monism that marked the ways of doing research considered that the enunciation of mechanical laws expressed in the universal language of physics and mathematics was the only possible path to generate knowledge (Comte, 1984). In addressing this conception, ideographic movements motivated by Husserl's phenomenology and hermeneutics committed themselves to making an approach to reality, capable of transcending the explanatory intentionality (*Erklären*) of the exact sciences, which are characterized by the generalization of the postulates that have passed through the hypothetical-deductive method, to land in interpretation as a platform of understanding (*Verstehen*) that subjectivizes and particularizes a phenomenon (Droysen, 1983).

Surrounding on this presupposition, it is necessary to read phenomenology as an epistemological place of research. This takes distance from speculative nomothetic theorization to receive and describe that which manifests itself to consciousness as it is (Husserl, 1992). This epistemic shift surpasses the materialization of the measurable to open the door to that which, being born from the sensitive, is problematized in the consciousness (Husserl, 1994).

Consciousness unveils the face of subjectivity that has been eclipsed by positive objectivism, transcending the explanatory hypothesis to transit through the Epoché as a wealth of qualitative research, that puts in suspicion —Husserl (1992) describes them with the image of putting between parentheses— the erudite pre-knowledge, with the purpose of opening to the possibility of the *quaestio* as form of reality problematization, as it is presented, that starts from the investigation and commits to look for the truth (Parra, 2011).

A relevant contribution of this epistemic place to the forms of research with qualitative approaches is the return to subjectivity since within the empirical-analytical construction of positive knowledge, this was always seen as a risk to make visible and listen to the voice of the subjects. To do so could shake the accuracy offered by the objective, thus tending to error. However, this cannot constitute a form of solipsism in which the subject turns in on themselves and is not able to dialogue with the other. This is perhaps the main Achilles' heel of Husserl's phenomenology (1992) since he reduced intersubjectivity to the field of consciousness. At present, many qualitative researchers continue to travel along this

path, preventing the encounter between phenomenology and social action.

The German philosopher Alfred Schütz (1993) proposes to give a phenomenological turn when overturning this study to society, when transcending the scope of conscience and giving it a social dimension, whose epicenter is the phenomenon of the intersubjective. This phenomenon does not respond to the jurisdiction of the private or to an intimate mentality, but rather opens up to the dimension of the dialogical encounter with the other. From there a phenomenological investigation dives into the conscience of the ego, but also discusses the experience of the *alter*.

A social phenomenology can be the basis for the work of the qualitative researcher, whose concern is to consolidate an inclusive knowledge mediated by the experience of intersubjectivity. That experience occurs in the lived present, in which we speak and listen to each other (Mieles, Tonon y Alvarado, 2012, p. 208), where the reality of daily life constitutes the collective fabric of social consciousness and the subjects share life as a place of interconnection in which consciousness flows.

The contemporary revolution of knowledge has motivated the transformations of the current society, which is crossed by a triad integrated by daily life, science, and technical reflexivity (Valera, 2008). Thus, the construction of knowledge is not given unilaterally by the verification or falsification of hypotheses, but rather, by the maturation of problems that do not find solution unless cognitive dichotomies and old ideals are reconstructed or replaced (Sotolongo & Delgado, 2006, p. 28), in last, by the capacity to *put between parenthesis*.

To investigate from a phenomenological perspective implies to clear the research of the macro-comprehensions created by the theoretical artifice, to designate the appearance of the sensible things as opposed to their essential or intelligible being (Marín, 2006, p. 127). In line with Kantian thought, the expression “phenomenon” is opposed to the expression “thing in itself”, which is a representation of our sensibility. Every object of empirical intuition is a phenomenon” (Caimi, 2017, pp. 201-202). This notion is opposed to noumenon by transcending the unintelligible from the perspective of human sensibility, which is why it shows itself, making itself manifest and visible (Castillo, 2000, p. 29) to human knowledge.

The consolidation of phenomenology as a field from which it is possible to construct investigative knowledge has propitiated processes of transit that continue to change. Therefore, phenomenology cannot be conceived only as a method of essential description of the fundamental articulations of experience (perceptive, imaginative, intellectual, volitional, axiological, etc.), but as a radical self-foundation in the most complete intellectual clarity (Ricoeur, 2000, pp. 200-201).

José Tadeo (2011) complements this appreciation by proposing that phenomenology is understood as a science coming from philosophy, a science based on the understanding of phenomena whose weakness is the absence of a method on which to philosophize. Therefore, it is often necessary to complement it with hermeneutics. Notwithstanding the above, this author can be criticized for the notion of science that underlies this context. Science is the result of a mode or manner of knowing. On the other hand, philosophy is more inscribed in the critical-reflexive scope that is in a discursive level; hence, one thing turns out to be scientific knowledge and another to be philosophical knowledge.

Identifying the platform from which qualitative research is carried out with a phenomenological episteme favours the non-assumption of the results or findings of the research. This type of research must not be preceded, for example, by common sense, scientific proposals, psychological experiences, beliefs, and/or prejudices. Hence, phenomenology, in the words of Gurdián (2007), does not start from the design of a theory, but from the known world, from which it makes a descriptive analysis based on shared experiences —where the known world and the inter-subjective experiences offer the signs or warnings to interpret the diversity of symbols (pp. 151-152).

The position defended by Gurdián (2007) makes the subjects and subjectivities that are an essential part of the methodological approaches visible. According to Martínez (2011), phenomenology is concerned with the understanding of social actors and therefore of subjective reality. It understands phenomena from the meaning that things acquire for social actors within the framework of their project of the world (p. 18). For this reason, individuals are a fundamental part of phenomenological understanding by assuming the role of cognizant, who provide meaning to the experiences lived about the

phenomenon and are in the capacity to be able to describe it (Creswel, 1998).

Under these assumptions, it is understood that phenomenology is not ultimately interested in explanation. The typical question asked is not “which causes X”, but “what X is”. Phenomenological research emphasizes the individual and subjective aspects of experience (Sandín, 2003, p. 16). Thus, it can be affirmed that an epistemological and ontological presupposition of phenomenology consists in that the being is manifested, exposed to the world of life (Bolaños, 2015, p. 42), being this world of life the place in which the phenomena are developed and, therefore, the scene par excellence of knowledge and interpretation of them.

The processes of investigation thought from phenomenology give sense to the community and the lived experience in front of the phenomenon. A constitutive aspect of these research processes is the descriptive nature that provides the opportunity for study, analysis, and reflection on the phenomenon. Similarly, it is important to recognize a rigor and an academic character that is conducive to transcending the level of subjective descriptions, to achieve a reach or an intentionality of intersubjective understanding, making the dynamisms of the scientific knowledge possible, along with its use in the investigation processes.

It can then be identified that one of the great challenges in scientific production is the consolidation of alternative ways of building knowledge. Ritzer (1998) calls it the integration or synthesis of paradigms, a fact that recognizes that the epistemological frontiers of research extend and merge. For this reason, a relational interaction from the field of the qualitative is required, where the phenomena are found face to face as a form of constitution of consciousness and the social fabric (Ritzer, 1998).

The current epistemic shift outlines the challenge of moving between paradigms that simplify and those that are complex; this is, that phenomenology can advance from the observation of the object to that of the phenomenon and the systemic network that observes and determines it (Espina, 2003). The figure of the phenomenal interrelationship is as an act of revelation in which a human being manifests himself, makes himself present before another to teach him or her, to show him or her something of their own being, to help him

or her discover herself (Ferreyra & Blanas, 2011, p. 18) —a fact that constitutes a growth project for the knowledge society that, despite technological advances, continues to find fractured human relationships (Ferreyra & Caelles, 2010).

It can be concluded that human action is open to the various interpretations that are generated by the understanding of it (Nieto, 2017, p. 177). The above is enough to indicate that the epistemological places from which research is conducted are not atomized fragments of a reality, but the scenario of interrelations of knowledge whose frontiers are thin; so much so that they can only be recognized behind the research intentionalities that respond to the context needs.

### **Hermeneutics as an epistemological setting for research**

Once certain appreciations have been established around phenomenology, it is time to explore the role and place of hermeneutics in the research process. For this purpose, a generic definition is exposed inside its epistemological and historical supports, which reveals the step and the scopes that it has for the research developments of human and social sciences at present.

Hermeneutics has its etymological roots in the Greek word *hermeneutikos* which, in a general and reductive manner, is related to the art of interpretation. In its Greek origins, this term is associated with the figure of Hermes, one of Zeus' sons, who assumed the task of bringing the messages of the gods to humans, ensuring that they could be understood. Hence, hermeneutics is associated with the art of interpreting or understanding written texts or realities, making the text something that goes beyond writing (Ricoeur, 1990).

The origin of hermeneutics cannot be separated from phenomenology, as established by Gurdián (2007). It is at this point where the greatest difficulty is found to differentiate these two perspectives. Having a germ in common, it is a delicate and detailed task that is required to establish their limits and frontiers. Thus, to define these it is necessary to expand the epistemological sustenances of hermeneutics. This perspective opens the possibility of being able to trace in a precise manner, or at least near, the limits and relations between phenomenology and hermeneutics applied to the field of research in human and social sciences.

In a historical journey to the 18th century, Marín (2006) clarifies that hermeneutics was related to the understanding and interpretation of sacred texts, but with the development of rationalism and classical philology the history of hermeneutics in its modern sense begins (p. 132). In this sense, it cannot be ignored that hermeneutics is consolidated with Western thought (literary criticism, philosophy, and social sciences) and, especially, with the interest of Christian religious traditions (Catholic and Protestant) in their commitment to understand the meaning of divine revelation from the sacred scriptures and a reading of its context from the experience of faith (Noratto & Suárez, 2007, pp. 113-121).

However, since hermeneutics is an epistemic and methodological axis of theological science, it is not exclusive to it. It is important to highlight its appropriation in various areas of the human and social sciences because its epistemological foundations offer essential elements for understanding objects, symbols, texts, and realities, among other aspects —in contrast to the epistemic tensions that arose between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries regarding the claim to truth and validity of knowledge between the sciences of the spirit and the positive sciences (methodological monism). Regarding this situation, Mardones (2005) states that from all this effort to specify a philosophy of science that does not fall into the nets of positivism and does justice to the peculiarity of human, cultural, or spiritual sciences, one thing is clear: the refusal to accept the model of scientific explanation that has triumphed in the West since Galileo. There is a recovery of the Aristotelian tradition through Hegel. (p. 32).

In general, and in relation to its root in Husserl's phenomenology, hermeneutics attempts to establish a process by which, initially, the meaning of any phenomenon is interpreted, and, in a second instance, the comprehension of it is realized (Gutiérrez, 1986, p. 57). This meaning makes possible the distinction of phenomenology in relation to hermeneutics, in which two clear levels of the latter can be distinguished: interpretation and understanding. According to Mardones (2005), these two types of study take distance from the positivist paradigm of science and its philosophical absolutization as the only way to build knowledge and explanation of reality.

Authors such as Heidegger and Gadamer defined the hermeneutics as the self-compression,

which would not be another thing that the comprehension of the own being as being in the world (Herrera, 2003, p. 1). In such a way, hermeneutics is related to a deep reflective process of knowledge and interpretation that is distinguished from phenomenology as this last one is understood in a more analytical and comprehensive way of the world and the diverse senses.

According to Ricoeur (2000), hermeneutics remained at the level of texts for a long time, restricting their use to them and vetoing or neglecting other spheres that can be subject to interpretation. This was to the detriment of being recognized, for example, from the oral traditions that are an essential part of the configuration of communities. In this regard, the author allows himself to allude to the discourse as a vindication of those.

As a result of writing, discourse acquires a triple semantic autonomy: with respect to the intention of the speaker, to the reception of the primitive audience and to the economic, social, and cultural circumstances of its production. In this sense, the written word moves away from the limits of face-to-face dialogue and becomes the condition of the discourse becoming text. It corresponds to the hermeneutics to explore the implications that this textual becoming has for the interpretative task (Ricoeur, 2000, p. 204).

As a complement to the above, Martínez (2011) integrates the value of community and the role of hermeneutics in this sense, since it seeks to discover the meanings of the different human expressions, such as words, texts, gestures, while preserving their uniqueness (p. 17), in such a way that it articulates in its work reality in a much broader sense and is not limited to texts alone. In this regard, Gurdíán (2007) draws attention to remember that hermeneutics is a general method of understanding, and interpretation is the natural way of knowing about human beings. The mission of hermeneutics is to discover the meanings of things, to interpret words, writings, texts and gestures, as well as any act and work, as best as possible, while preserving their uniqueness in the context of which they are a part (p. 146).

Accordingly, and applied to the level of research in the human and social sciences, a great value must be recognized in hermeneutics given its role in the profound interpretation that subjects make of the world of life and its components. These meanings pose a twofold task: to reconstruct the internal

dynamics of the text (object, situation, symbol, reality, among others) and to restore the work's capacity to project itself to the outside through the representation of an inhabitable world (Ricoeur, 2000, p. 205). This is where the hermeneutic exercise has been associated with subtlety or sharpness which have come to constitute the essence of hermeneutics (Noratto & Suárez, 2007, p. 121). This is, to its realization from the subject in their historical reality, where such aspects give reason of the hermeneutics from three implicit forms for the one who interprets, namely:

- *Subtilitas intelligendi* or capacity to understand what is being read or interpreted in the world of life (text).
- *Subtilitas explicandi* or extension of the meaning of the text or of reality, from the process of appropriation performed by the subject (context).
- *Subtilitas applicandi* or incorporation into the world and/or appropriated reality by the interpreting subject (hermeneutic) with a caveat regarding its distance and the configuration of its meaning (pretext).

Thus, hermeneutics is an essential element in research work in the light of the vital involvement of those who conducted it. In particular, it assumes a threefold dynamic (text, context, pretext) because the task of interpretation requires an appropriation of the reality under investigation on which it is possible to understand what it represents (text), the place in which it is situated (context) and its intentionality and/or becoming (pretext).

The application of hermeneutics at the level of research in the human and social sciences must involve serious, methodical, and profound work that goes beyond the descriptive or evaluative level, and goes into the thing itself in order to bring to light real meanings for the interpreters, within their symbolic contexts and networks. Thus, a new, critical, objective, and differentiated vision of the apparent reality is allowed. In this scenario lies its difference with phenomenology, since the descriptive interest of the latter, hermeneutics aims at an appropriation of reality and/or textuality as a condition of possibility to understand it in its structure, reality, and intentionality, while estimating the conflicts that may arise from the same interpretations —be these from the objectivity and/or from the subjectivity of those who perform it (Ricoeur, 2003).

## Conclusions

According to several methodologists or research methodology texts, it can be inferred that the use of phenomenology and hermeneutics is not univocal, since their place is given by the underlying research understanding and the autonomy of the researchers who employ them or their implementation. To this extent, it is common to find that some researchers refer to them as paradigms, approaches, perspectives, types of research, among others.

At the epistemological level, some features are recognized as characterizers of the particularities of phenomenology and hermeneutics and their application in the field of methodical research in the human and social sciences. In recognition of the above, and as a synthesis, a brief description is proposed of some of the relationships, differences, similarities, and scope, among other possibilities, that mark these two currents and allow for the dimensioning of their role in research contexts.

First, it is perceptible the common origin shared by hermeneutics and phenomenology. The first derives from the second in the historical developments of Husserl (1992; 1994). However, despite their common origin, the two reach different dimensions of application, reflection, and research.

Phenomenology is characterized by its approach and place of action on phenomena, or what is similar, it presents itself before reality exercising a descriptive role. Hence, it gives meaning to the world in which individuals live. On the other hand, hermeneutics deepens much more in the senses and the founded search of what is in itself; that is to say, it is played in a much more ontological dimension.

Secondly, it is common to find that hermeneutics has reached its splendour by basing its work on the interpretation of texts, given the nature of the texts and their exposure in the world. In this sense, the work of the hermeneutic is situated in determining or identifying the original intentionality of the text to transmit it publicly. It is common to appeal to hermeneutics in research of a documentary nature. However, its use cannot be limited to these scenarios, managing to be an excellent complement in other research stays linked to orality, narrative, and constructions of social, historical and/or collective memory.

Finally, on the interest of distinguishing both platforms, Gurdián (2007) proposes the following

differentiation when talking about hermeneutics and phenomenology:

The hermeneutic method tries to introduce itself into the content and the dynamics of the person studied, in their implications, and seeks to structure a coherent interpretation of the whole.

The phenomenological method completely respects the person's account of their own experiences. It focuses on the study of lived realities or experiences, generally not very communicable.

In addition to the above, it is valid to clarify that, despite the established differences, it is also possible to speak of a complementarity that supports the investigation. In other words, the use of hermeneutics or phenomenology in research is not univocal, or unidirectional, in such a way that their application demands a continuous attitude of discovery, knowledge, and questioning that leads to epistemological reflections (Thaddeus, 2011).

## References

- Bolaños, R. (2015). Elementos de hermenéutica y fenomenología para un diálogo metodológico entre las ciencias. *Revista Sophia*, 19, 25-46. doi: 10.17163/soph.n19.2015.01
- Caimi, M. (coord.). (2017). *Diccionario de la filosofía crítica kantiana*. Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Argentina: Colihue.
- Castillo, E. (2000). La fenomenología interpretativa como alternativa apropiada para estudiar los fenómenos humanos. *Revista en Educación y Enfermería*, 18(1), 27-35.
- Comte, A. (1984). *Discurso del espíritu positivo* (2.<sup>a</sup> Ed.). Alianza Editorial.
- Droysen, J. G. (1983). *Histórica: lecciones sobre la enciclopedia y metodología de la historia*. Alfa.
- Espina, M. (2003). Complejidad y pensamiento social. In L. Carrizo, M. Espina, & J. Klein. *Transdisciplinariedad y complejidad en el análisis social*. UNESCO
- Ferreya, H., & Caelles, S. (2010). Más allá del paradigma del consenso y del conflicto: el modelo del encuentro educativo. In H. Ferreyra (Ed.), *Actualidad y campo pedagógico. Textos con el pretexto de habilitar el debate*. USTA. doi: 10.15332/s2011-8643.2009.0005.02
- Ferreya, H., & Blanas, G. (2011). Introducción. In O. Parra, *El placer de conocer investigando*. (pp. 9-19). USTA.
- Gurdián, A. (2007). *El paradigma cualitativo en la investigación Socio-Educativa*. CECC-AECI.
- Gutiérrez, G. (1986). Cap. II - *Metodología de las Ciencias Sociales II* (pp. 139-165). Harla.

- Herrera, D. (2003). Fenomenología y hermenéutica. *Revista de la Facultad de Artes y Humanidades*, (17), 1-15.
- Husserl, E. (1992). *Invitación a la fenomenología*. Paidós Ibérica.
- Husserl, E. (1994). *Problemas fundamentales de la fenomenología*. Alianza.
- Mardones, J. (2005). *Filosofía de las ciencias humanas y sociales*. Editorial Anthropos.
- Marín, J. (2006). *La investigación en educación y pedagogía. Sus fundamentos epistemológicos y metodológicos*. USTA
- Martínez, J. (2011). Métodos de investigación cualitativa. *Silogismos de investigación*, (8), 1-43.
- Mieles, M., Tonon, G., & Alvarado, S. (2012). Investigación cualitativa: el análisis temático para el tratamiento de la información desde el enfoque de la fenomenología social. *Universitas humanística*, 74, 195-225.
- Nieto, J. A. (2017). Hacia una didáctica del sentido. Didácticas emergentes de las prácticas pedagógicas de filosofía en tres escuelas católicas. *Revista Interamericana de Educación, Pedagogía y Estudios Culturales*, 10(1), 173-195. doi: 10.15332/s1657-107X.2017.0001.07
- Noratto, J., & Suárez, G. (2007). La racionalidad hermenéutica en teología. In G. Baena, D. Martínez, V. Martínez, J. Noratto, & G. Suárez (Eds.), *Los métodos en teología*. Facultad de Teología. Pontificia Universidad Javeriana.
- Páramo, P. (Comp.) (2011). *La investigación en ciencias sociales: estrategias de investigación*. Universidad Piloto de Colombia.
- Parra, O. (2011). *El placer de conocer investigando. Gestión del Conocimiento*. USTA.
- Ricoeur, P. (1990). *Freud: Una interpretación de la cultura*. (8.<sup>a</sup> Ed.). Siglo XXI Editores.
- Ricoeur, P. (2000). Narratividad, fenomenología y hermenéutica. *Revista Análisis*, 25, 189-207.
- Ricoeur, P. (2003). *El conflicto de las interpretaciones*. Fondo de Cultura Económica de Argentina.
- Ritzer, G. (1998). *Teoría sociológica contemporánea*. McGraw-Hill.
- Rivadeneira, E. (2015). Comprensión teórica y proceso metodológico de la investigación cualitativa. *Crescendo*, 6(2), 169-183. doi: 10.21895/incres.2015.v6n2.16
- Sandín, E. (2003). *Investigación cualitativa en educación. Fundamentos y Tradiciones*. Mc Graw and Hill Interamericana.
- Sotolongo, P., & Delgado, C. (2006). *La revolución contemporánea del saber y la complejidad social. Hacia unas ciencias sociales de nuevo tipo*. CLACSO.
- Tadeo, J. (2011). Fenomenología y hermenéutica como epistemología de la investigación. *Revista Paradigma*, 32(2), 7-22.
- Valera, R. (2008). *Acercamiento a la problemática actual de los estudios sociales*. Curso: Participación ciudadana y educación popular, confluencias y desafío en el espacio asociativo latinoamericano. CLACSO.