

DOCTORAL THESIS

The genealogy of Apple in China: towards a genetic phenomenological sociology of culture, media and technology

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Abstract of the thesis

The genealogy of Apple in China: towards a genetic phenomenological sociology of culture, media and technology

The state of cultural and social theories is not satisfactory though they seem to flourish in terms of quantity. Scholars successfully describe most of the cultural and social phenomena but propose wildly different, sometime even opposite, interpretations of these phenomena. This thesis offers genetic phenomenological sociology as an alternative interpretation that goes beyond structure oriented theories and construction (agency) oriented theories. It proposes to interpret cultural and social phenomena in the process of their emergence and transformation, and argues that this process or genealogy is the social ontology of culture and society.

This thesis develops genetic phenomenological sociology through exploring the genetic side of phenomenology and social theories, and through examining the emergence and transformation of Apple in China. Genealogy is not only method and critique, but also social ontology. This is a main theoretical argument and objective of empirical analysis of the thesis.

Theoretically, this thesis explores the genetic side of Husserlian phenomenology, phenomenological sociology as well as the genetic side of social theories. These

theories fully develop genealogy as method and critique and imply genealogy as social ontology. But they do not fully develop the idea of genealogy as social ontology. This underdevelopment leads to theoretical problems of subject and normativity, such as Husserlian phenomenology and Foucault's theory. Genealogy, as social ontology, is a way out of the dichotomy of structure and construction, a way out of the philosophy of subject, and a solution to the problems of subject and normativity. This theoretical argument is further developed through theoretical investigation of meaning context, social ontology, genealogy, practice, encountering and embodiment from the perspective of genetic phenomenological sociology in the substantive chapters.

Empirically, the genetic phenomenological sociology of Apple answers the question how Apple culture emerges and transforms in China. It examines Apple in genesis in China from the 1980s to 2015. First, the meaning context of this period can be largely described as a transformation of electronic culture from modernization in the 1980s to individualism and consumerism after 2000 through marketization. Second, Apple store exemplifies the social ontology and epistemology of genetic phenomenological sociology. Third, the genealogy of Apple advertisements, media practices and media ritualization concerning Steve Jobs and the cultural encountering of Apple in the meaning context of China's reform era illustrate how Apple culture emerges and transforms. Finally, the genetic phenomenological sociology of Apple technology

further reveals the relation between people and thing, which is embodiment.

This thesis develops genetic phenomenological sociology as an alternative approach in the study of culture, media and technology that goes beyond structure and construction oriented theories. The ontological root of genetic phenomenological sociology, which is the non-subject philosophy, needs to be further developed.

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