Special section in memory of George Psathas

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Introduction

Nearly two years have passed since George Psathas died on November 15th, 2018, at the age of 89. Born on February 22nd, 1929 in New Haven, Connecticut, he taught since 1968 as Professor for Sociology at Boston University, where he continued his academic engagement as Emeritus following his retirement in 1997. It was George Psathas, who drew the attention of American social scientists to the theoretical profile and the methodological implications of what became known as “Phenomenological Sociology”: the encounter of the European tradition of Phenomenology with the empirical endeavors of American Ethnomethodology. He chose neither one path, nor the other, but placed himself at the crossroad between Alfred Schütz’s way of thinking about social reality and Harold Garfinkel’s methodology of daily life. Thus, he did not confine himself to simply pointing at certain similarities between these directions of sociological research. He consistently tried to develop and point at the similarities as well as differences between them. It is these conceptual intuitions and ongoing research interests, that justify the continued influence and lasting impact of George Psathas’ work.

In order to honor George Psathas, Jochen Dreher and Eric Garrett organized a round table in recognition of his work and his achievements at the annual conference of the *Society for Phenomenology and Human Sciences* (SPHS) in Pittsburgh in 2019. The following contributions are the revised versions of some of the papers presented at this event. Unfortunately, the organizers themselves were unable to participate in this special session, and Steven Crowell’s article cannot be printed here. Nevertheless, the contributions by Hisashi Nasu, Lenore Langsdorf, Michael Barber, Carlos Belvedere, and Martin Endreß offer an account of the topics and people who have accompanied George’s work for many years in very different ways and draw a vivid picture of George’s academic life and research interests from these experiences with dense descriptions.

Hisashi Nasu (Emeritus Professor of Sociology and Director of the Alfred Schutz Archive at Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan) draws on George Psathas’ first contacts

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with and influence on Phenomenology in Japan. Against this background, Nasu argues for an understanding of George Psathas' idea of "Phenomenological Sociology" as a "movement," i.e., not simply reducing it to its academic profile, but also considering the friendly connections between its representatives.

Lenore Langsdorf (Emerita Professor at the Department of Communication Studies at the Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, United States) focuses on the "turning points" in the relationship between Philosophy (especially Phenomenology) and Sociology (especially Ethnomethodology) in the work of George Psathas. She reconstructs the multiple aspects and the different levels in approaching "Phenomenological Sociology" as well as the several paths that eventually lead to George Psathas founding *Human Studies* as a journal devoted to this intellectual dialogue.

Michael D. Barber (Professor of Philosophy at the College of Arts and Sciences and College of Philosophy and Letters, Saint Louis University, United States) discusses the differences between Alfred Schütz's and Harold Garfinkel's versions of phenomenologically accurate description of social life. Especially the close connection between Ethnomethodology and Phenomenology, which George Psathas has always emphasized, as well as his critique on Schütz's methodological use of "ideal types" casts a new light on the accurate understanding of the "phenomenological sociology".

Carlos Belvedere (regular Assistant Professor and Principal Investigator of CONICET at the University of Buenos Aires) points at George Psathas' fruitful approach to Ethnomethodology as the beginning of an "Experimental Sociology" dealing with the natural attitude. Belvedere draws on both the strong phenomenological background of Garfinkel's ideas and on Husserl's, Gurwitsch's, and Schütz's influences on Ethnomethodology as well as on George Psathas' reading of Garfinkel's methodological project.

Martin Endreß (Professor of General Sociology at the University Trier, Germany) identifies two levels of dialogue between sociology and phenomenology: *Human Studies* as the main stage on which the dynamics of this relationship evolved and unfolded itself and Psathas' constant interest in the works of both Schütz and Garfinkel. Drawing on the problematic of "foundations of trust in everyday life," Endreß shows the complementarity of Schütz's and Garfinkel's methodological approaches.

We hope these contributions will further facilitate and productively continue the discussions and considerations which have been initiated by George Psathas.

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